



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 57 ABORIGINAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Factors in Aboriginal Student Success

Final report on the research project:



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We're all in this together: Keeping Aboriginal students in school (KASIS)

Prepared for School District No. 57 Aboriginal Education Department
By Shari L. Wallace

With contributions from:

Aboriginal Education Department, Project Administrator
Shelly Niemi

KASIS Research Advisory Committee
Bruce Allan, Natasha Bacchus, Toni Carlton, Victor Jim, Sue Perron, Vince Prince and Rheanna Robinson

KASIS Youth Research Team
Tyler Adams, Victoria Alexander, Isaiah Johnson and Maisie Woods

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to:

School District No. 57 Aboriginal Education Department
#102, 155 McDermid Drive
Prince George, BC
V2M 4T8
Tel: (250) 562-4843
Fax: (250) 561-2520
www.abed.sd57.bc.ca

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Executive Summary

The current study titled *We're All In This Together: Keeping Aboriginal Students in School* (KASIS) identified local issues that contribute to Aboriginal student retention with a special focus on social emotional learning. Interviews, focus groups and surveys were conducted with two hundred and forty-four participants including Indigenous students, family members, Elders and educators.

Interconnected factors in Aboriginal student success that emerged from participant experiences are: cultural safety, *Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning* (IK-SEL), and reconciliation. Within each of the three factors are relational elements. Cultural safety is experienced within relationships, IK-SEL is a person centered practice and communicative in every aspect, and reconciliation is about the repair of relationships. Each of the three factors recognizes the deep relational impact we have on each other. Students depend on their relationships to one another, school staff, mentors and their families to show them how to interpret the world, and navigate through their experience with education.

School success is inextricably linked to relationships and none more profoundly than that of the relationship of the student with their family. The way parents, grandparents and extended family experienced education profoundly influences what children think, feel and do in classrooms today. Education is both the cause and cure for harm and injustice and the student participants in this study are at the intersection of this crossroad.

Indigenous students often love school and have enriching relationships with school staff while their families are simultaneously managing the legacy that colonization and residential schools has imposed on their lives. Students in this study are having much more positive experiences with education than did prior generations of their family. Reconciling this incongruence and acknowledging the role Canadian society has had in creating it is an important step towards decolonizing education practices and reconciling relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The three factors presented in this report are a stepping stone for education action that aims to correct and strengthen the relationship between School District No. 57, Indigenous students and families. No person alone holds the responsibility for narrowing the education gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; we are all in this together.

Methods

In January 2013, School District No. 57's Aboriginal Education Department began a qualitative, participatory action research project titled *We're all in this together: Keeping Aboriginal Students in School K-12* (KASIS). KASIS was designed to respond to the disproportionately low graduation and transition rate of [Aboriginal](#) learners in School District No. 57. An integral component of KASIS has been collaboration with Aboriginal students, families, community members, [Elders](#), [Indigenous knowledge](#) holders, scholars and [educators](#). This was done in order to locate strategies to support [Indigenous](#) student success that are culturally appropriate, community recognized, and rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.

The KASIS project was conceived by School District No. 57 Senior Administration with Aboriginal Education Department Administration and members of the Aboriginal Education Board. Attaining new understanding as to why the achievement gap exists between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students was a primary concern, as was what could be done about it. The active participation of Aboriginal students and families was a foundational principle in the KASIS project and in many aspects the study was done with and for them. Participatory action methods were used in order for students and families to directly benefit from the study, and for everyone involved; educators, students, families, Elders, and researchers, to engage in transformative relationships.

I am glad to be part of this as in my family I have many Aboriginal peoples and I look forward to being of value to others in this whole endeavour, helping out where I can. Thank you, it is an honour to be and have a small part in this great undertaking (Lynn O'Grady).

Goals and Objectives

The original goal of the KASIS research project as set out in the KASIS Project Description (2013) was to identify new educational direction in the provision of social emotional learning programming that responds to the needs of Aboriginal learners in School District No. 57. This would occur by:

- Exploring the experiences of Indigenous students' and families as they navigate social and emotional development in context of educational success,
- Analyzing experiences accessing SEL programs to demonstrate how and why existing programs support learning and where deficiencies exist,
- Identifying best practices in Social Emotional Learning that respond to locally informed retention issues,
- Supporting the provision of new or improved SEL initiatives.

KASIS objectives were to:

1. Examine local retention issues by investigating the experiences of Indigenous students and their families who strive to keep themselves/ their children in school.
2. To investigate and promote social emotional learning programs that respond to Aboriginal student retention.
3. To produce a framework of Social Emotional Learning for Aboriginal Learners.
4. To direct professional collaboration and mentorship during the selection and implementation of best practices for the retention of Indigenous students into schools.

Cross Cultural Research

At the 2014 Shawane Dagoosiwin Aboriginal Education research forum Sherry Peden, Indigenous Educator and Researcher with Brandon University, talked about integrating

Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum in Manitoba. She said that everyone needs to work together to make [inclusive education](#) possible and that Indigenous people will lead the way on providing the Indigenous perspectives to integrate. Non-Indigenous counterparts follow, support and collaborate whenever appropriate. Conducting research with and for Indigenous people echoes these same sentiments. In cross-cultural research such as the KASIS project where the research participants are primarily Indigenous and the researcher is non-Indigenous, every part of the project should be transparent and accountable to the participants and Indigenous community it serves.

Indigenous methods of research emphasise relationships over knowledge, participation over expertise, holism over specialized understandings and investment in honouring research participants (Wulff, 2010).

Indigenous research methods such as those described by Shawn Wilson (2008) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) have invigorated the KASIS research project. In Smith's 1999 publication *Decolonizing Methodologies* she recommends that cross-cultural research be done within a mentoring model called "tiaki: where authoritative Indigenous people guide the project". The KASIS Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is comprised of Elders, Indigenous scholars, community and Traditional leaders and Aboriginal Education administration who helped to shape and monitor the study. The purpose of the committee was modelled after tiaki (Smith, 1999) and its members have been closely involved with all aspects of the research. KASIS RAC members worked to ensure quality cross-cultural research and the use of methods that are culturally appropriate and responsive.

Members of the KASIS Youth Research Team (YRT) held an integral role in the KASIS study in that they brought the student voice and youth perspective to the project. Their work

involved reflecting on the study findings and providing guidance for student engagement. They tested methods, gave feedback on analysis, and helped to organize and facilitate local and national reporting. Other major contributions of the KASIS YRT include assisting in the development; planning and production of the documentary film *Crow Brings a Message: Transforming education through Aboriginal Education*, and putting forward the *Young Warriors Program*, an initiative developed in response to preliminary findings from My Voice youth focus groups. For this team, expressing what was really going on for them and their peers in a purposeful way was life affirming. With permission, below is an example of this type of expression, as written by Maisie Woods on May 12, 2015.

A Masked Princess

She's beautiful, Smart, Elegant
Yet, She's Always Silent, Why You Ask?
Because Whenever She Tries To Speak,
Her Words Seem To Mean Nothing To Anyone Around her
So It's Like She's Always Got This Piece Of Tape Over Her Mouth
And Underneath That Beautiful Outside Mask
She's Broken And Crying On The Inside,
Wishing Someone Would Help Her Break Free
From This Reoccurring Nightmare She's Living.

Data Gathering

Inquiring into student and families lived experience and the context of their experience with education has been central to meeting the goals and objectives of the KASIS project. Mixed methods were used to allow for maximum participant inclusion and data gathering activities included family focus groups known as Tupperware Projects, one on one semi-structured interviews with students and key informants, My Voice student surveys, and focus groups with students, Elders and Key informants.

Interviews provided the richest source of data and participant stories were meaningful, deep, and illuminating. The My Voice survey provided breadth of data that supports the transferability of the study's overall findings. School schedules, gaining parent consent, and maintaining participant anonymity when administering surveys at school sites presented several challenges. As a result, only few site based surveys were collected. Administering surveys at the annual School District No. 57 Aboriginal Education Youth Conference was much more effective.

Tupperware Projects were an innovative data gathering method that allowed meaningful engagement of parents who may face socio-economic barriers to inclusion. Family recruitment for Tupperware Projects was done with school posters, newsletters and direct contact from school staff and KASIS researchers. Tupperware Projects hosted at schools with multiple families were particularly effective. Families who had positive connections to school staff and the Aboriginal Education Department were most willing to participate in the KASIS study.

Themes of inquiry that guided questioning in all data gathering activities were:

1. Social Emotional Experiences
 - a. Current Issues

- b. Student, Family & Community Needs
 - c. The relationship between academic and social emotional learning
2. Indigenous Knowledge in SEL Programming
3. Educational Equity
4. The Relevance of Racism

Demographics

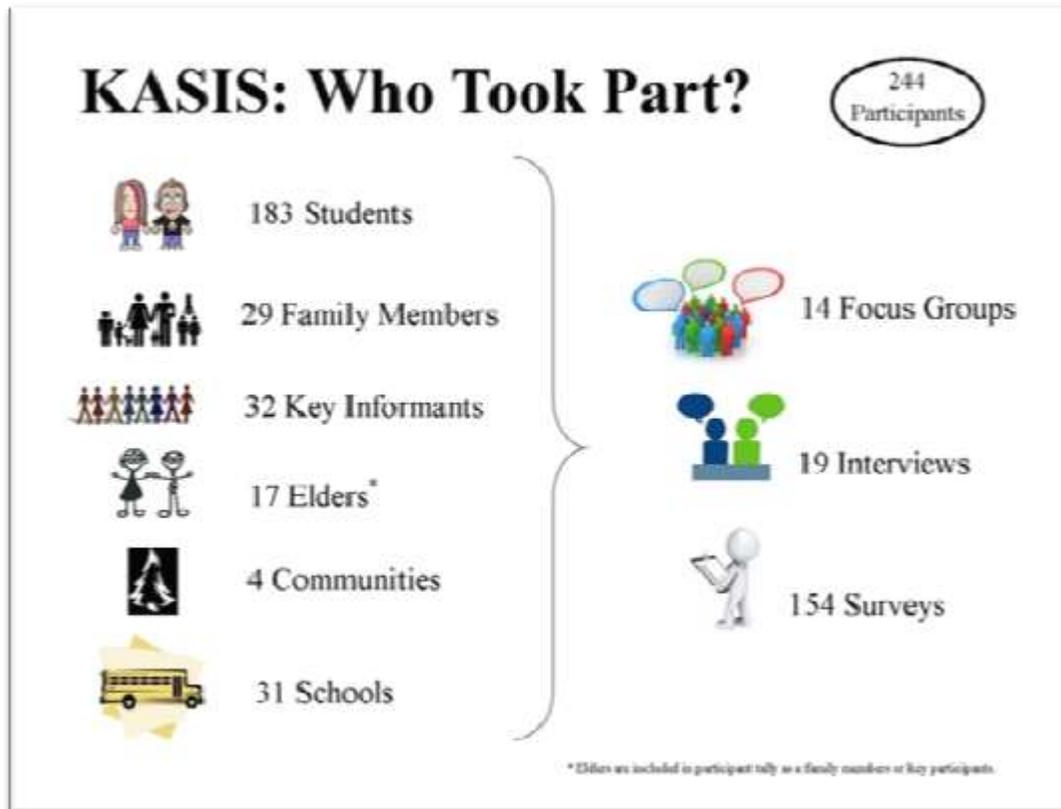


Figure 1. KASIS: Who took part?

Two hundred and forty four participants from four communities contributed to the study and student from all regions of School District No. 57 were involved (Prince George, McBride, Mackenzie and Valemount). Students, school staffs, families, and Elders were included as participants and 76% were from the student body. Of the participants, 85% identified themselves as an Aboriginal person. Posters, pamphlets, school newsletters, school staffs, and the Aboriginal Education Department website were used to recruit participants, inform people about the study, and to invite them to become involved. Above, Figure 1 titled *KASIS: Who Took Part*

shows how many people and communities were involved and in which type of data gathering activity. Figure 2 below titled *KASIS Participant Ethnicity* describes the ethnic back ground of the sample. Figure 3, titled *KASIS Participant Demographics* shows gender and age range of participants.

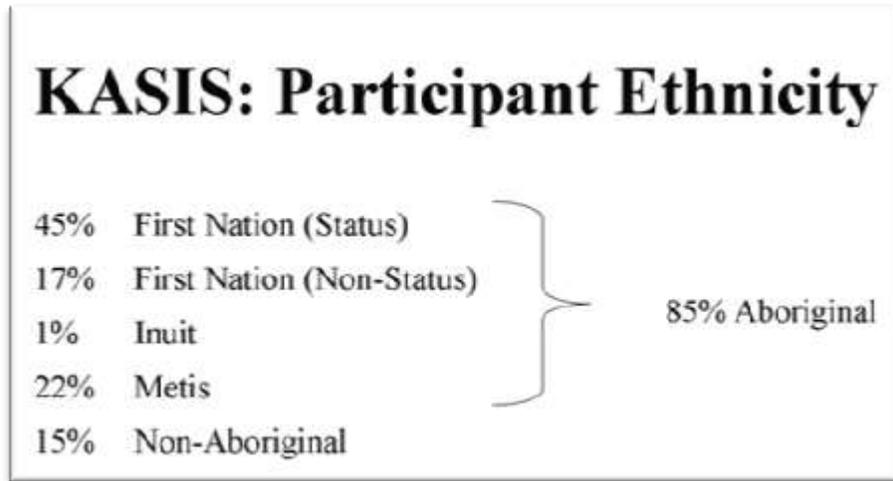


Figure 2. KASIS: Participant Ethnicity

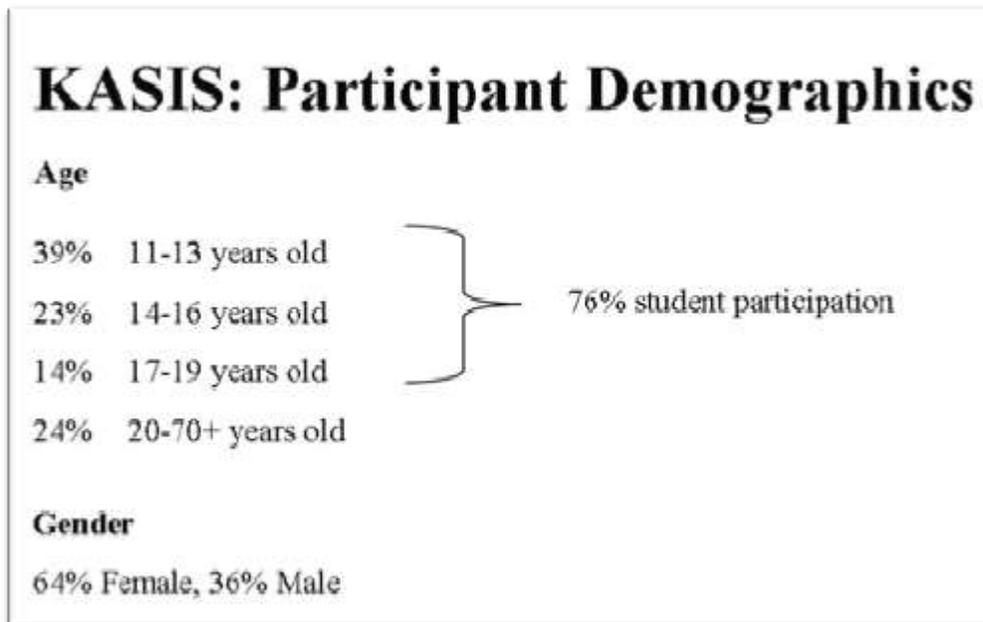


Figure 3. KASIS Participant Demographics

Analysis

A thematic and interpretive approach to data analysis was used to examine KASIS participant experiences. As reoccurring themes were identified, Indigenous scholarship on the topic was reviewed, and in collaboration with the KASIS Research Advisory Committee and KASIS Youth Research Team, a conceptual understanding of the themes was developed. Three groups were consulted to affirm the relevance and reliability of the KASIS results; the research participants, the KASIS RAC, and the KASIS YRT. Being a cross-cultural project, enhanced diligence was required to confirm that participant voices and stories are accurately represented in the research findings. Member checks done at KASIS Participant Reporting Dinners tested the accuracy of interpretations and conclusions with participants. Ongoing dialogue with KASIS RAC and YRT about methods, analysis and the meaning of data themes gave rigor and transparency to the study.

Report Organization

This report considers KASIS participant experiences and does not focus on what School District No. 57 is already doing to respond to the education gap. For more information on current practices please visit www.abed.sd57.bc.ca and www.sd57.bc.ca.

Included in the methods and background sections are descriptions of the project's rationale, context and methodological approach. The third section presents the key findings of the KASIS study in three subsections; Cultural Safety, Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning, and Reconciliation. One objective of KASIS was to produce a framework to social Emotional learning for Aboriginal learners. The results section on Indigenous Knowledge and Social emotional Learning undertakes this task. In it, the conceptual outline of *Indigenous*

Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning (IK-SEL) is provided as well as learning items to be included in the delivery of IK-SEL.

Participant's personal identifiers such as age, name, school and so forth have not been included and pseudonyms replace participant names. When participants are referred to in text, their pseudonym is placed within single quotation marks (eg. 'Jo'). When participants are quoted, their pseudonym is placed at the end of the block quotation in brackets, for example (Jo). Participant words have been italicized and block shaded in grey, for example "...made to feel a part of the community (Jo)". These measures protect participant's anonymity and differentiate their voices from scholarship. In instances where other personal identifiers such as a school name are included in a quote, a description of the identifier has been inserted within square brackets, for example [school name]. All other parts of this report attempt to adhere to the publication style of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2011).

Common themes are a focus of this report and bullets are used throughout the results chapter to summarize themes of participant's thoughts, experiences and ideas. Scholarship is woven throughout and further study by the reader on topics presented is encouraged. Over four hundred pages of interview and focus group transcription has informed KASIS results and considerable interpretation has been done. The My Voice Survey results are fully delineated in the KASIS Community Report. In this writing, survey results are integrated into the three interconnected factors in Aboriginal student success.

Definitions

Definition of terms is provided to clarify meaning and create a basis for understanding the concepts presented. Credit for the definitions below belong to the referenced source and in most cases, definitions are a paraphrase or direct quote. Some concepts such as colonialism, historic trauma and Indigenous knowledge are not elaborated upon beyond their given definition because the focus of this writing is to understand KASIS student and family experiences with education and how these experiences can inform education practices occurring in classrooms today. There is excellent existing scholarship on the concepts presented that are referenced both in text and the reference section.

Aboriginal Learning: The Canadian Council on Learning (2009) states that Aboriginal Peoples in Canada have long advocated their own values, cultural traditions and ways of knowing. Their perspective on learning reflects an enduring philosophy and way of living that integrates all knowledge and experience throughout each stage of a person's life. Aboriginal learning is a highly social process that nurtures relationships within the family and throughout the community. These relationships serve to transmit social values and a sense of identity, and also help to ensure cultural continuity. As a result, the value of individual learning cannot be separated from its contribution to the collective well-being.

Aboriginal Rights: The Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF, 2015) state that Aboriginal peoples of Canada hold Rights as a result of long-standing ancestral use and occupancy of the land. The Aboriginal right to hunt, trap, and fish on ancestral lands are examples of Aboriginal rights. Aboriginal rights will vary from group to group depending on the customs, practices, and traditions that have formed their distinctive cultures (CRRF, 2015).

Culture: The mix of ideas, beliefs, values, behavioural and social norms, knowledge and traditions of a group of individuals who have historical, geographic, religious, racial, linguistic, ethnic or social context, and who transmit, reinforce and modify those ideas, values and beliefs, passing them on from one generation to another. It results in a set of expectations for appropriate behaviour in seemingly similar contexts (CRRF, 2015).

Decolonization: The restoration of cultural practices, thinking, beliefs, and values that were taken away or abandoned (during the colonization period) but are relevant and/or necessary for survival and wellbeing. It is the birth and use of new ideas, thinking, technologies and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples (Yellow Bird, 2014).

Educator: The term chosen in this writing to identify persons facilitating social emotional learning and/or *Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning* in classrooms and schools. Educators are Teachers, Principals and Vice-principals, Counsellors, Psychologists, Social Workers, Youth Care Workers, Aboriginal Education Workers and any other school staff who are working with students on Social Emotional Learning. An Educator can also be community members such as Elders, traditional knowledge holders, Life Coaches, parents and guardians. Educators of Traditional Knowledge and social emotional learning have the common purpose of building social emotional competence in students.

Emotional Intelligence: The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (Goleman, 1995).

Elder: The definition of an Elder will vary from Nation to Nation. Within School District No. 57 an Elder is an individual who shares Indigenous wisdom, knowledge and

ancestral teachings with students and staff in order to achieve equity in education for Indigenous students, families, staff and the community. Elders have spent much of their lives in service to their community and are recognized and respected by their family, community and School District No. 57 for earning their knowledge. Elders demonstrate living with authenticity, integrity, respect and moral behaviour.

Elders in School District No. 57 connect students and staff to Indigenous history, tribal identity, and traditional ways of life. They impart teachings on Indigenous values, experiences with residential school, living on reserve, and walking in two worlds. Having witnessed ideas, cultures, technologies, and trends come and go; Elders are open-minded and non-judgmental about the world around them. They have seen many changes in the social and natural environment and understand stages and cycles of life. With empathy and compassion, Elders in School District No. 57 extend patience, humility, dignity and acceptance to all. Elders are both teachers and learners, willingly sharing their cultural, spiritual and traditional resources.

Experiential Learning: Learning that is connected to lived experience and reinforced by traditional ceremonies, meditation, storytelling, observation and imitation (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Holistic Education: Education that engages and develops all aspects of the individual (emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual) and the community, and stresses the interconnectedness of all life under the Creator (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Inclusive Education: Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and the inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical

surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected (CRRF, 2015).

Indigenizing Education: Integrating Indigenous thought and perspectives across the K-12 curriculum and into the larger system of structures and processes that make up schools (Alfred, 2004 and Dion, 2010).

Indigenous, Aboriginal, First Peoples: School District No. 57 (SD57) encompasses a large geographical area that includes urban, rural, First Nation, traditional and crown lands. Within these geographical and social settings, the use of the words Indigenous and Aboriginal are used interchangeably and in doing so, recognizes the many local, regional, provincial, national and international Indigenous people that make up the Aboriginal student body in School District No. 57. In this writing, Indigenous, Aboriginal, and First Peoples also refers to the cultural identity of the participants in the KASIS study be they, First Nation (status and non-status), Inuit, or Metis.

Indigenous Knowledge/Traditional Knowledge: Cumulative and dynamic knowledge about social, cultural, environmental, economic and spiritual life that has been transmitted generation to generation by a particular people from a particular territory (Daes, E.I in Battiste, M and Youngblood J., 2000). In the current writing, Indigenous Knowledge also refers to the cumulative knowledge of the Indigenous people who participated in the KASIS study, and who share the similar experience of education in School District No. 57. This term is used to honour their ancestral origins, education rights, and collective knowledge.

Lifelong Learning: Learning that begins before birth and continues through old age and involves the intergenerational transfer of knowledge (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).

Positionality: A concept articulated by Linda Alcoff (1988) and others, namely that race, class, gender, and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities. Knowledge is valid when it includes an acknowledgment of the knower's specific position in any context, because changing contextual and relational factors are crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation (Maher, 1993).

Reconciliation: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada describes reconciliation as an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining new and respectful relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians (TRC, 2015c).

Social Emotional Learning: The process of teaching students' emotional intelligence (Civic Enterprises, 2013). The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) suggest the foundation of social emotional learning (SEL) is based on five person-centered SEL competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management (2011).

Transformative Change: Changes in thought and behaviour that create an educational system that is a place of connectedness and caring, and a place that honours the heritage, knowledge and spirit of every First Nations student (Battiste, 2013. pg, 66).

Background

Social Emotional Learning in Schools

In September 2013 the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) released *The Missing Piece* a report on the findings from a US based national teacher survey about how social and emotional learning can empower children and transform schools (Civic Enterprises, 2013). The report describes overwhelming teacher support for [social emotional learning](#) (SEL) as a process to teach students [emotional intelligence](#). Teachers believe that SEL helps students achieve by increasing their interest, improving their behaviour, preventing and reducing bullying, and improving the school climate (Civic Enterprises, 2013).

Research based evidence that supports the need for improved social emotional learning in schools has never been stronger (Brown, 2004; Civic Enterprises, 2013; Elias, 2006; Goleman, 1995; NSCDC, 2004; Ross, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2007, Zins et al., 2004). Indigenous scholar Gregory Cajete explains the need for SEL this way: “emotion is the foundation on which we understand what we are learning”. Furthermore, Indigenous Knowledge systems have historically transferred social emotional teachings as a foundation for all teaching (Brown, 2011). In the *Sacred Tree*, Brown, Lane, Bopp and Bopp write:

There are four dimensions of "true learning" These four aspects of every person's nature are reflected in the four cardinal points of the Medicine Wheel. It cannot be said that a person has totally learned in a whole and balanced manner unless all four dimensions of her being have been involved in the process (1984).

In classrooms today, social emotional learning is much more widely recognized as an essential component of education. In addition to gaining cognitive and psychomotor skills at school, students are also gaining social emotional or affective skills. Pedagogy has shifted so that the new BC Ministry of Education curriculum drafts are designed with a focus on three cross-curricular competencies: thinking, communication, personal & social (Province of British

Columbia, 2013). These cross-curricular competencies connect in many ways to CASEL's Framework of *Person-Centered Key Social Emotional Competencies* (CASEL, 2011). This demonstrates that the British Columbia's education system is incorporating an increased amount of social emotional learning into classrooms.

Local Context

Every year the BC Ministry of Education publishes a report titled *How Are We Doing* and in 2001 it showed that Aboriginal student graduation rates in British Columbia were at 42% (2013). The 2014 *How Are We Doing* report shows a six-year Aboriginal student completion rate of 62% (Government of British Columbia, 2014). The six-year graduation rate of Aboriginal students in School District No. 57 has fluctuated over the years (Pepper, 2014). The 2012-13 success rate was 56% compared to 48.8% in 2013-14 (Pepper, 2014). Although statistics are showing some increase, the graduation rates of Aboriginal students (BC wide) still demonstrate a 24% gap from the overall graduation rates of non-Aboriginal students (2014).

Beginning in 1995, School District No. 57's Aboriginal Education Department has enlisted research to assess the needs of Indigenous students and provide evidence for programming decisions. Parallel to the rise in Aboriginal student success rates is School District No. 57's response to research based evidence. When the first Aboriginal Needs Assessment was conducted in 1995 by Malatest and Associates the study showed that absenteeism of Aboriginal students was 46% higher than non-Aboriginal students, and the dropout rate was estimated to be 50%. Innovative strategies to transform poor performance in providing education to Indigenous students have been a focus of School District No. 57 for many years. Attached as *Appendix A* is a summary of School District No. 57 Aboriginal Education research from 1995-2015. Included as *Appendix B* is a summary of select wise practices in Canada as prepared by Toulouse, P. for

the Canadian Teachers Federation (2013). This chart can be used to add nationwide context to Aboriginal Education as it summarizes factors identified as contributing to Indigenous student success by four Canadian studies.

Current issues Indigenous students experience in British Columbian schools include but are not limited to over representation in special learning programs, alternate education, behaviour designations and mental health designations (Government of BC, 2014). Indigenous students also have more experiences with racism, bullying and unequal treatment by school staff (Malatest, 2007, Government of BC, 2014). Parents of Indigenous students indicate in the Malatest Report their dissatisfaction with the shortage of Aboriginal role models in schools and limited amount of Aboriginal content in the curriculum (2007). Currently, there is no indigenous language program in schools and Aboriginal students are not being provided with much content about their tribal histories, language or identities.

There is however, a milieu of optimism and renewal within School District No. 57 and students are being provided with enriching educational opportunities. This in turn is allowing for better educational outcomes among Aboriginal learners. Further, teachers, counsellors and educational support staff have been providing a variety of social and emotional learning opportunities; both students' and staff have increased cultural learning opportunities; and there is growing recognition of the need for collaboration when it comes to meeting the needs of learners. There has been an overall increase in the importance of cultural safety and cultural awareness. This includes creating an environment for staff to participate in dialogue regarding best practice and working collectively to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners.

Researcher Reflections

At the beginning of this project the concept of emotional intelligence and how it fit into Aboriginal Education somewhat baffled me. I wondered why the Aboriginal Education Department needed to research social emotional learning when it's already a part of everything they do. Every staff member in the Aboriginal Education Department already delivers social emotional learning; it's just not defined as such. Indigenous Knowledge connects all dimensions of learning and traditional teaching and learning has always included the development of each. The Aboriginal Education Department draws from Indigenous Knowledge as a source for program development and in doing so embeds SEL as an integrated part of the whole. So why do a research project on SEL? What I've learned is that the answer lies in the heart, somewhere between the experience of colonization and the return to self-actualization.

The growing educational interest in emotional intelligence brings recognition to Indigenous Knowledge that has long since recognized that cognitive and emotional intelligence are close relatives and need one another to survive and thrive. I have faith that modern [educators](#) are reconnecting their own hearts and minds and those of the school children they teach in an effort to return us to a society that values relatedness. Many Indigenous scholars have argued that the modern education system is failing Indigenous students because it isn't providing an affective education that has "value relevance, cultural relevance and is [holistically](#) based" (Bryde n.d., Stubben, 2001, Brown, 2005). If this is still true of education, it is not too late to start. Emotional competency is taught by the repetition of values and the school classroom is an ideal place for its development (Brown 2005).

Personal Position

In 2005 I graduated from the University of Northern BC with a Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies. It was mid-way through that degree that I was fortunate enough to realize that First Nations Studies (FNST) had the academic content I was looking for as well as a fully integrated component of affective learning. Would I not have found FNST I would very likely still be trying to complete the science program I started with. As a person whose greatest learning competency lies in the affective realms, I have never thrived in educational environments that are based in the cognitive domains of learning. Most, if not all of my public school education was comprised of the learning the three R's, all which live in the cognitive domains. It wasn't until I was an adult learner, in FNST that I finally began to love school and it was because of the way Indigenous scholars were teaching me.

First Nations Studies was my first degree and being a non-Indigenous settler with little to no understanding of the Indigenous experience in Canada, I was transformed from what I learned. I can personally confirm that Indigenous curricular content does build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect. It has taken me years to integrate the lessons I've been given by Elders, Scholars and [Traditional Knowledge](#) holders. Becoming a culturally competent educator and researcher didn't happen overnight and having meaningful relationships with Indigenous people, families and communities was essential to my growth. I've been taught in the Cree language the phrase "ni nimoya isketen" which translates to English as "I know nothing". The meaning behind this phrase is more complex than may appear. When I say these words it reminds me about the importance of humility and to accept lessons that are given, at the time they're given. These words tell me that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that every person's part is of equal value to the whole. The words tell me that the

privilege assigned to me through the color of my skin is significant, and actively subverting that privilege is part of what I do to be a culturally safe person. Finally, in the context of [reconciliation](#), these words have a literal meaning - I do not know. I don't know what it is like to be a scared lonely child starved of their families love and affection; I don't know what it's like to be at the intersection of oppression, domination and discrimination; and I don't know what it's like to fight for my constitutional and human Rights, only to be denied them. Because of this, my place in reconciliation is behind those whom have had those experiences. They provide the way forward and it is not me or anyone like me who will assess the progress of reconciliation. Only those who have suffered can tell us when they suffer no longer. My place in reconciliation is, as Len Findlay puts it, is to "Always Indigenize!" That is, take a connected and critical stand with the Indigenous agenda, promoting Aboriginal Education, [decolonization](#), and the creation of space for Indigenous knowledge in schools and classrooms (Findlay, 2000 & Battiste, 2013).

Key Findings

Marie Battiste writes in *Decolonizing Education* that passing on what we know is an act of love (Battiste, 2013). In this study, KASIS participants have passed on what they know as an act of deep caring and commitment to educational change. From their stories three factors in Aboriginal student success have been identified: Cultural Safety, Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning (IK-SEL), and Reconciliation. The three factors are illustrated in *Figure 4. Factors in Aboriginal Student Success*. For [transformative change](#) to happen, all people need to compassionately engage in conversations of understanding about [First Peoples'](#) experience with education. With this we can begin to participate in the process of decolonizing education with courage, innovation and respect. It is hoped that this report will support the process.



Figure 4. Factors in Aboriginal student success.

Factor one: Cultural Safety

Amongst parents, students and staff in School District No. 57 there is a growing vision of what cultural safety is, how it can be obtained, and what works in opposition. KASIS participants have articulated cultural safety for School District No. 57 as well as how cultural un-safety and school push out and push through influence the subjective feeling of cultural safety. Participants also provided insight into how the cultural competency of school staff increases cultural safety.

The theoretical underpinnings of cultural safety used for this writing come from Jessica Ball's work with the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnership at the University of Victoria. According to Ball, Cultural Safety is "the outcome of interactions where individuals experience their cultural identity and way of being as having been respected or, at least not challenged or harmed" (Ball, 2009). Furthermore, cultural safety is determined by the recipient of a service; in the context of this report, this is Indigenous students and their families in School District No. 57.

KASIS participant 'Sunshine' spent most of her life living on her traditional territory surrounded by family, [culture](#) and Indigenous language. After moving to Prince George, her young family had new economic and educational opportunities that she is optimistic about and grateful for. The reflection of her children's cultural identity in schools however, is markedly absent. She says:

For us coming here from a small isolated community surrounded by culture and family, a little bit of first nations culture at the school would be nice; it doesn't even have to be ours...It's important to have culture classes at school so we don't forget about culture (Sunshine).

When considering ‘Sunshine’s’ values and experiences through the lens of cultural safety it is possible to foresee the benefit of teaching and learning that includes Indigenous culture and language. KASIS participants had considerable foresight on this and many described what the outcome of cultural safety in School District No. 57 could look like. It includes staff and students of all ages, nations and schools:

- Having equitable opportunities for health, success and mastery
- Being proud of their cultural identity and able to maintain it with joyful confidence
- Seeing their cultural identity reflected back at them with meaning and authenticity
- Seeing the inclusion of Elders and Indigenous staff
- Learning Indigenous language
- Learning from curriculum that includes traditional knowledge and First Peoples pedagogies
- Feeling respected, understood and accepted for who they are physically, verbally, emotionally and socially
- Experiencing high levels of parent and community involvement.

Cultural Un-safety

Cultural un-safety is “a subjective sense that one’s cherished values, goals, language, identity & ways of life are denigrated or threatened in an encounter, or that one is being asked to venture into a foreign culture without knowing how to function in it and without positive accompaniment” (Ball, 2009). A culturally un-safe social environment causes stress and in some cases duress. Examples and indicators of cultural un-safety for KASIS participants range from subjective feelings of being excluded, deficient and resented, to experiences of bullying, violence, racism, and school push out and push through. Below are themes in participant experiences that indicate cultural un-safety in School District No. 57. The themes are not ranked for significance.

- The indication that only Indigenous students and families are permitted to participate in Aboriginal Education activities and non-Indigenous students and families are excluded,

At my school I see it because it’s so small and everybody knows each other and some people don’t think its fair, the opportunities that the Aboriginals get. When we get offered opportunities like that, they tend to lash out a little bit in anger. It’s not too bad...I know we get offered to go ...and do the Aboriginal workshops and learn about history and somebody I know, they said, “That’s not fair. Why should they get to go? What about the blacks? What happened with them? Don’t they get any recognition for what happened to them? The Aboriginals, their land was just taken, that’s it. It’s not that big of a deal. They lashed out (Steve Jones).

- Amongst some Aboriginal students, cautious, guarded participation in Aboriginal Education activities,

Students are so shy they don’t get involved with Aboriginal services, except for going to the Ab. Ed. Centre. Kids are taught values from home that may stop them from being involved – identity issues (Shirley Temple).

- Resentment about the inclusion of Indigenous cultural activities in schools,

I don’t support this [Aboriginal Education] as Aboriginal views on education

should not be the only views represented in a multicultural society. (Parent)

Some kids think it's a waste of a day when there is an Aboriginal day and use social media to voice their complaints (Campwannabefirst).

- Collusion between the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and schools through the identification of Indigenous families' believed to need protective services (removing children from the home and placing them into Ministry Care),

I was helping to take care of the kids and I should have been contacted before they phoned MCFD but never was. They would stab us in the back (Anna).

- Feeling targeted, prodded and judged by school staff,

Teachers that say the wrong thing – they judge and condemn and it happens so easily. Kids rebel against judgement... Our kids in high school say that teachers are mean to them. That creates a risk of them dropping out (Bugsy).

There's also a problem with substitutes being mean to high school students (Anna).

Substitute secretaries have been mean too. They don't know me, my kids, our history, or the relationship we have with the school. One thought my kids were absent and called asking where they were. I was upset. They don't have a relationship with me and there is no trust there (Bugsy).

- The experience of light skinned Indigenous students being treated differently at school than dark skinned Indigenous students,

...mine are Aboriginal but light skinned and I don't think there is much issues at school (Rose).

Depends if they look Aboriginal (Fabulous, responding to the question: Are all students treated equally at school?).

- Indigenous students and families feeling invisible, inconsequential and un-cared for at school,

You're lucky that your kids go to [school name]. They're interested in your kids there; at [school name] we're just there. (Santa)

- Geographic and economic isolation,

...He doesn't like that school but I can't change it because [of where we live] (Santa).

...some students cannot financially afford what they are capable of reaching (Sheila).

- Indigenous students used as an educational funding grab,

[Everything was] fine until they found out he was [Aboriginal], then they wanted to talk to him with some special people because he gets more funding (Dogrib).

- No Ministry driven mandate for Indigenous content in the curriculum,

White privilege is connected to all of it which say's their way is better than my way (Luvlee).

- Intergenerational memory of suffering and adversity at schools,

#1 they and their generations have been taught that they are not equal. It is now almost genetic – 7 generations rule (Chicken Little).

School administrators need to recognize that families may be one generation removed from residential schools. Previous school experiences (positive or negative) will have an impact on a parent's involvement in school (Sharon Osborn).

There are bad memories. I didn't like to be called Aboriginal. I went to Residential school and they called me names (Santa).

- Indigenous students targeted for support services.

I noticed a lot that sometimes, because you're Native, the teachers think you need more help...It's just that it annoyed me a lot of times when there would be TAs in the class and you'd watch them and they would concentrate on the Native kids. Everybody else was doing their work, sometimes people would put their hands up, but their first concentration was the Native kids. Yeah, it's a benefit but it almost makes you feel stupid (Annabelle).

Racism, Bullying and Violence

Bullying and violence in schools are culturally un-safe experiences for Indigenous students and families and they are often times linked to racism. Experiences of racism are common among KASIS participants. Racism reduces a positive sense of self, trust in authority, school connectedness and belonging. Among KASIS participants, there are many stories about

bullying and violence in schools, but none told as prolifically as stories about racism. KASIS participants indicate that racism is a distinct problem that affects their lives, and only a few had little or no experience with racism.

Racism is really bad for native students (Elvis).

You'll find that (racism and bullying) at any school (Dogrib).

You kind of see it at the schools (Samantha).

There's not a lot of Natives at my school so there's a lot of people that are racist there (Katherine).

The biggest challenge would be just to do well in school. Proving everybody wrong. Because a lot of people are always like, "Oh, you're Aboriginal" and they expect me to drop out by now or barely pass classes (Silverkicks)

At the time when confronted with racism, many participants chose not to report their experiences and attempt to evade it by changing their behaviour, routines, and patterns. In the passage below, 'Brenda' explains that students and their families may not report bullying for fear of other problems worsening. 'Charlie' then talks about how he bottles up his emotional response after he's been the target of racism:

I'm hurt, angry and scared to phone the school... I tell the kids to say that nothing is wrong because too many Native kids are gone (Brenda).

From how I was raised, I kept most of that stuff in. Didn't talk about it to anybody, made it look like I was happy, all that (Charlie).

Participant experiences have included typical forms of bullying plus a unique type that is specific to Indigenous students. When Indigenous students experience school yard bullying it often has racial undertones. The other more unique form of bullying comes from other Indigenous children/youth who bully about the other's 'indianness' and identity issues that come from within Indigenous families and their community experiences.

We've never lived on reserve and reserve kids treated us differently. Prejudice and bullying "can go both ways". Indian boundaries vary between different Native communities. We get it from other Indian kids and from non-Natives (Anna).

...I got bullied a lot because I'm a lot lighter than they are and they were like, "You're white. You're not Native." And I'm like, "Yeah, I am. Have you seen my dad? He's brown. Have you seen my grandma? She's brown. I'm not faking it." They'd always try to bully me but it's like, "You're kind of annoying so I don't really care" (Hailey Lynn).

When evading bullying and racism isn't possible, violence can erupt. KASIS participants have experienced school violence that includes verbal, physical and psychological threat or harm. In the hallway at school, 'Charlie' had a physical altercation with a student that he believed was witnessed by staff. What he perceived to be a lack of appropriate response to the incident left him feeling that his physical safety was unworthy of protection. 'Anna's' children were so terrorized by verbal threats in the school yard that they couldn't report it for fear of retaliation from their aggressor. They stayed home from school for a week to ensure their safety. In 'Josh's' experience, the potential for peer violence was so prolific that he would place himself in vulnerable situations to test if he would get jumped. Doing this gave him a sense of control. 'Annabelle' has witnessed and been physically involved in so many fights that violence is normalized for her and from her perspective, most students fight.

There's that small portion of girls that say, "No, [swear] that. I don't want to look like an orangutan fighting and throwing around and pulling hair. I'm better than that." I wish I would've been one of those girls but it's also really hard to say that, too. Because then people would say, "You're a [swear] if you don't fight. You must be weak." They don't give you a choice (Annabelle).

Yes. I feel that way (always on guard). I test myself before I do something. If somebody threatened me the day before when I was going home, I say, "Okay", I go there that day, and I look for that person and walk by them, see if he does anything. If he does nothing I know he won't do anything to me ever (Josh).

The impact of bullying and violence can be profound for students and families, and especially so when it coincides with other forms of oppression and domination like racism. When life is experienced at the intersection of historic trauma and cultural un-safety, the impact of bullying and violence is amplified. Participants whom have been involved with school violence reported being affected in the following ways:

- Constant expectation of violence
- Ongoing fight or flight response
- Hyper vigilance for personal safety
- Absenteeism or frequently changing schools
- Physical and social isolation
- Emotional detachment
- Chronic states of sadness and anger
- Feelings of terror and worthlessness
- Feelings of guilt, resentment and frustration

Other factors expressed by KASIS participants that relate to racism, bullying and violence include:

- Indigenous students and families experience systemic, institutionalized racism
- Students have to consistently protect themselves from being viewed as an Indigenous stereotype
- There is anxiety amongst students that school programs and activities will worsen racism and bullying

- Elders say that racism “isn’t as bad as it used to be” suggesting an improvement in Human Rights for Indigenous people as well as intergenerational experiences with racism and discrimination
- In the face of consistent racism and bullying, Indigenous students and families are challenged to resist normalizing the behaviour
- Parents need follow up from school administrator after they make reports of bullying or racism in order to trust that their children are safe at school
- When schools respond quickly to bullying and racism, it improves cultural safety
- Value based instruction, with special attention to respect works towards reducing racism
- Anti-racism education for parents is required
- Exclusive opportunities for Indigenous students can exacerbate race based conflicts

School Push Out and Push Through

The disproportionately high rates of Indigenous students who do not graduate with a Dogwood Certificate and instead complete school with a Leaving Certificate, Adult Dogwood, or nothing at all is a factor that works against cultural safety. This phenomenon of Aboriginal students being chronically over represented in special learning and Alternate programs is identified as being ‘pushed out’ and/or ‘pushed through’ school. Being pushed through school occurs when students complete high school without being suitably challenged or academically successful; pushed out of school is being withdrawn without question, or expelled without option.

At a community feedback session for this project a guest anonymously asked the question “*Why do a lot of Aboriginal students end up in the PEP program [Pre-Employment Program]*”

when they start high school?" Similarly, 'Rose' talked about a student having little motivation to succeed in non-academic program and then wondered if non-academic programs are only for Indigenous students:

"why put in effort when we're not going to grad anyhow". They're given the easy way out. I don't know if these programs are for Aboriginal kids or if non-Native kids are in there too." (Rose)

It is such common knowledge that Indigenous students are pushed out or pushed through school that when it occurs, and the question of why it's occurring isn't clearly explained, discrimination is presumed. When staff members make a dedicated effort at bringing parents and students into understanding and accepting why alternative placements are made, there is less motivation to believe that it's happening to them because they're Indigenous. The following quotes show that there is a subjective knowing that Indigenous students are pushed out or through school.

Natives are pushed through instead of getting the support they need to fully graduate (MVFG01 Student).

I was put into PEP [Pre-Employment Program] without my parents or I being informed (MVFG01 Student).

They are advancing through grades without having skill (Melissa Floyd).

Some parents think that the school is just passing kids through (Kim).

My husband and I say that yes, we are First Nation and we want the same education for our kids as everybody else. We don't want our kids pushed through. That's why we came here and left the community I was born and raised in (Sunshine).

Quit putting everyone in SLR [Special Learning Resource] (Christine).

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence is defined as a set of values, behaviours, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program or among individuals and which enables them to work effectively cross culturally. Further, it refers to the ability to

honour and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviours of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff who are providing such services (Denboba, 1993).

Cultural competency is a pathway to cultural safety for Indigenous students and families. The importance of providing cultural safety for Indigenous students can be understood academically or intellectually, however, to have truly transformative change, a deeper knowing and paradigm shift is required. This shift involves how we understand, acknowledge, and remember the history of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples, and how we engage in respectful relationships based on mutual understanding and trust. As the cultural competency of individuals within School District No. 57 increases, the greater potential there is for cultural safety among Indigenous students and families.

To have Aboriginal cultural competency within School District No. 57, staff, students and families must:

- Understand First Nations history, accomplishments and culture
- Understand and use First Peoples Principles of Learning and/or Aboriginal Pedagogy
- Recognize the value of Aboriginal Education
- Meaningfully include, interact with, and listen to Indigenous Elders and traditional knowledge holders
- Understand where traditional knowledge comes from and how one's own [positionality](#) influences teaching and learning traditional knowledge
- Seek out and promote opportunities for learning about Indigenous knowledge, culture and traditions
- Recognize cultural revitalization and reconciliation as a process.

Factor two: Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning

“Emotional learning and culture go hand in hand” (E. Henderson, personal communication, November 26, 2015)

Based on the stories and experiences of KASIS participants, Indigenous Knowledge and social emotional learning are recognized as important contributors to school and life success. To optimize student’s educational success, both Indigenous Knowledge and social emotional learning need to be included in teaching and learning. With this recognition, it is recommended that schools and Educators support and protect the many paths to social emotional well-being through culturally safe educational practices and dynamic, carefully planned *Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning (IK-SEL)* tools and programs for all grades and ages. In the following paragraphs the conceptual alignment of *Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning (IK-SEL)* will be explained and the four essential components of IK-SEL will be discussed. The four components of IK-SEL are: Indigenous values; walking in two worlds; historic trauma, and relational connectedness.

Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning have similarities in regard to the importance of a mind-body connection as a foundation for learning. Proponents of social emotional learning recognize the mind-body connection through an empirical research base, and Indigenous Knowledge holders, from multigenerational experiences of understanding and practice. While social emotional learning and Indigenous Knowledge are unique and distinct, they are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. There is no intention here to attempt an integration of two modes of thought, expression and understanding; however, the term *Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning* is being used to recognize classroom strategies for social emotional learning that originates from traditional Aboriginal methods of transferring Indigenous Knowledge. The hyphen in this usage IK-SEL represents a bridge

between Indigenous Knowledge and social emotional learning.

For some, IK-SEL as an educational concept may bring up concerns of knowledge assimilation and appropriation. With this in mind the Two Row philosophy is provided as a foundational principal. The Two Row wampum is a Hodinohson:ni interpretation of agreements that took place in 1613 with Dutch settlers, and is the basis for all their future relationships with colonial powers (Hill, 2013). The Wampum symbolizes a river with two boats travelling side by side, together but separate, with no-one trying to steer the other's boat (The Two Row Society). Two Row philosophies recognize interconnectedness between all things, and the "universal relationship of non-domination, balance and harmony between two parties...the principles of peace, respect and friendship can be extended to any relationship between autonomous entities" (The Two Row Society). With this foundation, IK-SEL is two ways of knowing and being, with a bridge so that each can share with the other to serve the common interest of benefiting learners in School District No. 57.

General characteristics of IK-SEL include teaching and learning through Aboriginal pedagogies with experiential, holistic (balanced), oral, land based, relational, creative, repetitive, and flexible methods of instruction. IK-SEL involves Elders, family, peers, community members, circle, and ceremony. IK-SEL awakens the learning spirit and promotes interest in the self, community, life, and the Earth. It is not delineated by time or rigorous assessment because there are many paths to social and emotional wellbeing that can be followed at different times over a person's life, or in other words, when the time is right. With this, IK-SEL is responsive and adaptive to individual need and community.

Everyone is included and their identities belong, and are made to feel a part of the community (Jo).

The outcome of effective IK-SEL is physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. If emotion is the foundation to understand all learning and if the affective domain of learning is connected to each part of our physical, spiritual and mental realms of knowing, through the process of developing emotional understanding, all other domains grow stronger (Brown, 2011). With this, IK-SEL provides opportunities for social and emotional exploration with the expectation of emotional development and mature behavior as the result (Brown, 2011). In addition, IK-SEL promotes relational connectedness, cultural safety and multiple ways of knowing and being. By using traditional ways that are still valuable today, IK-SEL supports those who have both traditional Indigenous, and contemporary western lives (also known as walking in two worlds), and aids the navigation through multiple ways of knowing and being. IK-SEL is a personal process of discovery from which students find their gifts and identify their role within family and community.

To me, that social-emotional learning, that kid gets to participate in smoking fish, something his ancestors did thousands of years ago, is bringing some pride. There's a lot of positive cultural identity that gets built through that. To see it, year after year, that they're a part of that. They can tell their family, they can come up, they can participate in it, that's what I would like to see (Hal Jordan).

IK-SEL should not be imposed on students and some students may prefer western approaches to social emotional learning. Indigenous students have been experiencing the effects of colonialism and oppression their entire lives and even the most resilient student may recoil at the contemplation of history and reality. Internalized oppression and acculturation are effects of historic trauma that occurs at the personal, community, and the collective levels (Duran, 2006). Acculturation is the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group and colonial forces have made it so many Indigenous people experience forced acculturation and assimilation into Western society (Battiste, M. 2013, Duran, E. 2006, Milloy, J. 1999).

‘Annabelle’: *I wasn’t really involved in any of it [Aboriginal Culture] so I wouldn’t really be able to say.*
 Interviewer: *Can you tell me why you weren’t involved?*
 ‘Annabelle’: *At that time I was not interested in it. I was mad at my family and blamed them for everything. And took it out on myself.*

Classroom based IK-SEL can be a component of healing and reconciliation and Educators must expect some students to embrace it while others refuse it. There are many factors to consider when trying determining why refusal occurs including cultural safety, student readiness, the skill of the Educator, and the activity itself. In some cases, it could also indicate the level acculturation and internalized oppression felt by students and their families.

My grandma always wanted us to learn our language and I didn’t really want to... (Faith).

I don’t know much about the Native traditions, other than the general things we’ve learned in school. Last semester, I took a course and we went over what happened in the residential schools and that actually helped me see a lot of the problems that are present with a lot of the Aboriginals. The whole process of the residential schools completely messed up parents and how to parent. That’s where a lot of addictions came from and the abuse aspect, too. That’s also built up from that. No change really happening throughout the generations kind of, it’s sad for me to look at it and look at myself being a full-status Native and doing as good as I do while there are still so many that are disadvantaged (Dominic).

Essential Components of Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning

Essential components to be included in the delivery of IK-SEL are Indigenous values; walking in two worlds; historic trauma; and relational connectedness. The four essential components of IK-SEL are represented in Figure 5 below. Each component held a significant place in KASIS participant experiences and if IK-SEL is to be responsive to student need and local issues, these elements need to be included.

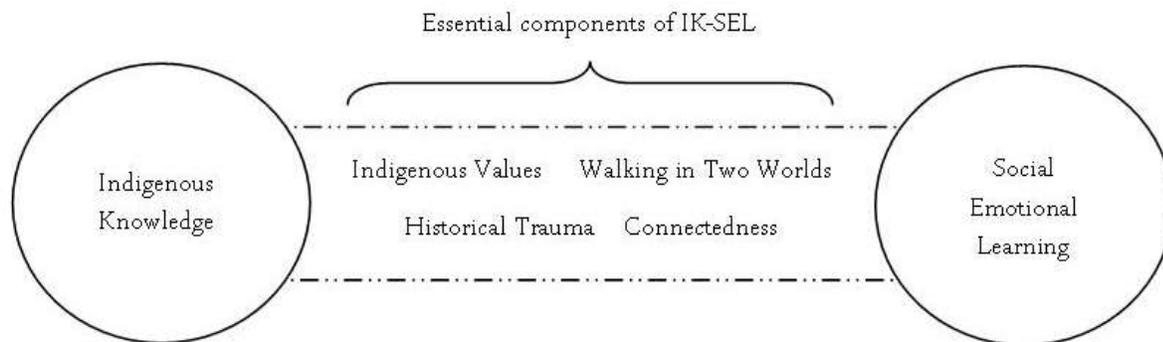


Figure 5. Four essential components of IK-SEL.

Indigenous Values

In Lee Brown's PhD dissertation titled *Making the Classroom a Healthy Place: The Development of Affective Competency in Aboriginal Pedagogy* he explains that emotional competency in Aboriginal pedagogy is taught through values (2005). He goes on to say that the process of decolonizing education happens in part through the assertion of Indigenous values.

Brown describes affective competency in Aboriginal pedagogy as involving:

1. The recognition of traditional Aboriginal value systems as an essential component of education,
2. recognizing and incorporating the student's value system into curricula,
3. allowing emotions to be "expressed and enthusiastically incorporated into the life of the school and the everyday activities in the classroom (pg. 36)"

KASIS participants identified *IK-SEL* as having the traditional values and beliefs of Indigenous peoples taught in School District No. 57 classrooms. Furthermore, the articulation of Indigenous values and beliefs, and the process of teaching them in classrooms is to be guided by Elders, traditional knowledge holders, Aboriginal educators and Indigenous families connected to School District No. 57. Teaching culture based values and knowledge in appropriate ways

involves cultural competency and a thorough understanding of cultural protocols. Locating oneself within cultural teachings (also referred to as positionality), recognizing the diversity of Aboriginal Nations and that values systems differ between them are important considerations.

In effort to articulate the Indigenous values of KASIS participants the model below has been created using concentric circles. At the center, or core of the model is respect, a value common to all participants. The lines of the circle are strings of words that describe what is treasured by participants; between the lines are words that summarize themes in participant values.

Interviewer: *What was it like to be connected?*
 ‘Rebecca’: *It was really nice. Everybody knew what it was like to be Aboriginal. There was no trying to explain things, what this word meant.*
 Interviewer: *So you connect in a different way with kids in your school who are Aboriginal than you would with non-Aboriginal kids, is that fair to say?*
 ‘Rebecca’: *Yeah*

In a recent report titled *Aboriginal Perspectives on Social-Emotional Competence in Early Childhood*, the authors suggest that Aboriginal children require an additional set of social emotional competencies to navigate walking in two worlds (Tremblay et. al., 2013). They state that:

...due to colonization, Aboriginal children develop within multiple contexts in Canada (i.e., urban, rural, on-reserve, traditional, and non-traditional) that may, at times, be incongruent with one another. As a result, Aboriginal children and youth may receive and have difficulty reconciling contradictory information about who they are, and how they fit into their heritage culture, and the dominant culture, as well as the meanings associated with being a visible minority (Tremblay et.al. 2013, p. 1).

The Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning put forward that having an accurate self-perception and sense of identity increases social emotional competency (CASEL, 2013). A key informant in this study critiques the attempt to provide Indigenous students opportunities to learn this competency by saying:

...we haven't taught them to function in either world, and there's two worlds that they live in. And they got to learn how to do both. They've got to learn how to be centred as an Aboriginal male or female. And also earn a living in this culture that's, that's here. And our system doesn't do a very good job at either one (Wolf on a Mountain).

In addition to walking in two worlds, there is a link for KASIS participants between transitions, supportive peer and adult relationships, and academic success. It is apparent from this research that the more support a child or youth has during periods of transitions, the better their educational outcomes will be. Transitions are involved with small changes like high school

students moving between classrooms during breaks, or elementary students coming back into the classroom after recess or lunch. Beginning a new course, starting a semester, meeting a new teacher or support person, beginning or ending a grade, or taking seasonal breaks are all larger transitions with greater impact on students. Moving homes, communities, and schools; changing family composition after death, divorce, separation or other disconnection are big transitions that require competency to navigate.

KASIS participants have experienced a large number of changes including moving between, rural, reserve and urban centres to access schools, jobs and opportunities. Adverse experiences, poverty or having multiple caregivers (Foster care) steeply increases the number of transitions a child or youth experience. These types of transitions are in addition to typical school transitions which alone, can cause stress, anxiety and uncertainty. Students whose lives are at the intersection of multiple school and life transitions will benefit from having personal competency in managing transitions. Supportive adult relationships are helpful, as is information for parents and caregivers on how to help children move through change. Equipping educational support staff with the skills and resources required to aid students and families through times of change is responsive, informed practice.

Relational Connectedness

A positive supportive relationship with peers, families, Elders, teachers and support staff is integral to school success. Among KASIS participants, many related their success to being loved and cared for by at least one person they felt attached to. Connectedness is a protective factor and for people who have experienced multiple disconnections, it is healing and stabilizing to maintain, form, and repair bonds.

Disconnecting Indigenous People from their communities, families, culture and identity

was a colonial tactic used to assimilate everyone into dominant society. In the apology to former students of Indian residential schools from the Government of Canada, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said this:

Two primary objectives of the residential school system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child.” Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country (2008).

It cannot be stressed enough, that schools and staff form meaningful, authentic relationships to Indigenous culture, communities, families, and students. Forming attachments of care and reconciliation supports students and moves non-Indigenous staff into greater understanding of the Indigenous student experience. It also opens a door to the inclusion of Aboriginal pedagogies in teaching and learning.

Equally important to school success for Indigenous students is positive peer and family connection. Families were the first site of colonial oppression and working to restore family connectedness on as many fronts as possible is critical. Peer relationships are almost as important to students as are their families. When KASIS participants shared the most important things in their lives, families came first, and peers, second. With this understanding, schools are in the perfect position for intensive social emotional learning that builds competency in peer connectedness.

Self-Management is another competency that speaks to connectedness, in terms of being connected to, and taking care of one’s self. Student development of this competency will help students to be organized, disciplined, motivated and capable of handling stress. It also includes managing time, getting enough sleep, keeping up with school workloads and completing

assignments. Handling expectations such as graduating, doing well, and behaving appropriately are also self-management challenges.

Adverse Experiences & Historic Trauma

Historic trauma can be referred to as intergenerational trauma or soul wound (Duran, E, 2006). In their report prepared for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski describe historic trauma as:

...a cluster of traumatic events and as a disease itself. Hidden collective memories of this trauma, or a collective non-remembering, is passed from generation to generation, as are the maladaptive social and behavioural patterns that are symptoms of many social disorders caused by historic trauma. There is no “single” historic trauma response; rather, there are different ...clusters of symptoms. (2004)

The Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project conducted by Malatest & Associates in 2007 for School District No. 57 showed the need to improve school treatment of topics such as physical abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse (pg. 30). The current study also found that students need more support to prevent, understand and heal from abuse and adverse experiences. Amongst KASIS participants, there are many stories of harm and suffering. Hardships faced by students and families fill a spectrum of offense and injury, all of which can be linked to historic trauma.

Many Aboriginal children come from vulnerable families with multiple generation trauma issues. Colonization led to an incredibly difficult status issue that will take more generations to erase. Whole families need to heal to help the children develop in the best possible way. Fetal alcohol syndrome, foster care, inappropriate modelling, substance abuse, poverty, unemployment, violence and other issues take their toll on vulnerable families (Josie).

Resiliency is the foundation on which adversity is managed, contained and overcome. Clinical psychologist Eduardo Duran says that “all of what we see or experience as reality has a dual nature. It follows that the greater the suffering, the greater the capacity to heal...” (2006,

pg. 111). Indigenous students and families have overcome many injustices and continue to do so. One KASIS participant talked about coping strategies he uses to push away intrusive thoughts he experiences:

Just keep yourself distracted even though it's easier said than done. I was going to the gym for four months and fifteen days ... now it's out of my head. I'm giving back to the community... going to the gym; that kept it out of my head (David Nolan).

It is not expected that Educators provide students and families a pathway to healing from historic trauma, or for schools to be solely responsible for managing affect in students. There are however, ways that schools and Educators can be responsive to student need, and understanding the magnitude of suffering that has occurred is a good place to begin.

Just sit there and listen. Don't say anything back. Don't judge me. Don't give me weird looks. Don't do anything. Just listen. I just need to sit there and talk and then I should be okay (Annabelle).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has published many accounts of Residential School experiences that every Canadian should read (2015b). Indigenous students in School District No 57 are involved in the legacy of those experiences and in their lives, it appears in many forms including addiction; family disconnection and dysfunction; injury; abuse; violence; neglect; exploitation; poverty; stress; sickness; suicide and self-harm; and criminal behaviour. Trauma and poverty informed practice, cultural competency, and relational learning are all required to meet the educational needs of Indigenous students and any student who is living with the effects of trauma.

As I've grown within these past couple years, growing up, with all the things that have happened in my childhood, I've never talked to anyone about that. I've kept a lot of stuff inside me, and growing up with the high school; too, it's had an effect there. I used to not be at school for two months at a time (Dominic).

I would say we've had a hard life. I've had a hard life ever since I can remember. I've been abused quite a bit. Not by my family but from other people. My mom's had a hard life because she's had to go through residential school (Katherine).

In response to understanding how historical trauma impacts students and the magnitude in which it does, it is recommended that Educators develop cultural competency and trauma and informed practice.

Factor Three: Reconciliation

One hundred years from now, our children's children and their children must know and still remember this history, because they will inherit from us the responsibility of ensuring that it never happens again (TRC 2015c).

Reconciliation is an ongoing process that in the context of School District No. 57, requires commitment from all those affected by the legacy of colonization and residential schools (TRC, 2015c). This includes former Indian residential school students, their families, communities, School District No. 57 staff students and their families, BC's Ministry of Education, and all people in Prince George, British Columbia and Canada. *We're All In This Together* has deeper meaning when considered through the lens of reconciliation. Not only is collective and individual effort required to reduce the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners, it is also required to establish and maintain respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace and prosperity on these lands we now share (TRC, 2015c).

The previous sections in this report have described how cultural safety and *Indigenous knowledge and Social Emotional Learning* are factors in Aboriginal student success. The factor of reconciliation takes aim at *why*. Residential schools are considered to have one of the most far-reaching and devastating legacies on the educational and economic success of Aboriginal people (TRC, 2015c). In effort to correct this legacy, this section presents stepping stones that can be put in place to forward the process of reconciliation.

Experiences with Residential School

Reflecting on where we have been and where we want to go in education allows us to cultivate creativity and build from the knowledge of our collective past. It also motivates us to speak with care and proceed with caution so the history of dominance and oppression is not repeated. Participating in School District No. 57 classrooms are students who are the first in three and sometimes four family generations to not attend a residential school. Parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, great grandparents and extended relatives of current School District No. 57 students went to residential schools. The children of residential school survivors and all students in schools today, in one way or another, have been impacted by residential school. There is no denying that the legacy of residential school directly affects the lives of many. The wary relief that children today won't be removed from the family home and taken to a residential school has an uneasy palpation. Comments such as this made by a School District No. 57 high school student illustrate the real and ongoing psychological impact:

Racial separation would cause big problems and we think about the possibility of this happening again (Unknown).

In some families, survivors share stories with one another about their residential school experiences. In other families, there may be no discussion at all about what residential school was like for them, or why they existed in the first place. KASIS participant 'Josh' is unsure who in his family went to Residential school and who did not:

I'm not too sure but I think my dad went to the school, I don't think it's called residential school, but it's like residential school. I'm not sure about my mom. But my dad, I think. I'm not sure. My grandfather's been to residential school. I'm not sure about my grandmother (Josh).

'Joe Ridel's' Grandmother told him often how one of her sisters didn't recognize her after she came home from residential school.

She didn't know who she was. She walked up to her and said, "Is mom inside?" and my auntie said, "No. This isn't your house. I don't know you" (Joe Ridel).

'Autumn' understands how her Grandfather's time at residential school taught him how to work hard, but didn't teach him the skills and values he needed to raise a family:

... they never learned stuff like that. They learned how to clean (Autumn).

Many of 'Katherine's' family members went to residential school as did most people in her home community:

All the Elders ... they all went to residential school. Almost everyone... went to residential school (Katherine).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established from the efforts of Residential school survivors who brought the truth about the treatment of children at the schools into public awareness (TRC, 2015c). Amongst the Calls to Action put forward by the TRC to amend the legacies of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation is a call for K-12 curriculum on residential schools.

62. i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students (TRC, 2015a).

If enacted, young people like 'Joe Ridel', 'Autumn', 'Katherine', and 'Josh' will have the opportunity for greater insight into their family history and possibly reconciling how residential school has impacted their life. Equally as important, is that all people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, know and understand the history, and commit to the ongoing process of reconciliation by building new and respectful relationships.

Aboriginal Education

Aboriginal Education makes school fun for us and lets us learn new things; it helps us find our voice; makes space for us, and keep our relationships strong. (Compilation of student voices from the My Voice Survey)

The context and content of education for Indigenous students has changed for the better since residential schools have closed and because many people have fought to change oppressive colonial educational practices. Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, said that “it was the education system that created the problem, and it’s the education system that will get us away from it”. With the same tone, the TRC writes that “Overcoming this legacy will require an Aboriginal Education system that meets the needs of Aboriginal students and respects Aboriginal parents, families and culture” (2015c). Today, Aboriginal Education means more than educating Indigenous students and somewhat ironically, it is charged with the task of advocating for the decolonization of education practises to the benefit of Indigenous students and Canadian society. Aboriginal Education as described by the Board of Education School District No. 57 policy 1230 is:

The incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives and philosophies in all curricular areas to inform all students of the past and contemporary lifestyles, indigenous knowledge and histories of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Aboriginal Education encompasses the rich traditions and values of the various Aboriginal people and applies those concepts to relevant issues facing Aboriginal children and youth today, throughout curriculum and cultural activities in positive, student-centered experiences (2011).

Curriculum and Aboriginal Education

KASIS participants believe that cultural competency can be effectively developed through education and that the process of reconciliation can be pursued in part, through education. Great enthusiasm exists for the potential of education to be the agent of change. Hope and expectation mingle together calling out for a future where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people graduate from high school at the same rate, have equitable opportunities for economic success and post-secondary achievement; and live with the same health and dignity.

These sentiments are echoed by Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. As previously mentioned the TRC has forwarded a Call to Action upon Federal and Provincial governments to establish mandatory K-12 curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada. In addition, the TRC also calls for a commitment to Aboriginal education issues including:

- 10. iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula
- 10. iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
- 63. i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- 63. ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- 63. iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.
- 63. iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above (TRC, 2015a).

The topic of Indigenous focused curriculum garnered generous response from KASIS participants. Substantial feedback was received regarding curriculum content, ways to deliver and develop Aboriginal curriculum, and issues involved with implementation. It is perceived by KASIS participants that further developing and implementing Aboriginal focused curriculum will improve two things; Indigenous students' capacity to successfully walk in two worlds, and all students' intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

The points presented below are placed in order of the amount of attention they received by KASIS participants. Items included as *1a* and *1b* were talked about the most, and in that, may be interpreted as having the highest priority, or the greatest opportunity for educational equity.

- 1a. Include Aboriginal content in all curriculum subject areas. Indigenous content includes but is not limited to:

- Indigenous peoples historic and contemporary contributions to Canada and the world
 - Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history
 - The history and legacy of residential school
 - Art and material culture
 - Language
 - Historic and contemporary land use; current issues
 - Cosmology
 - Social organization and governance
- 1b. Provide greater access to established First Peoples curriculum such as English First Peoples, First Peoples Math and First Nation's Studies
- 2a. Use Aboriginal pedagogies that include First Peoples Principles of Learning (FNESC, 2008) (see Appendix C) and:
- Experiential, project based learning
 - Land based learning
 - Orality
 - Metaphor
 - Non-Interference
 - Local perspectives and context
- 3a. Support teacher delivery of Indigenous curriculum with funding, resources, mentorship and professional development as needed
- 3b. Regularly assess or evaluate Indigenous curriculum for projected learning outcomes

- 4a. Mandatory K-12 Indigenous curriculum
- With ongoing advocacy from School District No. 57 administration and BC's Ministry of Education,
 - and accountability for Aboriginal Education carried by all staff in School District No. 57.
- 5a. Provide Indigenous language courses to students
- 5b. Integrate Indigenous Knowledge and social emotional learning (IK-SEL) into all subject areas

Other important points to consider:

- Include Indigenous families, educators and the extended community in curriculum development and delivery
- Maintain cost effectiveness with Indigenous curriculum
- Strengthen literacy and numeracy outcomes with Indigenous curriculum
- Allow students extended time to connect with Indigenous Elders, presenters and role models
- Acknowledge and make space for student's social emotional response to learning the historical truths of Indigenous peoples.

Aboriginal Education Department Services

School District No. 57's Aboriginal Education Department includes over one hundred itinerant and school based staff members whose purpose is to increase educational equity for Indigenous learners by providing enhanced culture, language and support services (2011).

Aboriginal Education Department services aim to close the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners by "infusing Aboriginal perspectives across the curriculum for all

learners as well as by providing direct wrap-around supports to enhance the overall achievement of Aboriginal students throughout School District No. 57” (Aboriginal Education Worker Handbook, 2014. p.15).

The KASIS study found that Aboriginal students and families place a great amount of expectation on the Aboriginal Education Department to advance reconciliation. KASIS participants praise the efforts that have been made while recognizing there is still much work to be done. The following are recommendations put forward by participants to improve Aboriginal Education Department Services:

1. Engage Aboriginal parents in Aboriginal Education Department services
2. Increase transparency through communication with students, staff and families
3. Collaborate with students to identify student need and responsive programming

Talk to them. Find out what is important to them (Parent Participant).

4. Provide best practices with qualified staff, authentic Aboriginal voices and resources
5. Provide more academic support to students
6. Assess the benefit of Aboriginal Education Department services against the educational outcomes of students

We need feedback and evaluation of services so that we know what working and what is not. (Three Angels)

7. Reduce bureaucratic barriers from implementing initiatives in Aboriginal Education.

I think there have been great initiatives... Initiatives get shut down at a higher level and we never get a real answer as to why that can't happen. A lot of people put work and effort into that and, when that effort doesn't get rewarded, people tend to step away and not want to do it again... (Hal Jordan)

It should be noted that some of the KASIS participant recommendations for improving Aboriginal Education Department service align with Calls to Action put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, in particular:

10. v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
10. vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children (TRC, 2015a)

Elders

...they are the true knowledge holders of traditional culture. (KASIS Participant)

Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers hold an integral role in reconciliation as they have long since been the people who deal with conflicts and harm in their communities (TRC, 2015c). Elders are the traditional teachers of culture and language who maintain clan and nation organization, language transmission, community and family values, and the exchange of practical knowledge (TRC, 2015c). By retelling oral histories and demonstrating how to engage in cultural practices that have ensured the survival of First Nations communities for time immemorial; Elders maintain and restore balance and harmony. While School District No. 57 moves towards reconciliation it is imperative to have Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders guide the process and keep it on track.

KASIS participants explain that Elder presence in schools and classrooms brings out the best in students by connecting them to their tribal identities. Their presence encourages Indigenous students to express and share their tribal knowledge which consequentially, increases the feeling of cultural safety. It is recommended by KASIS participants that schools:

- Include Elders as regular ongoing contributors to the school culture

- Consider Elders as integral contributors to Indigenous curriculum and Aboriginal Education Department services.

In School District No. 57 the Indigenous Elders Advisory Council meets regularly:

“Members share wisdom, knowledge and ancestral teachings with members of School District No. 57 in order to achieve cultural equity in education for Indigenous students, families, staff and the community” (SD57, 2014). KASIS participants recognized the benefit of Elders sharing ancestral knowledge in schools as including an increase in:

- student self-regulation and concentration
- student motivation to learn
- sense of knowing and being known (connection)
- social awareness and perspective taking

External Alliances

Alliances with First Nation Bands, community based organizations, people and initiatives are among the aspects identified as being important to reconciliation and Aboriginal student success in School District No. 57. External alliances address the legacy of colonization by working collectively on closing the gap in school, health and economic outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members. Much effort by many people is needed to establish and maintain respectful relationships that can transform the future for Indigenous people and Canadian society. The benefit of external alliances as indicated by KASIS participants should include:

- Bringing all people together to learn, share and celebrate Indigenous culture history and language
- Connecting recognized Indigenous leaders, mentors, Elders and traditional knowledge holders with classrooms and students

- Bridging school and community services for the benefit of students
- Providing enhanced learning opportunities, services and support for students and families when they're needed
- Creating a broad scale community of learners that understands Indigenous history and respects Indigenous culture and language.

Summary

Students, teachers, families, school administrators, staffs, trustees and community members share a common Canadian history - an Aboriginal history. The harms and injustices experienced by Indigenous people at the hands of settler colonialists are part of our collective past. To move beyond education practices that maintain the legacy of colonialism we must collectively reform education. As Battiste (2008) states, "This struggle demands an urgent agenda to effect educational reform...and to protect and enhance Indigenous heritage and livelihood damaged by colonial assimilation projects, neglect, diminishment, and racism" (p.85). Making strides toward the decolonization of education in School District No. 57 we can do three things:

1. Improve the cultural safety of Indigenous students by increasing the cultural competency of School District staff and eliminating culturally un-safe experiences including racism, bullying, violence, school push out and/or push through.
2. Develop acquire and implement *Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning* (IK-SEL) resources and/or programs for all grades and ages that include Indigenous values and build competency in relational connectedness, walking in two worlds, and managing or understanding the effects of adverse experiences and historic trauma.
3. Support the process of reconciliation by incorporating Indigenous perspectives and philosophies in all curricular areas, improving Aboriginal Education Department services, including Elders in schools and classrooms, and engaging with beneficial external alliances.

There are many creative, meaningful and culturally appropriate strategies that aim to narrow the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, of which, three

have been presented here. The three factors in Aboriginal student success derived from this study can be considered three of many. Embedded in research conversations that took place in this project were many examples of what is already being done to improve Indigenous students' experience of success in School District No. 57. Informing existing decolonizing practices with the three factors presented can improve, enhance or validate action for educational equity.

Space for Indigenous knowledge needs to be made in every school and classroom in School District No. 57 (Battiste, 2008); increasing the cultural competency of staff, students and parents will help carve out that space. As Indigenous knowledge is accepted and established as an integral component to children's education, acts of reconciliation will move us towards new relationships of trust, respect, equity and understanding. The work of decolonization and reconciliation is collective; we must support one another along the way, seek guidance, be patient, and share our experiences; we're all in this together.

“Decolonizing perspectives rooted in Indigenous knowledges are one way to bring about greater success for Aboriginal students while preserving cultural identity Indigenous languages” (Munroe, Borden, Orr, Toney and Meader, 2013)

Appendix A

Summary of recommendations from School District No. 57 Aboriginal Education Department research projects 1995-2015.

Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project, 1995	Aboriginal Education Needs Assessment Project, 2007
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of Native support staff to be consistent with students/support ratios in other comparable districts, • Provision of greater Aboriginal awareness training for SD57 staff, • Hiring of an Aboriginal Education Coordinator in the District, • Development and inclusion of Aboriginal curriculum and learning styles in SD57 schools, • Better communication with the Aboriginal community to highlight district activities that support Aboriginal education in district schools, • Establishment of additional support mechanisms (tutorial service, home care workers) to address Aboriginal student and parent needs, • Need for the Aboriginal community to work more closely with district schools to ensure that the needs of Aboriginal community are effectively “championed” in SD57 schools. <p>(Malatest, 1995)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the proportion of Aboriginal educators and support staff in Prince George schools, • Clarification of the role of Aboriginal support staff, • Promotion of Aboriginal teaching techniques to school instructional staff, • Establishment of a second or assistant Aboriginal education coordinator position, • Consider partnering with Aboriginal community to provide a tutorial program, • Enhance Aboriginal content in Prince George school curriculum. • Evaluate the feasibility of an Aboriginal language program(s), • Increase cultural awareness/orientation for school district staff • Utilize Aboriginal individuals as a resource for schools and students, • Utilize non-traditional communication vehicles between parents and teachers, • Encourage Aboriginal participation in school district decision making, • Need for more timely data collection, • Establishment of short and long term goals. <p>(Malatest, 2005)</p>

<p>Aboriginal Education Task Force, 2008</p>	<p>We're all in this together: Keeping Aboriginal student in school (KASIS), 2015</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate statement of intent with respect to Aboriginal education in the district, • Establish an Aboriginal Education Policy, • Review, goals, mandate, reporting relationship and membership requirements of the Aboriginal Education Board, and make recommendation for it to become stronger, more effective and a more representative advocacy group for Aboriginal students, • Appoint a district principal responsible for Aboriginal Education, • Enter into a formal Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, • Implement a strategic plan to recruit, select, hire and provide ongoing training for greater numbers of support staff, teachers, and administrators of Aboriginal heritage, • Clarify the roles, responsibilities and working relationships of Aboriginal support staff, • Develop and implement a strategic plan to address issues concerning Aboriginal learners in the areas of curriculum development, instructional practice and evaluation, • Investigate what is perceived by many in the Aboriginal community to be an overrepresentation of Aboriginal students who have formal Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) and/or are enrolled in English as a Second Dialect (ESD) programs, • Enter into immediate community consultations with the intent of designating an existing elementary school as an Aboriginal K-7 choice elementary school, • Implement a feasibility study for the creation of an Aboriginal choice secondary program. <p>(AETF, 2008)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the cultural safety of Indigenous students by increasing the cultural competency of School District staff and eliminating culturally un-safe experiences including racism, bullying, violence, school push out and/or push through. • Develop, acquire and implement Indigenous Knowledge and Social Emotional Learning (IK-SEL) resources and/or programs for all grades and ages that include Indigenous values and builds student competency in relational connectedness, walking in two worlds, and managing or understanding the effects of adverse experiences and historic trauma. • Support the process of reconciliation and the decolonization of education by incorporating Indigenous perspectives and philosophies in all curricular areas, improving Aboriginal Education Department services, including Elders in schools and classrooms, and engaging with beneficial external alliances.

Appendix B

A Summary of select wise practices in Canada as prepared by Toulouse, P. for the Canadian Teachers Federation (2013). This figure summaries factors identified as contributing to Indigenous student success by four Canadian studies.

<p>Sharing our Success: Ten Cases in Aboriginal Schooling</p>	<p>Creating Conditions for FNMI Success in Somcoe County</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership and governance • High expectation for students • Focus on academic Achievement • Welcoming education climates • Respect for local indigenous cultures • Quality professional development • Provision of wide range of programs/services <p>(Bell, Anderson, Fortin, Ottman, Rose, Simard & Spencer, 2004)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful and raised profile of Indigenous students • Addressing academic and professional knowledge gaps • Connections with communities • Involvement of Indigenous child & youth workers • Hiring of specialized Indigenous resource teachers • Culturally appropriate curriculum and spaces • Awareness and promotion of Indigenous protocols. <p>(Haig-Brown Research & Consulting, 2009)</p>
<p>The Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative (MAEI)</p>	<p>Beyond Shadows: First Nations, Metis and Inuit Student Success</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of promising practices in education • Models schools research and projects • Valuing traditional knowledge and self-determination • Youth entrepreneurship programs with businesses • Accounting and banking mentorships • Facilitating diverse connections and collaborations. <p>(MAEI, 2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadows of colonial effects • Social justice and inter-agency allies • Honouring Indigenous contributions • Building relationships with Indigenous peoples • Teacher knowledge and Indigenous inclusion • Indigenous education is Canadian education • Sharing our gifts: truth and humour <p>(Toulouse, 2013)</p>

Appendix C

The First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) identify common values and perspectives about education held by First People in British Columbia. The figure below shows each of the nine principles as articulated by the First Nations Education Steering Committee and the BC Ministry of Education (2008).

First Peoples Principles of Learning

First identified in relation to English 12 First Peoples, the following First Peoples Principles of Learning generally reflect First Peoples pedagogy.

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.

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