



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Valleycliffe Elementary

School District: SD#48 Sea to Sky

Inquiry Team Members: Pam Bourdon, Sarah Jajic, Cheryl Dawson, Carol Zuckernick

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Type of inquiry: AESN

Grade levels: Intermediate (4 - 7)

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

Focus area(s): Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation), First Peoples Principles of Learning, Land, Nature or Place-based learning

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

We focused on increasing evidence of aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in our school building.

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 looked for evidence that our students were immersed in First Peoples Principles of Learning inside and outside our school building. We felt as though we could do a better job of making our journey more evident visually through art, displays, projects and student voice and action. We encouraged each classroom to consider including aboriginal content when planning and eventually displaying units, projects, artwork, etc..

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

We were hoping to see more aboriginal content in the above mentioned aspects of our school environment and to be able to hear evidence of these learnings in the voice and



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choice of our 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.

Our hunch was that many of our learners were already experiencing learning through the lens of the First Peoples Principles of Learning, but that it was not evident to them that there is a connection between their learning and their sense of belonging, place and spirit.

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 used backwards design to plan our units and projects within the school. Many of us have attended Understanding by Design conferences and we incorporated these ideas into our planning.

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

At the beginning of the school year, the intermediate team planned and taught a collaborative unit about leadership and belonging which culminated in several large scale art projects that were displayed in the school halls and on the exterior of the school. We focused on attributes that make a good leader and ways that leaders can make everyone feel safe and like they belong.

Each class worked on units/projects that will be represented in our school reconciliation blanket when it is completed in the fall of next year.

We continued our Buddy Class program and tried to include more aboriginal content in the activities that we worked on together with our buddy classes.

We continued our school garden project and helped to enhance our outdoor classroom area to encourage more outdoor learning and understanding of place.

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



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The atmosphere and voice of the students changed throughout the year and there is a noticeable difference in the way students interact with each other both inside and outside the classroom at our school. There seems to be a sense of ownership by the intermediate students and they go out of their way to help and protect the younger students in the school. There is also a real sense of pride in the outdoor environment that our school has created through collaborative effort and hard physical work.

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.

We learned that providing children with an understanding of how the First Peoples Principles of Learning help to make their learning experience and place better was important. Students are better able to voice how aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing affect their sense of well being and belonging, and this in turn allows them to feel like they are an active part of their own learning. Taking on leadership roles and being a part of active projects that enhance our building, inside and out, creates a sense of ownership that is empowering, even to the youngest students. As well, weaving aboriginal content into the curriculum on a regular basis was easy and fun for all.