



2013-2014 AESN Case Study

School: Burnaby North Secondary **District:** SD41 Burnaby

Area of focus: Enhancement Agreement

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Question / focus area: By increasing the visible presence of Aboriginal peoples and culture within the school we hope to develop a greater sense of belonging for our Aboriginal students, while at the same time increasing the knowledge base regarding Aboriginal culture and history for our non-Aboriginal students. For this project Metis elder Phil Gladu guided us along the process of creating a Pow Wow drum. Phil provided us with the cultural understanding and significant teachings as we moved through this journey. He also worked with us to teach students a basic drumbeat and will be joining us in the fall to teach us an honor song that will be used at school celebrations and for years to come in the Burnaby North community.

Scanning: As the project progressed the sense of pride and ownership amongst our Aboriginal students engaged in the project became very visible to everyone involved. Aboriginal students involved in the project began to bring non-Aboriginal peers to participate in the building of the drum and to interact with the Elder. Our Aboriginal students began to build connections between the learning on the drum project and some of their other subject areas. Some of our more disengaged students were engaged in the project and with our elder from start to finish throughout the inquiry.

Focus: Our elder taught us that this drum was about bringing all people together, so we included elementary partner school students, non-Aboriginal students, teachers, counselors, administrators and community partners in this inquiry. The goal of this was to create community and an improved sense of belonging for our Aboriginal students.

Hunch: Burnaby North has one of the largest student populations within the district with over 2,000 students. Due to this factor Aboriginal peoples and culture haven't been readily visible or showcased prominently within the school community. We have been contributing to this situation by hosting our groups in segregation from the rest of the student body and this inquiry allows the greater student body a chance to partake in gaining understanding and appreciation for Aboriginal culture and worldview.

The drum project successfully brought together students and staff from all backgrounds. The plan is to go deeper next year and offer all members of the community the chance

to join our drum group, where we will learn songs and share understandings with one another.

New professional learning: We focused on two areas of professional learning. The first was about cultural protocols, which were shared by our elder. The second was focused on the power of involving Elders in our students' learning experiences. Our elder was able to make everyone feel comfortable, while still connecting all aspects of the drum to areas of high school curriculum. The inclusion of Phil Gladu in this project allowed for the establishment of a strong sense of community and allowed all students to feel comfortable during this process.

Taking action:

- Elder involvement – After bringing Phil Gladu into the project it quickly spiraled into other connections to the community (e.g., resources). He quickly engaged students in developing a plan on how to build the drum. As the inquiry progressed he was able to create interest amongst all members of the community.
- Community Engagement – Students participating in the project brought non-Aboriginal peers to get engaged in the learning, as did other teachers, counselors, and administrators. This enhanced the sense of community within the school.

Checking: The difference we noticed was the level of awareness throughout the school around Aboriginal Education, which connects to our Enhancement Agreement. More people within the school than ever before were engaged in learning about Aboriginal culture and protocols. This helped increase the level of pride and ownership over the project amongst our Aboriginal students. We also involved out transitioning Grade 7 students, which should ease their transition next year, but we won't be able to measure this until they enter the school next year. Our non-engaged students attended every session and engaged in the learning that was taking place at each session. We also know that this project made a difference because our students now want to go deeper and form a community drum group that will practice regularly next year.

Reflections/Advice:

The plan for the drum is as follows:

- Regular usage by Access Program for music therapy
- Formation of community drum group
- Use during honoring celebrations by community drum group

Students at a neighboring high school heard about the project and now want to do something similar at their school next year. The plan is to involve Phil Gladu in that schools community next year to work through a similar process.

For other schools looking to complete a similar project, allow the chance for students to provide input as the project is going on. This will allow you to go deeper with such a project and engage more learners in your community.