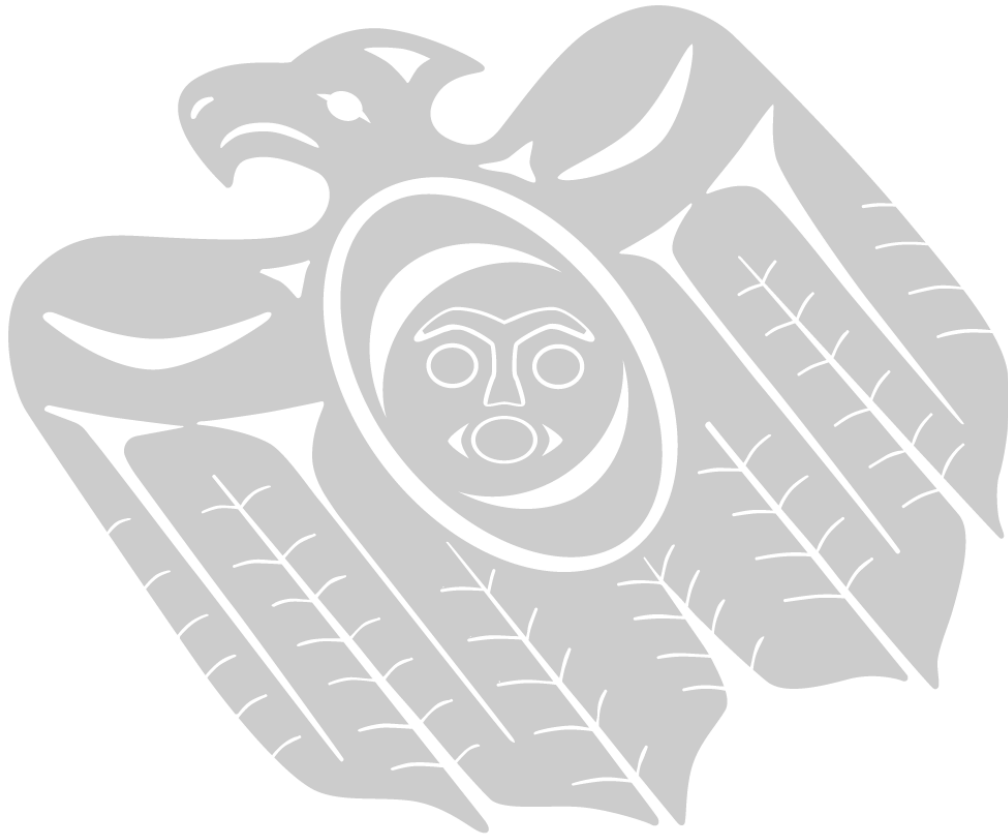


Reporting on the Vancouver School District, January 2011 Aboriginal Education Forums

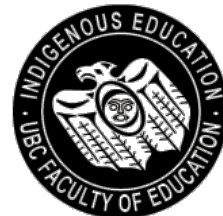


Community Responses to Creating a School or Model with an Aboriginal Focus

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Executive Summary

In January 2011, The Vancouver School Board (VSB) announced its plans to undertake a community consultation process to determine the community support or dissent for a proposed mini school with an Aboriginal lens or other model for students in the Vancouver School District (VSD). Four community consultation Forums were undertaken with students, parents and community members, and school staff stakeholders, which in total attracted approximately 167 participants. The report herein summarizes and synthesizes the opinions discussed at the four Forums.

The prevailing perspectives of the Forum participants indicated: (1) support for establishing a new school with an Aboriginal focus; (2) support for a larger school model that addresses K-12; (3) that the new school be one of choice; and (4) that the new school be open to all interested students in the Vancouver School District and that Aboriginal students be given priority. The goals of the school that the Forum participants articulated were that the school should:

- a. strive for excellence in which students are confident, respectful, critical thinkers and engaged learners;
- b. focus on quality education through Aboriginal worldviews, knowledge, culture, and values;
- c. maintain high expectations for student learning and success;
- d. value cultural diversity;
- e. develop a welcoming, culturally safe, and inclusive school environment; and
- f. engage parents and community groups in school planning and decision-making.

The framework for the Aboriginal focused school is discussed using a wholistic lens, which addresses the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual components/needs of the students, teachers, school, and

community. Forum participants, for example, wanted: the school to include Aboriginal ceremonies, the teachers to develop meaningful and supportive learning relationships with the students, the community to be engaged in the development of the school structure and policies, and the students to experience learning shaped by Aboriginal content and ways of knowing.

The one component of the new school that was repeatedly underscored by Forum participants was the need to hire excellent, effective, innovative and caring teachers. Specifically these ideal teachers:

- develop effective learning relationships with students, recognize students' talents and strengths;
- demonstrate care and patience toward students, listen intently;
- have high expectations of students and challenge them to do their best;
- have knowledge, experience, and commitment for using Aboriginal Knowledge in pedagogy and curriculum, understand the impact of colonization on Aboriginal people, and use strategies to decolonize education;
- are experts in subject areas and use varied pedagogy; and
- are aware and knowledgeable of urban Aboriginal contexts.

In the development of this school, however, the VSB needs to be knowledgeable and respectful of the concerns that the Forum participants voiced during the consultation process. Four of the more prominent concerns centered on the following issues: 1) the fear of segregation and racism; 2) the worry that this school would not encourage academic excellence; 3) the concern that the grade range of the school will be too narrow; and 4) the apprehension that the systemic barriers within the VSB will not allow the new school to have the flexibility

to meet the students' needs in the best way possible.

Despite these concerns however, the time is right to be bold and take action to start a new school with an Aboriginal focus. In following Aboriginal oral tradition, we would tell others that the January 2011 Aboriginal Education Forums resembled a feast where we were fed extremely well

with ideas and reminders (see Figure 1) of what is important for educational and school success; how Aboriginal Knowledge, values, and culture can effectively shape learning and teaching; and how parents and Aboriginal community members can work in partnership with the Vancouver School Board to offer education that is meaningful, inclusive, and excellent.

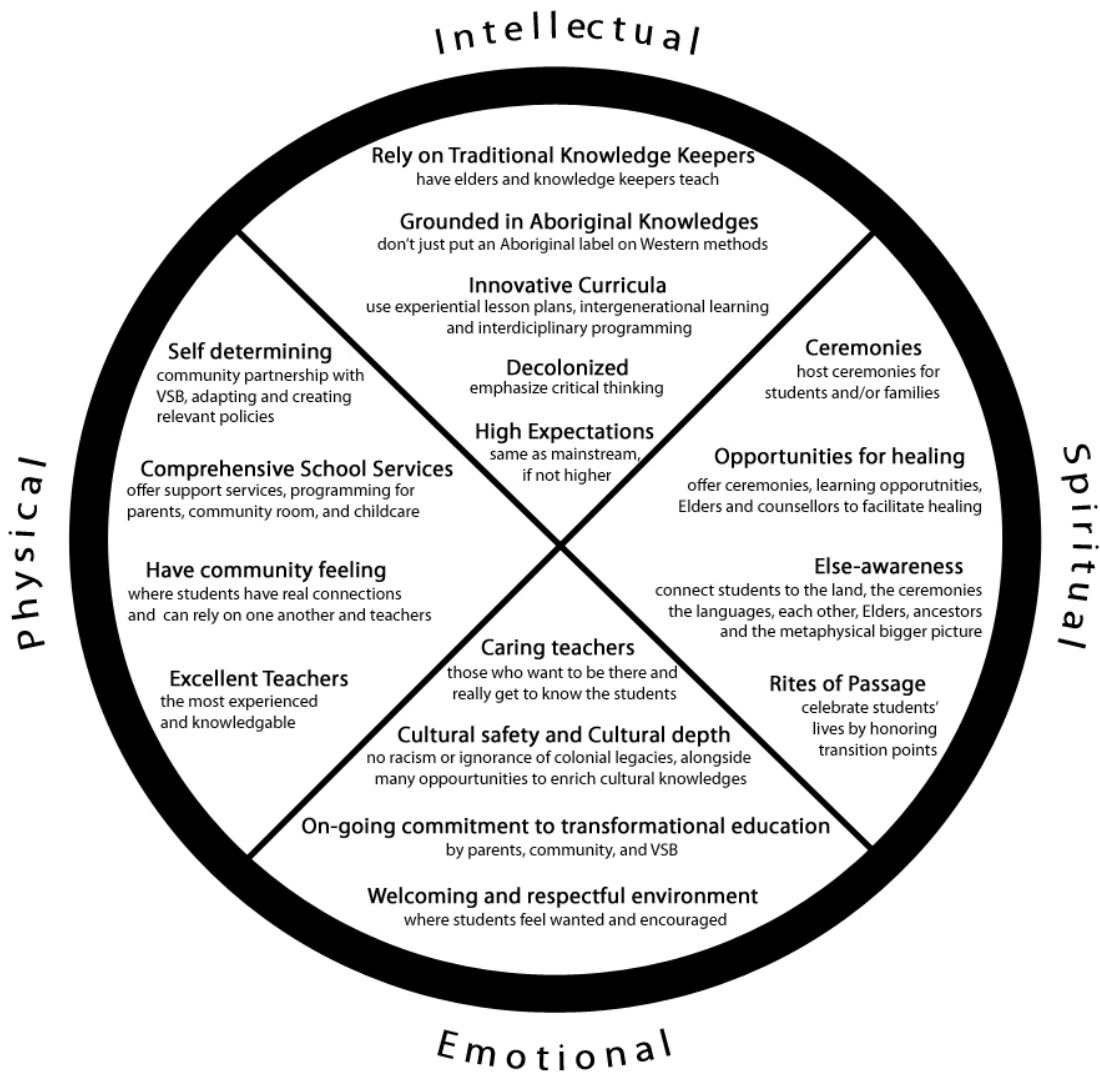


Figure 1: January 2011 VSB Aboriginal Education Forums - Aboriginal Wholistic Learning Framework

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I. Introduction

In January 2011, The Vancouver School Board (VSB) Chair sent a letter to Vancouver School District (VSD) students, parents/community, and staff stating: “We are also beginning a community consultation process this month to discuss whether the district should establish an Aboriginal-focused mini school or other model that will enable students, who may wish to do so, to learn through an Aboriginal lens.” This report is a follow-up to those consultation sessions, which were called Forums. The report includes this introduction, an analysis of the Forum discussions, a discussion and summary section, and concludes with suggestions for moving forward.

Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, professor, in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia was asked to facilitate the Aboriginal Education Forums and to write a report about those consultations. Two graduate students, Ramona Big Head, PhD student and Allyson Rayner, MA student assisted Dr. Archibald with the project (hereafter, Project team).

Planning discussions were held with Dr. Valerie Overgaard, Associate Superintendent, Vancouver School District and Deb Martel, Aboriginal Education Principal, VSD. Past VSD reports that related to Aboriginal Education were given to the Project team as background information. The Project team reviewed the materials and developed discussion questions based on the VSB consultation request. The VSD representatives and Dr. Archibald decided to hold four Forums with stakeholder groups about a mini school with an Aboriginal focus or other model. These Forums included a:

- (1) Student Forum, held on January 21, 2011, at MacDonald Elementary School with 55 participants

- (2) Parent and Community Forum, held on January 24, 2011, at Point Grey Secondary School with 35 participants
- (3) Parent and Community Forum, held on January 25, 2011, at Templeton Secondary School with 60 participants
- (4) Vancouver School Board Staff Stakeholders, held on January 27, 2011, at the Vancouver School Board Office with 17 participants (various staff association representatives)

Deb Martel and Dr. Overgaard oversaw the Forum logistics, advertisements, communications, and invitations.

The Project team designed the Forum structure and developed background information about the VSB’s interest in receiving feedback about a new school with an Aboriginal focus or other model, how one of the year two goals of the VSD’s Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement relates to this new school, a summary of key points about what is a mini school, and the purposes of the Forum (see Appendix 1). A set of similar questions formed the basis of discussion and feedback at each Forum, with ample time provided for individual feedback through plenary discussion, small group discussion, and written feedback on chart paper and post-it notes (see Appendix 2).

I.1. Forum Discussion Questions

I.1.1 Student Forum

1. Please think of a time when you really enjoyed learning about Aboriginal culture in your school. Think about what you learned, what the teacher did, were Aboriginal people involved? Share what you learned and why you enjoyed the learning experience.

2. If there was a new mini school or school in the Vancouver School District with an Aboriginal focus, what would you want this

school to be like and why? [Probe what would the teachers be like; how would Aboriginal culture be taught with subjects like reading and math; how would your parents and family be involved in the school?]

1.1.2 Parent and Community Forums

1. What would a successful Aboriginal Focused Mini-School be like? In particular: How would Aboriginal culture and knowledge be used to teach academic subjects? What other aspects of Aboriginal ways of knowing could be used in the school, for example, learning from Elders, intergenerational learning and mentoring, learning from the land, Aboriginal values, service learning? What would the teachers be like? What would the principal be like?
2. How could parents, family or community members be involved with the Aboriginal Mini School or Model?
3. What would make you want to send your child to an Aboriginal Mini School or Model?
4. What would prevent you from sending your child to an Aboriginal Mini School or Model?

1.1.3 School Staff Stakeholders

Because many of the staff participants had attended the previous Forums, the session started with sharing issues, questions, and concerns about establishing a school with an Aboriginal focus and then moved to sharing ideas for a school or other model. Feedback addressed the questions below.

1. What would a successful Aboriginal Focused Mini-School be like? In particular: How would Aboriginal culture and knowledge be used to teach academic subjects? What other aspects of Aboriginal ways of knowing could be used in the

school, for example, learning from Elders, intergenerational learning and mentoring, learning from the land, Aboriginal values, service learning?

2. What would the teachers be like? What would the principal be like?
3. How could Aboriginal Enhancement staff and/or Resource teachers be involved?
4. How could parents, family or community members be involved?

2. Analysis of the Forum Discussions

The Project team and school district staff took notes of the plenary and small group discussion sessions. The Project team then analyzed these notes. They identified common points of participants' agreement and disagreement about the Forum topics and questions. This analysis and summary section begins with a discussion about the responses to the question of whether or not there should be a new mini school with an Aboriginal focus or other model. Following this overview, suggestions are presented about what an Aboriginal lens for such a school could be like, considerations for successful teachers and principals are included, along with suggestions for ensuring meaningful engagement of parents and urban Aboriginal community organizations/groups. The section concludes with a discussion about pressing or on-going issues that need to be taken into account in future educational and school planning and implementation.

2.1. An Aboriginal focused mini-school or school or other model?

There was substantial agreement and enthusiasm about establishing a school with an Aboriginal focus. Parents and community

members said, “What took you so long?” “We needed this yesterday.” “This is the most exciting thing to happen in this school district in the past 30 years.” While strong support for an Aboriginal focused school was voiced, a few felt that instead, more support was needed to maintain the existing efforts and programs of the schools that were already experiencing success for Aboriginal learners or that efforts should be spent on increasing Aboriginal programming throughout the school district. Very few participants indicated a negative response but their perspective was articulated strongly: “Not good! This wouldn’t help our children.”

Various views were expressed about the school model, size of school and the grade levels that it should include. The concept of a mini school for grades 8-12 had both positive and negative ratings. One comment exemplifies the problem with using the term “mini”: “My concern is this word - mini. We don’t do anything in our community in a mini way, we do things in a big way, and it takes a lot of people.” Those who spoke against a mini school model wanted a much larger school concept, such as K-12. In fact, more support was voiced for a K-12 model. Another key reason for not wanting a “school within a school”ⁱ model was that Aboriginal programs are often labeled as not being as good as mainstream programs and students often feel embarrassed moving from their Aboriginal program to participate in the larger school’s activities or resources such as the cafeteria or when only they are pulled out of their class for an Aboriginal program: “The school within a school cultivates feelings of difference and separateness, and no teenager likes to be pegged as different and taken out of classes.”

Those who voiced support for a mini school model for grades 8-12 were concerned about the lack of Aboriginal focused high school programs for Aboriginal students who are not special needs: “What about children who aren’t drug addicted or have a

criminal record, but still need more than what the VSB has to offer? There is nothing for these kids who don’t have alcohol or criminal problems.” Other concerns that need to be taken into account are the transition points where Aboriginal students have experienced difficulty such as moving into the elementary intermediate grades (from grade three to four) and from elementary to secondary grades (from grade seven to eight), and then from grades nine to ten.

A unanimous perspective was that the new school must be a ‘choice’ where students and their parents/guardians make the decision of whether to enroll or not: “Make it clear that this school is about choice... don’t conjure up notions of residential schools.” Participants spoke about not having any decision-making power in the type and quality of education that they and their extended family received through years of forced assimilation through residential schooling. Even though parents may support a new school with an Aboriginal focus, they want the ability to choose to send their child to it.

More Forum participants felt that the school should be open to all students, with priority given to Aboriginal students. Learning through an Aboriginal lens or framework has the potential of being good quality education and the potential for eliminating racism and fostering positive relationships among a diverse student body: “We need to look at curriculum and embed Aboriginal teachings throughout all of the curriculum so we don’t have racist students and teachers, so our kids don’t get pushed out of school.” A few students felt that the school should be only for Aboriginal students because they are in a program for Aboriginal learners and they feel that such a program creates a safe and culturally relevant environment: “Even though we come from different Aboriginal groups, there is something that draws us together, some common feeling about being Aboriginal.”

In summary to the question of should there be a mini school with an Aboriginal focus or other model, the prevailing perspectives indicate (1) support for establishing a new school with an Aboriginal focus; (2) support for a larger school model that addresses K-12; (3) that the new school be one of choice; and (4) that the new school be open to all interested students in the Vancouver School District and that Aboriginal students be given priority.

2.2. School Goals

Forum participants talked about their hopes, dreams, vision, and expectations for education and for the proposed school. The Project team grouped these ideas into school goals.

- g. Strives for excellence in which students are confident, respectful, critical thinkers and engaged learners;
- h. Focuses on quality education through Aboriginal worldviews, knowledge, culture, and values;
- i. Maintains high expectations for student learning and success;
- j. Values cultural diversity;
- k. Develops a welcoming, culturally safe, and inclusive school environment; and
- l. Engages parents and community groups in school planning and decision-making.

2.3. What could a school with an Aboriginal focus be like?

“Don’t just put an Aboriginal label on Western methodology, don’t have the foundation being Western.”

Indigenous peoples often characterize education as wholisticⁱⁱ, meaning that

intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical human development is considered. Each learning area forms a distinct component, yet each can intersect and inter-relate with the other components. Examples for each area are given below in order to show how a wholistic approach to learning may occur. Even though an example is placed in one area, it can take on attributes of the other learning areas, which will be shown below. Relationships and responsibilities between and among the students, parents and community groups, teachers, principals, and school district leadership influence learning and success. A wholistic framework that shows these learning dimensions, and stakeholder relationships and responsibilities is used to present the rich array of ideas presented at Forum sessions. See Figures 2-5.

2.3.1. Spiritual

The spiritual dimension in this educational context does not refer to any religion but focuses on ways that connections are made between people, land, culture, and learning. Aboriginal ceremonies offer ways to connect to oneself and to others; to establish a respectful interactive environment; and to learn values and teachings. Elders and community Aboriginal knowledge holders often lead these ceremonies. Other Aboriginal public schools in Canada demonstrate that the inclusion of ceremonies through activities such as Talking Circles, Smudging, Sweatlodges, and land-based experiences contribute to student educational success.ⁱⁱⁱ Aboriginal arts, songs, and stories have a spiritual base to them. Aboriginal worldviews, philosophies, and pedagogies are placed in the spiritual area because they form the educational foundation for students to develop their inner ‘being’ in order to ‘become’ engaged and successful learners. See Figure 2 below.

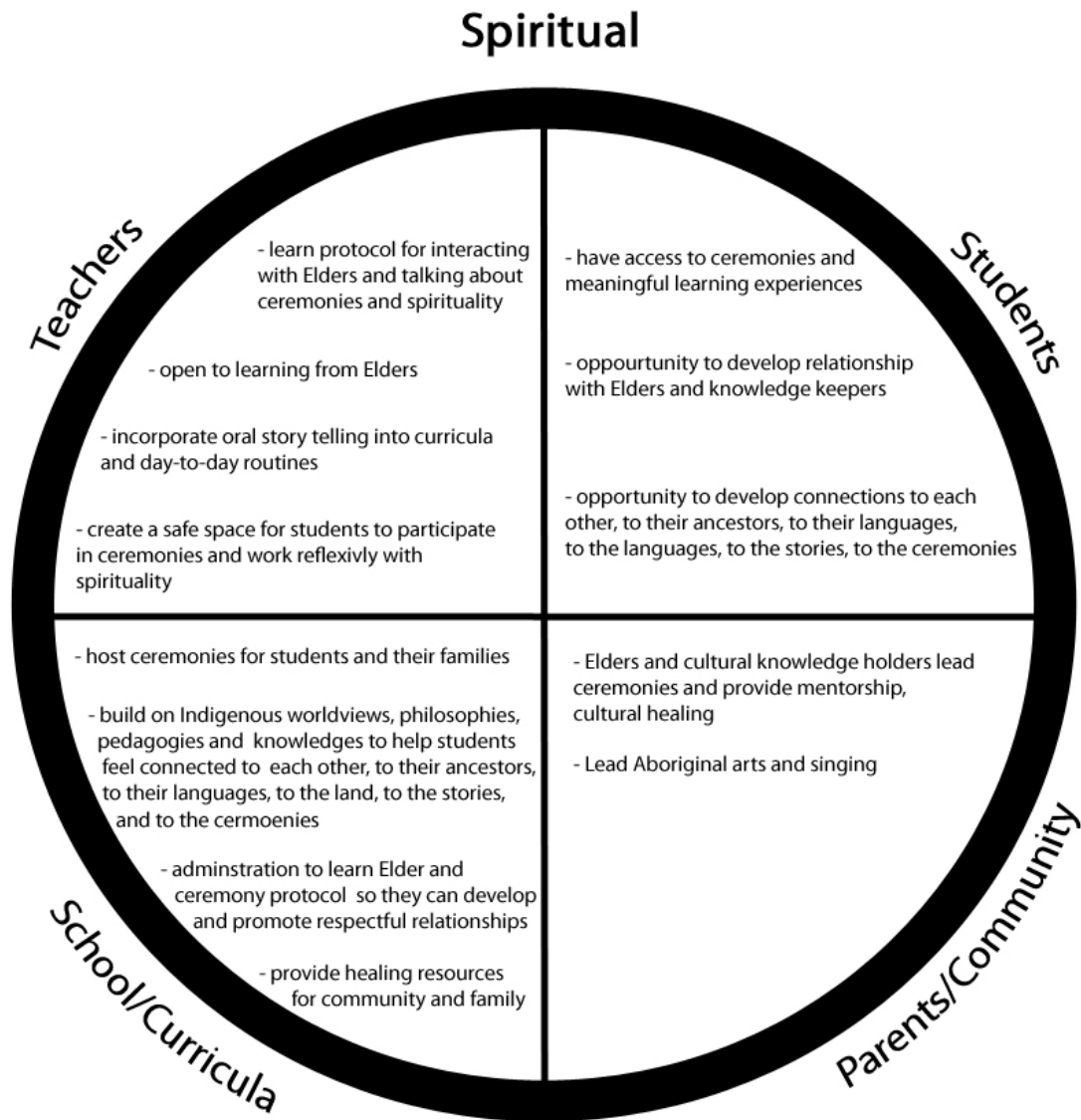


Figure 2: Spiritual Dimension of the Aboriginal Wholistic Learning Framework

2.3.2. Emotional

Positive feelings of enjoyment, hope, pride, and empowerment are examples of emotional outcomes that Forum participants wanted for the new school.

Students reinforced the critical role that teachers assume in creating a caring, welcoming, inclusive, emotionally safe, and empowering environment in their classrooms. Those teachers who contribute

to student success: (1) take time to get to know their students' family, social and cultural contexts and interests; and (2) develop relationships with students that demonstrate that they care about the students and expect them to take responsibility for being at school and engaged in the learning process. Teachers also mentioned that they benefit from a reciprocal learning relationship when they learn from their students, the parents, Elders, and Aboriginal community members.

Emotional

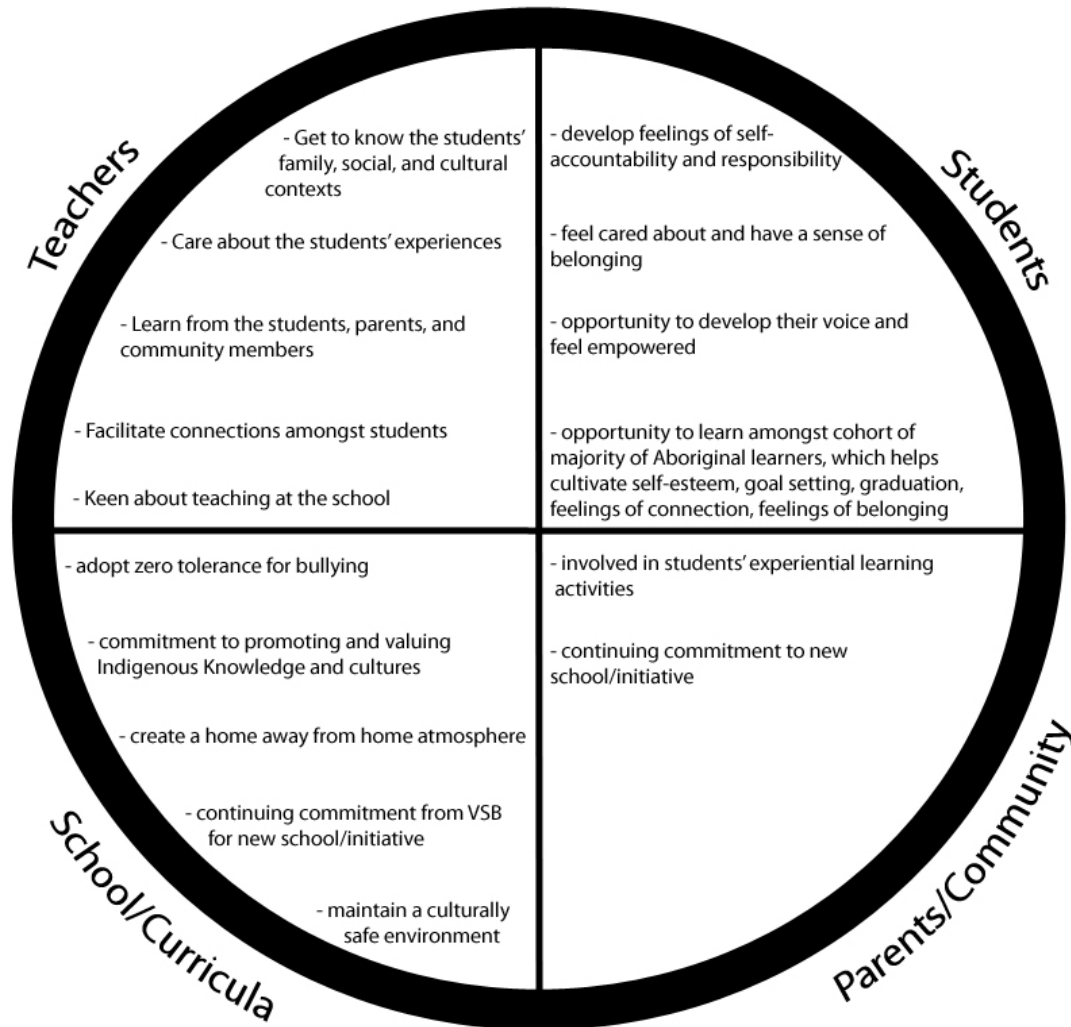


Figure 3: Emotional Dimension of the Aboriginal Wholistic Learning Framework

Students were asked to share examples of when they learned about Aboriginal culture. Additionally, they were asked to share what it was that they enjoyed about the learning experience and why. Examples often focused on some type of experiential learning such making crafts, going on field trips, and attending camps. The UBC Farm is one example in which students felt positive about learning from Elders, storytelling, traditional food preparation,

and gardening. They also valued learning with their teachers and learning from Aboriginal people and others involved in the UBC Farm. The UBC Farm example shows how this type of experiential learning has benefits emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually. Most importantly, students feel pride and are positive about learning through Aboriginal culture and not ashamed of it. In addition, the intergenerational learning process where

Elders, community members, teachers, and students learn from and through interaction with each other has multiple benefits.

The students from the Outreach Program, an alternative program for Aboriginal high school students, located at Britannia Secondary School attended the Student Forum. They reinforced the value of an Aboriginal based environment that creates a caring and engaging social and learning environment for Aboriginal students. The family-like feeling of the program and the way that teachers engage students make them want to attend school everyday and to eventually graduate: “The outreach school gives me a sense of home – a home away from home....In the mainstream school I didn’t want to go, and now in the outreach program, I want to go, every day.” Students shared their memories of how, in the mainstream school, they were not engaged in learning, and they felt that the teachers did not care about them or whether they succeeded or not. In the Outreach Program they said the staff (teachers, enhancement workers, and secretary) view them as “real people with real opinions” and they feel like “they can participate in classes, and that teachers actually want to hear what students think.” They are more confident in participating in class discussions now whereas in the past they were weary of saying anything in class for fear that it would be the wrong answer where they would then “feel 30 pairs of eyes staring at you.” The Outreach Program, its staff and students can offer much to the development of a positive learning environment.

One concern that parents and community members mentioned was that this new school had to have a long term commitment from the Vancouver School Board and District staff to support the school. One person said, “So if this mini school or model gets off the ground, and gets functioning, how long will it stay around....If it gets functioning, how long before someone else

takes it....every time we have something that is working they take it so they can do it better.” These views resonated with other Forum participants. Aboriginal parents often feel mistrustful of schooling based on years of assimilationist educational policies that did not value Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing and did not welcome parental and community involvement. Continuing support for this new school, a questioning of the status quo, and courage to do things differently require emotional commitment and action by all stakeholders. One participant said, “We need to be bold and take action.” See Figure 3 above.

2.3.3. Physical

The physical realm includes major actions such as governance and decision-making; school facilities and the school schedule; considerations for keeping physically fit and healthy; and pedagogy/teaching approaches.

Aboriginal parents and community members voiced strong opinions about developing a school governance structure and decision-making approach based on partnerships and “Nation to Nation self-determination principles.” This latter point reflects the Canadian national and provincial political movement of Aboriginal people to be involved in key decision-making roles on matters that affect them.^{iv} There are many urban Aboriginal service organizations in the Vancouver area and others such as Vancouver Coastal Health that could be involved in school planning and implementation; thereby, expanding resource availability and possibilities.

Suggestions were given about creating flexibility with the daily school schedule to take into account cultural seasonal, experiential and ceremonial activities, and as one participant mentioned, perhaps have the school day go from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm “to accommodate the teenage brain.” See Figure 4 below.

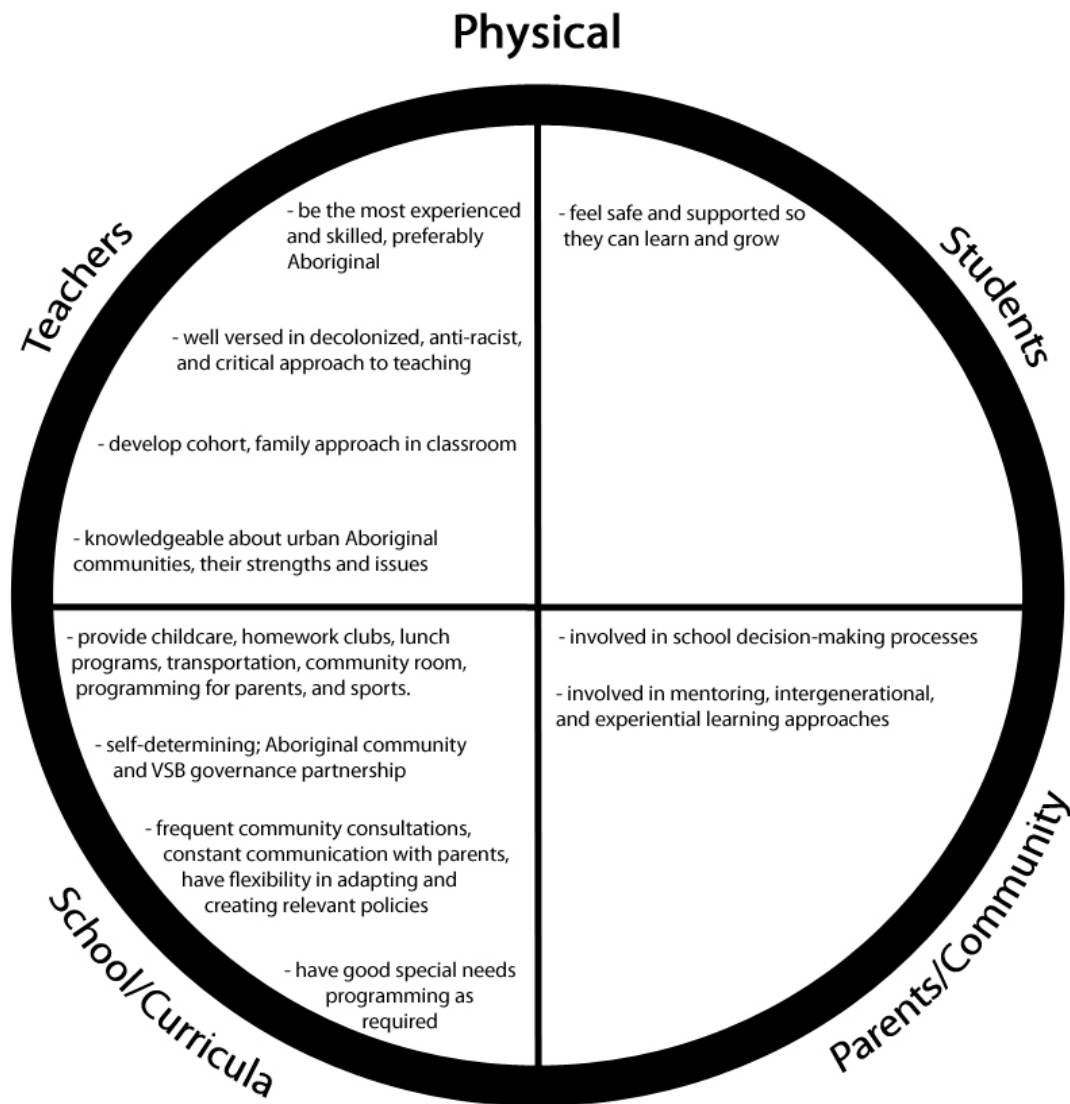


Figure 4: Physical Dimension of the Aboriginal Wholistic Learning Framework

The proposed school's physical features and facilities were also considered. Besides being physically safe (earthquake proof) and technologically well-equipped, suggestions were given about having a community room for workshops and meetings or using the school classrooms for these purposes after hours. The school could reflect Aboriginal cultures by having a Longhouse or Roundhouse structure. Various locations were recommended. The east side schools such as Templeton, Britannia, and

MacDonald were mentioned most often, and many did not want the school located in the Downtown Eastside. A few mentioned the west side such as Point Grey Secondary.

Physical health, well-being, and safety could be addressed through sports programs, traditional Aboriginal games, lunch programs, healthy living programs, and zero tolerance for bullying.

Major learning approaches that demonstrate

connection to Aboriginal knowledge and ways of knowing include the extended family/cohort model, intergenerational and experiential learning. Students who had a cohort or family feeling to their program flourished. Intergenerational learning is a traditional form of Aboriginal learning where Elders and others teach the younger generations through individualized or small group instruction and mentoring. Examples of experiential learning that had a longer term impression on students included: land-based activities, camps, canoe trips, preparing traditional foods, and cultural arts.

2.3.4. Intellectual

The discussion for the intellectual area begins with the participants' general views about school curricula, then it moves to examples of learning experiences and subject areas that can be taught through an Aboriginal Knowledge framework, and it concludes with considerations for critical thinking skills, assessment, career planning and mentoring.

Forum participants expressed their concerns and hopes that with a new Aboriginal focused school attending students need new curricula. As one participant stated, "I'm not interested in the same old curriculum," and as another said, we need "full curricula taught through an Aboriginal lens." The "same old curriculum" has colonial undertones, which can alienate Aboriginal students and foster racist misconceptions for non-Aboriginal learners. Critical thinking and Aboriginal cultures need to be the basis of the learning framework for this new school.

To move beyond the "same old curriculum" the proposed Aboriginal focused school can offer subjects such as math, reading, science, social studies, and the arts (visual and performative) by using Aboriginal content and pedagogy. It is possible to teach within an Aboriginal Knowledge framework

using the Ministry of Education's prescribed learning outcomes. Examples of province-wide Ministry of Education approved Aboriginal oriented curriculum include First Nations Studies 12 (can be taken as a social studies 11 elective), English First Peoples 10, 11, and 12 with the latter being an examinable subject, and Math 8 and 9 Aboriginal teaching guides are currently being developed. A K-grade 10 Aboriginal teaching resource, *Shared learnings: Integrating BC Aboriginal content k-12* has been readily available since 1998^v. Aboriginal groups and school districts throughout British Columbia have developed various teaching resources that can be adapted. The aforementioned examples of resources were shared at the Forums. Participants also gave additional suggestions for what else could be taught:

- Indigenous languages
- Experiential learning on land and in community as well as at the school
- Vibrant Arts (visual, performative, music) program
- Sports
- Learn about Indigenous people worldwide
- Literacy (reading, financial, and cultural)

Parents and community members want to see curricula embedded or naturalized^{vi} with Aboriginal content. They also specifically highlighted the desire to see cross-curricular and intergenerational learning opportunities grounded in Aboriginal Knowledges. The Potlatch, for example, could be drawn upon and have applications to learning about governance, mathematics, problem solving, communications, social studies, artistic creations and history lessons. Additionally, working outside at the UBC Intergenerational Farm, for example, provides science related educational opportunities, environmental studies, interactions with Elders, health and nutrition, and learning about life traditions. See Figure 5 below.

Intellectual

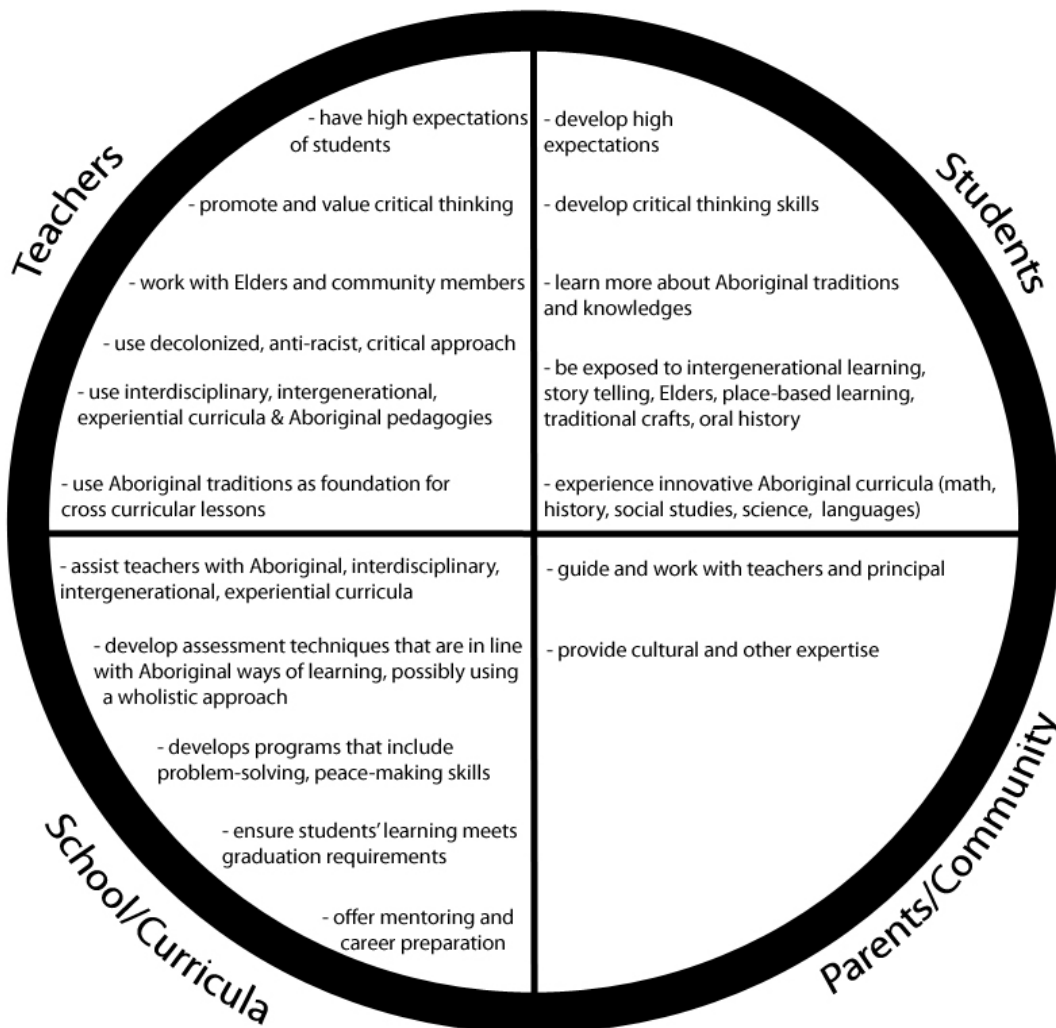


Figure 5: Intellectual Dimension of the Aboriginal Wholistic Learning Framework

History curriculum was repeatedly highlighted as needing specific attention as it has been a subject area where colonial history has been extremely misrepresented. Forum participants wanted history classes to more accurately reflect colonial history and its impact on Aboriginal peoples, including connections to be made between historical actions and contemporary inequities. Some participants suggested that these classes be mandatory for all students in the new school. They also felt that these

history classes would be beneficial for students in other schools.

While learning through an Aboriginal framework is important for this new school, parents and community participants felt that various forms of knowledge are beneficial and necessary so that their children “will be taught to be self-sufficient...will have 21st century knowledge and skills...will have multi-skill sets...and will respect all people and the environment.”

Participants emphasized the need for students to develop critical thinking skills in general and to use these skills to develop their understandings about the impact of colonization on Aboriginal peoples and their communities. Knowing about residential school experiences, and the impact of them, was one way to understand the current issues facing Aboriginal people and to value the resiliency of Aboriginal people to maintain their Aboriginal knowledges and values despite adversity.

Other important learning skills that Forum participants wanted to see included were problem-solving and peace-making. The latter comes from the Iroquois people of Eastern Canada and was used in one of the Vancouver schools to promote ways of getting along and solving problems.

Concerns were raised about assessment and standards. The view that the school should strive for excellence and have high expectations of its students implies that the school standards at minimum need to match mainstream schools. Participants encourage the VSD teachers and administrators to develop Aboriginal based assessments (such as a holistic framework) to meet these expectations.

Besides academic subjects, career decision-making and preparation skills and knowledge need to be accessible to students. Mentoring from college and university students and professionals was mentioned often.

2.4. Effective Teachers and Principal for an Aboriginal Focused School

“Pull students into the school instead of pushing them out.”

Forum participants often talked about what teachers did to engage them in learning or what they hoped that teachers would do in

a new school to create a welcoming, inclusive, and excellent learning environment. Clearly there are expectations for excellent teachers “who are in support of doing something different to support our kids.”

Here is a composite of the ideal teacher based on the Forum feedback:

- develops effective learning relationships with students, recognizes students’ talents and strengths;
- demonstrates care and patience toward students, listens intently;
- has high expectations of students and challenges them to do their best;
- has knowledge, experience, and commitment for using Aboriginal knowledge in pedagogy and curriculum, understands the impact of colonization on Aboriginal people, and uses strategies to decolonize education;
- is an expert in subject areas and uses varied pedagogy; and
- is aware and knowledgeable of urban Aboriginal contexts.

The desire to have Elders in the role of teachers and mentors was voiced strongly in all of the Forums. Elders who are cultural knowledge holders and who can mentor staff have already made significant contributions to education in the Vancouver School District. This important teaching resource and expertise exists and can be built upon for new initiatives. This new school needs to have Elders within the school and who will be an integral part of the teaching team. As many people said, “We need Elders in the school everyday.”

Having Aboriginal teachers was viewed as being very important for the new school. At the same time, participants mentioned that non-Aboriginal teachers who have a deep understanding of and successful experience in Aboriginal education should certainly be

considered. The most important considerations for the teachers chosen for the school are listed above and they must also be able to work as a cohesive team.

Much of the aforementioned teacher traits and expertise also applies to the principal. However, in order for the school to be successful, the principal needs to promote and support educational innovation. Since this school will be the first of its kind in Vancouver and one of the handful across Canada, the principal needs to be expert at team building, innovation, advocacy, communication, and transformational leadership.

2.5. Engaging Aboriginal parents and community

The parent/family and community supporters of the new school felt strongly that a new governance model or approach is needed where they have a more central decision-making role in cooperation with the Vancouver School Board. One member said it best, “We want to walk down this road with VSB and to be involved in every stage of development.” Recognizing the self-determination movement of Aboriginal people is an important principle that was mentioned many times. Members of urban Aboriginal organizations who were present at the Forums indicated their interest in partnering with the VSB to provide direction and to share responsibility for acquiring school resources.

As well, continuing dialogue and consultation with the students’ parents/family was strongly recommended so that they feel that the school is theirs and that they have a continuing responsibility to their child’s success and the success of the school. One participant said, “Listen to the parents: don’t tell them what to do but rather help facilitate their knowledge to plan or problem solve for themselves.” Parents and community members indicated that they could be

involved with various experiential learning activities as resource teachers. This school could be viewed as a resource to parents if it also had community oriented services, such as a community school or Neighbourhood learning centre where classes or workshops could be offered.

2.6. Concerns

The concerns of Forum participants centered on four major issues: segregation and racism, academic excellence, the scope of the school, and systemic barriers. These concerns need to be taken into account in planning for a new school and for continuing to improve Aboriginal education throughout the school district.

2.6.1. Segregation and Racism

A number of Forum participants voiced concerns about their feelings of segregation when first hearing about a new school with an Aboriginal focus. Conceptualizations of residential schools seemed to be triggered for a lot of Forum participants, and thus, they felt skeptical and leery of creating something different for Aboriginal students. Forum participants were also very familiar with systemic inequities and were concerned that a separate school could become ghettoized, under-resourced, subservient, and employ poorly qualified teachers.

At the same time, the issue of racism was brought forward as parents and students talked about comments made by teachers and students and treatment they received in public schools that made them feel “targeted.” One person said, “In school you have to address really overt racism, and experience what is different about you.” The difference implied here is one that is viewed pejoratively. Some participants said that they did not self-identify their children or themselves as Aboriginal people for fear of being labeled with learning problems and then treated as having “deficits.”

2.6.2. Academic excellence

Many Forum participants expressed concerns about the proposed school becoming a place of “dumbed down” education. Aboriginal students are too often the recipients of unqualified low expectations, and participants did not want to see these low expectations be reinvented in this new school.

2.6.3. Scope of the School

Forum participants repeatedly voiced that they would like the VSB to “think bigger” and strive to reach more Aboriginal students. Those who spoke to the issue of scope wanted to see the creation of an entire school, not just a school within a school. A school within a school “can only reach a small amount of students” and can potentially make students feel different and separate, which most teenagers dislike. One student who spoke, said for example, that she began to resent Aboriginal events because she felt isolated and embarrassed when she was pulled out of class to participate. Additionally, many participants wanted to see the new school focus on all grades, k-12 as more than just high school Aboriginal students need better opportunities.

2.6.4. Systemic Barriers and Commitment

The systemic barriers that concern participants the most are focused on the inflexibility of the school system and district. One example is the problem of hiring the best teachers and principal. One participant talked about the “elephant in the room...where we don’t have flexibility to hire the teachers we want,” which refers to the imposition of the seniority hiring policy of the teachers’ collective agreement.

Another key issue that concerns parents and community members is that they won’t be centrally involved with the Vancouver School Board in developing and running the proposed new school. Because Aboriginal programs in all sectors are often offered through soft funds or limited on-going funds, there is a fear that the school will not get the required funds and commitment to facilitate and maintain its success.

In concert with the commitment issue, some participants worry that the attention and support given to this new school will be an excuse for other Vancouver schools to give up their responsibility to address/include Aboriginal education.

3. Discussion and Summary

“There is no action piece yet!”

In response to the question of should there be a mini school with an Aboriginal focus or other model, the prevailing perspectives indicate: (1) support for establishing a new school with an Aboriginal focus; (2) support for a larger school model that addresses K-12; (3) that the new school be one of choice; and (4) that the new school be open to all interested students in the Vancouver School District and that Aboriginal students be given priority.

Another consistent message from Forum parents, community members, and staff is that it is time for action on the matter of establishing a new school with an Aboriginal focus. The perspectives of the 2011 Forum participants on this topic indicate strong support for this type of school, which is different from feedback received in previous years. The question of an Aboriginal secondary school was posed in 1995-96. The report *A Feasibility Study for a First Nations Secondary School for the Vancouver School System* concludes: “Establishing a First Nations Secondary School is premature and considered NOT FEASIBLE at present” (1996, p. xi, original in bold). The main

reasons for this 1995-96 conclusion revolved around the concern that there were not enough Aboriginal students to fill a high school because many had “personal needs and educational deficiencies” (p. vii) and that Aboriginal parental support for such a school was not secured. However, there was a recommendation that a “First Nations School or Program...at the middle school level IS FEASIBLE” (ibid, p. xi, original in bold). A number of other recommendations in the 1996 report relate to increasing and improving Aboriginal programming and curricula across the district, which has been reiterated by many VSD stakeholders over the past 14 years, and which the VSD has worked on in various ways.

Numerous consultations about improving Aboriginal education have been held with Aboriginal parents, community members, and VSD staff since the aforementioned 1996 report. Consistent recommendations about improving and increasing Aboriginal curriculum and parental involvement and increasing the numbers of Aboriginal teachers in order to improve Aboriginal education have been made: *First Nations Education Review: Taking Responsibility for Success* (March 2008); *Vancouver School District Strategic Plan to Improve the Achievement of First Nations Students* (May 2001); and the *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement* (June 2009).^{vii} Establishing an Aboriginal focused school is one innovative way to realize the recommendations mentioned above.

The time is right to be bold and to take action to start a new school with an Aboriginal focus. The January 2011 Forum consultations have provided some direction and suggestions for what an Aboriginal lens or focus is – in particular, 1) how school goals and wholistic learning and pedagogy can be shaped by Aboriginal Knowledge and ways of knowing; 2) how Aboriginal parents and community groups can work in partnership with the Vancouver School Board on matters of governance, planning,

and decision-making; and 3) how teachers and the principal can be successful with Aboriginal learners.

The concerns described in section 2.6 may be addressed through the development of new forms of school governance, school vision, goals, a wholistic learning framework, and improved curricula as demonstrated in the analysis section above. Many of the Forum participants’ suggestions, in the form of principles, considerations, and concrete examples are ways to address pressing issues. For example, the principles of ensuring the school is one of choice, that it is open to all students, and that excellence is central should negate the view that if a school with an Aboriginal focus exists that it is not as good as mainstream or that such a school results in a form of segregation that creates an inferior education and widens the educational and social gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners.

Revamped curriculum was not only requested for this new Aboriginal school; it was also requested for the larger VSB area. Curricula are powerful, and have the opportunity to help “kill the racism,” as one Forum participant stated. Participants felt that once more non-Aboriginal people begin to understand Aboriginal cultures from Aboriginal perspectives, racism will deteriorate. District wide changes to elementary and high school curriculum provides the opportunity to begin eliminating racism on a systemic level.

A number of the Forum participants who spoke in favour of a new Aboriginal focused school had experience with developing, working in, or attending Indigenous schools in Canada, the United States, and New Zealand. Aboriginal community members who work with social service organizations in the Vancouver area indicated their keen interest to work with the VSB in meaningful ways to “make the school happen.” The Vancouver School District is fortunate to have a diverse and rich array of expertise residing in the Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal communities, which it serves that, could be called on to help with developing and implementing a new school.

Talented, committed, knowledgeable, caring teachers and principals are of course needed for any school. For a new Aboriginal focused school, it is critical to its success. Great care needs to be taken to find and hire the best teachers and principal for this school. Top quality Aboriginal teachers and principal must be given priority for consideration for working in this school. This school's staff also needs to work effectively as a team with each other and with the students' parents and other community members. Getting to know the students and their families, developing effective relationships with the students, parents, and Aboriginal community members, participating in Aboriginal community events, and having a strong grounding in Aboriginal Knowledge and ways of knowing are additional key criteria for selecting the teachers and principal. The Forum participants' suggestions for effective teachers and the principal provides a rich foundation for developing hiring and retention criteria. The VSB may want to consider expanding the staffing selection and interview process to include participation and feedback of Elders, parents, community members, and senior students.

4. Moving Forward

“Be bold and take action.”

This report concludes with some suggestions for moving forward in the event that the Vancouver School Board opts to establish a new school with an Aboriginal focus.

Such a school will be a fairly new endeavour for public schools in British Columbia. Currently, there is one other BC public Aboriginal Choice School (elementary level) located at Prince George. Other public

Aboriginal schools across Canada include the Amiskwaciy Academy in Edmonton (grades 7-12), Joe Duquette Secondary School in Saskatoon (grades 9-12), Children of the Earth High School (grades 10-12) and Niji Mahkwa School (grades N-9) in Winnipeg, and the First Nations Junior and Senior School of Toronto (grades JK - 8). Some research exists that indicates the success factors and challenges of some of these schools and some of the trustees and staff have visited them. Case study research also exists about what makes Canadian Aboriginal schools successful.^{viii} The proposed new school's direction, vision, goals, wholistic learning framework, curriculum and pedagogy, staffing, and leadership are consistent with the little research that exists; therefore, taking action to start an Aboriginal oriented school is not done in a vacuum or without precedent.

The next action step could be to establish a working group comprised of school district stakeholders (trustee, district staff, Aboriginal parents, and Aboriginal community members) with a mandate to develop both short and longer-range plans for setting up a school. This group could identify the grade levels, location, governance plan, and hiring plan (timelines and criteria). A phased-in approach may be considered where the school starts with particular grades and then adds others later. Continued dialogue with stakeholders, including students, needs to continue regarding the evolving new school's plans.

Other VSD innovative initiatives such as the learning design features of the *Aboriginal Learning Inquiry* (2006 – appreciative inquiry project) and the wholistic school and community resource proposal for a *Cultural Connections Centre: Aboriginal Education Learning Centre* could be drawn upon and piloted in concert with the new school. The VSD has drawn from research for its programs and initiatives. A research program that examines the successes, challenges, and impacts of a new Aboriginal focused school can provide a means of

mobilizing useful aspects of the school's programs, curricula, and pedagogies for The January 2011 Aboriginal Education Forum participants consisted of students, parents, community members, school staff, school board staff, and trustees. They spoke from their hearts, experiences, and knowledge perspectives in response to the Vancouver School Board's question, "Should the district establish an Aboriginal focused mini school or other model that will enable students, who may wish to do so, to learn through an Aboriginal lens?"

schools within the district.

In following Aboriginal oral tradition, we would tell others that the January 2011 Aboriginal Education Forums resembled a feast where we were fed extremely well with ideas and reminders (see Figure 1) of what is important for educational and school success; how Aboriginal Knowledge, values, and culture can effectively shape learning and teaching; and how parents and Aboriginal community members can work in partnership with the Vancouver School Board to offer education that is meaningful, inclusive, and excellent.

Endnotes

ⁱ All of the quotes in this document are attributed to the Forum participants. In order to maintain the flow of the document, each quote may not always identify it as a Forum participant's perspective.

ⁱⁱ See— Archibald, Jo-ann. (2008). *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press; Armstrong, Jeannette. (2000). A holistic education, teachings from the Dance House: "We cannot afford to lose one Native child." In Maenette Nee-Benham & Joanne Cooper (Eds.), *Indigenous educational models for contemporary practice* (pp. 35-43). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers; Castellano, Marlene Brant. (2000). Updating Aboriginal traditions of knowledge. In George Dei, Budd Hall, & Dorothy Rosenberg (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledges in global contexts: Multiple readings of our world* (pp. 21-36). Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Canadian Council on Learning- Aboriginal Learning: Retrieved Feb 23, 2011 from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/RedefiningSuccessModels.html>. Wholistic is spelled with a 'w' to indicate an Indigenous Knowledge System approach.

ⁱⁱⁱ Haig-Brown, Celia., Regnier, Robert., Vermette, Kathy., & Archibald, Jo-ann. (1997). *Making the spirit dance within: Joe Duquette high school and an Aboriginal community*. Toronto: Lorimer.

^{iv} This movement started in the educational field with the development of the 1972, *Indian Control of Indian Education Policy* (IEIC) by the National Indian Brotherhood (now, the Assembly of First Nations). The major principles of IEIC included local community control, parental responsibility, the inclusion of Indian culture and values, increased cultural awareness of non-Indian teachers and more Indian teachers, and improved physical facilities.

^v The *Shared Learnings'* resource was sponsored and published by the BC Ministry of Education. It was revised in 2006. Retrieved Feb 23, 2011 from: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/shared.pdf>

^{vi} See, Battiste, Marie., & Henderson, James (Sakej) (2009). Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge in Eurocentric education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, (32)1, pp. 5-18.

^{vii} These documents contain many recommendations for improving many facets of education for Aboriginal learners. For the purpose of examining an "Aboriginal focus" for a school the curriculum, parent, and Aboriginal teacher recommendations are noted here.

^{viii} See Bell, David. (2004). *Sharing our success: Ten case studies in Aboriginal Schooling*. Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE); Fulford, George. (2007). *Sharing our success: More case studies in Aboriginal schooling*. Kelowna, BC: SAEE; Mahaffy, Cheryl. (2003). Amiskwaciy Academy: Honoring traditions, achieving excellence. *Legacy (Spring)*, pp. 13-16; Michel, Paul., Erickson, Mavis., & Madak, Paul (2005). *Why an Aboriginal public school? A report to the Prince George School District No. 57*. Prince George, BC: Prince George School District; Robinson, Rheanna (2007). *Education transformation: Issues for implementing an Aboriginal choice school in Prince George, BC*. Unpublished Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University.

Appendix I: Example of Parent and & Community Forum Agenda

VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD PARENT AND COMMUNITY FORUM

A NEW MINI SCHOOL OR MODEL WITH AN ABORIGINAL FOCUS

JANUARY 24TH AND 25TH, 6:30- 9:00 PM

The purpose of this forum is:

1. to receive feedback from parents, family, and community about establishing a Mini School with an Aboriginal focus or other Model, and
2. to indicate the level of support or disagreement
3. to provide concrete ideas about what an Aboriginal lens means, what the school (learning, teachers, principal) could be like?
4. to identify ways parents, family, and community can be engaged with this new Mini School or Model.

✕ Background ✕

From the Chair of the School Board's Letter - January

"We are also beginning a community consultation process this month to discuss whether the district should establish an Aboriginal-focused mini school or other model that will enable students, who may wish to do so, to learn through an Aboriginal lens." The School Board is interested in receiving feedback about establishing a new school or program. Suggestions about the grade levels, location, structure, curriculum, and staffing are encouraged.

Vancouver School District Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement, Year 2 Implementation Goals

"Increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal histories, traditions, and culture to support success for all students."

What is a Vancouver School District Mini School?

- usually grade 8-12 programs hosted by a larger high school.
- enhanced academic program, leadership, outdoor education, technology, social responsibility are some examples for foci for Mini Schools.
- usually 30 grade 8 students are admitted each year
- smaller classes
- students may also take courses in the host school.



Agenda

6:30 - 7:30 pm:

1. Background to Forum. Purpose of the Forum. What is a Mini School? Participant questions. Time to respond to chart questions.

7:30 - 8:30 pm:

2. Feedback. Small group discussion, see questions below

8:30 - 9:00 pm:

3. Plenary discussion, space for further comments and questions from participants.
 4. Closing
-

Small group discussion questions:

- A. What would a successful Aboriginal Focused Mini-School or other Model be like? How would Aboriginal culture and knowledge be used to teach academic subjects? What other aspects of Aboriginal ways of knowing could be used in the school, for example, learning from Elders, intergenerational learning and mentoring, learning from the land, Aboriginal values, service learning? What would the teachers be like? What would the principal be like?
- B. How could parents, family or community members be involved with the Aboriginal Mini School or Model?
- C. What would make you want to send your child to an Aboriginal Mini School or Model?
- D. What would prevent you from sending your child to an Aboriginal Mini School or Model?

Appendix 2: Forum Notes

Notes from the Student Forum: MacDonald Elementary, Jan 21, 2011

(55 Participants)

Plenary Session

Introduction: Information was given about the purpose of the Student Forum. Students were encouraged to help the Vancouver School Board plan ways to improve Aboriginal education and learning and to give ideas for a possible new mini school or other model that has an Aboriginal focus.

Jo-ann Archibald posed the question: “What do you like about school”

From students:

- the teachers are awesome
- the teachers are funny
- the teachers don't let us skip school
- they take an interest and encourage us to learn
- principals are fun
- they spend time talking and being friendly with students
- fun subjects like P.E.
- the libraries because they are full of books

From adults:

- the sports, because I didn't fit into school in any other way
- it was a way of connecting
- another adult echoed this idea of sports
- sports connect you with after school things which kept me safer
- gave me courage to keep coming back
- I had this one history teachers who was an amazing story teller
- So amazing that I got my BA in history

Notes from Small Group Discussions

Group I

Examples of how Aboriginal cultures were woven into teaching/education

One of the students went to a camp during the summer, called Camp near Tofino.

- It was sort of like an outdoor school.
- Two of the students in the group went there
- they played Aboriginal games, made cedar roses
- it was fun
- it made one student feel good
- they got to learn about First Nations people
- It made the students feel connected to each other, to the land, to their teachers

Another student offered the example of when his class went to the UBC farm

- they canned fish
- they learned how to process food and vegetables
- they made cedar headbands
- he felt like the teachers there really liked the students, as indicated by the fish the teachers sent the students after the farm trip
- the teachers also fed the students spaghetti and coffee which the students really liked, it indicated that the teachers care

One of the teachers said how when he first moved to Vancouver, he started working at Grandview, in a program called Eagle's Nest

- an Elder sort of took him under her wing and showed him around, taught him
- he learned about teamwork
- how when he came to work at [school] he wanted to come and help the students. How it was "I will do this, and I will give the students learnings." But in the end he ended up learning from the students, and the "I" was de-emphasized.
- he felt like his perspective flipped with the "I," "them," "we," "teacher," "learner."
- he got to learn about the Aboriginal people of this territory, and how that was really cool
- there was an Elder in the program that shared teachings with him, and introduced him to something called "the matrimonial land," which is where he met his wife he learned the traditions of the people from this land, like the Potlatch, which is all about government and legislative assembly. It is like a community forum, it's not just about sharing food.

One student shared how it was so awesome that they got to meet a principal from New Zealand, and learn about Indigenous people there he said how he wouldn't have had that opportunity in a mainstream school

The mentor who was there ... said how she learned from the kids

A teacher asked one of the students if he wouldn't mind sharing his transition from mainstream school to the outreach school

- The student said how in "regular school" his mind wasn't in it, he would just sit there and stare at his paper and not be engaged. He would show up to class, but just sit there and not do anything
- Now, at the outreach school, he is engaged in learning, he does his work, he likes going to school, and he is going to graduate which he said that he wouldn't have done so before.
- He repeated several times how he was going to graduate
- When asked what was the difference between the mainstream school and outreach school to make him that much more engaged, he said it was the teachers. The teachers helped him more
- He also said he felt more connected to the students

Another student jumped in and shared her experience with mainstream school and the difference between it and their outreach school

- in mainstream school she said the teachers "don't know where you come from." She said that if she was late the teachers didn't care why, they just told you to come in and sit down and get caught up – start taking notes.
- at the outreach school the teachers ask you why are you late, what is going on, they want to "know where you come from."

- Subtext: the teachers and people at the outreach school care about each student's story, but at mainstream school they don't

Another student jumped in to share his experience of transition

- At the outreach school [a staff member] will call you if you are not in school when you are supposed to, she will say "where are you?"
- He said that he felt "passed along" in mainstream school. That he was a problem that just kept getting passed along to the next teacher. He said how his teachers just kept passing him to the next grade, not caring.
- But in the outreach program the teachers care, they "pull the kids in," instead of "push them out" of learning and school

One student said how the teachers in the outreach school make the kids feel good when the teachers have *REAL* conversations with the students

- She said it was as if the teachers view the students as real people with real opinions and that the teachers are interested in hearing them

The students (almost collectively) said that they feel like they can participate in classes, that the teachers actually *WANT* to hear what the students think

They don't feel nervous participating anymore whereas in mainstream school they would just be silent and feel nervous

The students would feel like they might be made fun of in mainstream school if they said something wrong, if they said something they would "feel 30 pairs of eyes staring at you"

The students now feel like it is important to get their voice heard

The high number of students in mainstream school was difficult

In the outreach school there are small class sizes

One student shared how she also feels like she and her fellow students in the class have gotten to know each other over a long period of time

- There is a lot of respect for each other
- They have gone through the same experiences together
- "Their friends have their backs"

One of the students from one of the elementary schools said he likes sports and hockey the most about school

The mentor was talking about her connections with the kids and how she has been involved for such a long time that now the kids that she first taught are having kids and she sees them around town and they say hello.

Group 2

1st Question: Think of a time that you enjoyed learning about Aboriginal culture in school and tell us about it

Learned about the environment by going to the UBC Farm [and appreciated]

- Connections to Aboriginal life traditions
- Oral story telling – traditional form
- Enjoyed the interaction, engagement, hands-on
- Enjoyed when Elders shared stories and the life lessons are within the story – share teachings

Teachers

- being Aboriginal
- lesson becomes more meaningful, original, personal, significant

2nd Question: What would a school with an Aboriginal focus be like?

School to be:

- K to 7 and gr. 8 to 12 with an option of an extra year (i.e. like Ontario)
- all Aboriginal students
- some felt it should be for everyone
- it is important for everyone
- filled with staff that are confident with Aboriginal culture, histories and traditions
- filled with traditional cultural art forms -> contemporary building/grounds in a way to reflect traditional practices
- inclusive of Elders
- Mentors
- Inclusive of both traditional teachings and 21st century learning Why? -> because Aboriginal students learn just like everyone else, and want to hang on to traditional ways while learning for the jobs of tomorrow
- If it is 8-12, then you don't have more schools

Group 3 (students were from an elementary school)

What would the school be like?

- Multicultural celebrations
- Science/space
- Math
- Personal planning
- Self Defense
- Art (lots)
- Leadership
- Lockers
- 2 gyms/swimming pool/ice rink for hockey, soccer, basketball, martial arts
- Games room – video games
- Homework Club
- Catch up block
- Music room – strings program, drumming
- Drama
- Study modern & historical
- Learn own culture
- Learn Aboriginal languages, communicate with Elders, Preserve Language
- Carving, woodworking class

- Necklace making
- Experts in different areas of life (e.g., Elders)
- Not structured, changing schedule
- Field trips
- Math, beading, Aboriginal patterns
- Code talker, Navajo & Japanese people, WWI I – Residential schools – forced to speak English
- Dream catchers
- Poetry – The Raven, The Eagle

Teachers

- Elders teaching Aboriginal skills
- French person to teach French
- Teacher for each subject

Group 4 (students were from an elementary school)

What would the school be like?

- Lots of physical/active learning
- First Nations art
- More content about Iroquois Confederacy
- Peace Making skills (Iroquois Confederacy)
- Hands-on learning in all classes
- More art examples: beading
- More drama, traditional stories
- Elder involvement
- Dancing
- More field trips (Xaitem – Mission, Fish Hatcheries etc.)
- More swimming
- Learning orally (not text)
- More First Nations food (content, cooking, cafeteria)
- Canoe-making/carving
- Poems
- Weaving
- Nature and animal care

Aboriginal education is:

- Interesting
- Fun
- Empowering
- Exciting
- Aboriginal
- Sports (Aboriginal sports)
- An opportunity

Group 5

1st Question: Think of a time that you enjoyed learning about Aboriginal culture in school and tell us about it

- Field trip to UBC farm
- Cedar weaving
- Gutted fish with elders
- Traditional gardening with elders
- Community garden with Aboriginal people
- Field trip to Camp Hooksum for one week
- Gutted fish
- Learned culture and stories
- Slept in longhouse
- Elders' teachings
- Bathed in creek
- Learned traditional cooking and foods
- Survival camps on land/nature
- Tribal Journeys – canoe trip
- Traditional Recreational
- BC First Nations 12 exam course on Aboriginal topics
- First Nations Literature
- First Nations 12 is a very emotional course for First Nations students
- Residential school stories

Discussion input into residential school topics

- Viewed films and documentaries on residential school: i.e. *Blue Eyes*
- Viewed Aboriginal movies: i.e. *Smoke Signals, Dances With Wolves, Skins, Boy...*
- Residential school focus for three days
- Elders's stories on residential school experiences

Students expressed that they liked the idea of an all Aboriginal focused school

2nd Question: What would a school with an Aboriginal focus be like?

- One student expressed concern for an all-Aboriginal school because she felt that it is not good to isolate; it is better to be multi-cultural; she can get along with all people regardless of race
- Another student expressed that, for some Aboriginal students, it is easier to succeed with other Aboriginal students
- An all Aboriginal school will help with graduation rates
- It must be a positive environment
- A language course is important
- Aboriginal people come from different cultures, but do share common experiences
- One student shared "If I didn't have outreach [school], I would have dropped out"
- All Aboriginal focus would provide opportunity to share different traditions
- Need supportive teachers and coaches
- No bullying is important: Students want to feel safe
- Need Aboriginal teachers and elders in school

Plenary session after small group discussion

Jo-ann: Is there anything that anyone would like to share from their group discussions? Any new thoughts?

One adult said that one group wrote down peacemaking skills

- the students (grade 3?) studied the Haudenosuanne Peacemaker
- peacemaking skills seemed like a good idea for other schools

One teacher reported on what the students in his group talked about

- the relationships are more personable and stronger in the outreach school
- the students feel like they had a voice
- the students say they are more successful now
- the students feel like they have good relationships with staff

One student said

- We are all Aboriginal and get along so well
- We have commonality
- In mainstream school I didn't want to go, and now in the outreach school, I WANT TO GO, ever day
- If I didn't go to this outreach school, I would have dropped out by now

Staying in one school from beginning to end, gives students a chance to get to know each other. They move along together

One student said

- The outreach school gives me a sense of home
- A home away from home

One teacher said

- In [one school] they brought Elder in to heal some wounds
- She created a mini school and taught students about the people who belong to this land
- She taught the students about how governments are formed
- She got the whole school involved in the Potlatch

Jo-ann said:

- Potlatch covers a lot of ground. You can cover math, history, problem-solving, socials, communications, art

Jo-ann asked: what might prevent you from going to this school?

Students said

- no sports
- no arts – I only come to school for the arts
- if there wasn't that relationship between you and the teacher

Jo-ann asked: How do teachers build good relationships with students?

Students said:

- he liked having different kinds of teachers, everyone, a variety of teachers
- teachers should be Aboriginal, or if they are not, they should be really, really knowledgeable
- teachers who are not just in it for the paycheck

- teachers who take time to talk to students

Teachers said:

- you know a teacher could say “you’re not here, get your butt to school” but this has to be down where the power is more equal between students. Can’t say this when the teachers sits above the student so high
- the teachers have to feel like we have a relationship with the students too
- for the outreach school, we interview students, and that is where the relationship starts

Jo-ann said: this is the space to get out what you haven’t gotten out yet.

Comments:

- put Aboriginal language in the schools
- it would be nice for everyone to have this opportunity (Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal)
- student suggested that the school should add a course about learning traditions
- if we learn their culture, they should learn ours
- an all Aboriginal school will celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples, but also share common experiences
- safety issues: Students will be in one school from K to 12; no change of schools
- there will be a sense of belonging or home away from home
- Elders can provide traditional knowledge: i.e. potlatch, pow-wow, etc..
- diversity of teachers who are Aboriginal or have Aboriginal cultural knowledge

Notes from the Parent and Forum: Point Grey Secondary Jan 24, 2011

(35 Participants)

Plenary Session

Steve Cardwell – superintendent of VSB – opening remarks

- This Forum is an important step for dialogue
- Just the beginning – discussions, conversations
- Nothing has been determined at this point
- Consulting with Aboriginal people is essential to process
- Voices of students, parents, and community members are essential
- Introduced Jo-ann

Jo-ann Archibald shared information that was included in the Forum agenda about the background to the Vancouver School Board's request for consultation about a possible mini school with an Aboriginal lens or other model. She pointed out the discussion questions (on the agenda) for the evening.

Participants' comments and suggestions to plenary address:

Response #1:

- Previous information from previous forums hopefully will be included in your report
- White elephant in the room: jurisdiction debates between federal and provincial governments
- Urban Aboriginal organizations support schools
- Urban Aboriginal service delivery, partnerships with VSB
- Critically important: anything we do has to be placed based focused; economically sustainable;
- Want it to be successful for Vancouver's most challenged people

Jo-ann's response:

- Report will be available to all for future reference
- Can draw upon good resources and research to ensure Aboriginal organizations can be part of planning and implementation

Response #2:

- Learning from other places: 3 schools in Canada that are already doing what we want; plus use literature research; include these in dialogue

Response #3

- question: is it only 1 school? Only 30 students?

Jo-ann's Response

- The purpose of the Forums are to get feedback about having such a school established or another model for Aboriginal education could be suggested. No decisions at this point.
- We can explore various possibilities

Response #3

- Shame to limit it to 30 students

Response #4

- Aboriginal mini school should be in all schools
- Not just in one school
- Include Inuit and Metis

Response #5

- Is there any reassurance that this will be kept up whether there will be another election?

Chair of school board response

- This proposal is not just for the board; it is aligned with the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement; very surprised if it didn't get picked up by a new board in the future; Aboriginal education is a high priority

Response #6

- Principles valuable
- Keep it in mind as we discuss
- Lots of people don't agree with segregation
- Adoption & support of VSB for United Nations Declaration on Indigenous people is important

Response #7

- Single mom of 5 children
- Continuous battle for last 10 years
- Daughter placed in a room with only First Nations students
- Lack of control of teachers for First Nations students
- Against segregation; daughter on honor role
- Segregation - failing system
- FN students put in back dark classroom
- High drop out rates
- Tie traditional learnings: wants her children to get same learning and education as mainstream students in BC
- I'd like to see a big school with teachers who want to teach our children

Response #8

- We have a number of mini schools in Van School District
- It is a form of segregation: we take them out of mainstream
- Aboriginal enhancement program has important goals
- When Aboriginal children are not reflected in curriculum: that sense of belonging is not there
- long term goal for the district to focus on every school, every classroom includes Aboriginal children
- if we adopt segregation: we make it more difficult
- we really haven't addressed issue of belonging for Aboriginal students
- what community really wants is what I'll listen to

Response #9

- my son is in grade 8: there are no programs for my son
- there are alternative programs for kids who are drug addicted and have trouble with law

- these are the only available service; my son is none of these
- daughter experienced racist comment from teacher re: FN people during circle time
- ridicule shames our children
- Aboriginal awareness needs to be built into curriculum: provincially, nationally,
- Stay in school? Why? To face ridicule from school?
- Institutionalized racism exists
- Educate mainstream society in every grade level: in curriculum
- Many teachers do not know about impact of residential schools

Response #10

- we want success for Aboriginal students
- the term 'segregation' bothers me
- ensure that quality of Aboriginal education is on par with all students
- 30 years of shame for Aboriginal students in the province
- wholesale attitude issue that needs to be looked at

Response #11

- lots of good ideas shared this evening
- curriculum and societal change is good
- process is in place for dealing with racism in schools
- short term: necessary for everybody to follow through with process that's already in place
- word: segregation not helpful to use; with mini schools people apply to get to these schools; it is not forced segregation
- community building exercise should be part of a program
- wonderful opportunity for people to come together

Response #12

- re: equality principle; doesn't matter what we say; if we don't create quality of positions, nothing works; fundamental issue; community needs to be involved;
- there are positive examples out there: Harlem Children's Zone - Place Based program: pre-natal to graduation;
- school board can adopt this approach
- cultural identity of individual is important; schools currently don't teach anything about Coast Salish community
- need to build the cultural identity of children
- recognize challenges of families: i.e. single parent families

Response #13

- 25 year teacher veteran
- idea of choice: Aboriginal mini school;
- resources; wonders about staffing
- if the solution is a mini – school, then other schools will give up their responsibility of teaching Aboriginal focus
- staffing fundamental for success to this school
- current structure don't meet needs of Aboriginal students

Response #14

- Cultural safety needs to be developed
- Students need to feel culturally safe; many do not

Response #15

- resources: Federal gov't does provide \$ for resources for status Indians

Notes from Small Group Discussions

Group I

1st Question: What would a successful mini-school/model be like?

- right off the bat, one participant said that it would have successful students
- when prompted to define what successful students would be, he said that they would be those who feel confident and feel respected at the very least it should match the standards of mainstream schools, but it would be awesome for it to not only meet the standards/status-quo, but for it to excel too and be excellent. It should be “enhanced”
- in terms of content, it does not have to be the same content as mainstream school, but the content has to be something that is meaningful for the students
- historically these “segregation” schools are dumbing down, but this mini school is not this.
- the school would need educators with an interest and passion for Aboriginal students, and the educators would be preferably Aboriginal
- successful students would need to be able to question assumptions, the cultural assumptions of structures, peoples, education, etc

2nd Question: How would you include Aboriginal culture and ways of knowing?

- it's a hard question to answer, but the culture would flow from the Aboriginal teachers and people in the school
- when students feel like nobody gets “it,” (their cultural concerns, their way of being), they can feel like their teachers get “it.”
- you would need to include community and Elders, these are the cultural supports that students need
- you can have Elders in the class, and for any ceremonies
- you need to be inclusive of family and community; you need to build on the lesson from their lived experience
- you can draw on Aboriginal literature
- you need to become proud of your identity, and one way to become proud is through history, not white people's history, but you need Aboriginal history. You need this to feel pride and dignity
- there is a deep importance of knowing the travesties of last 100 years, it gives a context
- don't window dress histories
- you need to put life into the histories too, not just have it be this happened at this time, with these people etc, but to have it be full of life
- but with this focus on history, why is this just for Aboriginal mini-schools?
- you need to incorporate cultural teachings and also recognize the multiple Aboriginal populations
- culture is everything, Elders just scratch the surface, it's everything, it's how you talk to an Elder, not just having him/her there.
- But Elders keep the knowledge, so they need to be there
- But then there are myriad of questions when talking about Elders. which Elders? How many? What about Non-Aboriginal kids, how do you address their relationship with Elders?

3rd Question: How could parents, family or community members be involved with the Aboriginal Mini School or Model

- one person wanted to emphasize that figuring out how to include parents goes back to having the school have a very *real* basis in Aboriginal values, for within Aboriginal values is an inherent respect for families. These values will teach you how to do it.
- again you can bring Elder in to moderate and help
- you can have a community room
- you can offer drop in times and offer food which is inviting to parents
- if you want family involved, if you really really want it, you **HAVE** to start younger
- if you start at grade 8, it's too late. The parents are already not involved by that age, and it will be harder to re-engage them
- you need to start at grades 3-10
- then by grade 10 parents are still engaged, and they can continue to be engaged
- if you start at grade 3 you don't have to create a connection, you just have to maintain a connection
- you can have an A.D.P.A.C. (Aboriginal District Parent Action Community)
- when considering the inclusion of parents, you need to consider the developmental trajectories of teenagers
- teens don't want to hang out with parents and, if in grade 8, you are going to introduce teens to hanging out and involving their parents in school for the **FIRST** time, it is going to be hard.

4th Question: What would make you want to send your sons and daughters here?

- if they want to go, students will ask to go
- if it's enhanced programming
- if it address *real* social issues, like not having enough money, like home issues – e.g. wondering if your parent(s) are having problems while you are at school, like not having lunch
- if it's well resourced, awesome space, lots of technology

5th Question: What would make you not want to send your son or daughter here?

- nil

There was some redefining of “mini-school.”

- this idea isn't a “mini-school,” in that it has top-notch students that have to pass all the tests, but instead it seems to be a “miniature school.”
- Mini-school is a format within the VSB, and what we are talking about today seems more like a miniature school

Another idea

- People didn't like this idea of mini school, would like to see what is already in existence in the VSB grow stronger, like those programs at Grandview
- some people in the group felt like schools like Grandview are already doing all of these things, and these initiatives need to grow stronger

Another concern

- this creation of a “mini-school” should not look to places like COTE, Edmonton, and Prince George because Vancouver is completely different
- additionally, every school is different
- there is no system wide solution

Group 2

1st Question: What would a successful mini-school/model be like? 2nd Question: How would you include Aboriginal culture and ways of knowing?

- Are there criteria to get in?
 - academic level?
- Need strong cultural presence
- Have **Elders**/cultural mentors – staff
- Teacher/admin – Aboriginal students
 - Or staff that is knowledgeable and understanding
- Open to all students
- *All staff should be active, passionate and engaged
- Adjustment to collective agreement so that we can keep staff
- Curriculum -> address at Ministry level
 - Board approved courses
- Aboriginal ways of knowing
 - independent learning
 - oral/visual etc.
- focus on anti-racism for students and teachers
- June 21st, National Aboriginal Day
 - Focus on Aboriginal day/week for teacher training
- Aboriginal Education –Focus week
- Connect with external specialists – sciences, etc.
- Role models -> graduate students, trades, etc
- Clear actions to remove the segregation
- The people in the systems have to learn Aboriginal matters

3rd Question: How could parents, family or community members be involved with the Aboriginal Mini School or Model

- No responses

4th Question: What would make you want to send your sons and daughters here?

- Choice School
- safe environment
- cultural safety
- success
- respectful
- inclusive entry criteria
- clear scope and sequence of the program
- multi disciplinary
- school cohort or learning environment

5th Question: What would make you not want to send your son or daughter here?

- if it did not lead to graduation/dogwood

Group 3

1st Question: What would a successful mini-school/model be like?

A. Aboriginal Framework & Approaches

- Aboriginal worldviews & philosophies
- Coast Salish language & values
- Understand one's positioning and take responsibility –accountable to one's position
- Consider self in relation to others
- Respect all people and the environment
- Wholistic approach (spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual development)
- Include the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights (principles to guide learning and school interactions)
- Develop phase 2 of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement, extend principles of the existing document to all levels of education

B. Outcomes

- What makes this new school different from others in regards to outcomes?
- Transformative learning – engagement and action
 - environment – place based (local & global contexts and considerations)
 - be good citizens
 - sustainability
- Equity for Aboriginal learners, greatly increase Aboriginal student success
- Transform Indigenous culture into today's learning context and processes
- Need to understand historical, educational, social, political context of Aboriginal learners

C. Community Involvement

- Need to have a metro Vancouver Aboriginal urban strategy that would work with the Vancouver School Board

D. Partnerships

- Service organizations to work with the school, “work together as a team”, have similar services that exist for new immigrant children & families
- Identify and share human and learning resources – a benefit

Schema with: Governments, Students, School, and Community
Interactions shown among these parts and within a circle

E. School structure could be different

- adjust school schedule for ceremonial purposes and activities
- consider including cycle of life and seasons themes
- learning could occur on the land and not in the school but at community activities
- Cross cultural training is important for all – students, teachers, principal

F. Principal and Teachers

- Show case or recognize Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal staff
- They must believe in and work within the school's Aboriginal framework and philosophies
- Engagement and action for teachers and principals, provide Prof Development
- provide on-going cross cultural learning – critical for everyone
- Teaching style- teachers to be flexible in their teaching methods, use a variety of approaches, demonstrate patience and ability to help students who don't understand what is being taught
- Principal should be Indigenous – role model, be approachable

G. Other Comments

- On-going commitment is needed by school board and community groups
- Be mindful of need to take risks and to think outside the box (i.e., hiring the best or most appropriate teachers, dealing with employment policies, overcoming systemic barriers)

Group 4

1st Question: What would a successful mini-school/model be like?

2nd Question: How would you include Aboriginal culture and ways of knowing?

- Culturally safe: no shaming of children
- Traditions should be taught and upheld
- Aboriginal school of Excellence
- Not “ghetto-ized”
- Career preparation programs: i.e. nursing, medical doctors
- Education on various occupations
- Mentoring with professionals
- Funding partnerships: i.e. health organizations
- Scholarships made available
- Preparation for beyond high school
- Inspire at young age & grade
- Pow-wow room
- Sufficient physical space to accommodate the students
- Teachers need to be educated on Aboriginal issues
- Enriched Aboriginal school program
- Pre-requisites on admission criteria and admission process
- This should be an excellent Aboriginal program/school with more advanced & enriched programs
- Multi-aged cluster classes
- Consistent with Aboriginal ways of knowing .i.e. intergenerational learning
- Organized cultural events: i.e. Potlatch
- 50% of staff should be Aboriginal
- Parental – Home support necessary: i.e. physical & mental health issues
- Transportation needs to be addressed

3rd Question: How could parents, family or community members be involved with the Aboriginal Mini School or Model

- Need community support
- Need healing from residential school experiences

- Need resource people: i.e. psychologists in school
- Need elders in school everyday
- Access to food
- Big Brothers & Big Sisters programs
- Need role models
- “The Connections Tool”: Mapping, goals,
- Individualized plans for students/families/schools

4th Question: What would make you want to send your sons and daughters here?

- Sense of caring and belonging
- High expectations of literacy
- Social / emotional literacy
- Connecting to outside community
- Need to restructure school’s organization and learning
- Administration & teachers need to address residential school experiences
- Share – provide choices
- Model healthy environment
- Where are the role models? Need to network
- Re: resources - where are they working?
- Students will be seen as ambassadors/role models
- Welcoming environment
- After school programs
- Homework groups
- Transportation for afterschool programs
- Physical activities provided after school i.e. outdoor camps, science camps
- Learn Aboriginal cultures in other areas i.e. Aztecs
- Learn about land, archeology & traditional territories i.e. Kitsilano, Spanish Banks, Stanley Park
- Learn about Indigenous contributions i.e. to the land
- Passionate learning & teaching
- Programs should be “outside the box”
- Teach about connections to the earth/ environment
- Aboriginal people are stewards of the land
- Must have qualified staff / certified teachers
- Must provide opportunities that they cannot get anywhere else
- Assessment issues needs to be addressed
- Career planning & preparation programs. Focus on goals i.e. medical field
- Strong support in Career planning
- Apprenticeship programs
- Children will be taught to be self-sufficient
- Children taught skills to adapt to the changing world
- Resiliency / self-reliance
- Children will be taught to know their strengths
- Children will have multi skill sets
- An open physical space and environment
- Lots of art displayed
- Open and fluid learning environment
- Need to determine grade levels at the school
- Practical programs: outdoor, teams, adult connections
- Students taught self-efficacy

- Resource and research what's already working in other school districts

Plenary session after small group discussion:

Response #1:

- concerned about education barriers
- feedback should focus more on oral; a lot of our people don't do emails; can only express themselves orally

Response #2:

- tomorrow night Tuesday powwow at Friendship Centre. Won't have a good turnout for tomorrow night's forum. Try to schedule on different night. We've had bad experiences in schools, so have forums in alternate places other than schools

Response #3

- district needs to recognize successful Aboriginal people

Response #4

- challenging for Aboriginal people to get engaged publically; not comfortable in public forums; one on one feedback is an idea

Response #5

- how successful have other schools been? i.e. Edmonton?

Jo-ann: Children of the Earth School...75% of students have graduated

- Joe Duquette in Saskatoon; sharing circles; food; teachers; home away from home were qualitative factors for success
- Could gather studies of successful schools
- Establish partnerships with faculties of education

Response #6

- look at school's success and don't forget differences
- mini school takes away from larger discussion; we could be talking about other larger topics i.e. curriculum; alternative ideas;

Response #7

- how is knowledge collected here is being fed into the new teacher education course at UBC on Aboriginal Education?

Jo-ann (in response)

- knowledge here can be helpful in course i.e. UBC teacher prep course; intro to Aboriginal education; what should a school district do? This course will be mandatory; course being developed now; other teacher ed programs in BC have a core required Aboriginal education course already (UVic, UNBC, UBCO)

Response #8

- what about "old" teachers? How do we educate them?
- Cultural awareness is needed

Response #9

- what is going to happen to all the writings on the wall?
- What's going to happen?

Jo-ann (in response)

- we'll document all the comments (oral and written); then look for similarities and prepare a report for the Vancouver School Board. Report may be completed in two weeks

Board member response

- preliminary consultation first through these Forums the Board will consider the report and ask for feedback on it.

Response #9

- get suggestions on charts out to others
- community voice needs to be heard
- student success in schools need to be voiced

Jo-ann

- many of these ideas can be applied to whichever school or model is decided upon.

Notes from the Student Forum: Templeton Secondary, Jan 25, 2011

(60 Participants)

Plenary Session

An Aboriginal oral tradition and Town Hall format was used for the January 25, 2011 Parent and Community Forum. Individual participants spoke to the whole group. Small group discussions were not held because participants were interested in listening to the perspectives of the speakers. However, participants were encouraged to write individual responses on post-it notes about the Forum questions posted on chart paper in the gymnasium.

Participants were given the Forum agenda with background information and discussion questions (see Appendix I). They were invited to ask questions, share opinions, and give suggestions about any of the Forum questions.

Response #1

- Concern was regarding the fiscal restraints in relation to setting up a new school or program.

JA asked the school board members to respond

Board member said that fiscal restraints are a reality, and we have to be mindful of them, but not let them hamper things.

[JA added more:] Tonight we might come up with ideas about how to share resources. People from various organization may work together to share and acquire resources. This idea came up at last night's Forum (Jan. 24th)

Response #2

- Question: will the "school within a school" concept go farther than that idea and that reach.
[JA] said, it depends on what we hear
- Concerned about segregation and racism
- Concerned about the social issues that can come out of segregation children already dealing with this [segregation and racism] in mainstream, and if you put in a separate school, then they are more of a target
- now if you are talking about more programming in schools? I love that!
- when considering non-Natives? They may be nervous and apprehensive when they come across our culture, and if we had more Aboriginal cultures in mainstream schools, then the non-Natives will not be as nervous, and we won't have to be separated.

Response #3

- Her kids go to the Captain Cook school
- I don't want our children to be targeted anymore, I grew up with being a target, not in our community, but in high school. And that is hard. I worry about my kids
- With my school [Captain Cook], the parents all came together to work for 7 years to make our school non-prejudiced. We don't have any prejudice now, we don't have any bullying. They don't discriminate at our school anymore. I can now walk in my

- neighbourhood without feeling afraid. There is no stealing. My kids still have their bikes after 3 years, whereas I used to have to struggle for my kids to keep their bikes for 3 weeks. I can shake hands with neighbours and not be afraid
- So my concern is this word “MINI, “we don’t do anything in our community in a mini way, we do things in BIG way, and it takes a lot of people.
 - today we have families struggling to keep a roof over head and clothes on our backs, people share with me and I pass it on to others
 - so I don’t want this “mini” thing, even though its probably a good thing
 - just about every community centre has an outreach program for our kids, and it shouldn’t even be that way
 - my youngest child is in grade 1, and he has 25 kids going to school in his class.
 - They are threatening to close some of our schools, what happens to those parents who have to worry about bus fare? And lunch?
 - When I say we don’t do anything mini? Do we always have to be scraping by? Handing out? My grade 1 teacher had to ask for donations for crayons! We pay tuition, \$30 a year! 90 dollars! I don’t get that covered. I don’t get their school clothes covered, but I still have to pay because the school board doesn’t have enough supplies. If I’m paying all this money, and everyone else also is, then where is all the money going? Why are they closing the schools?
 - My children suffer a lot in this way and I suffer along with it
 - So if this mini school or model thing gets off the ground, and gets functioning, how long will it stay around? If it gets functioning, how long before someone else takes it???
 - Yesterday is when our kids need this!
 - If we get this model off the ground, can we keep it? Or is someone else going to take it because it’s succeeding like they do everything else in our communities
 - Every time we have something that is working they take it so they can do it better!!

Response #4

- I’m in full support of this initiative, and want to know what took you so long?
- I have a degree in anthropology from UBC, and am a licensed ECE for Aboriginal Head Start.
- What I would like to see is mandatory courses for our children in language and culture.
- Amongst our people, there is lots of diversity, and I can’t stress that enough
- When you are looking at language and culture, that diversity has to be taken into consideration
- My children are Nisga’a and none of the curriculum in schools focus on this
- The museum in Victoria, it represents all First Nations, and that is what I picture for this school
- I can’t stress this factor of diversity enough.
- I’m in full support, I have a teaching degree, and I want to teach there!!

Response #5

- I teach at an adult centre, and I have finished a PHD
- I am an adopted person of First Nation’s ancestry. “My life is about piecing together who I am.” My adopted family told me not to tell anyone about my ancestry. My adopted parents are both deceased, and my life is about animating what I researched [with respect to my culture].
- My MA thesis focused on the fact that in traditional cultures there is no word for “Art.” First Nations people live in direct contact with nature, and art is a critical way of finding their way, communicating with animal spirit and finding ourselves. When I teach visual

- arts, I open up space for listening my students are from all over the world, and I try to open up the world of arts, so it's a conversation
- I look at my job as a teacher as really being a listener
 - Art isn't evaluated, its process based, and they speak to each other's art in a circle, and I never say this circle is a First Nations thing, it is really a democratic space of Canada. Friendships happen in this format of teaching, and never once do I have to teach anti-racism concepts. The spirit of my classrooms is anti-racist [its implicit].
 - This Aboriginal school has to be oriented to listening

Response #6

- You need to make it clear that going to this school is about choice
- Do this so that people don't jump to things like residential schools
- Do this so that it doesn't start down the wrong road of discussion
- Make sure its about choice
- There are 2000 Aboriginal students in VSB. Those who are in alternative schools are really happy to be there, like those students at UNYA. They have a choice to be themselves there
- The people who work there are in support of doing something different to support our kids
- We believe a magnet school is what should be developed, and it should be based on Aboriginal ways of learning, etc. The MacDonald elementary school would be a good school to use
- It would be an amazing opportunity for VSB to use that school and partner with us [meaning the different places she worked]
- none of our kids should be forced to go to whatever school gets created, AND it should be open to all students
- might want to use Edmonton model of parents having to sign on to the school rules and abide by the way that things are taught in the school
- we strongly encourage VSB to walk down road WITH us, and to make sure that we are involved in every stage of development

Response #7

- I'm liking that there is partnership building. But, I also have my reservations. I would like to revisit past benchmarks for success, what are they now, what will they be in future
- I'm concerned about politics at the administration level
- Will we build nation-to-nation relationships with the VSB, or will the relationship be one of subservience
- Remember the 4 R's (from Kirkness and Barnhardt). Great article that talks about relationships, what it should be like from the parents and the administration and the staff. It's about respect and relevance. Some of these ideas were in my Master's thesis
- Are we moving our children forward? Or are we moving them towards long term careers?
- I don't trust the government and their mandate
- 5 years ago communities were building a learning environment based on their learning needs, and that mandate has changed. Now the mandate and learning is to meet market needs, and that is dangerous so move cautiously

Response #8

- I'm passionate about this subject [Aboriginal Education]

- What about children who aren't drug addicted or have a criminal record, but still need more than what the VSB has to offer? There is nothing for these kids who don't have alcohol problems or criminal problems.
- There is lots of racism at the schools from teachers. Children are struggling with that, and our children don't attend school
- We need to teach our children to keep their head high, and we need to teach our children how to problem solve
- We need to look at curriculum and embed Aboriginal teachings throughout all of the curriculum so we don't have racist students and teachers, so our kids don't get pushed out of school
- I feel sorry that we don't have blank canvas to work with, that we are looking at mini school model
- My friends have elementary school kids and they want to know why this school is not for younger students, their kids?
- We need to think about holding our children up so they can be role models for everyone, so they can be POSITIVE role models
- And partnerships, there are lots of different ways of doing schools for kids. We could partner with Vancouver Coastal Health and others. We have to open our minds and think of others ways to make things work.
- We should look at a school system where there are lots of different ages in one class. There are lots of ideas
- There is funding that is being given for Mandarin immersion schools, lots of money, and we can't forget about First Nations people. They are the true stewards of the land.
- I was so surprised to hear that CBC article and the racist comments that Canadians have. Kill the racism! Put our education into mainstream society to kill the racism in them.

Response #9

- I have little guys in grade 2
- I came here very passionately and I like how that person who spoke before said "tread carefully."
- We need to think about the future of our kids; we experience racism, and we all survived
- What are we teaching our kids?
- I teach my kids to say that they [people who are racist] don't understand our culture, that is why they [racist people] treat us [Aboriginal people] like that
- So the good idea is to teach them [non-Aboriginal people] our culture in a good way. Perhaps through things like cultural days. And, we need to learn their culture too
- With this Mini school? I'm sitting on fence
- Maybe open up mini school in Kits or where the rich people are
- But why do we have to segregate our kids in the DES
- We have money, I know where it is, and it's not getting to our kids
- We have to do something! Everyone has to say something; get up here and say something!

Response #10

- I own/run a First Nations developing company, and what I have learned through integrating at the community level is that people are crying out for a unified system from which they can make intelligent decisions
- Has anyone ever tried to build a house without a blue print? Measure twice, cut once.

- We need to understand what we are up against. We define ourselves through what we are up against.
- You need to think about those who are coming behind us
- You need to not think about what-ifs, I want to be certain about that first step, what is our commission, what is our issue. My issues is not having a framework to build that type of building, this is based on socio economic certainty
- Systemic problems are the issue
- moving things to a higher ground starts with the heart, not outside

Response #11

- I grew up in Winnipeg
- By grade 6, I was ashamed to be Native. Until my social worker told me about the old survival school and that is when I learned to become proud that I was Native
- Forget the mini school, lets have a full blown school from younger grades *lots of clapping!!*
- MacDonald school would be perfect
- My daughters went through VSB, they are reasonably intelligent, but VSB didn't work for them

Response #12

- My concern is that the model should be a big school
- I went to alternative school. My issue with it was that when I watched my friends going through mainstream, I felt uncomfortable and a bit embarrassed. When we made drums we had to walk through the main school, and that made you feel ... I felt ashamed. It's embarrassing to know you are off somewhere else learning something differently, maybe at a slower pace
- What I want to know is: is what I'm learning through an Aboriginal lens going to set me back?
- Going your own pace didn't work for me. I need something structured, with good curriculum
- NEC worked well, and there were other Native students there and I wasn't ashamed if I had a drum
- In the alternative, mini-school, you have to go to the same cafeteria as the mainstream kids, and then see the friends in mainstream schooling, and you feel like you're missing out, and you want to drop out of the alternative school.

Response #13

- I've lived in Vancouver for 18 years
- I want to put my support behind an Aboriginal school
- I think it will be a lot different than what it might have been before
- I had my own bad experience in school, dealing with non-Aboriginal teachers. They are very nice and everything, but they have a hard time understanding what our life learning has been like.
- My son has autism. The school that he is going to doesn't have the support to meet his needs
- There are lots of Aboriginal teachers, and I think my son would have done a lot better in a place where the teachers and staff knew everything and where they [students?] felt OK about who they [students?] were
- For sure I am 100% behind our own schooling, and it should be our own school

Response #14

- I have a daughter in grade 3.
- She struggles with teachers not understanding cultural differences
- I would love to see her getting more Aboriginal education
- Teaching subjects through an Aboriginal lens, I think that is great, but my concern is the kids we are losing in grade 8 and 10
- I worry about some of our kids going into high school. High schools are busy and the students don't know the teachers and the teachers don't know them
- I would love to see an Aboriginal mini school, like a small school where everybody knows everybody
- It wouldn't be at a slower pace, nor accelerated. But it would be a fit for your own pace model. To fit all the strengths and such
- We have some incredible educators
- If the model school happens to go well, other schools will want to model after it
- If community is involved and its working, this is something that other people are also going to want
- It's not just Aboriginal kids who are engaged with community, but all kids! They love it, and with their friendships they start to support each other because they understand the culture more.
- For me, I'm not just Aboriginal, I'm multi-ethnic. I would like if all of me is being heard
- I want to see where cultural education, period, is being emphasized. Where is it that our kids aren't being lost in high school? High school is where we are losing them, in grade eight.
- We need an elementary school feeling throughout high school
- We should challenge students to think critically
- Story telling is what engaged me. And you can story tell in ANY subject

Response #15

- I am a teacher at UNYA
- I work with kids who have been out of the school system and are making their way back into the school system
- I like what everyone has said so far. A couple of things that stick in my mind. When this model gets out there into the Aboriginal and teacher communities, it should be genuinely from the Aboriginal community
- When we first heard about this proposal at the school level we didn't know that the community supported it. Something that comes from community is going to be great if it has support and buy in. If it comes from VSB folks, from that unchanging institution, if it comes from VSB and Aboriginal kids are told they should go, that is opposite to a good idea; that is a nightmare.
- It has to be from the Aboriginal community
- Racism exists in the school district
- There is giant gap between white and Aboriginal students
- Racism comes from non-knowing. They [white people?] have no idea that our country was founded on historic wrongs and destroying cultures. If people don't know that If some Aboriginal kids get to go to school and be protected from racism that is cool, but we also need to get through to non-Native kids too

Response #16

- I am the old white guy
- This is an exciting thing, could be the best thing in the 30 years I've been with VSB
- My advice would be to think big, not small. There is opportunity in thinking big and there is danger in thinking small

- There should at least be an 8-12 school, if not a k-12 school
- We need to think in terms of 100s of kids, not dozens of kids
- I know though that small programs can save lives. I know that!
- When the kids got out of that small school they were ok, but that was end of line, no post-secondary or else
- What you don't want to do is create a ghetto for a couple dozen Aboriginal kids
- What you do want to do is provide a magnet for people to understand Aboriginal culture through the lens of that
- This is not just a multicultural country but also a county of multiple cultures
- When kids feel good about themselves they learn
- Curiosity gets burrowed out of them when they come to school
- Aboriginal kids come to school with a deficit, so additional services need to be put in place
- The model should be open to all student, that is really important that this not be a ghetto, it should be an exciting place for everyone to learn
- Rich resources are available in this context
- Aboriginal ways of learning that focus on environmental approaches or cross disciplinary approaches can be very amenable to social studies, in social studies a curriculum could be done in a heart beat
- Think bigger! Look out for pitfalls of another alternative program in church basements

Response #17

- high school teacher. Interested in leadership development and marginalized youth
- mini school for Vancouver is an opportunity to show Aboriginal people have great contribution to make
- the city can also be used as a learning classroom/experience, support centre; advocacy;
- develop a sense of power
- interdisciplinary curriculum, bring all different knowledges to bear
- students have to be engaged as full citizens in their own country

Response #18

- I work within VSB as an Aboriginal enhancement worker (for many years)
- I had apprehensions about being separated when I began this job, I didn't know if wanted to work within this system, of just being a worker for Aboriginal children. Then my first day, I met [name] who didn't know what he was doing either, and that made me feel better.
- Now my mandate is to teach everyone Aboriginal cultures
- White/Asian/Indian students said "you don't like me because all those students [Aboriginal students] get to come back with all these beautiful things, and we don't. I talked with the classroom teacher about how this wasn't working, and she said 'how about you teach once a week to all the children, so nobody feels segregated?'"
- We need more curriculum about Aboriginal people
- We have to put Aboriginal content into what we teach the kids (which is in the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement)
- She showed a poster from kids. She asked them how would you like to see curriculum. Her kids said, "go by the principles that we are taught – sharing, generosity, respect, balance etc". And the kids wanted sports, and outdoor stuff, and wanted to be involved with arts and music AND NOW, we have students who are in the enrichment program, not just students who are deficit, but also students who are damn smart! That gives me that balance

- I want our parents to have a choice. Their kids could go to public school or an Aboriginal school
- Most important thing that I fight for is to have our history taught in everything!!!
- How old is our public school system? Only about 40 years or 30 years. It's not that old.
- There are lots of amazing people we can draw on for this new school
- We might start out small, but I want to see a big school later on
- I taught my grade 4 students about residential schools, and they already knew about it. They said, 'my grandma said something about it ...' There is lots of information that children have heard, the more we give them the history the more we give them the strength of Aboriginal people

Response #19

- I am Métis and I feel passionate about Aboriginal education
- I graduated from NITEP in 2004. I'm currently doing MA at royal roads in Communications
- The Aboriginal school is a great idea, there are lots of things we can do with it
- I'm creating an Aboriginal mentoring program;
- Re: students dropping out, we need to have 0% drop out rate
- I want to bring in students from UBC and SFU to mentor high school kids. And, I am creating career programs too. We need to focus on doing things like apprenticeship programs, like carving and jewelry making
- UBC has an Aboriginal Admissions Policy to help students get in. That is a huge accomplishment
- You can use NITEP, I learned lots of cultural teachings from that program, that was great, and it was a program that helped mentor me, and if it wasn't for that program, I may not have finished my degree.

Response #20

- I am Blackfoot
- Talking about the social paths that are taken here, there are lots of great social movements amongst the people
- I would like to recognize the great support for this self-determined, self-facilitated Indigenous education, I think it's really awesome, it's an amazing opportunity. There was a statement that was made last year by the president of Bolivia. He hosted a conference on rights of Mother Earth. His statement was: Mother Earth or death, capitalism or survival? The time is now for the world to choose their path, the road to choice, and it is our turn to make a choice about which way we want to go. The day after this statement, the oil spill happened.
- Social structure of the new school model – is the social structure able to provide relationships and teachings, not just for Aboriginal people, but everyone
- I want to know what is the benefit of students participating in these schools
- I have a great many colleagues who work for the school board. Our schools are modeled after a factory – originated from the industrial revolution era. Like the buzzer, move from place to place, that is why it doesn't work for lot of people because its based on factory/production/industry
- We need to grow and develop intergenerationally with each other and with the land
- Is that model of schooling [from the industrial revolution] supporting our Indigenous way of life?
- Sometimes sorry isn't enough, like with the residential school apology. There needs to be some follow through, put some action behind the apology

- We also need to retain our languages. A lot of students are forced to learn French, but the priority is to focus on Indigenous peoples' languages and for non-Indigenous people to learn that too. We need to take steps toward language
- I've been to New Zealand, my wife is from there : seeing their Indigenous strength and their strength in language and their culture, and their strength in who they are, and their ability to express themselves. In New Zealand, non-Aboriginal people used Maori language. That blew me away! We don't get that recognition here in Turtle Island.
- It is important to look at other cultures around world and their strengths. New Zealand Maoris were able to re-attain their confidence and bring it to their community
- I want to see that strength here
- Teaching on the land is how we were meant to learn, we are people with great knowledge and great history
- There are lots of great things to learn from colonial ways of life, but we don't need the bad things

Response #21

- concerns: what is failing our student is not only our worldview being Western but also assessment and management, if we use those as Western standards then we will still fail our students
- in terms of evaluation, success could be assessed using the Medicine Wheel model in terms of growth and development
- don't just put Aboriginal label on western methodology
- don't have foundation being Western
- as a teacher my philosophy is that I'm employed by students, and if we use that its good, it's their classroom and I'm a visitor in their classroom

Response #22

- I am Anishnaabe
- I was a really bad kid, I got kicked out of the school district, but today I am very successful in university. Got my BA, MA, PhD
- I went to the Red School House in St. Paul. The school started when a group of women pulled their kids out of school because of all the racism and bullying and how the content was irrelevant to the Aboriginal students. The women pulled out their kids, and that was the beginning of the Red Schools
- I was went away from Southern Ontario and to Minnesota to go to these red schools. I really enjoyed it, and all of the things in those school are the things that are good
- If VSB is interested in hearing about this, give me a call
- There is a wide range of programming – magnet school, schools within a school, etc
- We need to consider community control and partnerships
- Allowing community to retain control and make decisions is important
- The curriculum across VSB should focus on Indigenous content
- And there should be professional development for teachers and counselors so they have an understanding about Aboriginal matters
- And we need Aboriginal teachers, we need to hire them
- What is the evolution of the school, where does it go? What is its mandate?
- And the choice, it has to be a choice.

Response #23

- When I first went to school, my teacher said "what are you?" I said, I'm a boy! So I went home and asked my grandma, what are we? She answered that we are Cherokee Indians. I said, we are Indians? Like on TV?

- Race is number one thing happening in classrooms
- It is our lot in life to answer: what are you?
- I've been involved in school take overs, like the one on Alexander reserve, the Joe Duquette school. It started out as reclamation school, to reclaim our kids who were working on the street and involved in gangs
- Now white people are suing to get in the door, and when you have white people suing you to get in door, you have done something right!
- Three things we need to consider:
 - 1) governance, who governs the school? Whose school is it?
 - 2) curriculum, I'm not interested in same old curriculum. We need to look at every school document
 - 3) funding, don't get involved in this minischool if funding may be taken away
- You know they take our funding if native kids do ok (!!)
- And one last point – when we did the Alexander school take over, they hadn't had one graduate and now they have MAs running the school, and Harvard is coming to look at them to figure out all the things they are doing right and all this was based on one principle: to create teachability you have to connect with students!
- When the students came in the door, they were not in deficit, they are only in deficit because of the solid wall they hit when they enter the education system
- Teachability: this means to connect with history, present and future of student. No teachers can do this unless they connect with student in one of these three areas. And when you do this, learning has been done because children are intelligent and they will learn
- Mini school is bad idea. We need our own school on our own campus and all races should go there. No school within a school!! When my children were school, and when they had to do something Native they hated it!! No one wants that. No one wants to be taken out of school to hear Aboriginal stuff. They resented being taken out of class.
- We need our own school!
- If we can do here what we did in SK, then this school will bring healing to all classrooms. Classrooms are not a healthy place for any student. We need to educate the heart.
- How do we have holistic curriculum? One example in Joe Duquette. They drew the eastern horizon on the gym. And then the students did ceremonies with respect to sun and how it hit the horizon painted on the wall. Elders came in and did that with the students

Response #24

- I don't have much faith in mainstream system, so I teach my own children
- Indigenous solidarity – live by it – create global indigenous network
- The mini school is a great idea
- My children were raised in an immersion preschool and elementary school. And now in New Zealand, high school are immersion too. Watching these Maori children come through these schools with the confidence and strength they have is mind blowing
- My baby is half Native and I'm wondering where do I send him?
- I also say, think big – self government, self-determination – take care of yourselves
- I'm here to support
- Look at the models in NZ, we have done it, and gone through challenges in our tribe. You guys don't have to go down the same path – google it!
- Integrate customs into the school
- The hunger for my identity made me go back to NZ and it is a beautiful feeling. It is a beautiful feeling to see children blossoming in culture and language

Response #25

- I have lived in Vancouver for many years. My grandmother was Beaver First Nation.
- My grandparents hid their children from going to residential schools. And that has had a lasting impact on my family
- My mother really wanted to go to school – she wanted art, music, fiddle,
- The children tell me what isn't here for them: their eyes are blank, or they are hiding hurt, and I think all of us have gone through that
- When I look at children and I see ... all the labels we put on children, I don't agree with that. My son had so many labels. I see him in pain and in joy. He learns experientially and through tactile ways, and he sees things a lot of us would miss. He is a sacred gift.

Response #26

- nutrition is important
- consider childcare (for young parents)
- think of varied start times
- need a specially trained principal
- need excellent teachers, support workers, admin, other staff
- could include a mentorship program
- curriculum developed by Aboriginal people
- every Aboriginal activity has a curricular connection: button blankets, dance, music, regalia, drums, math
- include entrepreneurship

Response #27

- For the lady interested in art: Native education culture – the Native Education College has that program, they teach it, and it is open to someone who wants to do art for children
- For the young teacher: we weren't allowed to have our culture in school. It was against the law.
- So I give thanks to the education department for opening this door and I say again we don't do anything mini! Everything should be in a big way. We are a big community. And we don't have just one way, we have a whole lot of ways
- I can't close the white door, my grandson is white and Aboriginal, and I have to keep that door open
- And I have to keep the door open to prairies, and north, where I have relatives too
- I'm made up of a lot of neighborhoods, in Vancouver I have the toughest neighbourhood. In the summer I was told I could not be funded for programs because I was too educated
- On the other hand and on the same page, I had to improve my language to get into college so I can open my own business
- Out do prejudice and hate. Make this a better place for our children to learn!
- We have pride in our art – what about technology? What about music? I want to see a place where they have everything available including their heritage first!!
- Thanks to the VSB. If you ask for help, we can come together again. You have your bases covered with all the different people in our communities!

Written Notes on Chart Paper

A. What would a successful Aboriginal Focused Mini-School or other Model be like? How would Aboriginal culture and knowledge be used to teach academic subjects? What other aspects of Aboriginal ways of knowing could be used in the school, for example, learning from Elders, intergenerational learning and mentoring, learning from the land, Aboriginal values, service learning? What would the teachers be like? What would the principal be like?

Written Response #1

- BE-DO-HAVE Being Operating System
- Define; Purpose; Approach; Process; Applications; Deliverables; Outcome(s)

Written Response #2

- Where she is appreciated, encouraged, exposed to diversity with Art and Dance and Storytelling and Critical thinking and Community and High Expectations and belief in her ability to succeed.
- Every child should be exposed to our cultures and belief system
- Train teachers
- Fund Aboriginal resources
- Expect great things from our kids

Written Response #3

- I hope to see a community school (not a mini or alternative) but a school, not only based on culture and arts, but also a high standard of cross-curricula academics from Indigenous perspectives in the form of critical thinking challenges and historical perspectives with traditional knowledge and oral history in all subjects and similar strategies to Montessori and open-minded ideas to new curriculum development and genuine connections with students and teachers and communities etc

Written Response #4

- Elders, intergenerational
- some “classes, subjects” mixed grades
- mentoring
- survival camps
- language
- the most intelligent teachers

Written Response #5

- Aboriginal history past, present, and future needs to be implemented into mainstream education. When others understand then comes acceptance and less racism!

Written Response #6

- Success? Whose standards? How is any other academic subject taught? There is no different – content?

Written Response #7

- Traditional stories
- Rights of passage

Written Response #8

- Would be qualified as is the provincial expectation.
- Allies
- Advocates

Written Response #9

- Use First Peoples English 12 Principles as baseline
- Incorporate representation of experiential learning as door into cultural perspective
- Teachers with multiple perspectives and principals and wide ranging life experience

Written Response #10

- BEING MODEL
- BE-DO-HAVE
- 1. Honest, open, willing, accountable, responsibilities, transparent; 2. Awareness, education, training, mentoring and service; 3. Spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical; 4. Social, economic, and environment

Written Response #11

- a successful mini-school
- start early – k – 12
- curriculum that addresses various learning styles
- artist and Elder visits to deliver curriculum – with shops
- open to all students
- literacy on many levels – cultural, financial, linguistic and focus on developing and celebrating ‘voice’ on understanding of the students and how to express it

Written Response #12

- based on family, traditional teaching, much like shared learning – curricula infused into every subject area and every grade level

Written Response #13

- I would like the school to have a small community feel; where student don't get lost or disappear. Yes have it at MacDonald but don't limit Aboriginal Education to the mini or magnet school.
- Let it expand to the whole district. Emphasize critical thinking and social emotional learning -> peacemaking and sports and LOGIC and skills and heritage and gifts

Written Response #14

- Add Aboriginal courses to mainstream curriculum. When they understand then less racism

Written Response #15

- Who should teach? teachers who are knowledge both in subject and culture. Ideally Aboriginal but most importantly capable and caring and knowledge culturally understanding
- same for principals

Written Response #16

- CONNECT with our kids find out their interests, play sports, and dance, and music, and inspire dreams. Holistic and exciting curriculum

Written Response #17

- The school system is built on an antique model from the factory industrial revolution. With this model of school as factory, preparing students to be a good ‘factory worker,’ we have a broken system because the world is no longer needing good factory workers.

We need to preserve cultural identity while preparing student for the world. We need more creative thinking people to solve the tough, wicked problems on globe

Written Response #18

- I agree with the mini school. All Aboriginal people in the lower mainland should play a part of implementing the programs because we are so diverse

Written Response #19

- Starting school each day at a time that is most effective for optimum learning for the teenage brain is something I would love to see change happen. Research proves that teenagers aren't even "awake" until late morning! Could we begin the teaching at 10am even, instead of 8:30/8:45am? We could go until 4pm, no problem!

Written Response #20

- As the Aboriginal students in VSB are so varied, each nation should be able to learn about their own culture / language throughout the school year.

Written Response #21

- Both principals and teachers should be those educators with experience (no first-timers) for this mini-school.
- These staff should also want to be teaching at the mini –school!
- At no time should the staff be at the mini – school by default of any kind.

Written Response #22

- Inclusion of Aboriginal history & culture into curriculum (k-12) in all subjects
- In-service for staff on above
- School should reflect the Aboriginal culture in the building.
- Inclusive to all students.
- Aboriginal worldview infused in the philosophy of the school.
- Hire more Aboriginal teachers.
- Involve Elders in school – everyday, every class
- Increase funding for the initial implementation.
- Attack systemic racism: i.e. low expectation of Aboriginal students.
- Encourage the Aboriginal students into courses that will lead them successfully to post-secondary institutions.
- Include parents in decision making.
- Listen to parents: not tell them what to do but rather help facilitate their knowledge to plan or problem solve for themselves (any group of people – even / especially Aboriginal parents)
- Credit all Indigenous languages (pre-requisites for university)
- Invite community to school to teach.
- Governments – Federal, provincial and municipal must advocate and fully support the mini-school - - financially as well!
- Do not rely totally on the Western way of "assessments" both for the evaluation of students and evaluation of school.

Written Response #23

- Nutrition
- Childcare (for young parents)
- Specially trained principal, teachers, support workers, Admin and other staff
- Mentorship program

- Curriculum developed for Aboriginal kids by Aboriginal people
- Every First Nation activity has a curriculum connection: Button blankets, dance, music, regalia, drums, math
- Entrepreneurship
- Elders
- Involve parents
- Train artists & cultural people to work with students
- Teachers: Multi-cultural with a good % of Aboriginal teachers & staff
- Principal to be culturally sensitive
- Do community consultation on a regular basis to ensure we are addressing their needs
- Build a community; develop trust with community, family, teachers, students
- One big caring, helpful, accepting family
- A safe environment that embraces our various cultures while building self-esteem and community

Written Response #24

- Elders! Elders! Elders!
- Teaching the land!
- Nurturing all physical development via sports, crafts, singing, drumming, dancing, acting, etc!

Written Response #25

- Wholistic
- Elders need to be involved
- Many nations from all of Canada
- (Teachers and Principal) Open-minded, caring good listeners
- (Principal) A strong Aboriginal community leader with extensive experience of the world

Written Response #26

(Teachers and Principal)

- Honest
- Open
- Willing
- Accountable
- Responsible
- Transparent
- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Strong Emotional & Physical (healthy) aspects of life

Written Response #27

- (Teachers) Honest, open, willing, accountable, responsible & transparent

Written Response #28

- Focus on Aboriginal teaching styles and learning styles

Written Response #29

- It should have family teachings that honor and respect our ways
- They should be open-minded and non-Native parents should not force their kids to attend

- Children/youth should be able to choose also

B. How could parents, family or community members be involved with the Aboriginal mini school or model?

Written Response #1

- mentoring and service
- choice: if they wish to; they will offer

Written Response #2

- to work collaboratively with our children
- doesn't have to be hierarchy

Written Response #3

- Willingly

Written Response #4

- All parents of this school should be active members of volunteering / PAC/ Program coordinators

Written Response #5

- A huge task to enable higher rate of success to envision a structure to meet the needs of youth that fall in between the boards to grade 12
- The resources are here to build this vision.
- It will take time
- Parents' voices are next
- Focus to succeed for the next generation

Written Response #6

- Mentoring and service

Written Response #7

- have programs for adults too

Written Response #8

- have focus groups!

Written Response #9

- have role models from all cultures & ages

Written Response #10

- Use parents & elders as resources for teaching
- Need multi-age classroom spaces that allow students to choose area of interest facilitated by community members

Written Response #11

- Involve all First Nations
- "Education" organizations to participate i.e. First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) so that you're not re-inventing the wheel
- "language teacher" data base

- Aboriginal teacher data base
- “Special Needs” Aboriginal teacher data base
- Aboriginal diversity data base – preschool to grade 12

C. What would make you want to send your child to an Aboriginal mini school or model?

Written Response #1

- Choice is important

Written Response #2

- certainty

Written Response #3

- based in the arts

Written Response #4

- outdoor component
- deinstitutionalize the learning
- accept different representation of learning
- assess on growth not testing regurgitated facts

Written Response #5

- parents/families could share their skills, experiences
- volunteer in sustainability of school
- I would send my child if it was administered efficiently
- High academic standards
- Cultural and language component

Written Response #6

- I wouldn't

Written Response #7

- Guaranteed funding as long term project
- First Nations governance
- Creative approach in cross-curricular goals that focus on community
- No dumbing down of approaches
- Critical literacy as a cornerstone

Written Response #8

- that it be open to all families
- that it has a model of nurturing criteria
- that there are Aboriginal / Indigenous teachers
- that it offers financial support for those in need
- it needs to be close to an Aboriginal community

Written Response #9

- my child's opinion of the school: Talk to the youth!

Written Response #10

- Whole Aboriginal school (not within mainstream)

- In touch with nature
- Holistic – embrace whole child
- Non-competitive
- Earth/elders’ wisdom
- Relevant topics for living and ethical+ productive+ happy life
- Support self esteem + caring for others
- Challenges profit-driven, win/lose, fear/lack mentality
- Set students up for choosing mainstream ed/life or not after high school

Written Response #11

- A completely alternate structure that creatively addresses the big ideas of Indigenous principles in cross curricular ways

Written Response #12

- I would like my kids to go to an Aboriginal school
- My son thought he could go through high school, now he said he feels like he does not belong. And there’s only a few months left
- My daughter will be going to an Alternate program next year. She is supposed to be in grade 9. She hardly goes to school

Written Response #13

- If my child saw themselves reflected in the school buildings in the curriculum and in the “staff”

Written Response #15

- Being able to learn Aboriginal culture and language

D. What would prevent you from sending your child to an Aboriginal mini school or model?

Written Response #1

- too small
- too segregated
- UNCERTAINTY
- Stigma of it being an excuse/exception for lower academic standards ‘especially made’ for First Nations
- One track focus – (culture indifference within)

Written Response #2

- political/divisive/in-fighting

Written Response #3

- if it isn’t self-determined by the community

Written Response #4

- Not safe –fire & earthquake

Written Response #5

- I wouldn’t send my kids there!
- No mini school in the DTES (Downtown East Side) Why?
- Ghetto school board. Yes, push all the Indian people in[to] the ghetto!

- I don't want this for my kids
- You can't put a first class FN school in urban Vancouver! A lot of our culture is in NATURE!

Written Response #6

- Everything!
- Mini Aboriginal school is like pushing a square through a circle –NO-
- Think traditional
- Think BIG!

Written Response #7

- Same model as a regular school system

Written Response #8

- Being segregated!
- Obviously separate
- Curriculum
- Teachers

Written Response #9

- If I felt her learning & critical thinking were not be emphasized or
- If she was learning to be ethnocentric rather than embracing or
- If she was only valued for her heritage and not her personality & abilities
- Also, if she was over exposed to kids that are partying hard
- Those are my fears related to an Aboriginal school

Written Response #10

- If it was "ghettoized"
- Segregation issues
- If the myths & stereotypes were perpetuated by the mini school
- If there was not enough funding to sustain school

E. Do you agree that a Aboriginal mini school should be established?

In the "agree" column

- yes, but I need to have a lot of conversation before implemented. TALK TO ELDERS!

In the "strongly agree" column

- yes!!
- Yes it's about time

F. Should the Aboriginal mini school be for:

Grades 8-12

- nil

Grades k-7

- nil

Grades k-12

- 5 tics under yes, plus
- yes to start them off with success
- yes we are still Aboriginal no matter what grade
- yes, having all ages in a nurturing teaching environment

G. What should the mix of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students be in the mini school?

Written Response #1

- all ethnicities should be welcome

Written Response #2

- open to Aboriginal first with any remaining spots filled with interested non-Aboriginals

Written Response #3

- it should be open to ALL students – no reverse racism

Written Response #4

- What about maxi – school?

Written Response #5

- 70% Aboriginal-30% non-Aboriginal

Written Response #6

- Children are social, children are medicine

Written Response #7

- I think it should be just Aboriginal

Written Response #8

- I don't think there will be a choice
- I don't think many non Natives will choose an Aboriginal school for their Children
- Another person wrote on this note: I disagree

Written Response #9

- I think it should be open to any child that wants to learn about Aboriginal cultures

Written Response #10

- Majority of Aboriginal kids, but open to all students

H. Which high school would be the best host for the Aboriginal mini-school? Why?

Written Response #1

- Templeton

Written Response #2

- k-12 school not a mini school

Written Response #3

- could it not be a longhouse or a roundhouse?

Written Response #4

- a school in the east-end or build a new school

Written Response #5

- Build own high school, k-12
- Not in downtown east side

Written Response #6

- MacDonald
- Close to high populated native area
- And it's in the eastside, not DTES

Written Response #7

- build own school, k-12, in many areas to accommodate Aboriginal population

Written Response #8

- Host k-12
- Hold up to 500 student or more
- Earthquake proof
- Technologically equip. – wifi

I. Is there an alternative to a mini school with an Aboriginal focus?

Written Response #1

- An Indigenous school (like Waldorf)

Written Response #2

- If they can make Aboriginal stream in Douglas College they can do this else where

Written Response #3

- YES!!! H.O.W.A.R.T. Unified personal professional development model. Created by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people because of Aboriginal people

Written Response #4

- Ways of knowing Fear of change
- If this were any other focus would it be a question?
- Should have Aboriginal curricula in all grades

Written Response #5

- Think Big!
- K-12
- Open to all students
- Full curricula taught through an Aboriginal lens, e.g. oral traditions, environmental perspective, interdisciplinary opportunities, etc
- Economy of scale (larger enrollment) to allow additional supports and services

Written Response #6

- Add Aboriginal curriculum to mainstream education, k-12 – college/university
- Teach all students about First Nations and our territory. And not black and white pictures of back in the 1800s

Written Response #7

- A maxi-school, k-12, (majority) with Aboriginal curriculum and teachers
- But with the best teachers whether Native or not

Written Response #8

- Sir Keith Reynolds' animated talk on the school system and why it's broken helps explain why we're seeing an epidemic on ADHD amongst children. It's on Youtube and it's pretty clear about what we're doing to wreck the common sense, genius of students.
- Seeking a model that will have the full support of the community, result in Aboriginal students succeeding in post-secondary & in life, requires some more appreciative inquiry.
- Most find a way to pave the pathway with kindness and understanding

Written Response #9

- When we talk about Aboriginal children do we know their rights? Their Indigenous rights here or globally? Why not have Aboriginal teachers and non Aboriginal teachers word side by side in classrooms so when history or social studies are being taught children hear our history and regular socials?
- Children can be taught experiential and visually take them out – see what sparks in their eyes

J. What are your concerns and questions regarding a mini school with an Aboriginal focus?

Written Response #1

- don't dumb it down

Written Response #2

- Another alternative school, what happens to those in alternative schools?

Written Response #3

- not in a big school

Written Response #4

- segregation
- what "focus"?
- displacement

Written Response #5

- my biggest concern is that this program becomes too complicated that it would buckle under. Standards must be kept high so that students can feel proud. A strong academic focus would lend credibility to the fledgling program.

Written Response #6

- lack of community involvement
- racism discrimination
- dumping ground for VSB teachers that can't cooperate in other schools

Written Response #7

- That this not be a rushed initiative of political structure, but a well thought out framework and administration that is highly consulted with Aboriginal community/leaders/educators and organizations
- Not rushing doesn't mean taking 10 years to accomplish though
- That it not become a dumping ground, alternative program for First Nation students who are not connecting or achieving success in the main school. This would be dangerous in carrying on the stigma and misconception that the same high expectations are not in place for First Nations or that First Nations are given exception and lower standards in academics

Written Response #8

- Elder/Parental/Grandparent support and involvement
- Outdoor education available
- Music
- A middle school should be how it starts so our kids don't get lost – elementary feel

Written Response #9

- 17% of high school drop-outs are gifted students. Why?
- In 1996, only 33% of Aboriginal students who started school in grade 8 completed in grade 12. Systemic racism possible answer.
- Content knowledge vs. process knowledge of education system
- Land based, intergenerational, language etc

Written Response #10

- Avoid a ghettoized program for Aboriginal kids. Don't isolate ignore them

Written Response #11

- In "pedagogy of hope" Paula Friere maintains that in order for 'hope' to be meaningful, we must put 'hope' into practice. Otherwise it, hope, is just hopelessness
- So, why are our children being 'displaced' once again? Why are our children being like forced immigrants in their own country. So why are we being forced/chased away from our rightful place in society?
- The solution is in the problem, so let's fix the problem. Let's fix the school system and make it user friendly for our children

Written Response #12

- We are diverse people with many reasons to live in Vancouver.
 - Education
 - Lack of housing
 - Employment
- Aboriginal history-how are you going to teach Aboriginal history because of our diversity?
- Racism. This is a sensitive issues because of past history; residential schools. Drop out rate is high because of racism.
- we are/were segregated from society - displaced and placed
- We need to stay with a vision for our rising generation, so they can walk with pride, feel equal in society as a human being
- Stop nursing racism don't rehearse it, just disperse it and we will reverse all of how society perceived us to be, education is one of our ways to rise up.
- Recognize our successes with the Aboriginal people

Written Response #13

- One of my personal life passions is learning to live (and heal) from the teachings of the Red Road, (i.e. traditional healing ways, teachings & clean & sober)
- I feel strongly that curriculum that teaches about FN history with alcohol should be mandatory and thorough from grade 8 -12 and even as early as grade 5. A resource like Maracle's book "Crazywater" is an excellent source for such teaching and the book, "The Sacred Tree", is also another excellent traditional healing resource that uses the Medicine Wheel.

Written Response #14

- Many students in VSB are dyslexic, undiagnosed for even their entire schooling (k – 12).
- There must be sufficient testing yearly for all students to identify these learners early and then to teach to their specific learning style in their abilities to read, comprehend, and express themselves.

Written Response #15

- What is mini?
- Where is this?
- Why just 8 – 12?
- Should this happen...how long does it exist?
- Money – funding \$
- Share resources

Written Response #16

- Is it going to be effective or relevant?
- Whose Culture?
- The plains, the Inuit
- Excuse me, my apologies to those that are from there but it is NOT my culture

Written Response #17

- What about children with F.A.S.D. or Attention deficit disorder?
- Will you have programs for them or support for the parents? [signed] Grandmother

Written Response #18

- The school board is failing our children
- Most specifically our boys
- I have two children that went through the system: I graduated and I dropped out at grade 10 because he was stigmatized as a native and said to need lots of resources. he didn't need it – he was and is very very intelligent

Written Response #19

- Not good! Bad Idea! This wouldn't help our children
- This school need to be in/out door / not in the middle of DTES!

Written Response #20

- Create a facebook page for feedback

Notes from the Teacher and Staff Stakeholder Forum: Vancouver School Board, Jan 27, 2011

(17 Participants)

Representatives from various VSD stakeholder groups: elementary teachers, secondary teachers, principals, support workers, CUPE, Vancouver District Office, and trustees attended this Forum. After introductions and background information about the purpose of the Forum, participants were invited to share questions, issues, and concerns regarding the establishment of a mini school with an Aboriginal focus or other model. The session concluded with suggestions for the development of an Aboriginal focused school or model.

Jo-ann:

Districted Forum agenda with background information and discussion questions. Because the majority of the people who are present, attended the Forums, I would like to consider questions, concerns and issues first; then we can move on to what kind of model or school we should have; then we can end on a positive note as we go along in the meeting.

Response #1

- I work in a grade 6/7 class
- My general concern for all of my learners, including my Aboriginal learners, is the lack of representation for their experiences in the education system about drug and alcohol use. We have no supports for our students who have parents with drug and alcohol issues
- There is no scaffolding with regards to a child who has a mother with a problem, or a child who is in foster care
- I tried to adapt our curriculum to include Aboriginal government models
- I felt ignorant even though I have two degrees and I understand about representing cultures as I have a degree in Anthropology
- I felt like I knew about poverty, but then I walked in poverty, and it was different
- I don't know how I could sit in meetings explaining that some of my students don't have phone numbers
- We need to have future educators, those teachers in training, come and study what it means to be an urban Aboriginal student
- I was disappointed in this process with the lack of focus on the question: "when did you lose your way?" I would love to hear about when these students say that they lost their way in school.
- We can get our kids to elementary school, and then we put them on the boat to high school, and then there is some turbulence, and they lose their way. Why do they lose their way
- Those are my concerns and thank you for listening.

Response #2

- At Van Tech, there was a family sense there and we did a lot of things through an Aboriginal lens
- We constructed separate programs, and my worries come from my experience there. We created a home atmosphere in these separate programs, so students felt safe and recognized, and then the other part of the program was that they were supposed to integrate into other classes. But the kids didn't want to integrate into other classes, they wanted to be in the alternate programs we created for them. Whether or not they passed or failed in those integrated classes didn't matter to them

- I want to know what we are preparing our students for.

Response #3

- Our goal is that we want to enhance success rates
- We are trying to grapple with ideas and make something happen
- The other piece is that we have a responsibility that all educators acquire a better appreciation for Aboriginal cultures and traditions. Those are two challenges.
- I was hoping Jo-ann could elaborate on the new direction of the new teacher training at UBC

[A]

- The UBC Faculty of Education is in the process of revising its teacher education programs . In the revised programs, all teacher-ed students are required to take a class on Aboriginal education. That course is being developed now. The Aboriginal education course will give them a grounding of the social, historical, and political issues that Aboriginal people have experienced, and get a sense of what Aboriginal communities ARE doing to deal with these issues. They will learn about various Aboriginal educational programs, policies, pedagogies and trends.

Response #4

- All teacher-ed students in BC will have that as a component. Any person coming for certification (BC College of Teachers), they will have to have that course. It passed in the last meeting, so implementation will be 2012? Maybe?

Response #5

- Whether or not there is bussing or transportation to this new school or model will be an issue for parents and families. How do we get students there for families not in catchment area? Getting to school is difficult for families
- And what will the start time be?
- We have excellent students, but they get to school at 10am, and they miss that first block
- It's very difficult for them to get to school

Response #6

- I would like to understand a little bit more about the background of these programs. So we have programs that learn through using an Aboriginal lens? If someone were to ask me why we are creating an Aboriginal mini school and how it will be different from the programs we already have, what is the answer?
 - Will it use different ways?
 - Will it be more rigorous?
- I don't have the background to know. I'm not rejecting this mini school idea, I just want to know how it's different

Response #7

- I think we (Board) want to do whatever we can to accelerate the success for Aboriginal learners. We want to forge ahead with the enhancement agreement. The mini school is one idea
- The status quo is unacceptable

Response #8

- I've been in the district since 1994 as a support staff and teacher. Then I got my teacher-ed certificate. I can see some challenges as a person who went back to school
- In school you have to address overt racism, and experience what is different about you.
- Also, in order to be successful in this society you have to look and sound a certain way, and that feeds into the identity issue about identifying as Aboriginal. Unique to our people [Aboriginal peoples], is that there is a way of being that transcends nation boundaries. There is a commonality. A commonality in how we experience each other. You can't commodify that and box it up and say this is what you will be teaching
- It takes a lot of soul searching on the part of teachers to address white privilege and to come to terms with the fact that we have inherited a colonial history that we are not pleased with but we are living with anyway
- I have two children, one is 20, and he was pushed out of the system, AND I'm a teacher. There was lots of shame around this, and he is also from mixed heritage. He understands his position in the world and how the world sees him
- In order to succeed, Aboriginal learners have to give up part of themselves. How you see the world? It's a spiritual thing. And this way of seeing the world and being Aboriginal is not valued and acknowledged consistently in today's education system. There are programs that try to value it. But it's not consistent, and it doesn't go on from generation to generation
- Whether or not students go to this school needs to be voluntary
- Would I have sent my child to that? YES! Providing it was a loving place.
- People say every school should be this way. But they aren't, they just aren't
- Aboriginal people will also say, "we don't want this, we want to fit in."
- Every Aboriginal person has a different experience coming out of education. We have all had to give up something. The more degrees you have, the more you've had to give up to participate in a system that never wanted you in the first place!
- This new school has to have decolonizing thinking as part of its framework
- It has to be connected
- It has to address racism, and internalized racism
- And kids who have been in-care have to be addressed too
- The school I'm at now has students who were in alternative programming. These students were moved into mainstream school to be part of system, but they still aren't part of it. It's a compensatory place- the whole set up is, although that wasn't the intent, that is just what is happening The students are trying to catch up from Essentials of Math or other programming to actually get graduation requirements. And these are amazing youth
- You can't commodify Aboriginal teachings and give it to teachers who haven't done the work (Aboriginal or not)

Response #9

- I wanted to speak to one question with respect to when does the loss happen. I think in secondary it becomes much sharper, but it doesn't start there, it starts in elementary school, but we don't shine the light there. But falling behind and those feelings of inadequacy starts in elementary school
- One other point: Related to what [name] was saying: the program should stand alone with its own identity
- The other way is going back to what we were doing badly

Response #10

- I wanted to acknowledge [name] and say thanks for her comments
- The issue of how we frame the issue was raised at the Templeton Forum

- Part of the struggle is that we have not asked the question about what does success mean from Aboriginal perspectives. What do Aboriginal communities dream success to be? We are focusing on a framework that is consistent with Eurocentric schooling, hoping that we can create a learning environment that can help Aboriginal students graduate. There is some conflict and tensions in that for me.
- I would like questions to focus on: “what would a supportive learning environment look like” and then I would like to hear: “what does success look like.”
- The students at Shawn Atleo’s e-forum reflected on their experiences in post secondary, and reflecting back to what might have helped them to make that transition.
- There are some things we haven’t thought about because of how we have framed the question. And, what would that range of success be? There are all kinds of successes that may or may not lead to graduation. Or it may take them to graduation in a different route

Response #11

- I agree with a lot of what [name] was saying
- I grew up in poverty, with a great childhood, lots of aunties and uncles. It wasn’t about money, it was about being and having a sense of pride in my family
- I fought all through my school years to just be who I am. When I got into adulthood and started to work with youth in the lower mainland and do therapy and conferences, and talk about how to be accountable, it’s the same question that always comes forward: What’s it like to be Aboriginal? I’m tired of that question, I don’t want to answer it! I just want to be!
- The big thing with the students I work with is to not answer that question. That means that the teachers and staff involved with the program have to do a lot of work before they enter that door
- I work with Aboriginal youth because I want to be a buffer to that question for them. I’m just really sick of that question! Not my job to answer that question, to convince school district staff about racism
- It’s the responsibility of the school district leadership as representatives of the system that perpetrates racism and colonialism, to change it! It’s not my job!! I’m tired of people asking me how to do this! We didn’t create racism

Response #12

- I’ve heard different definitions for success here already
- Raising graduation rates, that is colonialism in action
- I’ve been reviewing math exams and there is no Aboriginal content. So there is a tension in what we set up – we have to be up front about that
- Getting Aboriginal students through the requirements, but also honoring their community is important

Response #13

- I want to reintroduce myself
- I’m a woman mother, sister, aunt, principal ...
- But mostly I come from not a happy childhood. I went to residential school
- I sit here and I listen, and am saying, “here we are again!” We have talked about this time and time again! sat here about 10 years ago with Jo-ann Archibald and had the same conversation.
- I’ve worked with targeted funding and have been asked the same questions about teachers and schools and to make changes in the system

- I've not seen the action piece there. Deb could bring in piles of conversations we've had. We have been studied to death
- There is no action piece yet!
- The people who have been here longer know how much work went into this. I'm disappointed that we aren't talking about the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement
- How can we support what is already in existence? I look at all the people, and we should talk about supporting what is already there. We have this beautiful agreement here
- I've been in education for a long time and, when I look back at all these times, people keep talking about programs, like they are a one shot wonder
- It's not a program that is going to work for children, it's the approaches! It's the approach that I take at [school name] that is making the difference. It's how we focus on what we need for that community
- What I fear is: is about the issue of who knows what's best for us once again. I hope that that is not what is happening: "We know what is best for you." I would like to share what I think is best for myself and for the children at [school name]. I've been there long enough to know what is working, and I have enough experience to know what is working for our children
- What are the positive things happening around the school district?
- Why can't we focus on the expertise around the district?
- It's about that sense and care of belonging.
- Research has said that you do this by involving parents and working with parents side by side
- And we have to have high expectations
- So we need to not forget about what about the other strengths our children have. Not in one small school, but in all schools
- I've always thanked my mother for offering me the opportunity to see what the rest of world is like. I grew up in the countryside. I didn't know what the was city like
- The students have to know who they are as Aboriginal people
- Calvin Helin's book was referenced - about self reliance, and wondered how we can build skills so that our children can make their own decisions, right at the preschool level
- This new school is proposed to be grades 8-12, but it needs to start at preschool. Where do we fail? It's in the transitions: grade 4 to intermediate, and grade 7 to 8. It doesn't happen just suddenly in grade 8

Response #14

- I've been working at Britannia since '97
- I'm a graduate of an inner city teacher ed program. It deals with inner city residents
- I'm a teacher because I dropped out of high school. School was not a place for me, and I can tell you that things haven't changed much
- One of our staff went to the first forum. He was dismayed about the pain that the parents talked about. And, if he is dismayed, where is everyone else at?
- I worked with an alternate program many years ago and when the trustees found out that we had to use the same bathroom that transvestites used, they moved us. Now we are in portables
- Some things have changed. What has changed: we are now graduating students.
- We at the alternative school have had the privilege to be autonomous, we have been elastic, and have not had to fit into a mold. VSB hasn't bugged us to fit into a mold
- We have also had the good fortune to have enough staff to support our kids and our families

- I've heard that we at the alternative school aren't really graduating kids because we aren't doing chemistry and math 12. And that might be the next step. But we are limited in what we do. We are an alternate program
- But, 10 kids will get dogwood certificates this year. I wonder if that counts in the statistics?
- Success? That graduating student may be the first person in their family to get that dogwood.
- Every kid who comes to school, we ask them: what do you want to do? They always answer: I want to graduate.
- When we phone their families, they answer even though they are annoyed, because they want their kids in school
- What I think is most important is this: the kids will tell you that they come to our school because they feel supported and cared about. We develop relationships with them, and find ways to create success for them
- For the life of me I can't figure out why mainstream schooling can't be more flexible
- If kids go to funerals, they get penalized for not being at school. Why do they have to start the grade all over again? And this happens year after year
- There are different elements that mainstream school can't seem to adjust to, I don't understand that
- One student said she wouldn't attend the new school if it was integrated in the sense of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
- Our students are prairie folk or from up north. They feel a commonality about being together
- We had 17 kids write the First Nations exam, and we had pizza party for them when they finished because they worked so hard. In mainstream class when you write an exam you go home, and say "now what?" Schools need to celebrate success to create opportunities for more success
- I'm not Aboriginal. What does that say about staffing?
- What I want to emphasize is that this is an alternate school, not a mini school, and when people talk about the population who will go to the school they are alternate kids.
- We need to figure out if this new school is mini or alternate.
- We also learned that we can't take any kid who comes up the stairs, that is not always the best thing
- We need to look at the difference between alternate and mini schools
- To be a true Aboriginal focused school means that the form of it has to be different
- Lee Brown (at the parent Forum) said: the school needs to reflect culture and Aboriginal parents need to be involved – to make decisions
- The bottom line is relationships and elasticity

Response #15

- I think it is important to understand from the beginning that we want to incorporate the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement. We want to do that. We want to work together to make successful students. When I look at success and ponder about learning environments
- Then I look at the flip side about students not completing high school and ending up on the Downtown East Side
- We have to look holistically. I think now we are a point where we need to challenge ourselves.
- We know how parents want success for kids
- Many of us are survivors of residential schools and our parents are survivors too, and they are just coming to terms of those issues

- We must acknowledge the poor graduate rates of Aboriginal students but also acknowledge that one successful student in a family is cause to celebrate
- We need to look at both sides of the equation
- Its about poverty, family break down
- Our housing program – we have 5000 on the wait list for people bringing kids to city
- There are lots of social determinants impacting our families. No wonder why we have lack of success
- Grandview is an example of what can work
- Make sure that Aboriginal kids aren't just in special programs, we want them to be part of the overall programming
- One parent said, we just want good educated kids and to have our kids like any other kid
- I needed to say that I want to see Aboriginal students to succeed
- We need to work in partnership with the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement

[A]

- What are possibilities that we want to see, that will ramp up success - no matter if we are improving Aboriginal education across the district or starting a new school with an Aboriginal focus or other model?

Response #16

- I'm tired of quantifying myself and explaining myself
- I went through school and didn't self identify as Aboriginal
- My mom grew up on the DTES and I lived with my father. My dad said to be proud of who you are, but I hid it!
- I was in advanced math and accelerated programs through to grade 12
- And when I self-identified *SCREECH* people were like, you are what?
- My daughter: self identified in grade 8, she thought it was going to be a positive thing, and then we started getting drug information and other information, and they assumed she had problems at home. I was enraged! Seriously people! Did you read the address??Are you mad? I'm in a well to do neighborhood, I invested young
- All of my white friends are well meaning, but I am still annoyed when people ask what defines Aboriginal success. Well what defines Irish success? It is different, there are right wing Aboriginal people, left wing Aboriginal people, Aboriginal convicts ...
- Our culture doesn't define success, we are individuals
- I want my daughter to do something she enjoys
- My mother was a residential school survivor, she ended up in the DTES
- Sometimes the choices that people make in those neighbourhoods have to do with the fact that they are poor, not because they are Aboriginal. They don't choose to be poor. My mother didn't stand a chance in the 60s to be successful. I'm not criticizing her, but it was just the reality
- Success is a reflection of opportunities . It's not because these kids aren't smart enough
- Where do we go? I think some people like to be in cocoon.
- I will not self identify, I don't want to be labeled, and don't want all the crutches you are going to throw at me. I need the room to be who I am. The answer will be different for everyone
- Life is a competition. To get a job and get a scholarship, you need good grades. Not sure if that's a good answer
- It's not because we are Aboriginal that we show up late . It's because we didn't have breakfast. They aren't late because they are Aboriginal. We have to change the way we think about these issues. It's because of the circumstances they are in.

Response #17

- I wanted to say: when we did that program review and I participated as a union rep
- An adult educator said that she worked with kids who were 16 and onward who had left the system, and she brought it to our attention how different the experiences of her students were like. This difference in experience has to not be ignored when planning for this model
- My son went back to school and has one more course to finish
- Travel can be really important, some kids went to NZ and saw outside of the pre-constructed possibilities for themselves.
- I like the connection tool, we used it for every student and I like it
- I think there is a population of students who would like to be a part of this new school/model
- We have all of these different immersion schools that have a cultural focus. But for some reason we are still talking about this Aboriginal school. In '94 I worked with Lorna Williams to get things going. And there was lots of backlash. But now maybe we are at a place where this new school/idea is possible
- There are universal principles about Aboriginal ways of being that can be used in this school
- There is some math programming working in Britannia, and 5 students graduated from Principles of Math 12. It was working
- Something that has a balance of academic rigor and laying the foundation for a sense of belonging
- There are a lot of people who want to be part of this and to work together
- Another program I know of: it worked with pre-service people at UBC and around food security
- Finding a balance between participating in math and then giving back, that is what this program was about
- I also believe being clean and sober is a big part of it. Students need to know that adults (teachers & principal) are clean and sober. I don't know how you can implement that, but when kids ask me I tell them that I am clean and sober
- I think this school has to foster and acknowledge our kids' resiliency
- I also want to say that we [Aboriginal peoples] are all very diverse and what is said here is not the be all and end all
- When I was 16/17, I remember going out to UBC, and seeing a counselor there and saying I want to go to school. I didn't have a home. I remember thinking that I wanted to go to UBC and to be a social worker, and never did I think I was going to be a teacher. And this woman who worked at UBC said "you can do this!" I felt very hopeful because of that person, she never said you can't do this, even though I didn't even have an address.
- This School is about giving back

Response #18

- I just wanted to follow up about that math program at Britannia. Two kids who completed that program graduated from principles of math 12, and three others from other schools, so five in total from the district. And those in mainstream school should be celebrated for their success too

Response #19

- I came in here and was ambivalent
- I spent the first 10 years as youth worker in an alternative school

- My biggest frustration as a principal now is the lack of flexibility in the schools and district
- And now I want to see us being bold as to how we do this, and when I think about self-directed schools, they deliver their curriculum in 20 unit chunks, and when students come back from being away, they just pick up from where they left off. Failing because you were away and starting at the beginning is insane!
- I'm quite excited because there is real potential here
- I think we have an opportunity to take action!

Response #20

- I'm also really excited about doing something
- I am multi-ethnic and grew up in southern Mexico
- I have a Masters degree in multicultural education. First I got a history degree, and I was trying to self-discover about my peoples
- How does being multiethnic fit in with labels
- I didn't want to fit in because I was half Aborigina
- ILabels are really hurtful
- I'm proud to be Aboriginal, Italian, ...I'm proud of the people that came before me, and I've managed to be successful. My brother, same parents and same home, he still hasn't graduated and he is 24
- What engaged me in school was a teacher that I had a learning relationship with. . I was not an easy kid, I was mouthy and shy. Teachers always took a sigh when I walked into room. But I had this grade 4 teacher who engaged me. I wish I could have had her for all my grades. She engaged my mind and cared about the kids in class and exposed us to lots of different cultures. If we are going to do this, we need teachers like that
- Teachers who see talents, not just deficits. I was so disorganized, the only thing that got me through was that I was smart enough to remember what the teacher said
- I want to see a school that plays up on strengths
- That one teacher even let us name ourselves, what would your name be now she asked, she let us self identify
- I would like to see teachers go on shift, one can work 9 to noon, and another 7pm to midnight, etc That might work for teachers who don't like 9-5
- We need to be flexible with families and situations
- We need to find teachers who don't say "arg, connections tool!" but instead say, "oh how can we do better?"
- There was one little girl in my class. She said: "people think I'm boring." She didn't say "I am failing science," it was that she couldn't make friends, and she wasn't going to learn until that was addressed. It wasn't that "my mother is drug addicted," it was "I am boring!" I have lots of ideas, I'm not like any other kids, and neither are any of the other kids in my classes.
- Those of us who aren't just of one thing (like Aboriginal), then its hard to say its just for Aboriginal students because then its like saying you only want to be around part of me.
- There was a little boy in one of my classes. He wrote a poem about wanting to be a dream catcher so that he could filter out the bad in the world. He applied the teachings of the dream catcher, and that is what an Aboriginal lens is about: its about applying the teachings to other things.
- Regarding this school within a school: I would have felt stigmatized in a school within a school.
- It's a complicated issue, and there are lots of different voices, and lots of different needs
- The way forward is them having teachers who are willing to engage, as well as having other people in the community who will engage with the students.

- I would like all of our kids to have mentors and role models. I want Aboriginal role models, someone to connect with me and say hey I'm like this too, or I like basketball too.

Response #21

- One of the things that I'm very happy to have seen that has happened in the district, but I also have some angst about it too, is the First Nations Studies 12 and First Nations English 12. I would have loved to have had that in high school. But I think its backwards. It should be in grade 8 or 9, in the junior levels. If we are talking about hooking kids, they are already hooked in grade 12
- And another thing. I chase kids all day. But, I chase them in the school, not out and about 10 blocks away or at the billiard hall. They are in the school, they are on site and not on the street. And when they are in class, they are there because they say the teacher cares about me, and the teachers who don't care? They don't go. The students take part in it because the people care
- Teachers always come to me and say, what can I do, and as a response I always try to hook the teacher. The students are here, but how do we hook the teacher to actually be interested in the individual. To get them to say how come they aren't in class today, to say what is it about me the teacher that I'm *not* doing.
- Student & teacher check-ins – that is key. To say “Hi I'm [name], and I had a crappy day, so sorry if I'm testy. How are you? I saw your sister, how was she?” When I was in my teachers' meeting and I asked them to rank these check-ins and other facets of day-to-day activities, there were only 5 red dots on the check-ins, but for me relationships are IT.
- I didn't like school because I fought all the time. I hated reading, but I was good at listening. We had a substitute teacher, and he picked up right away that I was a rebel, and he got me reading. I read Lord of the Flies. And he changed how he taught for me. He modified English class for me. He engaged me. He asked, how do you want to pass this course, what do you want to do? No one asked me that before!
- We can say, what can we do to pass this course

Response #22

- I'm not in a hurry to find a framework of what to do
- I want to see kids throughout the system graduate with pride and confidence in who they are, and with the ability to decide who they will be
- The students that we do the greatest disservice to is Aboriginal kids
- I would like to use the system in which I have experience, to provide possibilities for Aboriginal communities and for Aboriginal communities to create what they want
- I feel there is a possibility for this to happen, and I want to help do what I can

Response #23

- I was at a meeting today and asked the Ministry of Education where their Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement is. There should be one for the Ministry of Education
- Even someone who is keen to teach in a good way doesn't have the resources
- Or teachers can be so strapped for time they can't do it

Response #24

- Can the VSB mandate certain types of pro-d?
- District response: No we can't, we can't mandate that they use connections tool or attend Aboriginal activities. I beg them, but I can't mandate them. Like others, I'm tired

of fighting this battle, how do you get the teacher to say I want to do this for the students, for the child that is standing in-front of you regardless of race

Response #25

- It's bigger than just teacher-student, it's the administrators too, who don't show leadership to be involved
- There are 60 enhancement agreements in the province

Response #26

- There is an 'elephant in the room' that has not been mentioned
- I don't have flexibility to hire the teachers we want because of the collective agreements
- Most of people here have met Lorna Williams, and she says just to do it
- It's not about being mandated, or begging, you just do it
- I would like to invite everyone to [our school] and see that we have just done it, all the elements are there, we just need your support to "just do it"
- Trustees need to help us be flexible to fill the gaps
- As principals and teachers we are working in confined boxes, and we want to jump out of those boxes.