



# Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

## 2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

**School Name:** Frank Hurt Secondary

**School District:** SD#36 Surrey

**Inquiry Team Members:** Robert Taddei, Ryan D'Angelo, Leanne MacDonald, Todd Meadows, Shawn Campbell

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**Type of inquiry:** AESN Transitions

**Grade levels:** Secondary (8 - 12), Post-secondary

**Curricular area(s):** Not applicable

**Focus area(s):** Transitions

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

We examine the role of collaboration in distributing our shared responsibility to support grade 7 to 8 transitions for Aboriginal learners.

**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?

Considering the evidence we collected during our checking-in stage of the spiral last year, most caring adults that grade 8s with Aboriginal ancestry identified were non-enrolling. Historically, our efforts to enhance the elementary to high school transition experience have been characterized by activities that happen outside of the classroom, and exclude enrolling teachers, and the relationships that students develop through curriculum. At our first inquiry meeting this fall, one of our team members voiced concern that our transitions framework put the responsibility for successful transitions on Aboriginal Enhancement staff.



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

This year, we continued to develop our transitions enhancement framework, but our focus was on student experiences within their classrooms. How can we help our grade 8 students see their enrolling teachers as caring adults? Our inquiry considers how priority practices that value Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives may enhance relationships and promote successful transitions for all learners.

**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.

Collaborative inquiry as a Humanities Department, will help distribute the shared responsibility of Aboriginal Education, and provide opportunities for students and teachers to develop the kind of relationships that lead to success. Through curriculum that reinforces a LOCAL focus, and values CONNECTEDNESS and RELATIONSHIPS, grade 8 students with Aboriginal ancestry will develop a positive personal and cultural identity within their classes. Our hunch is that through collaboration, enrolling teachers and all students will identify Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives AS ways of being that promote success for all learners.

**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?

Our overarching framework for inquiry is the spiral. This year, our team's inquiry narrative includes intersecting teacher inquiry that reinforced and refined our process in authentic ways.

During our scanning phase, we used a priorities matrix that considers capacity and relevance in distinguishing priority practices. Using teacher feedback, we identified four priorities from the ministry produced Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom: Moving Forward. Using the suggested practices from this document,



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engagement with Aboriginal leaders, students, and parents from our school community, the Blanket Exercise Workshop from KAIROS, the Metis Cookbook, the Wilderdom webpage, among other experience related print materials.

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

Through regular group meetings, carpool conversations, independent exploration, sharing ideas through a Google Doc, we identified a series of experiences that reinforced each of the priority Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives that we identified. Over a four week period all Humanities 8 classes participated in a COMMON EXPERIENCE (the Semiahmoo First Nation and Earl Marriott Secondary School Pow Wow), SHARED EXPERIENCES (the Blanket Exercise, Hug-a-Tree activity, and Community Cookbook), and small group AMBASSADOR EXPERIENCES (salmon preservation and bannock making). For some teachers, this was an invitation to consider Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives as primary curriculum relevant to all learners. For others, our collaborative efforts enhanced personal inquiry efforts to value First Peoples' approaches to learning and local content, and develop relationships that promote success.

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

Observation of student and teacher engagement provide some information about the success of our inquiry. Meaningful student engagement in the EXPERIENCES seemed to be positively related to the extent to which indigenous ways of knowing, and local content were already a part of the classroom experience. Checking in with grade 8 students with Aboriginal ancestry, we reflected on their relationships with their humanities teachers, and the extent to which their learning reinforces positive personal and cultural identities. We used teacher and student surveys to consider the impact of our inquiry initiatives. Most grade 8 students were able to describe Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives are relevant to all learners. Teachers felt that they were more likely to engage collaboratively in Aboriginal education as a result of this inquiry.

**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.



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Perhaps the most significant differences we made were in our willingness to discuss our practices, share what works, and imagine the 'impossible'. We took 250 students on a fieldtrip to the Earl Marriott Pow Wow! This alone is a symbolic indicator that reinforces our of value Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives as essential learning for students and staff. However, collaborative inquiry that more deeply engages local knowledge throughout curriculum requires more than broad gestures and isolated experiences. Through our collaborative actions, we must acknowledge our shared responsibility to Aboriginal learners by working together in ways that reinforce our relationships and connectedness. As we move forward, we look to grow our powerful EXPERIENCES into powerful learning ENVIRONMENTS, that engage indigenous ways of knowing to support successful transitions for all learners.