



School District 19 Aboriginal Education Newsletter December 2014

We respectfully honour and acknowledge Aboriginal people, recognising that our students come to us with Aboriginal ancestry from a variety of ancient homelands.

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.

Welcome to the first Aboriginal Education Newsletter for the 2014-2015 school year! There are many exciting things happening in Aboriginal Education in the District. We hope you enjoy reading all about them.



A Message from Michelle Cole, Aboriginal Advisory Committee Chair:

All My Relations,

The snow on the ground and the long winter nights remind us that the season of storytelling and winter dances begins. As we

gather with family and community listen and learn. Almost six months ago at the Summer Solstice we welcomed storytellers from all four First Nations around us. They spoke of stories of strength and courage as we choose our paths and reminded us not to take ourselves too seriously. The stories and conversations of last summer continue to echo throughout Revelstoke.

The Aboriginal Storytelling Festival, a community event, featured a tipi along the Columbia River. The Aboriginal students of School District 19 contributed to the peeling and sanding preparation of the poles to support this lodge. Lisa Moore contributed

greatly to this event and fortunately she has moved to Revelstoke Secondary School to support our Aboriginal students. We also warmly welcome Nadia McLaren as our new elementary schools' support worker. Nadia's creativity brings exciting new projects to



Revelstoke.

The approaching Winter Solstice is a time for us to be grateful and dream of future possibilities. The longer days of sunshine launching our new Enhancement Agreement discussion promise to be successful. Recently I was reminded in a talking circle at the high school; teachers come in many forms to guide us. We just need to be willing to listen to their stories.

Niá:wen (Thank you in Mohawk)

"We envision Aboriginal students who are successful and confident; have pride in their cultural heritage, unique gifts, strengths and abilities. We are committed to a community that acknowledges honours and respects, the diverse culture of our Aboriginal students, families and Elders." (from the S.D. #19 Enhancement Agreement)



A message from the District Principal, Ariel McDowell:

Hello! I am honoured and humbled to have been given a leadership role in our District Aboriginal Education department. Since September, I have been working hard to become familiar with the programs and supports in place in Revelstoke schools, and to learn about initiatives across the province that are leading to success for Aboriginal learners.

With the help of many knowledgeable people, an exciting year is kicking into gear. We have a dynamic and dedicated team of educators who are passionate about providing the best possible learning experience for our students. We have an equally committed Aboriginal Education

Advisory Committee, consisting of community, parent and school representatives.

Revelstoke has 117 students who self-identify as First Nations, Metis or Inuit. To ensure success for these students, and to promote broadly a deep understanding of and respect for Aboriginal cultures, histories, and ways of knowing, our community has an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. Our current Enhancement Agreement is up for renewal this year, and so we have some exciting work ahead!

I welcome your questions and comments about Aboriginal education in our District. I can be reached at Columbia Park Elementary at (250)837-0885, or by email at amcdowell@sd19.bc.ca



What is an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (EA)?

An EA is a working agreement between a school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education designed to enhance the educational achievement of Aboriginal students. The EA establishes a collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts that involves shared decision-making and specific goal setting to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students.

EAs highlight the importance of academic performance and more importantly, stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional culture and languages to Aboriginal student development and success. Fundamental to EAs is the requirement that school districts provide strong programs on the culture of local Aboriginal peoples on whose traditional territories the districts are located.

You are invited! It is time to renew our Enhancement Agreement, and to ensure that it is a document that remains relevant, we are hoping you'll get involved! On **January 20th, from 4 – 6:00 pm at RSS**, we are holding an event to showcase Aboriginal programs in Revelstoke schools, and to ask for your input about what we can do even better. As part of the evening's events, we will be unveiling a mural that Aboriginal students created, with the support of the Revelstoke Arts Council. Our existing Enhancement Agreement will also be on display. We hope you can come!

Who is an Aboriginal Student?



Aboriginal Ancestry is determined on a voluntary basis through self-identification. This includes First Nations (status or non-status), Métis or Inuit Ancestry. No documentation is required and the ancestry can go back several generations. Ministry of Education funding is provided to support the success of all Aboriginal students through culturally appropriate educational programs and services.

We encourage all students of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit Ancestry to complete a self-identification form as this allows you to access various supports and programs during the school year if you wish. Self-

identification forms can be picked up at any school office, or can be downloaded from our website: [http://www.sd19.bc.ca/pdf Files for Website/12-13 Elem. Ab Ed Brochure.pdf](http://www.sd19.bc.ca/pdf%20Files%20for%20Website/12-13%20Elem.%20Ab%20Ed%20Brochure.pdf)

If you have any questions about this process please do not hesitate to contact us.



A Message from Lisa Moore, Aboriginal Student Assistant at R.S.S.

This fall we were invited to Sinixt Language workshop in Nakusp, taught by LaRae Wiley. The roads were bad but the

workshop was well worth the trip because LaRae gave such an informative workshop. The Interior Salish website (interiorsalish.com) has a lot of resources to use in the classroom – songs, videos, written work.

We are working on preparing students, especially grade 11 and 12 students, for post-graduation. Some students are looking for financial assistance so I've been looking into scholarships and

bursaries. Other students need to get their Food Safe so we are planning a course at Okanagan College.

We are very happy to announce that we have 19 students on the Honour Roll this term, and 3 of them are on the Principal's Honour Roll! Well done!

We are looking forward to the spring with some ideas for Medicine Wheel projects, language workshops in the schools, possibly a youth conference. We are also continuing to build our Community Resource List of local Aboriginal people who are interested in Aboriginal Education. As well, if any Elders are travelling through Revelstoke we would be honoured to have them visit our schools.

**Please join us at the next Aboriginal Education meeting
Thursday January 8th, 2015 at 4 pm, at the School Board
Office,
501 – 11th Street**

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A Message from Nadia McLaren, Elementary Aboriginal Student Assistant

Dear Parents and Teachers of the Revelstoke Elementary School District 19:



I have recently been hired as the Aboriginal Education Worker (having big shoes to fill, replacing Lisa Moore). My name is **Nadia McLaren** and I'd like to take this time to introduce myself. Having recently moved from Toronto (but originally from small towns in Northwestern Ontario), Revelstoke is such a breath of fresh air. Immediately my partner and I could see that raising our two kids here is a privilege and we are already both so thankful for having this chance.

With regards to my work background, I graduated from the Ontario College of Art Design (now a credited University) with a major in Drawing and Painting. I also studied in Florence, Italy for one year and for a girl from a small town, it was a dream come true. Throughout University I worked with Aboriginal kids, both in my community of Sioux Lookout, Ontario and downtown Toronto where I helped run a mural program for at-risk youth with the Native Child and Family Services of Toronto. My work with the youth led to the understanding that something was deeply affecting these children and their communities. There was a common experience of hurt that I witnessed and beginning in those years, my work and my research served two purposes: One was to try to understand this hurt in a more intellectual or academic sense and the second was to learn more about my own Ojibway identity, which proved to be incredibly satisfying and fulfilling for me. My family never talked about our Ojibway background even though much of what we did was considered 'traditional.' So learning about the traditional cultures and more about the contemporary context of First Nation's issues was an enlightening journey for me. On the last day of my thesis year at OCAD, my Granny passed away. I realized her story passed with her, making it too late to ask her the important questions I needed answered. Shortly after, I began a project that would change my life - a documentary I made in her honour, my Granny, Theresa McCraw entitled, "Muffins For Granny." I had interviewed over 40

Elders across Northwestern Ontario with the hope of piecing together the story of my own Granny. I am forever grateful for the stories that were shared with me. Muffins For Granny has opened many doors for me over the years, offering opportunities to present my film to the public, thus engaging meaningful conversation about the residential school policy and its effects on the people of Canada. Currently, I am in the final stages of writing and illustrating a graphic novel memoir, entitled "Ever Good," which is a coming of age story based on my personal relationship with my Granny.

I look forward to using my art background as a means for learning (both my learning and that of the students). Our main goal this year will be to complete a large, multi-media mural/map of Canada. The students and classes will be involved in every stage of the process (Please see attached treatment for details). Upon completion, there will be an art reception where all will be invited. The students will thus be encouraged to speak about their work and the important issues to them. We will work together to find a prominent wall somewhere within Revelstoke, where we can proudly and permanently display our work of art.

I invite and encourage parents and teachers to be involved in any way you choose. I am at every elementary school throughout the week and would love to answer any of your questions and am open to any of your suggestions. I would like to take the time to let you all know how honoured I am to be working with the schools here in Revelstoke and I look forward to getting to know you all!

All my best and Meegwetch,

Nadia McLaren, Aboriginal Education Worker
School District 19, nadmcl@yahoo.com

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Free Film Screening: "Muffins for Granny"

7:00 pm January 16th, 2015 at the Revelstoke
Performing Arts Centre



You are invited to a special screening of the movie "Muffins for Granny" by filmmaker Nadia McLaren. McLaren is Ojibway, and hails from northern Ontario. She is a visual artist, writer and graduate from the Ontario College of Art and Design. She has recently joined the School District #19 staff as the Elementary Aboriginal Support Worker, working with students in all three Revelstoke elementary schools.

Muffins For Granny is an 88-minute documentary that weaves together home movie footage of her grandmother, interviews with six elders, including animated recreations of their stories, archival photos from residential schools, traditional songs, and scenes of the natural beauty of Ontario's north. Muffins for Granny is a layered and emotionally complex story of personal and cultural survival. McLaren tells the story of her own grandmother by combining precious home movie fragments with the stories of seven elders

dramatically affected by their experiences in residential school. McLaren uses animation to move the audience between the darkness of memory and the reality that these charismatic survivors live in today. McLaren interviews First Nations elders about their experiences in residential schools. Mixing stark animated moments with human faces and home movie footage, this is a raw and honest documentary.

An understanding of this sad chapter of Canada's history is important for all of us to grasp; it has repercussions for many families and youth today. After the screening, the filmmaker will hold a question and answer session.

This free screening is made possible by the Filmmaker, Nadia McLaren, School District 19, and the Revelstoke Performing Arts Centre.

We hope to see you there!

UBC Faculty of Education's Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Indigenous Education

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For more information on Aboriginal Education: <http://www.sd19.bc.ca/abed>

The UBC Faculty of Education is delivering a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), a free 6-week course titled [*Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education*](#) that begins on January 27, 2015. It is facilitated by [Dr. Jan Hare](#).

Contact: UBC Faculty of Education Tel 604 822 4145 Email info.educ@ubc.ca

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