



2013-2014 AESN Case Study

School: Deroche Elementary **District:** SD75 Mission

Area of focus: Transitions

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Scanning: We noticed that most of the students were interested in learning a new language. The oral tradition of learning was a nice way to begin learning language as this is how young people learn to speak a language. The later addition of song and drumming with props was engaging for many of the children. The full inclusion of all learners in the language lessons was most important in order to honour the reclamation of the Halq'emeylem language.

Focus: We wondered if including Halq'emeylem language instruction in kindergarten classes in the Mission school district would help create a sense of belonging for our students and their families in our Mission schools.

Our key area of learning was to connect the students with the local aboriginal cultural language: Halq'emeylem. To build a healthy culture of language learners, we made this inclusive for all learners, extending this to be a whole school inquiry with each class (three divisions) having 30 minutes of oral language lessons twice a week. (Monday and Friday mornings). The interactions amongst the children and the instructors make it interesting and memorable.

“Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).” - Principles of Learning

Hunch: Many of our young Aboriginal students attended Future 4 Nations Aboriginal Pre-school where they had access to learning Halq'emeylem language. Currently our students lose that opportunity for learning Halq'emeylem when they enter our public school system because we do not have a program in place to offer language instruction. Some families choose to send their children to a neighboring band school because of this issue.

It's hard to say if any new students came to our school because of Halq'emeylem language. Some of our older students reported back in their year-end surveys a sense of pride, learning their ancestral language. They communicated in Halq'emeylem in

conversation skill lessons (colour my conversation), in pen pal letters north and with Elders at home. It was an interesting conversation to have about their grandparent's attitude about the language with the residential school experience and shame associated with using the traditional language. This opened up an opportunity to discuss this with deeper understanding in our social studies classes for grades 4 and 5 students.

“Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.” - Principles of Learning

New professional learning: All staff are present during the lessons and are learning the basics of the Halq'emeylem along with the children. Three of our classrooms have word walls dedicated to this learning which continues into this next school year.

Taking action: Originally we were only going to include the kindergarten students and maybe offer it to some of the older Aboriginal students. This didn't make sense nor match our school's inclusive attitude towards learning. Our actions, to increase the language time for the whole school and to include all students was a great decision. The students are learning as a class. Our school has a majority of Aboriginal students so it made sense to build culture around aboriginal issues this way.

Checking: We did not collect formal data for this project. We did observe the engagement of the students and found that some of the older students in Division 1 who wanted to avoid the learning could easily do this in the larger classroom. This next year, we split up the Division 1 group into two smaller groups in order to provide all children an opportunity to engage and take part in the learning. Our year end awards assembly was a true measure of the learning when the children performed four songs in English and Halq'emeylem accompanied by a drum. The language teachers, Peter and Donna led the songs. The smiles on the parents' faces showed pride in their children's performance. One song honored dads for Father's day.

Reflections/Advice: We learned that it is important to learn and use the language of a culture in order to promote and build community. The students look forward to the language lessons and all participate to their best of their ability in the classes. Most of the children retained the word knowledge over the summer for basic greetings and weather. Having the children's names translated from English to Halq'emeylem provided them with a title and membership for the language. We plan to translate the names of the new students this year and honour them at an assembly. The lessons continue this year with four groups of k-6 students twice a week on Mondays and Fridays. We look forward to the learning.

“Learning requires exploration of one's identity.” - Principles of Learning