



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Gibson Elementary

District: #37 Delta

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Focus: To Nurture a climate where staff and students are willing to take risks in implementing BC's revised curriculum and open their hearts and minds to understand our Coast Salish Heritage.

Scanning: In the fall we surveyed our Grade 4 and 7 students with the four questions. From this survey we realized that much of the learning about Aboriginal Culture and knowledge came from our Aboriginal Support Workers, or teachers of Tuesday's Aboriginal Collaboration class. There was also mention of what students learned in the Grade 4 Social studies program but very little from their present classroom experience.

We learned that if we want Aboriginal Education to be integrated in an authentic way we have to support our classroom teachers and make connections and build bridges between the First Peoples Principles of Learning and the new curriculum for our staff.

We also were reinforced by the First Peoples Principal that "Learning Takes Patience and Time."

Focus: Our school goal is to have Aboriginal culture reflected in Gibson Classrooms and hallways and celebrated in a positive and inclusive manner. We wanted to ground our work in the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement and the First Peoples Principles of Learning. Through storytelling and art, we nurtured a climate where staff and students opened their hearts and minds to understand our Coast Salish Heritage.

Hunch: As we increased Aboriginal teaching and supports, staff will be more comfortable with integrating Indigenous knowledge and pedagogies into their classrooms. We thought that students would be more engaged with place based activities that involved the outdoors and the arts.

New professional learning: Much of our committee's professional learning came from the AESN network and our district Aboriginal leadership team. Their resources of workshops and books, have made a huge impact in our school.

Strengthening our circle: sharing with other classes within the school and connecting to each other's learning built relationships of trust with one another. Four of our staff members took advantage of the Aboriginal integration workshops put on by BCTF. One of our staff members, got so enthusiastic about Aboriginal Infusion, that she is now presenting at conferences around the province.

Taking action: With the students we made a rock art installation to highlight the principles: Learning Indigenous Knowledge. Learning takes time and Patience. Learning is embedded in memory and story.

Our new Aboriginal Support Worker has visited each of the classes and has shared his knowledge of Aboriginal ceremony, dance and lacrosse.

We used some of our AESN funds to support an indigenous dance group to visit our school. The funds also supported bannock and salmon for a Grade 3 Potlatch day.

Two Professional Learning days were committed to Aboriginal education. In one of the sessions, teachers shared what they were doing in their classes as well as what the new curriculum is asking them to do around Aboriginal Education.

On the second day the staff went through a Blanket Exercise to realize the consequence of Residential Schools. Both were meaningful days.

Many of the teachers have taken on Aboriginal art work and story projects.

- Our Kindergarten classes have Forest Fridays where they go out and explore the plants and animals around our school yard and connect them to indigenous ways of learning.
- Grade 2 class opens each day with a friendship circle.
- Grade 3's role played Aboriginal tribe roles, as well as studied dance and storytelling. They have also gone to the Museum of Anthropology to see the Aboriginal exhibitions.
- Grade 4's made Aboriginal murals, studied the way of life of our Coast Salish ancestors and made clay Spindle wheels.
- The Grade 5 teachers attended many Aboriginal workshops to learn crafts and customs. They integrated these learning in their study of Rocks as well as their Math Studies.
- Grade 6/7's read Aboriginal Novels like *Spirit Bear*, and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
- They also made many artworks with Aboriginal themes and animals.

We designated a classroom in the school as an Aboriginal education classroom. This room is decorated with posters and Aboriginal artwork and houses all the Aboriginal resources that the Delta district has made available to each of the schools. This is also the room that the Aboriginal worker teaches in. This has made a big difference to the culture of the school as it legitimizes the teaching of Aboriginal Education, and allows teachers to find and share the resources they are looking for.

Checking: We used our initial fall survey of teachers and students to build a baseline and found that only two or three teachers felt comfortable integrating Aboriginal studies. At the end of the year I can confidently say that all classes are opening their hearts to Aboriginal education and if not teaching it directly, they are requesting visits from Aboriginal elders and support workers to help them infuse Aboriginal world views into their curriculum.

Reflections/Advice: The biggest contributing factor to the success of this work is the partnership of teachers, as members of AESN and as teachers of Tuesday Aboriginal Collaboration Class. Thank you AESN for making this networking possible.