



School District 19 Aboriginal Education Newsletter Fall 2016

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 Fall 2016 Aboriginal Education Newsletter! There are many exciting things happening in Aboriginal Education in the District. We hope you enjoy reading all about them.

A message from the District Principal, Ariel McDowell:

Way' ("Hello" in Nsyilxen) and welcome to a new school year!

We hope that you and your child are settling in to a healthy and positive start to the year, and that you are both experiencing a good balance of opportunity, support and challenge. This is the first of four newsletters that will be delivered electronically to families with children who have Aboriginal ancestry, and who have requested to participate in the Aboriginal Education program. If you are aware of someone who is not receiving this newsletter who would like it, please let us know at the School Board Office at 837-2101.

Aboriginal Education programs in Revelstoke are for students and their families who self-identify as having Aboriginal ancestry. There is no requirement that students in the program have any affiliation with a Band, nor that they be Status or any requirement for blood quantum. Our program is an inclusive one. The program itself consists of three major areas:

- a) academic support and/or challenge for Aboriginal students
- b) personalized cultural/linguistic exploration for Aboriginal students

- c) Resources and support for regular education teachers and students to gain knowledge and understanding



The Year Ahead

Students and teachers across the District have been continuing to explore the revised BC curriculum, with its emphasis on Aboriginal content and approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers are looking forward to having the expertise and support of our Aboriginal Student Assistants to assist with planning and implementing these changes.

"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)

Some of the highlights of the new K-9 curriculum include:

- Aboriginal perspectives across all content and skill areas (Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies and Physical and Health education)
- First Peoples' Principles of Learning guide teaching approaches (see below)
- Specific lessons about BC's history that address discrimination, inequality, oppression and the impacts of colonialism, including the history of residential schools

If you are curious about how teachers and staff are including these approaches in classrooms, please ask!

Enhancement Agreement

We are so delighted by the results of all the community consultation and engagement. The Enhancement Agreement is our plan for the next five years for Aboriginal Education in School District 19. We have just two goals:

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

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

You may be surprised to learn some facts about our programs. For example, did you know that:

- Approximately 12% of our student population self-identifies as having Aboriginal ancestry
- Revelstoke has had an Aboriginal Advisory Committee since 1996
- The word "Aboriginal" in Canada refers to Inuit, Métis, and First Nations groups – all of these groups are represented in Revelstoke's student population



- The area now known as Revelstoke is the traditional territory of the Sinixt, Syilx, Ktunaxa, and Secwepemc people
- Research shows that Aboriginal young people who grow up learning about their language and culture are more successful and resilient, and contribute to the health of their communities
- Aboriginal education isn't just for Aboriginal students; one of our goals is to enhance the understanding, knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal contributions to our society for ALL students
- First Peoples' perspectives and ways of knowing are an integral part of BC's revised curriculum, across all grades and subject areas
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings underline the importance of schools and education in the process of national reconciliation with Aboriginal peoples
- Parents, elders, other family and community members sharing their knowledge is honoured and essential to the learning of young people

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Orange Shirt Day

September 30th is now recognized Nation-wide as Orange Shirt Day.



Orange Shirt Day has grown out of a story told to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Phyllis Jack Webstad. When Phyllis was six, she was excited to start school in her new, shiny orange shirt. Of course at that time, the school she was sent to was St. Joseph Mission, a residential school in Williams Lake. Her school experience did not turn out to be a positive one. The hope and humanity and disappointment that Phyllis shared in her story has struck a cord for many, and Orange Shirt Day has become one way to begin the conversation of the need for reconciliation in this country.

As Senator Murray Sinclair has stated, “education brought us here, and education will help us get away from this”. What is reconciliation? In the words of TRC, it is “based on the idea of restoring friendship and harmony – about resolving differences, accepting the past and working together for a better future.

This year the Aboriginal Education Department partnered with the Aboriginal Friendship Society of Revelstoke to make some very fine looking orange shirts. We offered them for sale for \$20, and have very few left, so they were a hit! Many students wore their orange shirts to commemorate this very meaningful day.

Our Aboriginal Mural of Canada will Adorn Begbie View Elementary

The enormous and stunning map of the language and cultural groups of Aboriginal peoples across Canada will hang proudly and prominently on the exterior wall of Begbie View Elementary, right near the basketball courts. Students worked with artist and Aboriginal support worker Nadia McLaren in 2015 to complete the mural. Be sure to come see the mural when it’s installed!

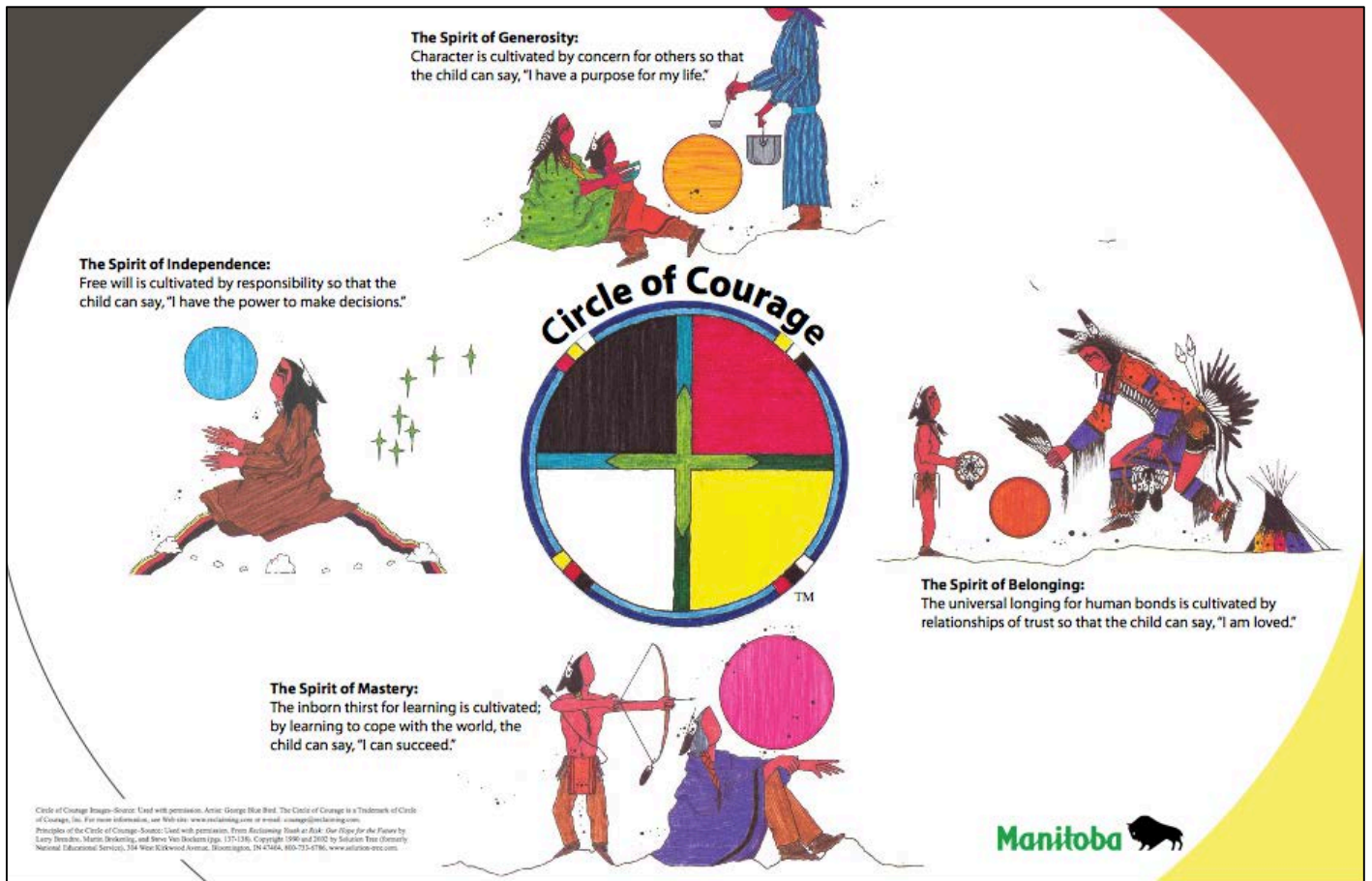
Welcoming Spaces

One of the priorities identified by our Board, by community responses and by students is for our schools to have a welcoming Aboriginal presence in the entryway, and a dedicated space for Aboriginal programs to work from. We hope you’ll begin to notice even more enticing places and spaces in our schools that make our students and families proud.

Kokanee Fish Festival

With the cooler weather, we hope to see lots of Kokanee returning to our streams. To welcome them, and to help students understand the complex and important Columbia River system, all students in Grade 2 participated in the Fish Festival on Friday, September 23rd. Karin O’Neill, Elementary Aboriginal Student Assistant, along with her daughter Charlotte, showed students how to make a dip net. Other activities included Bear Aware displays, Parks Canada ecology games, art projects and watershed demonstrations. And a special visitor also arrived to see if the salmon had returned...Mr. Black Bear!

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Aboriginal Youth Leadership Conference at Selkirk College

Students from RSS travelled to Castlegar on September 22nd and 23rd to take part in this special conference. The trip included meeting Elders, learning about the First Peoples of the Columbia River system, hearing renowned speaker Wab Kinew, and even sleeping in a tipi! We hope to send a bigger group next year, so if your child will be in Grade 9 – 12 next year, and has an interest, please contact Lisa Moore at 837-2173.

Coming Opportunities

Students across the District will continue to have opportunities to explore historical and contemporary topics. Looking ahead to the Spring, we will be welcoming the contemporary Indigenous dance, theatre, and music group Red

Sky with a production called *Mistatim* (May 1st). All students in the District will have a chance to experience this production about the taming of a wild horse, diversity, and reconciliation. On May 4th and 5th our community is bringing in Dr. Martin Brokenleg to share his Circle of Courage model. Nurturing generosity, belonging, independence and mastery gives our students – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – an opportunity to thrive and contribute positively to their school, their culture, and their community. We look forward to the work ahead!

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First Peoples Principles of Learning

These principles are being introduced in classrooms throughout the Province of BC, and across Canada:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on
- Connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.
- Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.
- Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning involves patience and time.
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

- Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.
- For First Peoples classroom resources visit: www.fnesc.ca



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

Territory Acknowledgement

Why do we acknowledge the nations on whose territory we live? And how do we keep that acknowledgment meaningful, not just a quick note to rush through before we get to the “real” part of our gatherings?

Many of us in the Revelstoke area were told that native peoples never lived here because of the inhospitable climate. I've even heard that this valley was “cursed.” When we acknowledge territory recognize that in fact people did live here and that those First Peoples still have stories about this land and feel strong connections to this area. We resist making those first people invisible. We are also making a gesture of reconciliation for the past wrongs; this is not to shame people living here now, it is merely recognizing historical fact that other people lost their homes, sometimes violently, and we now live where they once did.

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To keep territorial acknowledgement meaningful we need to think about our obligations to be in a good relationship with First Peoples, with the land itself and with all the creatures that live here. We are greatly privileged to live here and with that privilege comes responsibility to ensure it is a safe place for all – Indigenous Peoples, Locals, Newcomers and that we show gratitude by for this. Acknowledging territory is really just one step towards this.

I'm looking forward to the year ahead, full of meaningful and impactful learning – for students and for adults.

Sincerely,
Lisa Moore

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A Message of introduction from Karin O'Neill, Elementary Aboriginal Student Assistant

Hello Everyone!

Primary aboriginal education has had a busy September. Here is some of the many things we've been up to!

You may have seen posters for orange shirt day around the schools. We had school wide presentations on the origin of Orange Shirt Day, and a brief summary of some of the conditions and damages caused by residential schools. Many children, and most staff wore orange to show their support. The classrooms were seas of orange on September 30th. Also, many of our intermediate classes are participating in a four week study on residential schools.

The grade two classes (as well as all split classes including grade 2) learned about dipnet fishing and salmon in Aboriginal cultures. This included a story and discussion in class, then on September 23 about 60 children traveled to Bridge Creek. Our district had an Aboriginal Education booth at the annual Kokanee Fish

Festival, where children made dipnets to bring back to their classes.

In addition, Aboriginal lunch and recess programs have resumed, and the children have been busy learning and crafting.

This promises to be another busy and exciting year for primary Aboriginal Education.

Sincerely,
Karin O'Neill



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