



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Ballenas Secondary

School District: SD#69 Qualicum

Inquiry Team Members: Jane Reynolds, Heather Deering, Olivia Hill and Rudy Terpstra

Inquiry Team Contact Email: rterpstr@sd69.bc.ca

Type of inquiry: AESN Transitions

Grade levels: Secondary (8 - 12)

Curricular area(s): Not applicable

Focus area(s): Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation), First Peoples Principles of Learning, Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies, Social and emotional learning

In one sentence, what was your focus for the year?

Our focus for the year was to increase the entire school population's awareness of Indigenous culture and historical contributions through mini-lessons and an increase in the physical representations of Indigenous culture throughout our building.

Scanning: Briefly summarize your scanning process. How did you use the four key questions as part of the scanning process? What did you notice about the experiences of your learners that were most important to your team?

We used the four key questions, the OECD Principles of Learning and the First Peoples Principles of Learning to inform our interaction and collaboration with our students and staff. We used LINK and FLEX as a means to implement our focus for the year.

We introduced the four key questions into LINK classes at the beginning of the year to facilitate the reflection process for our students. FLEX learning allowed students and staff time for collaboration. FLEX also met the social emotional needs (SEL) needs of our students by allowing them time to work on homework completion, meet with teachers, join clubs, and catch up on rest. We delivered Indigenous mini-lessons through our LINK blocks to raise Indigenous awareness within our school. This was very powerful as the entire



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

school population was exposed to the ideas together, which made for meaningful conversations and learning. Team members collaborated on the creation of an Indigenous Resource document for our school community.

Focus: In a few sentences, explain why you selected this area. What changes were you hoping to obtain for your learners?

We chose this area to encourage Indigenous (and all students) grade to grade transitions and to create a supportive physical and emotional environment for all of our learners.

We also wanted to ensure we were recognizing our local communities and using authentic Indigenous resources within our curriculum and teachings.

We are hoping that our learners (and staff) feel more confident in their understanding of Indigenous history, and more aware of aspects of Indigenous culture. We know that many staff are concerned about making a 'mistake' while teaching about Indigenous cultures and hope that they will adopt some of the ideas that we have shared with their classes. We feel that by advancing "truth," we are helping our learners participate in the process of reconciliation.

Hunch: Describe your hunches about the ways in which practices at the school may have been contributing to the experiences of your learners that were of concern to you.

We were concerned that many staff members were ascribing to the "perfect stranger" ideology - essentializing, stereotyping, and romanticizing Indigenous history and culture. We know that when teachers have an "I know nothing and it doesn't have to do with me" attitude, students begin to devalue the importance of Indigenous education. Our mini-lessons were designed with the idea of challenging this perspective and educating our greater school community.

Much more learning is needed around Indigenous culture, history and contemporary contributions. People are very cautious and don't feel comfortable teaching the subject. By developing the mini lessons, we are educating our entire community, and modelling for our staff; hopefully increasing their confidence with this area.



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

New professional learning: What new areas of professional learning did you explore? What resources were most helpful? What specific designs did you use to support the learning of your colleagues?

Some team members participated in the UBC MOOC course - "Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education," to increase personal awareness. Others attended Indigenous Education workshops at the BC Alternate Education Conference, where they learned how to facilitate a simulation-based lesson on local Indigenous history. FNEESC resources were also helpful, and some individuals participated in FNEESC workshops.

Mini-lessons were designed to inform and educate both staff and students. These lessons were created collaboratively with a focus on effective strategy and ease of implementation. Lessons were designed to be participatory, with minimal direct instruction. This helped engage our learners, and reduce both prep and anxiety for teachers.

Taking action: Describe strategies you and your team decided on and how your actions worked out.

- Designed Indigenous mini-lessons and delivered these through the LINK structure to ALL learners in the school
- Created a pop-up display highlighting Indigenous history
- Created an Indigenous Resource List for the school
- Added Indigenous print and digital resources to our school library
- Changed our school logo to reflect Indigenous culture (designed by local Indigenous artist, Noel Brown)
- Used the Indigenous logo on our new rugby jerseys
- Painted Indigenous logo on center court of our newly refinished gym floor
- Communicated with our Indigenous elders and learners to create an authentic experience for our students and staff (guest speakers in the school)

Checking: Summarize the differences you made. Were they enough? Were you satisfied?

Many teachers used the same inquiry questions as a final reflection piece or part of student conferencing. We believe an increase in belonging has occurred at the school, as evidenced by fewer suspensions, less drug use by students, and increased attendance.



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

We had a meeting with a focus group of Indigenous learners and they appreciated that other students were learning about their culture and the positive contributions from their communities. They enjoyed seeing the visual representation and curricular content shift.

Respondents definitely notice an increase in physical representation through our new logo, rugby jerseys, gym floor, and welcome sign. Students reacted positively to the new logo, and are keen to Indigenize other school uniforms and clothing.

Reflections/Advice: Finish by sharing what you learned from this inquiry, where you plan to go next, and what advice you would offer other schools with a similar interest.

We need to encourage student voice next year to ensure cultural responsiveness. (cultivate positive cultural identity)

We recognize that there is still a 'push-back' from some staff and students; we want to continue to collaborate to find ways to encourage a growth mindset. or... We recognize that there are still obstacles to overcome. Each member of our community is at a different place in their journey.

Advice- be persistent and find ways to collaboratively plan methods and strategies to increase Indigenous consciousness for your community of learners. / Recognize deficit thinking in your school and develop a plan to change or challenge this misconception. Next- timeline added to our grand hallway - highlighting important events in Indigenous history; welcome paddles at the school entrance; continue increasing Indigenous resources; continue with our mini-lessons; perhaps add Indigenous logo to other school jerseys.