



School District 8
Kootenay Lake

Aboriginal Education Focus Areas 2022-2027

June 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge, respect and honour the First Nations in whose traditional territories the Kootenay Lake School District operates and all Aboriginal people residing within the boundaries of School District No. 8.

PREAMBLE

In 2018, School District No.8 (Kootenay Lake) began the important work of the [Equity Scan](#). The objectives of the Equity Scan included identifying promising practices and barriers impacting Aboriginal student achievement. In addition, the Equity Scan objectives also were to provide direction at the district, school, and classroom level answering this question: how do we positively impact Aboriginal student achievement?

As well, School District No.8 (Kootenay Lake) is deeply committed to the [TRC's Calls to Action](#), the goals of [UNDRIP](#), [DRIPA](#), [DRIPA Action Plan](#) and the [Calls for Justice of the MMIWG2S Final Report](#).

This Aboriginal Education Focus Areas document represents the results of community consultations throughout the district from 2018 to 2022, as a continuation of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement process and history. This document was designed in consultation with as many Aboriginal voices as possible to help us move forward with pathways to success for Aboriginal students. Consistently, the district Aboriginal student population is 20% of all students.



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Aboriginal Education

School District 8
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PURPOSE

The overall purpose of the School District No.8 (Kootenay Lake) Aboriginal Education Focus Areas is to improve the quality of education for Aboriginal students. Students remain the centre of our learning circle.

Aboriginal Committee of Education

The [Aboriginal Committee of Education \(ACE\)](#) is a group of people who are passionate about Aboriginal education. We are committed to supporting students to have the best school experience possible. We provide support and guidance to School District No.8 (Kootenay Lake) on matters regarding Aboriginal Education.





FOCUS AREAS

One: Nurture wholistic Aboriginal resilience and brilliance through belonging, pride, and identity.

What the research tells us:

Through the consultations, we continue to hear that there is a high priority for safe, trauma informed, and inclusive spaces for Aboriginal students and Aboriginal staff. Students need to feel welcome and connected to all spaces in their schools. They require the compassionate support from all staff to be guided through student voice. Empowered students have access to individual learning and leadership opportunities.



Two: Hold high hopes and expectations of success for all Aboriginal students.

What the research tells us:

The meaning of success continues to look different for all students, families, ancestors, and community members. A focus on academic and cultural success in academically challenging environments prepares students to successfully walk in both worlds (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). Success is graduation, pathways to post-secondary, employment, strong transitions, life-long family and nation teachings, cultural identity, community connections and responsibilities. A sense of purpose and understanding one's place in the world strengthens understanding of self, family, and community. Success is defined holistically through mental, emotional, and physical health supports. Outdoor and land-based learning was also a theme that emerged. Financial literacy, Numeracy and Literacy support student success. Success was also defined as students speaking their voices and feeling joyful, loved, and accepted. In the words of an elementary student "success is when you are passionate about something and want to be good at it". Success is free thinking and curiosity to gain knowledge.



Three: Aboriginal students, families, and communities guide Truth before Reconciliation.

What the research tells us:

Schools and the district need more opportunities for diverse guidance in sharing the truth before reconciliation. Students need Aboriginal representation with all forms of leadership including role models, peer tutors, teachers, and staff. Students need access to diverse nation teachings including language and culture. Families identified a strong desire to connect with the school community including through parent councils, extra-curricular activities, gatherings, after school options and formal parent involvement with learning. An ongoing acknowledgement from schools and the district on the history and legacy of residential schools is necessary. All of this work should be guided by listening to students' needs in partnership with families and communities.

Four: Provide opportunities to share stories of Aboriginal history, culture, and diversity: "The truth about stories, is that is all we are." T. King

What the research tells us:

Working towards reconciliation is the highest priority. Reconciliation is intergenerational, anti-racist, and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) aware work. Aboriginal students need to see themselves reflected in lessons, materials, and delivery of curriculum. They need to see themselves in relation to all: family, community, and the wider world. This requires ongoing work in professional development, localized stories and resources, land-based learning, Elders teachings, and Indigenization of K-12 curricula. Cultural safety training will help to build competencies to address the truth.





DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

This document will guide supplemental Aboriginal Education programming and support ongoing district-wide awareness and equity development.



GRATITUDE

We would like to thank the Aboriginal Committee of Education and recognize their dedication and commitment. We would like to specifically acknowledge all Aboriginal voices that contributed to these Focus Areas.