



**Kootenay Lake School District**

**Aboriginal Education  
Enhancement  
Agreement**

**“Our children, our focus”**

**2014-2019**



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# Acknowledgements

We acknowledge, respect, and honor the First Nations in whose traditional territories the Kootenay Lake School District operates and all Aboriginal people residing within the boundaries of School District #8.



We would like to thank all of the members of the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder's Council, our students, community members, and School District #8 staff for contributing to the development of this Enhancement Agreement.

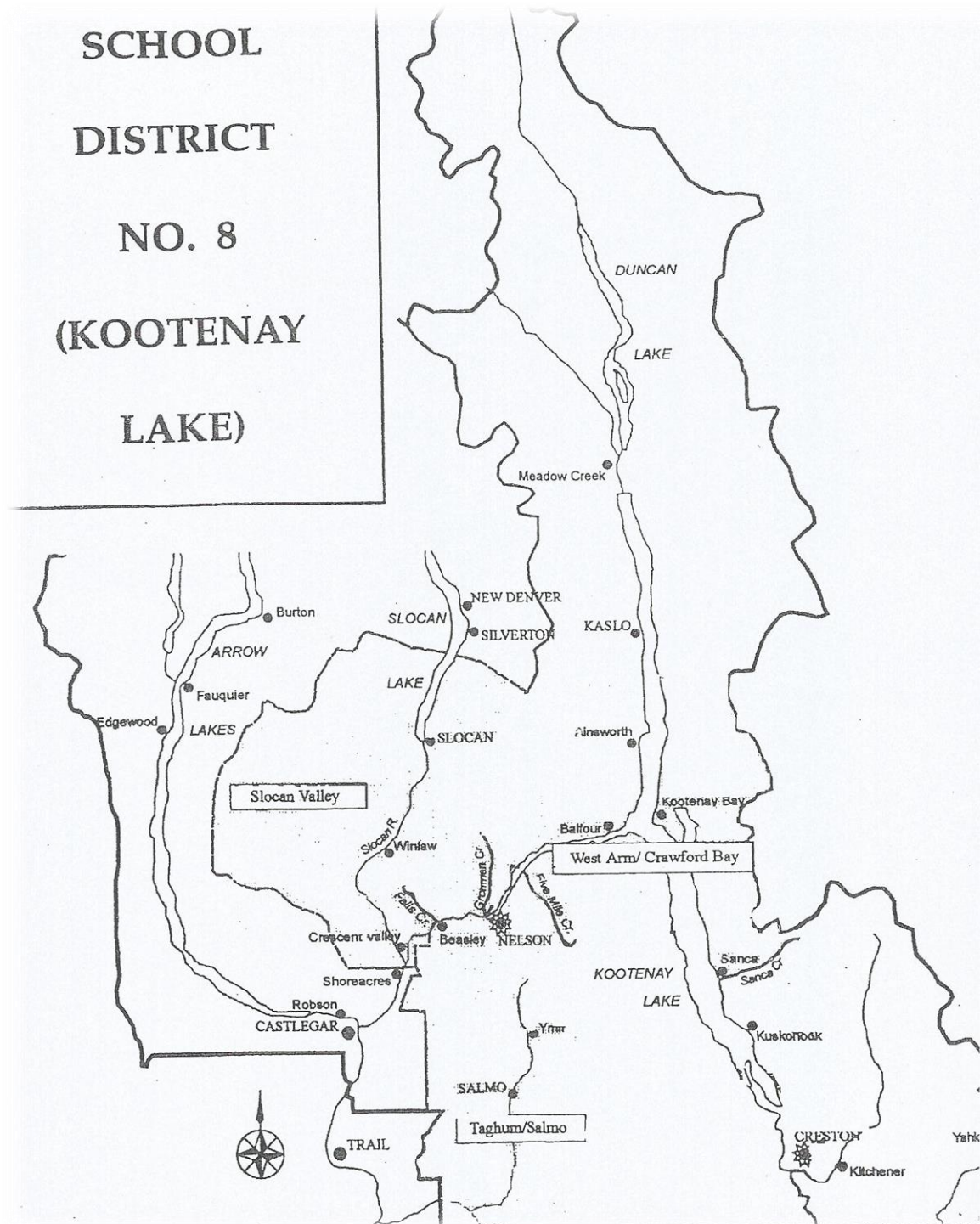
# Purpose

The overall purpose of this Enhancement Agreement is to enhance the success of our Aboriginal students and to raise the awareness of all members of the School District #8 community to Aboriginal culture, tradition, and issues.



# Our School District

School District #8 (Kootenay Lake) covers a wide geographical area and serves numerous communities within the East and West Kootenay region of British Columbia.





School District #8 is comprised of 6 Families of Schools:

- Crawford Bay, a small community on the east shore of Kootenay Lake
- North Kootenay Lake, comprised of Ainsworth, Kaslo, Meadow Creek and areas north
- Salmo, a small town south of Nelson
- Slocan Valley, comprised of the communities of South Slocan, Slocan, and Winlaw
- Nelson
- Creston and Yahk

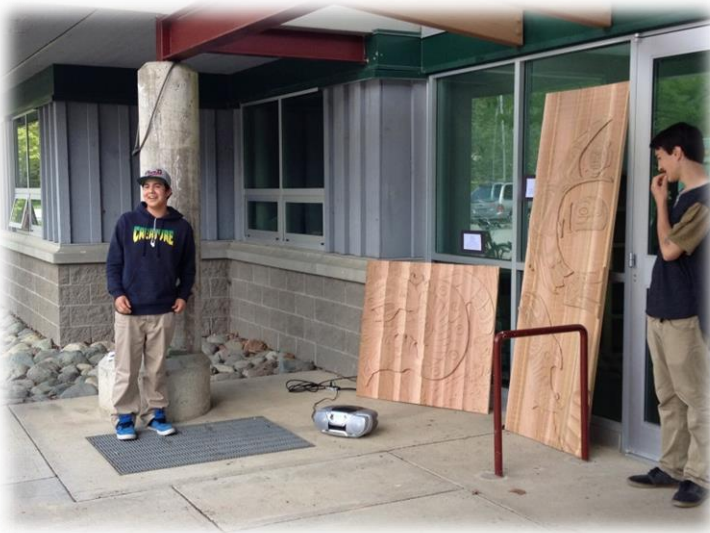
Facts about School District #8:

- The enrolment in School District #8 is approximately 4700 students and has shown steady decline over the past several years
- There are 24 schools in the district, organized in a variety of configurations, including:
  - 13 elementary schools
  - 1 middle school
  - 1 K-10 school
  - 4 secondary schools
  - 2 K-12 schools
  - Homelinks, a supported Home Learning Program serving three sites (Creston, Nelson and Kaslo)
  - DESK (Distance Education School of the Kootenays)
  - Wildflower, a grades 1-9 program that multi-ages by choice (five classes grades 1-6, one class grades 6 -9)



# Our Aboriginal Students

- Approximately 15% of our students have Aboriginal heritage (Status/Non-Status First Nations, Métis, and Inuit)
- Many students are Métis and others are from various Aboriginal nations across Canada
- There is one band in the district, the Lower Kootenay Band of the Ktunaxa Nation, just south of Creston



# Our Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder's Council

- Meets a minimum of 4 times per year (twice in Nelson, twice in Creston)
- Comprised of: Elders, representatives from Lower Kootenay Band and Metis Nation, Director of Innovative Learning Services, Aboriginal Education Coordinator, Board of Education Trustee, Aboriginal Youth Workers and Family Liaisons, teachers, principals, Aboriginal Students and parents
- The first Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement was signed on June 21, 2008
- Our Local Education Agreement with the Lower Kootenay Band was renewed on June 9, 2009
- We re-structured our advisory committee in 2009, turning it into an Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder's Council to honour the wisdom and council of Elders from our Aboriginal communities
- Our motto and driving force is: "Our children, our focus"





# Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement Process

We began the process of developing our second Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement in the fall of 2012. Our main goal was to engage as many Aboriginal voices as possible and to make space for all voices to be heard equally. We proceeded under the following principles:

- The focus would be on the success of our children – “Our children, our focus”
- All voices throughout the district would be given equal weight
- The new Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement would be co-created by the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder’s Council and from the voices from our community consultations, our Elders, and our youth

Our process was as follows:

- 1) In the fall of 2012, the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder’s Council developed the process for consultation.
- 2) An external facilitator with Aboriginal heritage was hired to facilitate the process; however, the facilitator withdrew and Andy Leathwood and Danica Lee completed these responsibilities.
- 3) Community meetings were held in the following communities:
  - a. Creston (2 meetings, one in Creston proper, and one at the Lower Kootenay Band Complex)
  - b. Nelson (including Salmo)
  - c. Kaslo (including Crawford Bay and Meadow Creek)
  - d. South Slocan
- 4) Discussion focused around what success looks like for our Aboriginal students, what strengths were seen in the current EA, and what possible changes could we make. All sessions were well attended and had a mix of parents, community members, educators, students, and extended family

- 5) Round table discussions were held with youth in all secondary schools and with our formal Elder's council
- 6) Conversations were held with our principals and vice principals
- 7) A link to the questions was included on our website and individual responses were encouraged.
- 8) A summary of the feedback from all meetings was compiled. The Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder's Council spent 4 meetings refining the information and formatting the new goals, strategies and indicators of success for the new Enhancement Agreement.
- 9) Danica Lee, Aboriginal Education Coordinator, and Andy Leathwood, Director of Innovative Learning Services, compiled all of the feedback and wrote the various drafts of the new agreement.
- 10) Ministry of Education officials were called in to provide feedback at the end of the process.





# Teachings from our first Enhancement Agreement

## *What did we learn from our first Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement?*

- 1) The goals identified in the first agreement were sound and valuable for our students
- 2) The first agreement provided many opportunities for discussion and a good focus for the work of the Aboriginal Education department
- 3) Through this work, overall awareness of Aboriginal education increased
- 4) During the time of the first agreement, Aboriginal academic success improved a great deal as expressed through traditional academic measures
- 5) There were too many strategies to focus on (22 for 3 goals)
- 6) There was no clear form of tracking indicators of success

## *Our new Enhancement Agreement is different in the following ways:*

- 1) We have four goals, all of which come directly from the voices of our Aboriginal community
- 2) We have limited the number of commitments to make it more attainable
- 3) The voice of youth and Elders is much more inherent in the agreement
- 4) The success indicators are closely linked to the strategies

In order to work in a productive and focused way, the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder's Council committed to the following motto:

**“Our children, our focus”**

This is the foundation of all of our work, including the development of our new Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

# Goal One

## *“Enhance the Aboriginal student’s sense of belonging, pride, and identity”*

Rationale: School connectedness and a sense of belonging are crucial ingredients for school success for all students. Aboriginal students must feel welcomed and supported in our schools, and must have a high level of trust for all members of the school community. In all of our conversations, people stressed the importance of students connecting with their personal Aboriginal heritage, customs, and history and for developing a sense of pride in their place as an Aboriginal person.

### Commitments:

1. Establish a visible Aboriginal presence in all schools
2. Continue efforts to Indigenize all curriculum

\*Commitments will be analyzed and reviewed annually and may change over the course of the AEEA to best meet the needs of the students.

### Indicators of success:

1. Track number of schools with designated Aboriginal Education space
2. Track number of schools with visible artifacts (posters, artwork, welcome signs, etc.) of Aboriginal culture displayed in school
3. Track number of schools offering courses with high Aboriginal content (English First Peoples 12, etc.)
4. Track instances of student work on Aboriginal themes displayed in schools
5. Survey of Aboriginal students on connection to culture, sense of belonging, pride, and identity completed annually





# Goal Two

## *“Improve the success of all Aboriginal students”*

Objective: Prepare students for successful transitions

Rationale: Aboriginal parents consistently identified that they want their children to have the same opportunities for future success as other students. In order to do that, Aboriginal students must possess the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the world they enter. Participants in our many conversations did not want to see a focus on university or post-secondary preparation, and much conversation was given to trying to understand what the term “success” meant for Aboriginal people. The consensus was that we needed to come to a common understanding of this (as indicated in the strategies below), but we wanted to honor all pathways – leading to post-secondary of any kind, directly to the world of work, and/or important cultural roles in communities.

### Commitments:

1. Encourage personalized learning through increased staff awareness of diverse learning styles and learning environments for Aboriginal students
2. Host conversations to develop a common understanding of the meaning of success for Aboriginal students



\*Commitments will be analyzed and reviewed annually and may change over the course of the AEEA to best meet the needs of the students.

### Indicators of success:

1. Conversations of Aboriginal student success in each family of schools each year
2. Track celebrations of individual student success
  - Graduation rates
  - Cultural accomplishments
  - Success on provincial exams
  - Rites of passage ceremonies
  - Provincial satisfaction surveys
3. Track degree and frequency of creative learning environments



**Note:** We will continue to track all available measures of Aboriginal student success including FSA results, provincial exam results, graduation and completion rates, etc.



# Goal Three

## ***“Improve connections between Aboriginal students, families, communities and schools”***

Objective: Make schools inviting, safe, and welcoming for Aboriginal parents and families.

*Rationale: Aboriginal parents in some of our conversations indicated they did not always feel welcomed or safe in the schools. Some of this was through direct experience, and some was connected to history and the legacy of residential schools and other challenges faced by them. In areas of our district where there is no reserve, parents felt isolated from other members of the Aboriginal community. Schools reported difficulty in engaging Aboriginal parents in the education of their children. Everyone felt that closer connections and more engagement of Aboriginal students in their education was another crucial criteria for student success.*

### Commitments:

1. Offer opportunities for activities that would engage Aboriginal youth and families, school personnel, and others (ie. Family Nights or school staff cooking meals for families)
2. Ensure that people hired to work directly with Aboriginal students have the appropriate qualifications and experience.
3. Set up a process to engage Aboriginal parents in each family of schools.
4. Encourage Aboriginal parents to join the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder’s Council



\*Commitments will be analyzed and reviewed annually and may change over the course of the AEEA to best meet the needs of the students.

### Indicators of success:

1. Track numbers of who is attending what events and how many activities are offered
2. Chart progress in hiring individuals with appropriate qualifications and Aboriginal heritage
3. Track attendance at parent meetings
4. Parent survey of connections to the school community completed annually
5. Track parent involvement on the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Elder's Council





# Goal Four

## ***“Improve awareness of the history, culture, diversity, and issues related to Aboriginal students”***

Rationale: The increased success of Aboriginal students (based on traditional measures such as completion and provincial exam results) is in part credited to our efforts in improving the awareness of stakeholders around Aboriginal issues. However, there is a clear feeling in our district and the Aboriginal community that this work has to continue, and that all students should be exposed to activities related to the culture and history of Aboriginal people Canada. It is also important for staff to be aware of these issues, and to weave Aboriginal content and understandings into their curriculum.

### Commitments:

1. Encourage whole school and whole class Aboriginal education activities
2. Provide professional development opportunities for all staff to attend
3. Devote one district professional development day to Aboriginal topics once every two years

\*Commitments will be analyzed and reviewed annually and may change over the course of the AEEA to best meet the needs of the students.



### Indicators of success:

1. Track opportunities for professional development for all staff to learn about Aboriginal topics
2. Track opportunities for all students to engage in Aboriginal cultural activities
3. Track the use of Aboriginal Education shared district resources in all schools

## Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement

### School District #8 (Kootenay Lake)

This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement reflects our commitment to work together on the following goals:

1. Enhance the Aboriginal student's sense of belonging, pride, and identity
2. Improve the success of all Aboriginal students
3. Improve connections between Aboriginal students, families, communities and schools
4. Improve awareness of the history, culture, diversity, and issues related to Aboriginal students

***“Our children, our focus”***



Aboriginal Education Enhancements Branch  
Ministry of Education, British Columbia



Jason Louie, Chief  
Lower Kootenay Band



Bob Adams, President  
Nelson & Area Métis Association



Bob Wright, Trustee  
School District #8 Board of Education



Josie Ahewane  
Aboriginal Elder, School District #8



Jamie Adams  
Aboriginal Student, School District #8



# Appendix A - Successes and Accomplishments from our first Enhancement Agreement

## **Goal #1: Enhance the Aboriginal student's sense of belonging and improve self-esteem**

- Increasing numbers identifying and self-declaring as Aboriginal
- More Ab Ed rooms/space/displays
- Non-Aboriginal students wanting to participate in Aboriginal activities
- Annual Powwow – students wearing regalia and dancing
- Regalia making
- Arts and crafts
- Moving towards Indigenizing curriculum (Example – teaching pow wow steps in PE class)
- Ab Ed programs existing in many schools
- Strong friendships
- Generational change/ Parents and Grandparents interest and connection
- Students inspired to do genealogy searches
- Decrease in racism
- Identifying and allowing more exploration of identity
- Future Aboriginal Teachers Conference 2013
- Students making a deliberate effort to connect with particular background
- Growth in parental/guardian participation
- Increased feelings of safety, belonging, and pride

## **Goal #2: To improve the academic success of all Aboriginal students**

- Increased graduation rates
- Performance averages are increasing
- Aboriginal students choosing same programs as non-Aboriginal students
- Mentorship
- Tutoring
- Homework clubs – students willing to attend
- Students willing to ask for help

## **Goal #3: Increase the number of Aboriginal students who are making positive lifestyle choices to support and enhance their academic achievement.**

- Increased involvement in extra-curricular and sport activities; more physical activity

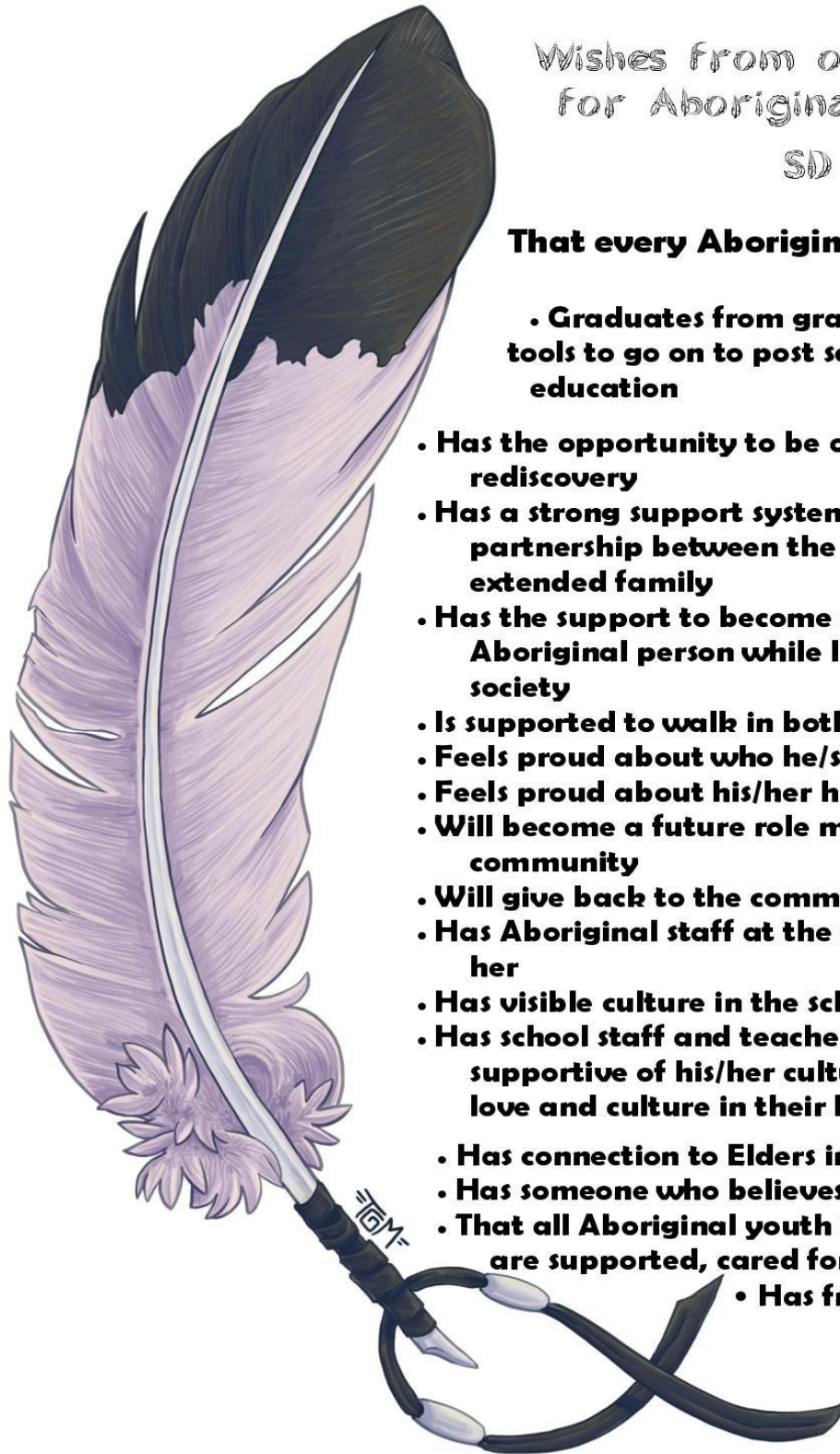
- Increased levels of trust
- Decrease in teen pregnancies
- Connections with outside agencies and more students asking for support
  - Tobacco cessation
  - Health nurse
  - Practicum students
  - Wellness clinic in school
  - College of the Rockies career fair
  - Selkirk College Aboriginal youth conference
  - Drug and alcohol awareness

# Appendix B - Elder's Wishes

Wishes from our local Elders  
for Aboriginal students in  
SD #8

**That every Aboriginal student...**

- **Graduates from grade 12 and has the tools to go on to post secondary education**
- **Has the opportunity to be on a path of rediscovery**
- **Has a strong support system that includes a partnership between the school, parents, and extended family**
- **Has the support to become a "self-actualized" Aboriginal person while living in mainstream society**
- **Is supported to walk in both worlds**
- **Feels proud about who he/she is**
- **Feels proud about his/her heritage**
- **Will become a future role model for the community**
- **Will give back to the community**
- **Has Aboriginal staff at the school to support him/her**
- **Has visible culture in the school**
- **Has school staff and teachers who are supportive of his/her culture and interact with love and culture in their hearts**
- **Has connection to Elders in the community**
- **Has someone who believes in him/her to succeed**
- **That all Aboriginal youth in care know that they are supported, cared for, and loved**
  - **Has freedom of choice**





# Appendix C - Youth Wishes

Wishes From our Aboriginal Youth

As Aboriginal students, we need to have:...

- 
- **Pride in who we are and to self identify**
  - **The right to live without racism**
  - **Opportunities to get together with Aboriginal youth from around the district**
  - **A space to gather in each school that is safe and comfortable (Ab Ed room)**
  - **The opportunity to continue in Aboriginal programming and teachings of our culture from elementary until graduation**
  - **The opportunity to be role models for younger Aboriginal students**
  - **Access and support for post-secondary education**
  - **Support to research our ancestry and learn our culture starting in elementary school**
  - **Support from our parents, teachers, and staff**
  - **Support to identify as Aboriginal within our schools**
  - **The opportunity to share our cultures with friends through school wide activities and events**
  - **Understanding from our teachers about the importance of learning more about our cultures. This learning needs to be valued at the same level or of more importance than other learning**
  - **Support from peers to participate in programming**
  - **The right to learn about Residential Schools and our peers and teachers also need to know and honour it**
  - **Opportunities for all students to learn the history of Aboriginal peoples**
  - **Field trips and access to "hands on" experiences to learn our culture**
  - **Access to our languages**
  - **Opportunities to attend youth conferences and meet Aboriginal youth across the province**
  - **Opportunities to learn about Aboriginal people today and current events**
  - **Teachers who are supported to learn more about Aboriginal culture and history**
  - **Access to academic support**
  - **Teachers who are aware of our diverse learning styles, support student's talents, and encourage personalized learning**
  - **Aboriginal student involvement in meetings (Aboriginal Advisory Council etc.)**
  - **Opportunities to teach future teachers and student teachers**
  - **Fun at school**
  - **Equal opportunities**

# Appendix D - Rubric

	Awareness	Developing	Acquiring	Exemplary
<b>Enhance the Aboriginal students' sense of belonging, pride and identity</b>	No designated Aboriginal Education space; No visible artifacts of Aboriginal culture displayed in school; Little or no evidence of Aboriginal content in courses; Little or no evidence of student work from Aboriginal themes displayed in schools; Surveys of Aboriginal youth report low levels of connection to culture, sense of belonging and pride	No designated Aboriginal Education space; Few visible artifacts of Aboriginal culture displayed in schools; Some evidence of high Aboriginal content in courses; Little evidence of student work on Aboriginal themes displayed in schools; Surveys of Aboriginal youth report medium levels of connection to culture, sense of belonging and pride	School has a designated Aboriginal Education space; Many examples of visible artifacts displayed throughout the school; Some evidence of high Aboriginal content in courses; Some evidence of displays of student work from Aboriginal themes displayed in schools; Surveys of Aboriginal youth report good levels of connection to culture, sense of belonging and pride	School has a designated Aboriginal Education space; Many visible artifacts (posters, artwork, welcome signs, maps of territory, etc) displayed throughout the school; Strong evidence of Aboriginal content throughout courses; Regular displays of student work from Aboriginal themes displayed in the schools; Surveys of Aboriginal youth report high levels of connection to culture, sense of belonging, and pride
<b>Improve the success of all Aboriginal students</b>	Lack of understanding and few examples of Aboriginal success; Low levels of performance or demonstrated improvement on: Graduation rates, Provincial exams, FSA, Provincial Satisfaction Surveys; Cultural accomplishments; No visible presence of creative learning environments	Some understanding and examples of Aboriginal success; Medium levels of performance or demonstrated improvement on: Graduation rates, Provincial exams, FSA, Provincial Satisfaction Surveys; Cultural accomplishments; No Visible presence of creative learning environments	Good understanding and some examples of Aboriginal success; Good levels of performance or demonstrated improvement on: Graduation rates, Provincial exams, FSA, Provincial Satisfaction Surveys, Cultural accomplishments; Visible presence of creative learning environments	Clear understanding and many examples of Aboriginal success; High levels of performance or demonstrated improvement on: Graduation rates, Provincial exams, FSA, Provincial Satisfaction Surveys, Cultural accomplishments; Visible presence of creative learning environments
<b>Improve connections between Aboriginal students, families, communities and schools.</b>	There is no process identified in the Family of Schools to engage Aboriginal families; Few parents of Aboriginal students attend school events or the Parent Advisory Council; School connectedness surveys are not completed; Few Aboriginal education staff have appropriate qualifications and experience	Some conversations are held in the Family of Schools with the focus of engaging Aboriginal parents; Some parents of Aboriginal students attend school events; School connectedness survey indicates good level of parent connectedness; Some Aboriginal education staff have appropriate qualifications and experience	A process is being developed in the Family of Schools to engage Aboriginal parents; Parents of Aboriginal students often participate in school events and the Parent Advisory Council; School connectedness survey indicates good level of parent connectedness; Many Aboriginal education staff have appropriate qualifications and experience	The Family of Schools has created an ongoing process to engage Aboriginal parents in the school community; Parents of Aboriginal students are active participants in school events and the Parent Advisory Council; School connectedness survey indicates high levels of parent connectedness; Most Aboriginal education staff have appropriate qualifications and experience
<b>Improve awareness of history, culture, diversity and issues related to Aboriginal students</b>	Few classes participate in Aboriginal cultural activities; Few staff have participated in a professional development activity with an Aboriginal focus; Aboriginal Education resources are available at the school	Some staff has participated in a District, school based or personal professional development opportunity; Some students participate in opportunities to join in to Aboriginal cultural activities; Aboriginal Education resources are integrated into some learning environments	Many staff participate in ongoing professional development on Aboriginal topics; Many students participate in educational activities with an Aboriginal focus; Aboriginal resources are integrated into many classrooms	Schools are actively organizing and participating in ongoing professional development opportunities; Bi-Annual District Professional Development day with Aboriginal focus is well attended; Student leadership is evident in planning of cultural activities; Most students participate in educational activities with an Aboriginal focus; Aboriginal Education resources are integrated into most learning environments