

The Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

Helping learners cross the stage with dignity, purpose and options

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“If we are going to be professional and thoughtful teachers, then we have to challenge and question, ‘How do we do this better for kids?’ In our discussions we’ve also come to understand that what is good for Aboriginal students is good for everyone.....but it took all of us challenging the status quo to finally figure it out.” - Network member

“AESN gave me the vehicle and place to do the work that was near and dear to my heart. It kept me going. You need a place to be validated where you work...I am motivated because AESN validates me in a way that I haven’t been validated in my own district.” - Network member

“The Network has given people permission to learn about Aboriginal education; it wasn’t in our sight lines prior to this.” Network member

This year, the federal government commissioned a research study through AANDC (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada) to assess the impact of the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network. These quotes came from teachers who were interviewed as part of the study, and capture much of the essence of what the AESN has been working on for the past four years. The final report will be released very soon.

The study concludes with the observation that AESN has had significant transformational impact on schools, teachers and districts around the province – and that there is still a lot of work to be done before we realize the network goal of *EVERY learner crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options* – and realize the dream of high quality and high equity learning experiences for every learner in BC.

The AESN is very pleased that there are many opportunities for schools, regardless of where they are in BC, to become involved in networked inquiries for 2013-2014 starting right away. An AESN seminar on May 5, 2013 at SFU Harbourside will feature many examples of transformative inquiry from the AESN and perspectives from a number of highly respected Aboriginal leaders.

At the seminar, we will also be launching two new initiatives for schools to consider for the upcoming year. First, as a result of financial support from the Vancouver Foundation, Debbie Koehn will be taking the lead on developing inquiries focused on Aboriginal understandings at the level of individual students. Second, the Irving K. Barber foundation at UBC is providing support for school teams who will focus their inquiries on transitions for Aboriginal learners – from elementary to secondary school and from secondary to post-secondary. ‘Dignity, purpose and options’ at transition points are the heart of this work. For seminar registration information, please click [here](#).

All schools are always invited to pursue questions connected to making the goals of the local [Enhancement Agreements](#) come alive in classrooms. This has been the basis for AESN since its inception. The AESN is very pleased that, as a result of the sales of the book, “Spirals of Inquiry: for Equity and Quality,” and with recent funding support from the Ministry of Education, all schools tackling important questions connected to Aboriginal learners and Aboriginal understandings will receive recognition grants at the conclusion of their case studies. Stay tuned to the Networks of Inquiry and Innovation website (www.noii.ca), which is home to the AESN, for additional information about how to become involved.

The AESN is grateful to DASH for their continuing partnership around inquiry, innovative practice and healthy living. The AESN is a good example of what can happen when people of goodwill come together to tackle challenging issues in a spirit of inquiry.