



## 2015-2016 AESN Case Study

**School:** Whistler Secondary

**District:** #48 Sea to Sky

**Inquiry Team Members:** Jody Nelson, Heather Sallows, Tanina Williams

**Our focus for this year:** Who walked here first? A focus on the awareness of the Aboriginal history of Whistler to enhance understanding and respect.

**Scanning:** Our learners are in the early stages of feeling comfortable about revealing their heritage. They have begun to explore and learn more to help establish a sense of “Place”. We are working as a team of learners to find out more about who walked here first, what trails they used why they traveled here and what they left behind that we can learn from. We have met often and through the year students have begun to share what they know about our home. Stories have been shared about the paths taken by parties moving through our area as a shared territory.

**Focus:** Our area is on the world stage and everyone has their own view of what this place is all about or what it has been built up to be. As we work together our hope is that the image of this place will have a strong foundation with an understanding of the important Aboriginal heritage this area has.

**Hunch:** We believe that our school community has a strong connection to the recreational aspects of our area. We have focused on doing everything we can to help students succeed in their athletic endeavors while ensuring that they complete their academic requirements. We have welcomed international students and worked to teach them about our area and learn about where they come from. There is an awareness of the Aboriginal heritage of our area but the knowledge component is not strong.

**New Professional Learning:** We have learned a great deal from the Aboriginal support workers in our district and even more from our leadership students. We have learned the importance of sharing stories and about the power of the circle. The staffs in our school are aware of this inquiry project and we have discussed moving forward by creating a blanket that reflects our sense of place.

### **Taking Action:**

- Hosting the 24 Hour Drum-at this event we raised the flags of the two nations of our shared territory and hosted the aboriginal leadership students in our district and from a visiting district. This involved a ceremony in which both bands gave presentations of stories, songs and traditional practices.
- The textiles classes in our school sewed bags to hold finger puppets that went along with a set of story cards. The aboriginal leadership students then decorated the bags with traditional art. We visited the kindergarten class in Whistler to deliver the bags with some of the students who had created them and shared this with the classes.
- We took time at a staff meeting to discuss the focus of this inquiry and how we could create a blanket that could reflect the sense of place for Whistler to display in our

school. Staff members are now working on formatting a contribution that their class can provide for the blanket. Work will begin on the blanket in the next school year.

**Checking:** We have begun the process and scratched the surface.

- We are more aware of the rich heritage that is in Whistler.
- More students are attending Aboriginal leadership functions than when the year started.
- More are feeling open to sharing and telling stories.
- Students have interviewed Elders and learned more about customs and history.

Much is left learn and do. We feel like the journey has started.

**Reflections/Advice:**

We have learned much from the Aboriginal leadership students and have a better understanding of where they are at and we will work hard to help them move forward to where they want to go. We hope to reach out to the Elders in our community and work with them in classes and with the Aboriginal leadership team to help establish a sense of "Place".