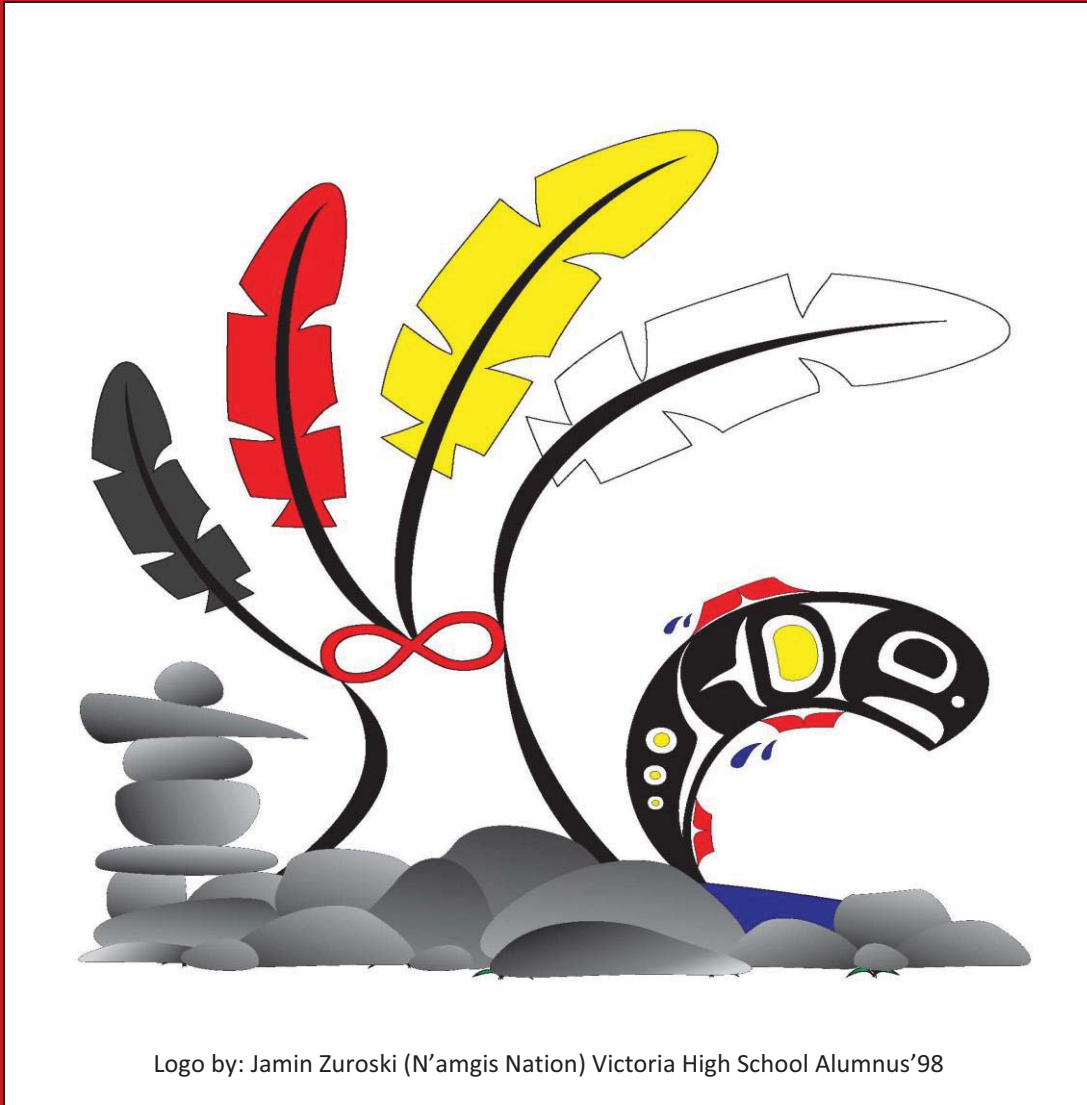


# The Spirit of Alliances:

*A journey of good hearts and good minds*



Logo by: Jamin Zuroski (N'amgis Nation) Victoria High School Alumnus'98

Greater Victoria School District

*Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement*

2013 - 2018

Front page:

*The Spirit of Alliances* logo acknowledges all Aboriginal Nations across the country working together side by side, as equals, to build on cultural revitalization and preservation. Each color and shape within this design symbolizes history, wisdom, pride, prosperity, determination and optimism.

Jamin Zuroski

# Voices of the Students

*"It was good, my perspective did change in a good way. The residential school part opened my eyes. I didn't know anything about the native people other than stereotypes and now I feel like I know more."*

*Esquimalt Secondary*

*"The purification and smudging ceremony was my highlight of the day - no, wait. It was the highlight of the week!"*

*Arbutus Middle School*

*"I just don't understand why our government ever thought this was a good idea. I'm glad there are people who can tell us about the dark secrets of our past."*

*Spectrum Community School*

*"I want to share with you that I'm Aboriginal and I've been telling my Grandfather about what we're doing and he cries. I'm really grateful to learn the culture that he could not share."*

*Continuing Education Centre*

*"I feel more connected to my grandmother, she taught me and my mom a lot about our heritage. I am proud to be Coast Salish. When can we come back again and learn more. This is exactly where I want to be."*

*Lansdowne Middle School*

*"I enjoyed everything from the drumming to the story telling. An important message I heard is that we are the generation to save Mother Earth."*

*Rogers Elementary School*

*"It has brought positive things in my life, I learned a lot about my culture. How we act like a family, we feel comfortable around each other, we have fun!"*

*Mt. Doug High School*

*"You spoke with your heart...which opened mine."*

*Victoria High School*

*"When I first heard of the smudging ceremony I had no idea what to expect. Being there with the sweet smell of smoke and the drum beat coursing through my veins was probably the most alive I have felt in a while."*

*Arbutus Middle School*

*"You have helped me not to give up in aspects of my life that are important and highly treasured as a First Nations person."*

*Victoria High School*

# Voices of the Teachers

*Words hardly explain  
The tears of time  
Shed for children  
Looking forward and up  
Showing the ways  
Sharing the stories  
The beliefs, customs  
Language  
These words are dear  
Hope, resilience,  
Teachings passed  
To carry on*

*Victoria High School*

*"The totem pole explanation and activity was terrific. She used so many different materials to gain and maintain their attention and to peak their interests."*

*Doncaster Elementary*

*"Mark and Jim made history come alive, with a combination of cultural and historical knowledge, current issues and humour. Everyone, student and adult should go on this tour. It's essential learning, interesting and fun, though very affecting when I really am faced with (and standing on the evidence of) the way of life that is gone; was purposefully wrecked, and that was here only 150 year and less ago."*

*Frank Hobbs Elementary*

*"Thank you for a very full lesson and opportunity to learn more about West Coast Aboriginal culture."*

*Northridge Elementary*

*"The facilitators did such a great job in showing us the cultural, environmental and political aspects of the local First Nations. As an educator, this experience was powerful. It will help me present better the ideas that "History does not just begin at the arrival of the European settlers."*

*Teacher Professional Development  
Environmental Hike*

*"It was super great! I was so happy to see the students interacting together. It was nice to see some of the negativity wash away in the forest. I am so happy that we have these hikes as a resource. They are invaluable!"*

*Victoria High School*

*"This program should be offered to all students. It is invaluable for problem solving, peacemaking, and environmental protection."*

*Rogers Elementary*

*"I noticed a sense of pride and belonging amongst the students - it is difficult to clearly distinguish this through words, it is more a feeling, a sense of energy between the students. This dynamic was also noted by several other adults who came to witness the creating of the shakers. I heard that although the students didn't all know each other, there was a commonality there. All of them wanted to be part of this cultural teaching."*

*Lansdowne Middle School*

# The Spirit of Alliances

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The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories we live, we learn, and we do our work.

The Greater Victoria School District would like to acknowledge and thank our community and district partners in sharing their voices during the process of renewing our Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. We thank you for paddling in our canoe with us, as your input was needed, valued and an essential part of the completion of this document.

### Awakening the Spirit of Alliances





## History of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Committee

The Greater Victoria School District (GVSD) initiated the development of its first Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA) with the purpose of improving the quality of education achieved by all Aboriginal students.

A range of Aboriginal community groups were identified as stakeholders and thirteen Aboriginal focus groups took place. Data was collected and resulted in the framework for the first AEEA which was signed in June 2005. A committee was formed from representatives of these focus groups and was called the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Committee.

The groups participating in the first AEEA were: Elders; Traditional Territory Hosts: Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations; Aboriginal parents; Métis organizations: The Métis Nation of Greater Victoria and the Métis Community Services; First Nations Interagency Team; The Victoria Native Friendship Centre; Students; Greater Victoria Teacher's Association; Hulitan Social Services Society; HIPPY: Home Instruction of Parents of Preschool Youngsters; Principals and Vice-Principals Association; Canadian Union of Public Employees and Camosun College.

The hard work and dedication of this committee resulted in the creation and implementation of the first AEEA for School District 61. The group continued to monitor its progress at monthly meetings and many original members make up the current committee: the Aboriginal Nations Education Council (ANEC). The Council has overseen the development of the Greater Victoria School District's second AEEA.

The implementation and growth of the AEEA will continue to require the involvement of many partners. Systemic movement in public education requires Principals and Vice-Principals, teachers, parents, caregivers, families and community to find their role in the change process. The vision is to increase Aboriginal student success by increasing cultural perspectives in the public education system. The participants in this vision are:

- Parents, caregivers and families.
- Teachers who increase their own awareness of Aboriginal perspectives in order to weave it into their classroom curriculum and teaching practices.
- Trustees, Principals, Vice-Principals and district staff who lead initiatives that bring Aboriginal perspectives into schools.
- Community that provides time and resources to the school district Principals and Vice-Principals and staff.
- Indigenous post-secondary educators who receive Aboriginal students who wish to further their education beyond high school.

This vision cannot be achieved without the alliance of all groups. The guiding principles and goals of the AEEA provide the framework that can bring about the systemic change needed to fulfill its purpose.

## Purpose

- The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement between the Aboriginal People in the Greater Victoria School District, Greater Victoria Board of Education and the Ministry of Education will provide a framework to ensure that students with Aboriginal ancestry will receive a quality and culturally relevant education in the public education system.
- The intent of this Agreement is to engage all stakeholders in ensuring this vision and includes all School District employees; Aboriginal, Inuit and Métis parents, families and communities.
- A broader vision of this Agreement is to increase awareness of Aboriginal history, contemporary issues and Aboriginal worldviews, for all students in the Greater Victoria School District.

## Guiding Principles The Parties to this Agreement



- Honour and Acknowledge the traditional territory and teachings of the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations.
- Acknowledge the traditional teachings of the Elders and the intrinsic value of Aboriginal cultures.
- Support initiatives that provide a culturally relevant education to students who are of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples.
- Develop shared ownership and mutual respect through ongoing dialogue and strong relationships that recognizes the cultural differences and diverse needs of Aboriginal students.
- Enhance a learning environment where Aboriginal students feel safe, respected and have a positive sense of place and belonging.



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## Greetings from the Aboriginal Nations Education Council

*A'si'em nu schala'cha* (my honourable friends):

It is with much pride that the Aboriginal Nations Education Council presents *The Spirit of Alliances*, Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, 2013-2018. The Aboriginal Nations Education Council represents Aboriginal communities, organizations, families and students, as well as teachers, administrators and Aboriginal Nations Education staff. *The Spirit of Alliances* is the result of two years of consultation and dialogue. It teaches us that we all carry responsibility for the retention and success of Aboriginal students in the Greater Victoria School District. Working together with good hearts and good minds, we will learn to share the gifts of the Bear, the Wolf, the Raven, and the Salmon.

*The Spirit of Alliances* is the work of many hands. I acknowledge all members of the Aboriginal Nations Education Council, all participants in the focus groups, all parents, students and community members who shared their voices, and all school district staff, administration, and board members who supported the development of this document. I extend particular thanks to Jamin Zuroski (N'amgis Nation) who provided the artwork depicting animals upon whose gifts we rely so deeply.

The students served by *The Spirit of Alliances* will accomplish many wonderful things throughout the next five years. They truly represent our past, our present, and our future. Collectively we share a tremendous responsibility for the education of all students.

In Good Spirit,

Janice Simcoe, Chair  
Aboriginal Nations Education Council



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## Greetings from the Aboriginal Nations Education Division

We are honoured to introduce you to the Greater Victoria School District's second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, *The Spirit of Alliances*. This agreement continues to support the original four goals of: creating a sense of place; honouring and supporting relationships; raising awareness and understanding; and increasing success for all Aboriginal students. As we paddle forward in this educational journey, we will focus on cultural competence with the vision of creating culturally safe learning environments. Schools and communities will continue to participate in activities that increase knowledge of factors that have impacted and continue to affect Aboriginal education.



Throughout our journey of the past five years, we kept our goals in sight as families, communities and school district staff focused on creating a strong sense of place and belonging to provide students with an optimal learning environment. We have created a strong foundation of awareness, support and action within the school district. Vital to this process has been our strong partnerships with families, local communities, organizations and educators.

Through a series of focus groups, families, community and the school district provided feedback. We listened. Collaboratively, the groups represented within the Aboriginal Nations Education Council developed this document, with the support of current research and an educational framework called Cultural Safety, to plan for our next five years. In the spirit of alliances we invite teachers, support staff, administrators, families, community members, Elders and students to join us on this journey. We are cutting through the waters, and are ready to paddle deeper and harder and travel further.

*The Spirit of Alliances* will see the school district and the community strive to ensure that Aboriginal learners continue to be supported, connected and successful in their educational experiences. We will build on the partnerships between families and schools to support student achievement. More of our classrooms will provide culturally relevant curriculum and programs that honour all children. Aboriginal Education is for everyone.

Gilakasla,

Nella Nelson  
Coordinator

## **An Integral Approach to Aboriginal Student Success**

This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, *The Spirit of Alliances* recognizes the importance of worldviews, our “mental lenses that are entrenched ways of perceiving the world” (Hart, 2010, p. 2). Aboriginal worldviews, upon which this document was developed, recognize that everything is connected and dependent upon relationships; the spirit world is real and so is our connection to our ancestors. Everything is constant and yet everything is always changing. Land is sacred and those who have been given stewardship of the land are to be honoured and respected.

Aboriginal worldviews inform Aboriginal learning, which is relational, experiential, cooperative, affirmative and holistic. Aboriginal learning nurtures relationships within the family, community and Nation. It is lifelong and rooted in a foundation of traditional Aboriginal ways of knowing. Aboriginal learning honours connections, shared knowledge, and traditions. It encourages responsibility to and engagement with the learning process. Aboriginal learning enables students to develop relationships with ideas, with others, with the natural world and with the spiritual realm.

Aboriginal learning and its visions and goals are framed within *The Spirit of Alliances* by the use of a quadrant model that signifies four essential components of education. This model emerged from Integral Theory, which holds that human beings and human activities are seen and experienced through and within four elements: the intentional/internal; the cultural/relational; the behavioural/observable; and systems-related knowledge and navigation (Wilber, 2005). This model has been Indigenized (Simcoe, 2013) and the Indigenized model was refined by the Aboriginal Nations Education Council to speak to the content and goals of *The Spirit of Alliances*. Within this model, the four elements are represented by animals – the Bear, the Wolf, the Raven, and the Salmon – and these animals, in turn, represent the gifts inherent in each quadrant.

Each animal represents a gift to the learning process. These gifts lay the foundation for the four goals of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, *The Spirit of Alliances*.



The **BEAR'S** gift to the learning process is self-awareness. This means being able to make meaning out of life, be creative, and act with intention. When the Bear's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to weave them into their learning experiences, the students' abilities to develop internal skills are enhanced. A principle of the Bear's gift of internal learning is the exploration of one's identity, which provides the foundation for students to make meaning of their place in family, school, and community. Students with a strong sense of self-awareness are able to make space for creativity in life, which enables them to act with intention. In order to experience this, learners need to be in a place where they are nurtured, valued, and feel a strong sense of belonging.







The **WOLF'S** gift to the learning process is relational. The Wolf thrives where communication, respect and reciprocity are valued, modeled and taught. When the Wolf's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to weave them into their learning experiences, their abilities to develop interpersonal skills are enhanced. When students have strong interpersonal skills, they are able to communicate clearly and respectfully when speaking with others and when advocating for themselves. A principle of the Wolf's gift to learning involves knowing one's history, generational roles, and responsibilities. Learners with this knowledge understand the interconnectedness of all aspects of life. In order to experience this, learners need to be blanketed by support from home, school and community.



The **RAVEN'S** gift to the learning process is cleverness and imagination. The Raven weaves together old, new and emerging knowledge to create a basket of skills, opportunities and potentials. When the Raven's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to integrate them into their learning experiences, they have more opportunity to develop their inherent talents and capabilities. A key principle of the Raven's gift to the learning process is recognizing that story-telling, art, memory and culture are woven throughout learning. In order to experience this, learners need to see themselves reflected in all aspects of the learning environment.



The **SALMON'S** gift to the learning process is navigation. The Salmon moves through the environment and other systems, adapting to and participating in change. Aboriginal students inhabit multiple worlds and thus need to be able to navigate multiple systems and influences. When the Salmon's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to integrate them into their learning experiences, they have more opportunity to develop their imaginations, decision making skills, and courage. A key principle of the Salmon's gift is that learning supports the well-being of self, family, community, land and Spirits. In order to experience this, learners need to develop and use critical thinking skills, adaptability, persistence, and resilience to create tides of change.

<p><b>BEAR</b></p> <p><b>Internal Skills</b>  Self-Awareness  Ability to Make Meaning  Creativity  Intentions</p> 	<p><b>RAVEN</b></p> <p><b>Active Skills</b>  Cleverness  Imagination  Skills &amp; Measureable  Knowledge  Behaviour</p> 
<p><b>WOLF</b></p> <p><b>Relational Skills</b>  Communication  Respect &amp; Reciprocity  Culture  Family and Community</p> 	<p><b>SALMON</b></p> <p><b>Systems Skills</b>  Understanding Systems  Capacity to Navigate Systems  Critical Thinking  Resilience</p> 

Artwork provided by Jamin Zuroski (N'amgis Nation)

## Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Goals



The **BEAR'S** gift to the learning process is the ability to be self-aware, to make meaning out of life, to be creative and learn to act with intention. In order to experience this, learners need to be in a place where they are nurtured, valued and feel a strong sense of belonging.

### **Goal 1: To provide a sense of place, caring, safety and belonging for Aboriginal students in the Greater Victoria School District**

#### **We envision each school community to:**

- establish an Aboriginal cultural presence.
- create and support opportunities to engage and record student voices and their perspectives on education through a variety of sources.

#### **Each school community will continue to:**

- access and track the district Aboriginal Curriculum & Cultural Integration Program.
- use traditional teachings to acknowledge the Lkwungen (Esquimalt and Songhees Nations) territory.
- develop, gather and track student or parental satisfaction through the provincial or locally developed surveys.
- designate personnel responsible for tracking and supporting Aboriginal students, and the contact for Aboriginal parents and community.
- inform community members on the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (*The Spirit of Alliances*) activities occurring at their school.
- submit an annual school report to the district outlining their activities that support the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (*The Spirit of Alliances*).

#### **ANED will continue to:**

- support these actions by fostering experiential learning and sharing knowledge and resources on Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing, being, and belonging.

#### **Assessment Tools for Goal #1**

- \* Ministry of Education Satisfaction Survey
- \* Attendance Rates for All Grade Levels
- \* (School) Annual Aboriginal Reports



The **WOLF'S** gift to the learning process is relational. The wolf thrives where communication, respect and reciprocity are valued and taught. In order to experience this, learners need to be blanketed by support from home, school and community.

**Goal 2: To honour, nurture and support relationships between the Greater Victoria School District, Local First Nations, Aboriginal Nations, families and community.**

**We envision each school community to:**

- participate in activities to strengthen their understanding of Aboriginal history and culture in order to weave Aboriginal Prescribed Learning Outcomes into their teaching practices.
- continue to invite community members to their schools as role models, cultural facilitators, guest speakers and presenters.

**Each school community will continue to:**

- maintain protocols and agreements with First Nations and community organizations to enhance the learning of students and staff in the district.
- facilitate the inclusion of Aboriginal community resources at all levels: classroom, school and district.
- provide opportunities for students and parents to participate in the annual Ministry of Education satisfaction survey.
- provide updates on the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (*The Spirit of Alliances*) initiatives to local First Nations, Aboriginal families, community and schools.
- facilitate activities that support the transition process for students from pre-school to post-secondary and/or employment.

**ANED will continue to:**

- provide resources and develop guidelines for the district on traditional protocols and teachings.
- participate in monthly Federal Local Education Agreement meetings with the representatives of the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, District Administrators and Principals of relevant schools.
- maintain and enhance educational partnerships with:
  - Aboriginal Nations Education Council
  - Camosun College
  - Esquimalt Nation
  - Hulitan Family & Community Services Society
  - Métis Nation of Greater Victoria
  - Songhees Nation
  - South Island Aboriginal Infant Development Team
  - Success by Six Program
  - Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services
  - University of Victoria
  - Victoria Native Friendship Centre

**Assessment Tools for Goal #2**

- ✧ ANED Resource Centre Database
- ✧ ANED Community Measurement Tool



The **RAVEN'S** gift to the learning process is the ability to be clever and imaginative. Raven weaves together old, new and emerging knowledge to create a basket of skills, opportunities and potential. In order to experience this, learners need to see themselves reflected in all aspects of the learning environment.

**Goal 3: To continue raising awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history, traditions and culture for all staff and students in the Greater Victoria School District.**

**We envision each school community to:**

- include Aboriginal perspectives in their teaching, administrative practices and school environments.
- support the use of Aboriginal worldviews and teaching strategies within the classroom and the school environments.

**Each school community will continue to:**

- emphasize the use of Aboriginal Prescribed Learning Outcomes (Ministry of Education) at all grade levels and across all subject areas.
- provide leadership in bringing Aboriginal perspectives into the schools.

**ANED will continue to:**

- highlight and promote professional development opportunities for District staff that focus on Aboriginal worldviews, language, history, culture and traditions.
- support the implementation of guidelines for the district on traditional protocols and teachings.
- highlight innovative practices in Aboriginal/Indigenous education and research.
- publish cultural curriculum resources in French and English.
- highlight, research and support the understanding of Cultural Safety in education.
- work with the District in renewing the Human Rights special program exemption for hiring of Aboriginal teachers.
- work with the District in supporting school wide cultural events for students, staff and community.
- work with the Learning Initiatives Team to integrate Aboriginal cultural content when working with School Learning Mentors, Middle and Secondary Action Research Teams and K to 12 Smart Learning Projects.

**Assessment Tools for Goal #3**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| * Number of requests for district Curriculum & Cultural Integration Program  | * Number of presentations and workshops given by ANED staff               |
| * Number of Learning Initiatives workshops in the district that demonstrate integration of Aboriginal Content into Learning Circle | * Number of participants in community based leadership and training camps |





The **SALMON'S** gift to the learning process is the ability to navigate the environment and other systems. In order to experience this, learners need to develop and use critical thinking skills, adaptability, persistence, and resilience to create tides of change.

#### **Goal 4: To increase success of all Aboriginal students.**

##### **We envision each school community to:**

- monitor, track and celebrate the successes of Aboriginal students.
- continue to enhance Aboriginal student transition.

##### **Each school community will continue to:**

- support the inclusion of Aboriginal specific courses and programs at schools.
- work with each other and other education partners to increase transition rates at all levels.
- encourage and support Aboriginal student participation in courses necessary for graduation and transition into post-secondary.
- increase the number of Aboriginal Leadership activities offered and courses taught from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
- encourage and recognize student participation in community based leadership programs and activities.
- recognize and support Aboriginal student opportunities in the trades programs.
- foster and support experiential land-based learning at all grade levels.

##### **ANED will continue to:**

- design, develop and implement Board Authority Authorized (BAA) courses that support experiential, cultural and lifelong learning.
- highlight Aboriginal student success models.

##### **Assessment Tools for Goal #4**

- \* **Aboriginal Student Completion & Dogwood Rates Disaggregated**
- \* **Aboriginal Grade to Grade Transitions**
- \* **Foundation Skills Assessment Results (Grade 4 & 7)**
- \* **Required Provincial Examination Results**
- \* **Student Transition to Post Secondary Institutions**
- \* **Number of Board Authority Authorized (BAA) Courses Developed and Implemented**
- \* **Participation & Completion Rates of First Peoples English 10, 11, 12 and BC First Nations Studies 12 courses and other provincial assessments.**

## **Performance Targets for Five Years**

The baseline data will be developed where not available in the school year. In each year thereafter, in all categories, increased growth is expected.

The Aboriginal Nations Education Council will annually review and report the level of satisfaction with the achievement of the goals and determine targets for the following year.

## **Implementation**

This Agreement will be in effect from September 1, 2013 to June 30, 2018.

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will contribute to and influence the development of the Greater Victoria School District Achievement Contract.

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**Abbreviations:**

- AEEA – Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement  
ANEC – Aboriginal Nations Education Council  
ANED – Aboriginal Nations Education Division  
BAA – Board Authority Authorized  
GVSD – Greater Victoria School District

## Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement

This document was created by the Aboriginal Nations Education Council members:

Janice Simcoe, Chair, Ab. Education & Community Connections,  
Camosun College

Nella Nelson, Coordinator, Aboriginal Nations Education

Deb Courville, Associate Superintendent

Edith Loring-Kuhanga, Trustee, Board of Education SD61

Desirée Holmes, School Liaison, Victoria Native Friendship Centre

Constance O'Leary, Métis Nation of Greater Victoria

Joanne Mitchell, Aboriginal Counsellor

Sabrina Williams, Cultural Programs Coordinator, Surrounded by Cedar

Paul Stevenson, Vice-Principal

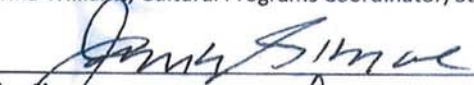
Freda Shaughnessy, Elder

Theresa Stokes, Teacher


Monique Gray-Smith, Parent

Karen Coleman, Parent VCPAC

Jamin Zuroski, B.C. Association of Aboriginal  
Friendship Centres

  
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Janice Simcoe

  
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Nella Nelson


  
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Deb Courville


  
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Edith Loring-Kuhanga

  
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Desirée Holmes

  
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Constance O'Leary

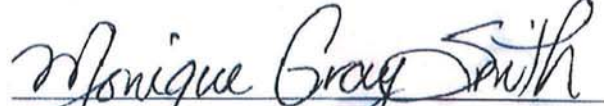
  
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Joanne Mitchell

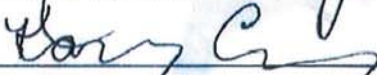
  
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Sabrina Williams

  
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Paul Stevenson

  
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Freda Shaughnessy

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Theresa Stokes

  
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Monique Gray-Smith

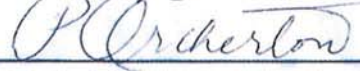
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Karen Coleman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jamin Zuroski

This report is respectfully submitted to:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Esquimalt Nation

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Songhees Nation

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Peg Orchardton, Chair, Board of Education, Greater Victoria School District

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Gaipman, Superintendent of Schools, Greater Victoria School District

\_\_\_\_\_  
Minister of Education