



## 2015-2016 AESN Case Study

**School:** Fraser Heights Secondary

**District:** #36 Surrey

**Inquiry Team Members:** Ami Kambo, Gurdip Mahli, Julia MacRae, Chris Pocock, Brenda Sampson, Brian Tait, Elizabeth Wolber, Elaine Wong

**Contact:** Brenda Sampson (sampson\_b@surreyschools.ca)

**Our focus for this year:** To increase all students' understanding of and respect for Aboriginal Knowledge and Culture and connect Aboriginal Issues to their lives.

**Scanning:** We interviewed three of 25 students, they value increasing connections to Aboriginal knowledge, topics and issues in their classes and value being able to connect with Aboriginal cultural workers, support staff, and elders. As a team we wanted to increase all students' connection to authentic, current content and help students gain a deeper understanding. Working with the new curriculum, we wanted to emphasize: be working to address "the competency profiles for positive personal and cultural identity." Our school has been working to maintain and build a strong relationship with the Katzie First Nation the past 16 years, and so built plans jointly with the Band and District Aboriginal Cultural Workers to focus student learning, classroom learning and inquiry projects.

**Focus:** We were hoping to build strong, authentic knowledge from real world experience that students could carry back to classroom projects and learning, as well as increase the overall school's level of understanding of Aboriginal topics and issues. We were hoping to increase Aboriginal student pride in self, build on a positive Aboriginal-focused school culture, and maintain strong relationships with Katzie First Nation.

**Hunch:** It is hard to truly learn about a culture, its issues, struggles, achievement and successes through text, paper, video and research. The level of student engagement, the depth of understanding is limited by the type of interaction. By engaging in a field study it was hoped to increase student and staff engagement in Aboriginal topics and inspire greater depth of learning and sharing.

**New professional learning:** Year two of inquiry project expanding, refining inquiry, and looking to share and build across the curriculum. Resource bins for teachers were created to support Aboriginal learning in subject areas with lesson plans, resource books. Partnerships between various classes and Aboriginal Youth as well as BC First Nations 12 classes and other classes were created throughout the year to spark Aboriginal themed lessons. Aboriginal Teacher Advocate support worked with a variety of subject area teachers to help them include new ideas and topics within their curriculum with an Aboriginal focus. Emphasis on cultural protocols: blanketing and witnesses, and recognition of support from the Katzie First Nation, Chief, Council, Elders, Archeology Staff from the Business Development Corporation, Health Centre Staff speakers, Aboriginal Cultural Workers.

**Taking action:** Three classes went to Katzie First Nation in November and 10 classes went to Katzie First Nation in April - 84, 118, 108 students across the three days. Students and staff were extremely inspired. School leaders and our school's Professional Learning Committee is looking at developing a teacher specific event for a professional development day for next school year, as well as staff are looking at how to set dates in the school calendar for Science/Socials/English classes for next year that work with the band as well as school based commitments.

To support and enrich class learning in English, Socials and Science classes, resource bins with customized lesson plan options with three to seven lesson plan options per bin were created with a sign out system: Seventh Generation Graphic Novels, Project of Heart assorted books and novels, *Amongst God's Own*, and Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) resources "They Came for the Children", and "We Were so Far Away", non-fiction Aboriginal biographies, Aboriginal Sports novels lit circle box, *My Name is Seepetza* two bins.

Loanable resources for Science 10 and Biology 11 classes—to be expanded and refined then turned into a sign out bin system soon—for identifying local plants on school grounds as well as resources to support researching traditional plants have been compiled.

Partnering between First Nations 12 class and senior Art 11/12 class for art workshop in May. Expanding art concepts beyond traditional formline art, to areas of Coast Salish, Contemporary, Woodlands, as well as modern First Nations expression of Indian Act, Residential Schools, colonialism and other issues through Conceptual Art.

Partnering between senior foods 11/12 classes and both second semester First Nations 12 classes to focus on local foods found on our school grounds (salmonberry, huckleberry, thimble berry, fiddleheads, hazelnuts), harvest, prepare, look at traditional foods and foods of contact. This partnership will occur in June.

**Checking:** Three classes went to Katzie First Nation in November and 10 classes went to Katzie First Nation in April - 84, 118, 108 students across the three days. Students spent the morning in the longhouse, taking part in a blanketing, calling of witnesses, welcome song, greetings from Chief and Council, exchange of gifts, talk from elders and cultural support staff regarding Katzie and the longhouse. After a meal break, students had a choice of two of eight workshops, then gathered in the longhouse for closing and feedback from witnesses.

The amount of raw data is daunting for year two of the inquiry project. We have 58 student FNS12 inquiry projects, various subject teacher lessons and projects, and 300 student field study reflections as well as school leader, teacher, band and cultural worker feedback. We are excited by the range of student responses, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Many students commented on their evaluations about the strong welcome they received from the band Council, Elders, and band members during their visits. "Being able to actually see, hear, feel, and to get in touch with them in the reserve was the most important part of this experience."; "learning more about their cultures and traditions and experiencing them first time inside a longhouse". Many students commented on their new understanding of the level of respect for nature, whether from the "importance of animals" workshop, the "plants walk", the "cedar technology" or the "fishing on the Fraser River". Many students commented on how they recognize the need to connect more with nature and not take it or the environment for granted. There were many comments on new learning around cultural protocols, around the band's health centre initiatives, the importance of childcare, support for families in need,

importance of education, the important role of business and job initiatives, and the complexity of the roles of chief and council.

By challenging ourselves to expand what is traditionally taught and to invite all teachers to participate and extend student learning, students have made many cross curricular connections between learning in Social Justice 12/Comparative Civilization 12 and First Nations 12, or between English 11, English Language Learners (ELL) classes, Biology 11 and First Nations 12. Overall students are achieving a greater depth of knowledge as they connect learning across a range of subjects, approaches and initiatives.

**Reflections/Advice:** Where we plan to go next:

We are actively planning student learning events at Katzie First Nation, possibly a whole staff professional learning event, as well as one to two student days late October or early November and one to two student days in April for English, Science and Socials classes grades 10 – 12.

In addition to a whole staff professional learning day learning at Katzie, the staff could follow up with a summative session (email or flex/lunch) on how to connect First Peoples Principles of Learning in their practice. In addition, the school and staff will continue working to make specific content connections to First Nations knowledge, such as: Archeology to Socials or Science and Technology 11 or senior shop courses looking at tools; Traditional Ecological Knowledge to Science classes looking at biology, chemistry, astronomy; Oral Narrative and Oral Tradition connecting to English and ELL classes, Traditional Games with PE and Languages (French/Spanish/Japanese). These ongoing sessions could be facilitated through Aboriginal Cultural Workers, Aboriginal Teacher Advocate or school staff who have experience teaching BC First Nations 12 (five teachers on staff with experience). The focus for these next steps will be to make the learning meaning and practical for staff and students, and to inspire and equip teachers.

**Advice:**

Build a strong, positive working relationship with your school district Aboriginal Education Department, Aboriginal Cultural Workers, Local First Nation's Band, your school parents group and school staff and school leadership to fully support, plan and execute this type of event.

Katzie Longhouse



River Walk for Salmon Talk and Fishwheel



Archeology Presentation



Student Conceptual Art Project for #MMIW

