



2014 - 2015 AESN Case Study

School: Fraser Lake Elementary Secondary **District:** #91 Nechako Lakes

Area of Focus: Transitions

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Our focus for this year: We focused on incorporating more First Nations content in our daily lessons. We also began implementing the First Peoples Principles of Learning into our practice.

Scanning: Curiosity is the first word that comes to mind when we think of what we noticed. Students asked lots of questions and were eager to discuss what they learned. We found that we had to limit the time they had to work on a given assignment as they never wanted to stop learning about their topics as they always came up with more questions. Students questioned why learning about First Nations culture and history was not more predominant in their education previously or in other classes.

We also noticed that for the units which incorporated First Nations content, Aboriginal students not only were more engaged, they also produced higher caliber assignments.

Focus: The group selected this area because we felt all students needed to learn about First Nations culture and history to bridge the gap which we were noticing had started between the Native and non-Native students in our school. Furthermore, we wanted to infuse First Nations culture and history into our daily lessons as opposed to “doing a unit” on First Nations People.

Hunch: At our school it had become a tradition that a bunch of activities were organized for the elementary students to participate in to celebrate National Aboriginal Day. Although the students really enjoyed the day, it was a big job to organize the day. We realized that it was the only time First Nations culture and history were being recognized in a school where 40% of the population is of First Nations descent. In addition to the National Aboriginal Day activities we set a goal to add in more First Nations culture and history into our lessons. We wanted the content to have a natural fit into our units.

As a group we noticed that in the secondary end there was a division growing between the Native and non-Native students. During lunch and break time, students were spending less time

as a whole and more time in segregated groups. Students were still getting along; however, we thought that with more education they would understand each other better.

New professional learning: This year we worked on improving the First Nations resources that we have in the school. We went through the library collection to see what we already had and decided what areas needed new materials. Throughout the year we worked closer with our Aboriginal Home School Coordinator and with her help found some new presenters. We looked into different conferences that we can attend next year.

Taking action:

We looked at the units we were teaching and researched where we could naturally incorporate First Nations culture or history. For example, when teaching a sports unit in French high school students learned how to play Lahal, and watched videos on the Arctic Games.

As part of a Canadian Identity unit, elementary students conducted individual inquiries into First Nations culture. As part of this unit, the class attended a language and art workshop with a Carrier Language and Culture Educator.

Checking: It took us a while to figure out how to effectively implement this change into our teaching practice. We feel we have made a positive difference in the lives of all of our students, but have barely scratched the surface. From the beginning we have not been sure how to record the evidence of the effect of the changes. Although assignment marks indicated that First Nations students scored better in the revised units, marks do not show the changes in students' self-esteem and acceptance. We recognize that we need to come up with some way of collecting evidence of the positive changes happening and we are considering surveys.

Reflections/Advice: We have learned that we ourselves need to learn more about First Nations culture and history before we can effectively share the information with our students. We understand that there are some things that we will never be able to do and need to be able to find more human resources who can help us. Given the opportunity, our students embraced First Nations culture and history.

We are planning to continue this inquiry next year. It is our hope to revise more units, get more staff involved and create a means of collecting evidence.

Our advice to other schools would be to start small and to find local resource people.