



# ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT

2013-2018

Our vision: To have every Aboriginal learner graduate with dignity, purpose, and options.





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**Top Left:** Mike McKay, Superintendent and CEO of Surrey Schools.

**Top Right:** Traditional singers during signing of the Agreement.

**Bottom:** Students participate in Windspeaker (Aboriginal Leadership Camp).



*Hjorth Road Elementary mural honouring the 100th year celebration of the school. Artists: Zelda Komurcu and Jason Kraft.*

## VISION AND GOALS

### OUR VISION:

To have every Aboriginal learner graduate with dignity, purpose, and options.

### OUR GOALS:

- Increase positive identity and sense of belonging for all Aboriginal learners;
- Increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions, and cultures for all learners; and
- Increase achievement for all Aboriginal learners.

# ABOUT

## WHO WE ARE

Surrey is a growing district, enrolling over 70,000 students in 125 school sites. Presently, there are over 3,200 Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> learners enrolled in all but two sites. Supporting cultural connections for urban Aboriginal students is complex, given the size and variety of needs. Moving forward our Enhancement Agreement will be supported by the inquiry process to maximize the effectiveness of the work done. The inquiry process is an asset-based model that has a positive effect on the beliefs and attitudes about Aboriginal learner achievement by focusing on their strengths.

## BACKGROUND

The second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA) brings new vision to the work of supporting Aboriginal learner success. Over the course of the first agreement from 2008 to 2013 there were modest improvements in literacy, numeracy, and the six-year Dogwood completion rate. High expectations for learner achievement have remained our mandate throughout the significant changes which have occurred in the way we deliver services to Aboriginal learners.

Changes include, but are not exclusive to:

- increased collaboration to raise the profile of Aboriginal education across the district;
- shared responsibility for achievement, including enhanced programming in literacy and numeracy; and
- increased frequency of cultural events that highlight Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives.

## PARTNERS

Aboriginal education staff, together with other district departments, partner with local Aboriginal communities, the Aboriginal Education Council, Board of Education, and the Ministry of Education to carry out the Agreement. The Aboriginal Education Council with membership from community, district and parents, represent Aboriginal interests in the way that Aboriginal programs and services are provided. It is our vision to have every Aboriginal learner graduate with dignity, purpose and options.



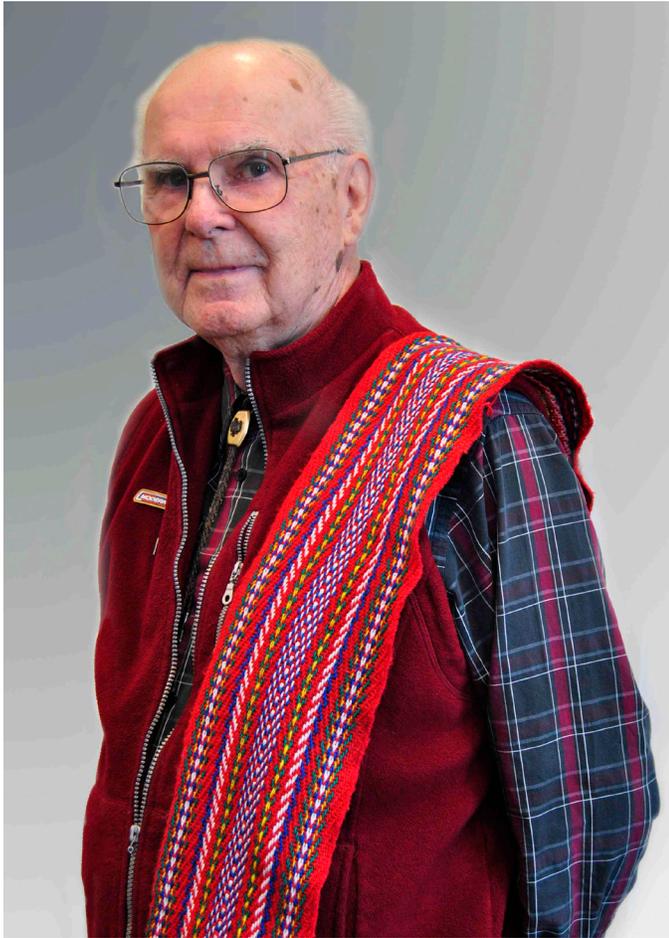
*Traditional drummers and singers, Dean Sam and daughter Mavis Pierre, during the post raising.*

## THE ABORIGINAL EDUCATION COUNCIL

The Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) recognizes and honours the unique qualities of all Aboriginal peoples living in our diverse community. The AEC strives to promote better understanding of, and appreciation for, the contributions of local and North American Aboriginal cultures within our schools and community at large. The AEC is comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Katzie First Nation                                    | Semiahmoo First Nation                              |
| Board of Education Trustee                             | Aboriginal Elders                                   |
| Parent Representatives, Surrey Schools                 | Assistant Superintendent, Surrey Schools            |
| Nova Métis Heritage Association                        | Surrey Teachers' Association                        |
| District Principal (Aboriginal), Surrey Schools        | Surrey Principals' and Vice Principals' Association |
| Kekinow Native Housing Society                         | Canadian Union of Public Employees                  |
| Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association |   |

<sup>1</sup> "Aboriginal" is a term used by the government of BC and is inclusive of First Nation, Metis, and Inuit peoples.



*Alvin Myhre (Métis Elder)*

The integration of Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge in the curriculum serves as an important step to begin to address misunderstanding of Aboriginal cultures. With a more in-depth knowledge of Aboriginal people and their history, all students in British Columbia will have a foundation for developing mutual understanding and respect.

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013, p.4)

## CONTEXT

The history of education for Aboriginal peoples has been one of transformation over time. Prior to the arrival of Europeans in North America, First Nations and Inuit communities had highly developed systems of education that supported their social and economic structure. Learning was integrated into all aspects of daily living and was a life-long endeavor. The “classroom” was the entire community, and the teachers were all people in the community. Families, Elders and community members alike had the responsibility to share their expertise and wisdom to guarantee that knowledge and understandings were passed down from generation to generation. In this way, Aboriginal communities ensured their unique linguistic, artistic and cultural traditions were continued.

The arrival of Europeans changed the landscape of education for Aboriginal people in significant ways. In an effort to assimilate Aboriginal peoples, Europeans began a process of education that

culminated in Canada’s policy to remove Aboriginal children from their families and communities and attend Indian Residential Schools. Forced assimilation had significant negative, multi-generational consequences for Aboriginal peoples that are still felt today. However, the strength and resilience of Aboriginal peoples that has existed for centuries continues today.

Aboriginal peoples across Canada continue to remediate the negative impacts that assimilation policies had on Aboriginal language, knowledge, traditions and culture. Their efforts serve to enrich and enhance today’s educational contexts.

While Surrey schools serve and appreciate students from around the world, the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge within its curricula honours both the historical and contemporary roles played by Aboriginal peoples in the foundation of British Columbia and Canada.

## PURPOSE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

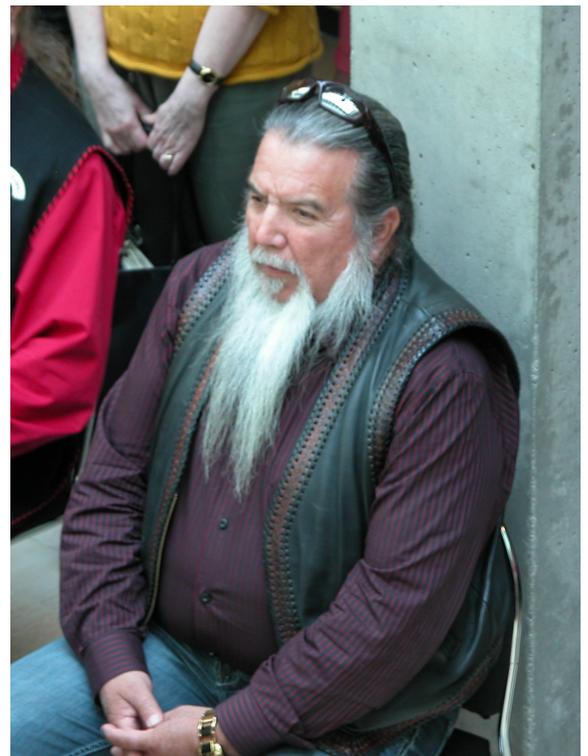
The Surrey School District's AEEA outlines a collaborative plan that is guided by a collective vision. This plan is a shared responsibility between local Aboriginal communities, the Board of Education, District Education Services - Aboriginal Education, the Aboriginal Education Council, and the Ministry of Education.

### THE AEEA WILL SERVE TO:

- respect and affirm positive relationships between local Aboriginal families and communities, and the district;
- foster shared decision making between the district and local Aboriginal peoples and communities;
- develop a better understanding among school and district administration, teachers, and support staff of the contemporary and historical issues that may impact the achievement of Aboriginal learners;
- educate all learners about the history and culture of Aboriginal peoples;
- foster an environment that supports Aboriginal learners to develop a positive personal and cultural identity;
- promote learning opportunities relevant to Aboriginal learners;
- focus on the strengths that Aboriginal learners bring to the education system; and
- celebrate the achievement of Aboriginal learners.

### PARTIES TO THIS AGREEMENT ARE COMMITTED TO:

- acknowledge and honour the people and traditional territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Kwantlen First Nations on which Surrey schools reside;
- through dialogue and collaboration, foster mutual respect and strong relationships that recognize the cultural differences and diverse needs of Aboriginal learners;
- share responsibility for the success of all Aboriginal learners attending Surrey schools;
- enhance the educational experience, sense of identity and place, and belonging of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit learners within a safe and respectful learning environment; and
- maintain high expectations of Aboriginal learners in all subject areas.



**Top:** Elder Se'qwa:y e'nte' (Danny Charlie) from Sto:lo Nation marking the base of the Welcome Post located within the Surrey District Education Centre. The post was carved by artist Leonard Wells.

**Bottom:** Chief Willard Cook (Semiahmoo Nation)

## OUR JOURNEY

“Every culture has a world view, whether it is stated or not. It gives people a characteristic perspective of things which runs through every aspect of their lives. This perspective tells the people what is important and why.”

(Dene Kede, 1993, p. xxii)



Chief Ed Pierre (Katzie Nation)

The planning carried out for the AEEA was informed by evidence collected and analyzed from a number of sources. These included data from Ministry and District assessments, as well as survey and focus group results and professional discussions with district staff. Survey respondents and focus group participants included parents, students, teachers and other staff. Over the time of the first Agreement the district observed:

- a modest, but important increase in the academic achievement;
- increased six-year Dogwood completion rate; and
- the beginning of integration of Aboriginal content in the classroom.

In 2013 students, teachers, parents, district staff, school and district-based administration gathered together in focus groups to share their thoughts on what was working in Aboriginal education. Participants expressed concerns about systemic barriers and structural hurdles that continue to frustrate Aboriginal learners and their families. Suggestions were offered on ways to better support Aboriginal learners. The feedback gathered indicated:

- both satisfaction and dissatisfaction within each of the existing goal areas;
- pride in specific school initiatives and individual actions;
- a call for recognition of the success that individual students achieve;
- positive identity and sense of belonging were important to students;
- teacher comfort with integrating Aboriginal culture into their classrooms;
- professional staff offering insights and best practices; and
- change and innovation in the way Aboriginal learning services are delivered.

## DISCUSSION

In moving forward with our Enhancement Agreement, commitment to improving the six-year Dogwood completion rate has been incorporated as an outcome under our goal to increase academic achievement. The district will use its improved understanding of the needs and barriers faced by Aboriginal learners to better support their academic, social, artistic, athletic and leadership achievement.

In looking ahead, we commit to:

- foster a positive personal and cultural identity that highlights the strengths of Aboriginal peoples;
- maintain high expectations while providing relevant support;
- celebrate Aboriginal learners’ success; and
- support the inclusion of First Peoples’ Principles of Learning in our classrooms.

## FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

- 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.

(English 12 First Peoples Integrated Resource Package, 2008)

## GOALS AND RATIONALE

The goals and rationale outline the direction of the Enhancement Agreement over the next five years. Associated with each goal are objectives which give more specific, measurable statements of intent. Each objective has a performance target or targets which are designed to be realistic, but to also present a challenge to the system. Performance indicators are measures that show quantifiable information about how we are achieving our goals and objectives. The objectives, performance targets, and performance indicators presented here will be periodically monitored to ensure that they are proving to be effective.

### THE AGREEMENT PARTNERS ARE COMMITTED TO THE FOLLOWING THREE GOALS:

1. Increase positive identity and sense of belonging for all Aboriginal learners

**RATIONALE:** It has been determined that “students’ experience of acceptance influences multiple dimensions of their behavior” (Osterman, 2000; Willms, 2000). Research suggests that schools should adopt organizational practices that support student experiences of membership in a supportive community. In essence, this need for relatedness is the need to experience belonging (Osterman, 2000; Ma, 2003). This basic human need is something that can be understood by everyone. Deci et al, 1991 (as cited in Osterman, 2000 p. 325) argued that when student needs are not satisfied in educational settings, research findings “predict diminished motivation, impaired development, alienation and poor performance.” In addition, the concept of identity has also been found to be linked to student success. Students who have a strong sense of identity are able to withstand and persevere. Research indicates that a strong sense of identity supports student success in schools (Fryberg et al., 2012).



*Students participate in Windspeaker (Aboriginal Leadership Camp).*

2. Increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions, and cultures for all learners

**RATIONALE:** Increased knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions and cultures for all learners serves to enhance the educational experience of Aboriginal learners. Research shows that a learning environment that meaningfully reflects the cultural knowledge and understandings of the learners’ cultures supports the success of those learners (Au & Blake, 2003, Dooley, 2008, Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Also, recent work in BC in the area of quality and equity for Aboriginal learners highlights the urgency of the need to integrate Aboriginal content across the curriculum. Halbert and Kaser (2013) indicate that “... the limited knowledge of many Canadian young people about the history and current accomplishments of Indigenous people, are problems that call out for concerted professional action from all of us.”

3. Increase achievement for Aboriginal learners

**RATIONALE:** This goal is framed within a model of achievement that emphasizes models of success, resilience, and dignity, rather than focussing on a deficit model of education (Peterson, Raphael, Nilson, 2013). Within a strength-based framework, our goal is to increase achievement for Aboriginal learners that maximizes options for post-secondary participation and employment. This goal includes objectives specifically related to the acquisition of reading skills. Research indicates that reading skills have a strong impact on completion of postsecondary and labour market participation, income and family outcomes (StatCan, 2010). In addition to focussing on reading, this goal to increase achievement also includes objectives related to the acquisition of numeracy skills, as these skills will allow for increased opportunities in post-secondary education, trades and the work force. The third set of objectives relate specifically to transitions, as supporting successful transitions for Aboriginal learners increases the likelihood of successful completion of secondary school within the K-12 system, rather than school completion as an adult learner returning to school.

## TARGETS AND INDICATORS

### UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYZING DATA, TARGETS AND INDICATORS IN THE ABORIGINAL ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT:

The education of Aboriginal learners shapes their own development and how well they will do in life, as well as the economic and social well-being of Surrey and British Columbia. The indicators will show how well Aboriginal learners are progressing through school from kindergarten to graduation.

A focus on success for Aboriginal learners will be based on data from Ministry reports, district assessments and surveys of Aboriginal learners. This data will be presented together to tell a more complete story within the annual reports for the Enhancement Agreement. In setting our targets it is our responsibility as a district to use the Enhancement Agreement and the annual reports

to plan for improved success for Aboriginal learners. Measuring progress and what truly matters is inherently challenging. We recognize that stories of individual learner success and data extracted from matched cohorts of Aboriginal learners will inform our work. We also need data to inform our systems and change strategies that we put in place across the district that improve Aboriginal learner achievement.

We realize five-year targets may be ideal in that they allow us to measure trends over time, but at the same time annual performance targets give us the opportunity to pause and reflect on system changes to ensure we engage in a continuous improvement process.

We continue to aspire to have Aboriginal learners achieve at a greater rate and communicate to our communities about how Aboriginal learners are progressing each year.

### GOAL 1: INCREASE POSITIVE IDENTITY AND SENSE OF BELONGING IN ABORIGINAL LEARNERS.

	OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE TARGETS ANNUALLY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
1.1	Increase Aboriginal learners’ perception of positive identity.	Baseline data to be determined in the first year. Incremental improvements annually.	Student survey
1.2	Increase Aboriginal learners’ perception of sense of belonging.	Baseline data to be determined in the first year. Incremental improvements annually.	Student survey

**GOAL 2: INCREASE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ABORIGINAL HISTORY, TRADITIONS, AND CULTURES FOR ALL LEARNERS.**

	OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE TARGETS ANNUALLY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
2.1	Increase the integration of Aboriginal content across all curricular areas K-12.	Baseline data to be determined in the first year. Incremental improvements annually.	Teacher survey Student survey
2.2	Increase learners' participation rates in First Nations Studies 12, English First Peoples 10, 11 and 12.	Increase participation rates by 10% annually.	BCeSIS extraction of enrolment

**GOAL 3: INCREASE ACHIEVEMENT OF ABORIGINAL LEARNERS.**

	OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE TARGETS ANNUALLY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
3.1	Increase acquisition of phonological skills at the Kindergarten level.	Reduce the percentage of learners experiencing difficulties in the acquisition of phonemic skills by 50%.	Early Literacy Phonemic Awareness Test - Surrey (ELPATS)
3.2	Increase grade 1 reading performance.	Establish baseline data in designated schools. Increase grade 1 reading skills by 3% annually.	Reading Performance Standards
3.3	Increase grades 1 through 7 reading performance.	Increase the percentage of learners meeting-exceeding grade level expectations in reading by 3% annually.	Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) results for grades 4 and 7
3.4	Increase early numeracy skills.	Establish baseline data in designated schools. Increase percentage of learners meeting to exceeding expectations in early numeracy skills (K/1) by 3% annually.	What Do They Know (WDTK) assessment tool
3.5	Increase grades 1 through 7 numeracy performance.	Increase the percentage of learners meeting to exceeding grade level expectations in numeracy by 3% annually.	Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) result for grades 4 and 7
3.6	Increase successful completion of English 8 and Math 8.	Establish baseline data from all secondary schools. Increase the percentage of learners successfully completing English 8 and Math 8 by 3% annually.	BCeSIS extraction, Aboriginal learner performance of C- or better in English and Math 8
3.7	Increase the percentage of Aboriginal learners successfully completing English 12 or English 12 First Peoples.	Increase the percentage of learners successfully completing English 12 or English 12 First Peoples by 3% annually.	BCeSIS extraction, Aboriginal learner performance of C- or better in English 12 and English 12 First Peoples.
3.8	Increase the six-year Dogwood completion rate.	Increase the six-year Dogwood completion rate by 3% annually.	Ministry Standard Report
3.9	Increase transition rates from grades 10 to 11.	Increase the percentage of learners making successful transitions for grade 10 to 11 by 3%.	Ministry Standard Report
3.10	Increase the percentage of Grade 12 learners with plans to continue on to postsecondary schools, institutes, or trades programs.	Baseline data to be determined. Increase the percentage of Aboriginal learners continuing on to postsecondary schools, institutes and/or trades by 3%.	Student exit survey.

## DATA COLLECTION

The performance areas selected for enhancement are those where data can be:

- collected, tracked and assessed with integrity;
- effectively used to analyze student achievement in order to design, coordinate and implement programs to support Aboriginal learners;
- analyzed to effectively implement strategies to improve Aboriginal learner engagement in learning activities; and
- to inform the goals within the District's Achievement Contract.

## ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN:

Implementation of the 2013-2018 AEEA will be a shared responsibility within the Surrey School District. The Agreement will be supported, where appropriate, by Aboriginal community partners as represented within the Aboriginal Education Council. The AEEA implementation plan will identify specific educational strategies, initiatives and data collection processes that support growth, and provide progress measures within the agreement's three goal areas.

The implementation of Surrey's second AEEA will be monitored and reviewed throughout its five-year term. Aboriginal education staff will prepare and present annual progress reports to the Aboriginal Education Council, Surrey Board of Education and BC Ministry of Education.

This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will be in effect from June 2013 to June 2018.



*Traditional post raising, April 2012 at the Surrey District Education office. From left to right: Christy Northway, Reg Leon (in red shirt), Ray Prosser, Rick Ryan, Brad Bauman, Ross Brennan, and Trevor McQuarrie. Post carved by Leonard Wells of Semiahmoo Nation.*

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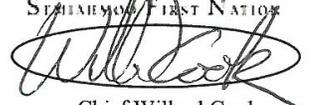
## MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

We the undersigned acknowledge and honour the relationship that exists between Surrey School District and the Aboriginal communities. We also acknowledge and honour the people and traditional territories of the Katzie, Semiahmoo and Kwantlen First Nations on which Surrey schools reside. We jointly acknowledge our collective responsibilities for the success of all Aboriginal learners attending schools in the district. We agree that the terms of the Enhancement Agreement will provide direction for Aboriginal education in the School District for the period June 30, 2013 to June 30, 2018.

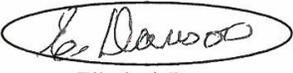
In respect and honour of the Aboriginal communities and organizations named below, we intend to develop appropriate and meaningful educational programs for the benefit of all Aboriginal learners in the School District.




Chief Ed Pierre  
Katzie First Nation

Chief Willard Cook  
Semiahmoo First Nation

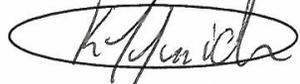
Elizabeth Dawson  
Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Association




Ken Fisher, President  
Nova Métis Heritage Association




Shawn Wilson, Chairperson  
Board of Education of  
School District No. 36 (Surrey)

Kelly Tymich, Parent  
Aboriginal Education Council




Mike McKay  
Superintendent of Schools  
School District No. 36 (Surrey)




Minister of Education  
Representative

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"Aboriginal" is a term used by the government of BC and is inclusive of the Metis, Inuit and First Nations as outlined in the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982, s. 35.2"





**Surrey Schools** LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING

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