



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Signal Hill Elementary

District: #48 Sea to Sky

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Our focus for this year: The history of Indian Residential Schools (IRS) in British Columbia in terms of Reconciliation.

Scanning: Our original question for the inquiry was what kind of knowledge did our students have about IRS? However, we were not able to pursue this inquiry as we thought we could because of numerous other language and cultural practices already taking place at Signal Hill Elementary. We realized that we will continue this inquiry process into the 2016/17 year. However, all of these practices feed directly into our inquiry about IRS. All students receive 30 minutes of Language and Cultural classes twice a week, taught by a First Nations worker and supported by an Elder fluent in Uclamoosh. Each class also receives an additional, short-term cultural class with various activities and story-telling. More stories with First Nation content were read, noon hour drumming was held once a week. Assemblies often opened with First Nations presence. National Aboriginal Day is annually celebrated with games, activities and information. A formal school leadership member is involved and interested in First Nations culture and has presented the staff with new ideas about educating through a First Nations' lens. There is heightened awareness at our school about the importance of the history and current situation of First Nations people.

Focus: We strongly felt our students need to know the truth of IRS because of the general unawareness in Canadian and British Columbian society.

Hunch: Students and staff are really starting to appreciate and take pride in First Nations history, culture and language.

New professional learning: We are all learning to educate and learn through an Aboriginal lens and our most important resources are the people, young and old, who work and/or visit our school to share their knowledge and friendship with everyone at the school. Colleagues have been supported through activities (for example, the shoes activity) and new information at staff meetings.

Taking action: Each classroom has created a Reconciliation Blanket for an Elder from the area and the blankets were presented at a ceremony on June 22, 2016. In the 2016/17 school year the entire school will proceed with our original inquiry about IRS.

Checking: The differences made were positive and educational and we viewed this inquiry as one with a wide breadth and it will be ongoing. It will probably never stop expanding our knowledge and curiosity.

Reflections/Advice: We learned that it is not in the best interest of anyone to “overload” your plate, but to build upon whatever foundation is already present and to persevere. Time is not our enemy—there will always be time for the learning we hope to achieve.