

Aboriginal Education

Enhancement Agreement

2014-2019



Skwxwú7mesh Nation

Aboriginal Peoples in West  
Vancouver Schools

West Vancouver School District

British Columbia Ministry of  
Education



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***We are grateful to our First Nations, Métis and Inuit friends and families who have guided this journey and shared their thoughts about the importance of healthy partnerships to help our students achieve their best and to foster wellness of spirit, body and mind throughout their lives.***

*Chen kw'en mantúmi*

## Signatories



The parties of this agreement commit to developing an ongoing partnership to ensure the success of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students attending school in the West Vancouver School District.

This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement will provide direction for the parties, as they work together to provide the finest possible learning opportunities for our students.

This Agreement also recognizes the importance of the role of families, caregivers, guardians and the Elders of our students, and we hereby commit to strive to provide opportunities for their positive involvement in West Vancouver Schools.

It is with a mutual respect for one another and a combined commitment to work together in exercising our responsibilities to enhance education opportunities, that we sign this document today. This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement hereby confirms our commitment to work respectfully together to develop appropriate and meaningful programs which will benefit all of our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.

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Skwxwú7mesh Nation Chiefs and Council, Co-chair

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BC Ministry of Education

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Skwxwú7mesh Nation Chiefs and Council, Co-Chair

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Superintendent of Schools, SD45

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Skwxwú7mesh Nation Education Department Head

\_\_\_\_\_  
Trustee, WV School District



## Preamble


### Our Journey/nexw7iyá'yulh

O Siyám

The West Vancouver School District respectfully honours and acknowledges the history and culture of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation, in whose territory we reside, learn and work. Further, it is recognized that a successful partnership in education between the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and the West Vancouver School District is critical to the academic, social and emotional growth of our students. We greatly appreciate the time and support provided by our community and bordering district educational partners who shared feedback and guided our thinking in the development of this document.

To begin the process of developing an Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, the West Vancouver Aboriginal Education Committee (WVAEC) has been in close consultation with the Skwxwú7mesh Nation Education Department. Our goal is to work together to support student learning and ensure that all Aboriginal students in West Vancouver achieve success and graduate with dignity, purpose and opportunities. In addition, we have endeavored to provide opportunities for education for all of our students and families that would honour and reflect the rich history, current issues and culture of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation, other First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

This has been a very positive journey to date, with collaborative sessions, Circle Gatherings, Family Feasts, student lunch meetings, and more formal committee meetings for our First Nations, Métis and Inuit families, students and Elders to communicate, work together and provide input toward the goals and objectives of school programs and structures in West Vancouver.



We are grateful that many adults and Elders from our Aboriginal community are directly involved with the learning activities and celebrations at our schools; often providing the leadership for these events.

The Skwxwú7mesh Nation Education Department has provided excellent guidance to our committee and has kindly worked with our senior staff, administrators and teachers to ensure mutual understanding and that learning activities are appropriate and reflect the needs of our students. We will continue to work with the Education Department as we develop school programs and resources to enhance student learning and improve student achievement.

This marks the first time that a formalized Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement has been developed in West Vancouver. The goals of this agreement are to ensure that school district employees, First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, parents, families and school communities work together to foster student success. This agreement has been created between the School District and the Skwxwú7mesh Nation, the WVAEC Advisory Committee and the Ministry of Education. It will be brought forward to the Skwxwú7mesh Chiefs and Council, the Ministry of Education and the West Vancouver Board of Education for recognition and a commitment to work toward and support these goals together.

We are excited by this formalized commitment to an ongoing partnership which will share in decision-making, goal-setting and support strategic programs and initiatives to enhance academic and social opportunities for success for all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in West Vancouver.

Chen kw'enman-túmiyap (thanking you for your kind attention)

*West Vancouver Aboriginal Education Committee (WVAEC)*



## Acknowledgements

D'Angelo Baker – Student, WVSD

Jody Billingsley – Vice Principal, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Juanita Coltman – District Principal, SD48

Spelexiñh, Anjeanette Dawson – Elementary School Counsellor - Skwxwú7mesh Nation – WVAEC Advisory

Mike Finch - Principal, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Warren Hicks - Aboriginal Education Consultant, WVSD

Jane Kellet - Trustee, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

K'etxímtñ, Alroy Baker – Skwxwú7mesh Nation Language Support

Sa7plek Lanakila, Bob Baker – Skwxwú7mesh Nation Cultural Worker – WVAEC Advisory

Carol Langley – Caring Community Coordinator, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Caroline Mahlmen – District Principal, Aboriginal Education – SD46

Flora Michaels - Student, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Sean Michaels – Parent, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Steve Rauh - Principal, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Snítelwet, Deborah Jacobs– Skwxwú7mesh Nation Education Department Head – WVAEC Advisory

Lynne Tomlinson - Director of Instruction, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Tsnomot, Brad Baker – District Principal, SD44 – WVAEC Advisory

Scott Wallace – Principal, WVSD – WVAEC Advisory

Piaoutenaat, Jackie Williams - Elder, Skwxwú7mesh Nation – WVAEC Advisory

Sesemiya, Tracy Williams – Secondary School Counsellor – Skwxwú7mesh Nation – WVAEC Advisory

Chapkolanoth, Henry Williams – Elder, Skwxwú7mesh Nation – WVAEC Advisory

Xwalacktun, Rick Harry – Skwxwú7mesh Nation Cultural Support – WVAEC Advisory

Yeltsilewet, Faye Halls – Skwxwú7mesh Nation Employment and Training Department Head – WVAEC Advisory

## Learning through the Journey of the Canoe

The work of the Aboriginal Enhancement Committee in the West Vancouver School District recognizes the traditional lessons realized through the canoe culture of the Skwxwú7mesh people. As if on a canoe journey, this agreement seeks to build a strong foundation of support for one another, and collaboration and mutual respect through the lessons we have been taught by the Elders, parents and community members with Aboriginal ancestry.



With thanks, we have focused on four major lessons taught and recorded by the Skwxwú7mesh Coast Salish People. We respectfully strive to build a strong foundation to work toward the goals of this agreement.

They are as follows:

### ***1) The Gift of Each Enriches All***

Every story is important. The bow, the stern, the skipper, the power paddler in the middle – everyone is part of the movement.

### ***2) We All Pull and Support Each Other***

Nothing occurs in isolation. The family is prepared to be supportive, planned and committed to engage and help the canoe move forward. The family will never let itself sink. When we know we are not alone in our actions, we also know we are lifted up by everyone else.

### ***3) The Journey Is What We Enjoy***

Although the start is exciting, and the conclusion cause for celebration, it is the steady process toward our goals we remember. The journey requires great preparation, awareness, and on the journey together, we are much more than ourselves.

### ***4) A Good Teacher Allows The Student To Learn***

We will strive to create a learning atmosphere to support learning, but we must allow each paddler to gain their awareness through the ongoing journey. Nothing sustains us like that sense of potential we gain by dealing with things. Each paddler learns to deal with the person in front, the person behind, the water, the air, the energy, and the blessing of the eagle.

*With thanks to Sa7plek Lanakila, Bob Baker  
-Huy chexw a*

### **This Journey Together**

Leadership for Aboriginal Education programs and activities in the West Vancouver School District will be shared between the Skwxwú7mesh Nation, other First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in West Vancouver and the West Vancouver School District. Activities and programs will respect the culture and traditions of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students throughout the classrooms of the school district and engage and encourage success for all students.







## Guiding Principles

To ensure that our journey remains true to its purpose we must paddle together and continue to learn from one another. Through our work on this journey, we will enhance the lifelong opportunities for all students.

The parties to this Agreement support the following principles:

**Improving cultural awareness** – We will continue to create opportunities and activities for West Vancouver School District staff to build a greater understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit history, culture and context. This will facilitate an improved learning environment for all students in the district.

**Developing relationships** – We are deeply grateful to the Skwxwú7mesh Nation Education Department and First Nations, Métis and Inuit parents, Elders, caregivers and students in our district who are working with us to better understand how best to support our learners.

**Collaborating with all educational partners** – We are all responsible for our children’s well-being. As a community of learners and educators, we will work together to develop programs and partnerships that will help to improve their achievement.

**Inspiring our learners** – When students feel safe and respected, they are able to engage in their learning and reach their full potential. We will work to support and inspire each student so that we may enhance student achievement and a sense of well-being.

## Partners

The West Vancouver Aboriginal Education Committee recognizes the importance of the partnership between the Skwxwú7mesh Nation, other First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and the West Vancouver School District. Our goals are to enhance learning opportunities for our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and to encourage lifelong wellness and success. Our partners include:

Skwxwú7mesh Nation

Other First Nations, Métis and Inuit

West Vancouver School District

BC Ministry of Education



## Definitions

### Aboriginal

First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples

### Caregiver

Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, adult siblings, step-parents, foster parents, and guardians

### Community

Those responsible for and contributing to the care, well-being and advancement of Aboriginal youth

### School Community

Those who are part of a school, including students, staff and parents

### Aboriginal Peoples

All off-reserve and urban First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who are not affiliated with the Skwxwú7mesh Nation




## Overview of Our Goals

This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement is designed to enhance the educational success of our First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. We will focus on three main goals to ensure that our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

Throughout the process of developing this agreement, we have understood the importance to the community of holistic and place-based learning within a circle of communication and respect. We continue to learn from the many parents, Elders, caregivers, educators and students in our Aboriginal community who have spent hours with us on this learning journey. We are grateful for their wisdom and patience in the consultation process.

**Goal One**            To improve the sense of belonging and presence of students of Aboriginal ancestry.

**Rationale:** This goal focuses on the emotional and spiritual development of each student. We have taken the lessons learned from our Aboriginal educators who have shared with us the importance of recognizing that all Aboriginal peoples have a thriving community. Our schools need to recognize and celebrate these communities and provide welcoming learning environments for students and families. The development of cultural awareness in our schools is an important enhancement for our Aboriginal students, but will also help our non-Aboriginal students to better understand the rich traditions and history of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and other Aboriginal people in our community.



**Goal Two**            To improve the academic achievement of Aboriginal students.

**Rationale:** This goal focuses on the intellectual development of each student who may be struggling academically. With a relatively small population of Aboriginal students in West Vancouver, we have tracked each student’s individual progress and are able to determine appropriate programs and support needed. We will use ongoing formative classroom assessments and district assessment tools to monitor student achievement and plan for educational programs. Increasing the academic success of students of Aboriginal ancestry is critically important to helping them progress beyond graduation and realize their hopes and dreams into adulthood.

**Goal Three**            To increase the use of accurate, authentic and relevant First Peoples’ Resources

**Rationale:** The Ministry of Education is co-developing a comprehensive new curriculum that includes the First Peoples Principles of Learning as a guiding tool for teachers. The new curriculum also includes the current and historical context of Aboriginal Education with supporting resources. With a majority of our students being non-Aboriginal, it is very important that they follow curriculum with accurate, authentic and relevant materials to support learning.




## Appendix A

### Goal 1

#### To improve the sense of belonging and presence of students of Aboriginal ancestry

##### Strategies:

- a) Maintain and develop activities for student and parent voices to be heard.
- b) Assign resources, undertake and celebrate activities that heighten awareness of aboriginal culture and tradition for all students at our schools.
- c) Encourage Elders, parents and community members of Aboriginal ancestry to participate and, where appropriate, provide leadership at the schools.
- d) Ensure ongoing collaboration, consultation and communication with the Skwxwú7mesh Nation Education Department.
- e) Ensure staff members are advised where and how to access assistance for students of Aboriginal ancestry, and professional development for themselves.
- f) Ensure District and school counsellors are aware of our students with Aboriginal ancestry, and that these students are personally contacted by counsellors assigned to them, so that they receive appropriate support.

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- g) Ensure the West Vancouver Board of Education receives regular updates throughout the year and are invited to attend activities undertaken at our schools and classrooms designed to enhance education for our First Nations students and the understanding of all students attending our schools.
  - h) Assess the success of this goal by interviewing Aboriginal students in secondary school and their parents at least once per school year. Support the *School Completion and Beyond* efforts in each school, focused on giving student voice in their educational journey.
  - i) Continue to develop the connections between Skwxwú7mesh Nation social justice programs and the use of Restorative Justice practices in schools.
  - j) Provide ongoing staff development in the area of Aboriginal Education to increase cultural education and awareness.
  - k) Develop authentic community-based projects through consultation with the Skwxwú7mesh Nation.
  - l) Develop a West Vancouver Aboriginal Education website including cultural and educational information, student highlights, targeting funding information and links for resources and upcoming events.



## **Evidence of Success**


- Increased satisfaction reported by Aboriginal students and parents on the Ministry Satisfaction Surveys – Gr 4-12
- Increased attendance rates of Aboriginal students as reported each term – K-12
- Increased satisfaction reported by Aboriginal students that they feel welcome and have a sense of belonging in our schools as indicated on the District Aboriginal Education Survey – Gr 8-12
- Increased satisfaction reported by Aboriginal students that they feel safe and happy at school as indicated on the District Comprehensive School Health Surveys – Gr 5-12

## **Goal 2**

### **To improve the academic performance of Aboriginal students**

#### **Strategies:**

- a) Assign staff resources to review each student's education profile and make professional contacts as required for student success at least three times per year, coinciding with reporting issued by the school.
- b) Assign staff to review the individual student education plans, and make contacts as required for each student of Aboriginal ancestry to ensure resources are properly deployed to support the student for academic, social and emotional success.

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- c) Develop data collection that will allow for easier analysis of the academic success and attendance records of our Aboriginal students.
  - d) Utilize resources from the S̄kw̄x̄w̄ú7mesh Nation Education Department as required.
  - e) Provide staffing to support “At Risk” aboriginal students through Student Support Services or through the Aboriginal Success Teacher model.

### **Evidence of Success**

1. To increase the number of students who are fully meeting or exceeding expectations in the following:
  - FSA results – Grades 4 and 7
  - District Literacy Assessment results including DART, RAD and Early Screeners – K-7
  - Numeracy - Report cards Gr 4-7
  - Satisfaction Survey results – Gr 4-12
2. To increase the following:
  - Transition rates from Gr 3-12
  - English and Mathematics course marks and participation – Gr 8-12
  - Participation in and completion of high school trades and apprenticeship programs






### **Goal 3**

#### **To increase the use of accurate, authentic and relevant First Peoples' Resources**

##### **Strategies:**

- a) Review current resources and learning activities used by teachers and administration at the subject department meetings at the secondary level, and at the primary and intermediate team meetings at the elementary level.
- b) Ensure our Caring Communities Coordinator and/or the Director of Instruction with responsibility for Aboriginal Education is in attendance at the secondary department and elementary team meetings, or failing that, another resource person will attend who is approved by the Director of Instruction (Aboriginal Education).
- c) Where appropriate, utilize resources from the Skwxwú7mesh Nation within classrooms, and at school-wide functions and events.
- d) Identify activities that may be undertaken at other sites, or in other districts that may benefit our students of Aboriginal ancestry, and arrange for them to attend if appropriate.
- e) Liaise at least three times per year with Aboriginal Coordinators and/or administrators from North Vancouver, Sea to Sky and Sunshine Coast School Districts.

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- f) Continue to develop the Aboriginal School Plan model to annually track each school's progress and planning in the area of Aboriginal Education.
  - g) Support the inclusion of Aboriginal content and ways of knowing in courses, programs and curriculum.
  - h) Increase professional development for teachers to support the new curriculum on Residential Schools in BC, with specific focus on the Grade 5, 10, 11 and 12 Social Studies curricula.
  - i) Connect teachers with workshops on Aboriginal Education.

### **Evidence of Success**

- Aboriginal students and parents will report an increased satisfaction that the historical and current context for Aboriginal resources is accurately presented in West Vancouver classrooms (District Aboriginal Education Survey).
- Grade 5 and 10 classroom teachers will attend workshops on Residential Schools and use the resources provided for instruction in Social Studies.
- West Vancouver classrooms will have clear evidence of the use of the First People's Principles of Learning embedded throughout the curriculum as reported in Aboriginal School Plans.

- Elementary Social Studies and English programs will be literacy-based, including current First People's resources available through the Ministry of Education, First Nations Education Steering Committee and other sources.
- Teachers will be encouraged to use the District Aboriginal Education website to share resources and exemplars.

