



## Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

### 2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

**School Name:** L. A. Matheson Secondary

**School District:** SD#36 Surrey

**Inquiry Team Members:** Annie Ohana (ohana\_a@surreyschools.ca), Gillian Swartz (swartz\_g@surreyschools.ca), George Voros(voros\_g@surreyschools.ca), Gurpreet Bains (bains\_gurpreet@surreyschools.ca),

**Inquiry Team Contact Email:** Annie Ohana (ohana\_a@surreyschools.ca)

**Type of inquiry:** AESN

**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, Indigenous pedagogy

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

We would like to focus on learning about culturally relevant pedagogy and how to implement it within an Aboriginal framework of the First People's Principles of Learning. This is meant to provide a path forward for teachers to enhance their curriculum and be more student-responsive not just for our Aboriginal students but for all students.

**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?

During the scanning phase (a several year-long process to be honest) we noticed that students sometimes had a hard time connecting to certain cultural understandings because it was something outside of their scope of experience. Our students' level of understanding was somewhat limited by shallow understandings but also a lack of connection to the material. Why were students not connecting, why did they feel that the experiences were so dissimilar to their own? My curiosity was stimulated by the results I have seen of culturally relevant pedagogy that managed to bridge the gap between cultures, but still managed to avoid cultural relativism.



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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?

Our school dynamic is such, that multiculturalism can in fact take away from the process of learning about Indigenous ways, not only leading to less content, but also further marginalization of our Aboriginal youth through various means. Identity is very much important for our students. By using culturally relevant pedagogy, we hoped to bring use the strength of our student's identity within a new lens of Indigenous knowledge.

**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.

In attempting to be diverse in our learnings, we seemed to have been acting in ways that were overtly tokenistic, often relying on the 3Ds of Dinner, Dine, and Dance to converse about culture/heritage/identity. Quite a few teachers acknowledge that fact but also the wish to avoid such realities, especially when bringing reconciliation through content/curriculum. For myself, and through the lens of culturally relevant pedagogy, this was an issue I found highly problematic, as students were not truly "seeing themselves" in the curriculum.

**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?

What we settled on after several months of trying to infuse Aboriginal content through Identity were two fold.

1) That people were still overwhelmed and so we went back into various curriculum established by FNECS and other groups and broke down the set pieces into 4 categories we felt were more attainable:

- Strategies, Goals, Content, and Process

We did some staff training and data collection around these four frameworks and found that it provided a stronger and more accessible entry point for the infusion of Aboriginal curriculum for both staff and students.

We implemented such a strategy in our classrooms but also in the construction of curriculum for our Mentorship Through Identity Program. Each lesson was constructed to use strategies and Content through authentic processes that allowed us to reach our goals of providing Aboriginal fusion within our program.



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

We incorporated this with our professional learning

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

Far from enough, as quite honestly the missing piece ( although slowly coming into focus) is resources that are properly funded. With that being said, our Mentorship Program as well as the start of our work on ( SGCPs) seem to have allowed people to go into more depth into how to bring about a culturally relevant pedagogical approach to aboriginal infusion. We are seeing different teachers, and even students ( in terms of Mentorship) take on deeper concepts of Indigenous knowledge and practices.

We plan to continue in our endeavor to solidify and cement our use of the SGCPs from within the FPPL so that we do achieve a full breadth of use across multiple curriculum and subjects.

**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.

What we have learned from the inquiry thus far, is that we need to take things step by step and to define with more specificity and in smaller scale entry points into Indigenous Knowledge so that the First People's Principles of Learning are more widely used, and more culturally relevant to a wider breadth of individual.