



2014-2015 AESN Case Study

Schools: Howe Sound Secondary, Pemberton Secondary, Don Ross Middle and Xet'olacw Community Schools **District:** #48 Sea to Sky

Area of Focus: Student Level

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Scanning: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth (Grades 8-12) from four schools, three within SD48 and Xet'olacw, Mt. Currie Band School, came together with purpose, to lead their peers in Reconciliation by raising awareness about being an Aboriginal Youth today. The students overwhelmingly chose to share their experiences of racism, social misunderstanding, stereotypes, and current issues with their peers, educators and community. Students went to community seeking cultural experts, Elders and knowledge keepers to tell their stories and share their life experiences in order to gather relevant, accurate and meaningful information for learning. Students decided they needed a vehicle to deliver their voice and chose visual media, film. Students needed their voices to be heard!

Focus: Students chose the impact of our shared Canadian history, and the inter-generational effects of colonization; specifically residential schools, the Indian Act, racism and the Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women in Canada, as their focus. It was difficult to focus on any one of these issues in creating understanding, without including the others.

Hunch: 60 students from the Sea to Sky corridor met once every 2 months to share their experiences and make a plan raising awareness about issues affecting their learning in their schools. It was extremely evident as students shared their daily experiences that classroom, school and outside communities did not know the impactful shared history causing barriers to understanding and learning together in Reconciliation. So they decided to gather, create and share stories in a documentary.

New professional learning: All members of our Aboriginal Youth leadership group, community and educators learned together about the importance of each story, each voice and experience. All of us were tasked in listening, speaking from the heart, kindness, cooperation and collaboration, and most of all, respectful protocol. As our district is spread out over 6 Territories we acknowledged each one, respectfully in culture and language. Students shared their Nation's culture and we learned together so we could share with others. Student ownership of content and process was the goal; educators learning involved stepping back and lifting their student's voices and actions up.

Taking action:

1. Students gathered to share experiences following Circle protocols.
2. Students chose specific areas to raise awareness about based on their experiences shared.
3. Students decided to survey their peers at their own schools on what they know about our shared history and each school made up their own set of survey questions relevant to their issues.
4. Surveys were collected, answers tallied and from this information they chose two areas to focus their learning on this year: "Being Aboriginal Today" and "The Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women in Canada".
5. The students then chose how they were going to proceed, as on May 1, there is an annual 24 Hour Drum event that would be their forum for sharing.
6. They chose to create spoken words, slams, documentary film shorts, Art stories and representations, plays and traditional drumming and singing as the vehicles to spread their words.
7. Each school group of Aboriginal leadership students worked on their own pieces developing a show to present their learning. All four schools compiled their programs and the students put together impactful live performances that travelled to 6 locations in a 24 hour time frame up and down the Sea to Sky corridor. The 24 Hour Drum!
8. The students wanted to document their learning process to share with others and decided to be part of a documentary film about their journey. This film can be used as a learning tool to support learners in moving forward in Reconciliation.
9. Students raised money on the day of the 24 Hour Drum and at other community events to support the travelling Art Installation, "Walking With Our Sisters" coming to Comox BC, July 15, 2015. Walking with Our Sisters aims to honour the lives of missing and murdered indigenous women of Canada and the United States. The installation also aims to acknowledge the grief and suffering that the families of these women continue to experience. As Walking with Our Sisters tours North American communities, it works to allow art to create dialogue and awareness surrounding the issue.

Checking: The student's work is featured on our website: <http://sd48aborinaleducation.org/> ; the link to their documentary is: <https://vimeo.com/132351277>

- confidence levels
- impact

Reflections/Advice: We learned to listen to our students even when their stories broke our hearts, we listened some more. We learned to trust the learning process of each student so they could engage and take ownership of their work. We learned to let go of the learning and to support our students in picking it up, their way, with voice and choice! We learned that we have a long way to go as educators in educating ourselves about the intergenerational effects of residential schools and the Indian Act. We learned that all things are possible; it takes focus, support, purpose and commitment, and most importantly, students need to share their learning in giving back to their communities. It was in the giving back, that they felt heard!