

# Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement

## "Vision for the Future"



Siwal Si'wes

Mission Public Schools 2007-2012

# Enhancement Agreement

## History

Mission Public Schools has long been part of Aboriginal education initiatives in British Columbia. Beginning in 1985, staff was hired to work with Aboriginal students in the district. In 1989, meetings with the Aboriginal communities regarding Aboriginal Education brought about the creation of the Siwal Si'wes Advisory Committee. Since these early beginnings, Aboriginal Education has grown steadily with the introduction of targeted funding during the 1994/1995 school year. The number of self-identified Aboriginal student population has grown from the 464 to 769 students, with most of the growth occurring over the past 4 years. Our children are well represented by a number of Aboriginal groups from across Canada. Even though the Mission school district lies within Sto:lo Territory (Leq'á: mel, Kwantlen, Matsqui, and Scowlitz First Nations), many children and families have made Mission their home historically because of St. Mary's Residential school and the legacy it has left in Mission. Many generations of families attended St. Mary's and were still in attendance when its doors closed in 1984.

The Aboriginal Education department, keeping with Sto:lo tradition, was given a name by Sto:lo elder (Gwen Point), "Siwal Si'wes (Our forefathers' teachings)". This name reminds us in our work that our children need to know who they are before they can walk forward with pride and we honour each child's past that they bring to our schools on a daily basis. The logo reflecting our name was designed by Roy Hanuse (Namgiis). Siwal Si'wes has an Advisory Committee that is a large active group made up of a diverse group of elders, parents, grandparents, Community Agencies, School District Staff and Trustees. They are an integral part of the department and strive to enhance our students' educational experiences.

## Guiding Principles

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is the working agreement between Mission Public Schools, local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education. The Enhancement Agreement was created over the past 3 years with the guidance and input of the Aboriginal students, Siwal Si'wes Advisory committee, and Aboriginal communities with the vision of success for all Aboriginal students.

The Aboriginal Communities and Mission Public Schools recognize and honour the special relationship that exists with the First Nations communities in Mission School District and the traditional territories. They also recognize and honour the historical and critical importance original peoples place on preservation of their language and culture within their traditional territories. This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement acknowledges and honours the four traditional territories of the following First Nation communities:

- Leq'á: mel First Nation
- Kwantlen First Nation
- Matsqui First Nation
- Scowlitz First Nation

In addition, this Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement acknowledges and honours the vital role in representing the interests of the:

- In-Shuck-ch Nation
- Fraser Valley Métis Association
- Métis Nation of British Columbia
- Siwal Si'wes Advisory representing all Aboriginal students and their families

and the Aboriginal Communities acknowledge the collective responsibility for the success of all Aboriginal learners during their educational journey in Mission Public Schools. With respect and honour of all Aboriginal peoples, we work together with their participation and wisdom, to develop appropriate and meaningful educational programs for the benefit of all Aboriginal learners.



*“My dad used to tell us to our best teaching tool was to “watch and listen”; this was our way to our teachings.”*

Waql an newth, Penelakut (Mel Jack)



## Core beliefs

While we recognize that Mission Public Schools currently has a Achievement Contract that clearly includes specific goals to support greater success for Aboriginal learners and that Siwal Si'wes currently supports those goals through its initiatives, the committee developing our Enhancement Agreement believes that we need to continue to identify and develop throughout the life of the Enhancement Agreement actions that will ensure Aboriginal students' success. It is further recognized that many of the actions developed to support reaching one goal may be intertwined within other goals and that these are all integral to the success of Aboriginal students in Mission Public Schools.

Siwal Si'wes Advisory wants to stress the importance of the role and responsibility a teacher has as an Elder to Aboriginal students. Our Elders are our teachers, mentors, leaders, and carry our knowledge forward to our future generations. There is also a collective responsibility that all levels have connectivity to and responsibility for Aboriginal student success from the Board of Education, administration, teachers, and support staff. The Advisory also believes that capacity needs to be built within schools through parent participation in Schools, through Parent Advisory Councils and on School Planning Councils (SPC).

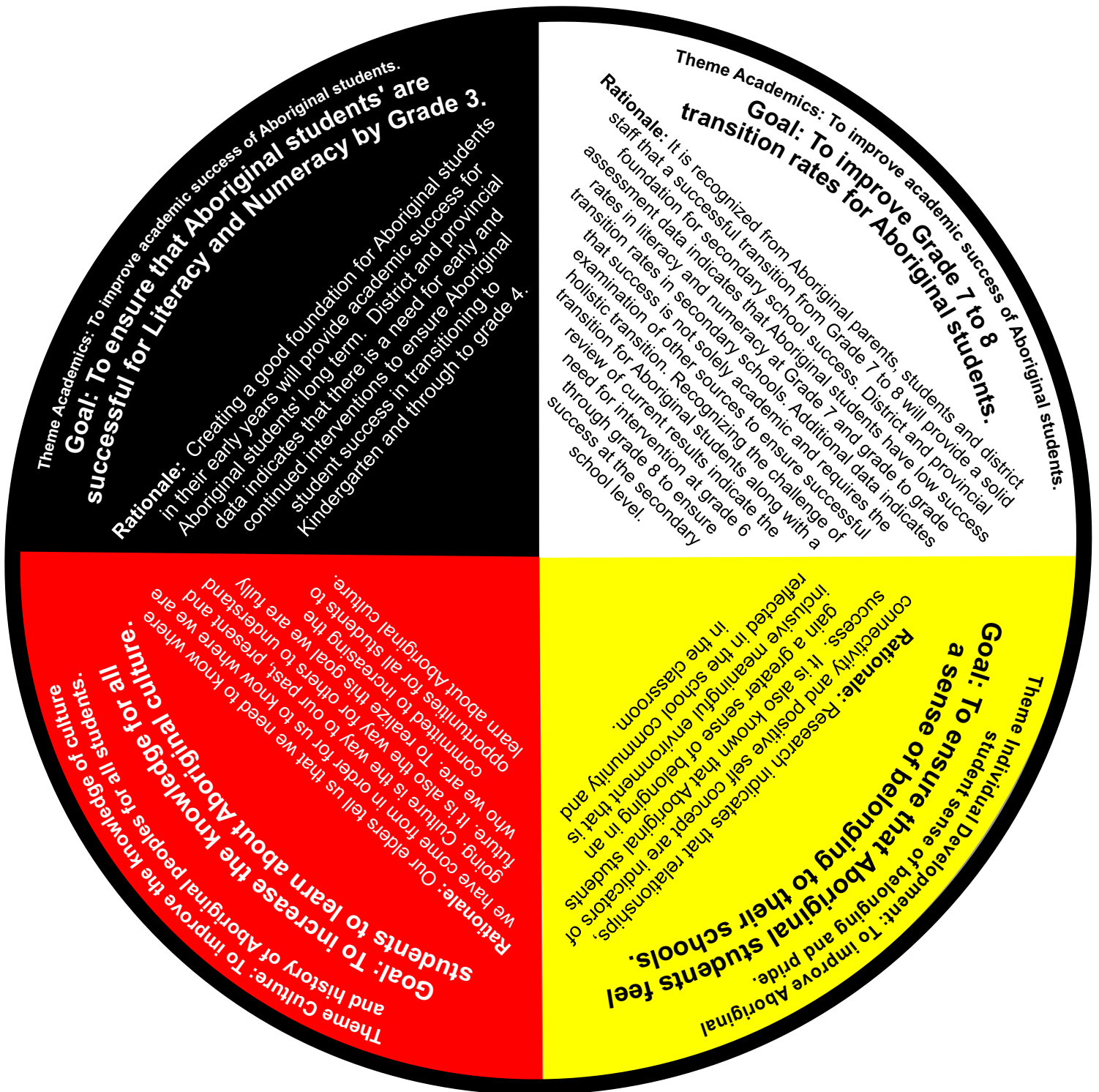
The Advisory recognizes the importance that increased knowledge of Aboriginal culture has in deepening one's understanding of Aboriginal people – past, present and future and wants to ensure that there are continued opportunities for all students and staff in Mission Public Schools to participate in those opportunities.

*"The key difference between being a successful organization and a significant one rests in the attention that is paid to the common good. Schools and districts that focus only on the past and present may be successful -- but without a vision for the future that involves a commitment to the common good, they will fail to make the transition from success to significance. (Dr. Gene Carter, Executive Director ASCD, 2005)*



*"We are all Aboriginal Educators; just some of us have Aboriginal Ancestry."  
Colleen Hannah - Okanagan*





Note: During the development of the Siwal Si'wes Enhancement Agreement, it was determined by the community and advisory committee that our vision would best be represented by a Medicine Wheel. "As the medicine wheel is an ancient symbol to help us see and understand things we can't quite see. It teaches the importance of balance in life... . [It] helps us with our vision to see exactly where we are and in which areas we need to go to realize our potential." *Sacred Tree*, 1984.

**Theme Academics: To improve academic success of Aboriginal students.**

**Goal: To improve Grade 7 to 8 transition rates for Aboriginal students.**

**Rationale:** It is recognized from Aboriginal parents, students and district staff that a successful transition from Grade 7 to 8 will provide a solid foundation for secondary school success. District and provincial assessment data indicates that Aboriginal students have low success rates in literacy and numeracy at Grade 7 and grade to grade transition rates in secondary schools. Additional data indicates that success is not solely academic and requires the examination of other sources to ensure successful holistic transition. Recognizing the challenge of transition for Aboriginal students along with a review of current results indicate the need for intervention at grade 6 through grade 8 to ensure success at the secondary school level.

**Indicators:** Baseline data collected 2007/08

- FSA, DART school wide write
- GNAP, Grade 8 district math exam
- Attendance
- School involvement Data
- School Connections survey tool – created for 2007/08

**Theme Academics: To improve academic success of Aboriginal students.**

**Goal: To ensure that Aboriginal students' are successful for Literacy and Numeracy by Grade 3.**

**Rationale:** Creating a good foundation for Aboriginal students in their early years will provide academic success for Aboriginal students' long term. District and provincial data indicates that there is a need for early and continued interventions to ensure Aboriginal student success in transitioning to Kindergarten and through to grade 4.

**Indicators:** Baseline data collected 2007/08

- Phonological Indicator Kindergarten
- FSA, DART, DRA, School wide write

*"I say with all of my heart and soul: get every bit of education you can. Whatever you do, stay in school as long as possible. Learn, because learning is power; it is how you come to have choices about what you will do and where you will go; it is how you become free."*

*Len Marchand – Skilwh (Okanagan)*

*"Breaking Trail", Caitlin Press Inc., 2000*



**Theme Culture:** To improve the knowledge of culture and history of Aboriginal peoples for all students.

**Goal:** To increase the knowledge for all students to learn about Aboriginal culture.

**Rationale:** Our elders tell us that we need to know where we have come from in order for us to know where we are going. Culture is the way to our past, present and future. It is also the way for others to understand who we are. To realize this goal we are fully committed to increasing the opportunities for all students to learn about Aboriginal culture.

**Indicators:** Baseline data collected 07/08

- Satisfaction Survey – to be created 2007/08

\*\*We will track the opportunities through the following indicators:

- Number of inclusive classroom presentations in district.
- Number of inclusive classroom presentations per school.

*“Will you teach your children what we have taught our children? That the earth is our mother. What befalls the earth befalls all the sons of the earth. This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”*

Chief Seattle’s Speech, January 1854, Version 4



**Theme Individual Development: To improve Aboriginal student sense of belonging and pride.**

**Goal: To ensure that Aboriginal students feel a sense of belonging to their schools.**

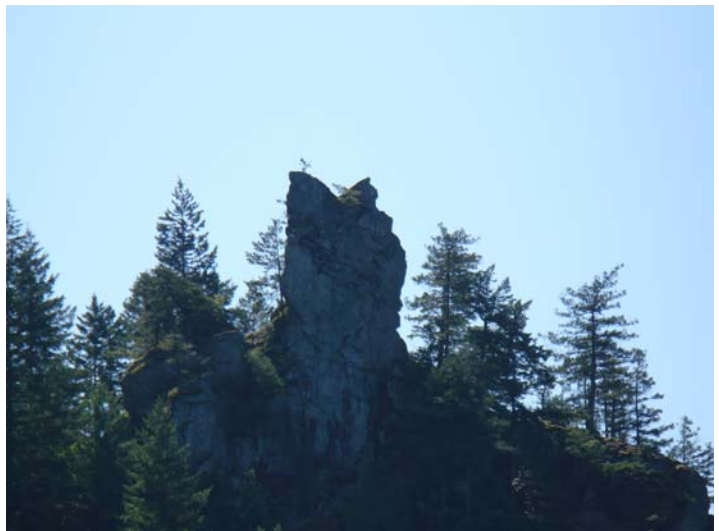
**Rationale:** Research indicates that relationships, connectivity and positive self concept are indicators of success. It is also known that Aboriginal students gain a greater sense of belonging in an inclusive meaningful environment that is reflected in the school community and in the classroom.

**Indicators:** Baseline data collected 2007/08

- Attendance
- Satisfaction surveys-created in 2007/08
- Connectivity surveys –created in 2007/08

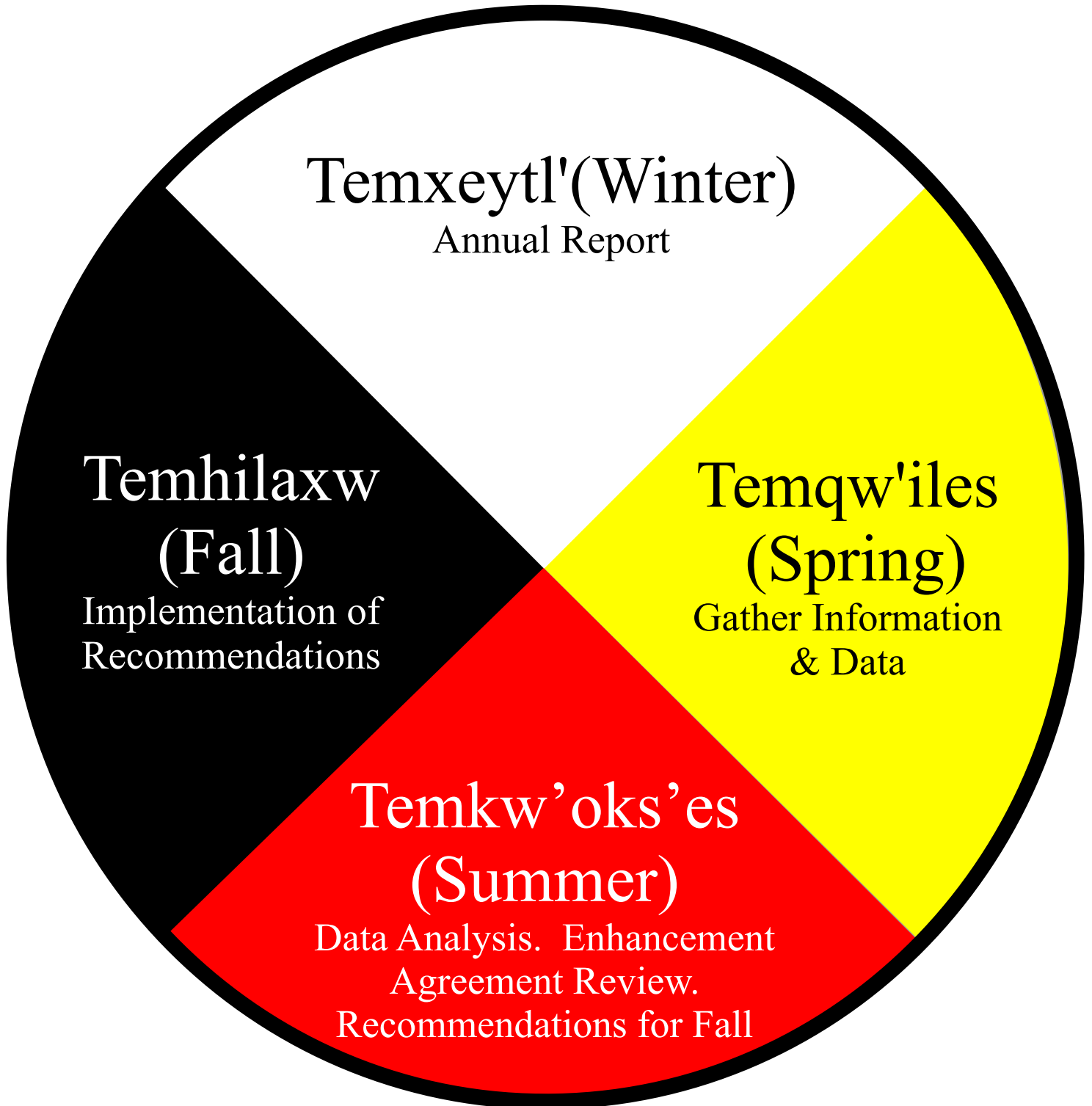


*“If you talk to the animals they will talk to you and you will know each other. If you do not talk to them you will not know them and what you do not know, you will fear. What one fears, one destroys.”*  
Chief Dan George

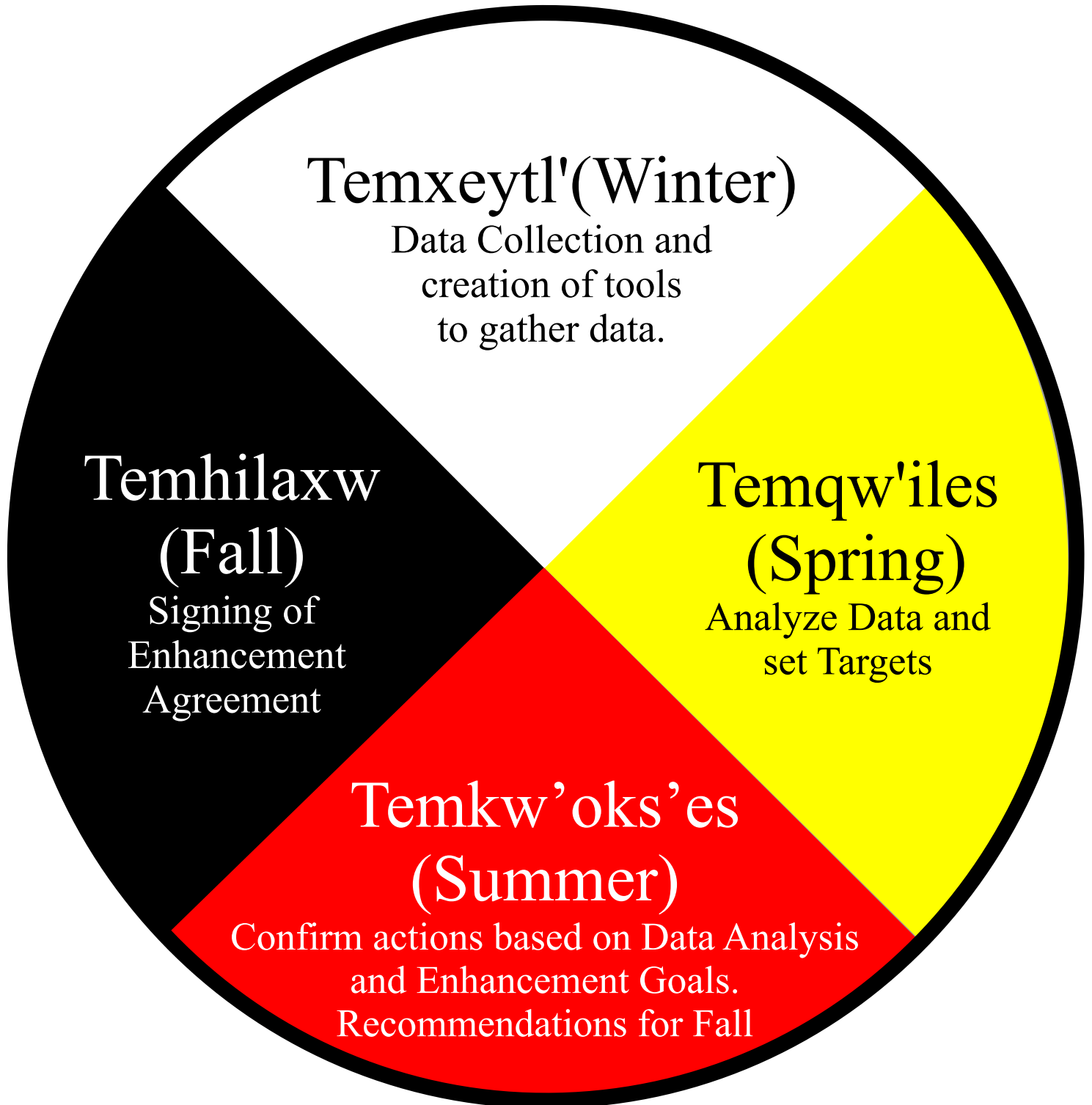




# Enhancement Agreement Yearly Cycle



# Enhancement Implementation Year 1



## **Appendix**

These are some of the ideas that the community and committee had to help put the Enhancement Agreement in action, but it does not exclude the work that is currently being done.

### **I. Current District Wide Initiatives**

- Aboriginal Liaison Workers striving for a 75:1 student:staff ratio
- Aboriginal Academic Support Teachers –Secondary
- Cultural Elder
- District Principal Aboriginal Education
- Administrative Assistant
- Aboriginal Kindergarten opportunities
- Celebrations
  - Student Recognition Ceremony
  - Grade 7 transitions (Shadow Days/Transition Day, District Transition meetings, Grade 8 home visits (August), Grade 8 retreat
  - Graduation Honouring
  - Sto:lo Awards
  - Cultural Days
  - Staff and Students Honourings
  - School Cultural Projects
- District Aboriginal Resource Centre
- District Aboriginal Presenter Book
- District Aboriginal Incentive Grants
- Aboriginal Student Leadership Program and Council (All Secondary School sites)
- Partner in District Summer Camp Programs
- Professional Development Workshops

### **II. Future considerations**

#### **A. Leadership/connectivity**

- Build Leadership Capacity across the district with Administration and Staff
- Increase leadership/mentorship programs for students at both Elementary and Secondary
- Aboriginal Student Leadership Program and Council (All Secondary School sites), currently this opportunity is not available at all secondary sites.
- Create a yearly plan to welcome families and students to schools
- Attendance support plan.

#### **B. Culture**

- Create drum, fiddle, flute and dance groups to provide opportunities for students to learn and perform as well as mentor younger students
- Create cultural student leaders to assist with cultural presentations at the Elementary Schools.

#### **C. Recognition of success & Belonging –**

- Assist schools with Aboriginal family participation in school based events

- Increase Aboriginal visual presence in schools
- Increase Aboriginal content in daily activities and events
- Increase the incorporation of Aboriginal content and perspective into daily school events – sharing with schools ideas and contact persons to carry out this task.
- Increase awareness of Aboriginal presenters in district
- continue to follow cultural protocol for territory, while being cognizant of other Aboriginal cultures too.
- Increase staff inclusive cultural presentations
- continue and increase administrative learning opportunities to increase knowledge of Aboriginal peoples and territory knowledge.
- Mentorship programs with elementary and secondary students.

#### **D. Creation of meaningful/relevant curriculum**

- Aboriginal Curriculum Support Teacher
- Aboriginal content – teacher mentors/teacher groups
- Strengthen links with Preschool and Elementary to ensure a successful transition.
- Individually tracks students at risk
- Aboriginal Content integrated into classrooms.
- Teacher mentors for the inclusion of Aboriginal content into class
- create teacher lead professional development within the framework already used by the district and schools, ensuring Aboriginal content without adding additional professional development days – integrating them within schools and through the district. I.e. literacy and numeracy teachers using Aboriginal content in their presentations, Department heads sharing Aboriginal lessons and integrating it into their teachings.

#### **E. Student Support**

- increase teacher responsibility as the role of an elder figure that they represent to Aboriginal students
- support for Teachers and support staff – re: Aboriginal learners, Aboriginal curriculum.
- Create communication plan with family and home – phone calls, visits, email, meetings





