

School District
No. 19
(Revelstoke)

ABORIGINAL
ENHANCEMENT
AGREEMENT
2016-2021



We respectfully honour and acknowledge Aboriginal peoples, recognising that students come to us with Aboriginal ancestry from a variety of ancient homelands. We acknowledge and recognize the Métis people as one of Canada's distinct peoples. We would like to acknowledge and honour the four nations on whose traditional land we live and learn: the Sinixt, the Ktunaxa, the Secwepmec, and the Syilx.



Thank you to all of the students, parents, community members, and representatives of interested groups who participated in our consultation sessions. We are grateful for your input, insight and refinements, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with you to implement the goals in this Agreement.

The Lay of the Land

This document, the second Enhancement Agreement for School District No. 19 (Revelstoke), represents the culmination of more than a year of consultation and collaborative planning in our community. Enhancement Agreements (EAs) are working agreements between a school district, local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education, and are designed to enhance the success of Aboriginal students.

The process of developing this Enhancement Agreement has been led by the School District No. 19 (Revelstoke) Aboriginal Advisory Committee, and has involved extensive community engagement. In 2014 and 2015, a series of gatherings, workshops and open house events were held to share the progress from the last agreement and to begin consultations towards a second Enhancement Agreement. Participation included students, community representatives, parents, a representative of the Ministry of Education and of the Ministry of Children and Families, the Early Childhood Development Committee, Community Connections, the Revelstoke Social Development Committee, Revelstoke Board of Education, School District No. 19 support staff, teachers and principals, and the RCMP. The recently-formed Revelstoke Aboriginal Friendship Society has also worked closely with the Advisory Committee, and now brings a community-wide Aboriginal voice to Revelstoke. Outreach to nearby Aboriginal Nations, including Sinixt, Ktunaxa, Syilx, Secwepemc and Métis Associations, all contributed to the refinement of our goals and wording.

This Enhancement Agreement has been developed within the wider context of the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC, 2015). Several of the *Calls to Action* of the TRCC refer to a) the education of Aboriginal students and b) education for reconciliation. These two categories form the basis for our two goals.

This Enhancement Agreement represents a partnership between the School District, Aboriginal communities and community members, and the Ministry of Education. The signatories to this Agreement agree to collaborate and work in our various capacities toward the goals.



The Vision

We envision a student body and staff who understand indigenous history and circumstances, and recognize our roles as individuals and institutions in reconciliation, ensuring that Aboriginal students are successful and confident in their endeavours, feel connected to their cultural heritage, and recognize their unique gifts, strengths and abilities. We are committed to a community that acknowledges, honours and respects the diverse cultures of Aboriginal students, families and elders.

Teachings from our first Enhancement Agreement

Signed in 2010, Revelstoke's first Enhancement Agreement had four goals: 1) to increase Aboriginal students' knowledge and pride of their heritage and language; 2) to increase every student's awareness of the culture and heritage of Aboriginal peoples; 3) to increase Aboriginal students' successful completion of their secondary education; and 4) to increase the academic success of Aboriginal students with increased literacy, numeracy and technological competencies.

Some of the successes from the first Enhancement Agreement include the following:

- Aboriginal student self-identification rates have remained in the 13-14% range, with 100% of graduating students choosing to participate in the blanket or sash ceremony
- First Nations 12 has run in our District since 2006 for all interested learners
- District-wide Aboriginal events have been held, including special performances, commemoration of the National Day for Healing and Reconciliation, sturgeon-nose canoe building, and the painting of a mural representing the First Peoples' language regions across Canada
- Aboriginal students are reading at grade level in District-wide measures at Grade 3 and Grade 7 (100% of students)
- Provincially mandated testing indicates results at or above District average in Writing



and Numeracy at Grade 7

- Six-year Aboriginal student high school completion rate is 76% (compared with BC average of 62%)

While there are many successes we celebrate in the District, there are still challenges to address:

- Difficulty of connecting students with knowledgeable Aboriginal people to learn from. In particular, integrating authentic Aboriginal language learning opportunities
- Small but persistent differences in educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, especially in the upper grades (grade-to-grade transitions, six-year high school completion rate, scholarship rate)
- Emphasis in the curriculum on Aboriginal topics and perspectives across all grades and subject areas needs to be supported by authentic professional development and resources

Language of this Agreement

The metaphor of a journey is key to the language of this Enhancement Agreement. The journey consists of:

- Two main Goals, with a breakdown for each into various Destinations
- Elements, which are strategies for reaching the several Destinations
- Trail Markers, signs we look for to ensure we are on the path to our Destinations and Goals

Goal 1: To nurture in Aboriginal students a spirit of generosity, belonging, independence, and mastery.

Rationale

We acknowledge our shared responsibility to continue to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students in Revelstoke. Our consultations with community groups and individuals revealed that success means a variety of different things to different people. The wording of this goal is based upon the work of Martin Brokenleg, whose Circle of Courage model integrates Aboriginal philosophies of child-rearing, and contemporary resilience research. This holistic approach to student success and health reflects the community responses in our consultations.



- Nurturing **generosity** involves opportunities for giving unselfishly back to others, and the feeling of worth and responsibility that brings
- **Belonging** involves treating others as kin, forging powerful social bonds based on respect
- Nurturing **independence** involves opportunities to make decisions, solve problems, and show personal responsibility
- **Mastery** involves learning from others with more experience to become competent and capable

An essential part of this goal is the need to work in partnerships to build the capacity and enthusiasm among educators and staff in School District No. 19 to integrate Aboriginal ways of knowing in their classrooms. Another key to the realization of this goal is to enhance connections with Aboriginal elders, knowledge keepers and community members in and around Revelstoke. With no nearby local band, these individual connections are important.

Destination: Generosity and Belonging

Aboriginal students see their history, heritage, culture and language as sources of strength, and as part of who they are and wish to develop their skills to share with their community

- Elements: all of our schools and the School District strive to—**
- Create opportunities for Aboriginal students to participate in and learn about their history, heritage, culture and language
 - Present authentic contemporary Aboriginal perspectives in school resources, including textbooks
 - Provide opportunities in Aboriginal cultural arts (visual arts, dance, music, handwork) and Aboriginal language
 - Continue to connect with Aboriginal history through school activities and make history meaningful to contemporary lives
 - Provide opportunities for connections to Aboriginal groups (language classes, trips to powwows, visits and exchanges, pen pals, etc.)
 - Collaborate in community initiatives that benefit Aboriginal students and families
 - Celebrate and honour Aboriginal community members who visit our schools
 - Provide all Aboriginal students with safe spaces and with supports and enhancements needed to thrive and understand who they are, past and present, socially and culturally
 - Provide learning opportunities about traditional paths to wellness



- Participate in events that offer an opportunity to bring Aboriginal perspectives to the community: Carousel of Nations, Canada Day parade, Welcome to Kindergarten event, and others.
- Facilitate culturally sensitive teaching practices, including educator knowledge of the First Peoples' Principles of Learning and Aboriginal worldviews

Trailmarkers:

How do we know that Aboriginal students are developing a spirit of belonging and generosity?

1. Examples of student learning and contributions to those around them.
2. Number of students making connections to their community and/or cultural roots (for example, student community involvement, or choosing to research personal heritage and ancestry)
3. Participation rates in Aboriginal activities (recess and lunch programs, field trips, gatherings, etc.)
4. Number of schools with designated Aboriginal spaces to welcome students and families, and evidence that such spaces are used by Aboriginal students and their families.
5. Participation of Aboriginal students in community events where an Aboriginal presence or initiative is present.

Destination: Independence and Mastery

Aboriginal students remain engaged and challenged throughout their school career, leading to high school graduation and a transition into post-secondary studies, or directly to the world of work, and/or to fulfilling roles in their community.

Elements: all of our schools and the School District as a whole strive to—

- Honour parents and families as first teachers, and welcome them into the schools
- Foster opportunities to learn from elders, family members and peers and build a network of mentors within the community
- Nurture student gifts and talents, including culturally appropriate leadership



- Facilitate opportunities for personal projects, for instance job shadowing and mentorship
- Support school personnel to know the talents and interests of individual Aboriginal students, and offer mentorship, personalized inquiry and leadership opportunities
- Ensure students are familiar with the range of learning tools available through schools
- Facilitate land-based learning opportunities
- Provide history curriculum about colonialism, including factors that have had historical impact; and include in the curriculum insight into keys to resiliency
- Ensure that course selection and graduation planning is done with the collaboration of students, families, and school staff, including Aboriginal department staff
- Keep in touch with students after they complete school

Trailmarkers:

How do we know that Aboriginal students are developing a spirit of independence and mastery?

1. Students with Aboriginal background elect to participate in targeted Aboriginal programs, events and activities in the District
2. Academic engagement and progress of Aboriginal students is monitored at the classroom, school and District levels (literacy benchmarks, attendance rates, province-wide mandated test results, final marks in courses leading to graduation)
3. Participation rates in school extra-curricular activities, leadership and athletic activities
4. Graduation rates
5. Scholarship and award rates of receipt
6. Post-secondary pursuits (education, work, community involvement)



Goal 2: To integrate reconciliation and Aboriginal ways of knowing across all grades for all learners.

Rationale

The deep history of our continent and our country is that of Aboriginal history and cultures. Knowledge of Aboriginal culture and history can expand the world views of all students, foster inclusivity and tolerance, and contribute to the values acknowledged as central in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission—honouring all peoples in Canada, regardless of ancestry, and nurturing a strong and resilient culture for all. Aboriginal cultural studies and history, both past and present, can foster humility and understanding in all learners as they develop broad understandings of different ways of knowing, believing and living.

Destination: Reconciliation and the way forward

- To learn about the legacy of colonialism in Canada
- To learn about the local area in which we live: it's first peoples, and the languages, land and organisms which continue to sustain us
- To learn about the contributions, historic and contemporary, of Aboriginal peoples

Elements: schools and the School District as a whole strive to—

- Educate staff, teachers and administrators in Aboriginal perspectives
- Familiarize staff, teachers and administrators of the District with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Implement the revised Provincial curriculum, including the use of authentic Aboriginal resources across grades and subject areas
- Provide anti-racism education opportunities
- Encourage the use of territorial acknowledgement protocols at appropriate times or events
- Empower teachers to facilitate cultural opportunities in their classrooms
- Include in the elementary curriculum both historical and contemporary information about the local first peoples of this area, including meeting representatives from each of these Nations
- Endorse plant walks and ethnobotany study, following protocols for sustainable and respectful use
- Endorse curriculum projects that sustain a view of “Helping all the animals in the world” (Primary student’s words); Eco-biological studies
- Create awareness for all students of local Aboriginal languages through signage, posters, and knowledge of simple greetings



Trailmarkers:

How do we know that students from all backgrounds are developing knowledge of Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary life?

- Evidence that District, school, and course plans integrate Aboriginal content
- Satisfaction Survey and other survey responses
- Tracking of availability and use of authentic Aboriginal resources in classes and school libraries
- Number of times parents and Aboriginal role models are invited into schools
- Number of school signs in local Aboriginal languages
- Registration in First Nations 12

Appendix:

a. Aboriginal Education for All Classroom Rubric