

# REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO.46 (SUNSHINE COAST)

## **STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT: INDIGENOUS CULTURES & DIVERSITY**

Submitted by Kerry Mahlman, District Principal, Indigenous Learning  
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Goal 1.h.: Our Students will explore Indigenous cultures in our community and the diversity of cultures in the world.

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### **Overview:**

The elements of culture are the characteristics and knowledge (often transmitted from generation to generation) of a particular group of people, often shaped and influenced by the place(s) where they live, the length of time they have lived there, the event that have happened over time, other groups who have come to live there, too, and the resources they have access to. It is these influences that have created unique cultures and expressions of them. Culture is holistic; each element is connected to many if not all others. Culture has a past, but it has a present and a future as well. Culture needs to be understood as current and contemporary as much as historical. Culture need to be understood in the context of the pressures there are for it (or elements of it) to change or stay the same.

### **Synopsis of this Year's Initiatives:**

#### Indigenous Cultures

1. Build on Knowledge Keeper programming to develop local Cross-Cultural interactions among students and in classes and courses.
  - Over 40 Knowledge Keepers visit schools and classrooms across the district by Zoom and in-person.
  - Students spend time with Knowledge Keepers out on the land/waters on the Sunshine Coast, on the lower mainland, and at the Skwxwú7mesh Lílwat Cultural Centre in Whistler.
  - Indigenous Learning Team is working with shíshálh Knowledge Keepers to bring land and language-based experiences into the classroom through print and artifact
  - shíshálh Culture Baskets provide hands-on experiences exploring ways of life and even
    - occupations.
  - Skwxwú7mesh Culture is shared through time on the land, through story-telling, and culture kits.
  - Métis Knowledge Keepers guide the development of learning materials and approaches to culture.
  - Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, art and lifeways are shared with students though print, video, artifact and web-based connections.

- Salish Weave Art Collection is continuing to tour schools. Indigenous Learning Team is developing new ways to encourage students and staff to respond to the Salish Weave Art Collection.
  - District Principal, a shishalh Knowledge Keeper, and a Music Teacher will attend the “Everything is Connected” provincial music conference to dialogue about how to how to embed Indigenous ways of knowing and being in music education classes.
  - Beginning conversations with CUPE about Elder and Knowledge Keeper positions in schools.
2. Invite Indigenous authors and authors from a diversity of cultures to visit schools to promote understanding of cultural perspective through story and the process of writing.
- In partnership with the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts, authors have visited schools and classrooms across the district by Zoom and are scheduled throughout the year.
  - The Indigenous Learning Team is including literacy and writing activities in their collaborative visits to elementary and secondary classrooms.
  - The Indigenous Learning Team is working with Coastal Voices Anthology coordinators to encourage Indigenous students to learn through story, to tell stories, and to write – with the possibility of an Indigenous Voices publication.
  - In partnership with the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts and local storytellers, The Indigenous Learning Team working on an Indigenous Story-Telling event in the spring.
3. Create experiential learning opportunities that build capacity for student leadership, service learning, and the deepening of cross-cultural understanding.
- With the support of the Indigenous Learning Team, students have participated and/or are participating in the planning and implementation of a number of activities and events across the district. This includes:
    - Orange Shirt Day
    - Blanket Exercise
    - Indigenous Veterans Day, Remembrance Day, and honouring loss in the community
    - Circle Work
    - Input into the Equity Scan
    - shishalh Rites of Passage program (transitioning from elementary to secondary school)
    - Eagle Feather program (for graduating students)
    - Making (Traditional Indigenous arts)
  - The Indigenous Learning Team is involving students in cross-cultural connections with Indigenous communities in Australia, the North (Dene and Inuit), and the Tk'emlups te Secwépemc.

## Diversity of Cultures in the World

Culture and Diversity in the world are explored through a number of educational experiences in the district.

This includes:

- Curriculum and Competencies (Classrooms and Courses)
- Indigenous Learning (by enhancing Indigenous Student Achievement with using culturally respectful, responsive, reflective and inclusive practices, *and* by embedding Indigenous World Views and Perspectives into Learning Environments for all students)
- International Student Program
- Opportunities for international travel through travel clubs
- Inclusion programming
- Equity, Social Justice, Anti-Racism and SOGI education
- The Seasonal Round of special events, celebrations, days or months of recognition (such as Black History Month) and sharing opportunities in schools including author visits and Knowledge Keeper visits
- The Ensouling Our Schools work in schools and the district

The uniqueness as well as the relationships and interconnectedness of cultures emphasizes creating safety and space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews to be shared.

Specific courses in the district where diversity and cultures are themes of exploration include:

- First Peoples English 11 and 12
- BC First Peoples 12
- Comparative World Religions 12
- Social Justice 12
- Genocide Studies 12
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century World History 12
- Explorations in Social Studies 11
- Social Studies K-10
- English Language Arts K-10
- English Language Learning and English as a Second Dialect – where students' cultures are held up and respected in the context of supporting English Language development
- Food Studies 8, 10, 11-12
- French, Spanish, Russian courses
- she sháshíshálhem (shishalh) language and culture courses and experiences K-12
- Cultural Connections 8 at Chatelech Secondary  
Learning includes: Geographical (land) connections to languages and cultures, Anti racism/Social Justice, SOGI, respectful/inclusive language, calling out and calling in when a social situation is not safe or actions are micro-aggressive
- Directed Independent Studies and Flex Blocks

## Data Analysis and Review:

- SD46 Student Satisfaction Survey/How Are We Doing Report (Annually)
- Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI)
- Youth Development Instrument (YDI)

- Number of Knowledge Keeper and Author visits to schools and student engagement (annual analysis)
- Survey of classroom and school events across the district that encourage cultural sharing and pride (annual collection of anecdotal data)
- District Student Leadership Team survey results
- Nurturing the Learning Spirit Indigenous Student consultation (ongoing)
- Indigenous Education Advisory Circle member feedback (ongoing)
- Equity in Action scan results (ongoing)

**Resources:**

- Community partnerships (eg: shishalh and Skwxwu7mesh Nations, Métis community, people from other Indigenous communities, Festival of the Written Arts, Sechelt Arts Festival)
- Knowledge Keepers (from a number of Indigenous and multi-cultural communities)
- Ensouling Our Schools resource
- Course curriculum/content and expertise/skills/life-experiences of education staff
- Print and multi-media learning resources, including linking to websites
- Internet access to live or nearly live person to person interaction opportunities such as Zoom, e-mail, teleconferencing, Google Docs

**Budget:**

- Targeted and district allocated Indigenous Learning funding
- School, classroom, course, technology and library funding allocations
- District technology funding allocations

**Emerging Areas of Need:**

- Anti-racism and Social Justice education cross-curricular
- Learning experiences concerning Black History Month and Black Lives Matter movement
- Strategies to increase diversity of educational staff (at all levels and in all roles)
- Strategies to increase the number of qualified Indigenous Language and Culture teachers
- Strategies to increase student and staff consciousness of the need for safety, respect and inclusion for students who identify as being in minority or marginalized due to low economic circumstances, geographical location, racial or ethnic identity, cultural or linguistic identity, ability differences, SSOIE

**Adaptations/Next Steps:**

- Continuing implementation of this year's initiatives
- Continuing to broaden relationships and connections to communities and cultures world wide, especially Indigenous cultures
- Continuing to adjust to the challenges of COVID protocols in terms of in-person sharing of culture, especially in terms of keeping Elders and Knowledge-Keepers safe.