



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Hatzic Middle School

School District: SD#75 Mission

Inquiry Team Members: Lyn O'Grady-Teacher
Connie Moojelski-Aboriginal Liaison
Ramona Valenzuela-Aboriginal Liaison
Shirley Gibson-Principal

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Type of inquiry: AESN

Grade levels: Intermediate (4 - 7), Secondary (8 - 12)

Curricular area(s): Arts Education, Language Arts - Oral Language, Language Arts - Writing, Social Studies

Focus area(s): Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation), Core competencies (for example, critical thinking, communication, problem solving), Indigenous pedagogy, Inquiry-based learning

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

All students (student population of 620) and staff to research and become educated on the history, cultural impact and current continued effects of residential schooling on Aboriginal peoples.

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?

I used the four questions with students in my Grade 8 English/Social Studies class. They seemed to focus their discussion on subjects where they felt confident and successful. The students nominated adults in the school who gave them positive verbal feedback, provided extra support with their school work at lunch time and after school and encouraged them on a daily basis to strive and be the best they can be. I noticed the students were more receptive to ongoing oral feedback from teachers who believed in them and often



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discussed their learning with them and how they see themselves, and future goals of where they see themselves, in the future. They needed this encouragement to scaffold their learning journey and also to consider/ strive for their 'next steps'. One of the 'First Peoples Principles of Learning' is 'Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.' This principle seems to be directly related to our whole school project this year 'The Project of Heart' and the meaningful learning that occurred with students and staff.

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

Many students and staff were unaware of the detrimental effects and lasting legacy of IRS. In addition, it seemed part of our school population knew some aspects of IRS but had no knowledge of the depth of cultural loss and abuse residential school students experienced and suffered and how this continues to affect their daily lives.

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.

There seems to be a gap in the integration of Aboriginal culture within the school and a definite apprehension about inclusion of Aboriginal culture within the new curriculum. Availability of resources is a primary concern for many educators as is including inquiry as part of one's practice. We have many Aboriginal Liaison workers in our district that have the expertise to inform and educate our students about Aboriginal peoples and IRS. Utilizing the knowledge of these Aboriginal educators is a definite area where we can make a difference and encourage high levels of student engagement so students are connected and supported in their learning.

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?

My own professional learning went to a new level as I created lesson plans for the entire staff to utilize with their students in discussing and sharing information about IRS. I used 'backward design' as I simplified the work I had research with my Grade 8 class last year to enable staff to feel greater confidence in discussing and learning about this topic. The resources that were most helpful were First Peoples Principles of Learning, Project of Heart Booklet (BC Teachers Federation) and an IRS survivor's lived experiences.



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

I presented the idea of a whole school project focussing on IRS, using powerpoint, at a staff meeting. The staff decided they didn't want 6 lessons but we needed to change it to fit in with 3 lessons within our school curriculum/timetable. I then made changes to accommodate the staff needs and wants and re-presented the changes at the next staff meeting. I created explicit lesson plans that were easy to follow and incorporated the booklet 'Project of Heart', an individual tile for each student and staff at our school (700 tiles in all), reflection sheets and exit slips (for each student and staff) so staff had everything they needed to discuss IRS with their homeroom students. After we completed the lessons and wrote/drew on the tiles, as our reflection on our learning, we had a 'Traditional Aboriginal Blessing Ceremony' for the entire school with elders, Aboriginal Liaison Workers from various district schools, District Superintendent and District Principals in attendance. The tiles are to be placed within carved cedar hearts and displayed in our school with 'Project of Heart' and 'Hatzic has H.E.A.R.T' (our school motto) written next to them. I also organised bannock for 700 people to have after the assembly and extra refreshments for our visitors. There was a great deal of positive feedback from all who attended and witnessed the presentations and our learning throughout this inquiry.

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

The baseline data was collected as the students and staff completed a thinking sheet identifying what they knew about IRS and what they wanted to learn about IRS. The final written reflection from students and staff gave a clear indication their learning curve about Aboriginal peoples and IRS, in particular, was huge. A number of staff commented that until they heard Connie, an IRS survivor, speak at our whole school assembly they had no idea of the impact and what they suffered as small children. They thanked me and were most appreciative this had been brought to everyone's attention at our school. The main difference seems to be bringing to everyone's attention the treatment of Aboriginal peoples within Canadian history. This area of learning is huge as it is not included in any of the textbooks we use with the students in our schools as it is a dark area of Canadian, and Australian, history that has not been acknowledged but rather covered up.

The students answers to the four questions was very different to their initial responses as now there seems to be an empathy, that was not evident in the beginning, towards Aboriginal peoples and what they have endured as a direct result of IRS and how this continues to impact their lives today. In addition, many learned about the treatment of students at the residential schools and the large number of students who did not survive



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IRS and/or have not been able to cope and have taken their own lives as adults. The students spoke about how they can inform others outside the school about IRS and how this affects Aboriginal peoples today.

I feel that our school population is more knowledgeable about one aspect of Aboriginal Canadian peoples. However, we need to continue weaving Aboriginal knowledge and culture within our classrooms on a daily basis.

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.

I have learned that a whole school inquiry project is a huge undertaking but the outcomes for learning are incredible. I also learned that when clear and concise explanations are provided to staff they are more comfortable to engage in the inquiry process. Next steps would be to continue including Aboriginal knowledge and culture within all areas of curriculum at our school. To foster this there needs to be continued scaffolding and support for the staff and resources need to be readily available. When this is all in place the benefits to our students are priceless in all areas of their learning and development.