



# Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement

June 2016 to June 2021



**Vancouver  
Board of Education**



Vancouver Board of Education

# Acknowledgements

The Vancouver Board of Education acknowledges and honours the traditional unceded territories of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish, Coast Salish peoples; where we live, work, and learn.

We acknowledge the contributions and commitments of the members of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Implementation and Monitoring Committee who have met to review the annual plans over the five years of the first agreement, and who have supported and participated in the development of the Second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

# Table of Contents

- Guiding Principles ..... 2
- Who We Are ..... 3
- What We've Learned From  
Our First Agreement..... 5
- Our Goals .....7
  - Goal 1: Belonging..... 8
  - Goal 2: Mastery ..... 10
  - Goal 3: Culture and Community ..... 13
- Appendix ..... 18
- Memorandum of Agreement ..... 19
- Acknowledgements ..... 20

Cover photo and photo below are students in the Aboriginal Focus Program at Macdonald Elementary



# Guiding Principles

The first agreement, from June 2009 to June 2014, was created upon two principles, which continue to guide the work:

1. Each Aboriginal learner and family must experience a sense of belonging and place within educational settings, where their voices are heard, where they have choice and influence in decision making, and where their cultures, histories and contributions are respected and reflected.
2. The Vancouver Board of Education will provide equity of opportunity for Aboriginal students, and be committed to the ongoing development of best-practice strategies for instruction, improvement and inclusion.

These guiding principles are further supported with the recent release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report; "*Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*":

*"Much of the current state of troubled relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is attributable to educational institutions and what they have taught, or failed to teach, over many generations. Despite that history, or, perhaps more correctly, because of its potential, the Commission believes that education is also the key to reconciliation." (p. 234)*

During the life of the first Enhancement Agreement the emphasis has been on supporting Aboriginal students to graduate successfully from Grade 12, as well as to develop broader knowledge, awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture, histories and contributions, in all of our students.

The parties to the Agreement recommit to the following:

- » Maintaining shared ownership and mutual respect;
- » Creating learning environments where Aboriginal students are safe and respected;
- » Honouring the people, traditional territories and teaching of the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish peoples and those students, families and community members who are First Nations, Metis, or Inuit;
- » Acknowledging the traditional teachings of the Elders and the intrinsic value of Aboriginal cultures and beliefs.

# Who We Are

The City of Vancouver is enriched by its very diverse Aboriginal community. It is home to the third largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada with approximately 53,000 people. In addition to three Coast Salish Nations who are indigenous to the area -- Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations -- the city is also home to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit from all over the country. The majority of the Aboriginal people in Vancouver are First Nations, the next largest group is Métis, and less than 1 percent of the Aboriginal people in Vancouver are Inuit. This Aboriginal population is generally younger than the non-Aboriginal population.

## According to the *Environics Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study in 2010*,

- » *85 percent of Aboriginal Vancouverites said they are “very proud” of their specific Aboriginal identity (i.e., First Nations, Métis or Inuit). 52 percent are “very proud” of being Canadian.*
- » *44 percent are not concerned about losing their cultural identity. They feel it is strong enough to continue and that they can protect it.*
- » *70 percent of First Nations people, Métis and Inuit think Aboriginal culture in Vancouver has become stronger in the last five years.*
- » *25 percent hope that young people from the next generation will stay connected to their cultural community, and 17 percent hope their young people will experience life without racism and discrimination.*
- » *Aboriginal Vancouverites have a higher tolerance and acceptance for other cultures than their neighbours: 81 percent of Aboriginal people in Vancouver believe there is room for a variety of languages and cultures in this country, in contrast to 51 percent of other Vancouverites.*
- » *A majority of Aboriginal people living in Vancouver, believe they are viewed in negative ways by Canadians.*
- » *Urban Aboriginal people want to be an important and visible part of urban life. Six in 10 feel they can make their city a better place to live, which is similar to the way that non- Aboriginal urban people feel.*

Grade 12 Aboriginal graduation retreat.



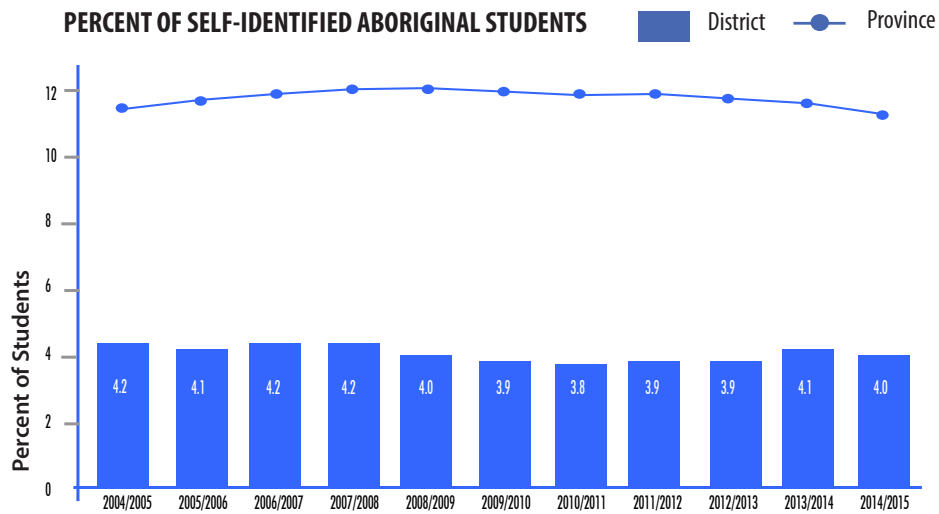
The Vancouver School District is the second largest school district in the province, with a student population of 51,000. Approximately 2200 students self-identify as Aboriginal annually (4% of the total school population), and they represent over 600 bands and nations.

The conditions that are present in an urban context, such as wide disparity in socio-economic levels, rates of transiency, and degrees of connectedness to cultural identity and supports, are all reflected in our Aboriginal student population. Each student has their own story, and we have tried to acknowledge and reflect indigenous student perspectives in the ways in which we provide supports to students and their families.

**NUMBER OF STANDARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY PERCENTAGE OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS**  
**DISTRICT - Number of Schools**

School	Total Schools	under 5	5 to 10	10 to 20	20 to 50	50 to 100
Year	#	%	%	%	%	%
2010/11	109	83	14	5	4	3
2011/12	110	85	15	3	4	3
2012/13	110	83	16	3	5	3
2013/14	110	82	17	3	5	3
2014/15	111	88	12	3	5	3

**PERCENT OF SELF-IDENTIFIED ABORIGINAL STUDENTS**



left: VSB representatives and First Nations community members share in the blessing of the canoe.  
 right: Students, from Streetfront Youth Program launched the canoe.



# What We've Learned From Our First Agreement

During the life of the first Enhancement Agreement the emphasis has been on supporting Aboriginal students to graduate successfully from Grade 12, as well as to develop broader knowledge, awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture, histories and contributions. By focusing on the success of each Aboriginal student on an individual basis, we have seen a gradual improvement in the graduation rate and Six-Year Completion Rate.

Through the first Enhancement Agreement, these are some of the changes that have been made in support of student success:

- » The Aboriginal Education staff has been reorganized into a student case-based service delivery model to increase connectedness and accountability.
- » The data available on Aboriginal Student Achievement has been enhanced by the development of an Aboriginal Information Management System (AIMS) and promotion of individual success plans for each Aboriginal student.
- » Aboriginal Education targets, goals, and review processes have been prescribed at the district and school level.
- » Aboriginal Education services are embedded in schools as part of school based teams with a greater focus on 'push-in' service model delivery.
- » VBE staff is more aware of factors leading to success for our Aboriginal students and therefore plan accordingly.
- » The Aboriginal Focus School was created at Macdonald Elementary and opened September 2012.
- » District Recognition ceremonies at the grade 7 level and a District Aboriginal Graduation ceremony are in place.
- » An annual Grade 12 Aboriginal Student District Retreat was established.
- » The value of the role of Aboriginal Elder/Knowledge-keeper is recognized and appreciated throughout our schools.

We know that more needs to be done to close the gap between graduation rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, and that we need richer data to tell this story with greater accuracy, and with reference to individual student achievement.

The district has continued to develop more intentional and explicit supports for all schools to further understanding of Aboriginal culture, histories and contributions through: District-Wide Professional Development Days; expanded cultural workshop opportunities for students at the school and district level; the creation of new staff positions to support the development of cultural awareness; and the inclusion of the



Photos above: signing of the Vancouver School District's first AEEA (June 25, 2009)

following goal in each school plan since 2013-2014:

*To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions among all students.*

We have been well supported in the development of this goal through the contributions of local Elders, local Aboriginal cultural organizations, and the Musqueam Band who have hosted numerous staff and student professional development opportunities at their Cultural Centre.

As a result we note the following:

- » The awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal culture has grown amongst students and staff.
- » Aboriginal cultural celebrations throughout the VSB are a common occurrence
- » Workshops and cultural activities are developed and presented throughout the district on an ongoing basis.
- » The establishment of an annual First Peoples Festival at the Museum of Anthropology was an important addition to our cultural celebrations.
- » Schools and offices are more accommodating and welcoming to Aboriginal people and a conscious effort has been made to reflect, support and encourage displays of Aboriginal art throughout the district.
- » The district continues to develop closer connections with Aboriginal community organizations and post-secondary institutions.
- » The VBE has been instrumental in developing MOUs and agreements with universities and local organizations on initiatives to increase connections with elder services, and to improve student readiness for and access to post secondary opportunities.
- » Policies on Aboriginal staffing and recruitment are in place and governed by Human Rights exemptions.



Grade 12 Aboriginal grad retreat: An opportunity to celebrate the students' successful entry into Grade 12 as well as learn about university and college application procedures, band funding, scholarships and lots of other valuable information necessary for the Grade 12 year

Nootka Elementary Celebrates Gathering Day





# Our Goals

For the new agreement, the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Implementation and Monitoring Committee has agreed that **the three goal statements will remain the same**, as they accurately describe what is important in improving success for Aboriginal students in the Vancouver School District. There has been a slight rewording of the culture and community goal, where 'respect' replaces 'empathy', as a stronger, more affirmative term for this goal statement.

## Belonging

To increase Aboriginal students' sense of pride, self-esteem, belonging, place, acceptance and caring in their schools.

## Mastery

To ensure Aboriginal students achieve increased academic success in Vancouver schools and that they participate fully and successfully from kindergarten through the completion of Grade 12.

## Culture and Community

To increase knowledge, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions by all students through eliminating institutional, cultural and individual racism within the Vancouver school district learning communities

Our goals will be reviewed annually throughout the five years of this second agreement to ensure that they continue to support Aboriginal student success.

# Goal 1

# Belonging

To increase Aboriginal students' sense of pride, self-esteem, belonging, place, acceptance and caring in their schools.

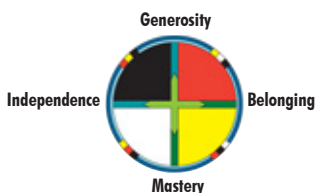
One of the key findings of the Middle Years Development Instrument (2014) is that children's health and well-being is directly related to the presence of the following assets they perceive in their lives:

- » Supportive relationships with adults
- » Supportive relationships with peers
- » Enriching activities
- » Proper nutrition and sleep
- » Positive school experiences

## What the Research Tells Us

Our District has been working on social emotional-learning with Kimberly Schonert-Reichl and Shelley Hymel for many years. We have relied on their research into belonging and relationship to inform our practice in this area. Shonert-Reichl and LaRose (2008) provide multiple sources of evidence for the need for children to feel a sense of belonging. In short they show that "children's engagement or disengagement in institutions, such as schools, depends largely on whether children's fundamental needs for belonging, autonomy, and competence are being fulfilled" (p.14). They further go on with a reference to the framework developed by Martin Brokenleg and others in a "Circle of Courage". The framework is based

**CIRCLE OF COURAGE**  
developed by Martin Brokenleg and others



on Aboriginal worldviews as well as the latest research on resilience in youth. The "Circle of Courage" takes into consideration the universal growth needs of all children and includes four dimensions: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Leading to a sense of belonging is a connection with adults in the school. Results from the study that initiated the Middle Years Development Instrument which is used regularly in our District, found that children in grades 6 and 7 who felt connected to a parent, peer, or community adult reported greater empathy towards others, higher optimism, and higher self-esteem than children who felt less connected. These kinds of research have informed both the selection of this goal and the strategies used to promote a sense of belonging.

## What We Have Learned and What We Celebrate from Our Work

The Aboriginal Education staff has been reorganized into a student case-based service delivery model to increase connectedness and accountability. Using a database called Aboriginal Information Management Systems (AIMS), Aboriginal and support staff in schools has been tracking the kinds of interventions in place for each student in order to better plan for their success. Using this system has provided caring adults a more systematic way to track Aboriginal student engagement and their relationships with caring adults. We have learned that not only is the sense of belonging for each child important, but a sense of belonging for their families is equally so. Getting to know each student, their families, and what makes them feel a better sense of belonging is critical. To this end, the district has been developing individual success plans for each child.

Regular attendance at school has been determined to be a critical issue for many students in the district, including a large proportion of Aboriginal students. For some students, regardless of their background, poor attendance can result from feeling like you don't belong. It can also be an impediment to developing a strong and positive sense of belonging. For our Aboriginal students, this is an



Student, Walter Dan and Musqueum artist, Debbie Sparrow



Grandview/Łuuqinak'uuh Elementary School tile mural.

issue at all levels of the K-12 system. The District is implementing an attendance strategy to track and improve attendance for all students. Recognizing that there may be different reasons for attendance issues amongst our Aboriginal students, our Aboriginal staff will be working with school support staff to ensure that these issues are recognized and supported in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

We learned that celebrations for Aboriginal Students provide a concrete way to engage them and celebrate their successes, which in turn, leads to a sense of belonging and pride. We will continue to look for opportunities to celebrate Aboriginal students, their families, and their communities in a genuine and supportive manner.

## Indicators and Targets

1. We will administer an Aboriginal Student Survey based on the Circle of Courage (Generosity, Belonging, Mastery and Independence) which will provide baseline and then annual data for each of the three goals.
2. We will use MDI data to track “connectedness to adults at school” and “school belonging” at the Grades 4 and 7 levels (and Grade 10 when available). We aim to see an increase in these areas.
3. The District will track attendance with the use of the Student Information System. We have collected base-line data and will aim for an increase in attendance each year for the next five years. Our first area of focus will be at the transition years; entering Kindergarten, Grade 7 to Grade 8, and Grades 10, 11, and 12.
4. We will track our Aboriginal student self-identification data throughout the District. We will aim for an increase in students choosing to self-identify as Aboriginal because they are feeling more welcomed, engaged and proud to be a part of the school community.
5. We will track Aboriginal student involvement and participation in extracurricular, leadership and volunteer opportunities at the secondary level as well as looking at MDI data related to “social responsibility and volunteering” and “use of after school time”. We will aim for increases to participation rates in all of these areas.

# Goal 2

# Mastery

To ensure Aboriginal students achieve increased academic success in Vancouver schools and that they participate fully and successfully from Kindergarten through the completion of Grade 12.



*Poor educational achievement has led to the chronic unemployment or under-employment, poverty, poor housing, substance abuse, family violence, and ill health that many former students of the schools have suffered as adults. Although educational success rates are slowly improving, Aboriginal Canadians still have dramatically lower educational and economic achievements than other Canadians.*

*Education is a fundamental human and Aboriginal right, guaranteed in Treaties, in international law, and in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms...*

*Although secondary school graduation rates for all Aboriginal people have improved since the closure of the [residential] schools, considerable gaps remain when compared with the rates for the non-Aboriginal population. For example, according to the 2006 census, 34% of Aboriginal adults had not graduated from high school, compared with only 15% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In the 2011 census, these numbers improved slightly, with 29% of Aboriginal people not graduating from high school, compared with 12% in the non-Aboriginal population.*

*"Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, July 2015, p. 145-146*

## What the Research Tells Us

Schools are environments for learning. Although learning requires a sense of belonging, including seeing one's cultural respected and reflected in the environment, ultimately to be successful in school, students have to learn to read, write and understand a variety of areas of knowledge. The research in this area is immense and we have focused on two areas.

The first is research on early literacy, which tells us that if students have not learned to read and write by the end of grade three, they will likely never catch up to their peers. Early intervention is critical for success. We believe this to be one of the most important pieces of research to inform our work. We rely considerably on the work of Marie Clay



2015 Aboriginal Graduation Celebration

(2005) and others who have done extensive research on Reading Recovery. At present there are 52 of the 92 elementary schools in Vancouver that have Reading Recovery programs.

Some students do, however, continue through their schooling struggling with their learning. For the youth who are at risk of not succeeding in academic areas, researchers have noted the importance of attending to an individual student's "voice" (Garard, 1995) while Croninger and Lee (2001) demonstrate the importance of relationships and the role teachers play in offering support and guidance.

Our most recent Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) data (2014) indicate that district-wide, 22% of our Grade 4 students and 47% of our Grade 7 students could not name one person at school whom they considered to be an "important adult". An important adult is defined as someone who, among other things, "encourages me to pursue goals and future plans" and "teaches me how to do things that I don't know".

## What We Have Learned and What We Celebrate from Our Work

Through our work with the implementation of the Early Intervention Plan we have found that most students who have access to individual tutoring with highly trained teachers in Reading Recovery are successful in learning to read in Grade One, unless they have more specific learning needs. And even then, we are able to identify them early for additional supports. Either way, Reading Recovery, an intervention we have been systematically implementing across the district with a Five Year Plan in place, has been proving to be successful for Aboriginal students.

In addition, the District's decision two years ago to review the structure of the long-standing "Inner City Schools" model has allowed us to move from providing support to whole schools which were deemed to be Inner City to an "Enhanced Services" model, which provides specific, targeted support to those individual students who need the most help, many of whom are Aboriginal. The change of the role of Project Teachers to Literacy Teachers means that there are additional academic supports in place (in addition to the Reading Recovery model) for these students.

Another outcome of the creation of the Enhanced Services model was the implementation of Transition Teachers. These teachers work alongside the Aboriginal Education staff to ensure that those students who may risk "getting lost" in those important transition years of Grades 6 and 7 to Grade 8, as well as Grades 10 through 12 are supported in whatever ways necessary, including ensuring that they have the necessary courses that lead to graduation.

Having specific individual success plans for Aboriginal students in Grade Twelve has made an immense difference in their trajectory. By focusing on the success of each Aboriginal student, on an individual basis, we have seen a gradual improvement in 2 different measures, the Graduation rate and Six-Year Completion rate. Aboriginal Education services are embedded in schools as part of school based teams with a greater focus on 'push-in' service model delivery.

We have learned that when the Aboriginal Staff as well as the Enhanced Services Staff are focused on the academic success of Aboriginal students, they are able to more effectively coordinate with the work of other support staff in schools. All schools have

a goal for Aboriginal Education and the collective responsibility for success is a positive direction. It is clear that every member of staff in every school needs to be responsible for the success of Aboriginal students. Creating a culture of success through annual celebrations at the Grade 7 and 12 levels is also important.

## Indicators and Targets

1. We will administer an Aboriginal Student Survey based on the Circle of Courage (Generosity, Belonging, Mastery and Independence) which will provide baseline and then annual data for each of the three goals.
2. We are going to track students' individual success plans – first for those students in grades 4, 6, 7 and 10, 11, and 12, and eventually students in other key grades as well. We will target improvement in transition rates, which we believe will improve incrementally as a result of the individual focus.
3. We are tracking the results of students receiving Reading Recovery support and aim to have every Aboriginal child reading at grade level by the end of Grade One. We will disaggregate our data from Reading Recovery to identify Aboriginal students.
4. We are tracking graduation rates – both the Six-Year Completion and Grade Twelve Graduation. We aim to increase each measure each year, with an ultimate goal for equity with non-Aboriginal students.
5. We are tracking Grade 10 Provincial Examination Participation and Results. We aim to increase participation in Grade 10 English because under the current Graduation Plan requirements it is critical for school completion. We also aim to improve results in Grade 10 English with more students receiving C+ or better each year. (Currently, the Ministry of Education is reviewing and revising graduation requirements. Should these requirements change, we will adjust our targets and indicators accordingly.)
6. We are tracking Aboriginal student post secondary transitions to colleges, universities, trades programs and apprenticeships. We will aim to increase the number of students who continue with their education and/or training after graduating from secondary school.
7. We will use MDI data to track "Academic self-concept" for our Aboriginal students in Grades 4 and 7 (and Grade 10 when available). We will aim to increase the number of students who have a positive self-concept.



Britannia Secondary Aboriginal Book Club

# Goal 3: Culture and Community

To increase knowledge, awareness, appreciation of, and respect for Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions by all students through eliminating institutional, cultural and individual racism within the Vancouver school district learning communities.

The right of children to know their culture and language is protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008):

## Article 15

1. *Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.*
2. *States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.*

*Fully implementing this national education framework will take many years, but will ensure that Aboriginal children and youth see themselves and their cultures, languages, and histories respectfully reflected in the classroom. Non-Aboriginal learners will benefit, as well. Taught in this way, all students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, gain historical knowledge while also developing respect and empathy for each other. Both elements will be vital to supporting reconciliation in the coming years.*

*"Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, July 2015, p. 240*

## What the Research Tells Us

The history of Aboriginal Peoples since the Europeans arrived in North America has involved attempts to eradicate Aboriginal culture. As a result, Aboriginal identity is a charged issue and a critical one for student success. Inclusion of traditional knowledge and knowledge about the history of Aboriginal peoples is integral to the success of Aboriginal students. Ignas (2004) argues, *"meaningful curriculum must necessarily be rooted in local knowledge and history and that this is especially so in the case of Indigenous students whose typical experience of mainstream education is one that has distanced and denied First Nations knowledge"* (p.49).

Further, as noted in a Saskatchewan government paper, Pattiniak (2004) has shown that *"school curriculum, practices, and programs that value and incorporate local Indigenous knowledge have proven to be successful in increasing Aboriginal student success and academic achievement."*

*The Commission believes that to be an effective force for reconciliation, curriculum about residential schools must be part of a broader history education that integrates First Nations, Inuit, and Métis voices, perspectives, and experiences; and builds common ground between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. The education system itself must be transformed into one that rejects the racism embedded in colonial systems of education and treats Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian knowledge systems with equal respect.*

*"Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future" Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, July 2015, p. 239*

The new BC Education Plan that will be fully implemented in Kindergarten through Grade 12, intends to embed culturally appropriate Aboriginal perspectives into all parts of the curriculum:

*“The province has long had the goal of improving school success for all Aboriginal students. To do this requires the inclusion of the voice of Aboriginal people in all aspects of the education system, increasing the presence of Aboriginal languages, cultures, and histories in provincial curricula, and providing leadership and informed practice.*

*The inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge is based on the understanding that Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge are a part of the historical and contemporary foundation of BC and Canada. An important goal in integrating Aboriginal perspectives into curricula is to ensure that all learners have opportunities to understand and respect their own cultural heritage as well as that of others. Over the past decade, curriculum has integrated Aboriginal content into courses and grade levels. The education transformation work builds on what was learned and extends Aboriginal perspectives into the entire learning journey rather than in specific courses or specific grade levels. This means that from Kindergarten to graduation, students will experience Aboriginal perspectives and understandings as an integrated part of what they are learning. “*

Related to cultural identity is a sense of self-esteem for Aboriginal students. Positive self-esteem is a key factor in the success of Aboriginal children as shown in a growing body of research (e.g., Hilberg & Tharp, 2002; Kanu, 2002; Swanson, 2003). Schools need to honour Aboriginal people and their traditions and ways of knowing. Aboriginal students need to see their culture meaningfully represented in the learning environment. An educational environment that honours the culture, language and worldview of the Aboriginal student is critical to this process. Aboriginal students require schools in all aspects to honour ‘who they are’ and ‘where they have come from’ (e.g., Antone, 2003; Gamlin, 2003; van der Wey, 2001).



Pictures: students at the Douglas Annex take part in an eight day celebration of Aboriginal culture participating in a Raven Tales assembly, a storytelling session run by Henry Charles, mask making, creation of a button blanket and Lacrosse lessons.





## What We Have Learned and What We Celebrate from Our Work

The district has found that by being inclusive of Aboriginal values, acknowledging the First Nations territories on which we live, work and play at every appropriate occasion, filling schools and the district office with Aboriginal art has been a demonstration of respect for Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions. Having an Aboriginal person on district staff whose role is to assist schools to incorporate culturally appropriate content and provide them with access to resources has been very successful. Many schools have availed themselves of the grants available to support culturally relevant activities and learning opportunities in school communities. Many district staff have attended workshops and cultural activities developed and presented throughout the district on an ongoing basis. Many schools have participated in the First Peoples Festival at the Museum of Anthropology. The awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal culture has grown amongst students and staff and we have learned that it is important to have people understand the stories behind Aboriginal traditions and the Aboriginal world view, rather than to simply engage in creating artefacts of the culture.

The Aboriginal Education Learning Branch in the Ministry of Education has just released *Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom: Moving Forward*, which will be a valuable resource for all schools and classrooms. It will help non-Aboriginal educators to understand the importance of engaging with the land and nature, authentic use of language and culture, the power of story, and understanding of traditional teachings, to name a few.

The addition of an Elder in Residence/Knowledge-Keeper to our District has also had a positive impact on both our Aboriginal students and their families, as well as helped to foster better understanding on the part of non-Aboriginal students and staff.

Aboriginal cultural celebrations throughout the VSB are a common occurrence. From all these activities we have learned that being intentional about increasing knowledge in this area brings more respect, awareness, empathy and appreciation in schools and the district. Our ongoing work on social emotional learning and antiracism has also taught us the importance of this emphasis.

Over the time of the agreement, the District worked closely with the Aboriginal communities to create an Aboriginal Focus School. While the school has not yet grown in size to the extent all would wish, its creation is a demonstration of the commitment to respect and appreciation of Aboriginal culture that underlies our approach to support. The District will continue to support the AFS as well as other school and district initiatives that foster a better global understanding of Aboriginal perspectives and support for Aboriginal students.



## Indicators and Targets

1. We will administer an Aboriginal Student Survey based on the Circle of Courage (Generosity, Belonging, Mastery and Independence) which will provide baseline and then annual data for each of the three goals.
2. We aim to have every school incorporating Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions in their learning environments. We will track the numbers of schools that seek grants and those that request access to resources and personnel, and district-wide we will increase those numbers each year.
3. We aim to have every teacher familiar with and able to include Aboriginal histories, traditions, cultures and contributions in their teaching and will track the numbers who attend professional development opportunities. We will expand opportunities and track attendance numbers with an aim to increase those numbers each year.
4. We will use MDI data to track “school climate” at the Grades 4 and 7 levels (and Grade 10 when available). We aim to see an increase in this area.



Aboriginal Grade 12 Graduation Ceremony



Frances James and Casey James present a Pow wow song and dance at Douglas Annex



First Nations Trades Sampler - Over 40 youth of Aboriginal heritage from Vancouver and across the Lower Mainland spend the day at John Oliver Secondary working with industry professionals.



Students and staff at Sir William Osler Elementary School, along with a special guest artist, are all involved in the creation of an expansive piece of First Nations artwork

# Appendix

## Goal 1 Belonging

### Strategies and Structures

- Continue to acknowledge local territory at school and district events and meetings
- Continue to track student support and interactions through the use of AIMS (Aboriginal Information Management System)
- Investigate possible reasons for student absenteeism and work with schools, parents, and community groups to support Aboriginal students for whom poor attendance is impacting their ability to learn and grow in the school setting
- Create an Aboriginal student survey to engage and record students' own perspectives on their sense of belonging and success
- Create additional extracurricular opportunities for Aboriginal students to demonstrate leadership and social responsibility
- Use relevant data such as EDI, MDI, etc. to monitor student perceptions of sense of belonging and personal success
- Develop opportunities for Aboriginal student and parent voices to be heard in the context of learning
- Encourage increased participation of the families of our Aboriginal students in school events through personal connections, cultural events, etc.

## Goal 2 Mastery

### Strategies and Structures

- Continue to include specific goals and objectives related to the learning success of Aboriginal students in each school's annual school plan
- Focus on individual student academic success through the use of Student Success Plans which are completed three times during each school year
- Provide individualized and targeted support to students through a whole school "team" approach
- Provide enhanced support to Aboriginal students through the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Teachers and Workers (AEETs, AEEWs) and Transition Teachers
- Focus on supporting Aboriginal students in the important transition years and ensure that they have the required courses for graduation
- Recognize and support Aboriginal student opportunities in trades programs

- Create intentional and thoughtful connections with post-secondary institutions (BCIT, SFU, VCC, UBC, etc.) in order to support Aboriginal students transitioning to these institutions after Grade 12.
- Support our youngest Aboriginal learners through Early Intervention programs and support from Literacy and Reading Recovery Teachers
- Provide opportunities for out of school academic support for Aboriginal students (homework clubs, etc.)
- Research the impact of initiatives such as Aboriginal University Transition Programs (AUTPs) and consider the feasibility of such a program in our District.

## Goal 3 Culture and Community

### Strategies and Structures

- Support the inclusion of Aboriginal content and ways of knowing in all areas of the new curriculum
- Increase access to Aboriginal resources in schools and school libraries
- Continue to include specific goals and objectives related to the development of Aboriginal cultural awareness in each school's annual school plan
- Support the teaching of the Residential School curriculum in Grades 5, 10, and 11/12 Social Studies curricula
- Provide professional development and support to teachers so that they may incorporate First Peoples' Principles of Learning into their teaching
- Support the use of *Aboriginal Worldviews and Perspectives in the Classroom: Moving Forward* in the classroom and provide professional development support around the resources provided through the Ministry of Education
- Provide and support a variety of cultural opportunities and events both at the district and individual school levels
- Identify community needs and look for additional opportunities to develop partnerships with Aboriginal community organizations
- Seek out partnerships with and sponsorship from Aboriginal community groups interested in supporting our students through various incentives
- Support the development and growth of the Aboriginal Focus School at Macdonald Elementary.
- Where possible, provide opportunities for language instruction, either through district personnel or in collaboration with local community organizations or Bands.

# Memorandum of Agreement



We, the undersigned, acknowledge and honour our collective responsibilities for the success of all Aboriginal learners attending school in the Vancouver School District.

We agree that the terms of this Vancouver Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will provide direction for Aboriginal education in the school district for the period of June 2016 to June 2021.

With respect and honour toward all Aboriginal Peoples, we intend, with shared participation and wisdom, to work together in a mutually beneficial manner to develop appropriate and meaningful programs for the benefit of all Aboriginal learners.

## SIGNATORIES

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*British Columbia Ministry of Education*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairperson of the Vancouver Board of Education*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Chief of the Musqueam First Nation*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Superintendent, Vancouver Board of Education*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*District Principal, Aboriginal Education*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*District Parent Advisory Council Aboriginal Parent Representative*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council*

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Urban Native Youth Association*



# Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and recognize the dedication, commitment and many hours of contribution of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Implementation and Monitoring Committee, along with the many district and community stakeholder representatives who made this Agreement possible.

BCIT

CUPE 15

Langara College

Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council

Ministry of Education

Musqueam Band Council and Education Coordinator

Professional and Administrative Staff Association

Simon Fraser University, Faculty of Education

Student, Parent, Elder, and Community Groups

Urban Native Youth Association

Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators

Vancouver Board of Education

Vancouver Community College

Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council

Vancouver Elementary Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association

Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association

Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

Vancouver School District Aboriginal Education Department Staff



