



## 2015-2016 AESN Transitions Case Study

**School:** Charles Hays Secondary

**District:** #52 Prince Rupert

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Three-year inquiry: Aboriginal transitions to create skills and opportunities for success for Aboriginal learners moving from middle to high school to post-secondary. Students will be better supported in planning their educational journeys.

**Our focus for this year:** This year our focus was building connections and relationships through collecting our learners' stories and building inquiry at the whole staff level.

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**Scanning:** We started by asking ourselves, a diverse team of educators, what we thought was working well for our learners and what were the areas of challenge. Then we asked ourselves what it would feel like, look like, sound like (and taste like!) to be connected to school. How could we achieve that for all our learners?

We used the four key questions for two purposes; to foster an inquiry mind-set amongst our school staff and to enhance our relationships with our learners.

**Focus:** We hoped that by increasing the number of educators involved in the inquiry we could build on our collective expertise and draw upon the varied types of relationships we have in the building (coaches, teachers, counselors, Aboriginal family resource workers).

**Hunch:** We wondered who was and who wasn't feeling connected to school. Our hunch was that these reasons would be varied and complex. We needed a way to better understand what was and wasn't working for our learners. Feeling connected to peers and educators was the area we hypothesized would make the greatest impact.

**New professional learning:** Aboriginal Pedagogy and learning – being active participants in the shared responsibility of Aboriginal Education. Members of the team worked with these resources and professional learning to varying degrees depending on their educational role.

- *First Peoples Principles of Learning* – authentic, intention and explicit in every learning environment and for all learners.
- First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) *Career Journeys* - A resource for teachers, parents, students and includes posters. It is very useful and can be part of our project.
- Cultural learning - working with Elders, language teachers, role models, parents, community, and Aboriginal Family Resource Workers. Locally developed resources: *Persistence and Change*.

- Gathering our students' stories through interviews, building relationships, and in multiple formats.
- Reconciliation Education - continuing to grow our understanding of the truth and reconciliation history and intergenerational impacts. Important learning for all Canadians.
- Authentic Resources - share and make use of these resources across grades / subjects.
- *Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom: Moving Forward*

**Taking action:** Our staff met to explore the questions; Why do you think our learners come to school? What do you think keeps them here? What success stories can we glean strategies from for holding onto learners not currently connected to school? From there we analyzed the stories collected in the form of sentence strips. We reviewed success stories for key themes emerging. We took our rich conversations and began to map out opportunities for flexible learning spaces and connection, time based on the needs students expressed. An architect team drew up samples of how we could repurpose our library to better serve our learners. The action of the flexible learning space will begin next year with initial scheduling changes for some of our educators. We've made connections between our middle school and secondary to see how we can better support transitions between the two schools in addition to the grade-to-grade transition. There is an excitement around these opportunities.

**Checking:** We are satisfied with the place we arrived at for the end of our first year. The model of the three-year inquiry works well for a project of this scope. We've established a strong baseline of where we are starting out. We will be able to compare the impacts of our efforts next year with the flexible learning spaces and transitioning between middle and secondary school.

**Reflections/Advice:** We've learned to *Hagwilaan*, walk slowly and do things well. We acknowledge that the goals we aim to achieve in this inquiry take time and require establishing relationships and listening carefully so we can learn from each other and from our students.