



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation **Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network**

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Surrey Academy of Innovative Learning - SAIL

School District: SD#36 Surrey

Inquiry Team Members: Jas Uppal, Sabrina Symons and Kristie Batalha

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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), Inquiry-based learning

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

To connect student identity with inquiry

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 told the students we are also planning to engage in an inquiry and we need their help. We sat with 4- 5 students individually and asked the questions. We recorded their responses to the questions. We learned that many of the students feel they are learning about ' Aboriginal perspectives' but feel it is not infused in the curriculum They feel they are 'make a drum day' , 'learn how to weave' or 'listen to storytelling'. The students indicated they wanted to go deeper with their understanding. The students seemed very interested in further exploration of aboriginal perspectives but were asking for authenticity and increased integration of the perspectives.

The students' experiences from elementary school stimulated our curiosity and the most recent field trip to Green Timbers Park with an aboriginal educator sharing stories and knowledge about medicinal uses of plants. We used the principles of listening to the students and keeping them at the center of how /why to be involved in the study.



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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?

We found it exciting to listen to the students about their exposure to aboriginal perspectives in earlier years and yet were questioning what they understood and how they could make deeper meanings from it. The findings from their comments helped us define a focus - how can we integrate aboriginal worldviews/ perspectives into our curriculum in a more meaningful and holistic way?

We wanted to go beyond the discrete and 'add-on' learning about aboriginal perspectives/worldviews.

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 wanted to go beyond the following finds:

1. Aboriginal perspectives/worldviews are taught as 'add-ons'
2. The focus is on 'dance, decorate, dining' when aboriginal perspectives/knowledge/worldviews are introduced in the classroom.
3. There is very little integration of aboriginal perspectives/worldviews resulting in deeper and more meaningful learning. It is presented as separate and discrete learning.
4. Also, mainstream students view the 'aboriginal perspectives/culture' very separate from who they are

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?

1. We are introducing a new inquiry topic- Culture and Health
2. Field trip - medicinal uses of plants was introduced in September. Students expressed lots of interest. We plan to build on this.
3. In January 2017 - we introduced the above inquiry by having students examine uses of local teas for health benefits with Heidi and Nadine.
4. Meeting with our Aboriginal helping teacher to identify ways to approach health and aboriginal perspectives/worldviews more authentically.



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5. Aboriginal Helping teachers – knowledge of resources, the network meetings and listening to other teachers’ ideas

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

- **build on an topic area the students showed a great interest in**
- **integrate Core competency – Personal awareness and culture identity into the inquiry**
- **broadened the understanding of aboriginal worldviews to include other cultures too**
- **Hook – to use an informal way of starting the conversation – use teas to begin discussions of tea and health and aboriginal people (closed with this too)**
- **Students developed their own inquiry question from the initial conversations**

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

Many students used the tea /health/ ways of aboriginal people as the impetus to research their own understanding of health. Some students .

- **students started to make connections to their own cultural backgrounds**
- **a few students began conversations with their grandparents about health and use of natural plants and berries (eg. Turmeric, goji berries)**
- **The students on their own accord began the inquiry sharing with acknowledging the traditional territories**

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.

Learned:

- **start small and make it manageable**
 - **begin with students connecting to self and build from there**
 - **integrate the inquiry question into what we are already doing**
 - **students helped us see that our ‘check in circle’ was modeling aboriginal ways too.**
- They recognized the importance and benefits of this to their classroom community – made connections to aboriginal worldviews**



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Go next : How can we integrate aboriginal ways of knowing /practices into our weekly current event discussions?

Advice:

Examine what you are doing and identify the spaces for integrating aboriginal perspectives/worldviews.