



**School District No. 53
(Okanagan Similkameen)**

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT 2014/2016

Mission Statement:

sysisuselx i? scm̓amaya?. maʔlspuʔusəlx ali? i? sqilx^w
cawtət k^wu_pḥam. ixi? ḥspiwt.

*'Enhancing students' pride and success through
traditional Okanagan and Similkameen people`s ways of learning.'*



Aboriginal students from each of the high schools in district join together and enjoy the breath-taking view from nᓄaylntn Bluff as they learn a bit of history of the Okanagan People.



Introduction

This report will contain information from October 2014 thru June 2016. During the academic year 2014-2015, the support workers have spent more time together sharing and developing their skills, whether it was through crafts or traditional knowledge. At the beginning 2015-16 academic year, we started the work to renew our Enhancement Agreement for another signing.

We had a small working group consisting of our senior student reps, band education coordinator, elementary and high school administrators, an elder, district aboriginal teacher, school trustee and our district superintendent. We are looking forward to signing our third Enhancement Agreement, in October 2016, with our Aboriginal partners: the Lower Similkameen Indian Band, the Osoyoos Indian Band, the Upper Similkameen Indian Band and representatives of parents of students with Aboriginal ancestry.

Aboriginal Education Advisory Council

The Aboriginal Education Advisory Council (AEAC) has been operating for many years. This shared leadership and governance model has provided the district with excellent guidance. The AEAC operates on the basis of open and transparent communication where all members are encouraged to state concerns and opinions in a respectful manner. The combination of the various participants (elders, students, educators, school and senior administration, parents and advocates) brings a valuable perspective. For more information on the make-up and operation of the AEAC, please see our 2011 – 2016 Enhancement Agreement at:

http://www.sd53.bc.ca/aboriginal/pdfs/Aboriginal_Enhancement_Agreement_Signed.pdf

Each year, the AEAC reviews the progress made and sets new action goals. The action goals for 2014/16 were:

- Integrate Aboriginal activities school-wide
 - Professional Development for support workers to enhance their ability to deliver Okanagan/Similkameen cultural content.
 - Build on current Aboriginal resources and curriculum content at all levels
 - Find a “champion” for FN Studies¹² and First People’s English in all high schools.
- Create a better “feeling of belonging” at the school level, with particular emphasis on inclusion of non-band members, Metis and Inuit students.
- Continue to develop a list of resource people with emphasis on communication between resource people, school and support workers.
- Assist teachers in implementing the Residential School curriculum.



District Demographics 2012/13 to 2015/16

	All Students				Aboriginal Ancestry			
	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016
Elementary (District)	1260	1287	1254	1238	160	213	213	226
Secondary (District)	989	966	948	918	174	170	178	187
Total for District	2249	2253	2202	2156	334	383	391	413

Aboriginal ancestry students continue to be the fastest growing group in our district.

First Nation Band Affiliations:

Lower Similkameen Indian Band	Keremeos
Osoyoos Indian Band	Oliver/Osoyoos
Upper Similkameen Indian Band	Hedley

Highlights for the 2014/16 School Years

- Okanagan Language continues in three schools in partnership with OIB and LSIB.
- Support Workers have been using their professional development by sharing their expertise and presenting in other schools as well.
- Support Workers participated in an Aboriginal Education Series offered by Okanagan College.
- Okanagan Days rotates around the elementary schools so the whole student body of the host school can participate and all grade 4s in district are bussed in to partake in event. All support workers are presenters and local Knowledge Keepers are brought in as well to share with students. We also had 4 student presenters as presenters.



The students at Osoyoos Elementary School were dazzled by Caine’s fancy dance demo and other students learned how to play the Stick Game. Our student presenters were from Oliver and Penticton.



- Our first Culture Camp was held in partnership with Osoyoos Band and Lower Similkameen Band in the spring of 2014. The Cultural Camps that is offered to district staff, administrators, teachers and EAs are going to be offered every two years in partnership with the three local bands.



Teachers listen intently while Knowledge Keeper Shares stories with them.



The ladies are getting the bark prepared to smoke smoke the hide while the youngster watches.

- Aboriginal readers have been purchased for all elementary schools and all students are enjoying them.
- We have been building on the sense of belonging with the urban, Metis and Inuit students in the district.
- SOSS developed and implemented the Epic Program, which is an “Outdoor Program” that was taught by a teacher who is a local band member. The program was opened to ALL students at SOSS and focused on place based learning, integration of subjects, and sense of belonging. This was a full day semester long program where students earned credits in four subject areas. This was very successful and will be offered again this coming year with the hopes of expanding to other similar program initiatives.



- We held our fourth Aboriginal graduation ceremony on Aboriginal Day at the Osoyoos Secondary Theatre. We had 44 grads this year although all students couldn't participate.
- Our ninth annual district pow wow took place at Similkameen Elementary Secondary School in Keremeos. All district grade 4 students were bussed to the event to participate in the opening Grand Entry and learn about the traditions of a pow wow. Students from School District No. 51 (Boundary) and School District No. 58 (Nicola Similkameen) again joined us for the festivities in 2014. In 2016, we had students/families from Kamloops and Princeton join us during the student portion of our pow wow. As in the past, our local band schools, Sen-Pok-Chin (Osoyoos Indian Band) and Ntamtqən sənma? maya?tn (Lower Similkameen Band) were able to join us.



Two young boys from Cawston Primary School get honored by carrying in flags at Grand Entry



All students are encouraged to join in the Intertribal Dances.

- Each school (administrator and support worker) develops an Aboriginal Program Delivery plan at the beginning of each school year. This plan outlines how goals, programs and activities will be delivered in each school. It will serve to communicate to students, parents, staff and community the purpose of the Aboriginal program and the activities that take place.

SUMMARY: We are creating an environment where students feel they belong and their culture is valued. With their peers on the Advisory Council, they are able to bring forth their suggestions and share concerns. Aboriginal culture is celebrated and shared in the schools and in the local communities in a respectful manner and all students are curious and receptive. Our aboriginal students are taking pride in sharing their culture and seeking increased opportunities.

Promising Practices

Team Inquiry Model: Aboriginal support workers participate in the District's "Team Inquiry Model" (TIM) time once a month as they work with teachers and administrators to investigate ways to improve achievement. Many schools have inquiry questions related to engagement, connections and social-emotional learning. These are a good fit with our Enhancement Agreement goals and the inclusion is valued. Many schools have specific inquiry questions with a focus on the success and achievement of aboriginal students.



Response to Intervention (RTI): Workshops have been held for elementary and secondary teachers and administrators. These workshops will focus on three levels of intervention and, most importantly, differentiation of learning and meeting the needs of all learners in the classroom. This has been of great benefit to our aboriginal learners as it focuses on who are our learners rather than any identification for services.

Cultural Focus: Our program has progressed towards a greater emphasis on educating our support workers so they can assist teachers with the new curriculum through the inclusion of the local culture. We have also focused on staff sensitivities and teacher in-service so that they have increased confidence in addressing issues and subject matters in their classrooms. We believe that by encouraging all students to know and understand the culture, the Aboriginal students will be more proud of their heritage and traditions, be more understood, feel welcomed at school (as will their families), be more successful with their learning, and hence require less support. We are seeing very positive trends with much improved academic performance and graduation rates.

Cultural Awareness: This program was developed to help our teachers and administrators learn about the Okanagan people, their history, their lands and their traditions. They also learned about residential schools through active participation, and the long-lasting and negative effect on the people. We have offered this program in the spring of 2015 and created the Culture Camps. Two camps will be held in the district, one in the Similkameen and one on the Okanagan side. We are looking forward to having Upper Similkameen Band get involved when the next Culture Camps are offered in the academic year of 2016-17.

Aboriginal Connections: This is a new group that was started this year and includes SOSS' vice principal, Aboriginal support workers, District Aboriginal Teacher, OIB's education coordinator, and OIB's Family Support Staff. The purpose was to create a liaison for the families who are still not comfortable dealing with the public schools.

Network Leader – Engaging Aboriginal Students: This is a newly created position this year led by a teacher who has designated time to work with classroom teachers on instructional strategies that focus on engaging Aboriginal learners through the First People's Principles of Learning, understanding and implementing the new curriculum, and engaging in promising practices to meet the needs of our learners. This position has already supported teachers in increasing their comfort level with the new curriculum as well as lead teachers through inquiry practices to improve the success of the aboriginal students in their classes.

Pow Wow Fundraisers: These are held in three of our communities to raise funds for our annual pow wow. They include a traditional dinner and loonie auction. They are well attended by parents, students and teachers developing strong connections between each. They are successful because they are fun and the food is reasonable and delicious! Each will raise between \$500 and \$1000 depending on the size of the community.



Okanagan Days crafts with intermediate students at Tuc-el-nuit

Okanagan Language: School District No. 53 has been teaching Okanagan Language in its schools for close to twenty-five years. It is often a struggle to find speakers to teach Okanagan. Our approach to dealing with this has been to partner with bands and language associations to provide language at the secondary level. At the elementary level, our Aboriginal education support workers in the Similkameen are training with the Paul Creek Language Association to learn Okanagan and as a result are able to teach the language as part of their Okanagan cultural classes.

Student Feasts: Schools are holding feasts for students and staff more often. These gatherings feature traditional foods and protocol and build relationships between students, staff, and community

R'Native Voice: was introduced at both Similkameen Elementary Secondary School and Southern Okanagan Secondary School. R'Native Voice is a holistic approach to teaching Aboriginal youth about their culture and history to assist them to develop self-empowerment and make choices that will support them in making decisions that will lead to a more sustainable future. This program is taught as a partnership between the Okanagan Nations Alliance (ONA) and the School District. The primary instructor is trained and employed by the ONA. The school provides a contact teacher to oversee students' learning and meeting of outcomes. It's a vehicle for students to earn credit while they learn about their culture.

Participation at the AEAC by principals and support workers is encouraging the schools to take more initiative at the school site. There is a direct link between the council and the schools creating greater understanding and commitment to education programs at the schools. Everyone feels they have a voice and decisions are bottom up rather than top down.

Reading Support: schools continue to have special programs to provide extra support to Aboriginal students who are behind in their reading. In addition, the AEAC helped elementary schools with the purchase of the first set of the Circle of Life Series from Nelson Education. Each elementary school purchased the next set in 2015.

Strategic Plan: We engaged in an inclusive process in the spring of 2016 to establish a strategic plan for learning and success in School District No. 53 over the next seven years. The plan has a dedicated goal – 'Enhance positive educational experiences for Aboriginal students.'



Report on EA Performance Goals

The aim of our enhancement agreement is to demonstrate continuous improvement in each goal area. The following are highlights from the 2014 – 2016 school year.

Areas we are Taking Pride:

- Improving readiness of children entering kindergarten as demonstrated by our Early Development Indicators (EDI) results and our district kindergarten assessment. We continue to work with our communities and First Nation bands to provide early learning programs with a focus on literacy. This past year we supported the acquisition of a grant by our three bands to provide a mobile “hub” which will provide support to Aboriginal parents around the district. This hub began operation in 2014 – 2015.
- Cooperation with band schools to provide the Welcome to Kindergarten program. This program provides a bag of kindergarten literacy materials to parents at an orientation session in May/June.
- We continue to maintain very strong achievement levels in reading and writing at the elementary level, as demonstrated by the Provincial Foundation Skills Assessment. Grade 4 reading results (76% meeting or exceeding) continue to exceed those of the province (65%). Eight percent of Aboriginal students are in the “exceeding” range. Aboriginal results for grade 7 reading were improved at 67%. Fifteen percent of Aboriginal students were ‘exceeding’ in reading for 2014-15! Seventy-six percent of Aboriginal grade 4 students were meeting or exceeding expectations in writing, as compared to 73% for non-Aboriginal students. For Grade 4 and Grade 7 Writing, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal results is narrow.
- In numeracy, 67% of Aboriginal grade 4 students met or exceeded expectations.
- Our Aboriginal six-year completion rate has continued to show an increasing trend since 2010.
- In Foundations of Math 10, Science 10, and English 12, aboriginal students earned a C+ (Good) or better at a similar rate to non-Aboriginal students.
- Pass rates in courses leading to graduation are strong
- Have 4 students (2 senior and 2 junior) that sit on our Aboriginal Education Advisory Council. They hold elections with support from their support workers. They contribute to discussions and demonstrate passion for their leadership roles.
- Aboriginal students are well represented in Career Education options such as Work Experience, Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA), ACE IT (Accelerated Credit Enrollment in Industry Training), and dual credit programs.



Elementary administrator, David Foster reporting for his group at AEAC meeting.



- Most schools take their students to dig speetlum and hold a feast later on in the year. This is an important tradition for the Okanagan people.
- A trip to the Ochre Bluffs was made by three schools. Lessons about the local pictographs and how they were made interested the students.
- Four schools participate in raising their own salmon fry and two more are requesting to join in. Grade Kg-4 students attend the salmon fry release that is held by the Okanagan Nations Alliance, each spring.
- Students take a fieldtrip to the Okanagan River to learn from an elder about the return of the salmon to the Okanagan territory and the importance of the salmon to the culture. The return of the sockeye salmon to our area is recent and the Okanagan people have had a big part in it.
- Deer feasts, hosted by students, are held in the fall season for other students and staff.
- Combining schools by age/grade groups for various cultural games and field trips.

Things Requiring Further Focus and Inquiry:

- Engaging parents and families
- Working on cultural sensitivity and in-service to help secondary teachers understand and respond when students are going through a crisis or health issues that interfere with learning.
- More effort is needed to increase participation of Aboriginal students in higher level courses (English 12, Foundations and Pre-Calculus Math 11 & 12, Sr. sciences, etc).
- We must continue to find ways to maintain and improve the number of students graduating and offer multiple pathways to success.
- There is a continued trend where Aboriginal males are completing school at a higher rate than Aboriginal females.
- The representation of Aboriginal students in secondary alternate programs remains a concern. The Response to Intervention initiative, our newly created aboriginal network and the focus outlined in our new Enhancement Agreement and District Strategic Plan may help to address this as we work harder to engage Aboriginal learners.
- We continue to work on a “sensitivity training” program for teachers. We hope that our new culture camps, and the hopeful inclusion of additional staff, will meet this need. Sensitivity to our Okanagan culture and an understanding of our history is critical in teaching our students, and also understanding the impact that residential schools and the Indian Act had on Native people, and the difficulties some families are dealing with today.
- We continue to struggle in providing First Nation Studies 12. To be successful we’ll need a team of champions, administrator and teacher. We continue to look and encourage.



- Although some English teachers are integrating aspects of the First People's English curriculum, we have not yet been able to offer it as a course. We continue to look for ways.

Concluding Remarks:

Our council and District are committed to the success of every student. As our Aboriginal culture becomes more imbedded in our schools, students will feel more welcomed and be more successful. We feel we are making good progress in this area. The support workers are willing to help teachers feel "comfortable" in teaching the new curriculum.

Thank you to our students, teachers, administrators, communities and aboriginal education department for their dedication to our students and perseverance in our mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Gallagher
District Aboriginal Teacher
School District No. 53
(Okanagan Similkameen)