



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Don Ross Middle School

District: #48 Sea to Sky

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Your focus for this year: My focus was researching and using Indigenous learning frameworks and tools to engage Aboriginal learners, who we perceived did not view themselves as part of the school environment, and further showcase this learning as a symbol of Truth and Reconciliation.

Scanning: I observed that Aboriginal students were disengaged in learning, not consistently attending class, roaming the hallways, and rejecting many adults.

Focus: I thought that by delivering curriculum recognizing indigenous knowledge embedded in history, memory, and story, and reflective/holistic (visual journaling) these students may begin to engage in the classroom.

Hunch: My hunch was that perhaps traditional practices/conventions like rote learning, punitive discipline, question/answer, and a lack of personal connection may have been contributing to the concerning experiences of our learners.

New professional learning:

- Personal research
- Books: *Stolen Lives: The Indigenous Peoples of Canada and The Indian Residential Schools*, *Indigenous Learning Frameworks*, *Pedagogy in a New Tonality*
- Circle Protocols.

Taking action:

- Teacher book club to foster school-wide Indigenous frameworks for learning
- Circle to reflect on learning
- Visual journals as a tool to process and document learning
- Mediums (modeling clay, pen and ink, watercolour painting)
- Relevant content (processes of colonialism, residential schools, intergenerational trauma)
- Using Indigenous rubric to guide instructional planning
- Personally connect with these learners outside of class (hallway, First Nations room)
- Language and Culture class
- Planning a field study to a museum with an exhibit of socio-politically charged Indigenous art
- Inviting other Aboriginal students that were wandering the halls into my classroom
- Asking Aboriginal students back into class if and when they left. PERSISTENCE

Checking: I made a difference where students who felt they didn't belong other places came to my class even when it wasn't on their timetable. I was able to interact with these students

whereas some teachers are not acknowledged by them. These students demonstrated an increased level of engagement and produced more work during this inquiry than they had previously. My hunch was wrong in that the Aboriginal students did not like the visual journals as much as my non-Aboriginal students but did engage because of the theme of oppression and racism that led to the processes of colonialism, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, Attawapiskatt, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. They attended class, engaged in conversation, made 3D sculptures, and one student saw herself as a teacher or an expert with wisdom to share with others instead of just not attending.

Reflections/Advice: I feel I failed on increasing the moral imperative for many of my students. Some of the students retained the idea that they have 'done residential schools' and they are sick of being made to feel guilty about it. I think my lowest moment was when a few students complained that Aboriginal students get into the Museum of Anthropology for free and it should be equal now. I learned that despite what I've been researching lately, the content does matter; I saw my First Nations students become engaged when we started talking about things that are relevant to their history, past, and present so I'm wondering how to approach instructional design next year that includes both authentic Indigenous Frameworks for learning WITH Indigenous content or perspective. I also learned to persist in a way that I never have before with some students. I still did not get the academic production that I was looking for but it is a process that takes time...if only I got to keep them for another year. In terms of publicly showcasing this learning, the process cannot be rushed for it to be meaningful. Plans need to come about with purpose, but with authenticity, and so I think that in the future I will trust that my colleagues, my students, and I will find a way to grow and publicize the Truth and Reconciliation process in our school our way.

I have been following Facing History and Ourselves on Twitter and have learned about Infographics and The Geographic Inquiry model to make visible learning around particular Indigenous issues. Next year I will also continue to use our District designed Indigenous-framed rubric to guide instructional planning, keep the book club going to garner formal and moral support, and build relationships between my classes and the Language and Culture class.