

**ABORIGINAL ENHANCEMENT SCHOOLS NETWORK  
2011-2012**

**SPENCER MIDDLE SCHOOL  
#62 Sooke**

**Leadership Team**

Cynthia Berenyi  
Huw Griffiths  
John Lyall  
Dennis Warbrick

**Contacts**

cberenyi@sd62.bc.ca  
hgriffiths@sd62.bc.ca  
jlyall@sd62.bc.ca  
dwarbrick@sd62.bc.ca

**School Context/Community Involvement**

Spencer Middle School is a grade 7-9 school located in Langford in the Sooke school district. School District #62 (Sooke) serves approximately 8200 students, is located on South Vancouver Island adjacent to Victoria. Spencer Middle School enrolls approximately 620 students, 11% of which are of Aboriginal ancestry. This population forms a diverse group, primarily off – reserve, non - status and Métis populations.

**School Question**

How can we increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing throughout Spencer?

**Focus of Inquiry**

The primary objective of the inquiry was: how can we increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing throughout Spencer Middle school. It was the intention that Aboriginal curriculum and / or projects would be offered to as many Spencer students as possible.

**Links to District Enhancement Agreement**

The inquiry question is directly related to the second goal of the Enhancement agreement: To increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal Ways of knowing for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students

**Strategies**

The focus was to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing throughout Spencer Middle school. It was anticipated that the Aboriginal Inquiry team would be a vessel to encourage teachers and staff to implement Aboriginal curricula / projects into their classrooms. The following are the strategies and structures offered at Spencer in 2011 - 12.

Aboriginal Awareness Exploratory 7: This is a third year grade 7 course, starting in September 2009. Grade 7 students at Spencer Middle school are scheduled an exploratory block. Spencer offers Aboriginal Awareness as one of the five exploratories offered (others include Foods, Woodwork, Computer science, Smart Start). Thus, the majority of grade 7 students take the course. The class is roughly 6 weeks in length, totally about 18 hours of instruction. In this exploratory, our class:

- Learned of the term Aboriginal, which includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit,
- Learned of the diverse Aboriginal populations of BC,
- Learned of Aboriginal peoples in Canada,
- Were introduced to Aboriginal art and its components,
- Watched short films on Aboriginal oral histories,
- Learned about Aboriginal languages through First Voices software,
- Went on a guided tour, Box of Treasures at the Royal BC Museum
- Had fun!

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The primary form of data for this inquiry originated from the Aboriginal Awareness exploratory. At the beginning of the exploratory, students were asked: What is your current understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing (culture, peoples, diversity, language, art, history)? **What do you know?** At the end of the exploratory, students were given a similar questionnaire that asked: **what did you learn?**

All Nations Room: The All Nations room is a vibrant center of Spencer Middle School. It offers cultural, academic, social and emotional support. The Spencer Aboriginal education team meets weekly to cover student issues and plan cultural events.

Cultural activities promoted through the All Nations room included:

- **Monthly lunches:** the last Wednesday of each month, the All Nations room hosted monthly lunches catered through our cafeteria. Each lunch included an Aboriginal guest who shared their teachings prior to lunch, and then enjoyed a hot meal with our students afterwards. The lunches were open to all students, the ‘developed’ criteria being that students must be present for the shared teachings.
- **Drum making / Paddle:** Twenty Spencer students created and painted a drum. Teachings were shared on the significance of drums to Aboriginal cultures, and the significance of the designs placed upon them. These drums were completed for a Spencer All Nations Art Show May 30, 2012. Students were asked to share titles for their pieces, and the personal significance of their drums to them. Invitations were developed and sent home with all students.
- **Film Fridays:** The All Nations room presented films and documentaries on Aboriginal topics the last block of Friday. Class discussions and short reflection pieces accompanied the films.
- **Role Models / Field Trips:** The All Nations room through the leadership of Huw Griffiths and Dennis Warbrick undertook and facilitated a large number of field trips. This included Inuit speaker Michael Kusagak, bannock making, artists such as Charlene George and a Box of treasures field trip to the museum.

Me to We: The *Me to We* Leadership Sacred Circle Program in the words of the Me-To-We staff is a program that “*celebrates the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual success of Aboriginal children and youth*”. This year, eight Aboriginal youth from Spencer participated in the SD 62 wide Me to We program.

Their involvement included 4.0 days of workshops with students from throughout the district, and four subsequent days at Spencer working on art projects.

Student involvement included:

- Participation and learning of teachings of the Sacred Circle
- Assistance in the planning and implementation of the Sooke School District Celebration of Aboriginal Student Success night April 17, 2012.

English 9: A presentation of a unit on the New Zealand film *Whale Rider* to two English 9 classes.

### **Focus of Formative Assessment Strategies**

The inquiry project was encompassed throughout the strategies throughout the school. Of the big six formative assessment strategies, we focused on the following three:

- **Learning Intention:** The clear learning intention that guided the inquiry project was the question, directly related to the second goal of the Enhancement Agreement: “to increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal Ways of knowing for both Aboriginal & non – Aboriginal students throughout Spencer.
- **Self Assessment:** the primary form of data collection was students’ self assessment of what they knew and what they learned throughout the strategies. The self assessment questionnaire for the Aboriginal awareness exploratory 7 included: What is your current understanding of Aboriginal

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ways of knowing (culture, peoples, diversity, language, art, history)? **What do you know?** At the end of the exploratory, students were given a similar questionnaire that asked: **what did you learn?**

- *Sense of ownership:* the variety of activities, in particular hands on Aboriginal art activities produced a strong sense of ownership amongst student participants.

**School Findings**

Aboriginal Awareness Exploratory 7: The majority of data produced came from the Aboriginal Awareness exploratory 7 class. Essentially, students were given a *what did you know* questionnaire at the beginning of the exploratory and a *what did you learn* at the end of the exploratory.

Aboriginal Awareness Exploratory

	Total # of students	1 Emerging	2 Developing	3 Acquired	4 Accomplished	Average score
What do I know?	114	47	54	13	0	1.7
What did I learn?	107	2	60	41	4	2.4

This demonstrates an increased understanding of Aboriginal Ways of Knowing

Of particular interest was the Grade 7 student satisfaction survey.

	School	District	Province
At school, are you being taught about Aboriginal peoples in Canada?	34%	17%	16%

34% of students responded yes to ‘All the time’ or ‘Many Times’, putting Spencer Middle School in the 89% percentile provincially.

Monthly lunches: To date, there have been eight monthly lunches hosted in the All Nations room. Lunches were generally held the last Wednesday of each month. This year, we have hosted six guests, including:

Month	Guest	Aboriginal Students	Non Aboriginal Students	Total Students
September	Shirley Alphonse	19	20	39
October	John Lyall	21	21	42
November	Christa Green	18	17	35
December	Winter Celebration	19	29	48
January	Me – We Students	16	30	46
February	Jan Peever	16	21	37
March	Norma – Jean, Loni	16	20	36
April	Alex Nelson	19	25	44
May	S. Alphonse, K. Cranmer	16	15	36

It is evident that the number of students, Aboriginal and non Aboriginal students that participated in the All Nations monthly lunches demonstrates an increased awareness and understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing throughout Spencer.

Drum making: Twenty Spencer students created and painted a drum. Teachings were shared on the significance of drums to Aboriginal cultures, and the significance of the designs placed upon them. These drums were completed for a Spencer All Nations Art Show May 30, 2012. Students were asked to share titles for their pieces, and the personal significance of their drums to them. Invitations were developed and sent home with all students.

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Some of the personal comments included

- It represents to me the beauty of art and nature. I am proud to be Metis.
- This is my family crest and I really like it. It was the first thing that came to my mind.
- I made this drum for my grandpa. He is Chinese, so I drew him a dragon.
- I painted an owl on my drum because my cousin's Aboriginal name is Seneena which means Owl in our language.

Me to We: The *Me to We* Leadership Sacred Circle Program in the words of the Me-To-We staff is a program that “celebrates the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual success of Aboriginal children and youth”. This year, eight Aboriginal youth from Spencer participated in the SD 62 wide Me to We program.

Role Models / Field Trips:

Date	Activity	Aboriginal Students	Non Aboriginal Students	Total Students
October 2	Hoop Dancer	17	5	22
October 13	Me – We	10	0	10
October 17	Bannock Making	7	0	7
October 25	Better Ideas	12	0	12
November 8	Goldstream	18	1	19
November 9	Michael Kusagak	25	8	33
January 16	UVic summer camp	9	8	17
February 2-3	Me – We Workshops	8	0	8
February 9	Bannock Making	4	3	7
February 10	Career Fair	7	1	8
March 29	Drum making	10	8	19
April 12 – 13	Me – We Workshops	6	0	6
April 18	Celebration of Success	6	2	8
April 4, May 16, 25, 28, 29	Charlene: Art project assistance	22	8	30
May 8	Box Treasures	16	7	23

Movie Monday / Film Friday

Date	Movie	Aboriginal Students	Non Aboriginal Students	Total Students
December 12	Raven Tales	10	4	14
January 9	Whale Rider	8	3	11
January 16	Whale Rider	7	8	15
January 23	Raven Tales	5	6	11
January 30	Wind Talker	7	6	13
February 6	Wind Talker	7	8	15
February 13	Evolution People	6	5	11
February 20	Raven Tales	7	7	14
February 27	Rabbit Proof Fence	7	5	12
March 12	Rabbit Proof Fence	6	6	12
March 26	Resource documentary	5	12	17
April 2	Raven Tales	3	5	8
April 18	Raven Tales	7	8	15
April 25	Reel Injun	4	11	15

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May 4	Reel Injun	6	9	15
May 11	Raven Tales	5	9	14
May 18	Luna	11	13	24
May 25	Luna	14	14	28
June 1	Potlatch	3	4	7
June 8	Metis	5	19	24

**AESN Plans for 2012-2013**

It is the intention that plans will expand upon 2011–2012 of inquiring *How can we increase awareness and understanding of Aboriginal ways of knowing throughout Spencer Middle school.* It is anticipated that strategies and structures to integrate and incorporate Aboriginal teachings throughout the school and classrooms will increase.

**Reflection**

The Spencer Aboriginal Inquiry project has been an invaluable tool over the past three years. It has “forced” us to track data, and study trends. It has allowed us to investigate Aboriginal students and curricula with a critical eye, one that probes deeper than before.

**Sustainability:** We believe the exploratory is an excellent vehicle for increasing Aboriginal Awareness to all students.

**Performance Standards:** Aboriginal Awareness continues to be difficult to assess without a criterion tool in which to reference students to. What exactly is Aboriginal Awareness? What are the core traits required to be considered Aboriginally aware? I will present a draft Aboriginal Awareness Rubric, the stark reality being that the vast majority of Aboriginal and non Aboriginal students and staff would be firmly in the emerging and developing categories.

**Aboriginal Ways of Knowing Rubric (Draft)**

	Emerging	Developing	Acquired	Accomplished
Respect Emotional	Students are minimally knowledgeable of: -the term Aboriginal (including First Nations, Métis and Inuit) - the diversity of Aboriginal peoples -their own cultural heritage and the connection between self, family and community	Students are knowledgeable of: - the term Aboriginal - the diversity of Aboriginal peoples -their own cultural heritage and the connection between self, family and community -want to learn of and demonstrate respect for Aboriginal peoples	Students share their knowledge of: - the term Aboriginal - the diversity of Aboriginal peoples -their own cultural heritage and the connection between self, family and community - demonstrate respect for Aboriginal peoples	Students integrate their knowledge of: - the term Aboriginal - the diversity of Aboriginal peoples -their own cultural heritage and the connection between self, family and community - clearly demonstrate respect for Aboriginal peoples -recognize Aboriginal contributions to modern society.
Relationship Spiritual	Students are minimally knowledgeable of: -Aboriginal worldviews -their own sense of (Aboriginal) sense of belonging in their school, and show minimal interest in	Students are knowledgeable of: -Aboriginal worldviews, including the four aspects of the human body: emotional, spiritual, mental and physical -their own sense of (Aboriginal) sense of	Students share their knowledge of: -Aboriginal worldviews, including the four aspects of the human body: emotional, spiritual, mental and physical -their own sense of (Aboriginal) sense of	Students integrate their knowledge of: -Aboriginal worldviews, including the four aspects of the human body: emotional, spiritual, mental and physical - including a holistic interconnected

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	cultural activities at school.	belonging in their school, and willingly participate in cultural activities at school -want to learn more of Aboriginal worldviews	belonging, and actively participate in cultural activities at school	worldview -their own sense of (Aboriginal) sense of belonging in their school, and are role models in cultural activities at school
Relevance  Physical	Students are minimally knowledgeable of Aboriginal knowledge (AK), including: -Aboriginal peoples and territories (e.g. not aware of the local traditional territory) -Aboriginal history -Aboriginal language and culture -Aboriginal art, stories, song and dance	Students are knowledgeable of AK, including: -Aboriginal peoples and territories (e.g. aware of the local traditional territory) -Aboriginal history and culture -Aboriginal language and culture -Aboriginal art, stories, song and dance -contributions of Aboriginal peoples to contemporary society - want to learn more of AK	Students share their knowledge of AK, including: -Aboriginal peoples and territories (e.g. aware of the local traditional and neighboring territories) -Aboriginal history -Aboriginal language and culture -Aboriginal art, stories, song and dance -contributions of Aboriginal peoples to contemporary society -the impact of colonization and the Indian Act	Students integrate their knowledge of AK, including: -Aboriginal peoples and territories (e.g. aware of the local traditional and neighboring territories) -Aboriginal history -Aboriginal language and culture -Aboriginal art, stories, song and dance -contributions of Aboriginal peoples to contemporary society -the impact of colonization and the Indian Act
Responsibility  Mental	Students are minimally knowledgeable of an Aboriginal Knowledge transfer system (AKT) that is: -inclusive of knowledge connected to place -aware that knowledge is passed orally -aware that knowledge is passed through elders -aware that knowledge is passed through reciprocal relationships	Students are knowledgeable of an AKT system that is: -inclusive of knowledge connected to place -aware that knowledge is passed orally -aware that knowledge is passed through elders -aware that knowledge is passed through reciprocal relationships - dynamic and exists in a modern world -want to learn more of an AKT system	Students share their knowledge of an AKT system that is: -inclusive of knowledge connected to place -aware that knowledge is passed orally -aware that knowledge is passed through elders -aware that knowledge is passed through reciprocal relationships - dynamic and exists in a modern world	Students share their knowledge of an AKT system that is: -inclusive of knowledge connected to place -aware that knowledge is passed orally -aware that knowledge is passed through elders -aware that knowledge is passed through reciprocal relationships - dynamic and exists in a modern world -aware that resilience as an integral component of AK