



2013-2014 AESN Case Study

School: Prince Rupert Middle School **District:** SD52 Prince Rupert

Area of focus: Enhancement Agreement

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Question / focus area: Will using local historical content as the focus of learning the grade 8 social studies curriculum, provide engaging opportunities for students with diverse abilities, and raise engagement and impact success rates for all students?

Scanning: Visiting the areas that we learned about in the classroom and experiencing the area first hand, was extremely engaging for the students. Many students showed pride when they knew about areas that we visited or had heard stories from elders. When we made comparisons with what was happening in Europe at the same time, students were able to start making connections and seeing differences.

Focus: The grade 8 social studies curriculum focuses on historical events that occurred between 500 and 1500 CE. The students had learned about Medieval Europe and the Renaissance. This unit taught them what happened locally during the same time frame. This allowed them to learn about how they are truly connected to history and that their history is important.

Hunch: Other grade 8 social studies teachers have taken an interest in this unit and also want to teach it in their class. Grade 7 and 6 teachers are discussing how this would also fit into their curriculum so that Tsimshian history can span the three grades at our Middle School. We are also seeing the benefits that are being gained from learning outside the classroom and the potential of taking this unit across the curriculum to include science, English and math.

New professional learning: Professional learning that we experienced was the benefits of collaboration. Collaborating with teachers in the school as well as with the Aboriginal Education department really added depth to my learning experience and created better lessons for the students. Collaborating with people within the community also enhanced the learning situation and the ability to explore the community outside of the classroom.

Taking action: We decided to make this unit more of an oral unit where we engaged in discussion, went through the unit together, brought in guest speakers and went out into the community to areas that we were learning about. We think this helped increase the

engagement of all students. Students that struggle with reading or writing were able to contribute and take part in the learning experience.

Checking: We were not able to go to the other areas that were part of this unit. Our baseline was monitoring student engagement. We found that the students that are normally least engaged in class showed the greatest increase in engagement.

Reflections/Advice: From this inquiry we learned the value of teaching curriculum using a variety of methods. Students benefit when they are presented with different modes of instruction and are able to show what they know through different means. When you can make learning personal to the students and they can see how what they are learning relates to them, you can increase student engagement.