



School Name: Ebus Academy

School District: SD#91 Nechako Lakes

Embedding Indigenous understandings in traditional classrooms presents one set of challenges for teachers, doing so in an on-line environment is something else again.

The Ebus academy team led by Nicole Arnold (narnold@sd91.bc.ca) have been working for a few years to embed Indigenous content and culture into a range of curriculum areas.

As they scanned their learners, they noticed that their learners are more interested now in the opportunities that are offered online than in the past and are seeking more events to attend. Over the past few years there has been a steady increase in participation in the events and learning opportunities. The inquiry team at Ebus saw this as evidence of an appetite for more.

The team wanted to build on the momentum of increased student engagement and participation (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) students in their education by ensuring Aboriginal content and culture was infused in the weekly and daily learning opportunities. They also wanted to continue the face to face events that have become part of the Ebus experience.

One of the hunches they had was that the nature of online learning can be a barrier to student engagement. "We can offer opportunities, but we never know if anyone is going to show up at the event or sign into the v-class session."

Building new learning for the inquiry team became key. Teachers used the Aboriginal Education worker's knowledge of resources, connections to the community, the traditions and history to help infuse their teaching with Aboriginal content. A community member took the Aboriginal Education worker, a high school science teacher on a medicine walk in the winter and they made videos for learning on the Ebus website. A primary teacher had the opportunity to work with Roy Henry Vickers to learn about his books, his history and artwork (online meetings). She also learned about the work of other Indigenous authors like Jay Odjick

As they moved to action, the cultural learning expanded to all ages, from primary to secondary in a variety of curricular areas, from storytelling to science to history.

What did they see as a result?

- increased student engagement with the primary stories in v-class (students didn't want to miss each week's story, which is partnered with a reading/comprehension strategy.)
- students expressed that they had not known much about Aboriginal history in Canada (residential schools, etc.) and developed a greater understanding of current and past circumstances.
- students who chose to participate in the v-class sessions were very engaged and returned over and over, indicating that the experience was valuable for them. They were also able to readily engage in personal reflections about their learning and the information they gained.

The Ebus team reflected that persistence is key as they slowly and gently reached out to engage teachers in working together. In this online learning environment, providing opportunities and enticing student involvement through choice is critical (choice in joining, choice in ways of showing their learning, differentiated expression); increase the selection of resources available for teachers to use; collaborating together is also critical as teams access local human resources and educate themselves about their local areas.





School Name: Fort St. James Secondary

School District: SD#91 Nechako Lakes

Last year (**2017-2018**) the inquiry team at FSJSS focused their inquiry on infusing-place based learning, First Peoples' Principles of Learning and Indigenous perspectives through personalized inquiry-based learning. This was an extension of work previously started by a small team within the school.

Scanning: Their scanning indicated that many of their Indigenous learners were not engaged and did not feel successful as learners. However, they noticed that when they offered opportunities for students to personalize their learning through choice, they saw greater growth and engagement, with many students able to answer the four key questions. Through their efforts with personalization, students were getting the sense that they are being more successful and they are becoming more goal oriented and self-regulated. The staff also became increasingly aware that the intergenerational trauma stemming from the history of Indian Residential Schools continues to impact their learners, their school and community. The team believed that their work on personalization was helping students at all levels begin to speak about trauma and to embark on healing through community and school-based learning.

Focus: Their focus was to take the first Peoples' Principles of Learning off the poster on the wall and to begin to live them. They realized that the importance of the land and its original peoples in their area was an essential piece of who their learners — both Indigenous and non-Indigenous — are. The team believed that connecting to the truth of the history of colonialism, would support the development of all of members of the school community meeting on equal ground, with mutual respect.

Hunch: At the beginning of the year, the whole school community was not fully aware of some of the innovative practices happening at FSJSS, nor did everyone agree yet on the most effective ways to enact positive change with learners. Some families had a fear of asking questions and expressing concerns. Sometimes the only communication between school and home was about concerns. Changing this pattern was essential and important strides had already been taken as this year got started.

New Professional Learning: The staff embarked on an ambitious year of professional learning that included the following:

- Collaborative professional day with Jo Chrona from FNEESC regarding English First Peoples Curriculum
- One teacher worked on curriculum learning maps for EFP courses (with Jo Chrona & Shelley Moore)
- A team participated in the Small Secondary School Think Tank as the case study that other districts focused on.
- Teachers learned from each other through sharing, co-teaching and other collaborative activities.
- A cross-school team presented their learning journey at the Network of Inquiry & Indigenous Education Symposium
- The team collaborated with Vancouver Island University, a representative from UNBC, and the high school (NVSS) in Vanderhoof to produce a professional quality video highlighting innovative learning practices in the district. The collaborative discussions that laid the foundation for this video were valuable professional learning opportunities.
- In partnership with UNBC and the John Prince Research Forest (partnership with UNBC) the staff is learning how to incorporate the forest and what it has to offer into a range of courses.
- Some teachers are in training with the [Streamkeepers](#)

Taking Action: The team intentionally used inquiry-based learning in all of their humanities based classes and students shared their learning in a variety of forums (video interviews, class sharing circles). Sharing involved addressing three of the four questions posed by NOII and often, the fourth was addressed spontaneously in their reflections. Portfolio assessments were integral in most humanities classes.

Many staff incorporated growth mindset learning as part of the learning journey in their classrooms. Some students began using the growth mindset language explicitly and demonstrating it in their learning. As others look back and reflect on their journey, they can identify the mindsets they either used or wished they had used.

Teachers expanded their curriculum in a number of areas to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and one teacher piloted English First Peoples 10 -2 credits course with English Language Arts 10 -2 credits. Another teacher hosted Co-Creation 2018, a rich day of sharing where students learning in an alternate space were invited to have dialogue with each other, the Indigenous Education staff, Indigenous community leaders and educators from outside the school. These learners unpacked First Peoples Principles of Learning (one small group wrote them in student friendly language to



better understand them); began to co-design personalized Socials 11 courses; and, provided feedback on the year's work and input for the coming school year.

Checking: The inquiry team at FSJSS believe that this year was a great beginning. More students learned to be true learners. Learners in a variety of classes were exposed to and learned the same important big ideas through integrating courses. They were also able to appreciate each other's learning styles and differences. Students were keenly interested in what others were learning which strengthened the community of learners in the school.

The Indigenous liaison support workers and First Nations Education Coordinators were even more involved in the school and community-based learning. Their knowledge and wisdom were welcomed and incorporated into the perspectives and learning that took place. Some of the opportunities were spontaneous and authentic (e.g. an eagle's untimely end led to learning about the cultural significance of this creature; Allan Downey, author and professor visited while in the community) while others were co-created in advance. Local knowledge holder Pete Erickson shared his community's traditional practices with respect to governance and justice. More learners and adults alike can answer the 4 questions with genuine deep responses. They know what they are learning and where they are going or would like to go next. Some are at the beginning of this continuum and others are going beyond expectations.

Reflections/Advice: As this team looked ahead, they see considerable potential for more collaboration between the elementary schools and between departments. Staff meetings will be used for sharing strong practices with each other. Their advice to others would be to build and strengthen cross school connections, sharing resources and practices. Knowing more about the local culture will help teachers feel more comfortable connecting to it in the curriculum. Engaging in reconciliation and 'truth telling' is a goal and a challenge that needs to be embraced.





School Name: École Ballenas Secondary

School District: SD#69 Qualicum

The team at Ballenas was part of the ten-school research study focused on improving transitions for Indigenous learners. 2017-2018 was the second of three years for this school in the study.

In 2017-2018 the Ballenas team continued to increase awareness of Indigenous knowledge and ways of being through school-wide mini lessons as well as by increasing Indigenous physical, cultural and curricular representation.

As a result of conversations with Indigenous students the previous year, staff members asked how they could further create Indigenous awareness within the school community. They then focused on the reflective and responsive nature of learning, had conversations with local knowledge holders and were thoughtful about the process of creating and delivering both mini-lessons and curricular lessons. Two key OECD principles of learning that became a focus were 1. stretching all students and 2. building horizontal connections.

While the broader goal was increasing awareness for all students, the Ballenas team wanted their Indigenous learners to feel an increased sense of belonging which would result in an increase in transition through grade 10 and on to graduation.

The inquiry team was concerned that some staff members were ascribing to the “perfect stranger” ideology — essentializing, stereotyping, and romanticizing Indigenous history and culture. They realized that when teachers have an “I know nothing and it doesn’t have to do with me” attitude, students begin to devalue the importance of Indigenous education. Their mini-lessons were designed with the idea of challenging this perspective and educating the greater school community.

The team recognized that much more learning is needed around Indigenous culture, history and contemporary contributions. By developing the mini lessons, the Ballenas team was educating the entire community, and modelling for all staff with the goal of increasing both confidence and awareness.

Mini-lessons were designed to inform and educate both staff and students. These lessons were created collaboratively with a focus on effective strategy and ease of implementation. Lessons were designed to be participatory, with minimal direct

instruction. This helped engage learners and reduce both preparation time and anxiety for teachers.

Staff member, Heather Deering has become a leader with FNEC through her work piloting English First Peoples 10 and teaching BC First Peoples 12. This has included creating learning maps with Shelly Moore, Jo Chrona and others to assess the new EFP courses. Heather's learning and sharing across the province and at Ballenas have been an invaluable contribution to the inquiry project.

From the perspective of the inquiry team, the highlight of the year was the paddle installation ceremony at the end of the year where the welcoming and leaving paddles were revealed to the whole school community at a year-end celebration. The artist, Elder, Indigenous team and Indigenous community all participated. As well, all students had a mini-lesson on the symbolism and meaning of the paddles. These beautiful paddles now greet everyone at the main entrance.

The team was able to purchase authentic Indigenous resources to support the new curriculum and the expansion of the numbers of sections of English First Peoples 10.

The team surveyed their Indigenous students to find out how they thought staff actions were impacting them. They asked the following:

1. Have initiatives had an effect on how you feel about Ballenas?
2. BC First Nations Studies, English, and Social Studies among other courses at Ballenas have increased the amount of Indigenous content into the courses. Have you noticed this and how did you feel about this?
3. Ballenas has made all students of Ballenas aware of Indigenous culture by having mini-lessons in LINK (stereotypes and Halloween, recognizing that we are on the shared territory of the Qualicum and Nanoose First Nations...), highlighting Indigenous contributions to the World Wars at Remembrance Day, and the Paddle Ceremony coming this year. How do these school-wide activities make you feel about your school?
4. What can we do more of? What should we do less of? What next?

While many of the Indigenous students do not belong to the local Indigenous Nations, most responded positively to each of the questions.

In reflecting on their progress, the Ballenas team acknowledged that they need to continuously encourage, and listen to, student voice to ensure cultural responsiveness and continue to be in conversation with local knowledge holders.



Their advice to other schools is to be persistent and find ways to collaboratively plan methods and strategies to increase Indigenous consciousness for each community of learners. Recognize deficit thinking and develop a plan to change or challenge this misconception. Continue to develop lessons and build confidence in teachers to teach and learn. Support teachers with rich, varied and authentic Indigenous resources. Allow time for collaboration and learning.





School Name: Forest Park Elementary

School District: SD#68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith

The work of Forest Park Elementary staff this past year was focused on making sure that Indigenous knowledge was increased - by taking an interest in creating an Indigenous community garden and learning more about how Indigenous cultures connect with the natural world. There was a staff consensus that well-being from an Indigenous perspective would be helpful to everyone in the community.

Scanning involved finding out where the learners were in knowing about traditional uses of Indigenous plants. Staff noticed that the more young people learned about the natural world and traditional perspectives, the more they wanted to learn — they were hungry for greater understanding. Two key aspects of the school focus included asking themselves how plants were an important part of Indigenous culture and history and developing an understanding of the contribution of nature to human lives. Both adult and young people as learners wanted to delve deeply into these two critically important areas.

An important part of developing greater understanding was making sure that intellectual resources were readily available. Staff created and used binders of information related to the plants of the Snaw-naw-as and Sne-ney-muxw, for example. They learned from non-fiction and fiction books by Indigenous authors — Monique Gray Smith and Richard Wagamese. First Nations Science and Ethnobiology units and information about wild products in the BC coastal rainforest were found to be very helpful in the planning process. As well each teacher received eight Coast Salish stories related to the land to use as personal professional learning resources.

Another valuable aspect of the work of this staff involved thinking about their progress in understanding more deeply their natural environment through a metaphoric lens. Beginning efforts were viewed as being at a **SEEDLING** stage — this was the space that many learners were in at the initial stages of this important inquiry. Students did not know much about Indigenous local culture and were not used to thinking about how they were connected with the natural world.

The staff designed and engaged in powerful learning opportunities including learning about the needs of a garden, selecting plants, harvesting and preparing stinging nettle

tea, studying real community gardens, listening to the stories of an Indigenous Plant Elder, learning songs and drumming from an Indigenous musician and participating in a Celebrations Assembly for the Xununup Garden and Earth Day.

As the learning took hold, young people moved into the **ROOT** phase — they were able to explain how nature contributes positively to their lives and describe how Indigenous stories helped them learn more about the local culture and history.

By the end of the year most students had arrived at a **PLANT** phase — they could provide personal and reflective

insights into both the natural world and Indigenous understandings. They also could articulate where they were going next in their own learning.

The staff of Forest Park Elementary had some key pieces of advice for other schools:

- Work together and celebrate new learning.
- Build a collective understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing — this can be quite easy if you do it as a team — and doing so is necessary and so important.
- Create a place and a day in history where two worlds come together to learn together, to walk slowly and to celebrate what can happen when our hearts are in the right place.

What will they do next? They plan to combine the First Peoples Principles of Learning with the Nature of Learning principles by keeping their learners at the center of their learning and by celebrating and recognizing individual differences. They will continue connecting with their broader communities. Once the plants grow — learners of all ages will harvest them and make teas, tonics and medicines for their benefit of all.





School Name: Garibaldi Highlands Elementary

School District: SD#48 Sea to Sky

In 2017-2018 the focus at Garibaldi Highlands was on reconciliation.

The inquiry team decided to start by scanning staff members. They asked how teachers how they felt they were doing with teaching and learning about Indigenous culture and reconciliation. The team decided to start with the adults rather than the students out of a belief that teachers need to understand the history and impact of residential school before teaching it. They were also curious about the level of understanding of how weave Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into daily practice.

They used the three of the four key questions with staff (Where are you going with your learning? How are you doing? Where to next?). Using Survey Monkey to gather responses they noticed that some teachers provided feedback such as “I feel like I don’t know what to teach in terms of Indigenous content; I don’t know what is age-appropriate for teaching about residential schools; I wish I had an expert or more teacher guides to help with the content.”

They also noticed that one of the strengths was that teachers were interested in learning more and using library resources. The team selected as a focus reconciliation because of the imperative to inform ourselves and our learners about our shared Canadian history

Their hunch was that some teachers were feeling inadequate, uncomfortable, and uninformed with regard to reconciliation. Part of this may have come from the lack of awareness of Canada’s complete history. This was not part of the curriculum when teachers themselves were in school. Another hunch was that although there are many resources available in the school library and online, perhaps staff didn’t know what was there. Some also wondered whether some educators were perhaps feeling guilt-ridden because of biases towards other cultural groups. The inquiry team hoped they could help staff overcome those feelings and help them access available resources.

They invited Indigenous Elders into the school to teach about culture and circle. They visited the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre in Whistler. Collaboration proved to be

key in accelerating learning. As they gathered in a group, they were able to share feelings with each other. They learned about the resources in the school and online and they found the FNESC website to be especially helpful.

As they moved to action, the school staff took part in Circles training with [Peace of the Circle](#).

They collaborated as an entire school to create a Reconciliation Blanket. One of the team members attended a 24-Hour Drum that was presented by the Aboriginal Youth Leadership team from the district and the staff gathered to review and discuss the books and multimedia in the school library. One of the First People's Principles of Learning was unpacked at each monthly staff meeting.

In checking what differences were made, some of the teachers felt that their actions led to raised awareness about reconciliation in and outside of the classroom. They became more conscious of how First Nations teaching is done and the lessons from a First Nations Cultural worker made a big difference. Teachers reflected that Indigenous ways have become more embedded in our everyday teaching. Circle training helped the staff become much more comfortable and the students have responded very positively to the protocol. There was a sense that the reconciliation blanket pulled the whole school together

And while this was a good start, there was the realization that this is just the beginning of the journey towards reconciliation. Confronting the truth and moving towards reconciliation can be emotionally challenging work. The team recommends that using a resource such as Peace of the Circle can help create the conditions for open communication.





2017-2018

School Name: Silverthorne Elementary

School District: SD#54 Bulkley Valley

The staff at Silverthorne Elementary decided to increase their school-wide emphasis on recognizing and celebrating Witsuwiten culture in order to increase Indigenous feelings of pride, acceptance and belonging which are necessary components of learning success.

Scanning:

At the end of June 2017, they conducted student surveys with all of their students and interviewed all their vulnerable students, as well as randomly selected students. The survey and interview questions were guided by the Four Key questions for Learners and by their understanding of the First Peoples Principles of Learning. The interview particularly gave them the necessary information to form their inquiry for the 2017-2018 school year.

The information gathered during the interviews allowed them to better understand that although most of our students thought they were cared for, they didn't know for sure because adults didn't always say it. They also learned that their students wanted more opportunities to learn about Witsuwiten culture, history and language, and they wanted to do this through hands-on activities like drumming, as well as by connecting with the land by being outdoors. Their students also wanted to learn more about their language.

Focus:

The staff noticed that although they had nearly 50% Indigenous learners, they had very few opportunities to learn about Indigenous language and culture. Their Indigenous students were mainly living off reserve (and often in foster care), they overall tended to have limited, or no information, about their own culture and traditions. They also noticed that many of their Indigenous students were not fully meeting expectations in most subject areas.

The staff hoped that by increasing the amount of Indigenous learning for both adults and young people they would see a higher level of confidence and engagement with Indigenous students and improved intellectual success as well.

Hunch:

Their hunch was that although they were physically taking care of their vulnerable Indigenous students by ensuring they had breakfast and lunch, clothing and caring, they were not modelling and valuing the things that were potentially most important to them. They were not connecting so much as educators – more as caretakers. This was not enough to get their students excited about their learning.

New Professional Learning:

Auntie Doris, a Witsuwiten language teacher came twice to teach Witsuwiten language. All members of staff and all students K-7 participated in the lessons. They used the everyday terms around the school and they played Simon Says in Witsuwiten at their weekly assemblies. They included new language for each season. This allowed them to connect their language learning to the seasonal learning they were doing throughout the year. The language is posted on walls around the school and teachers practice it in their classrooms.

They researched and ordered quality resources and spent much of their book budget on ensuring that teachers and students had resources for learning and teaching. They purchased resources from Strong Nations, as well as Science First Peoples and the Indian Residential Schools and Reconciliation materials. They used the *Learning, Knowing, Sharing* resource as well as learning from many local Indigenous guest speakers. Truth and Reconciliation resources were purchased to support the teaching in this area and the Calls to Action.

Taking Action:

Although teachers were still in the learning phase, they willingly incorporated Witsuwiten cultural learning across all subject areas including writing, reading, science, social studies and hands-on learning such as making and decorating drums for their Traditional Drumming group.

They increased the time and resources allocated to the Silverthorne Traditional Drumming group. Students were able to choose between drumming during



class time, drumming at lunch and/or drumming with the performance group which practices more often.

For the Orange Shirt Day – the assembly was organized by the Grade 7 students. This assembly was about introducing the idea of Truth and Reconciliation.

The Art of Listening – a school-wide project.

- They began with introducing the children to the art and stories of Roy Vickers. They looked at where he came from, how he learned and how he expresses himself now. They listened to his stories and developed their understanding through sketching.
- Traditional oral stories are a living history that is passed on through our children. Mel Bazil gave them the opportunity to learn the art of listening. The students practiced their sketching while listening to his stories to strengthen their understanding and their recall of these important lessons.
- They celebrated their learning with a wet felting art project that honoured the style of Roy Vickers. The art is proudly displayed in a mural in the heart of the school — a place of story, the library. The strength of community is there for all to see.
- They hosted a Winter Outdoor Learning day where they played Witsuwiten games, had demonstrations and learning from a trapper and did activities such as snow shoeing and making ice cream.

As well teachers routinely took their classes on field studies connected to their inquiry. These included: ice fishing, snowshoeing, Sturgeon release, and hatchery releases for both the Babine and Witsuwiten nations. They toured the museum in Witsset and visited Roy Vickers' home to see the new totem pole he is creating.

Staff and students now use and practice Witsuwiten language throughout the school every day. They also include Witsuwiten language on their Facebook site so that parents and community can learn alongside the children and adults in the school



Checking:

Learner Interviews – They interviewed 28 students, 20 of whom were from our “Students to Watch” list, and 8 who were randomly selected.

- 27 of the 28 were able to name an adult or adults who makes them know that they are cared about. They were able to explain the things the adult did that made them know that. They described actions such as helping when hurt, helping them work out problems, helping with their work.
- When asked how they liked to learn about the culture and history of the Witsuwiten people, all 28 students said that they liked active tasks such as the drumming, wet-felting an image from Mel’s stories, button blankets and art/building projects. Several also said being outside in nature, survival skills and Witsuwiten language.
- The interviews were important because they gave the team more specific information and helped them plan their goals for the upcoming year. The interviews showed that students feel safe and cared for and that they can identify some of the things that adults do to make them feel that way.

Time Spent Engaged in Learning – Five of our most challenging students are now spending most of their time each day in small groups or in their classrooms rather than in the hallway or office.

The Facebook page has been an unexpected source of evidence/data related to parent and family involvement with celebrating learning about Witsuwiten culture, history and language. They have over 272 parents and community members following our page, and as a sample of a typical month, during the last 3 weeks of June they had 4053 engagements on the site, and 2437 people were reached.

Case studies:

Each classroom teacher chose one Indigenous student from their class and closely tracked their learning and engagement throughout the year. They used the same guiding questions, as well as the DART or EPRA results, and other forms of intellectual evidence specific to their classrooms. At the end of the year, each teacher completed a portfolio documenting the students’ learning journeys and their academic changes over the year.



- All eight students selected for the case studies showed improvement with their engagement with all aspects of their schooling. They all connected with the Indigenous activities and learning.
- Although every student showed improvement with their academic studies, it is hard to prove if this is due to normal growth throughout the year, or to the fact that they were more engaged in all aspects of their schooling, and particularly to activities and strategies involving Indigenous culture and language. It is important to note, that when given choice as to how to express learning in certain subject areas, many of the case study students chose to show Indigenous art or information.
- What was evident through the case studies was that teachers took a greater personal interest in better knowing and understanding some of their most challenging students. The relationships went deeper than showing caring and moved into connecting with students over something they cared about. This model showed that when teachers value and respect a learner's culture, then the student can gain more confidence with their relationships with their teachers and other adults in the school and therefore engage more in their learning.

Reflections/Advice:

Don't be afraid to learn alongside your students. Their engagement in their learning increases when they see staff taking risks and valuing learning about Indigenous culture and history.

Preliminary discussions are showing that teachers, staff and students are keen to continue with learning about Witsuwiten culture, and that the staff should expand on the areas that engaged the students the most.

They will begin the year with a workshop for staff about the Calls to Action, and will be planning on how to address these as part of the school-wide plan including all learners in K-7.

They would like to continue on this journey of how to gather evidence to connect our students' growing confidence and engagement at school with their personal and intellectual success.

Please note: on their website the First Nation is spelled this way: [wet'suwet'en](#)

School district spells it: Witsuwit'en





School Name: Fort St. James Secondary

School District: SD#91 Nechako Lakes

The inquiry team at Fort St. James Secondary decided that a focus on increasing learner engagement and connectedness was very important. They also wanted to develop thinking skills by engaging in provocative and experiential learning about Indigenous history, culture and colonization.

They also noticed that many of their learners were reluctant and struggling readers which required the staff to be creative about ways to approach reading effectively. They observed a lack of inter-connectedness between groups of students (an absence of connectedness amongst young people from the three reserves and with the non-Indigenous students). Social media had also become a challenging roadblock to learning because it entered the classroom and often caused distraction and distress, sometimes creating and continuing the trauma in the lives of the learners.

The inquiry team believed that learning about Canada's history from the perspectives of Indigenous people would help create greater understanding of their community and their country today. Their guiding question was "What does it mean to be a Canadian in 2017"? The goals were longer term as they wanted more Indigenous students to graduate from FSJSS. They also wanted students to develop increased independence and self-directed learning skills.

The team wondered why trying to learn in traditional school ways was proving ineffective for many learners and they wondered why students saw education as a process of filling in the blanks on a piece of paper instead of learning to be educated citizens in a democratic society.

They decided to launch their work by reading and exploring the ideas in new resources from those provided by Strong Nations Publishing. They participated in a district inquiry learning session in August 2016 (SD 91). They then worked as a team to co-plan and design learning opportunities using their new resources and the revised curriculum. Co-teaching with district support teachers was also part of their new professional learning.

Teachers found they needed to open up to be vulnerable with students, modelling that they were learning alongside them and taking risks. They infused growth mindset ways of being in their daily work with learners, failing and trying again, being relentless and persistent.

Community members (Elders, residential school survivors or their relatives) were invited to the classrooms for experiential lessons like The Blanket Exercise. This proved to be one of the most powerful strategies partly because the community members were deeply moved that the teachers were willing to help students learn about this history from an Indigenous perspective.

There was much greater differentiation (small groups, one to one support and student choice) and this helped learners go deeper with inquiries that were meaningful to them.

Student-led inquiry supported students to connect to issues that spoke to their hearts and they became more invested in their learning.

All students were asked to reflect on what was important about what they learned, and how their thinking or understanding changed through what they learned.

They were also asked to reflect on how they learned best, what works and what does not work for them as learners.

Reduction of the reluctance of students to take risks in their learning was a result of this initiative. Different students showed new leadership skills through the variety of learning experiences that were offered. Students developed greater ownership of their learning. They also developed real empathy and expressed a genuine concern and care for the wrongs of our history and have changed their views about current situations as a direct result of their learning. The staff has genuinely helped change some aspects of racist thinking in our classrooms and community.

Reflections/Advice:

Teachers experienced a renewed spark of inspiration for this work. This was driven by a strong desire to make even deeper changes in teaching practices and it was supported by colleagues who were willing to be open and share their learning and teaching with each other. Our departments have been working for years on breaking down the walls and working together in this inquiry has helped continue this path.

We need to continue to embrace the view that change is inherent to this learning process.

We are teaching students, not curriculum.

The involvement of our Vice Principal, Margaret Mattess, in our inquiry has been integral in helping us strengthen relationships with each other, with students and with community.



Next Year:

The Vice Principal will be teaching Gr. 8 First Nations Studies in order to build relationships and will continue to be involved in our Humanities inquiry.

We will continue adapting pedagogy and the school structures enough that students continuing their learning experience through new opportunities (numbers of students, flexible groupings) that promote success in student ownership of learning.

We will provide assistive technology to support learners with literacy skills that are delayed (e.g. Google Read & Write).

We will begin the year with these experiential, place-based learning aspects so we develop a stronger sense of community early on.

