



Spring 2016

BC NETWORKS

CONNECTING, EXPANDING, INQUIRING, TRANSFORMING, PERSISTING

Dear Network colleagues,

We look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming symposium. We are in for a lively few days of learning and networking. Last spring we took a big risk and rented a larger space for the symposium in hopes of attracting 300 educators. We have been overwhelmed with the positive response and are now in the somewhat unfortunate position of turning people away because the registration is completely full. Maybe the time is right for deeper forms of learning, a real focus on disciplined inquiry, stronger connections and resilient networks. It's definitely time to move forward with purpose, passion and persistence.

Purpose and Vision

As we seek to find ways to support inquiry networks in the coming years, we decided that it was time to get a clear statement of purpose - especially as related to AESN. On Saturday, April 16 a small group of network leaders met with us to think through together our purpose and vision for the coming years. Here's a **draft** of our thinking:

AESN PURPOSE

The purpose of AESN is to create an inquiry community where everyone learns and works together to ensure that every Aboriginal learner crosses the stage with dignity, purpose and options - and that together we eliminate racism in schools.

To accomplish this, we:

1. Create connections and reduce isolation through
 - Face to face meetings
 - Regional networks
 - An annual symposium
 - Partnerships with university faculties
 - The development of a cadre of regional leaders
2. Provide access to and generate research and resources
 - Commission research studies on impact
 - Provide up-to-date resources on our website
 - Use case studies to accelerate learning
3. Promote the use of consistent and coherent principles and frameworks by using
 - The Spiral of Inquiry as a shared framework for school and system change
 - The four key questions to deepen scanning and checking stages in the spiral of inquiry
 - The First peoples' Principles of Learning to inform and shape practice
 - The learning principles from the OECD to inform inquiry and guide innovation

4. Provide micro-credit grants
 - To acknowledge and respect the contribution of AESN school teams to our common purpose
5. Model, invite and develop shared learning and leadership

Who do we serve and what do they need?

- **Aboriginal Learners:** to move further into their lives with dignity, purpose and options, a sense of belonging, agency, intellectual engagement and a positive identity
- **Teachers:** resources, sense of community, new ideas, increased energy, enhanced motivation, new learning opportunities and a space and structure for risk-taking
- **Principals:** all of the above + sense of shared leadership and teamwork within their school and across schools.
- **District Leaders:** all of the above + the space for conversations about what's important and broader perspectives from connections with other district
- **Aboriginal Support Workers:** respect, validation, support, resources and sense of teamwork
- **International Visitors:** hope, ideas, pictures of possibilities, connections, resources, models, self-reflection, perspective and authentic experiences

What is it that AESN will be the best in the world at?

AESN will be the best in the world at creating inquiry networks of curiosity-driven, non-racist schools with powerful results for Aboriginal learners.

Key initiatives 2016-2017

1. Secondary Transitions Impact Research Study

In the fall of 2015, Professor Catherine McGregor, Associate Professor at the University of Victoria was contracted to lead a study looking at improving transitions for secondary students. Fourteen schools in ten school districts are involved in this study:

W L Seaton Secondary	#22 Vernon
Frank Hurt Secondary	#36 Surrey
George M Dawson Secondary	#50 Haida Gwaii
Charles Hays Secondary	#52 Prince Rupert
Southern Okanagan Secondary	#53 Okanagan-Similkameen
Smithers Secondary	#54 Bulkley Valley
North Peace Sr Secondary, Energetic Learning Campus, Bert Bowes Middle School, Dr. Kearney Middle School, Prespatou School	#60 Peace River North
Dover Bay Secondary	#68 Nanaimo Ladysmith
Ballenas Secondary	#69 Qualicum
Eke Me-Xi Learning Centre	#85 Vancouver Island North

These schools each received a start-up grant to support travel to network meetings, resources, participation in the May 2016 symposium and visits to other participating schools.

At the symposium schools will be meeting as a complete group for the first time with Dr. McGregor and Debbie Leighton-Stephens who is helping to manage this project on behalf of AESN. Each school will be submitting a case study of what they have accomplished to date at the end of June 2016. These case studies will be published next year in a special AESN edition of Adminfo.

We realize that changing the trajectory for Aboriginal students in secondary schools will take concerted effort so we plan to extend this study until the spring of 2018 at which time we intend to produce both print and video records of the impact the schools are having on learners.

2. Focus on Implementing the Recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

We need to move to action to address the recommendations of the TRC. At the May symposium, we will be exploring specific ways in which schools are addressing specific recommendations and the ways in which we can deepen this work in the coming year.

3. Learning from and with other parts of Canada

In October 2016, the Canadian Education Association is hosting a symposium in British Columbia and AESN has submitted a proposal to present at this event. Providing this opportunity for AESN leaders and school teams will help us learn more about what is happening across Canada and will also demonstrate the potential of inquiry networks to activate significant reform.

4. Provide on-going support for school teams

In addition to the 14 schools involved in the research study, close to 100 schools across BC and the Yukon are involved in focused inquiry through AESN. The list of these schools and the focus for their work can be found at <http://noii.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2015-16-AESN-INQUIRIES.pdf>

It has always been our stance that any school in BC and the Yukon is welcome to join AESN and that once their case study is submitted, we will endeavour to recognize their contribution by providing a small grant. Last year we were able to provide grants of \$500 to all participating schools. While we recognize the grant is not in itself a motivator, it is an important symbol of thanks and recognition to these schools for making their learning open and transparent.

We will be discussing this draft statement of purpose with Network leaders at our May 12 meeting – and we invite your thoughts at any time via email or through the blog.

Case Study Templates and Four Key Questions

We have simplified the template for the case studies this year - now there is only one template for you to use. You will see that we are asking you to include in the case study the ways in which you are using the four key questions (Chapter Four in *Spirals of Inquiry*) to inform both the scanning and checking stages in the spiral. We knew these questions were important when we wrote the book AND now we understand even more just how important they are. We have learned this from our experience with the 100+ schools in England who are part of the Spirals of Inquiry initiative through the Whole Education Network. Each of these schools is expected to start with the four questions. As they report to the research team attached to this study, the schools have been describing what they are learning from listening to their learners – and the learning is profound. Now we realize that without seriously listening to learners' responses to these questions, we are missing the boat in terms of understanding their experiences.

The case studies are one of the best ways we have to share knowledge quickly about the strong practices being developed in AESN and NOII schools. We really appreciate the effort you put into telling your stories of change. Case studies are shared on our website at www.noii.ca.

Publications

Recently, we submitted a chapter for an international publication *Teachers Leading Educational Reform* edited by Alma Harris and Michelle Jones to be published by Routledge later in 2016. Our chapter, titled "Inquiry Learning Networks as Activators of System Reform: *Purpose, Passion and Persistence*" describes what we have learned about system reform, inquiry and innovation through our work with the networks in BC and the Yukon. Copies of this will be available at the symposium.

Developing Self-Regulating Learners (Butler, Schnellert & Perry) is now available and we are excited. This is a book we have been waiting for – and one that all NOII / AESN schools need to get right away. Some of the questions that they answer in this book may reflect some of the questions many of you have had about self-regulating learning. Here are a few examples:

- Is there a difference between self-regulation and self regulated learning?
- How can I support cultural diversity in an SRL-supportive classroom and community?
- How can formative assessment help in developing SRL among middle school learners?
- How can I motivate students to engage in SRL and active learning?
- How can educators make learning meaningful for Aboriginal learners while focusing on SRL?

We are very pleased that Deborah Butler, Leyton Schnellert and Nancy Perry will be at the symposium and we look forward to exploring these and many other questions together.

We are also really looking forward to the publication of Jo-Anne Archibald and Jan Hare's (editors) "*Sharing Stories of K-12 Aboriginal Education Success in British Columbia.*" We are hopeful that this important new book will be available by the fall.

International Links

The international interest in the work of NOII and AESN continues to grow. At the symposium we will be welcoming visitors from New Zealand, Australia, England and the USA - and we are grateful to Lynne Tomlinson and Brooke Moore for arranging school visits for our guests.

In early June, we are speaking at the Trans-Tasman Principals' Conference (www.transtasmanconference.co.nz). The title for our keynote is *Inquiry and Innovation, Curiosity and Teamwork – Strong Outcomes for ALL*. This might sound very familiar! We are captivated by the title of one of the sessions: *Kaua e mate wheke mate ururoa - Die Like a Hammerhead Shark* and we promise to tweet regularly about what we are learning – unless of course we bump into a hammerhead.

In March we spent four days in Sydney working with a large group of schools in NSW who are using the spiral of inquiry to help frame and inform a large initiative in Science and Technology. We wrote a short brief for these schools in preparation for our time with them and you can find it here <https://goo.gl/dqYgcc>

At the end of June we will be back in England to meet with the schools involved in the Whole Education Network Spirals of Inquiry initiative <http://goo.gl/9ub19S> and also to launch a new group of schools. The partnership with these schools continues to be a real source of inspiration for us as we see how, even in a very challenging policy environment, inquiry and professional curiosity can be powerful drivers for change.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Inquiry and Innovation Summer Institute July 8-9, UBC pdce.educ.ubc.ca/2016-inquiry-summer-institute/

During this two-day institute school and district teams will have a chance to understand in greater depth the foundations underpinning the spiral of inquiry and will also consider strategies for implementation at the classroom, school and district levels. We have found that two days of intensive focus is necessary to really get a handle on the spiral of inquiry and we are pleased to be able to provide this opportunity.

Transformative Educational Leadership Program TELP telp.educ.ubc.ca

We have the great opportunity to be part of the UBC team developing a new graduate level program in leadership. If you are looking for a challenging program as part of a networked cohort determined to make significant system change based on the best of local and international thinking, this may be for you. This is for educators who already have a Masters degree and there is the option of course credit at the doctoral level. Don't hesitate to contact either of us if you would like more information.

District Research Study

At the symposium last year, a group of district leaders met with Dr. Catherine McGregor to explore the possibility of a research study focused on the role of district leadership in creating cultures of inquiry – with an impact on learner outcomes – in BC school districts. This work is now well underway and Terry Taylor, Superintendent of Schools in SD 10 Arrow Lakes and Catherine McGregor will be presenting an overview of the study on May 13 at the symposium. This study will also be featured at the Learning Forward Conference in Vancouver next December <http://learningforward.org/learning-opportunities/annual-conference#.VxIRUbs7IVc> as well as at ICSEI in Ottawa next January. <http://www.icsei.net/2017/index.php?id=1784>

NOII Symposium 2017 – May 12 – 13 - Save the date!

LOOKING FORWARD

Here's hoping you are all enjoying a great school year. We are really looking forward to reading your case studies and to continuing to learn with and from you as together we strive to achieve our shared goals. We just received the first case study of 2015-2016 from West Heights Elementary in Mission. The focus of their work this year has been on educating students in Halq'eméylem as one avenue to address racism and act as a bridge between cultural communities. Here's an excerpt from the checking and reflections portions of their case study:

(We) see unity and a sense of belonging happening in the classrooms. Students are highly engaged and you can even hear them singing their Halq'eméylem songs in the hallway. Students are feeling more connected and you can see the excitement in their eyes when the presenters come into their rooms..... We would love to expand this next year to the whole school. We used our students' involvement as our baseline to see if change was evident and it was. Relationships improved and Aboriginal culture is viewed as important.

We learned that a second language is not only beneficial to developing the brain, but also truly is a bridge between cultural communities and brings equality and addresses the problem of racism.

Your inquiry spirit, focused professional learning, persistent efforts, teamwork and generosity in sharing your learning are having a profound impact on the lives of learners across BC and the Yukon. Thank you!

Sincerely

Judy Halbert & Linda Kaser