

**School District 84 (Vancouver Island West)  
Indigenous Education Enhancement  
Agreement  
2024- 2029**



Cover Art: Wolf, Orca and Thunderbird courtesy of Vince Smith

Our third Indigenous Education Enhancement Agreement (EA), clarifies the ongoing commitment between First Nations and the Board of Education of Vancouver Island West School District # 84 (SD 84), to improve the successes of Indigenous students enrolled in SD 84 education programs.

The Indigenous Education Council (IEC) is made up of representatives from Ehattesaht/Chinehkint, Kyuquot/Cheklesaht, Mowachat/Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, the Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC) and SD 84. This Agreement was codeveloped by SD 84 and the NTC in support of the SD 84 IEC after a series of community engagement sessions provided direction to guide this work. This work will be implemented by SD 84 in full consultation with the IEC and with the support of First Nation communities, schools and the NTC. Together, we seek to continually improve the success of all Indigenous students, to provide greater engagement from communities to guide schools in ways which support growth of Indigenous students, our schools and our communities, and to support the high level of respect and trust required in building relationships.

Our third EA will use the wisdom gathered at our community consultations to build on the success of our second Agreement. The communities have provided the IEC with a clear vision to focus our work on each Indigenous student and their pathway to success:

### **Walking Together for Indigenous Student Success and Lifelong Learning**

- *We envision a school setting where our children have an awareness of where they come from, of who they are and of their fullest potential.*
- *We envision a safe and healthy learning environment that extends between our schools, our communities, and our territories.*
- *We envision a learning environment where our culture and our language are embedded in everyday teachings.*
- *We envision our children upholding our belief in strong character and confidence, walking through life on earth with dignity, pride and enthusiasm for all that life has to offer.*
- *We believe that we must guide students to success by providing a strong foundation that promotes wisdom while they grow intellectually, socially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally.*

## Creating and Enhancing Pathways to Indigenous Student Success

Our mission is to help Indigenous students realize their full potential. It is our intention to establish pathways where all students are supported along their journey to success. These pathways will address the recognized need for:

- A school/community partnership with a visible and vibrant connection between the school, parents, families and the community to support students.
- A school and community culture which enables all members to feel welcomed, cared for, safe, respected and valued.
- All to contribute to respectful communication by listening before being listened to. Nuu-chah-nulth elders firmly believe that we talk through mistakes with storytelling and love rather than punishing for a mistake.
- Understanding that students are best able to learn from mistakes with actions of “sitting down rather than putting down.”
- Opportunities for students to learn with Indigenous role models and Indigenous teachers.
- Including Indigenous traditions and ceremonies in school routines to contribute to a sense of belonging, respect, acceptance, and ownership.
- Identifying, understanding and supporting individual students’ styles of learning as keys to providing a successful learning environment for all students.
- All students to have knowledge and understanding of the Residential School era and the significant impact that this experience has had and continues to have on the role and strength of the family structure and individuals. It is important in teaching students of the Residential School era, that there be an understanding of the success and progress that is evident in individuals, families and communities as they move towards regaining the strength of their ancestors.

### Focus Areas

#### hiišuu maatmaas (community approach)



We recognize the importance of involving our community members in all aspects of education. A strong and active Indigenous presence and partnership is needed for Indigenous students to feel valued and welcomed and for all students to recognize the important role of Indigenous Education.

#### ʔiihʔiih ʔuutuul q<sup>w</sup>aaqin tiič ʔuhʔiiš ciciqkqin (culture and language)

Knowing who we are, where we come from and our vision of where we are going as Indigenous people will support our chosen pursuits. Speaking the language and



understanding the knowledge and practices of the Nuu-chah-nulth and other Indigenous people is critical to these pursuits and to building a strong and resilient personal identity. We embrace the need to strengthen our traditional ways of life by telling and showing our community and members of other communities the language, traditions and practices of our ancestors.

It is our belief that students who are confident and have a strong sense of belonging in an environment that embeds cultural teachings and language become exemplary models for their people. It is essential to provide learning opportunities for students to grow emotionally spiritually, intellectually and physically while carrying forward the wisdom of the elders.

**čaamaapi ʔahʔaaʔa wiikšhin ʔiisuwiłminhukqin**  
**(safe and healthy schools)**



Safe and healthy schools exist when students, parents, community members and school staff express a sense of ownership and pride for the shared and vibrant Indigenous cultures which are evident in the life of the school and community. All members of the school and the community believe they are welcomed, safe, respected, and valued.

Student safety and health will be identified and addressed in the strategies and structures of this Agreement and in the daily activities and interventions that already exist in schools.

**haahuupčuwiłas**  
**(character education)**



The teaching and mentoring of students with respect to character education is an essential component of the formal and informal interactions within and outside a school, community, or group. Character education teachings help students become strong individuals and responsible citizens.

We believe this recognition will allow students explore their full potential and to surpass expectations for their academic, social, physical and emotional growth. When an emphasis is placed on providing a learning environment that is positive, inclusive, safe and healthy, and founded in the guiding principles of our

community's traditions we will, in partnership, be able to guide students along a lifelong path of learning, teaching and leading.

## **Implementation**

**The IEC commits the next five years of our work together to pursuing the Goals of this Enhancement Agreement through the agreed Strategies and to be accountable to our communities and one another through the Indicators of Success. We recognize that this agreement is a living document and commit to ongoing community consultations and updates as a result of these.**

## **Goals , Strategies and Indicators of Success**

Goal 1: Increase community and school engagement in the education of Indigenous children

### Strategies:

Community consultations

Community cultural events with school staff

Creation of a protocol curriculum

Granting students academic credit for community-based learning with involvement of community

Each community and school has a council (like an IEC at each school) where information about student progress is shared openly in a spirit of working together to solve any issues.

### Indicators of Success:

Community survey

Communities recognize cultural teachings when students enter "real life"

Goal 2: Increase the cultural relevance of the education system for Indigenous children.

### Strategies:

Indigenous role models (Grandma circles, Elders in residence, support staff and teacher education programs)

Indigenous language and culture integrated into the education system (NCN language classes, land and sea [place based] education)

Indicators of Success:

Student survey  
Parent survey  
Annual report on strategies

Goal 3: Increase Indigenous students' levels of success.

Strategies:

Individual Pathways plans for all Indigenous students including student goal setting  
Nuuchahnulth Education Worker (or the equivalent) to explain report cards, literacy and numeracy levels, and issues facing staff to students and parents  
Research on identifying and overcoming staff and student communication barriers

Indicators of Success:

Pathways plans actual vs needed  
Report on the steps taken to increase the cultural relevance of the education system  
Community survey  
Student retention  
Student graduation  
Student transitions

Goal 4: Increase the safety of the education system for all Indigenous peoples

Strategies:

Trauma informed practices  
Equity scan work  
Consider restructuring at the schools level to address safety concerns

Indicators of Success:

Annual report on trauma informed practices  
Attendance rates  
Retention rates  
Student survey  
Community survey

Goal 5: Increase Indigenous students' sense of identity

Strategies:

Indigenous educators (staff)  
Character education

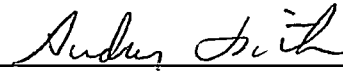
Indicators of Success:

Number of Indigenous staff vs possible  
Student survey  
Community survey


Signed on behalf of:



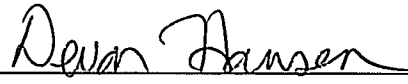
Ehattesah/Chinehkint First Nation



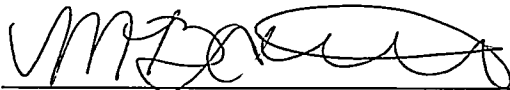
Nuchatlaht First Nation




Mowachah/Muchalaht First Nation



Kyuquot/Checklesah First Nation



Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council



School District #84 (VIW)



## **APPENDIX A: PATHWAYS STUDENT PLAN**

### **Pathways - At a Glance**

Pathways is a program initiated by the NTC Education Department in partnership with School Districts, communities, parents, and others to support NuuChahNulth students on an individual basis as they move from a young age to graduation from secondary school and beyond.

The program was built on the premise that it takes many people to help each student meet and exceed their goals. It is essential that all partners have an understanding of what is important to students, where struggles and challenges limit a student's ability to succeed and open doors to exploring different options for meeting various challenges.

An essential part of this program involves grounding learning and education experience in a strong sense of identity and cultural belonging as well as ensuring that support teams prioritize relationships with students and hold a strong commitment to supporting students along their path to independence and confidence to live a happy and whole life. This Path to Learning support document helps teachers, support workers and others begin to engage with what is important to each student, and which barriers may exist along the path of following dreams and aspirations. It is a goal that this document may support the sharing of effective strategies to overcome the many distractors that inhibit student success.

In its current form, Pathways exists in two types of documents. There is a teacher resource booklet that was recently updated in 2022. It contains twenty lessons that are usable by a classroom teacher.

As well, student workbooks are differentiated by community dialect as supports to guide learning if and when necessary.

It is the work within each community to ensure that the learning is culturally and place based specific and that the lessons of the pathway journey continue throughout the child's K-12 experience.

More information on the program can be found online at the School District 84 Website:

<https://sd84.bc.ca/about-sd84/departments/indigenous-education/>



## **APPENDIX B: PATHWAYS SURVEYS**

### Pathways Student Survey and Interview

The Pathways survey and student interview are conducted each year to help guide planning for individual students and for the Pathways program.

The survey questions use a five-point scale to record student responses to a variety of questions about their experiences of the Pathways program. The written survey questions can be found on pages 163-165 of the Pathways Teacher Guide. The written survey can be completed as a whole class activity (each individual student should record their own responses), in small groups, or individually. The written student survey should be completed prior to the interview. If you anticipate that a student might need support to complete the written survey, the survey could be completed orally during the interview.

The interview consists of a series of open-ended questions that are intended to be a guide for an individual conversation between teacher and student. Other important adults, such as parents, caregivers, grandparents, N.E.W.'s, etc. can be invited to be a part of the interview. The interview is intended to be completed orally, with notes about student responses recorded. *Please do not ask students to respond to the interview questions in writing – the conversation is important!*

At the interview, begin by reviewing how the student responded to the written survey. The teacher can ask questions about the student's response to help clarify.

After reviewing the student's written survey responses, ask the open-ended follow-up interview questions. You can alter the wording to be more appropriate for your students, but try to maintain central intention of the questions. Record the students' responses.



## Pathways Student Survey and Interview

### Safe and Healthy Schools

<b><i>I am comfortable at school and contribute to the school community.</i></b>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

<b><i>I can identify at least two adults at school who believe that I will be successful.</i></b>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

<b><i>I know what I need to feel safe and to be healthy.</i></b>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

#### Follow-up:

- i) Who makes you feel safe? What does that person do to make you feel safe and supported?
  
- ii) Do you have people and places from whom you can get the support you need when you need it? Who are some of those people or places?
  
- iii) Is there anything at school that makes you feel unsafe? Who or what makes you feel unsafe?
  
- iv) Can you name at least two adults at school who believe in you and think you will be successful? Who are those adults? Can you name any other adults who are not at the school who believe in you?



## Language and Culture

<i>I feel connected to my culture.</i>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

<i>I feel connected to the land.</i>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

<i>I can understand and speak in my traditional language.</i>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

### Follow-up:

- vii) Are you learning about your Nuuchahnulth language and culture? (If yes, where / when / with whom are you learning language and culture?)
  
- viii) How do you feel about learning Nuuchahnulth language and culture?
  
- ix) What do you like most about learning Nuuchahnulth language and culture?
  
- x) What else would you like to learn about Nuuchahnulth language and culture?

## Character Education

<b><i>I understand my responsibilities at school and in the community.</i></b>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

<b><i>I understand my role in my family, community, and culture.</i></b>				
1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Not Sure	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree

### Follow-up:

- xi) What are some of your responsibilities or some ways that you contribute to:
- Your family?
  - Your community?
  - Your school?
- xii) What are some of your gifts and talents?
- xiii) How can we nourish and support you in developing your gifts and talents?
- xiv) What do you wish that your teacher(s) knew about you?

## Pathways Community Survey

The Pathways Community Survey is conducted each year in community. This survey can be applied as a series of guiding questions within a facilitated conversation; however, the questions can also be answered as a stand-alone survey.

### Questions

- On a scale of 1 – 10 (with 10 being the highest), how is your relationship with your child's:
  - School principal
  - Classroom teacher
  - Support workers
  - School environment
  
- Have these relationships improved or declined?
  - School principal
  - Classroom teacher
  - Support workers
  - School environment
  
- If improved, what has improved? If declined, what has declined?
  - School principal
  
  - Classroom teacher
  
  - Support workers
  
  - School environment

- What can SD84 and the schools do to make you and your child feel heard?
  
- How would you like to have ongoing feedback about your child (please rank in order of preference from 1-5) :
  - Facebook private message
  - Email
  - Phone call
  - Meeting
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- How often would you like each type of feedback? (weekly, monthly, etc.)?
  - Facebook private message
  - Email
  - Phone call
  - Meeting
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Who do you want to hear from (please rank in order of preference from 1-4)?
  - Teacher
  - Principal
  - Support Worker
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
- NOTE: School and Community based questions should be added to this survey to reflect local initiatives, needs and relationships.
  
- What questions do you have?

## Pathways Community Lead Survey

The Pathways Community Leads Survey is conducted each year at the Indigenous Education Committee (IEC) table. This survey is best applied as a series of guiding questions within a facilitated conversation; however, the questions can also be answered as a stand-alone survey when necessary.

This document should include up to date information on the current EA goals, measures, outcomes and an explanation for each.

- What notable gains have been made towards achieving our stated EA goals to date?
- What are the notable issues apparent with achieving our EA goals to date?
- How will we address the issues to move forward:
  - What is working?
  - What is not working?
  - What is missing?
  - What needs to stop happening?
- How can First Nations gain more control over education for their communities?
  
- How do individuals, families and communities fit into these conversations?



## **APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORTS**



### **Equity in Action: An Overview of the School District 84 Equity Scan Process**

Prepared by Aida Mashari and John Swift, M.A. at Makwag Consulting

Prepared for School District 84, Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation, Nuchatlaht First Nation, Ehattesaht First Nation, Kyuquot First Nation, and the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council

November, 2022

## INTRODUCTION

On November 22, 2022, the School District 84 (SD84) Equity Team met in Gold River, BC, on the territories of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations, to continue discussions on the state of First Nations education in their communities.

The team included representatives from the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC), the superintendent of schools, principals, teachers, teachers-in-training, and educational support staff. Many of the participants had also been students of SD84 at some point and were also parents, grandparents or family members of past and current students. All participants identified as First Nations (FN) from various territories across Canada.

The Equity Team met to address the following questions:

- What notable gains have been made in FN educational autonomy to date?
- How can FN gain more control over education in their communities?
- What are the key barriers and challenges to FN educational success and autonomy and how can they be addressed? What can be improved? What's missing?
- How do individuals, families and communities fit into these conversations?
- How can SD84 facilitate increased family and community participation in education?
- How can SD84 make students, families and community members feel heard and encourage ongoing feedback?
- What questions do community members have for SD84?

## METHODOLOGY

The conversation was facilitated in person by John Swift at Makwag Consulting over the course of nearly three hours, which included a meal break. There were **\_# participants** in all. At the request of a participant, the meeting was begun by addressing the loss of community members to the opioid crisis, which included a moment of silence and sharing of personal experiences. Following this, everyone was welcomed to the traditional territories of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations. Then a round of introductions took place that allowed participants to introduce themselves and their role in the education

system. After introductions, Ian Caplette (NTC Director of Education, Training, and Social Development) and Lawrence Tasaroff (Superintendent of Schools & Secretary-Treasurer) provided a brief history of the Equity in Action Project (EAP) and gave an update on programs that are now underway. Participants were then encouraged to share their experiences with the education system and to give feedback.

## BACKGROUND

### HISTORY

The EAP began in 2018-2020 when the Ministry of Education approached SD84 in order to better understand how well the education system was working for FN in their communities. The main goal was to figure out ways that education can empower FN identity and benefit FN communities. In light of the historical weaponization of education against FNs, SD84 has been committed to working towards changes that make the education system benefit and serve the interests of FN communities. Community engagement and feedback were deemed necessary for the success of the EAP. Thus, [\\_# meetings](#) have been held with various stakeholders in order to incorporate input from the communities. It was deemed important that SD84 also be available to answer questions communities have about their schools and education system.

### OUTCOMES

- Two courses have been introduced at Vancouver Island University (VIU):
  - Indigenous Learning Recognition Portfolio (ILRP100) - The intent of this course is not to teach, but to highlight the identity, culture and gifts/strengths of participants in a positive light. The goal is to have FN knowledge validated through the post-secondary system. Many within SD84, as well as other school districts, have taken the course or are interested in taking it. It is increasing in popularity.
  - Indigenous Learning Recognition Portfolio Education Course (ILRP450) - related course to ILRP100 for FN teachers.
- Enhancement Agreement / Local Education Agreement (EA/LEA) Table:

- SD84 has been directed by this body, which includes all education workers from FN communities, Nuu-chat-nulth Education Workers (NEWs) and district staff.
- Monthly meetings are held to discuss education. Meetings have become more regular and this has been hugely beneficial.
- Funding for these meetings has been provided by SD84 so that this program is free and accessible.
- Teacher Education Program (TEP) - An in-community Indigenous teacher training program created in partnership with VIU is underway:
  - SD84 requested crediting their own teachers and providing their own instructors from within communities to make it possible to retain the program locally and thus make the program more culturally appropriate for each FN community.
  - Currently, there are cohorts in Zeballos and Gold River. They began their training in Aug 2022. These first cohorts will graduate in Dec 2023.
  - TEP allows trainees to stay predominantly within their own community for their duration of study.
  - TEP allows for more culturally appropriate education in relation to each FN community's culture, language, and history.
  - Training teachers within the community allows for more continuity and less turn-over in school staff.
  - Preference can now be given to hiring qualified FN over non-FN hires within SD84. New hires join existing unions for teachers or support staff. This also means guaranteed employment for those within the community who complete the TEP.
- Current work in progress to make training of FN education workers more accessible:
  - Expanding opportunities to complete GEDs within communities despite staffing shortages.
  - Providing the option of EA training first and allowing for laddering into Child and Youth Care programs or TEP if desired. This type of transition can mean easier access, as well as beneficial experience, for new teachers entering a challenging training program and profession.
  - SD84 and NTC currently have staff that can help community members navigate bureaucratic paperwork and processes needed to access educational and training opportunities.

## LESSONS

- It has been worthwhile to invest quality time to build relationships within communities, and with everyone involved at VIU and beyond to make the ILRP and TEP successful. Current working relationships are a few years in progress.
- The importance and benefits of meeting more frequently have been noted, allowing for building of better relationships, incorporation of community feedback, and successful implementation of courses and programs.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

All educators and educational support staff present stated how much their work means to them in personal and social terms. They shared that they feel fortunate to work within their own communities for the benefit of their community members. There was also consensus that generally things have improved over the years for FN education. They went on to discuss current challenges in the education system and how to address them. Major themes, including challenges and recommendations, are outlined below.

### IMPACTS OF ADDICTION, GRIEF AND TRAUMA ON LEARNING

Participants discussed realities that impact education and are not adequately addressed in schools. They identified the need to provide resources in schools to address addiction, grief and trauma for students. They also identified a need for educators and support staff to better understand what's happening at home for students in order to provide more appropriate support.

#### Challenges:

It has been difficult for SD84/NTC to bring counselling services into schools. The Province has directed them to the FN Health Authority, which SD84/NTC and the community feel cannot address the need for appropriate youth counselling for students. There was consensus that these services need to be provided within schools to be effective. Despite the challenges, staff at SD84/NTC are working to bring counselling services into schools.

#### Recommendations:

- Addiction, trauma and grief counselling services for students within schools.

- Breakfast Programs have proven beneficial in communities that have them.
- Home visits by school staff (which could also alleviate inaccessibility issues surrounding scheduled parent-teacher interviews as they unfold today, more on this below).

## ASSESSMENTS AND ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Participants addressed the importance of accommodating different ways of learning and increasing one-on-one support in schools. Many students in high school did not receive the support they needed in earlier grades in order to be successful. It was noted that many adults in communities struggle with basic math and language skills. To remedy this, better access to Psycho-Educational Assessments are needed to address speech/language challenges, ADD and other learning disabilities, and physical disabilities. These assessments lead to Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students that are very beneficial for teachers, support staff and families.

Currently, parental/family advocacy is generally required to ensure students are getting assessed and advancing with appropriate support. Teachers have too much on their plate, thus many students fall through the cracks. However, if teachers identify challenges for different students that require additional one-on-one support, how can the community, school staff and SD84 work together to make that support possible? It was also acknowledged that assessment criteria change over-time, and that hopefully the learning environment can become inclusive enough to not require such assessments in the future.

Challenges regarding provision of Psycho-Educational Assessments and IEPs:

- Assessments are expensive.
- Assessments and IEPs lead to students being labeled and categorized, which can carry stigma
- Staffing remote locations, not funding, is the key challenge for SD84. COVID's electronic trend has actually allowed for virtual support to be possible for many, but there is a preference for having such support in person within the community.
- Despite identification of needs, some students don't qualify for funding based on their exact diagnosis because they might not meet all of the criteria required by the Province to provide one-on-one funding support.

Recommendations:

- Better access to Psycho-Educational Assessments to determine needs and strengths of students, followed by IEPs and other individualized programs for students based on their particular situation.
- Placing equal value on hands-on skills, academic skills and land-based learning to allow each student to choose the right educational path for them.
- Community outreach through an SD84 Open House on IEPs for parents: Such outreach is required to alleviate stigma, to highlight what IEPs are, and how they can lead to more support and success for each student. Parents need information on how to access services.
- Jordan's Principle was discussed as a possible solution because it can allow access to funding otherwise not possible in the public system. It was noted that group applications are possible and can alleviate individual challenges in accessing this support.

## ONGOING AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

Participants addressed the importance of ongoing community engagement and feedback. Experiences in each community are different and SD84 needs feedback and input to take appropriate action. Meeting more frequently has been identified as beneficial. COVID's swing to electronic meetings allowed folks in different locations to meet regularly with more ease. SD84/NTC staff are willing to make accommodations if they are aware of barriers to participation. For example, parents can call to give feedback to SD84/NTC if they're unable to attend scheduled meetings.

## PARENTAL/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Participants noted the importance of increasing parental/family involvement in the education of children. This involvement is critical to the success of Equity sessions and parent-teacher interviews (which currently have low attendance). As well, parental/family awareness and involvement is important and beneficial to students and to educators on a daily basis as this support goes a long way to provide positive motivation for them. Parents/families should do their best to participate and pay attention to what their kids are doing (grandparents and other family members can and do sometimes step in where parents can't.) Teachers and support staff need more connection with families to better

understand what's happening at home for students in order to provide appropriate support.

They also noted the importance of working with parents and families to accept their children as they are, particularly around gender identity, strengths, interests, and future goals. It is important to help parents understand the consequences of not accommodating and accepting who their child chooses to be and what they choose to pursue.

Challenges for parents:

- Many parents/families face barriers to increasing their participation and these challenges need to be addressed, such as practical (financial, time) barriers to attending community meetings and parent-teacher interviews.
- Parents/care-givers need support with their own healing and dealing with their own shame. Parental healing will benefit children, such as parents learning to be easier on themselves will teach their children to do the same.

Recommendations:

- Home Visits by school staff could be helpful for understanding what's happening at home and also to facilitate parental involvement in their child's education. Parent-teacher interviews are more likely to occur if these meetings could also take place in the student's home.

## EMPOWERING FIRST NATION IDENTITY THROUGH EDUCATION

Participants discussed ways to empower FN identity for students, which included:

- Teaching history from a FN perspective
- Highlighting current community stories and how students are a part of history in the making
- Highlighting FN people in positions of leadership
- Land-based education
- Acknowledgment of impacts of trauma and supporting personal healing

## CHALLENGES OF NAVIGATING COLONIAL SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

Participants addressed the challenges of working within colonial structures. Bureaucracies and administrative paperwork are alienating for many to navigate and make participation inaccessible or difficult for teacher training programs, student assessments etc. Lack of official credentials, such as GEDs, also limit opportunities

Participants also noted the challenges of tackling racist accusations by some settlers that they are ‘lowering standards’ when working to reasonably accommodate the needs of FN participants in teacher training programs, and in asking for additional time-off for FN teachers within the union to address trauma and grief in their communities. As well, they noted that the Protestant work ethic (working Mon-Fri, 9-5) is oppressive and goes unquestioned in society at large and does not allow for adequate time off for personal care around trauma or death in families. The needs of adults are particularly over-looked.

### **FINAL SUMMARY**

This session provided an opportunity to acknowledge gains made by the EAP since it began in 2018. In partnership with VIU, training of the first TEP cohorts is underway and ILRP courses are being increasingly accessed to help empower FN educators. As well, folks involved with the EAP are proud of the relationship building that has been done to make these gains. They also continue to learn how to engage the community more effectively. Discussions and feedback in this session focused on: the need to further ease of access to the TEP; the need for and benefits of student assessments, IEPs and one-on-one support for students; and how to encourage and reduce barriers to parental/family participation in education.

Particular recommendations included:

- 1) Provision of counselling services related to addiction, grief and trauma within schools for students.
- 2) Provision of Breakfast Programs for students in every community.
- 3) Easing access to Psycho-Educational Assessments and better provision of one-on-one support for students as needs are identified.
- 4) Ensuring FN education places equal value on hands-on learning, land-based education and academic skills.
- 5) Open Houses to educate families on the benefits of Psycho-Educational Assessments and IEPs, and to alleviate the stigma surrounding these.
- 6) Home Visits by educators in order to better understand family challenges, as well as to reach parents/families who are otherwise unable to engage in their child’s education.

- 7) Finding ways to support parents/care-givers to do their own healing, as well as working with them to understand the importance of accepting their child's gender identity, interests, goals etc.
- 8) Provision of support with colonial/bureaucratic paperwork and processes that alienate many FN, with regards to student assessments, teacher training programs, completion of GEDs, and accessing funding through Jordan's Principle.



## Equity in Action: [Overview of SD 84 Equity Scan Ehattesaht Session](#)

Prepared by Mark Worthing and John Swift, M.A. at Makwag Consulting

Prepared for School District 84, Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation, Nuchatlaht First Nation, Ehattesaht First Nation, Kyuquot First Nation, and the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council

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## Introduction

On November 1st, 2022, the SD84 Equity Team met with community members from Nuchatlaht, Ehatesaht and Mowachaht/Muchalaht in Ehattesaht to continue discussing strategies to increase equity for Indigenous learners throughout the district.

## Methodology

The conversation was facilitated by John Swift, of Makwag Consulting with approximately 10 people. Participants were encouraged to share openly and freely their own experiences, ideas, concerns and insights in a sharing-circle style context where individuals could respond to one another, exchange and listen in a non-linear meeting context.

## Overview & Key Themes

The session reemphasized how the effects of residential schools on children carry through into everything happening in schools today, noting that even the colonial structures of the school calendar, hours of instruction all perpetuate a colonial way of being. It was evident that even well intentioned settler staff have their own blind spots and are impacted by their cultural upbringing. One participant noted the fine line walked by principals between being authoritarian and being flexible. On the one hand you need to create structure and on the other hand if you create too much structure and you're accused of being a residential school. There's that tension. There was also a sense of untapped potential and eagerness to deepen relationships to get things done without any further hesitation or time wasted.

Some of the themes identified were loosely bundled into: 1) Teacher experiences, training, retention & resourcing issues; 2) Power dynamics, trauma, counseling & healing; 3) Language & Culture Immersion; 4) finding the balance between home/family/cultural space & school/institutional space and also 5) land & ocean-based learning.

“As an aunty I want to support you to...create a safe environment that has structure...I'm a resource for you... I can support your efforts...I don't think we've tapped into each other very well.” - Participant.

“seeing what goes on here, I'm still not even sure this 'school' is really the answer, it often creates a lot more problems. I really wonder what the right way forward is.” - Participant

-The right balance between home/family/cultural space & school/institutional space.

A central theme throughout the course of the conversation was about how to strike the right balance between cultural learning spaces, the home or family space and the

schooling institution. Community members spoke about wanting a more integrated approach, where teachers and education were more grounded within the community, simultaneously, families felt more welcome and participatory within the school. Striking the right balance, and finding appropriate boundaries and delineations between parenting and traditional institutional teaching roles seemed to be the question at hand - in one sense, how can we become a community as one for the wellbeing of children and future generations of leaders. There was an earnest sentiment that it is a privilege to help shape communities' futures.

There was also discussion of potential initiatives like implementing a Grandma or Auntie team in the schools to support wellness, behavior, and calming children down in the setting. Excitement was expressed about models that support children, parents and teachers together.

“We say Hishuk-ish-tsawalkt we are all one. It takes a community to raise a child.” - Participant

“We need [help], we want our children to be successful, we want them to thrive in life. But we can't have our kids go to school and not know that they're sitting there 5 years straight doing nothing and have them graduate with a degree that maybe they didn't even earn... because how did they earn it if they sit there for 5 years doing nothing. They're walking away with no education, but we think they are... People think their kids can go right away into college if they want to... We need a little bit more transparency. People need to be a little bit more honest and we need to work together to talk about real issues about trauma and education and how we're going to get our kids from A - Z. So that when they turn 18 they can take care of themselves” - Participant.

“each of us know something, together we know a lot, we're going to share with each other what we know” - Participant

Sometimes those young people do have what teachers need, they are the teachers. Particularly in

...kids who can fully function in ceremonial society, a ceremonial way, but when they come back into the classroom where that ceremonial relationship isn't quite there, they function differently. I really appreciate the query about bridging those two worlds: how do we create a safe, knowledgeable environment for children who function very well in a ceremonial environment and how do we have that experience as teachers in a structured colonial school environment?” -

Participant

“Each family has different songs and dances and performances. They came traditionally and we have to respect that and say yes, and show up and we'll be there on behalf of our school.” -

Participant

“What I’m learning from my instructors is outstanding. Just bringing that perspective of community into schools, or bringing school into community, is something that I know we need to implement, and I’m really glad we’re having this conversation.” - Participant

The kids just melt my heart. Not a lot of people get the work that people in education do. We’re not here for money, not here to make things more difficult. We’re here trying to help and make change and make a difference. Everything I was taught by my grandparents, my parents, all my family members I bring to my classroom...“We are teaching each other and we are here to help and care about each other and that's how I was taught” - Participant

“We want you to notice the investment that we’ve made...we want you to have the benefits of those...We’d really appreciate it if you'd put the books we’ve published on the list of school books for teachers, point people to First Voices work we’ve done, let us know, what is it that you need? What do you want for your classrooms?” - Participant

#### -Language & Culture Immersion

Language, culture and traditional knowledge was a natural priority in everyone’s contributions and reflections. The importance of 10 years of work towards an immersion program was emphasized and the need for a multi stakeholder program reiterated. It seemed to be a combination of work in community and some within school would be the desired program structure with distinct cultural work through family and also having cultural work within the school system.

It was identified that there was a gap or missing opportunity to teach in the classroom setting the Ha’wilt’h of different territories and questions were raised about how the school district could move from theory to practice with regards to many cross-cultural conversations that are underway.

There was a strong desire to draw from different successful indigenous language immersion programs elsewhere and a desire for Indigenous ways of knowing to be integrated in to colonial topics like math.

“It’s English - everyone’s getting the idea but no one’s learning anything because both parties are not speaking in a way that both parties understand. Certain students walk away with no education” - Participant.

“When teachers learn language, they’re so excited and so enthusiastic and they use it, and then if kids in the classroom haven’t been exposed to it yet, and it's still growing in the community..

Then it’s this new other thing they have to learn, and it looks a bit like ‘oh man, I have to catch up in that way too’.” - Participant

“They focus on the child, and the parent, but in reality we should be looking 7 generations back and 7 generations forward. And something that we should be looking at

as an institute we're not just training kids, but we're training future leaders and you know what we're teaching them is going to affect them for 7 generations...We need to keep that in mind, what we're instilling in these kids." - Participant

"As a parent and I moved home...we always wanted access to our indigenous ways of knowing and our language." - Participant  
-Land & Ocean-based learning

Participants identified the importance of removing barriers and making accessible land and ocean-based learning more easily possible and a regular part of schooling for students and teachers. How can the school district support cultural learning extending to outside of school settings?

"Get on the boat, get on the water- this summer trying to get community as a collective on the water to experience the herring, whales, sea lions, wolves arrival...The amount of effort and energy that was required for 4 boats of community on the water was 'nothing short of amazing'; required 'paper-chasing, insurance, permission slips lifejackets'...Educational 'law' has shifted so that institute has more ability to shift towards this kind of activity/field trip." - Participant

-Power, trauma, counseling & healing.

There was a clear understanding that trauma is not being adequately addressed in SD84 and that there is an explicit need for clinical support. Community members felt that kids are hurting, and the community is concerned that because trauma and wrap-around services were not available they were suffering and/or being graduated without adequate academic readiness for

post-secondary schooling expectations. There is a strong need for culturally appropriate trauma-informed professionals who can deal with a diversity of trauma symptoms and behaviors as they occur differently for different ages with a myriad of triggers for their trauma or pain. The threat of MCFD getting involved was felt as a heavy shadow of residential schools and

state-sanctioned control over communities' ability to co-create safe education/school-family dynamics.

The community offered a number of solutions or ways to address the issues including: full time trauma-informed counselor for the children; kids going to school at their own pace; a holistic trauma-informed approach to education; clinical therapy pilot project; family-based justice to be served when there is bullying; utilizing gifted people in community without colonial credentials who can support individual/community mental health or having an aunty/culturally appropriate trauma-counselor person present in schools.

“There’s no decision if our kids are going to go to school, they have to go to school, if they don’t they’re going to get apprehended by the Ministry. I think that’s in the back of a lot of people’s minds, residue from residential school; those laws are still in place....still an oppressive system being forced on Indigenous people. How power and money is shared, that responsibility ultimately still lies with the State. We can contribute ideas, thoughts through a roundtable, but still the State has the decision on how money is going to be spent. There’s limitations to the freedoms we can exercise. We can say ‘we wanna do this’ but at the end of the day whoever the top dog is can say...we’re not gonna do that.” - Participant

“One of the beautiful things about colonialism is that it can change shape to ensure the status quo remains the same...to make sure that control stays intact.” - Participant

“My daughter is not in school right now cuz she’s going through a woman thing right now. Last time the school called me and i had to go get her cuz she wasn't comfortable being in school. She was scared and she didn’t want to be around kids.” - Participant.

-Teacher experiences, training/programs, retention & resourcing.

Generally the Teacher training initiatives and programs were uplifting and successful projects that have had numerous benefits ranging from peoples individual life-journey, employment as educators and feeding through the entire education system for an enriched quality of cross cultural education. One theme of note was the success of the teacher program as both classroom and in-community/place-based allowing for more flexibility. Iisaak & Hishuk-ish-tsawalkt were referred to in general terms invoking the reminder that these Nuu-chah-nulth teachings can continuously serve as pedagogy & foundational education ethics for reconciliation and decolonization.

A few key issues that were identified were the need to protect against burnout; problems with high turnover rates; children craving stability and consistency; the effort needed in finding people who have passion for the job or getting the right people in the roles; and the issue of hiring people when/if they don’t know what they’re getting in to; and the risks of those working in under-resourced scenarios having compassion fatigue/empathy fatigue.

“You learn from these kids how they internalize things and how they learn, every day the observing piece is huge, it’s huge. Sometimes it's overwhelming because so much goes on in little kids' heads!”

“With the ILRP 100 I took it twice and it was different both times, amazing both times. The fact that I was able to work with the community with staff, and watching some of their mindsets change for the better, was just phenomenal.” - Participant

“One of the biggest things that made me want to do this was the fact that I would be learning at home, being home, this is my son's home, I've been here for almost 10 years.”  
- Participant

“It always comes down to Iisaak - if these kids really really believe that you care about them and that you respect them, they're going to give it back to you.” - Participant

“I notice how the children... are so connected to him and the young adults, they're just so connected spiritually and in a healthy way, and I want to say thank you 'cause i know that they're excited to come and eat with you and get together...you have that way of putting it out there and they all come together with you. You have a nice gift.” - Participant referring to another educator.

### Final Summary

The session was a centralized gathering of a few communities together with similar themes and needs being expressed. It was affirmed that these types of conversations were to be the beginning of coordinated work and not the end result. And there was a desire to chart a path towards solutions that work for children despite the colonial barriers and lived trauma of children, families and communities navigating the often archaic and under funded education system.





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Prepared by Mark Worthing. and John Swift, M.A. at Makwag Consulting

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October 2022

## Introduction

On October 19, 2022, the SD84 Equity Team met with the community in Kyuquot to continue discussing strategies to increase equity for Indigenous learners throughout the district.

## Methodology

The conversation was facilitated by Ian Caplette, Director of Education at the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council via zoom consulting with 25-28 participants in person at the Health Center Building Board Room in Kyuquot. A meal was prepared by Ian, Carla and others and enjoyed by all for lunch prior to the beginning session. Ian opened the floor with a moment of silence then posed the context of the conversation to be about education, in open, general terms. Updates about Progress and various files and projects were shared by Lawrence T & Natalie Dixon after a round of introductions.

Participants were encouraged to share openly and freely their own experiences, ideas, concerns and insights in a sharing-circle style context where individuals could respond to one another, exchange and listen in a non-linear meeting context.

## Overview & Key Themes

-Natalie D and Lawrence T opened the session dialogue with SD84 updates on EALEA table discussions; curriculum days; courses with VIU focused on Nuu-Chah-Nulth culture (ILRP) and a Special Topics teachers course; teacher education program to help Nuu-chah-nulth people become teachers (first group to finish 2023 sept another cohort december); special hiring program to ‘discriminate’ against non-indigenous people and hire Indigenous teachers; Pathways curriculum (Nuu-chah-nulth developed). They also made clear that the School District wants feedback to gauge if they are on the right track in the eyes of the communities and what they might be missing.

“Are there things the school district does that are clearly a problem? We’re all under the colonial structure and there are things we just assume.”

-Applied Land & Ocean-based learning consistently emerged as critical to both culture and simply an applied reality of living in a remote coastal community that is separate from urban hubs, food distribution and transportation corridors. Wild food harvesting, fishing, hunting, foraging, medicines, preserving and self sufficiency were important knowledge that participants wanted to see more central in education. Beyond simply the applied knowledge itself, it was noted that this helps with healthy lifestyles, an environmental ethic and responsibility of stewardship with regards to the territory as well as important for mental health.

-There was a strong emphasis from many participants that not only Kyuquot culture and

traditional knowledge be centered in the content and methods of education, but that the Maa-nulth Treaty be taught explicitly through curriculum with a lens to raising youth who

understand the responsibilities of being a modern treaty nation. This topic emerged a number of times throughout the session and included inquiries into what it might mean to employ traditional grooming of Kindergarten to Grade 12 youth towards political roles to uphold nationhood and treaty obligations. It was generally agreed that having Legislative councils in the schools and feeling welcome to share and participate in education is something that should continue as a way to help children and youth learn at their own pace and feel like they have access to leadership.

Ideas were floated of a youth-representative, or having students mentor and then present back to council what they have learned about the Maa-nulth treaty. SD84 was keen to explore the potential for growing more work on governance, sovereignty and treaty with regards to education and also noting that it's important for the schools to celebrate the Treaty on April 1st to help show kids that Treaty is a good thing. Currently the Maa-nulth Treaty is being taught in Contemporary History Class to grade 11 & 12 students as a piece, along with UNDRIP, and other subjects.

“I'd like to discuss our nation and being recognized as a Treaty nation and what that means... We're a government, we have government positions that require education... Our government is aging, and people are retiring. We need our future generations to carry on what we've been building. Every position is vital for all our people. It is important that we're recognized as a treaty nation that we need to start training our youth to be where we are today and for the fights against the provincial government or federal. We need people at those tables and to talk for your people, to stand up.”

-Repetition (“iqua” - repetition?) exposure and compassion for students to come to knowledge/learning on their own terms as they are ready, as opposed to driven and pushed towards a set learning outcomes and objectives and told what to learn, how, when etc. It is important for youth to choose the elders and teachers they look up to and be given the spaciousness to develop, mature and become themselves alongside their peer group who share lived experiences and generational kinship.

“That was how we talked. That was our way, to be repetitive day in and day out. I remember my nan always saying things all the time. That's our way we bring it [the teaching] back every so often. The “Naniqs”(?) used to talk - that was our way with repetition... When we potlatch you hear things that have been said over and over again.”

“When they're acting out they're trying to communicate something to us, and we need to honor that, lift them up, listen and not scold them. Those kids that are pushed out of school cuz they're acting differently than they're expected. We need to bear an open mind and open heart with that child, they're suffering and their communication is blurred to us - and we need to be there for that. And we teach the warriors to support one another - they understand each other as peers right away.”

-Families, with grandparents or aunts caring for children and youth as primary teachers rather than white-dominant cultures where parents and children in one household export the role of teaching and education to the institution and onto teachers. Decolonizing this binary and drawing indigenous family structures into schools, and education into families

was an important theme that came up in various ways throughout the session. In this same vein, it was noted how important it is for teachers and educators to be active participants in the community. Parents,

caretakers and teachers should be understood to be raising families and children together, often crossing cultural lines but with shared intentions and community. It was reiterated a number of times how important it was for people to put names to faces, and meet each other on the same level to walk together.

“You spend most of your time with our kids, so I want to know who you are. We stood our kids up in front of you and said, help me raise my kids with me.”

-Ethics, respect and propriety between children, youth and elders and adults was identified by a number of participants in reference to children and youth respecting elders and Haa’wilt as well as basic respect for one another. Specifically for educators, it was emphasized that if families or caregivers don’t set the expectation that students should respect teachers then it becomes difficult for those teachers to share knowledge and help with that child.

“I was thankful enough to have my parents and grandparents in my life... I always remember being disciplined cuz I always pushed that line. But the way kids learn has never changed. They watch all of us. They’re awake, watching us. To have a healthy community is what [education] means to me; to show them what it’s like to have a community... how it’s ok to disagree and still respect each other... and how to show respect to each other and to oneself.”

-Culture & Language as paramount, central as apriori for educational pedagogy. There was dialogue about how cultural teachings and practices can be an antidote or a solution to grief and anxiety children are processing. Participants discussed the potential for immersion language programming and having elders and knowledge holders from the Lands & Resources department as well as basket weavers to engage students on a regular basis.

-Grief, counseling, healing and intergenerational trauma. In a number of ways the impacts of colonialism are the daily barriers for students being in a positive and safe state of mind to be effective learners and members of the community. If children are dealing with loss, depression or anxiety this forecloses their learning potential and requires resolution or tools for them to work through their grief. Education and schooling could be providing more tools or opportunities for families and students to develop healthy coping mechanisms and wellness practices.

“Residential schools taught us not to show us emotions and we were taught how to silent-cry.”

-Teacher retention, indigenous representation, staffing and incentives. Many participants reiterated how critical it was for there to be consistency and retention of teachers or staff within the community. It takes a long time to build trust and develop relationships so it's a huge loss when a teacher needs to leave or move on from their role. It was highlighted that teachers in the district aren't provided with equitable wages compared to other districts and perhaps should be offered financial incentives considering the requirements of a remote working environment.

Participants also exchanged thoughts on having more Nuu-chah-nulth or indigenous teaching aids

and assistants that could be retained in the community for longer, or be from the community themselves.

“Respect has a hard time reaching over colonial barriers. For colonial oppression to exist, all it takes is the denial that it's there. You just show up with white skin and you're the authority. And on top of that you're the principal. Already with race, people draw the lines of authority. Some want to be the saviors of the community, but we don't want to be saved, we just want to be helped.”

-How might youth bring their voice into this conversation?

“The students themselves can be a tremendous guide for all of this too. And this aligns well with what the elders have told me, which is that they are lifelong learners as well.”

Final Summary

Overall the session was very organic in flow and dialogue which allowed for a lot of conversation, sharing and thoughts to come to the forefront. All types of feedback were invited and an earnest sense of open-hearted commitment to continue the conversation was priority for everyone in the room. Some of the most notable themes that emerged were:

- 1) Teacher/staff Retention & Representation.
- 2) Grief, Counseling and tools for healing intergenerational trauma.
- 3) Culture & Language as pedagogy for education.
- 4) Ethics, respect & propriety between youth & elders/adults.
- 5) Family as teachers, teachers as family - enmeshing/reinforcing.
- 6) Land & Ocean based learning & knowledge.
- 7) Repetition, exposure and compassion as methods/teachings.
- 8) Importance of teaching Maa-nulth treaty and grooming leaders.



## **APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FROM MAY 2024 MEETINGS**

Summary of what was shared to inform the EA draft:

1. Make the EA local and simple to read and understand
2. Students should be setting personal goals in the areas the EA addresses
3. There should be accountability for students around their behaviours
4. The IEC should be engaging research professionals to explore areas of concern identified through their work
5. The parents and community need to know how their children are really doing. Not just local letter grades, but in comparison to other students their age in other schools/districts. If behind, are they improving and closing the gap?
6. There needs to be stronger communication and relationships between the schools and parents.