

Mid-Year Aboriginal Education Report

École Boundary Elementary

Boundary Elementary staff, students, and community have fully engaged in their journey of learning and leading in aboriginal ways. We recognize that each member of our community is at different places with their understanding and we continually support each other as we move forward with the First Peoples Principles of Learning, Aboriginal Worldview, and Ways of Knowing of the First Peoples. Aboriginal Education is infused into daily life at Boundary Elementary; learning and practice are embedded throughout the curriculum, our activities, and our community.

Learning Across the Grades

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Kindergarten – Daily Practice

The kindergarten class begins each day with a “hello circle” in which they take time to breathe and calm themselves before they greet each other around the circle and start the day as a community. In the classroom reading library, the teacher has added in books that reflect indigenous images and stories (such as counting books, alphabet books, and stories about nature and family). Children have the opportunity to see indigenous images as an integral part of the literature they are accessing, and it is familiar to them as something that is a part of our daily world.

Kindergarten – Family Study in Social Studies

Using the Nelson Socials Kit, the kindergarten teacher decided to put a spin on the unit on families. The children had the activity of creating a family portrait to present a description of their families and provide a visual opportunity for students to compare and contrast their families. After the success of the story string project that the teacher conducted last year, she wanted to add symbols



in the portraits to convey more about the children's family interests, values, and stories. She began with the work of George Littlechild because it allowed for a meaningful entry point to local and aboriginal artists. Students went on a field trip to see the Memory-History-Story exhibition at the Artist for Kids Gallery. This created a profound experience for the children as they had the opportunity to respond and describe their feelings and ideas about their selected artwork. The children sketched the



selected forms and elements of images that were of interest to them in the gallery. From this experience, students were able to recognize indigenous images / artifacts around the school. The immersive nature of the gallery allowed the students to transfer learning to the school environment, creating new connections to their understanding of the indigenous ways of knowing.

Using variations of Littlechild's style, the students enlarged photocopies of each family's photo and used transfer paper to draw the outlines of the family members on watercolour paper. Then they used pastel and watercolour to colour the images they had created. The next step in this unit will be to add layers to the images by selected symbols that relate to the family stories. The next six weeks will be spent layering components and documenting each stage of work. This project exemplifies that learning takes time and patience. The final artwork will be displayed at an exhibition that will showcase both the portraits and all the stages of work.



Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.

Kindergarten – Salmon Study

The teachers talked with students about the importance of salmon to First Peoples. They made murals showing salmon habitat and illustrating the life cycle of salmon. The eyes in the eggs are illustrations of an eye using aboriginal art techniques, a visual reminder of the connection between salmon and the First Peoples. As they visited the creek and became aware of the habitat needs of salmon, they also learned the values of caring for the environment, sense of place and sustainability that are consistent with aboriginal principles. Salmon studies will continue through the process of the Salmonid program which will be taught with the focus on Core Competencies and First Peoples Worldview.



Primary – Class Meeting in a Sharing / Talking Circle

During class meetings, teachers have the students form a talking circle with a talking stick and have them reflect on the week.

Primary – Guided Reading

Primary teachers are using authentic reading material (such as *Turtle Island Voices* and a variety of titles from *Strong Nations*) that we have



been purchasing as part of the School Plan and Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan to do guided reading in their class. In addition, teachers are using specific books, such as *How Raven Stole the Sun* to explain various concepts in social studies from an indigenous perspective.

Learning involves patience and time.

Primary – Art Education

Primary students are learning and applying various aboriginal art techniques to numerous art projects. Grade 1 students made connections to *How Raven Stole the Sun* using the basic shapes from the indigenous art technique (such as ovoid, U-shape, split U-shape, etc.). Students in a grade two class created masks in the form of an animal that they thought had qualities similar to themselves, using the book *Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox* as the foundation. Grade 2/3 students used indigenous art techniques to reimagine the Canadian flag.

Grade 3/4 students studied and critiqued traditional and contemporary aboriginal art. Students created visual art projects that incorporate movement integrated lessons: students created Haida shapes with their bodies, formed a tableau, and then created artwork in traditional colours and shapes. Students also learned to weave through traditional methods as part of design thinking.

As based on traditional Inuit legends, students made oil pastel resist watercolour landscapes focused on sense of place and utilization of natural resources. Students applied blending techniques using chalk pastel to illustrate the Northern Lights based on traditional Inuit legends.

Primary – Physical and Health Education

The primary students have been exploring strength-based games and challenges from the aboriginal culture during PE class. The grade 3/4 students have been learning creative dance and rhythm to aboriginal drumming. As a component of Health Education, teachers used the medicine wheel as a tool to have the students explore the balance of the four components (physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual). Students studied mindfulness so they could learn to look within and find their connection to the earth and their place within it.

Grade 1 – Learning about Community in Social Studies

A grade one teacher taught a unit on community by focusing on how the aboriginal people work together within their community to help each other fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Also, the teacher explored the concept of only taking what we need from the earth and showing respect to nature by connecting it to understanding needs vs. wants (food, shelter, medicine, etc.).

Grade 2 & 3 – Life Cycle in Science and Diversity in Social Studies

In a grade two class, the students have been looking at life cycles and how the local First Peoples changed their hunting and fishing practices based on the season. As well as looking at the diversity of Canada as part of social studies, with the focus being on the cultural similarities and differences of various communities, particularly of those aboriginal communities in the North.

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Grade 3 & 4 – Language Arts

Students have heard many indigenous legends and stories told orally. They have explored the role of the speaker and listener. Stories were compared to other tales which lead to writing activities such as literature studies, comparison writing, personal narratives and opinion writing. Students also transformed their stories into small drama presentations.

Grade 3 & 4 – Social Studies

Teachers used the FNEESC lesson plans for nature-based learning and activities related to the seasons and traditional culture. Also, teachers incorporated the sharing of family background and traditions into their classroom community by having students research their families and share with the class. Students did beading activities from the *Flower People* to understand the impact and history of the Métis People.

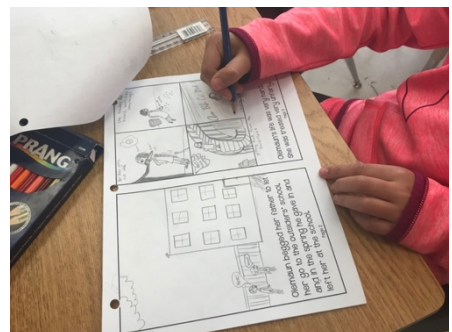
As part of Orange Shirt Day, the students studied the vital connection indigenous people have worldwide to their physical place / territory. They explored and discussed the reasons why Residential Schools came into existence. They also learned about the immediate impact on people who attended, their families, and the communities.

Grade 3 & 4 – Science

The students looked at the historical, current, and potential future practice of obtaining, distribution of, and utilization of resources. They focused on the impact and upcoming implications on Indigenous cultures and ways of life.

Grade 4 & 5 – Socials

As part of the Socials, the grade 4's have learned about various issues such as early contact, trade, cooperation and conflict between the First Peoples and the Europeans. Meanwhile, the grade 5's have been learning about past





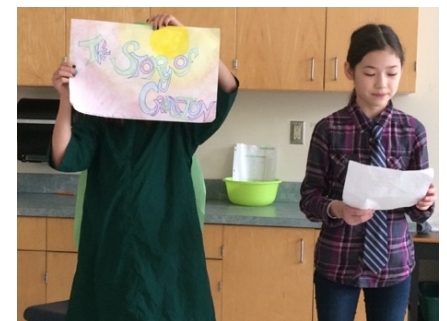
discriminatory government policies and actions such as the Indian Act and Residential Schools. As part of the integrated Language Arts curriculum, the students are reading *Fatty Legs*, a story about an Inuit girl and her experience in a Residential School. Part of the learning experience included an art unit on aboriginal design.

Grade 5 & 6 – Social Studies

Students have been exploring the Residential School system. To support this learning process, the District Aboriginal Education Team member, Stephanie Maki, had been in twice: once to help discuss the aboriginal culture and their concept of identity; the second time, Stephanie talked about how government policies have worked to strip the sense of identity from aboriginal people. The students will be moving into the truth and reconciliation process next, which will involve a reconciliation related art project.

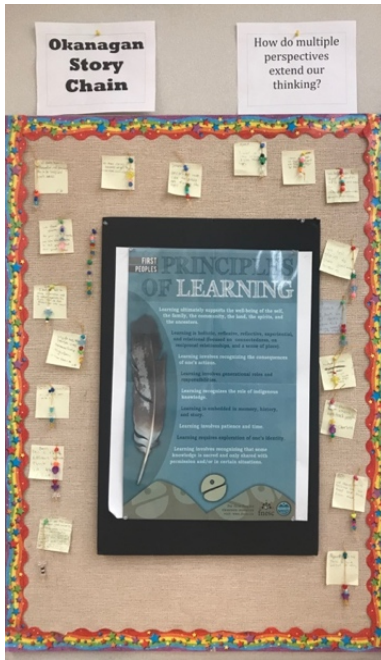
Late French Immersion 6 – Arts Education

The grade 6's researched aboriginal legends through video and books which they then used to create and perform Reader's Theatre scripts in groups. Following the assignment, the students researched various local aboriginal groups to find out about their music (drumming), their dance, and their art. They used the information to create their own dance and drumming in the style of their researched group.



Future studies include a visit from a member of the Burnaby Art Gallery who will teach the class about aboriginal art and its influence in modern times with a focus on pop culture. Students will have an opportunity to create a piece of their own artwork to share with the class.

Grade 6 & 7 – Language Arts



As part of the Language Arts curriculum, the students have been learning about oral storytelling. Using the information provided by Jessica Johnson the previous year, the grade 6/7 teacher has taught the students about the importance of storytelling and the Okanagan Story Chain tradition. The students then practiced the art of storytelling – being the Speaker and the Listener to share their memories.

Students have been exploring the truth behind the Indian Residential School System using literature and activities. The students read and discussed *Shi-shi-etko* and *Shin-chi's Canoe* to begin to understand the impact of the residential school system on the families and communities. The students discussed the concepts around the loss of identity, culture, and language. The concepts were further investigated with the reading of *Stolen Words* to deepen our understanding of the impact that the Indian Residential School System has had on the survivors and the intergenerational survivors of the system.

Grade 7 – Science

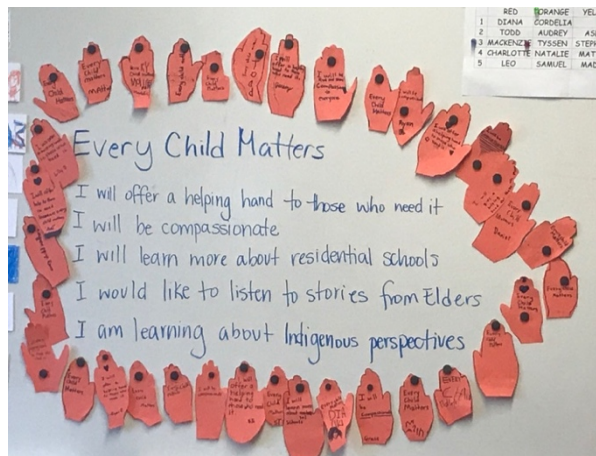
As part of the science curriculum, the teacher has included the Aboriginal Worldview and perspectives of local aboriginal communities when discussing the effects of climate change. By integrating the resources and voices within the variety of perspectives shared, the students received an inclusive learning experience and were able to recognize the importance of indigenous knowledge.

Library

Our school librarian has been purchasing published indigenous materials and creating teacher resource binders using the resources available from FNEESC. When the school librarian is requested by teachers to find resources to support the class curriculum, she purposefully includes indigenous books as part of the collection. During the library NIT provided to teachers, the school librarian shares indigenous stories as read alouds. This consistent process over the past few years has resulted in the students beginning to naturally make cultural connections between books and to the curriculum being taught in the classroom. When studying the New Year traditions across cultures, the librarian discussed the indigenous cultural practices around the new year (especially her experience with the Gitksan community; as well, as the Nisga'a tradition of celebrating Hobiye: celebration of the waxing crescent moon during the latter part of winter). As well, during library NIT, the school librarian has been tying in oral storytelling using the indigenous stories about seasons, navigation, and constellations with various classes.

Learning as a School Community

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).



- Our complex learners have been working one on one with the Educational Assistants and their teachers with adapted versions of the resources used to support the integration of aboriginal education.
- Classrooms around Boundary display the First Peoples Principles of Learning poster, aboriginal artwork, and artifacts. Aboriginal resources are integrated into teacher and student libraries.
- At all assemblies and public gatherings, we begin by having the administrator and two students share the Traditional Territory Acknowledgement in both English and French.

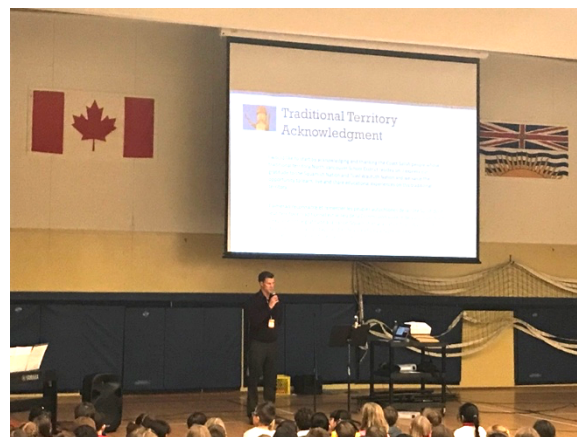
Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Remembrance Day Assembly

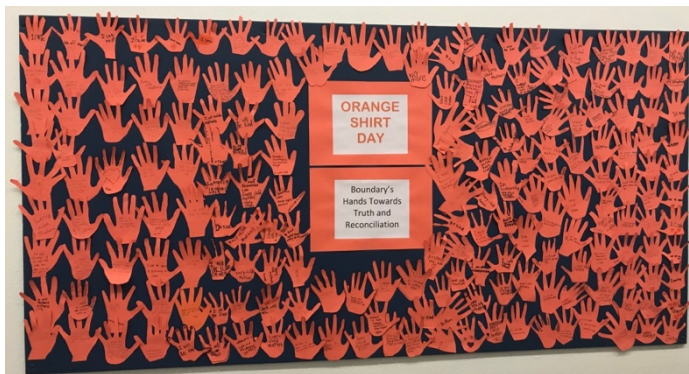
During the Remembrance Day Assembly, we recognized the meaningful contributions of the First Peoples during First and Second World Wars, as well as the Korean War.

Orange Shirt Day

For Orange Shirt Day, the teachers were provided with a handout created by the vice principal. It included unique lesson plans for each grade level – based on reading picture books and discussion ideas to promote in-depth exploration of the Truth. The handout also contained information guides to help with personal, professional development (resources for teachers to read and videos to see). As



well, the librarian set aside a bin of aboriginal picture books and novels for teachers to supplement the lessons during the weeks leading to Orange Shirt Day. On Orange Shirt Day, each student had the task of creating an orange hand and writing the step that they would take towards understanding the truth and towards reconciliation.



We focused the message on “every child matters” and the importance of the role that each individual has in supporting and honouring the history, heritage, and ways of knowing of the First Peoples.

School Plan – Social Responsibility

As part of the School Plan, we have been focusing on social responsibility using the Second Step Program. This action was further supported by the integration of the aboriginal resources to promote discussion of our responsibility towards reconciliation. For example, in the grade 2/3 classroom, the students worked on positive messages using aboriginal artwork.

Learning in The Community

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Making Connections to The Family and The Community

- Three classrooms (2/3, 3/4, 3/4) attended the Salmon Girl play at Presentation House Theatre.
- The kindergarten teacher and vice principal attended the Welcome Back to School Community Dinner at the Tsleil-Waututh Nation Gymnasium to interact with the community. They were able to meet the families of some of our students and to reconnect with families and students whom they had taught previously.
- The kindergarten teachers, Strong Start teacher, and administrative team have made plans to integrate Aboriginal Worldview and Storytelling into their Ready, Set, Learn Event at Boundary Elementary. The team is currently organizing for a member of North Vancouver School District’s Aboriginal Education Team (such as Dallas Gus) to co-teach or to share a story at the event.
- The kindergarten class attended the Memory-History-Story exhibition at the Artist for Kids Gallery in the ESC. The visit was a component of the ongoing Family Studies unit as part of social studies.

Making Connections to The Land

- Students in grade 3 have attended the Skw'unc-was program (one-day cultural program) to enhance the students' understanding and respect for First Nations culture in an authentic Coast Salish longhouse experience.
- Students in grade 6 have attended the Grade 6 Outdoor School program to participate in learning in the natural world with opportunities to create meaningful experiences, understandings of the Aboriginal Worldview, and develop sustainable values and actions.

- Students in grade 4 will be attending the Grade 4 Outdoor School program this spring.
- One of our student teachers has applied to and received the Emily Longworth Memorial Award Grant Funding to take students on a field trip that will provide curriculum enrichment. The two grade 3/4 classes will be attending the Hiwas Feasthouse Cultural Program: First Nation Education on Storytelling and Songs from Squamish Elders, traditional craft making, and food preparation on Grouse Mountain.

Professional Development

Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.

Boundary's Resource Plan

- As part of Boundary's School Plan and Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan, we have been purchasing resources for our school based on the re-designed curriculum. One of our goals has been finding resources that focus on supporting Aboriginal Education and finding authentic resources that can also supplement the learning that occurs in our French Immersion classes.
- The kindergarten classrooms have the Nelson resources for Science, Socials, and Math which incorporate the aboriginal culture. The teachers are mindful to only address aspects of the resources that they feel are authentic. The school has spoken to the Nelson Representative asking for their measures of vetting materials to ensure authenticity.

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Boundary's Professional Development

- At Boundary, we have formed an Aboriginal Education Team consisting of teachers from primary grades, intermediate grades, Late French Immersion, administration, and the librarian. The team has taken an active role in attending the Argyle Family of Schools Collaborative Inquiry Grant on Aboriginal Education: Storytelling and in seeking out authentic resources that can be used to integrate Aboriginal Worldview and the First Principles of Learning into the curriculum and daily practice.
- Curriculum Implementation Day – the vice principal shared a presentation on aboriginal education storytelling (information that was previously co-created with Jessica Johnson and a few other lead teachers of the Windsor-Seycove Family of Schools Aboriginal Education Storytelling Collaborative Inquiry Grant Network) with the staff members at Boundary.
- Curriculum Implementation Day – Boundary's Aboriginal Education Team that attended the first Argyle Family of Schools Collaborative Inquiry Grant on Aboriginal Education:

Storytelling came back from their morning session to share the information they had learned with the rest of the staff at Boundary.

- At Boundary's Staff Meetings, we have made it a regular practice to share food while we share our stories. This act is helping create a cohesive sense of community as different staff members bring contributions of food items to each meeting. Moreover, we have added a Share Our Stories section to the staff meetings, where staff members orally share their stories of lessons that are taking place in their classroom.

Individual Staff Professional Development

- Teachers have indicated that they are doing personal reading of books such as *The Voices That Shape Us*, *Hannah and the Spindle Whorl* and *The Inconvenient Indian*.
- Both administrators attended the Leadership for Learning session at Chief Joe Mathias Centre.
- An administrator and the librarian attended the Dinner and Dialogue focused on the viewing of *Colonization Road*.
- The vice principal is a supportive member of the Argyle Family of Schools Collaborative Inquiry Grant on Aboriginal Education: Storytelling team and helped with the creation of the proposal. As part of the notion of educating the educator, the goal was to create an opportunity for a network of teachers in the Argyle Family of Schools to meet and explore storytelling as part of aboriginal education. The team includes Heather Myhre who has been jointly supporting the group and presented about storytelling at the first session during the Curriculum Implementation Day in the fall.
- The librarian is currently enrolled in the MOOC course at UBC.



In conclusion, as you can see the narrative at Boundary is one that is evolving as we continue to step forward together as a community towards integrating Aboriginal Education into our daily practice as educators and in our own professional development. We look forward to continuing our journey together, as we have opportunities planned to deepen our understanding and to continue to provide learning opportunities for our community in the spring.