



# Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement

2014-2019

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## Acknowledgments

We acknowledge that the Abbotsford School District resides on the ancestral and traditional territory of the Sumas First Nation and Matsqui First Nation.

The Abbotsford School District is a diverse and vibrant community. As Abbotsford is the third most ethnically diverse community in Canada our schools are rich with a myriad of cultures and languages. Abbotsford School District is fortunate to have two First Nations communities in its catchment area. The Sumas First Nation and the Matsqui First Nation are important partners in our School District's collaborative context. In honour of our First Nations communities the District recognizes the worldviews and epistemologies of the Sto:lo people. Sto:lo culture and Halqemeylem language are an integral part of Aboriginal education in the Abbotsford School District. Care is taken to respectfully reflect this relationship.

The Abbotsford School District has a long standing Aboriginal Advisory Committee. Our Advisory includes representatives from the community at large including teachers, support staff, school administration, members of the Board of Education, senior management, Sumas First Nation, Matsqui First Nation, Sto:lo Nation, the Fraser Valley Metis Association, The Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Families Services Society, and parent representatives. We respect and honour the relationship that exists with both the First Nations in whose traditional territories we reside and our collective responsibility to promote the success of all Aboriginal students attending the Abbotsford School District (#34).



## **Purpose**

The purpose of this agreement is to enhance the education of Aboriginal learners. Secondly, this agreement is meant to ensure the reliable collection of data that measures student achievement in the selected areas. This agreement is a commitment between our Aboriginal communities, the Abbotsford School District, and the Ministry of Education. The agreement will be the focus of our Aboriginal services for the next five years. The strategies and structures that we put into practice will be as a result of the direction of this agreement.

## Previous Agreement

The Abbotsford School District's first Enhancement Agreement began in June of 2007 and ended in June of 2012. In the five years of the Enhancement Agreement's implementation the District and its collaborative partners developed structures and strategies to enhance the learning experience of Aboriginal students in our 47 schools. The District experienced many successes including increased graduation rates, improved services, and the development of new collaborative partners. The District also identified areas of growth such as the need for increased culturally relevant curriculum resources, cultural integration, and student tracking systems.



### **Mission Statement (Moral Purpose)**

We are committed to the improvement of Aboriginal student achievement through a holistic and culturally relevant public education.





## Guiding Principles

The areas selected for enhancement are those where there is assurance that the data can be:  
Tracked over time  
Tracked with integrity  
Effectively used to implement intervention

We are committed to the improvement of Aboriginal student achievement. It is recognized that the success of Aboriginal students is holistic. The Advisory Committee is committed to the development of the student as a whole (which includes academics, culture, language, and spirituality.)

The Advisory Committee recognizes the importance of Aboriginal staff in the District and acknowledges the need for positive role models in the lives of our Aboriginal students. The Advisory Committee is committed to the continued support of increasing the current percentage of qualified Aboriginal staff in the District.



## Process

The process in which this agreement has been developed has been implemented purposefully and over time. We have been diligent to ensure that all stakeholders have been consulted in the development of this agreement. In order to gain a common perspective on the wants and needs of our Aboriginal families a survey was implemented to gather information from parents as to what is most important to their children's education. School Administrators, Teachers, Support Staff, and Students were then targeted in order to gather information on what staff would like to see in the area of Aboriginal Education.

Once an internal cross section of our District was completed, attention was focused on our Aboriginal Communities. Meetings with both Sumas First Nation and Matsqui First Nation were held to discuss the Enhancement Agreement process. A meeting with the Metis community was held to ensure our Metis families had an opportunity to share their perspectives. Family gatherings were held to invite families from our urban Aboriginal population to join us and discuss what the Enhancement Agreement process means to our Aboriginal students. After the initial information gathering sessions were completed we took time to look at what the most salient points of the agreement are. After processing the suggestions of the members we were able to identify four major areas of focus for our agreement. It was then emphasized that all of the suggestions of the group are valuable and that they would be kept for the purpose of future discussion during the implementation stage of our Enhancement Agreement process. From this stage we took the time to again inform all parties about the work that had been done to that point.

What was most clear in this process of consultation was the need for Aboriginal language and culture to flourish. The majority of our consultations with all stakeholders focused on the need for Aboriginal language and culture to be woven into the fabric of our education system. The voices of the consultation process again and again emphasized the power of cultural integration as a tool to enhance the education of Aboriginal students. As a result of this feedback from stakeholders Aboriginal language and culture is a prominent focus in our Enhancement Agreement.



## Goals

We have identified four major goals for this Enhancement Agreement. A process of consultation was used in identifying the goal areas that the Abbotsford School District and its partners will focus on for the duration of this agreement.

## Indicators

Indicators of success will be identified for these goal areas. These indicators will help the District measure the achievement and success in the four goal areas. The indicators for the selected goals will:

- Be tracked over time
- Be tracked with integrity
- Include both District and provincial data

## Targets

Targets will be set based on baseline data. The targets set will reflect a five year estimated growth in achievement in the four goal areas. Time will be taken to identify indicators. Upon the identification of relevant indicators the District will collect baseline data that will reflect the achievement of Aboriginal students in these areas. This data will allow the District to set targets that will reflect anticipated success for all Aboriginal students. Indicators and targets will be reflected in an appendix and in annual reports. These reports will be submitted to the Ministry of Education, presented to the Board of Education, as well as distributed to the District's stakeholders.



## Goal 1

Increase the school completion of Aboriginal students

### Rationale:

All parties have identified a need for increased school completion for Aboriginal students. School completion for Aboriginal students has been at the forefront of the educational conversation for many years. Significant efforts at the provincial and District level have been made to improve graduation results of Aboriginal students. These efforts are due to a commitment by all parties to provide an education to Aboriginal students that is meaningful and respectful to Aboriginal ways of knowing. Elizabeth Jackson-Barrett, in her discussion of Aboriginal ways of knowing in the *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* stated, "If educators are serious about 'closing the gap' for Aboriginal students in education and 'undoing' the damage that has impacted upon the successful completion and retention rates for generations of Aboriginal students then we [educators] must give consideration to modelling the 3Rs shown in Aboriginal children's upbringing - Responsibility, Relationships and Respect." (Jackson-Barrett, 2011) We recognize that the improvement of school completion for Aboriginal students is a multi-level commitment that includes Senior Staff, Administrators, Teachers, Support Staff, Students, and the Community. It is important this goal have focus at all levels of the system (Elementary, Middle, and Secondary). This will be done in an effort to include early intervention as a key indicator of student success.

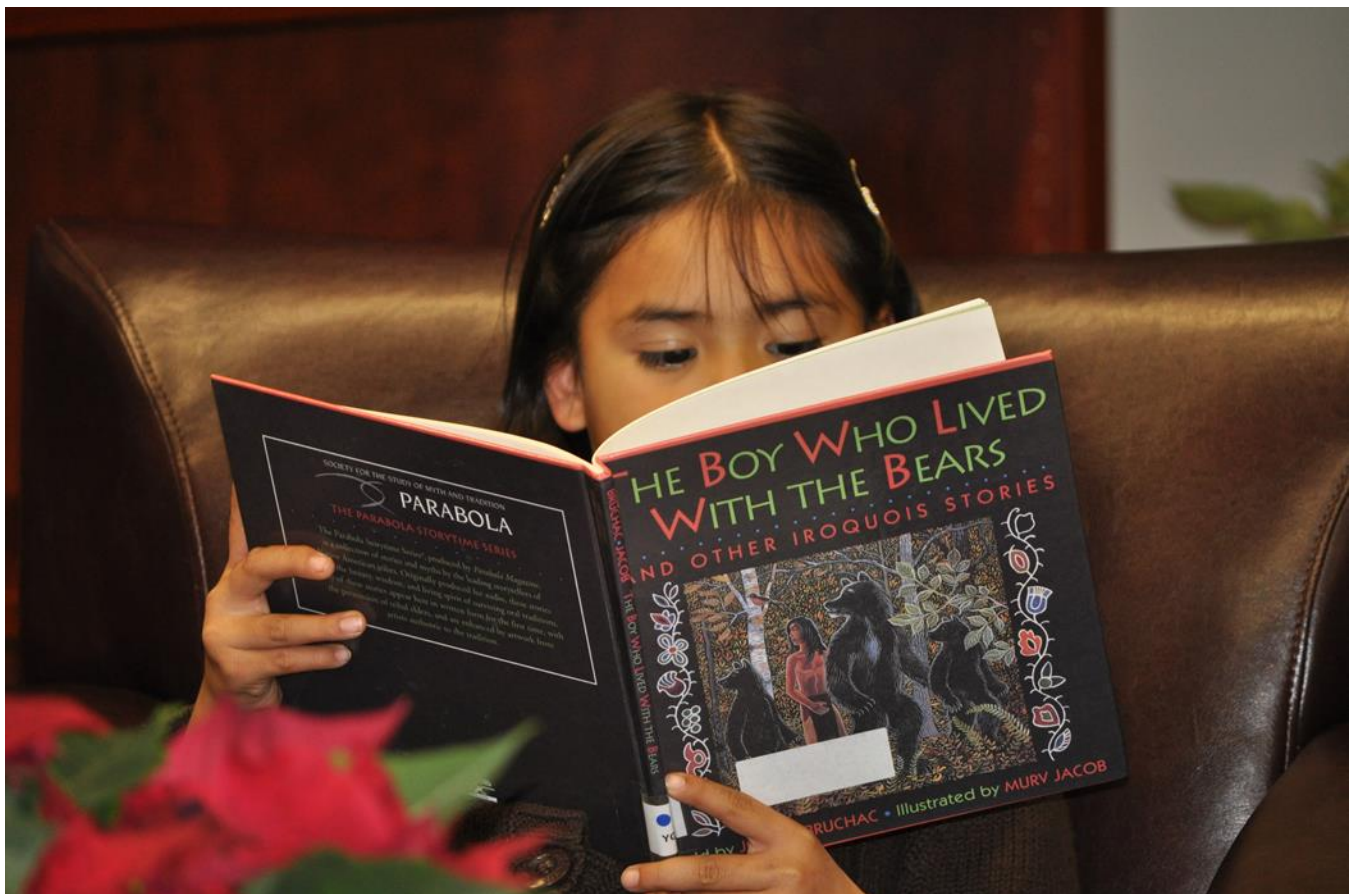


## Goal 2

Increase the number of Aboriginal students that are meeting expectations in reading

### Rationale:

All parties recognize the importance of fluency and comprehension in reading. In building competency in reading we believe that our Aboriginal students will experience success in all areas of their education. Evelyne Bougie of Statistics Canada states the importance of literacy achievement for Aboriginal students as they transition into employment: “low levels of literacy skills may limit people's options in terms of access to professional and technical occupations requiring complex literacy skills, and also in terms of access to adult education and training programs. These limitations are, in turn, likely to affect people's overall sense of well-being.” (Bougie, 2003)





### Goal 3

Increase cultural pride in Aboriginal students

#### Rationale:

All parties recognize how important the implementation of culture is in our schools. The District also honours the necessity of traditional language as an integral aspect of culture. Aboriginal culture is recognized as an important aspect of the educational system for Aboriginal students. In order to provide an education that is holistic and relevant to Aboriginal learners we must provide rich cultural and linguistic educational programs. By ensuring our student's education is culturally and linguistically enhanced we are strengthening the social capital of the Aboriginal communities (Cappon, 2008). The District is committed to promoting Indigenous language learning. It is through learning our languages that we are able to continue to increase our cultural identity (Cappon, 2008). The District honours the traditional language of Sto:lo people while recognizing the first languages of our diverse Aboriginal community. In order to achieve cultural pride for all of our Aboriginal students we will need to implement language and culture intentionally in all of our classrooms. It is imperative that language and culture is embedded in classroom instruction for all students. It is important for everyone to learn about the cultural and linguistic traditions of Aboriginal people.



## Goal 4

Increase the sense of belonging of Aboriginal students at school

### Rationale:

All parties acknowledge how important a sense of belonging is for Aboriginal student achievement. By building a greater sense of belonging in students we believe that our Aboriginal students will achieve at a higher level in other key areas. The Advisory acknowledges the need for every student to have a strong sense of belonging and to feel as if they have strong relationships in their school.

"Relationships are a fundamental tenet in Aboriginal cultures and teachers must build up relationships with not only the Aboriginal students in their classrooms, but also with the families that care for those children" (Jackson-Barrett, 2011).





## Implementation

This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will be in effect from September of 2014 to June of 2019.

Actions will be implemented in alignment with the goals of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement over the five - year term. All schools will implement actions to improve the results of Aboriginal students in the indicated areas. Where data for indicators is not available it will be collected over the first year. The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will be clearly articulated and reflected in the District's Achievement Contract.



## References

- Bougie, E. (2003). *Literacy Profile of off-reserve First Nations and Metis living in urban Manitoba and Saskatchewan: Results from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003*. Statistics Canada.
- Cappon, P. (2008). Measuring Success in First Nations, Inuit and Metis Learning. *Options Politique*, 61.
- Jackson-Barrett, E. (2011). The Concept for Change: Reconceptualising the 3Rs in Education for Indigenous Students. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 24.

## **Abbotsford School District Memorandum of Agreement**

We, the undersigned acknowledge and honour our collective responsibilities for the success of all Aboriginal students in the Abbotsford School District.

We agree that the terms of this Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement will provide direction for Aboriginal Education in the Abbotsford School District for the period of September 2014 to June 2019.

We commit to work together in a mutually respectful manner to continue the development of appropriate and meaningful programs and services for the benefit of all Aboriginal learners.

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Peter Fassbender  
Minister of Education

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Cindy Schafer  
Board of Education Chair

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Matsqui First Nation

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Chief Dalton Silver  
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