

**NETWORKS OF INQUIRY AND INNOVATION
2011-2012**

**PORT HARDY SECONDARY
#85 Vancouver Island North**

Leadership Team

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School Context/Community Involvement

This inquiry project was a partnership between Port Hardy Secondary School (PHSS) and Eke Me-Xi Alternate School located on the Tsulquate Reserve. Port Hardy Secondary School has a student enrolment of 320 students in grade 8-12. Approximately 50% of the student population is of First Nations ancestry; with the majority of students residing on one of the three local reserves. During a four week Literature Circle unit students were introduced to social justice concepts that focused on identity, how experiences shape identity, how people deal with challenges and why our society needs to be aware of individual differences. There were 17 PHSS students participating and 9 Eke Me-Xi students; students met face to face once a week for two hours to discuss/work together and the remainder of the week was spent independently reading and using an online platform to respond to questions and each other.

School Inquiry and Action

School Question

Will school-to-school partnerships, targeting English Language Arts/English First Peoples' Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs), increase students' knowledge and understanding of self, others and individual differences?

Strategies

- Identity Themed Literature Unit focusing on the following questions:
 1. Who Am I?
 2. How do experiences shape identity?
 3. How do people deal with challenges?
 4. In what ways does learning about others change our own identity?
- Weekly Group assignments targeting specific skills and tied into each guiding question:
 1. Where I Am From Poem
 2. Life size Character Activity-thoughts, feelings, words, action, relations with others
 3. Trauma and Responses to Trauma Activity
 4. Soundtrack Project
- Novel selection criteria:
 1. Fit our theme of Identity
 2. Two of the four novels must be written by aboriginal authors
 3. Variety and range in reading levels
 4. Content that adolescents could "relate/connect" to
- Online component:
 1. Questions and activities developed with the expectation that they are engaging and relevant, employ higher order thinking skills, and elicit evidence of learning and connection of ideas. Layered questioning that forces students to make connections to self, to the text and to society.
 2. Allow for student choice
 3. Require students to participate in threaded discussion in order to learn from others.¹

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4. Require students to provide feedback to peers
5. Netiquette—expected, taught, and modeled

School Findings

Pre and post Literature Circle surveys were emailed to participating students at Eke Me-Xi and Port Hardy Secondary. Twenty-two (22) pre surveys were completed and 17 post surveys were completed. Categories for data are Not Yet Meeting Expectations (NY), Approaching Expectations (A), Meeting Expectations (M) and Exceeding Expectations (E).

The student survey had a 5 point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree; strongly disagree and disagree answers were placed in the Not Yet Meeting category, neutral or unsure answers were placed in the Approaching category, selecting agree meant Meeting and a strongly agree answer meant Exceeding Expectations.

Hard data and students’ written responses have been included as evidence:

I believe it is important that our society recognize individual differences.

| | NY | A | M | E |
|------|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Pre | 5% | 18% | 41% | 36% |
| Post | 2% | 9% | 33% | 56% |

Sampling of student responses to this question during online threaded discussions:

- I feel there is a value to celebrating differences and respecting them. “It was good that we could do something no one but another Navajo could do.” (Bruchac, pg. 81-82) Ned and the other Code Talkers were able to use their language to make an unbreakable code. It is because of that difference, being Navajo, which helped win the war. The Navajos were given recognition for the part they played in the war and are celebrated and respected.
- I know for a fact that having a differed populace is better for the world than having a singular one. My general feeling towards people has not changed. As a whole, people are unintelligent, greedy, and overly aggressive beings. However, they have great potential, and some are more intelligent, less greedy and not as aggressive as others. The word special brings to mind nothing for me, for it is only a word. Special in today’s society can mean that either a child is generally more intelligent than his or her classmates, or that they are mentally challenged in some way, generalizing that they are different from the average, therefore, “special”.

Stereotypes that exist about certain groups of people are often very true.

| | NY | A | M | E |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Pre | 41% | 36% | 14% | 9% |
| Post | 33% | 11% | 34% | 22% |

Sampling of student responses to this question in the post survey:

- Sometimes because they bring it upon themselves.
- Sometimes there is a certain group or community that stereotype, but not all people are the same. They can be similar but in certain areas of the place. Ex in Canada we supposedly live in igloos but that’s only true in the colder parts of Canada.
- Every individual has a choice; we can decide individually whether we believe it to be right. I do not know if prejudices will go away entirely but I do think that the world view is changing and prejudicisms and racism are becoming less and less acceptable.
- Stereotypes exist because people believe them to be true.
- I find that stereotypes that exist about certain groups of people have a root of truth. What makes a stereotype false is when it is exaggerated into an extreme, and the extreme is negative.

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- Stereotypes about certain groups of people are often not true. Just because you are of a certain group doesn't mean that you are the same as them, individual differences set people apart from each other.
- People can look at others by what is inside-not judging them by their cover. We can change the way we look at others and learn more about the things that make them who they are.
- If everyone realizes they generalize people they might stop.
- I think that in every group certain group of friends they each have their own stereotype by the way they act, and how they talk and even dress.

Learning about others changes who I am as a person.

| | NY | A | M | E |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Pre | 59% | 27% | 9% | 5% |
| Post | 22% | 23% | 44% | 11% |

Sampling of students' written responses to this question in the post survey:

- No--My beliefs do not change easily.
- Reading about and discussing other peoples, experiences has made me think sort of differently because you learn more about other people and hear what they went through and it makes you feel like you're normal and, not everyone's perfect.
- Reading about and discussing other people's experiences has made me think differently. I learned about how they overcame their struggles.
- I have more knowledge about others and learned new things.
- Reading and discussing other peoples experiences has made me think differently on some subjects. If I had only answered the questions in this unit thinking about my own experiences my answers probably would have been different. Having to take into consideration other peoples experiences forced me to think with a bigger perspective which in turn changed my own perspective on some of the answers I would have given
- Reading this book has added to my knowledge base on First Nations because before I didn't know anything about the Navajo culture. Now I know a little more about their culture.
- This glimpse inside Christopher's mind has not changed how I think about people because you should never judge a book by its cover.
- Reading this book hasn't changed the way I think, its only fiction so it has no impact on me.
- I think knowing a little bit more about a person changes your perspective of a person because it's not their actions that describe a person, it's their personality. I think there are shades of grey in between black and white, and I think no other person is the same.
- I think learning more about people does change your perspective on that person.
- I feel that my perception on First Nations issues has changed because I never knew about the Long Walk or anything that the Navajo had gone through because of the U.S Government. If I hadn't of known what had happened to them, I couldn't have felt empathetic for them because I wouldn't of had the knowledge. But when I found out about what happened to them, I felt empathetic toward them.

School Plans for 2012-2013

The 2012/13 school year will see this inquiry project going "deeper and wider." Partnerships and collaboration will still be an important part of the teacher role but the aim is to join forces with our five elementary feeder schools using literature circles. The plan is to have a linear Grade 10 English class at PHSS become the mentors for our "next year's grade 8 students." This idea melds with our school's academic and social responsibility goals as well as our District's Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement goals. Rough ideas are: use of one common text, plan in the fall/winter for delivery in the spring, online component using the Collaborize Classroom platform again, face to face events prior and post, grade 10

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students become the transition leaders for the grade 7s, look for a novel that deals with schooling/transition/bullying /coming of age issues (? Fatty Legs or Mockingbird), involve community/elders—more adults reading the same book so cross generational discussions happen, have grade 10 students read the novel first (become “the experts”) and have them co-create the layered questions and weekly themes with their teacher and the grade 7 teachers.

Reflections, Advice

| Ideas to help us go “deeper” | Ideas to help us improve |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss during face2face one of the online topics aloud or delve into it together as a group--maybe one of the topics students would have not chosen • put more emphasis on the reply component to encourage more meaningful discussion online • a perspective writing piece. Present a scenario and have the students rewrite the situation through the eyes of their character. And then present it to the class. I think that would really highlight some of the characteristics of the different characters and possible encourage students to try reading each other’s book. • I think more front loading, really selling the book. And, more presentations/sharing of what we are all enjoying/not enjoying about our books. • an active study of good comments versus bad comments might be good. There are plenty examples of bad comments out there—could be a pre activity so it is not so obvious who is not meeting expectations—have students create the online discussion rubrics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> assess posts/comments each week(formative) -- not just through private messaging—self assess? Hit it hard in week one so we see improvement throughout the four weeks. Perhaps have a focus each week for posting/commenting ie: questioning others or critiquing others <input type="checkbox"/> most definitely try to provide more regular feedback for students but also a Facilitator/moderator googledoc or weekly debrief <input type="checkbox"/> maybe do some peer and/or self assessment as well and really get down and dirty with assessment rubrics. <input type="checkbox"/> set higher expectations for discussion participation. We could actually directly teach a few discussion strategies, i.e. Say Something |

Student threaded discussion for What is a Wailing Wall?

A wailing wall is used in Jerusalem and is believed by many to be the remains of one wall or a great Jewish temple or the wall surrounding the temple’s courtyard. It is a stone wall that extends about 62 feet above the ground. The wall is supposedly a sacred site by Jews, and thousands of people make pilgrimages there each year. It also is a source of much dispute regarding its true history. I haven’t heard of a wailing wall before, it seems pretty calming and sounds like a good place to go when you really need it.

The way I deal with difficult or painful things I just think, it’s for the best, if it’s a death then I think, "they’re no longer in pain." Dealing with my grandfather’s death was a pretty hard thing, because it’s the biggest death I suffered that I could actually remember. I just kept thinking to myself, "I saw how much you suffered, how much pain you were in, you’re no longer in that pain, you’re with God, happy and at

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home. I just wanted you here for myself, for you to make me happy, I was thinking selfish when I said I wish you were still here for me to hug and kiss, for you to make me laugh." I cried a lot when he passed away, my eyes were puffy and red, my throat hurt from actually letting out a loud cry, but now I'm happy that my grandpa's at home in heaven, I still miss him, but I'm also very happy he's no longer suffering.

Posted By Chassidy.j on 05/23/2012 03:16 PM

Chassidy,

I thought you made a really good connection to the Wailing Wall and how people go there to mourn with your comment about your grandfather passing. I thought how you dealt with that seems like how people deal with their mourning at the Wailing Wall- they go there to think. When you said the Wailing Wall seems like a peaceful place I had not really thought that initially because it's called a "Wailing Wall" but now I agree with you the wailing wall does seem peaceful because it allows people just to think.

AlishaM Replied on 05/24/2012 07:29 AM