

# Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom

*Moving Forward*



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*Moving Forward*



ISBN 978-0-7726-6928-5

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# Foreword: A Vision for Aboriginal Education

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The inspiration for this project was to support and build upon a regional dialogue that would lead to further strategies and clear commitments from all educators as we work to serve each learner, families, and communities. With a spirit of collaboration, a commitment to transformation, and an “If not here, where?” mindset, we approached Director Ted Cadwallader of the British Columbia Ministry of Education to share our School District 85 (Vancouver Island North) aspirations. Shortly thereafter, the vision and partnership was expanded to include four other school districts to host focus sessions on Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom.

Our efforts have been inspired by regional First Nations leadership and the many courageous Nino’gad (Knowledge Keepers), warriors, and thinkers that are at the forefront of transformation and changing paradigms. In addition to finding our way locally, we are guided by influential works such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), and the “First Peoples Principles of Learning” (2008 – see the Introduction to this document for details).

The themes that emerged across territories and communities inspire a call to action. New constructs for leadership, Indigenous pedagogical practices, Aboriginal perspectives and content, and a vision for decolonizing mindsets were among the wealth of ideas expressed as to how we move forward both individually and collectively. It is our responsibility to sustain this conversation and to make commitments to ensure that we are successful.

Commissioner Murray Sinclair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada stated that, “We have to start addressing the way that we teach our children about Aboriginal people.” The Commission has identified the role of leadership and education as the way forward.

We acknowledge the British Columbia Ministry of Education for its leadership and courage in facilitating the regional sessions. We salute those named in the Acknowledgements of this document who made the sessions a reality in their regions and extended the conversation across the province. We acknowledge as well all the organizations and individuals who helped make our own SD 85 session a successful and inspiring event—the First Nations Education Council, the Kwakiutl Nation (regional session host), leaders at the district and school levels, teachers, support staff, students, Chiefs, Elders, community members, post-secondary institutes and agency partners.

***Kaleb Child and Scott Benwell***





# Acknowledgments

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The Ministry of Education would like to thank all those who participated in the Gatherings that gave rise to the vision set out in this document. We are grateful to each Aboriginal community that graciously hosted these events and participated in the dialogue in collaboration with local school districts: Tsaxis (SD 85); Burnaby (SD 41); Williams Lake (SD 27); ?Aq'am (SD 5); and, West Kelowna (SD 23).

Leadership provided the vision for the day, but the outcomes of this project stem from the extensive voices of community. This diversity included hereditary Chiefs, elected Chiefs and Councils, Elders, Aboriginal support staff members, community agencies, students, teachers, school district staff members, principals, vice-principals, school trustees, post-secondary institutes, and other partners.

The Ministry would also like to acknowledge those who helped set the context, guide discussion, and record the input of participants at each of the regional Gatherings.

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Most of the photos used in this document were captured by the facilitation team. Special thanks, however is extended to Shelley Janvier, on staff with SD 41 (Burnaby), who captured and shared the photos used on pages 2, 13, 29, 51, 60, and 70.

Finally, the Ministry would like to thank GT Publishing Services Ltd. for assistance in developing this document (editorial: Bernard Gobin; design: Barry Millar).



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# Introduction

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The past decade has witnessed several significant developments affecting Aboriginal Education in BC.

Most visible, perhaps, has been the acknowledgment on the part of both the Province of British Columbia and government of Canada of the mistreatment and disrespect that Aboriginal peoples have endured throughout much of our nation's history. This has resulted in a new attentiveness on the part of government to long-standing demands from Aboriginal leaders for a fresh approach to the provision of formal education at all levels. Consultation and negotiation have occurred, First Nations leaders have come together to give the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) a strong mandate to advocate for quality First Nations education in BC (both on-reserve and off-reserve), and several important agreements have been reached that recognize the importance of education in improving the lives of Aboriginal people in the province:

- the New Relationship Agreement (2005)  
[www.ubcic.bc.ca/issues/newrelationship/#axzz3d9xOne6N](http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/issues/newrelationship/#axzz3d9xOne6N)
- the Transformative Change Accord (2005) [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=7F6620F4C9004B9B845C5A105388A779](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=7F6620F4C9004B9B845C5A105388A779)
- the Tripartite Education Agreement (2012)  
[www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1327671439967/1327674065864](http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1327671439967/1327674065864)





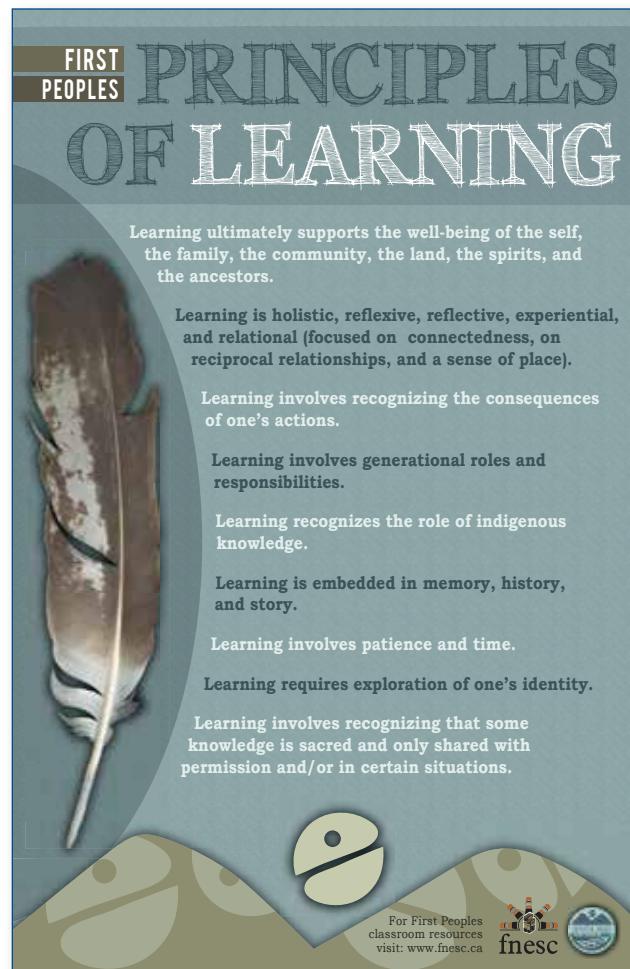
*A world of resources now exists to help K-12 teachers and students enrich their knowledge about Aboriginal themes and topics.*

At the same time, many individuals with an interest in education, including educators working within the school system, have been involved in trying to effect specific improvements, including

- the development and implementation of courses such as *BC First Nations Studies 12* (1995 & 2006), *English First Peoples 12* (2008) and *English First Peoples 10-11* (2012) that incorporate the input of Aboriginal educators and that address historical and contemporary themes and topics, with an emphasis on the BC context
- increased, mandated curricular emphasis K-12 on the traditions and history of various Aboriginal peoples
- creation and identification of pedagogical resources for teachers and authentic learning resources for students
- the articulation and dissemination of First Peoples Principles of Learning

Educators, Aboriginal communities, and many parents and students across the province are aware that much more work is needed to build momentum for change and improve school success for all Aboriginal students. As part of its commitment under the Transformative Change Accord (2005), the BC Ministry of Education annually provides comparative reports on the educational achievement and satisfaction of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students respectively (these *How Are We Doing?* [HAWD] reports are available at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/performance.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/performance.htm)). What the data reveal is some modest improvement in overall retention rates for Aboriginal students and areas requiring further attention, including

- performance on the Foundation Skills Assessments (of literacy and numeracy skills at the grades 4 and 7)
- performance on required examinations (at the grades 10, 11, and 12 levels)
- completion rates
- relative numbers of students who receive awards or scholarships upon completing secondary school.



This [the problem of education in the wake of Canada's history of residential schooling] is not an Aboriginal problem. This is a Canadian problem. Because at the same time that Aboriginal people were being demeaned in the schools and their culture and language were being taken away from them, and they were told that they were inferior, they were pagans, that they were heathens and savages and that they were unworthy of being respected — that very same message was being given to the non-Aboriginal children in the public schools as well. As a result, many generations of non-Aboriginal Canadians have had their perceptions of Aboriginal people “tainted.”

Justice Murray Sinclair  
Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
*quoted in The Vancouver Sun, Monday, May 25, 2015, p A8*

Further, the recent publication and release of *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015 – see [www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec\\_Summary\\_2015\\_05\\_31\\_web\\_o.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf)), helps illuminate the scope and nature of the challenge. For Canada's former assimilationist policy of residential schooling has not only harmed those individuals who were required to attend; it has profoundly damaged communities, weakened traditional languages and cultures, and engendered a deep distrust of formal education among many Aboriginal people. At the same time, the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples, traditions, and cultures in “mainstream” education has given rise to diverse negative stereotypes and attitudes among non-Aboriginal Canadians.

The Province of BC is committed to meeting these evident challenges. As part of its broader education transformation process currently under way, the BC Ministry of Education is embedding Aboriginal perspectives into all parts of the curriculum in a meaningful and authentic manner. This includes extending Aboriginal perspectives into the entire learning journey. From Kindergarten to graduation, students will experience Aboriginal perspectives and understandings as an integrated part of what they are learning.

In order to better support this initiative, educators within the BC school system have asked for guidance and support that addresses the following questions:

- What is meant by Aboriginal education and by Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives?
- What is required of them and of the education system in order to provide appropriate and authentic teaching in line with the First Peoples Principles of Learning? For example, what changes can they usefully make in their pedagogical practices? What learning resources should they be using with students?
- Where can they turn for guidance and support in modifying their practice to incorporate new content and approaches (some educators have expressed concern about mis-steps in attempting to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge into their practice)?

This resource is designed to help address some of these questions.

## The Engagement Process

In the spring of 2015, gatherings were held in five communities/school districts:

- Fort Rupert/Tsaxis, SD 85 (Vancouver Island North), in Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory – Feb 4
- Burnaby, SD 41 (Burnaby), in the traditional territory of the Tsleil-waututh, Squamish, and Musqueam – Feb 11
- Cranbrook/?Aq'am SD 5 (Southeast Kootenay), in Ktunaxa traditional territory – Feb 17
- Williams Lake, SD 27 (Cariboo Chilcotin), in Secwepemc, Carrier, & Tsilhqot'in traditional territories – March 2
- Kelowna, SD 23 (Central Okanagan), in Okanagan traditional territory – March 4

Together, the five districts involved serve a broad mix of learners — urban and rural, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal.

The gatherings were provincially supported and organized at the district level — reflective of each district's stakeholder community. They were configured to bring together members of both the Aboriginal community and the educational partner community in each district (i.e., both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). Participants included students, teachers, Aboriginal support workers, District Aboriginal Education coordinators, district administrators, parents, community Elders, First Nations leadership, members of the Métis community, and professionals working with youth in the district (including agency partners, non-profit organizations and, in one case, RCMP school liaison representatives). Representatives from the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC, the organization created by First Nations leadership to speak on behalf of First Nations on education in BC) attended, as did representatives of the First Nations Schools Association (FNSA).



 #BCAbTalks



## The Agenda and Approach for the Gatherings

Each gathering followed local First Nations protocol and opened with Chiefs or Elders welcoming the group to their traditional territory. The ensuing discussion occurred in three separate sessions, each guided by a particular set of focus questions. These questions were formulated to reflect those that have been previously raised by BC educators interested in understanding how the education system (and they themselves) can improve Aboriginal education provincewide.

### Working Session 1 – A Focus on Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives

- What do we mean when we say, “Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives” in learning?
- What are the characteristics of Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives?

### Working Session 2 – Content and the Classroom

- How do we ensure that Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives are embedded into practice and into every classroom? What are specific examples?
- How do we engage and inspire Aboriginal learners?
- How do we ensure we make space for Aboriginal voice? What conditions or spaces give rise to Aboriginal voice?
- Are there regional examples of excellence to which we can point?

### Working Session 3 – Evidence of Success

- How will we know we are meeting the needs of all Aboriginal learners? What is the evidence? How does it look and feel?
- What can we do to ensure we are successful?
- Do you have advice for other educators, administrators, agency partners, and community members about how to work together on these initiatives?

Discussion of the focus questions occurred in small groups of 6-10 participants, each facilitated and recorded by a member

of the Ministry facilitation team. Participant comments were summarized and transcribed in the form of “blog” entries that were periodically “posted” onto screens by the facilitators. At the same time, individuals who wished to do so were able to contribute to a parallel Twitter feed via their own personal mobile devices (tweet **#BCAbTalks**).

At the conclusion of each Gathering, a comprehensive record of the day’s “blog” posts was compiled and retained by the Ministry facilitation team for use in the creation of this document. Separate handwritten summaries of participants’ input were also compiled on poster-sized sheets and archived by the Ministry’s facilitation team, as a backup and verification measure. The facilitation structure was designed with the intent of being inclusive of all voices.

## The Creation of this Document

Overall, the level of interest in the gatherings — their focus and aim — surpassed initial expectations, and organizers found themselves able to attract and include a broad range of participants with insight and advice to offer. Discussion was extremely wide-ranging and yet, for the most part, pertinent to the guiding questions used to structure the agenda.

As is clear from the agenda for the gatherings, the original mandate was to elicit “best practice” pedagogical advice on Aboriginal Education from experienced professional educators and members of Aboriginal communities. In practice, however, many participants proved more interested in expressing their vision(s) for Aboriginal Education (i.e., articulating their aspirations and priorities) than in setting out a detailed “roadmap” for instructional practice. Gradually, along with several constructive insights and “appropriate practice” ideas, a number of overarching themes emerged. So to do justice to the substance and spirit of the gatherings these recurrent themes have become the basis for organization of this document: actual comments from individual participants (drawn from the facilitated “blogging” record), have been grouped in relation to these themes, in order to

- give educators a sense of the nature and scope of the adjustments needed to effect positive change in the area of Aboriginal education

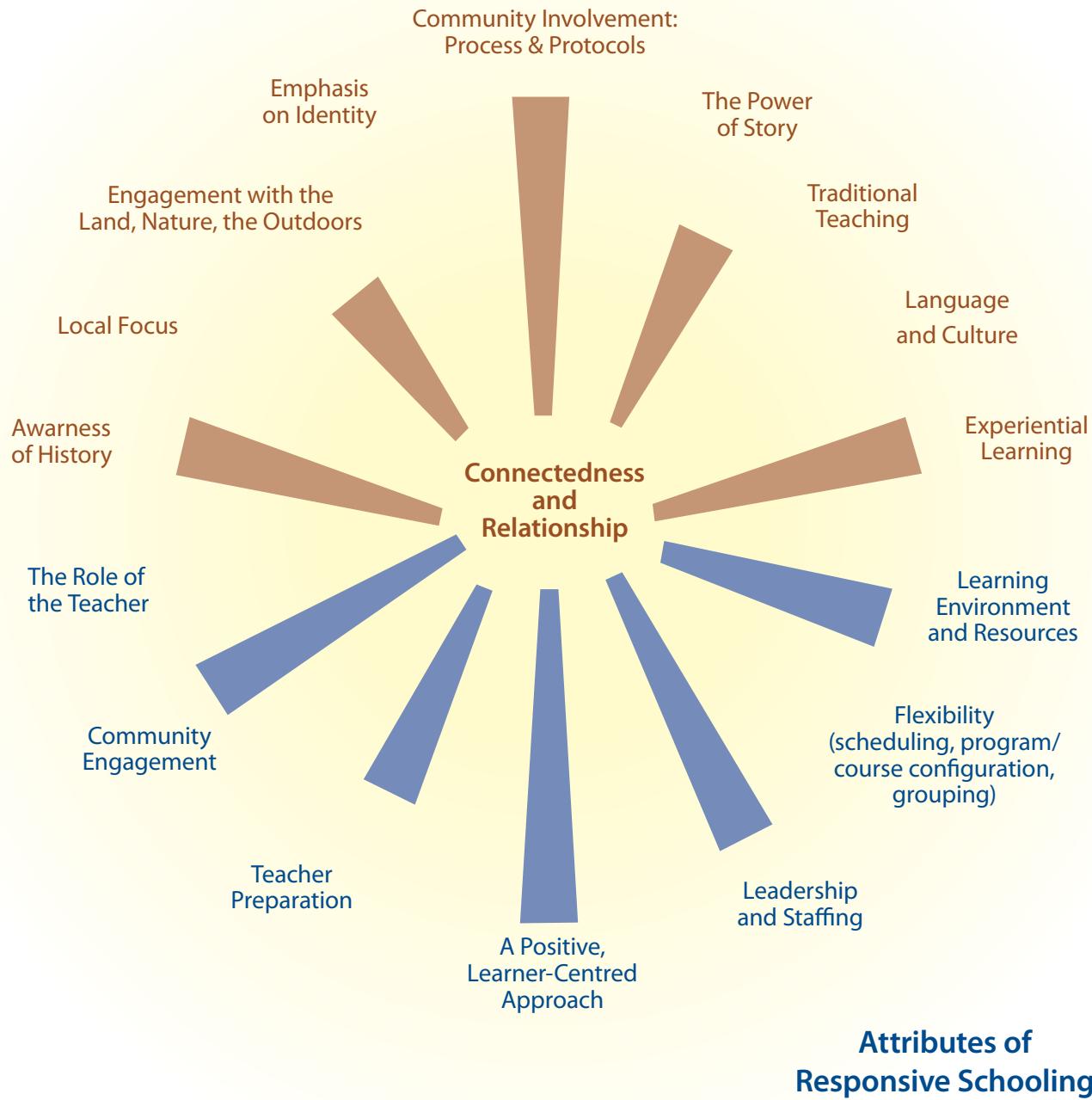


- 
- identify specific practices that educators can adopt and initiatives that they might pursue to help improve educational outcomes for their Aboriginal students — as well as for their non-Aboriginal students
  - provide a sense of the context within which these practices and initiatives make sense (i.e., outline the implicit, underlying rationale for actions and practices that are suggested).

This is not to suggest that the gatherings reflected unanimity or consensus on all points discussed. As might be expected given the wide variation in the roles, interests, and backgrounds of participants and the significant geographic, demographic, cultural, and logistical differences that exist among the participating districts, there were many divergent and sometimes contradictory opinions expressed. When considering the import of any particular comment reproduced here, users of this document are consequently encouraged to keep in mind that

- it presents a sampling of opinions, and cannot therefore be taken as absolutely authoritative (the practices that truly qualify as “best” are situation-dependent, and Aboriginal populations, contexts, and experiences are diverse, so much further conversation regarding the best way forward is needed)
- it does not purport to capture all voices, but rather a somewhat selective sampling (it has not been vetted through a formal, representative process that engages all education partners)
- the comments shared in this document reflect an interactive, “brainstorming” approach to the identification of “appropriate practice” rather than a rigorous research approach
- the comments contributed represent both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal voices (they are not intended to displace or undermine the voices of elected and/or hereditary Aboriginal leadership, or to minimize the voice of FNESC, the organization created by First Nations leadership to speak on behalf of First Nations on education in BC).

## Characteristics of Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives



Themes that emerged from the gatherings serve as organizers for the insights and ideas presented in this document. This circle graphic represents them, showing how themes identified with respect to the attributes of responsive schooling address and complement the themes associated with characteristics of Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives.



Board of Education of  
School District No. 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)

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F: 250.392.3600  
350 Second Avenue N  
Williams Lake, BC V2G 1Z9

## MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES



### Mission

Ensuring all students have meaningful learning experiences, empowering them to succeed in an ever changing world

### Vision

We envision an encouraging and understanding learning environment where everyone demonstrates a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity

### Values

The Pillars of Support for the School District No. 27 Mission and Vision are characterized by the following four core operating values:  
**RESPECT - RESPONSIBILITY - KINDNESS AND CARING - ACCEPTANCE**

These statements act as a guide for the School District's decisions around its learning priorities, its practices, its policies, its processes and its budget allocations. The Mission, Vision, and Values focus on providing a wholistic and supportive learning experience to children.

*"Learning, Growing and Belonging Together"*

# Aboriginal Education for All Learners

- 63) We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:
- ...
- iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.

*Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, p. 290*

Available for download at  
[www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec\\_Summary\\_2015\\_05\\_31\\_web\\_o.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf)





**A**lthough there are two distinct aspects to Aboriginal Education (i.e., education of Aboriginal students and education about Aboriginal peoples in BC and Canada), there is remarkable overlap between what is involved in achieving success with respect to each. This is what proponents mean when they say that “the First Peoples Principles of Learning and other key aspects of Aboriginal Education are applicable for all learners within the school system.”

Two themes are central to the notion of Aboriginal education for all learners:

- **strengths-based, learner-centred practice**

This begins with educators knowing their students as individuals and configuring instruction to connect with their interests and build on their strengths to engender confidence and enjoyment in learning. For more on this, see “A Positive, Learner-Centred Approach” in the section of this document on Attributes of Responsive Schooling.

- **overcoming racism**

Racism needs to be acknowledged and addressed proactively. This can be done through

- explicit instruction/discussion
- messaging within the school environment
- teacher modelling
- correction of factually faulty generalizations about history and peoples
- situation-specific challenging of thoughtless comments that reinforce negative stereotypes
- corrective intervention to address racist put-downs and other hurtful behaviours

See various theme discussions in the section of this document on Characteristics of Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives for additional ideas on countering racism.

*We need to get rid of the racism and systemic thinking embedded in old-style schooling. ... Part of the process is about decolonizing our thinking.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Indigenous education has to be linked to anti-racism and social justice.*

participant, Burnaby

*Allow students to go where they want to go, help them move toward what they view as valuable. At a young age, point out what their strengths are.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Make it obvious that eliminating racism is a priority. This could include something as simple as signs with messages such as “Please, no racism.”*

participant, West Kelowna

*A teacher’s expectations of students are one of the most powerful determinants of success for those students. A teacher who believes the students are capable of excellence and can achieve it if properly engaged will work wonders. This means a change of outlook and in beliefs about education on the part of the educator is needed. Limiting beliefs and attitudes on the part of educators need to be addressed, discussed, overcome.*

participant, Tsaxis



*Musqueam Elder Larry Grant*

*Conversation at school is often fear-based. We fear and shame people into motivation (“Wait until you go to high school, college...” “If you don’t do this...” etc.”). Teachers need to put out the opposite message more frequently. It would be a great idea to work with teachers on messaging to their students (“How do we shift this approach to strength-based instead of fear-based?”). The training would start with awareness and then move to re-messaging. Awareness of why we are doing what we do will reduce the deficit approaches to schooling and the learners.*

participant, West Kelowna



*A graphic compilation of key words (Wordle) drawn from the facilitated “blogging” record gives an impressionistic indication of how frequently particular themes and concepts were raised in discussion. While not capturing the relative “importance” of the themes or concepts in any substantive sense, it indicates what participants in the gatherings felt most compelled to mention.*

# Characteristics of Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives

*Learning is holistic and we need to focus on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community, language, culture, and the natural world.*

participant, Tsaxis



# Connectedness and Relationship



## Implications for Educational Practice

- Look for ways to relate learning to students' selves, to their families and communities, and to the other aspects of Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives described in this document.

*"Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in Learning" should be understood to refer to*

- *a holistic outlook and the relationship to all relatives on this territory*
- *integration of knowledge, content, ways of being (this is beneficial for all students)*

participant, Burnaby

*There's more involved to education and learning than just doing your homework. It's about making meaning out of your life, finding value. Homeland, mother tongue, roles and responsibilities are all interconnected.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Schools work so hard to break things down in order to understand (analysis). In indigenous worldviews, we look for relationships between ideas. Worldview is very relational, and we make connections to our personal lives.*

participant, Burnaby



*So much of worldview is carried in language. Still, there are many commonalities among the worldviews of First Peoples, such as an emphasis on family and relationships and a broader sense of relationship that includes one's relationship to land, self, the natural world.*

participant, Burnaby

# Awareness of History



## Implications for Educational Practice

- Ensure that any focus on the history of Canada and Canadians or on Canadian social studies include reference to the experience, situation, and actions/perspectives of Aboriginal peoples, in all periods studied (including and up to the present).
- Avoid reliance on colonial-era secondary sources (i.e., 20th century and earlier texts and resources) for accounts or explanations of topics, events, trends involving Aboriginal peoples. Where possible, use contemporary sources created by or with the involvement of Aboriginal contributors.
- When referencing Aboriginal content, give learners a chance to work with locally developed resources (including local knowledge keepers) wherever possible.
- Use accurate, specific historical facts and explanations to counter racist and stereotypical generalizations about Aboriginal peoples in Canada.
- When correcting inaccurate half-truths and generalizations, focus the correction on the ideas, not on the students who may have been misled into believing and expressing them.

*Authentic teaching around residential schools and the history of Canada is needed at many grade levels (K-12) — not just starting at grade 5. How that is represented needs to be balanced — not simply seen through a western view.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Schools need to teach our history, even though there are sensitive topics. An objective of this should be to facilitate truth and reconciliation. Certainly it is good to see some of this reflected in the new Grade 3 curriculum.*

participant, Tsaxis

*We are moving towards correcting historical data and updating educational materials. There is a large number of people who believe inaccurate portrayals of history that they learned in school. We need to change this.*

participant, Tsaxis

*There has to be more local history. Among our people, the history of the Chilcotin war carries forward for generations. This was first recognized in the 90s, and people started speaking about it again. Prior to that, we didn't speak about it for fear of retaliation.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Mandatory content at every grade level would ideally include the topics of land use, history, relationships, and Aboriginal title.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Include Aboriginal history along with Canadian history — not as an aside.*

participant, Burnaby

*The idea of a shared history — Canadian history, not just Aboriginal history — opens opportunities to bring Aboriginal perspectives into the classroom. It has the potential to alleviate some fear and increase comfort level. One place to start is with good literature. Aboriginal literature does not have to be studied on its own but can be seen in the canon of good literature from an Aboriginal perspective that teaches students that there are more perspectives on our society.*

participant, Burnaby

*Make sure the effects of colonization are taught and understood (by teachers as well as by students). People must be open to changing ideology, their system of belief; there needs to be a willingness on the part of people to change, to look honestly at their perceptions, the language that they use, their actions, and the experiences of the past (e.g., colonization). We need to ask ourselves, "How much time is needed to grasp the impact of all of this? ...for students to 'get it', to understand what has happened and what is happening? ...to allow for vulnerability. Accurate history must be mandated in the curriculum. For example, why are we learning more about European history than we do about Canadian history? Why do our students not know what the Indian Act is?*

participant, Tsaxis

*In the teaching of history, students rarely get the Aboriginal perspectives. Teachers only know the non-Aboriginal perspectives. Textbooks and school materials primarily propagate the European worldviews and perspectives. There is fear around teaching the Aboriginal perspectives. Young people need to be taught how to approach history and need to learn the different perspectives. Worldview, the lens through which we view the world, can be unconscious. Yet, because decisions are generally based on worldview, the differences can have a large impact. We all need to be respectful of other people's worldviews.*

participant, Burnaby

*Other important local history topics include the potlatch ban and gunboat justice (where the authorities gave the community warning and if the community didn't change, they would send in the gunboat).*

participant, Williams Lake

*Bring more knowledgeable First Nations speakers into the classrooms to teach about the history. Also, put material together — with lots of pictures.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Reconciliation needs to be part of the future, but we need to acknowledge what happened in the past (i.e., the attempted assimilation). Everyone has a role in that — Elders, youth — knowing what happened and connecting it to everyday life. Students need to think about how that history affects "me" and learn to look from the eyes of those who experienced it: this is the connectedness — taking everyone's ability to perceive and building empathy with the sharing. One can't force people to accept reconciliation, so there is still a lot of work to do.*

participant, West Kelowna

*We need to review resources that people are using and ensure that they are more accurate or at least use existing misinformation to teach the real facts.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Having accurate historical accounts of what has taken place within BC and Canada in regards to land title and rights, history...etc. needs to be more mainstream in the curriculum to help all students.*

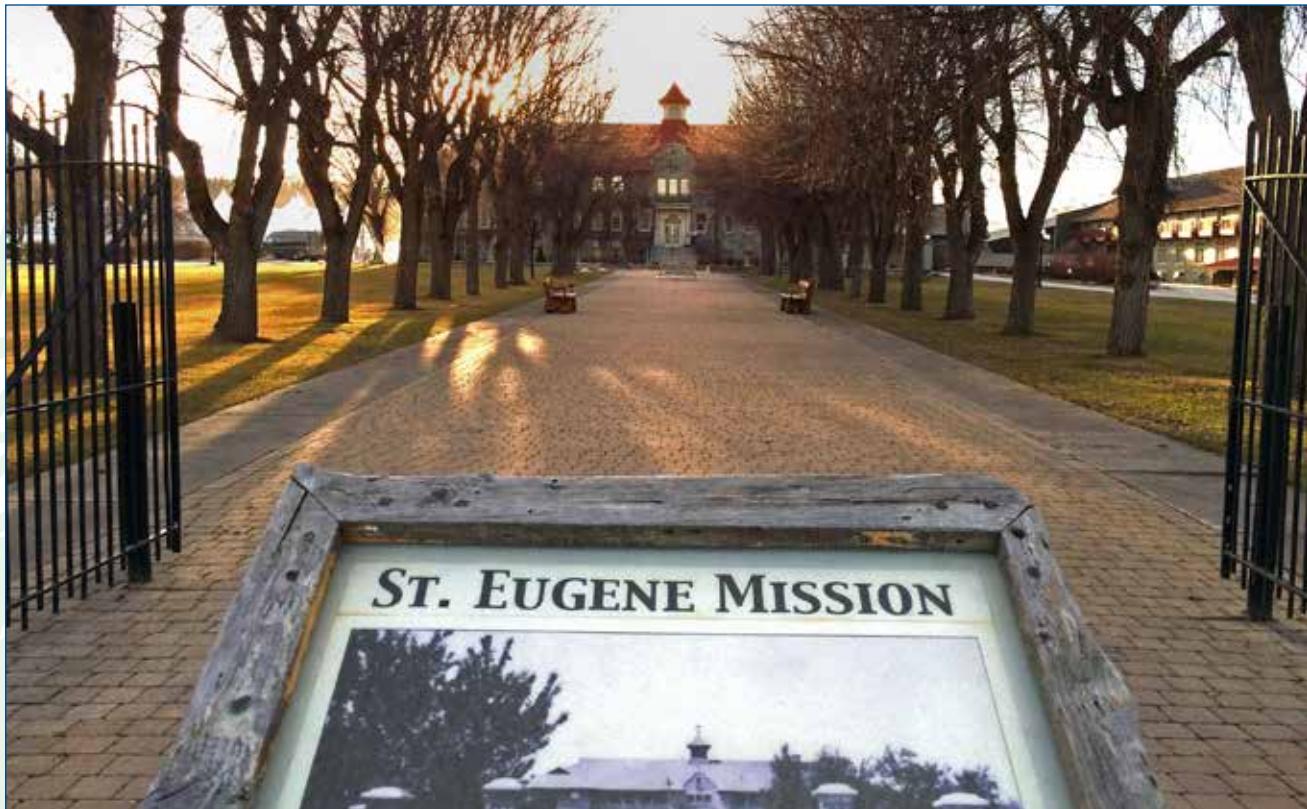
participant, West Kelowna

*In the schools, the students need to know our history, our culture, connection with nature, diet, medicines, ceremonies, and protocols in our culture to understand where Aboriginal people are coming from.*

participant, Williams Lake

*We need to help all students — Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal — to understand the effects of colonialism.*

participant, Tsaxis



*We need to teach accurately and teach pre-contact and pre-fur trade history. Often, it feels like I need to correct the facts...about “discovery” how Vancouver was renamed, etc. Let’s get the facts right first and then we can incorporate worldviews and perspectives. Eurocentric dominance does not do justice to any of the history that exists. In curriculum, it feels like we don’t exist...that we are invisible.*

participant, West Kelowna

*All students need to understand the history of the local people (in SD 23 the Okanagan people) — the move from hereditary chieftainship to elected chiefs, the fur trade, the leaders of the people in the past. This means creating resources that go beyond the single stereotypical portrayal and that represent the regional reality, but that also deal with the continent-wide prejudices and oppressions that dominated the colonial history. Content needs to be written by Aboriginal authors (e.g., Okanagan authors). The knowledge keepers who understand the protocols need to be the ones writing, leading, defining the curriculum to be learned: “Nothing about us, without us.”*

participant, West Kelowna

*Consider making it a requirement for all students to take BCFNS12. The two key foundational aspects are building relationship and developing awareness and understanding.*

participant, West Kelowna

# Local Focus



## Implications for Educational Practice

- Look for opportunities to incorporate place-based learning into your practice (a focus on local Aboriginal history, experience, stories, imagery, ecology).
- When referencing Aboriginal content, give learners a chance to work with locally developed resources (including local knowledge keepers) wherever possible.
- Look to the school's Aboriginal support worker(s) and/or trusted local contacts for guidance and help accessing good local content.

*Teachers need to be open to learning (i.e., for themselves) and to finding out about local protocols when introducing local materials.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*We need our local teachers to know local history (the Tsilhqot'in Nation's impact on the development of the railroad in BC is an example. Community-driven resource development is another).*

participant, Williams Lake

*We need to see the local culture reflected in the classrooms, especially in the high school.*

participant, Tsaxis

*"Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in Learning" is ...recognizing that the protocols and worldviews are diverse across our province, so they have to be respected in the local context.*

participant, Burnaby

*If we start from the point of where we stand, we are able to immediately and comfortably bring Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives to the classroom. We all share the history of the place on which we stand, but education needs to recognize the language and people that come originally from this place.*

participant, Burnaby

*We are afraid of [teaching that paints a picture of First Peoples using] this pan-Indian paint brush instead of the perspectives of each nation, and their worldviews and histories and cultures. When we talk about moving away from a colonial perspective and toward Aboriginal perspectives, we mean recognizing that there are over 100 different First Peoples.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Engage with the local perspective, rather than the stereotypical, “pan-Aboriginal” that doesn’t necessarily relate to the immediate, the present, the current. A non-local perspective may be okay, but only when approached in comparison/contrast/relation to the local — with the support of regional Elders. This applies especially in connection with class projects.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*There is great diversity among First Peoples, and our students’ learning needs to reflect the local Aboriginal community’s knowledge and language.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Place-based education: We could do a better job of teaching a balanced local history and encourage our education partners to expand the use of local Aboriginal place names. These names have been there for generations and reflect our sense of connectedness to the environment. The Ktunaxa name for Sparwood, for example, means “special place on the river” and evokes our links and connections to the river. Just as its waters come from the surrounding creeks and streams and flow on to eventually feed into the Columbia River, so they connect people to one another.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*In the high school, every student 8-12 should have the opportunity to read local Aboriginal authors’ books and poetry.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Start with that local connection (whose land) and work out from there. Knowledge is locally-based; you can’t just make one system and have it apply to the entire province.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*The focus needs to be on the local experience, culture, history (the language, etc.) and on being able to connect that with the experience of the non-Aboriginal students’ families.*

participant, Williams Lake

# Engagement with the Land, Nature, the Outdoors

## Implications for Educational Practice

- Look for opportunities to get students interested and engaged with the natural world immediately available (place-based education in the area near your school). Illustrations using locally observable examples and phenomena, physical education activities, homework assignments, and student projects are examples of opportunities to promote this type of engagement.
- Plan and organize to take instruction and learning outdoors where possible, organizing instructional planning to facilitate this.
- Explore team leadership and the use of resources such as skilled Aboriginal community members and third-party outdoor education specialists to facilitate and help deal with the challenges associated with leaving the confines of the school (e.g., the need for equipment, expertise in outdoor environments, risk management, transportation).

*Although First Peoples are very diverse, most of us have a similar respect for and connection with the land. This informs our understanding of responsibilities and roles and our sense of our relationships to all living things. How do our decisions impact the land around us? How does where we are influence what we view as important and what to learn? How do our decisions about “what is important” and “how to be” relate to community? For many people, this seems philosophical, but it is actually very pragmatic, it’s your every day, it’s practical. “Look after the land and the land will look after you.”*

participant, ?Aq'am

*There is a feeling of sacredness within all Aboriginal ways of learning, particularly focused on relationship to the land.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Learning is in the land – history and story are in the land; land should be the starting place.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Increase outdoor learning opportunities and use the Aboriginal place names and language to describe the things you are doing.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Students need to have more connection with nature as part of their education (knowing the plants for medicine, food, etc.). This weaves understanding at a deeper level (especially when we introduce First Nations terminology related to the land in the classroom) and students develop a synergy with the place where they live.*

participant, Burnaby

*There are many ways of connecting students with the land. A one-week Grad trip onto the land in the Grade 12 year would be an easy place to incorporate Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives. Such trips are very popular, and relationship is very different when outside the classroom. A key element would be to instill honour and connectedness to the land. At lower grade levels, a gardening program could provide opportunities for connection with both land and community – from growing to preparing food. And any ecology-oriented project (e.g., stream restoration) provides further opportunities. You do not have to go far away up a mountain.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Why aren't we using our outdoors to a greater extent? It is a good place for social, emotional, and spiritual learning, as well as learning about ecology, science, and mathematics. It's grounding. It's a great place to teach language, place names, survival skills. It's engaging, reflexive and holistic. It gives people opportunity to show their skills and shine. What can we do to support this? How do we work around the timetable, etc. There needs to be an evolution of budgeting for support so that we don't feel limited.*

participant, Tsaxis

*The way our classrooms and schools operate is often not conducive to including Aboriginal voice. They are formal and can be seen as institutional. Go outside and sit around a fire. It changes the dynamic, especially when we are dealing with contentious issues. Many native people don't like coming to formal settings with a set agenda. There needs to be time and room to explore, let the conversation flow. Be patient and trust to the process.*

participant, Williams Lake



# Emphasis on Identity

## Implications for Educational Practice

- Embrace learner-centred teaching practice.
- Encourage student self-awareness grounded in knowledge of family origins, cultural background, place of origin, allegiance and affiliation, citizenship, and other identity “markers.” Student self-expression via writing, speaking, and representation is an opportunity to address and revisit this theme at various stages during their K-12 schooling.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the cultural identities of all students represented in your learning cohorts.

*We need to encourage knowledge of self — the sense of place: “Where are you from?”*

participant, Tsaxis

*Perspective on how you perceive the world is a part of who you are. A sense of how one belongs and is connected is essential to learning. We need to understand our connectedness, particularly to the land.*

participant, Tsaxis

*All children should be acknowledged for their ancestry; it is their identity and what they bring. You've got to know where you come from to know where you are going.*

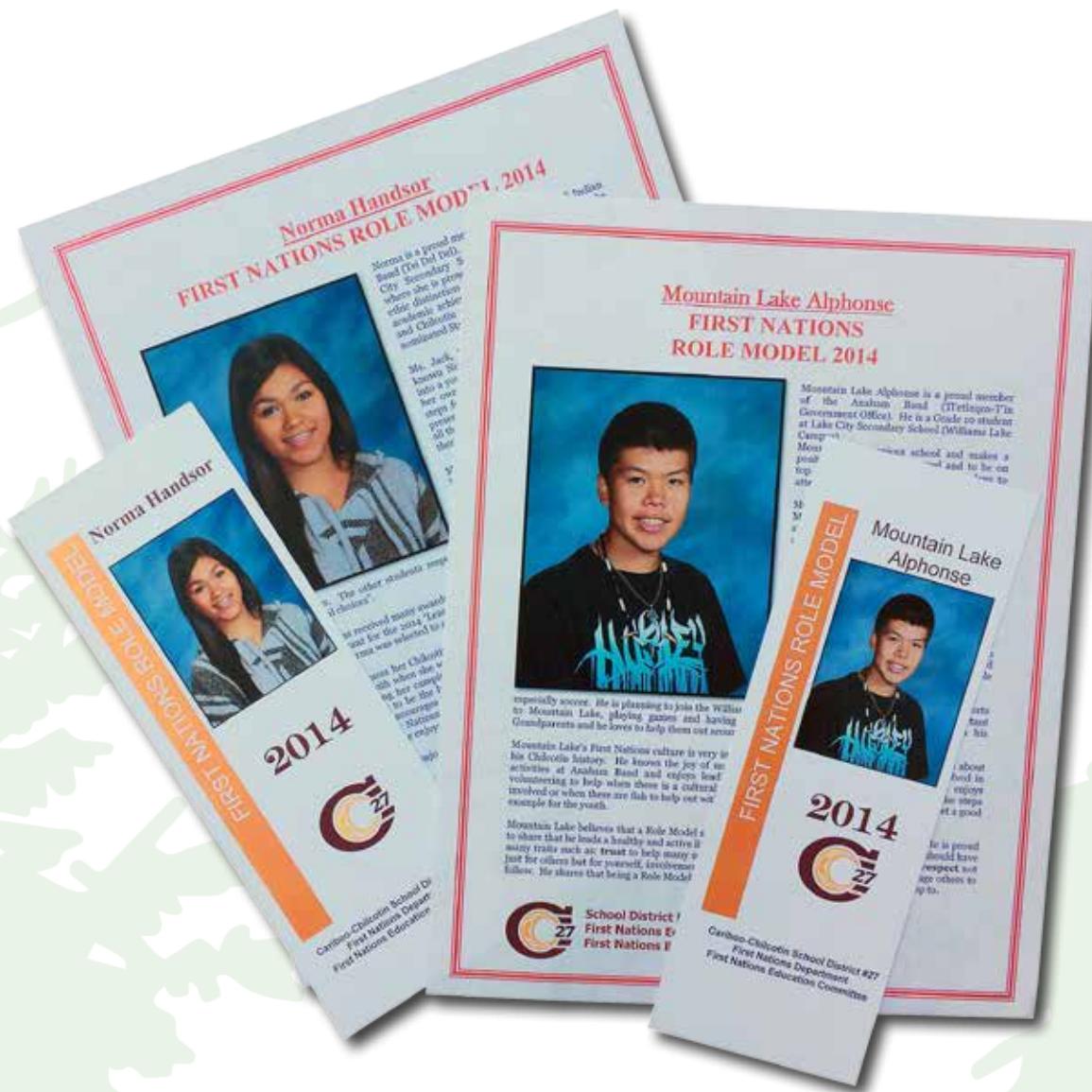
participant, Tsaxis

*To better represent Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom, education needs to help people understand their roots, their culture — encourage the identity journey.*

participant, Burnaby

*Because kids tend to be conformist, especially at the grades 7-9 levels, [and because past and ongoing racism results in people feeling denigrated and devalued on account of their origins and ethnicity,] efforts to celebrate and promote distinctiveness in identity, including cultural identity, are important; Aboriginal kids need to be affirmed in exploring their identity.*

participant, Williams Lake



*Recognize individual goals and strengths. As educators, it's our job to highlight the individuality of each student, and foster their sense of pride in individual identity. Hearing negative comments in the past — students may need help to create strong images of themselves. We help by honouring identity and reaching out and getting to know students at a personal level.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Pride in their own identity for all students is critical. For many Aboriginal students it is difficult to move away from the connections in home community — that transition can be so difficult; consider the case of one student (put-down by racism, not proud of her identity, having to learn a new language) who came full circle. Now she would never want any other child to feel a lack of pride in his or her identity.*

participant, Burnaby

# Community Involvement: Process and Protocols

## Implications for Educational Practice

- Make it a priority to connect with the local Aboriginal community.
- Look to the school's Aboriginal support worker(s) and/or trusted local contacts for guidance and help doing this.
- With your Aboriginal students, take deliberate steps to help the family feel involved and respected. Value the family and the family will value the education system. Home visits can yield huge dividends.
- Recognize and embrace the important role that you as educator can play in addressing the need for reconciliation and overcoming the legacy of colonialist/assimilationist schooling.
- Expect criticism from time to time. Having your own network of knowledgeable and supportive community and professional contacts will give you somewhere to turn for advice.

*We want our teachers to immerse themselves into the community in which they work. We want to connect them with culturally knowledgeable people.*

participant, Tsaxis

*An important characteristic of Aboriginal education is community involvement in learning. Teachers, children, parents, other family members, and other people in the community all have a contribution to make.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Family and community are a big source of learning. The inclusion of these worldviews and perspectives has the potential to reduce racism since it is difficult to be racist to people to whom you are connected and know/understand.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Protocols are key in understanding the local community.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Making room for First Nations students to affirm their identities within the school context is empowering. Within Aboriginal communities, however, the affirmation of identity is expected to occur within the context of protocols, so asking Elders and others who are knowledgeable about local/regional protocols is essential. In our district, for example, there was a young woman who wanted to wear traditional regalia to her graduation, rather than the traditional cap-& gown; this request required her to not only consult with school authorities, but to include input from her Elders. In this instance an Aboriginal support worker from her school proved valuable as an intermediary.*

participant, ?Aq'am



*Kaleb Child, District Principal, First Nations, SD 85 and Gathering facilitor*

*Aboriginal perspectives (worldviews) are land based and diverse, and they occur in historical and geographical pockets. This is why it's important to have local conversations. As educators, we need education of our own to feel comfortable teaching about the local First Peoples/Nations. We need to use advocates as a resource, especially for understanding local perspective. And we need lots of support, especially with knowledge of protocols. Fortunately, many indigenous peoples have similar protocols, even if diverse.*

participant, West Kelowna

# The Power of Story

## Central Implications for Educational Practice (Tips for Educators)

- Learn some of the traditional stories told within the local Aboriginal community. Then use them as a touchstone for your students when applicable “teachable moments” arise.
- Give students opportunities to apply and demonstrate the skills associated with oral storytelling: memorize, internalize, and present (re-tell exactly). At higher grade levels, students benefit from opportunities to tell their own experiential stories and listen and respond to those of peers.
- Metaphor, analogy, example, allusion, humour, surprise, formulaic phrasing, etc. are storytelling devices that can be applied when explaining almost any non-fiction concept. Make an effort to use devices of this sort in all subject areas and to draw upon stories of the local Aboriginal community.

*Rendering knowledge as story is an attribute of Aboriginal ways of learning; making this happen in many ways in the classroom is desirable (i.e., apply this idea in different subject areas).*

participant, ?Aq'am



*Young people love the stories and become engaged early. It just spreads out from there.*

participant, Burnaby

*There are many deep teachings in the stories. Understand that humour is a part of the stories and part of who Aboriginal peoples are, but that there is much more to the stories than just the humour.*

participant, West Kelowna

*When dealing with challenges such as improving retention rates for Aboriginal students, try involving them directly in discussing the topic. When it comes to pinpointing the reasons for dropping out or for staying in school, a survey may not work at all, but a gathering may get more of a response. Have students tell their stories - both those who did graduate and those who dropped out. Listen to their stories. Validate the struggles and successes revealed. Look at the inspirational stories — those students who overcome and succeed. We are all products of “in spite of” or “because of.”*

participant, West Kelowna



# Traditional Teaching

## Implications for Educational Practice

- Recognize the traditional teachings of First Nations students. In particular, Aboriginal students who are disengaged may benefit from learning traditional teachings.
- The involvement of Elders, either in school or via mentorship-type arrangements will likely be needed to pursue traditional teaching. Look to the school's Aboriginal support worker(s), Aboriginal district principal, and/or trusted local contacts for guidance and help with this.

*How do we engage and inspire Aboriginal learners? Reflect local Aboriginal ways of being, including expectations of respect, behaviour, generosity, and how we live together respectfully.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Make the Seven Teachings a Principle of Learning (Respect, Trust, Love, Honour, Humility, Bravery, Truth). They are also sometimes referred to as the Seven Grandfathers. Focussing on the "Seven Teachings" helps students self-correct their behaviour much faster.*

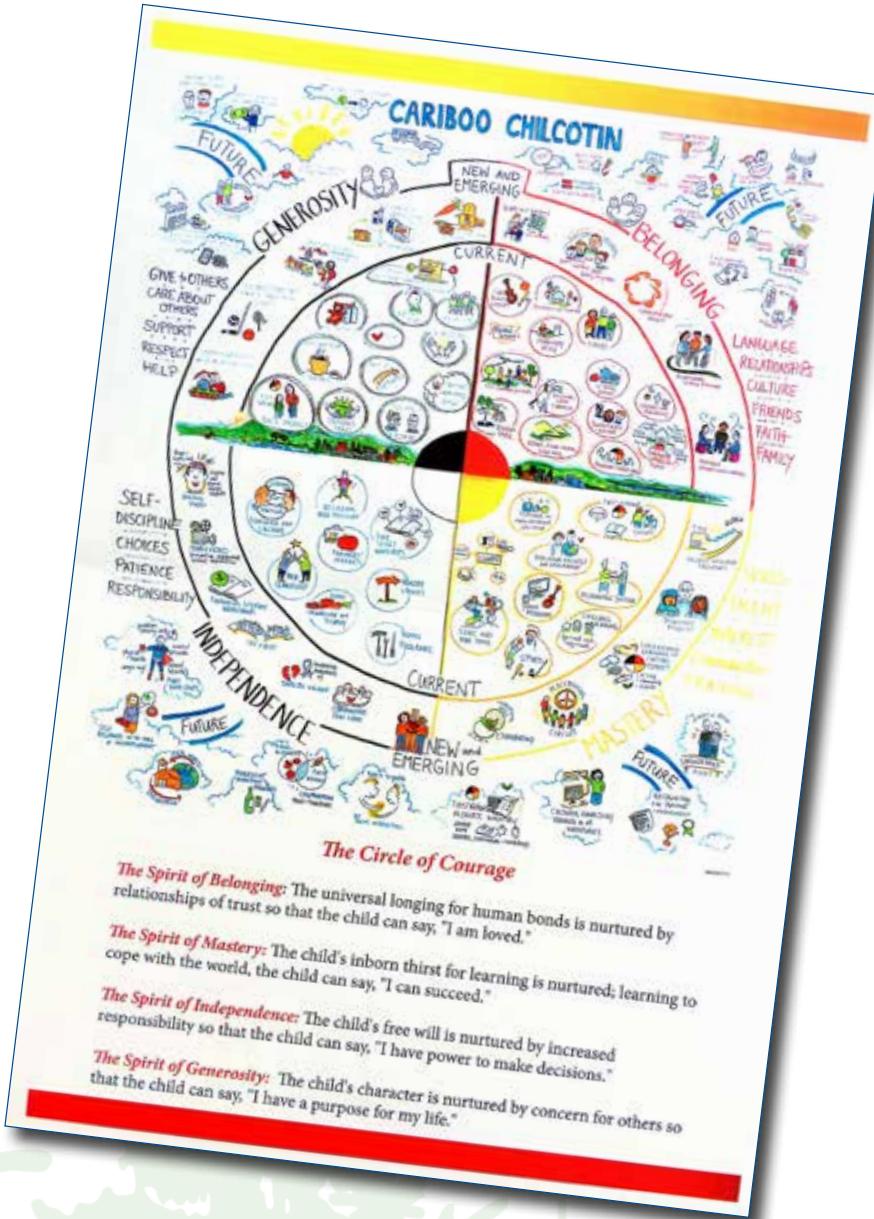
participant, Williams Lake

*Traditional Aboriginal learning includes the spiritual aspects of life as part of education.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Aboriginal perspectives start with protocol and end with protocol. Even just a little bit of awareness and observance goes a long way. Traditional values as reflected in the seven teachings are gifts that are given to us. We need to encourage students and build on strengths ...send students off to reflect on their behaviour and how others feel — how they are impacted by our words and actions.*

participant, Williams Lake



*Traditional teaching used to explore identity  
and pursue healing for members of the Aboriginal community  
in SD 27 (Cariboo Chilcotin)*

*Respect is the antidote  
to racism, bullying,  
stereotyping.*  
participant, West Kelowna

*Promote the local Indigenous or Métis culture and the amazing  
traditions involved (traditional art, trapping, music, dancing).  
Recognize traditional resource gathering practices (fishing, hunting,  
trapping, controlled burning) as aspects of land management.*  
participant, Williams Lake

# Language and Culture

## Implications for Educational Practice

- Expect use of the language to be part of any educational experiences with an Aboriginal aspect that involves outdoor trips or field studies in the local Aboriginal community.
- Demonstrate respectful support for efforts within the local Aboriginal community to revitalize language and culture by
  - incorporating into your practice simple words and phrases for greetings, interactions, place references, etc.
  - visibly acknowledging the local First Nation's culture through the use of images, artifacts such as a talking stick, or circle sharing sessions
- Be alert and sympathetic to ways the school can be involved in language instruction programs (i.e., for the local Aboriginal language).
- Base your actions and expectations on recognition of where the local community sits with respect to the current state of their language and culture revitalization/preservation efforts. Look to the school's Aboriginal support worker(s) and/or trusted local contacts for guidance on this.
- Embrace the need for inclusion of esteemed Aboriginal language speakers as essential and respected participants in language teaching and learning.

*Language has to do with land and connection to the land. Without knowledge of the language you don't have as strong a connection to the land.*

participant, Tsaxis

*We would like to see the language programs become and remain an integral part of the school curriculum and be recognized as equivalent to all other subjects.*

participant, Burnaby

*Aboriginal worldviews are embedded in Indigenous languages. Have Indigenous language at all levels ...open to all learners.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Language is who we are. Language is important in ceremony, songs. There should be more resources for language instruction.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Language instruction should be infused (i.e., made a part of learning in other subject areas, which may involve co-teaching). Language preservation programs like those in New Zealand and Hawaii started at the ground and worked up. Spend funding to ensure Elders are present four hours a day. They are a resource of knowledge. This needs to be seen as an investment, not a token piece! The goal should be not only language preservation but language growth!*

participant, Tsaxis



*Injecting music into what we do to will help us to better understand the culture. Drug and alcohol-free Métis gatherings in various locations draw musicians from all across western Canada and the US. If one were occurring nearby, it would be a great way to build awareness of Métis culture in your area.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Connections between mathematics and language in our school are a principal challenge. Our teachers adjust the math curriculum to integrate explanation of concepts and practice of skills into culture and language — not the other way around. They have helped us develop a project-based approach that works.*

participant, West Kelowna

*We need to develop our language curriculum and our own curriculum resources. Our knowledge has been oral tradition and has only been written recently. We need more Indigenous languages in the early years too. I want my Chilcotin classes to learn more complex language, not just place names, colours, etc. Improved language teaching will require us to have traditional speakers in the school system. ...Also, guest speakers who will share their stories.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Aboriginal language needs to be reintroduced and its importance recognized. Over the last 200 years there has been a systematic attempt to wipe out all of the languages. We need to see leadership interested in learning and using place names and different aspects of the local language, such as greetings and other basic expressions. For example, Elkwood School has a Ktunaxa name that is based on the name of the place, as does Mt. Baker Secondary. Recognizing Aboriginal place names and posting indigenous-language welcome signs in the school are easy first steps in bringing the language into schools. The same practice can then be extended out into the community (e.g., the territorial map and statue at the airport).*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Programs that support language learning tend to be repetitive (very little developmental progression), so a staged curriculum is needed; also needed are partnerships with colleges. Partnerships with communities are sure to be helpful, as parent involvement is key. Since not all parents are able to support language development by learning it in the home, work may be needed to create/establish and support communities of parents who speak the language and who will welcome in kids from other families for the immersion experience.*

participant, Williams Lake

# Experiential Learning

## Implications for Educational Practice

- Look for ways to incorporate hands-on learning experiences for students into your practice.
- Embrace learner-centred practice and interact with students to ascertain their strengths and preferences when it comes to learning experiences.
- Emphasize possible practical applications (e.g., “real-world”) when introducing abstract or theoretical concepts.

### *Give children a chance to*

- *learn a job, then do the job and be paid for it (if this happens for a few weeks, they will then be able to be successful, because they have seen success; success breeds success)*
- *be successful with buying and selling items (they need to learn to take pride in what they do for work, entrepreneurship)*
- *learn from real-life situations that will help them to do the right things (i.e., stay away from drinking, drugs etc.)*
- *learn practical life skills as part of their daily work at school (more holistic education)*

various participants, Williams Lake

*Teach your children by doing — not just talking about it.*

participant, Tsaxis





*Emotion is missing from present-day education. I'm talking about feeling wonder as we notice sap run, witness tree growth, hold moss, pick berries, dig clams, skin a seal. Emotion is also embedded in the chants and songs that go with these experiences and activities.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Worldview is a way of thinking about the world. Perspective comes from learning and experience. The two are interconnected, but whereas students can learn about Aboriginal worldviews, they need experiences to acquire an understanding of the perspectives.*

participant, Burnaby

*Aboriginal education involves hands-on learning and finding new ways to teach and learn within and outside of the traditional education systems (e.g., inviting community members into the classroom).*

participant, Tsaxis

*Use storytelling, sign language, and games to create opportunities for experiential education. The challenge is to maintain the integrity of material drawn from Aboriginal sources (through the help of local resource people) while at the same time helping kids meet provincial learning expectations.*

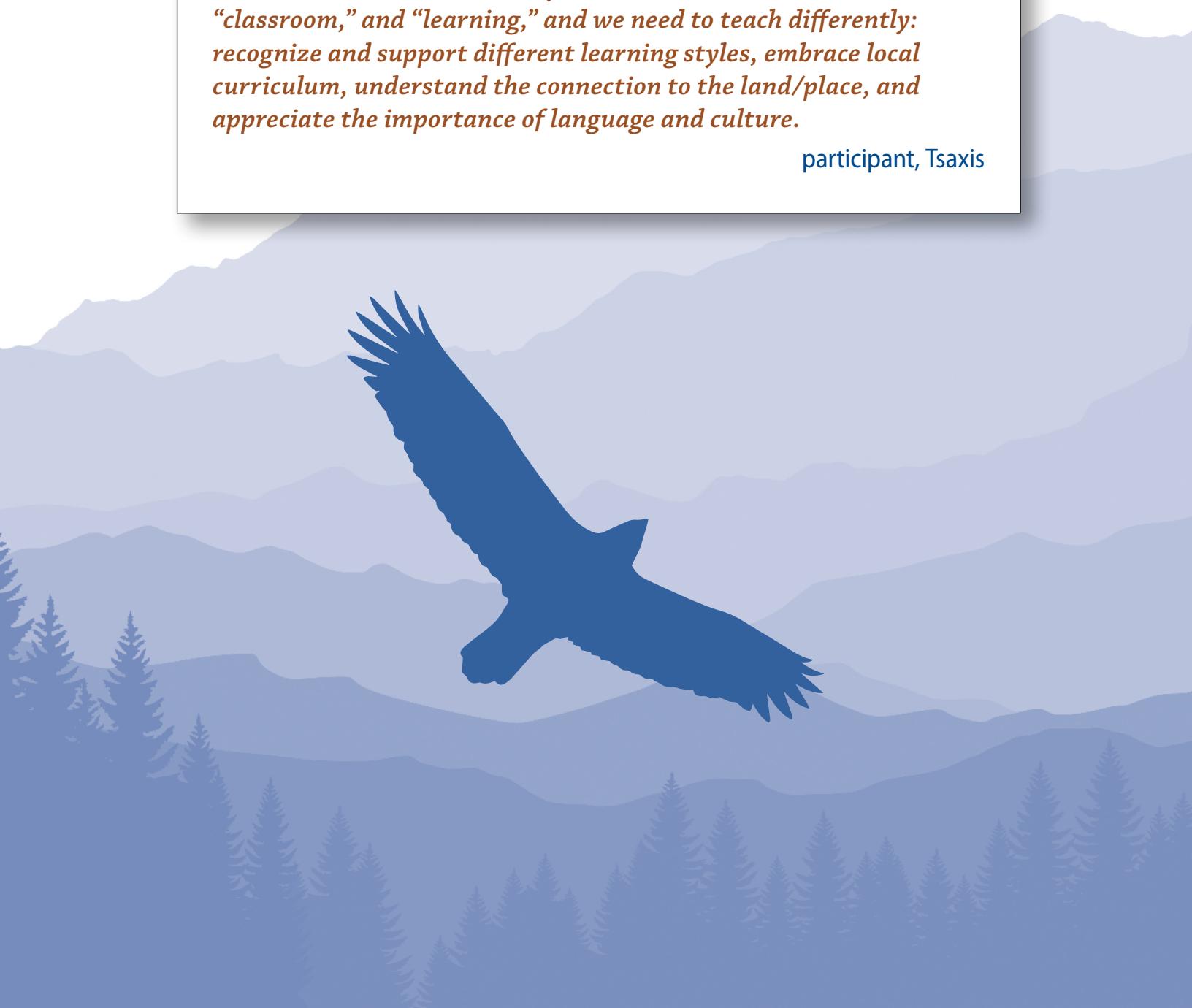
participant, West Kelowna



# Attributes of Responsive Schooling

*We have an old, out-of-date system. We need to redefine “school,” “classroom,” and “learning,” and we need to teach differently: recognize and support different learning styles, embrace local curriculum, understand the connection to the land/place, and appreciate the importance of language and culture.*

participant, Tsaxis



# The Role of the Teacher

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In any community, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, the teacher has an important role in guiding student learning, skill acquisition, and achievement. In the context of Canada's new commitment to truth and reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples, however, the teacher has an important additional role in contributing to truth, reconciliation, and healing. Where schools are situated within or near Aboriginal communities, teachers have an important role to play in contributing to the social wellbeing and cultural vitality of the community. As well, teachers have an important role to play by educating all of society about the place of First Peoples within the Canadian mosaic and the importance of redressing the historical damage done to Aboriginal communities.

*From a mental health perspective, [we need to] see how communities are dealing with health issues and understand the healing process for each individual community. I can't fix the whole problem, but I can work with my students and community to make a difference at a local level.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Teaching about Aboriginal peoples from a non-Aboriginal view when you are ill-informed is not beneficial. As teachers, we need to invest in our own learning and understanding.*

participant, Burnaby

*The "Ally Bill of Responsibilities" is a good starting place for new and practising teachers to begin to implement Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives.*

participant, Tsaxis

*It is important to ensure that consideration of Aboriginal perspectives is a normal, everyday practice and not just an occasional thing.*

participant, Burnaby



*Racism is a major challenge. Overcome this by being courageous and relentless in addressing it, identifying it when we see it, and teaching our children well. Model a better way to behave, take individual responsibility to improve self and the area around you. Address racism through cultural teachings of respect, patience, and self-regulation.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Teachers might explore the potential for building traditional Aboriginal thinking regarding parenting into courses that deal with Family Life Education and life planning (e.g., Planning 10 and thereafter). What would this look like? Can local districts be encouraged/empowered to develop such course curricula?*

participant, Williams Lake

# Community Engagement

The path to successful engagement with the local Aboriginal community begins with effective cooperation among school staff members. Teachers need to see the school's Aboriginal support workers as collaborating colleagues with invaluable knowledge of the local community and the family circumstances of individual students. Teachers can also strengthen learning by exploring ways of including knowledgeable community Elders in their classrooms and schools. Further outreach into the Aboriginal community can then allow teachers to better support their Aboriginal students and enrich the educational experience for all learners.

*Make sure that as a teacher [i.e., as an ally in the task of strengthening Aboriginal communities], you are proactive in ensuring that you're not just taking and doing [when building Aboriginal perspectives into your practice], that you're asking and conferring, that there's community involvement in every piece. This is especially important because of the history of this country, during which Indigenous voices have been silenced and made invisible; so if people don't actively find ways to involve Indigenous voices in their teaching, then it perpetuates the colonial approach. Find an Indigenous person who has accurate information, get permission from the people who have the language and knowledge, learn how to teach it, and listen (so you can subsequently say, "This is the teaching I have from this place...").*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Leaders and Elders know the barriers that each community is facing, and we need to bring this awareness into the School District too. For example, [in some cases] the younger people haven't heard the stories of the residential schools until the Truth and Reconciliation process began. This brings up many emotions and schools need to be aware and be able to support students as they learn about residential schools and all of the stories. [In other cases,] we have students experiencing difficulty with having mixed heritage and recognizing both/multiple sides of their ancestry. We have children who have been in care with the Ministry of Child and Family Development and who don't know who they are or where they come from. Parenting is an issue that affects education. We went from everyone [i.e., community-based child rearing] to nuclear families and are now contemplating going back to everyone again, because the young people need this level of support. So how do we change our parenting and schooling to meet community needs and involve everyone?*

participant, Williams Lake

*It is important to have cultural resource people from the community sharing their skills and talents in schools (e.g., Elders in Residence, Role Model program, resource people).*

participant, Tsaxis



*The Elders in Residence program at SD5 (Mt Baker High School) is an example of excellence; this program was school-initiated and then district-supported.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*The involvement of Elders & knowledge keepers is key to the appropriate representation of the culture of the place — they understand and represent the protocols (e.g., in relation to grad ceremonies). The Aboriginal learners in the class should not be the ones who are tagged or pushed into the role of knowledge keepers for the history and protocols; teachers need to understand this. Also, Aboriginal kids should not be the only ones in a class given assignments dealing with “First Nations issues.”*

participant, West Kelowna

*It is helpful if Elders are introduced to the school environment and to their supportive roles by being given opportunities to meet all students (in groups, one-on-one, as needed).*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Develop partnerships with parents, families, and communities so they feel supported by the school, connected to the school, and needed by the school. Schools and school systems cannot be successful without Aboriginal students, parents, and communities.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Build in a way to have Elders in schools, especially in secondary schools. Their presence changes the dynamic of how students feel and behave.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Having an Elder in meetings with children will change the attitude of the children.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Involving Elders in identifying service opportunities for students will contribute to the inclusion of Aboriginal content in schooling.*

participant, ?Aq'am

# Teacher Preservice Training and Inservice Professional Development

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As part of their certification studies within postsecondary education faculties, teachers require relevant and reliable information about Aboriginal education in order to confidently engage with Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives. And whether they are new to teaching or have several years' experience, they also benefit from ongoing professional development opportunities focused on emerging trends and best practice in this field.

Teachers themselves can further the cause by requesting this type of inservice training and choosing it from among other inservice professional development options when available. They can also pursue their own informal professional development in this area through conversations with knowledgeable colleagues education networks and locally focussed research (e.g., reviewing their district's enhancement agreement and informing themselves about local initiatives with respect to Aboriginal education).

*What is needed is professional development on what Aboriginal perspectives are. Not a lot of stuff is well known, and educators come from all over the world; so we can't take for granted that people know and understand First Nations cultures in BC.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Look at ways to provide professional development that builds on prior efforts to raise awareness, support students and give tools to teachers. This is a large undertaking, so it must be approached from multiple directions. It can't be a one-off; it has to be continuous and systemic. One of the most obvious results will be a reduction of racism and more acceptance of Aboriginal people across society.*

participant, Burnaby

*It would be a good idea to have cultural courses for all teachers upon their arrival in the region. Consider the example of Yukon where teachers have to learn Tlingit at a basic level and take a cultural awareness course before being certified to teach in Yukon.*

participant, Tsaxis

*It is important to take risks in learning and not be afraid to try, fail, and grow. Teachers need to cultivate and demonstrate passion. Long-term professional development can help instil this.*

participant, Burnaby

*Teachers need training, knowledge, understanding of Aboriginal history.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Building capacity in teachers to include Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom means incorporating it into the teacher education program. Several postsecondary institutions are starting to include it in their training for teachers. There are also good professional development workshops for more senior teachers (e.g., BCTF workshops on Residential Schools, and on Debunking Myths).*

participant, Tsaxis

*Designate a professional development day for Aboriginal Education and bring together all teachers, administrators, and support workers. In addition, consider establishing Professional Learning Communities: every two weeks everyone gets together and discusses how to meet the needs of all learners. Everyone has a share and say. This humanistic approach is really meaningful and engaging for teachers. Every person in the building is participating within work hours.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Support more professional development for teachers that focuses on First Peoples education, and use these professional development activities as a way to create a local Indigenous Education plan for their community. Relationships are central, so allow for professional development that helps all teachers to understand how important relationship-building is to student success (between teachers and students, students and students, parents and teachers, etc.).*

participant, Tsaxis



*Teachers and administrators need to have the knowledge and understanding to teach local history and culture across the curriculum K-12 (we need to educate new/current teachers). There needs to be more than one mandatory indigenous course in university. Future teachers should be educated on local histories and culture. We need to draw from local knowledge keepers and local resources to create mandatory Aboriginal courses/infused content across the curriculum.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Teacher education is a big one. There needs to be a change in how teachers teach in classrooms. Up North, it is mandatory for a teacher to attend a specified number of days of "inservice" orientation/training in the community before his or her 1st day of school. We too want the teachers of all Aboriginal students to be more sensitive to community environment -- more open to and aware of local Aboriginal ways of teaching and learning.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Teacher training (pre-service) needs to include topics such as residential schooling, the history of First peoples in Canada.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Use mentorship programs (with those knowledgeable about Aboriginal perspectives) to enable our current educators to succeed in helping all students.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Finding ways to integrate content into all areas of the curriculum and breaking through the bare minimum that is required involves awareness and continuous learning for teachers. As they begin incorporating Aboriginal perspectives and characteristics into their knowledge base and their practice (growth inside and outside of the classroom), it will allow them to feel more comfortable and confident in their abilities to engage with Aboriginal perspectives, get past the fear of making mistakes, consult with others to become increasingly knowledgeable, and ask questions (recognizing that there is a lot of sensitivity within many communities).*

participant, Burnaby



*Linkages to local cultural resource people need to be established for any teacher who approaches this material. This should be part of professional development, and the local resource people need to be given priority*

participant, West Kelowna

*Educators need to engage with the community. The more perspectives you have on issues, the better you will understand and be able to improve things. Engaging is an opportunity to learn and grow. Have administrators attend events, functions, or sessions that are put on by Aboriginal communities.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Ideally, all teachers would undergo a form of education focused on traditional Aboriginal learning. This is perhaps best handled via local professional development programs rather than preservice teacher education. For example, topics such as relationship building from an Aboriginal perspective and local protocols could be included as part of local professional development, as a priority. What does this look like? ...Rather than expecting Aboriginal educators to advocate for their inclusion, make it so the district administrators and school-based staff solicit their input (continual advocacy from the outside is exhausting for support workers and other front-line staff).*

participant, ?Aq'am

# A Positive, Learner-Centred Approach

In addition to knowing their students as individuals and configuring instruction to connect with their interests and build on their strengths, teachers who espouse a learner-centred approach typically adopt an outlook characterized by

- a willingness to see themselves as facilitators of students' learning rather than autonomous classroom managers
- a focus on "setting the bar ever higher" with respect to what students can do rather than on magnifying their awareness of what they cannot yet do (i.e., a deficit focus)
- an emphasis on promoting student self-regulation and student initiative with respect to their own learning (age-appropriate)
- the more extensive and frequent use of student self-assessment activities
- the ability to nurture reflective learning (including the use of student-generated criteria for assessment).

*Building capacity in our community and our students involves*

- *treating kids respectfully and really listening to what they have to say...*
- *creating a space for kids to meet their social/ emotional needs before their learning needs...*
- *educating the whole child (heart/mind education).*

participant, Tsaxis

*There are such varied methods of learning and teaching. Consequently, within the education system there needs to be huge diversity in ways to represent what you know.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Respect means giving room for all voices (indeed expecting all to take a turn speaking). It also means listening respectfully (for students, this means no electronics, but quiet doodling or movement while others speak is OK). Engendering respect is a challenge when the home environment does not have established patterns to facilitate this. Consistency in applying expectations and accountability for students are critical. And making connections with the students is key to understanding the motivation and values underlying student absences or challenging behaviour.*

*When it comes to disruptive behaviour, consequences need to be clear, consistent, and relevant for learners — not punitive, but focused on the needs of the group. Again, deliberately managing students' use of electronic devices is especially important (e.g., requiring students to park their cell phones; modelling appropriate use in specific situations).*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Addressing the needs of Aboriginal learners may mean accommodating a different sense of time. Specifically, teachers may need to take the time to make students feel resolution about their questions/feelings before moving on. This is compatible with student-centred learning, but not necessarily with the fixed timetable.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*In the classroom, making space for Aboriginal voice involves patience and time (e.g., waiting for the students to feel confident about expressing themselves). Trust building is critical, and this in turn requires educators to know and be sensitive to the individual student's personal circumstances (how often transferred among schools, home situation, etc.). If the student comes from a challenging home environment, trusting ANY adult may be difficult, so solutions such as peer support networks, student services, and specialized staff may be needed.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Making opportunities for students to retain and revisit their own earlier assignments (e.g., a writing sample from beginning and end of year) allows for self-assessment and self-reflection; (regarding the writing sample, the focus can be on content chosen to write about as much as on technical mastery).*

participant, ?Aq'am

*We need to learn from where the students are at. This involves using an inquiry strategy (taking a questioning approach), bringing diverse views into the classroom, giving students a voice, and helping them feel comfortable at standing up and saying who they are (they need a safe place to do this).*

participant, West Kelowna

*How do we ensure all students have a strong sense of identity? How do we ensure Aboriginal voice in all of the conversations around learning? Part of the answer is having youth involved at all levels, so that their voice is heard and this guides changes. ...And input needs to be sought from a diverse group of students, not always the same two. A Youth Advisory group for the school district (outside of the PAC) that meets quarterly is one possibility.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Engaging First Nations learners comes down to responding to their goals and interests (e.g., drumming, drawing, researching, pursuing outdoor education activities).*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Ensure that the territory-specific, local focus is extended to make connections with other Aboriginal peoples further afield. There may be a large mix of Aboriginal ancestries and traditions among students within the classroom, and all should feel connected and recognized.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Being willing to try is essential for learning (whether it's learning to clean fish or solve a problem). Care, kindness, and sensitivity to reticence are important for educators. Ice-breakers, encouragement, modelling of respect, and humour are all important techniques for teachers to use in order to support the willingness of students to participate.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Making space for Aboriginal voice comes back to having a safe environment for students in the classroom. This is the result of proper teacher training that enables the teacher to facilitate conversations about difficult or negative subjects in a sensitive manner, and not put First Nations students on the spot irresponsibly. Good preservice training allows teachers to capitalize on the teachable moment in a positive way. The non-verbal, reticent, shy student who is inclined to not participate especially needs support in order to feel comfortable speaking up and participating.*

participant, West Kelowna

*The democratic classroom, in which students do not feel inhibited by the teacher's authority is helpful.*

participant, West Kelowna





*Coast Salish Elder Roberta Price addressing the SD 41 Gathering in Burnaby*

# Leadership and Staffing

Beyond professional training and development, school-based educators need leadership and support from district administrators in implementing the suggestions put forward in this document. The leadership role includes

- raising the level of attention paid to Aboriginal education
- modelling respectful engagement with the local Aboriginal community
- exploring ways to find and hire more educators from within the local Aboriginal community
- recognizing the role and potential associated with Aboriginal support workers and engaging them more deliberately in the delivery of education.

*Leadership is needed to move educators away from the fear of making a mistake — saying something offensive or getting involved in discussing things you do not understand. If we want our students to be risk-takers, however, we need to be risk takers too. There needs to be culture of risk taking done in a respectful manner so teachers are able to overcome their fear of taking on an area where they are not an expert (e.g., I know about world, European and Canadian history but not Aboriginal). The new transformation curriculum is still in draft form and resources are way behind, but we have some teachers already moving ahead, and FNESC has a lot of resources. So if leaders create an atmosphere where it is okay to make honest, well-intentioned mistakes teachers will become more comfortable with Aboriginal perspectives and content and their instruction will become better.*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Leaders in the school and in the district can move the agenda forward by using drivers in education (school plans, district achievement contracts, Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements, professional development choices, school-based activities). Curriculum change is also a driver of change, since it includes Aboriginal content and what all students need to learn. The challenge for leaders will be to implement initiatives for change that may make people uncomfortable. To overcome that discomfort, leaders must model and encourage improved practices for teachers and other participants in the education process.*

participant, Burnaby

*Aboriginal advocates (equivalent of Aboriginal support workers) play an important role too as role models; they know the individual students well and liaise effectively with teachers to help engage and inspire the Aboriginal students.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Explore the use of affirmative action practices that prioritize hiring of more Aboriginal teachers of local origin. This could be done by seeking exemptions from the BC Human Rights Tribunal for priority hiring (as opposed to strict merit-based criteria for hiring). The result will be more local Aboriginal expertise within the system and clear messaging to everyone about the value of their involvement.*

participant, West Kelowna

*“The community supports the individual” is a core principle in many Aboriginal societies. The school can align itself with this by focusing on better home/school liaison, through the involvement of the Aboriginal support workers learning about the students & their home lives and communicating this to the classroom teacher(s).*

participant, ?Aq'am

*Leadership at the Ministry, district, and Bachelor of Education preservice teaching levels is important in pushing for the inclusion of Aboriginal awareness in education. Inservice workshops on both the “what” and the “how” of First Nations teaching are also important and valuable, so mandatory professional development sessions for teachers (mandated by either the district or the BC Teachers’ Federation) would help.*

participant, Williams Lake

*School district leadership is needed to help create stronger relationships between Aboriginal communities and the schools and to overcome restrictive school district policies that prevent us from taking students out on to the land. There are many roadblocks that need to be broken down — liability issues, teacher contract provisions, coordination challenges, costs. These all need to be worked on. If incorporating aboriginal worldviews and perspectives into education is perceived to be entirely optional it won’t happen. Leaders need to establish a community of learning within the school to support this work.*

participant, West Kelowna

*When it comes to teaching “outside of the box,” administrators have the ability to support this, and the encouragement needs to come from them. Even with a very simple activity such as having kids learn about stripping cedar bark via hands-on participation, there are “extra” tasks to complete and barriers to overcome, like permission forms. The amount of red tape is frustrating, and it needs to be dealt with ahead of time. Something as important as a school-organized fishing day trip requires educators to not only organize the boat and agenda, but also address issues such as weather delays, safety planning, and fishing permits so every student can participate. The cultural teacher/support worker can be involved in helping, and parents as well as members of the local (Aboriginal) community can too, but leadership and support from administrators is essential.*

participant, Tsaxis

*At the present time, many teachers feel that bringing Aboriginal expertise (Elders, support staff, language teachers) into their classroom is an imposition and gets in the way of their ability to deliver the curriculum. The timetable and the way we deliver the curriculum need to be more flexible to allow for the inclusion of Elders and knowledge keepers. Teachers need professional development to reduce the fear they feel of doing things in a new way. They also need high quality resources (including people) to help them to change the way they teach and provide students with quality learning experiences. Trustees need to honour and put into practice the recommendations from Aboriginal people. The Superintendent has to set this as a priority and follow up with their staff by asking questions and expecting results. Directors of Instruction and Principals are instrumental in ensuring that Aboriginal content is happening in all classrooms for all students.*

participant, West Kelowna

# Flexibility in Scheduling, Grouping, and Program Configuration

Finding ways to be flexible is a big challenge for school trustees as well as school-based and district educators. Creativity and determination are required, together with a willingness to explore possibilities and take risks in attempting to do things differently. As with any attempt to implement change, communication and engagement with all education partners (including Aboriginal community members and parents) are critical. The reward for success, however, is increased community satisfaction with schooling and better educational outcomes for students.

## *What does flexibility mean?*

- *When a potlatch or other ceremony is happening and an exam or test happens, we need the flexibility to allow that student another day and time to complete or finish.*
- *When we observe protocol such as a loss in a community, schools and teachers need to understand and acknowledge and find ways to help students keep their academic grades up.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Aboriginal children will miss classes to attend activities (e.g., food gathering), and teachers should give them credit/recognition for attending those activities.*

participant, Williams Lake

*The Aboriginal events that we want students to participate in and learn from don't often happen within a 9 to 5 schedule. They go into the evening, and some go on for as long as four days. Also, many important activities take place in summer, and lots of education is happening on those days. Educators need to find a different way to organize schooling (the school calendar) so kids can learn from participation in these experiences or have a day to go to sites. At the very least, there should be provision for students to do a presentation on what they learned when they come into school in September. A whole-day, whole-school open house on the first day of school that includes invites to family and other community members might also be a way to recognize and capture some of this learning.*

participant, Williams Lake

*The Graduation Program is so very important — and the Ministry cannot be too prescriptive, but must be flexible and allow for differences and styles of learning as well as a lot of Elders in classroom.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Allowing non-First Nations and First Nations kids to connect with the local reserve community (e.g., via field studies, visits) might be another way to stimulate/build understanding of what it means to be Aboriginal.*

participant, Williams Lake

*When it comes to flexible calendars, fishing and mushroom picking season could be accommodated. For the Xeni Gwet'in wagon ride, students miss school without adverse effect. And SD27 has five or six different calendars already: Naghtaneqed and Dog Creek have their own calendars established through working with the communities. We also have alternate programs where students can start later etc. Some schools have 4.5-day-per-week schedules (e.g., Alexis Creek Elementary & Junior Secondary). We are pretty far ahead. For even better success, perhaps we could have teens start later and go later in the day.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Another approach being used in SD27 is to support rural education and make arrangements for students in outlying areas to take in-town courses part of the time. Having students transition gradually to in-town schooling as they progress to higher grade levels lessens the impact on them, and they are more comfortable knowing some teachers when they eventually come into town on a more full-time basis. This idea could be extended to deal with the transition to post-secondary as well. The community would like to see opportunities for the grade 12s to meet TRU (Thompson Rivers University) staff and learn more about careers there. That would give them the sense of belonging there and make them more comfortable to go there.*

participant, Williams Lake

*The linear timetable is not structured to allow for learning in an Indigenous way. It doesn't allow for deeper exploration of things that students may be passionate about learning. Make space in the day/week/year for this to happen more often.*

participant, West Kelowna

*Building programming in an extra-curricular space (e.g., an after-school program — 3h for 12 weeks focussing on Okanagan history, culture, language, ceremonies, protocols, and that include two youth gatherings plus a 25h community project commitment such as helping Elders — service work) and then obtaining credit/certification for it once it is built has been an effective strategy for avoiding some of the development pressures/ restrictions that the system otherwise would impose.*

participant, West Kelowna

# The Learning Environment and Resources

A welcoming and caring learning environment that gives Aboriginal students the sense that they belong can make an important contribution to student engagement and participation. In this connection the value of steps to visibly acknowledge the local First Nation within the school should not be underestimated. Also important are learning resources (locally developed and other) that recognize the importance of First Peoples within Canadian society and enable Aboriginal learners to see themselves reflected in the content studied. Dedicated space that Aboriginal learners can call “their own” will likewise contribute to their sense of belonging.

*Good physical space (windows, ventilation, room to move) that enhances a sense of connection with the environment is important.*  
participant, ?Aq'am

*Make students feel welcome in the school.  
Sense of belonging is so important!*  
participant, Tsaxis

*When it comes to making space for Aboriginal voice, physical space is helpful; so capital building plans should be making provision for permanent, dedicated space for Aboriginal students, Elders, etc. to gather.*  
participant, ?Aq'am

*Make children curious about their own heritage (e.g., displaying elements of Aboriginal culture may make them more interested in asking their grandparents about their heritage).*  
participant, Williams Lake



*Actions we'd like to see in our district schools: recognizing and acknowledging Aboriginal history and diversity ...and being sensitive to the local Aboriginal community's events and issues throughout the school year.*

participant, Williams Lake

*Making space for Aboriginal voice involves developing safe and caring environments and having actual physical space to meet and hang out. It also involves students knowing where the space is and accessing it.*

participant, Tsaxis

*Schools can help build bridges with the local Aboriginal community and give voice to Aboriginal students and families by*

- *acquiring cultural objects such as a big drum, hand drums, regalia, shawls, vests, and a talking stick to use for cultural and school events*
- *adopting an Aboriginal name in the local language and making it visible on/in the school*
- *sending ambassadors from each school to significant community or regional events*
- *creating a story 'door' (or display) regarding the relationship of the school and the local band.*

participant, West Kelowna

*It is important to ensure that Aboriginal students have a place to go where they feel safe and are able to connect with an Aboriginal support worker or someone they feel comfortable with. ...also, that they have a place to go that belongs to them and their peers (Aboriginal rooms in schools).*

participant, Williams Lake

*Validation by peers is extremely important for students; creating opportunities for this to happen is affirming; for example, a bulletin posted in the school that includes profiling of issues involving the Aboriginal community can help improve visibility and initiate discussions/conversations; other examples include Remembrance Day profiling of Aboriginal vets. A continuing collection of small acts of inclusion and recognition will have more impact than a one-off.*

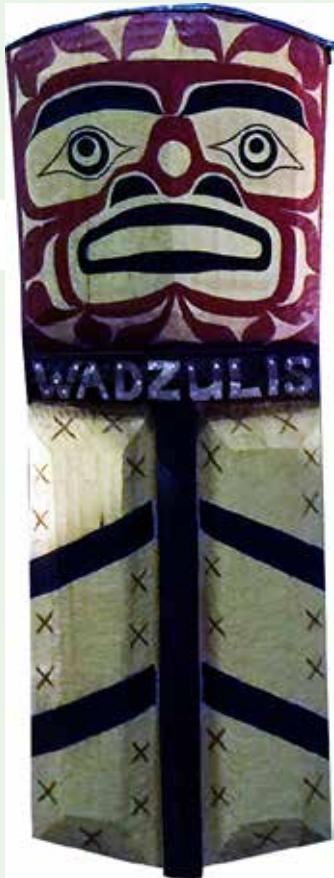
participant, Burnaby

*Calendars that reference local Aboriginal places, cultural events/activities, would be great learning/teaching resources for educators to create/acquire.*

participant, Tsaxis

# Aboriginal Education in Action: The Kwakiutl Sacred Geography Learning Project

*This is an example of how some of the characteristics of Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives (together with attributes of responsive schooling) might translate into teaching and learning at the school level — as outlined by participants at the regional session held in Tsaxis, SD 85 (Vancouver Island North).*



## Connections

This multi-age, whole-school project involved hands-on experiential learning through art, story, and geography. It likewise constituted place-based education — providing opportunities for connection with the land, nature, and the outdoors as well as constructive engagement with the local First Nations community.

## Background/Context

According to tradition, the original ancestors of the Kwakiutl were supernatural beings. In the beginning times they possessed an ability to transform between their natural state and human form. The original names of these ancestors are known as the “myth names.” These were passed down through time and came to refer to both the original ancestors and their descendants. They are still used by the Kwakiutl Chiefs today.

The places where these beings came down from the sky, out from the deep forests, or ashore from the undersea kingdom and took human form for the first time mark the genesis of each of the Kwakiutl ‘namima or tribes/clans (‘namima literally means, “those of one kind”). These creation places form part of the sacred geography of the Kwakiutl People, and the “myth names” attest to both an ancient relationship with the land and a close connection to place of origin.

Over time, many significant events occurred. The ancestors confronted other supernatural beings, performed feats of great strength, encountered ancestral spirits, or clashed with the shaman of other peoples. These events were recorded in the great oral tradition of the Kwakiutl and retold at Potlatch ceremonies through the use of masks, songs, and dances. Because these important events occurred in real geographic space, they too form part of the sacred geography of the Kwakiutl.

## Project Description

To acknowledge and celebrate this sacred geography, members of the Tsaxis community, in collaboration with local educators, decided to create place-based signage in Kwak'wala (language of the Kwakiutl First People) to mark the various places identified in the oral tradition. Master carvers and artisans engaged with Elders, youth, and community members to share the old stories, research the clan histories, gather raw materials, and engage in a creative design process. The process of making a place-based sign included

- Elders working with youth (students) to share stories and history of the place
- artisans collaborating with youth and community members on design elements
- participants in the process learning the Kwak'wala place names
- creation of an appropriate crest or artistic motif of the '*namima* whose history is tied to that place
- community engagement to build awareness and pride in the shared history of the people
- utilization of diverse natural building materials and re-used, re-cycled products to promote cost savings and sustainability



## Project Outcomes

Throughout the process, student participants gained valuable collaboration skills as well as skills associated with planning, designing, and fabricating the signs. Finally, the completed signs were installed. The actual installations constituted an act of sovereignty on the part of the Nation, as each place was named and reclaimed. The entire event was celebrated with ceremony and community involvement. This aspect of the project elicited pride among student participants, demonstrated community support for the undertaking, affirmed strong Kwakiutl leadership in education, and elevated the spirit of the people.



*Burnaby secondary student Destiny Morris demonstrating competitive fancy-dancing steps*

# Indicators of Success

*Recognize that there is a continuum of success and we can never say, “we have arrived here now and can rest on our laurels.”*

participant, ?Aq'am





*We cannot rely just on  
FSAs, Provincial Exams,  
letter grades, Fraser  
Institute rankings, etc.  
to define success.*

participant, Tsaxis

**W**hen asked about evidence of success with respect to Aboriginal Education, participants in the regional gatherings readily recognized the value of existing measures for success, including

- the graduation rate for Aboriginal learners
- the retention rate for Aboriginal learners (i.e., reductions in the drop-out rate)
- the school grades achieved by Aboriginal learners.

It was widely acknowledged that improvements in all these would certainly reflect an improvement in the state of Aboriginal education.

At the same time, however, there were repeated calls for assessment to focus not just on the scholastic achievement for Aboriginal learners, but also on the extent to which the educational system at every level (provincial, postsecondary, teacher pre-service, teacher inservice, district, school, and classroom) succeeded in taking steps in the directions previously advocated by participants — to incorporate characteristics of Aboriginal education into schooling and to become more responsive to the needs and concerns of Aboriginal communities and learners.

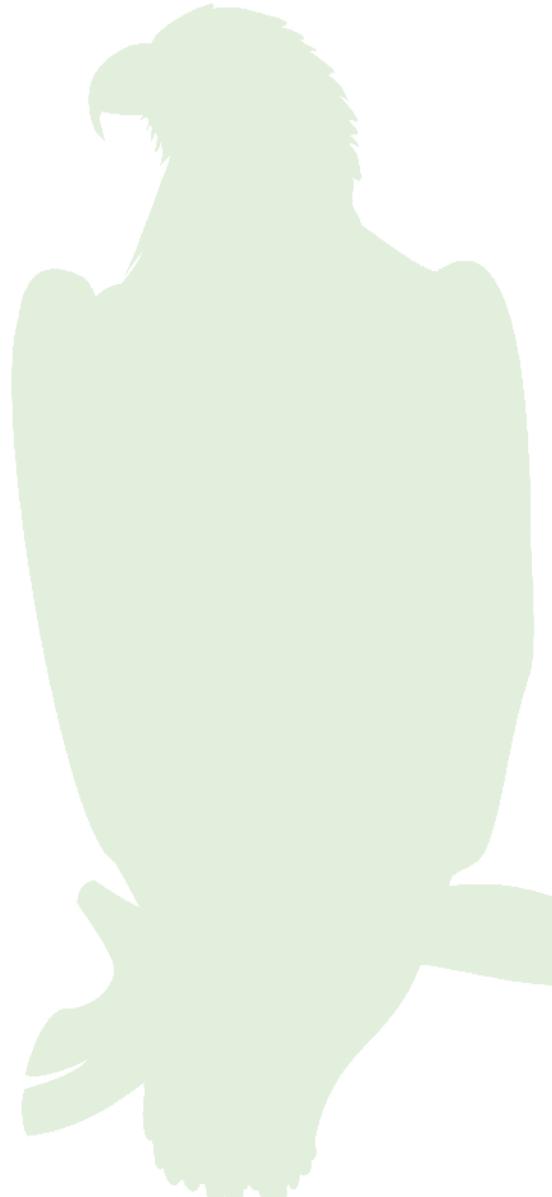
Some participants emphasized the need to broaden the scope of assessments and think long-term. Others were more inclined to identify indicators of success that are immediately applicable in the near term. Some prioritized qualitative measures of success, while for others, measures of success that rely on compilations of quantitative data remain the most practical and useful. Finally, some participants reaffirmed the value of various existing criteria for evaluating progress and noted that important indicators have already been incorporated into a number of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements that school districts have created with input from key district education partners, local First Nations, and the Ministry.

What follows here is a compendium of participant suggestions, loosely grouped according to scope and focus.

## Broad Societal Indicators of Success

We'll know we are being successful when

- Canadians generally, and educators in particular, understand and discuss the significance and ongoing impact of the residential school experience on Aboriginal people and society as a whole
- we see increased numbers of non-Indigenous people taking direct personal responsibility for their own decolonization and reconciliation
- non-Aboriginal Canadians have more realistic, informed, and positive perceptions of Aboriginal communities and individuals (recognizing that such changes in public attitudes are hard to measure and require longitudinal study)
- we see more Aboriginal individuals in leadership and role model positions in the community, government, politics, etc.
- we see Aboriginal young people succeeding in K-12, post-secondary and the job world at the same rate as the rest of society
- we see signage in [the local Aboriginal language] in communities
- Aboriginal people experience improved health
- we see significant changes in rates of employment, incarceration, and dependency, among Aboriginal people
- Aboriginal arts and music are highly obvious in mainstream media
- there is less evidence of societal racism
- today's contentious issues (such as land-related issues) are not seen as contentious but as resolvable
- when any Indigenous person who has an education doesn't feel obligated to fight for the rights of Indigenous people



## Indicators Pertaining to the School System

We'll know we are being successful when

- differing education partners within the district (e.g., educators, community leaders, police school liaison personnel, students) regularly come together to find out what is happening and what could be provided with respect to youth programming

- 
- the voice of youth (including Aboriginal youth) is present and heard as part of district educational decision making
  - all students graduate with an understanding of Aboriginal peoples and cultures
  - we see decision makers in community and in school districts recognizing that they have a role in reconciliation and making decisions with this as a fundamental consideration
  - we no longer have Aboriginal curriculum and other curriculum — we just have curriculum
  - Indigenous people's content is embedded in every subject and grade level
  - Aboriginal students are accessing and participating in district programs at the same rate as other students
  - Aboriginal learners graduate at the same rate as non-Aboriginal students (we can stop measuring Aboriginal graduation rates)
  - students have ready access to learning environments that they find engaging, including differing sorts of "alternative" school environments
  - you understand where you are in your learning, where you were in your learning, and where you are going in your learning
  - all learning is valued; all learning is supported; all learning is acknowledged; all learning is celebrated
  - we have process-oriented education (it is not about the end product)
  - we look at the personal growth of students in an all-encompassing manner and not specifically in terms of GPA
  - curriculum is inclusive of relevant, authentic Aboriginal content, and teachers feel accountable for addressing it
  - there exist more professional development and day-to-day supports for teachers on Indigenous Education
  - more local curriculum is being offered (i.e., there is funding for development of local curriculum)
  - changes to the funding model allow better funding for Aboriginal support workers, cultural teachers
  - more Aboriginal teachers are working in the system (and specifically, more teachers/support workers from the local First Nation in every district)

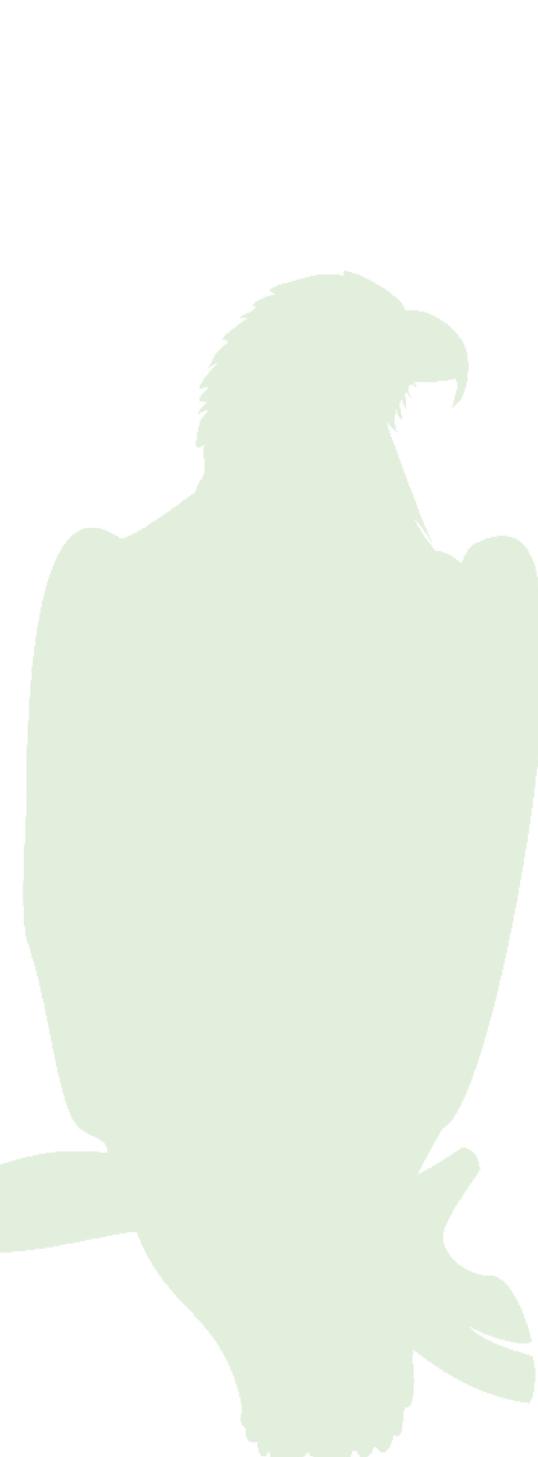
- Aboriginal individuals occupy positions at every level of the education system (e.g., teachers, principals, superintendents, directors, deputy ministers, ministers)
- technologically-savvy teaching and learning are occurring at all levels
- students experience smooth transitions between schools on reserve and the provincial school system
- there exist widespread professional training opportunities for educators engaged in language revitalization, teaching, and learning (at conferences, etc.)
- language teaching certification and curriculum identifying successive levels of proficiency exist for all Aboriginal language programs
- there is more support and training available to educators who are dealing with special needs.

## Indicators Pertaining to the Work of School-Based Educators

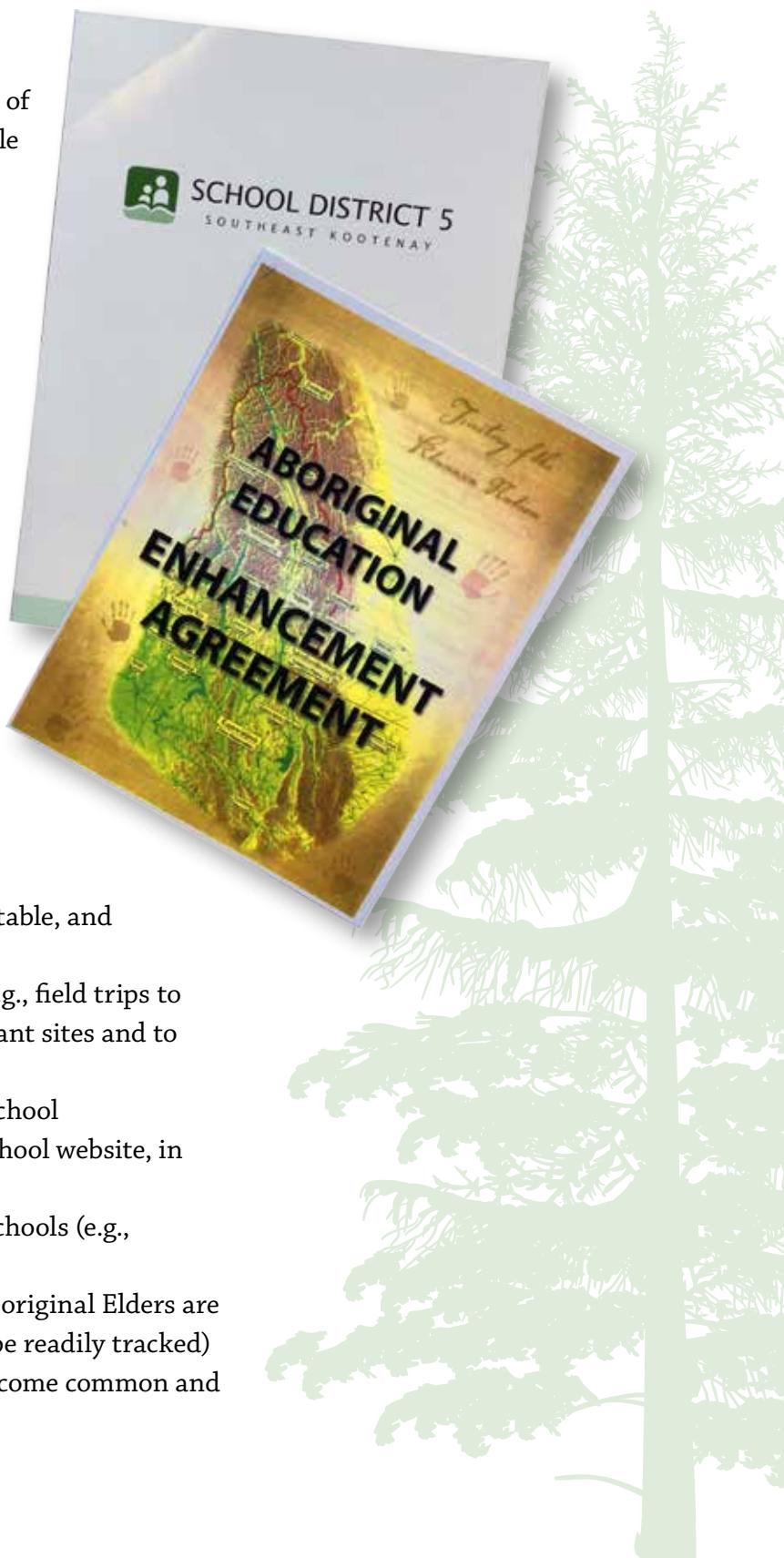
We'll know we are achieving success when

- teachers see the relevance of Aboriginal knowledge in their curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- the way we define "education" and "educator" is not only seen through a euro-academic lens (the Big House is acknowledged as an educational space, Elders and other knowledge keepers in community are highly esteemed as educators, the land and its stories are seen as a teacher, etc.)
- the values underlined in district Enhancement Agreements guide educators' work with all students
- school personnel (and community members) move beyond the expectation that only the Aboriginal educators are responsible for Aboriginal student achievement and Aboriginal education
- teachers regularly ask for and receive professional development and support in Aboriginal education
- there is more frequent and consistent cooperation between teachers and Aboriginal support workers (more collaboration, less working "in silos")
- school-based educators are able to invest more time and other resources in building relationships with Aboriginal families and communities



- 
- deliberate and explicit measures exist within each school to provide mentoring and leadership for teachers with respect to incorporating Aboriginal perspectives into their practice
  - teachers reach out to our [Aboriginal] communities and community organizations to help us provide cultural learning opportunities for students and learn with the students
  - there is a comfort level among teachers who are reaching out and receiving support from the local communities
  - natural and authentic conversations are happening in schools about Aboriginal knowledge and content — involving all members of the school community, not just teachers
  - teachers truly believe in success for all students (if you move the bar up and believe that every student can achieve that then you will see students and educators strive to do so)
  - we have teachers and administrators taking risks to change their practice in attempting to promote better Aboriginal education
  - teaching practice is open to a diversity of perspectives, including Aboriginal & student views when building learning opportunities
  - students' own ideas of success are taken into account (teachers communicate with individual students about how they feel about their learning and their achievements)
  - culturally sensitive instruments and processes are used to gather student and community satisfaction information, and this information is used to inform schooling decisions (e.g., processes would include qualitative questions such as, "Do you feel a stronger connection to your school? Do you feel stronger connection to your culture and language?" — questions such as are already included in many school satisfaction surveys)
  - teachers use encouraging language, practices, and actions, and provide frequent recognition for achievements of various kinds
  - teachers nurture and foster curiosity, regardless of time restraints, transitions, developmental age, and the constant barrage of stimulation (including the overabundance of information)
  - teachers are finding new ways for students to express knowledge (as opposed to paper and pen examinations)

- teachers regularly attend to the needs of struggling students (e.g., by investigating reasons for frequent absenteeism or a lack of focus on education and mobilizing available supports)
- there are explicit strategies to support Indigenous boys (with respect to gender parity, male students have the tendency to get left behind; the imbalance starts at a young age)
- Aboriginal students are no longer “pushed” towards receiving a school leaving certificate
- knowledgeable high school counsellors can confidently encourage Aboriginal students to look beyond “completion” courses that limit their post-secondary pathways, knowing that there is good in-school support for students to meet expectations, even when the bar for achievement is set high
- schools are more experiential and learner-centred
- classrooms are more co-operative, comfortable, and inclusive places for Aboriginal students
- there is more place-based learning time (e.g., field trips to culturally/historically/ecologically important sites and to Aboriginal community events)
- Indigenous languages are heard/seen on school announcements, on newsletters, on the school website, in blogs, and at celebrations
- traditional Aboriginal practices occur in schools (e.g., smudging, circle meetings)
- there is an increase in how many times Aboriginal Elders are coming into schools (something that can be readily tracked)
- Intergenerational learning and sharing become common and comfortable



- Elders, support staff members, and Aboriginal support workers who are involved in schooling are given role-appropriate opportunities to assess and comment on success in what they do (via focus groups, self-assessment questionnaires)
- students transition smoothly from secondary to post-secondary or the world of work — leave our systems and contribute to their communities and greater society as a whole
- every learner graduates with dignity (sense of self and pride), purpose (something they connect with), and options (ideas for what they are going to do next)

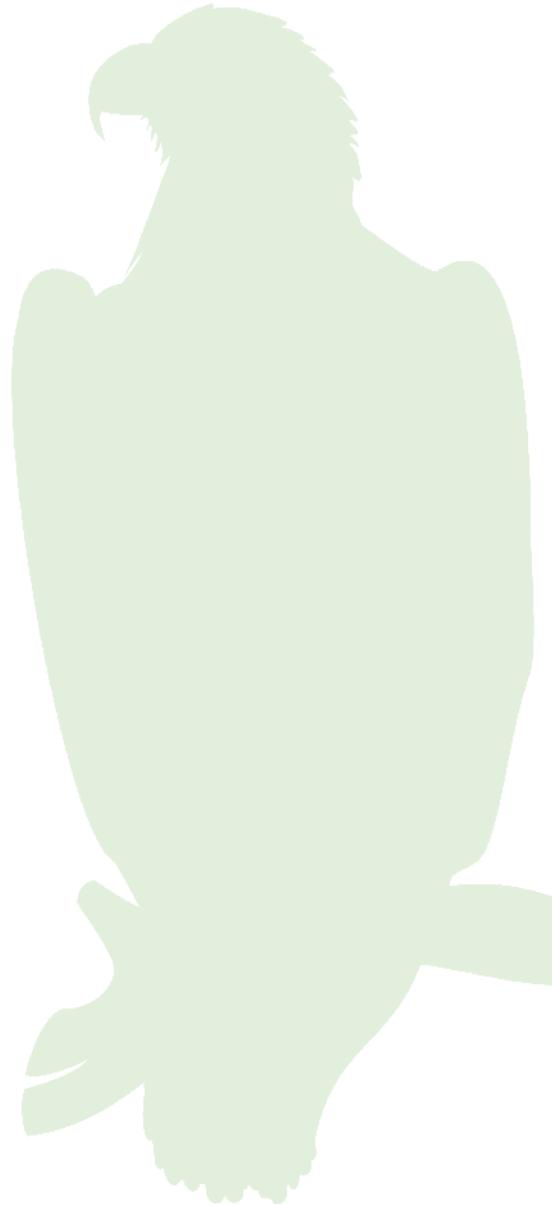
## Student-Focused Indicators

We'll know we are achieving success when

- children feel supported and have a sense of belonging
- kids will talk more openly about what happens in their lives
- there is continuous learning and kids are able to work at their own pace
- more Aboriginal students are wanting to be at school (students are coming and staying at school and are happy to come back the next day; attendance is one way to measure engagement, and engagement is a measure of success)
- more Aboriginal students are participating in sports and other school-based extra-curricular activities
- students have positive feelings about learning — both during their school years and after graduation
- the kids believe in themselves and are confident learners (youth behave with confidence and with self-determination)



- students know what their strengths are
- students are knowledgeable about who they are, with a strong sense of self and how they belong
- all students feel themselves represented in the school and in the curriculum
- students participate meaningfully in decision-making within the school
- students are motivated to think about what steps they need to take to achieve their goals
- Aboriginal students all take visible pride in their culture
- students participate in and take pride in performance and further learning (e.g., seeking out drum making and drumming workshops, participating in public drumming or dancing performance)
- we see growing/high levels of enrolment in Aboriginal language courses among all students
- we hear students using Indigenous languages in the hallways and classrooms
- we see more youth at [Aboriginal] community cultural gatherings
- we see children playing in cultural ways and able to speak confidently about how this has changed them
- students are willing to slow down, forego instant gratification (enjoy something as simple as a 10 minute walk rather than the “instant gratification” of getting a ride), and get past the perception that everything faster is “better”
- we see kids carrying themselves more respectfully, living a healthier lifestyle (how much garbage is lying around the community and in our landfill is a good indicator of our success)
- students are knowledgeable about healthy self-care that includes cultural teachings
- our kids believe in their dreams and believe that adults will assist them in reaching those dreams
- we see happy, successful graduates within the community
- we see our Aboriginal kids employed in diverse fields (conductor, astronaut, chemist, journalist) and part of society as a whole
- we see more Aboriginal youth reaching out to their Elders and families



- there is less bullying within our schools (being grounded in your own identity and feeling strong in who you are reduces the amount of bullying; when children find their voice they feel more confident in who they are; in doing so, they reduce the amount of bullying that they experience; this confidence comes from within the community, family, and school)
- people feel a real sense of satisfaction with the quality of their lives
- students feel that they are successful and satisfied (self-assessment required to quantify this)
- students feel they are overcoming barriers and achieving personal goals — or acquiring understanding in relation to those goals, even if these get modified along the way (the conversational “check-in,” or in a more formal setting the focus group, is the best means of identifying this)
- we see students learning about a job from hands-on experience in the field (e.g., in silviculture)



# Possible Next Steps



# Helpful Links



#BCAbTalks

In keeping with the feedback received from the five regional gatherings, this document urges you as educator to establish direct personal connections and build relationships with educational partners committed to Aboriginal education. A valuable part of your network can be the ever-strengthening online community that shares news about relevant new developments and ideas for practice. The online world can also help you to better access the growing collection of culturally authentic learning and teaching materials being produced. Here we identify four valuable places to explore online:

## 1. [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/documents.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/documents.htm)

This part of the Ministry of Education's website identifies several Ministry-produced learning resources and curriculum materials and gives access to a host of useful links that provide reliable information on topics of interest.

The screenshot shows the "ABORIGINAL EDUCATION RESOURCES" section of the BC Ministry of Education website. It includes a search bar, a navigation menu with links like "B.C. Home", "Ministry of Education", and "Aboriginal Education", and a "Resources" link. Below the menu, there are two main sections: "THE FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING" and "LEARNING RESOURCES".

- THE FIRST PEOPLES PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:** This section discusses the First Peoples Principles of Learning and provides a link to the "Principles of Learning (PDF)".
- LEARNING RESOURCES:** This section includes:
  - Aboriginal Curriculum Integration (ACI) Project:** A project to create K-12 multimedia resources that integrates Aboriginal content into curriculum. It features a website of lesson plans initially focusing on core curricular areas in Grades 7, 8 and 9.
  - Planning Guide and Framework – Development of Aboriginal Learning Resources:** A guide designed to help educators and Aboriginal communities work in partnership to develop learning resources that reflect and honour the cultures and history of the Aboriginal peoples.
  - Shared Learnings: Integrating BC Aboriginal Content K-10 (PDF, 2.85MB):** A resource guide developed as a tool for integrating Aboriginal content into all subject areas from kindergarten through Grade 10. Purchasing information is available from [Crown Publications](#).
  - First Nations Map:** A map illustrating the rich diversity of First Nations peoples of British Columbia.
  - First Peoples' Language Map of BC:** A geographic depiction of the First Nations languages of B.C. It is an excellent tool for teaching students about the wealth and diversity of the Indigenous languages and cultures in this Province. Maps can be ordered through the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council.

On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar titled "ABORIGINAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS". It lists "Social Studies" documents, "English First Peoples" documents, "Approved First Nations Languages", and "RESEARCH". There is also a "USEFUL LINKS" section at the bottom.

2. [www.fnesc.ca/resources](http://www.fnesc.ca/resources)

This portion of the website for the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC, the organization created by First Nations leadership to speak on behalf of First Nations on education in BC) identifies many useful documents and provides streaming versions of several videos.

The screenshot shows the FNESC website's Publications page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About, Programs, Resources, Post-Secondary, Events, Learning First Peoples, Contact, and a search bar. Below the navigation is a large banner featuring the FNESC logo and the text "First Nations Education Steering Committee". Under the banner, there is a sub-navigation menu for "Publications" with categories: Teacher Resources, Public Schools K-12, First Nations Schools and Governance, Languages, Post Secondary, and Annual Reports. The main content area displays a table of publications with columns for Title, Date, and Link. The publications listed are:

Title	Date	Link
In Our Own Words: Bringing Authentic First Peoples Content to the K-3 Classroom	2012	.pdf
Authentic First Peoples Resources K-7	2011	.pdf
English First Peoples 10 & 11, Teacher Resource Guide	2010	.pdf
Math First Peoples 8 & 9, Teacher Resource Guide	2010	.pdf
English First Peoples 12, Teacher Resource Guide, Teacher Resource Guide	2009	.pdf
Poster First Peoples Principles of Learning	2008	.pdf

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links for About Us, Programs, Resources, Post-Secondary, Learning First Peoples, and a search bar. The footer also contains copyright information: "Copyright First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) - All Rights Reserved".

The screenshot shows three video thumbnails from the FNESC website. The first thumbnail is titled "2012 FNESC conference highlights" and shows a video player with a play button and a progress bar. The second thumbnail is titled "Keynote - 18th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education" and shows a video of Justice Murray Sinclair speaking at a podium. The third thumbnail is titled "FNESC Edward John Keynote" and shows a video of Grand Chief Ed John speaking at a podium. Below each video thumbnail is a caption: "2012 FNESC conference highlights", "Justice Murray Sinclair's keynote address at the 18th Annual FNESC Conference on Aboriginal Education", and "Grand Chief Ed John's keynote address at the 18th annual FNESC conference on Aboriginal education". The bottom of the page has a link: "For the audio from the keynote speeches for the 12th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education, please click here."

3. <http://noii.ca/aesn/> and the related page <http://noii.ca/spiral-of-inquiry/>
- The Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network (AESN) is part of the Network of Innovation and Inquiry (NOII, <http://noii.ca/>). AESN schools link their inquiry specifically to Aboriginal ways of knowing. The “Spiral of Inquiry” provides school teams with the structure for guiding their improvement and innovation work. Participating schools develop a question to address through their inquiry, collaborate with colleagues through regional meetings, and share case studies in a spirit of generosity and curiosity.

**Spiral of Inquiry**

Inquiry is about being open to new learning and taking informed action. The [Spiral of Inquiry](#) invites network schools in taking an inquiry-oriented, evidence-based approach to learning and teaching — one that focuses on making the education system more equitable through the provision of high-quality learning opportunities for all young people.

The Spiral of Inquiry has six key stages: scanning, focusing, developing a hunch, new professional learning, taking actions and checking that a big enough difference has been made. At each stage in the spiral, three questions are asked: What is going on for our learners? How do we know? and Why does this matter?

**AESN**

Schools participate in the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network (AESN) on a voluntary and annual basis. AESN schools link their inquiry specifically to Aboriginal ways of knowing. The [Spiral of Inquiry](#) provides school teams with the structure for guiding their improvement and innovation work. Participating schools develop a question to address through their inquiry, collaborate with colleagues through regional meetings, and share case studies in a spirit of generosity and curiosity.

4. [www.k12innovation.ca](http://www.k12innovation.ca)

The **Innovation Inventory** is a showcase of innovative practices that are currently underway in schools throughout B.C. Schools are encouraged to submit their stories in a medium that best illustrates their innovation so that it can be shared with others. The **Innovation Partnership** is a community of practice focused on bridging the theory and practice of learning innovation. In

addition to having an opportunity to showcase your innovative program or practice, schools accepted into the partnership will have access to research support, opportunities to engage with districts doing similar work, potential exemption to policy/regulation, and resources to help cover the costs associated with the partnership.

**K-12 Innovation**

Home How to Participate Frequently Asked Questions Contact Us

On January 29, 2015 the Minister of Education announced the K-12 Innovation Strategy, a strategy intended to support teachers as they implement practices which integrate and promote personalized learning in the classroom, school and school community.

At the heart of the K-12 Innovation Strategy is the Innovation Partnership, a community of practice focused on bridging the theory and practice of learning innovation. The Innovation Partnership Working Group (IPWG) was established to work on behalf of the K-12 education system as stewards of this partnership.

Innovation best serves the system when successes are shared, networks are cultivated, and educators are given opportunities to further explore initiatives that benefit student learning.

Teachers and students to benefit from new video

Members of the IPWG include the following education partner groups:

bcpvpa British Columbia Teachers' Federation BCIT Ministry of Education FISABC BCSSA

HOW TO PARTICIPATE!

Beyond this, conduct your own searches to find the work of researchers and pedagogues in the field. There are many prominent practitioners from BC, including Dr. Jan Hare, Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, Dr. Jeanette Armstrong, Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Dr. Michelle Pidgeon, Dr. Trish Rosborough, and Dr. Lorna Williams, among others.

*Local resources are valuable; examples are*

- *document developed by City of Vancouver from Guidebook for Immigrants*
- *the Stó:lō Historical Atlas*
- *correspondence between the Queen and people of British Columbia*
- *Musqueam exhibit*
- *Ellen White – Snuneymuxw – Coast Salish stories (20-page books, all aimed at an Elementary audience).*

participant, Burnaby

# Co-operative Reflection on Practice

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It is hoped that this resource and the process leading up to its creation will inspire educators to move ahead with transformative practice in relation to Aboriginal education. Beyond building partnerships and relations with communities and conducting personal research, useful next steps include bringing together colleagues (fellow educators, support workers, administrators) at both the district and school level to ponder collective action. Staff meetings and/or special-purpose “mini-gatherings” might advantageously focus on round table discussions of questions such as the following:

## Possible Primary Questions

- How does our school incorporate local Aboriginal communities in decisions regarding school programs and student learning activities?
- Who from the local Aboriginal community/communities might we want to consult or include in our planning?
- What local resource people, places of cultural significance, and other local First Nations resources are available to support our school programs and student learning activities?
- What are we doing to ensure that Aboriginal parents have a voice in their children’s education at the classroom, school, and district level?
- How has my perception of my role in reconciliation changed as a result of reading this document?
- What are we already doing well? How do we know? What concrete, new steps might we take?
- What professional learning resources have we found that we consider worth sharing with colleagues, and why?
- Of all the specific instructional and assessment practices we have tried, what has proven troublesome for students? What has proven engaging?

## Possible Secondary (Follow-Up) Questions

- How will emotional support, including counselling, be provided for students if they are confronted with racism or experience emotional turmoil when learning about colonialism and decolonization?
- How can we as educators raise awareness about culture and community as sources of strength?
- How can we better support teaching of authentic Canadian history?
- What might gifted learning and other specialized learning programs in our school look like for Aboriginal youth?
- How do we extend and network within our school district and beyond?
- Should we look at rearranging the school day for teenagers?





#BCAbTalks