



'ALHK'IKH HËDILH -  
 WALKING TOGETHER:  
 A Framework for the Enhancement of  
 Aboriginal Education in the  
 Bulkley Valley



**CUPE**



**School District #54  
 (Bulkley Valley)**



**'ALHK'IKH HËDILH  
WALKING TOGETHER:  
A Framework for the Enhancement of  
Aboriginal Education in the  
Bulkley Valley  
2013 -2018**

**School District #54 (Bulkley Valley)**

## PREAMBLE

As the result of collaborative effort between Aboriginal communities of the Bulkley Valley, the Ministry of Education and School District #54, this Framework, first signed in June, 2006, outlines a consensus on, and a commitment to the improvement of opportunities for Aboriginal learners. 'Alhk'ikh Hédilh establishes a collaborative, respectful and trusting partnership between Aboriginal communities in the Bulkley Valley and School District #54 and involves shared decision-making creating a unified voice at the Aboriginal Education Council to address the educational needs of all Aboriginal students. The Aboriginal student population of School District #54 has increased from 21% in 2006 to 23% in September 2014.

In the 2013/2014 school year there were 547 Aboriginal students in the District. In this second Agreement we will continue to focus on:

- Student Success
- Culture
- Sense of Belonging
- Health and Wellness

## INTRODUCTION

'Alhk'ikh Hédilh highlights the importance of academic performance and relates local \*\*Witsuwit'en culture and language to Aboriginal student development and success. Fundamental to 'Alhk'ikh Hédilh is the requirement that schools provide a strong program that rests upon the local Witsuwit'en culture, on whose territory the district is situated. 'Alhk'ikh Hédilh acknowledges and honours School District #54's special relationship with the Witsuwit'en. In addition, 'Alhk'ikh Hédilh acknowledges and honours the vital role played by the Lake Babine Nation, the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, the Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre, the Moricetown Band Council, the Tri-River Metis Association, Kyah Wiget Education Society, the Houston Friendship Centre and the valuable input gathered from School District #54's Aboriginal Parent Circles.

'Alhk'ikh Hédilh will also bring strength and direction to the Aboriginal goals in School Improvement Plans and to the District Achievement Plan. While targeted funding will be used to enhance the educational experience of Aboriginal students, it should also be acknowledged that the resources to support Aboriginal academic success will largely be drawn from core funding.

## PURPOSE

'Alhk'ikh Hédilh is intended to improve on a continuing basis the quality of education achieved by all Aboriginal learners. 'Alhk'ikh Hédilh provides:

1. A framework for involving all Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organizations in a variety of decision-making areas;
2. On-going and consistent opportunities for School District #54 including Principals, Vice Principals, District Staff, Teachers, Support Staff, Students and Aboriginal communities to come together in a structured way, to continuously improve the performance and

achievement of all Aboriginal learners and enable them to meet locally established targets in all areas of learning;

3. A “roadmap” for helping schools to focus on performance-oriented Aboriginal education.
4. Opportunities to recognize and honour the culture and historic heritage of all Aboriginal peoples;
5. A holistic view of the academic, social, emotional, cultural, health and wellness needs of Aboriginal students;
6. Flexibility and choice in supporting Aboriginal student achievement;
7. A framework for the support and development of relevant Witsuwit’en language, curriculum and resources.

## PRINCIPLES

1. We recognize the need for long-term, sustained commitment to improve the academic success of all Aboriginal learners.
2. We agree to work individually and collectively within the mandates of our respective organizations to improve the performance of all Aboriginal learners.
3. We will promote positive relationships between schools, students, parents and community in order to enhance student wellbeing and achievement.
4. We will respect all Aboriginal cultures and traditions, including the tradition of respecting the primacy of the Witsuwit’en culture, and of the Witsuwit’en Nation within its territory.
5. We understand that the health and wellness of Aboriginal students is important for student success in the broader sense, as well as to increase their ability to be successful learners. To this end, the health of Aboriginal students will be actively promoted in every aspect of school life.
6. The performance areas selected for enhancement are those where there is assurance that the data can be:
  - ◆ Tracked for trends over time and reviewed annually;
  - ◆ Effectively used to plan and implement strategies;
  - ◆ Used in the District Achievement Plan and the School Improvement Plans;
  - ◆ Used for assessing targets and to develop reports that will be reviewed annually and presented to communities.



## PROCESS

The original *'Alhk'ikh Hëdilh* was signed on June 8th, 2006 in Moricetown, BC. In 2013 the document was reviewed and updated by the Aboriginal Education Council with input from the communities and the Aboriginal Parent Circle.

Each school year, a report will be prepared by the Aboriginal Education Council to provide an update on progress with respect *'Alhk'ikh Hëdilh* goals and targets; and to identify directions, strategies and targets for the new year.

Using *'Alhk'ikh Hëdilh* as the framework, and community identified priorities, the Aboriginal Education Council will establish an annual plan with short and long term priorities that is supported by School District #54. This annual plan addresses the Aboriginal Education budget and informs the implementation of School Improvement Plans and the District Achievement Plan. The plan is submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.

The Aboriginal Education Council contributes to identifying school and district goals and the directions that will create opportunities for Aboriginal student success.

## FOCUS AREAS

School District #54 has identified two major goal areas in its **District Achievement Plan**. The district is focusing on the grade to grade transitions specifically of Aboriginal students which are important gauges of student success and achievement. As well, the district is using formative assessment strategies which will provide clear learning intentions to improve Aboriginal Student Success in all curriculum areas.

Within each goal area in the District Achievement Plan, strategies to support Aboriginal learners will be developed and implemented to address the following focus areas:

### I. STUDENT SUCCESS

### II. CULTURE

### III. SENSE OF BELONGING

### IV. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## **STUDENT SUCCESS**

**Improving the academic success of Aboriginal students will improve the future for all Aboriginal Students.**

**What we learned from our first agreement:**

**Providing Aboriginal materials and resources in the core curriculum areas engages Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students collaborating in deep learning and helps develop a sense of pride in all Aboriginal students.**

### **GOAL:**

**Improve literacy skills of Aboriginal students in Kindergarten and Grade 1.**

**Indicator:**

- ◆ Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

### **GOAL:**

**Improve reading and writing skills for Aboriginal students in the elementary and secondary grades.**

**Indicators:**

- ◆ Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) in Reading and Writing in Grade 4 and Grade 7
- ◆ District Reading Assessment
- ◆ Grade 10 Provincial Examination Results—English
- ◆ Grade 12 Provincial Examination Results—English

### **GOAL:**

**Increase Graduation rates for Aboriginal students**

**Indicators:**

- ◆ Transition Rates
- ◆ Six Year Graduation Rate

**GOAL:**

**Improve Aboriginal student academic performance in Provincial examinations.**

**Indicators:**

- ◆ Participation rates in government examinable courses:
  - Apprenticeship and Workplace Math 10 and Foundations 10
  - Monitoring report card marks

**GOAL:**

**Improve Aboriginal participation in career programs.**

**Indicator:**

- ◆ Participation in Secondary School Apprenticeships and Accelerated Credit Enrollment in Industry Training (ACE-IT)

**GOAL:**

**Increase the number of Aboriginal students staying and progressing at school.**

**Indicator:**

- ◆ Grade to grade transition rates.

## II. CULTURE

All students will have an opportunity to experience, appreciate, understand and develop a respect for Aboriginal culture and history. Every school will be able to clearly articulate the ways in which Aboriginal culture is integrated into the life of their school.

What we learned from the first agreement:

All students are curious and wish to learn about the local Witsuwit'en worldview and culture and appreciate being exposed to Witsuwit'en ways of knowing.

### GOAL:

All students will experience  
Aboriginal content as part of the regular curriculum in K-12.

#### Indicators:

- ◆ Question in District Responsibility Survey

#### Indicator:

- ◆ All Grade 4 students exposed to *We are Witsuwit'en* unit & feast
- ◆ All Grade 7 students exposed to *Untold History: The Impact of Indian Residential School on Canada's Aboriginal Peoples* unit
- ◆ Most high school students are learning about Witsuwit'en history and culture through the *Niwhts'ide'ní Hibi'it'en: The Ways of Our Ancestors* textbook.

### GOAL:

Schools will provide meaningful cultural  
activities with an Aboriginal focus.

#### Indicator:

- ◆ Number of cultural activities provided at schools this school year



### **III. SENSE OF BELONGING**

All students need to feel like they belong. Our schools will develop a sense of belonging, where Aboriginal students feel safe and included in all aspects of school life. They will develop enhanced self-esteem which is critical to their success and well-being.

**What we learned from the first agreement:**

When students feel that they are in integral part of the school community, they are comfortable in sharing their ideas and thoughts with their peers and competing wholeheartedly.

#### **GOAL:**

All Aboriginal students will feel a sense of belonging at school

#### **Indicator:**

- ◆ District Social Responsibility Survey.
- ◆ Attendance data

#### **GOAL:**

All students will feel safe and supported.

#### **Indicators:**

- ◆ District Social Responsibility Surveys
- ◆ Ministry Parent and Student Satisfaction Surveys

## IV. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The health and wellness of Aboriginal students, including physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health must be secure to ensure vibrant and productive Aboriginal communities.

At this time we are unable to identify authentic performance indicators for this focus area.

What we learned from the last agreement:

Health and Wellness is clearly understood and is being addressed at the District through a number of strategies. We plan to identify meaningful strategies and measures for Aboriginal student health.

### GOAL:

To teach Aboriginal youth to make choices from a place of inner wisdom.

Indicator:

- ◆ Track program with Safe Boy & Safe Girl District Survey.

## Appendix A

### DEFINITIONS

**Aboriginal Education Council** – is a structure that set the priorities for Aboriginal student success for School District No. 54. Membership on the council is set out in its Terms of Reference.

**Aboriginal Peoples** - are recognized in the Canadian Constitution 1982 (Section 35) and include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Aboriginal students are school-aged students who have identified themselves as having Aboriginal heritage.

**District Achievement Plan** – is the Board of Education’s public commitment to improving student achievement. It is based on thoughtful consideration of student performance information and reflects the unique characteristics, priorities and needs of this district.

**School Improvement Plan** - is a school plan created by the parents, teachers and Principals on the School Planning Council to improve student achievement.

**Witsuwit’en** – School District # 54 lies within the boundaries of the Witsuwit’en (Wet’suwet’en) territory.

\*\* Witsuwit’en (*Revised Hildebrandt*) vs. *Wet’suwet’en (Hildebrandt)*: It is important to note the orthography (writing system) for the Witsuwit’en translations are written in a revised version of the **Hildebrandt** style now called **Distinctly Witsuwit’en**. The differences between these two systems are the *Hildebrandt* version does not fully accommodate the entire Witsuwit’en sound system, and the Distinctly Witsuwit’en was written to capture all the Witsuwit’en sounds. At the request of the Aboriginal Education Council School District #54 uses the Distinctly Witsuwit’en orthography as its foundation is based in academia.

## Appendix B

### Vision Statements:

**School District No. 54:** *“We are committed to working in partnership to ensure all Aboriginal learners in School District #54 experience success”.*

**Office of the \*\*Wet’suwet’en:** *“We are proud progressive \*\*Wet’suwet’en dedicated to the preservation, enhancement of our culture, traditions and territories, working as one, for the betterment of all”.*

#### **Moricetown Band**

*“The Moricetown First Nation is building on a proud past and working on a productive future”.*

**Kyah Wiget Education Society:** *“We are proud progressive Witsuwit’en dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of our culture, traditions and territories working as one for the betterment of all Witsuwit’en Peoples”.*

**Dze L K’ant Friendship Centre Society:** *“The Dze L K’ant Friendship Centre Society is an Organization guided by Aboriginal values that provides activities, services and information to all people. Developing skills and strengths incorporating spiritual, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing, focusing on helping people become self-sufficient and self-reliant. The Friendship Centre is dedicated to promoting friendship and awareness among all people”.*

**Houston Friendship Centre Society:** *“To assist, meet the needs and generally promote the best interest of people of Aboriginal origin who are making the transition to the urban community”.*

**Tri-River Métis Association:** *“The Metis Nation is committed to advancing the education, cultural integrity, heritage and traditional rights of the Metis people”.*

**Bulkley Valley Teachers’ Union:** *“The Bulkley Valley Teachers’ Union members are dedicated to working as a school community promoting Aboriginal learners’ success during every phase of our students’ educational journey”.*

**CUPE:** *“CUPE Local 2145 is committed to working to ensure that all Aboriginal learners in School District #54 experience success, in a manner that respects, protects and enhances Aboriginal heritage and culture, and is responsive to the stated goals of the Aboriginal community”.*

**Bulkley Valley Principals and Vice-Principals Association:** *“The Bulkley Valley Principals and Vice-Principals Association is dedicated to working with our partners to improve school success for Aboriginal students in our district”.*

**Ministry of Education:** *“The Ministry of Education provides enhanced funding to school age students of Aboriginal ancestry. Enhanced funding provides culturally-appropriate educational programs and services to support the success of Aboriginal students”.*

**‘Alhk’ikh Hédilh: Walking Together**

**IMPLEMENTATION**

This Agreement will be in effect for five school years from September 3, 2013 to June 30, 2018.

**School District #54 (Bulkley Valley)  
November, 2013**

**We, the undersigned, confirm our commitment to improve the success of all Aboriginal learners in School District #54.**

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Board of Education

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Moricetown Band Council

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Ministry of Education

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Bulkley Valley Teachers’ Union

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Office of the Wet’suwet’en

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Kyah Wiget Education Society

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Dze L K’ant Friendship Centre

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Houston Friendship Centre

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Tri-River Metis Association

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Lake Babine Nation

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CUPE, Local 2145

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Superintendent of Schools

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Bulkley Valley Principals and Vice Principals’  
Association