



## 2015-2016 AESN Case Study

**School:** École Heritage Park Middle School **District:** #75 Mission

**Inquiry Team Members:** Virginia Avery, Lisa Duthie, Brent Schmor, Carolynn Schmor, Claudia Yung

**Contact:** Linda Ziefflie

**Our focus for this year:** Our goal was to have students learn about the inequalities around the world as a motivator for social action where they learn to protect and respect the human rights of others. This involved integrating social justice thinking where they evaluate existing power structures, events and practices from multiple perspectives. They will make decisions and take action to address issues personally, locally and globally.

**Scanning:** In the scanning phase, we used school events that highlighted inequalities (such as Orange Shirt day with the story of Phyllis Webstad and the stripping away of Aboriginal culture) and picture books to create opportunities for students to discover innovative ways of understanding, confronting and addressing issues around children's rights. Participating teachers interviewed a few students in their classes. After reflecting on the students' responses, the following themes emerged: students did not realize that there were human rights violations that occur around the world, continue to happen in our own province and are still happening today. Other themes developed around the questions: what are the basic human rights and how can they be protected and preserved? What prevents us from accepting and valuing everyone as they are?

**Focus:** Using the questions developed from student responses and discussions, we chose one essential question for further inquiry: How can we contribute to a world that respects and protects human rights? To explore the essential question, students engaged in discussion groups around picture books, novels for literature circles, and documentaries to introduce different stories of human rights. These stories became vehicles to focus on some key human rights violations: racism, discrimination, child labor, oppression of women and girls, oppression from war, bullying, poverty and homelessness. Over the course of the inquiry, students reflected on children's rights in Canada, how they enjoy these rights, and how these rights were violated in the stories they read and viewed. Using rating scales, reading responses, and journal writes students made personal connections and developed a shared understanding. In particular, recognizing and appreciating Indigenous perspectives was a focus in our discussion about human rights violations.

**Hunch:** With the new curriculum emerging in British Columbia, we felt that it was important to have students learn through inquiry. Learning through inquiry offers the potential for motivating student learning and leads to changed ways of understanding through big disciplinary ideas that have value beyond the classroom. As a group of educators, we have begun the process of creating a community of learners working towards a common goal of having our students become socially responsible, global citizens.

**New Professional Learning:** We have started to familiarize ourselves with the redesigned grade 7 and 8 Social Studies and English curriculum and with the Aboriginal content in the new curriculum to help align the essential learning outcomes proposed in the inquiry. We collaborated with our school Aboriginal Cultural Worker, with other District Aboriginal Cultural Workers, and our Teacher-Librarians (EHPMS, Siwal Si'wes). Team members are getting to know the materials and are using them in their own classrooms and continue to share with other staff ways in which to use the materials.


**Taking Action:** We plan to share new resources as they become available. As well, we will continue to explore our own teaching practices to learn how to reframe a curricular topic and instruction to tap into students' personal/cultural experiences as a resource for understanding. We remain committed to consider and incorporate the First Peoples Principles of Learning as we move forward with our inquiry. In addition, we will continue to work on creating culminating projects together that are personally relevant, socially significant and differentiates instruction for all learners. Our goal is to move away from information driven curriculum and foster critical literacy. Finally, we would like to see the inquiry process culminate with a student driven meaningful action project.

**Checking:** We feel that we have just scratched the surface of this inquiry. We have now had a taste of it and it was encouraging to see the students' responses to the initiative. Student Responses: "I feel more open to different cultures and people." "It's (Inquiry Questions) important because if nobody learns and knows what's happening in this world, how do we help those people."

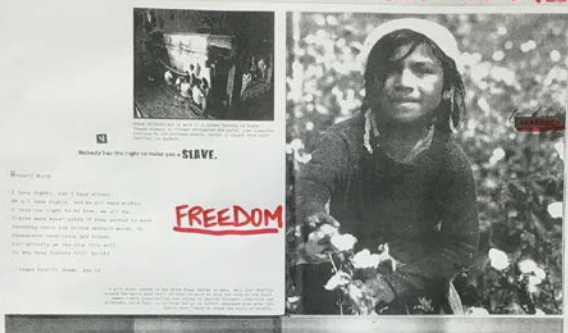
**Reflections/Advice:** We learned that students come to us with many backgrounds and family histories. This inquiry project has allowed educators and students to make connections through family stories of poverty, residential school experiences, internment camps, holocaust tragedies, and even their own experiences of being judged unfairly by their peers. They were curious about other human rights violations and were shocked to learn some occurred in their own community. Learning about how people are treated unjustly by others has piqued their interest in human rights issues around the world and inspired them to take action to make a change. We noticed that when the students were engaged in discussions or sharing stories they often sustained their focus for longer periods. The responses students gave were thoughtful and empathetic. We believe that that our inquiry supports the principle that learning is embedded in memory, history, and story. Through their own family histories, classmates shared an understanding of how discrimination affects families and society and it is up to them to make a change so we can have equality for all people.



2.

 **Text to Text**  
 the story Henry's Freedom Box

it shows that he should have the right to own our own home; live with our family.



Not getting forced for war  
 No terrorism

We should be allowed to choose if we want to work.  
 We have the Freedom of speech.

Freedom of speech  
 I agree that nobody has the right to make you a slave  
 we deserve to have Freedom of our choices.

We should be able to choose what we want to do with our lives.

- 1. We should be able to choose where we live.
- 1. We should be able to choose what we wear
- We should be able to choose if we want to follow/believe a religion

**Text to Self; we have the Freedom of speech in Canada**

Q. Why hasn't slavery been banned in all countries?  
 Q. DO YOU think we Deserve a right of Freedom?  
 You should not be able to buy people  
 Children should not work

Q. Why are there still corpeal factories working with children?  
 children should not be stolen/or taken away

1 You deserve the right to go freely 2) dont buy slaves.

