



## Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

### 2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

**School Name:** Ecole Christine Morrison

**School District:** SD#75 Mission

**Inquiry Team Members:** Shannon Greig, Judy Cathers, Kathryn Day

**Inquiry Team Contact Email:** Shannon.greig@mpsd.ca

**Type of inquiry:** AESN

**Grade levels:** Primary (K - 3), Intermediate (4 - 7)

**Curricular area(s):** Social Studies

**Focus area(s):** Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation)

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

In light of the new curriculum, we will focus if students are in fact learning more about First Peoples of Canada.

**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 reviewed the data from previous years (Student Connectivity Surveys completed by Aboriginal students and non-aboriginal students). After reflecting on the student's responses, we found a trend that emerged regarding the learning of First Peoples of Canada.

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

We will start with the foundation of the Aboriginal Culture, the First Peoples Principles of Learning. Our hope is to use the First Peoples Principal of Learning, Learning involves patience and time, as our guide as we begin to incorporate the new BC curriculum which includes Aboriginal content in all subject areas.



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**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.

School staff members have been working hard to educate themselves with knowledge and practices of First Peoples of Canada, due to the new curriculum requirements. We predict that this increase in staff development, along with the new curriculum will result in an increase of students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) that feel they learn about First Peoples of Canada.

**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?

We plan to familiarize ourselves with the new curriculum and to collaborate routinely with colleagues, our school Aboriginal Cultural Worker, our Halq'emeylem Teacher, our Teacher-Librarians (CME and Siwal Si'wes) and with community elders and knowledge keepers. We also plan to seek out and share new resources and learning opportunities when they become available.

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

- Continued to ensure "Aboriginal" was placed on every staff meeting agenda, so information and resources were shared twice a month with all staff
- Continued to offer weekly instruction of the Halq'emeylem language
- Started every assembly with a welcome song in Halq'emeylem, French and English sung by all students and staff
- Continued to celebrate Orange Shirt Day
- Continued to celebrate "Rock your Mocs" day
- Celebrated Louis Riel Day
- Celebrated the Stó:lō New Year
- Aboriginal-based field trips to Grouse Mountain (hiwus feasthouse) and to Coqualeetza Longhouse in Chilliwack
- School wide Aboriginal Cultural Day – all students participated in three different cultural workshops
- School wide Honouring our Elder Project – all classes met individually with local Elders, to hear stories and learn first-hand experiences



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- Elder lunches – students were taught protocol of sharing a meal with a guest
- School wide art activity – Seven Sacred teachings – Truth(turtle)
- School wide Aboriginal Running Club through Sports Med BC
- Continued to celebrate National Aboriginal Day
- Integration of new Aboriginal literature in all classes
- Salmon release program
- Introduction to Archery program
- Math Catchers program
- Cedar box garden project

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

Summarize the differences you made. Were they enough? Were you satisfied? What did you use as baseline - and change - evidence? How much richer are your learners' answers to the four questions?

Questions    Always/Often

1.        I am learning about Aboriginal Peoples of Canada        37%/44%

We used the data from the survey given every year by the district Aboriginal Department and specifically looked at the results for this one question regarding learning about Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. The results for this year were not what we expected; we expected the percentage of Always to be higher.

**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.

On further thought and discussion, we began to reconsider our expectations. Is it reasonable to expect students to always be learning about First Nations of Canada, as the curriculum is quite vast? When we include the results for often = 44%, their combined percentage is 81%. When we consider that 81% of students feel they always or often learn about Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, then we are fairly happy with the results, although this still could be higher. We also acknowledge that certain parts of Aboriginal culture have become part of the school culture and tradition and therefore students do not see it as learning about Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. For example, singing the welcome song at assemblies, including Halq'emeylem in daily announcements, greeting liaison workers in Halq'emeylem and having First Nations literature as a part of their daily reading programs.



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We as a school community need to continue to work on integrating Aboriginal content into our classrooms. We learned that it is not only important what we teach in the classroom, but also how we teach it. With the support of local Elders and school liaison workers we have developed practices of traditional customs, which has led to a greater understanding and respect for First Nations culture.