

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT

School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)

Coldwater Band, Lower Nicola Band, Nooaitch Band, Shackan Band,  
Upper Nicola Band, Upper Similkameen Band, Metis Association,  
Conayt Friendship Society

Ministry of Education

November 2017 to November 2022



Aboriginal Advisory Council

# SCHOOL DISTRICT #58 (Nicola-Similkameen)

## ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT

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### **Background:**

As noted on the Ministry of Education website,

*British Columbia schools have not been successful in ensuring that Aboriginal students receive a quality education, one that allows these students to succeed in the larger provincial economy while maintaining ties to their culture. Growing recognition of this problem led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 1999:*

*We the undersigned, acknowledge that Aboriginal learners are not experiencing school success in British Columbia. We state our intention to work together within the mandates of our respective organizations to improve school success for Aboriginal learners in British Columbia."*

*Memorandum signatories include:*

*the Chiefs Action Committee,  
the provincial Minister of Education,  
the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and  
the President of the BC Teachers Federation.*

*The Memorandum of Understanding led to a framework for the creation of Enhancement Agreements. Through these agreements, new relationships and commitments were made to improve the educational success of Aboriginal students.*

### **Purpose:**

An Enhancement Agreement (EA) is designed to enhance the educational success of Aboriginal students. It is a working agreement between a school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education designed to improve Aboriginal student success. The EA also establishes a collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts that involves shared decision-making and specific goal setting to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students.

EAs highlight the importance of academic performance and more importantly, stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional culture and languages to Aboriginal student development and success. Fundamental to EAs is the requirement that school districts provide strong programs on the culture of local First Nations' peoples on whose traditional territories the districts are located.

Enhancement Agreements . . . .

- provide Aboriginal communities and districts greater autonomy to find solutions that work for Aboriginal students, the schools and the communities; and require a high level of respect and trust to function;
- are working documents that are developed for a five-year period and provide goals and targets that are reviewed / assessed regularly to determine progress;
- include actions that are assessed frequently during the term of the agreements to determine their effectiveness and adjusted as needed.



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### **Process:**

School District No. 58's present Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement was signed October, 2012. The agreement, signed by the Lower Nicola Band, Nooaitch Band, Coldwater Band, Shackan Band, Upper Nicola Band, Upper Similkameen Band, Metis Association, Conayt Friendship Society, Board of Education and the Ministry of Education outlined four previous goals:

1. To increase the level of health and wellness amongst Aboriginal students.
2. To increase the level of participation and knowledge of local Nlaka'pamux and Syilx culture and language among students.
3. To improve Aboriginal students/parents feelings of self-worth and identity.
4. To improve the graduation/six year completion rate of Aboriginal students (Dogwood Certificate).

The 2012 Enhancement Agreement and most recent Local Education Agreement were reviewed extensively by the working committee prior to undertaking the development of the new Enhancement Agreement.

The following Enhancement Agreement reflects a collaborative process between School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen), Aboriginal Advisory Council and the Aboriginal Communities of the Nicola Valley and Upper Similkameen Valley. Members of the working committee below, gathered information through numerous working sessions, world café activities, interviews and community visits.

- Chief's and Councils
- Coldwater Band
- Shackan Band
- Nooaitch Band
- Lower Nicola Band
- Upper Nicola Band
- Upper Similkameen Band
- Conayt Friendship Society
- Metis Association
- Student Representatives
- Parent Representatives
- Teacher Representatives
- FNSW
- SD #58 Principals
- District Aboriginal Principal
- Assistant Superintendent
- Superintendent
- Elder Representatives



The goals outlined in the EA have been prioritized as have the guiding statements in each of the rationale. Also, in an effort to honour people's voices, all working documents and community input have been archived and will continue to be reviewed regularly by the working group.

The action items listed in this document are fluid, and as so, they too will be reviewed and their effectiveness evaluated. The actions are suggested strategies and structures that have been developed by the working committee and gathered through community input. The examples include work that has been started in relation to reaching the goals as well as possible future strategies and structures that will help us improve student success and reach the goals.

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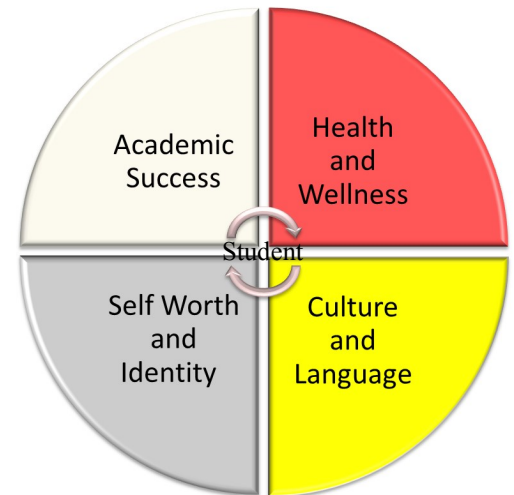
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### **Context:**

The First Nations people in the Nicola and Upper Similkameen Valley have been committed to the advancement of their students' success and to the achievement of high standards in education. The Bands of the Nicola and Upper-Similkameen Valley have been advocates for Aboriginal students attending the public schools in Merritt and Princeton.

The Aboriginal Advisory Council (AAC) is an advisory council to the Board. Its purpose includes improving the learning environment of all levels of the school system so that Aboriginal students may gain maximum benefit from their formal education. The AAC is instrumental in the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. The AAC includes representatives from the local Bands, the Conayt Friendship Society, Metis Association, school board, schools and senior school district administration.

The AAC acknowledges the importance of ensuring success for all Aboriginal students through this agreement, as well as recognizes and honours the historical and critical importance local First Nations People place on the preservation of their language and culture. Further, they recognize the primacy of each Aboriginal Peoples' language and culture within its traditional territory. This Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement acknowledges and honours the special relationship that exists between School District No. 58 and the:



- Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, Shackan and Upper Nicola Bands and supports their commitment to the preservation of their language and culture. Further this Agreement acknowledges and honours Nlaka'pamux and Syilx as the principle culture / Aboriginal languages of this territory and School District No. 58 will continue to support the development of its programs and curriculum;
- Upper Similkameen Band and supports the continued fusion of local First Nations culture into the schools of Princeton
- Metis Association supports the education of the role that the Metis currently plays in shaping Canada's history and culture
- Conayt Friendship Society who work to engage and represent Aboriginal people in urban communities

The AAC acknowledges the collective responsibility for the success of all Aboriginal learners attending school in School District No. 58. In respect and honour of the local First Nations and Metis, the AAC will continue to develop appropriate and meaningful educational programs for the benefit of all Aboriginal learners.

In addition to acknowledging collective responsibility, the AAC stresses the importance of collective accountability. Accountability will be provided through the alignment of the Enhancement Agreement with other school / district improvement processes and through annual review and reporting of results.

Finally, all stakeholders understand that this is a working document and that changes to address progress and the needs of students in relation to the goals will be ongoing.

### **School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen) is committed to working collaboratively to:**

- 1) improve 2017/2018 results as measured by the examples of indicators provided for each of the goals;
- 2) develop new data collecting tools and gather base line data for the purpose of setting specific targets in all four goal areas by the end of the 2017/2018 school year;
- 3) review and report out on Enhancement Agreement results on a yearly basis;

# SCHOOL DISTRICT #58 (Nicola-Similkameen)

## ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT AGREEMENT

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### Goal #1

#### **To increase the level of health and wellness amongst Aboriginal Students.**

##### *Rationale:*

Research tells us that a student's health and wellness is essential for student success. This goal is based on the recognition that health and learning are interdependent and encompasses physical, social, emotional and spiritual well being.

It is our belief that by taking a holistic approach to this work that incorporates both a traditional and a contemporary perspective we will be able to improve student success. Parent involvement in all areas as well as the alignment of School District, Band, other partners and community activities will be instrumental in achieving this goal. Universal programs offering pro-active opportunities for all Aboriginal students will be developed while our most vulnerable students will be supported with specific interventions to address barriers to success. Increased support in the areas of grief and loss as well as drug and alcohol prevention will be a priority. Furthermore, alternative and holistic solutions for students experiencing conflicts will be developed with the aim of keeping students connected to school and the community.

##### *Indicators:*

Indicators are provided in Appendix A. They are displayed to show how the indicators will be used in each of the goal areas and in some instances in more than one goal area to provide evidence of progress for Aboriginal students. Indicator tools, baseline and targets will be set and reviewed annually.

##### *Examples of Possible Action Items: (Items will be reviewed, analyzed and adjusted annually)*

- Expand range of extra-curricular activities
- Expand range of Aboriginal focussed clubs
- Youth Voice at MSS
- Align District resources with Bands and community
- Educate our students about healthy eating and health effects (ie. Diabetes)
- Develop health and wellness programs and curriculum in partnership with Bands and community agencies
- Recognition of the Extended Family structure by the SD
- Provide opportunities for traditional healing methods (eg. Grief and Loss)
- Provide access to Aboriginal counseling
- Ensure that transportation is not a barrier to opportunities for Aboriginal students
- Increase universal support for students in relation to health related issues and include an Aboriginal perspective
- Expand on District work with Children in Care planning and include an Aboriginal perspective
- Consider and involve extended family when working with Aboriginal students when possible
- Develop a peer support group that focuses on all students but provides specific support for Aboriginal student issues
- Connect to Bands and Community agencies to provide Health and Wellness programs in our schools
- The SD will develop understanding around student and family needs (eg. Cultural practices, funerals)



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### Goal #2

**To increase the level of participation and knowledge of local Nlaka’pamux and Syilx culture and language among students.**

#### *Rationale:*

Educational research indicates that if children feel their culture, language, heritage and roots are valued then they will have a basis for positive self-esteem and the confidence to learn new things. With this in mind it is vital that opportunities for students to learn to speak the local Aboriginal Languages are provided throughout the school system. As a result, a priority will be strengthening the K-12 language program. To help facilitate this, language teachers will be supported in the areas of curriculum development, instructional strategies, and classroom management.

Aboriginal World Views: Perspectives in the Classroom document states that,

*This [the problem of education in the wake of Canada’s history of residential school] is not an Aboriginal problem. This is a Canadian problem. Because at the same time that Aboriginal people were being demeaned in the schools their culture and language were being taken away from them, and they were told that they were inferior, they were pagans, that they were heathens and savages and that they were unworthy of being respected—that the very same message was being given to non-Aboriginal children in the public schools as well. As a result, many generations of non-Aboriginal Canadians have had their perceptions of Aboriginal people “tainted”.*

#### **Justice Murray Sinclair, Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

With this in mind we believe it is important to increase the knowledge of local Nlaka’pamux and Syilx culture. In order to do this local resources will be developed and shared within the schools, families and communities. The resources and lessons will be integrated into the work of teachers in classrooms, the outdoors and in the local communities.

#### *Indicators:*

Indicators are provided in Appendix A. They are displayed to show how the indicators will be used in each of the goal areas and in some instances in more than one goal area to provide evidence of progress for Aboriginal students.

#### *Examples of Possible Action Items: (Items will be reviewed, analyzed and adjusted annually)*

- To provide language instruction / opportunities across all grade levels
- Develop an Elder in Residence Program
- To promote language instruction through culture camps, language camps and other programs
- To enhance Aboriginal Principles of Learning through the integration of language activities
- Provide equal representation of all second languages during course selection
- Provide opportunities for all classes and the community to access the House of Honour
- Provide local culture camp to students, teachers, parents and extended families
- Honor our Language teachers formally
- Integrate Aboriginal activities into all subject areas
- Provide opportunities for student mentorship
- Capitalize on the use of technology in language classes
- Expose students at Primary grades to Indigenous language
- Support language instruction through staff development and in-service
- Increase language resources
- Connect resources to a seasonal calendar (place based learning experiences)



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### Goal #3

**To improve Aboriginal students/parents feeling of self-worth and identity.**

#### *Rationale:*

Research has supported the importance of fostering a positive identity through education. The BC Auditor General's Report on Aboriginal Students states:

*Welcoming and supportive learning environments are key elements of student success. Within its mandate, the Ministry can do more to address obstacles to ensuring safe, non-racist and culturally relevant learning environments for Aboriginal students.* November 2015

In order to improve students and parents feeling of self-worth and identity we believe we must increase the representation of local Aboriginal culture in our schools and increase the number of Aboriginal role models connecting with students, staff and the community. Alongside of this work will be an increased recognition of Aboriginal student success and staff development in the area of self-worth and identity. Finally it is our belief that it is important to continue to increase the number of Aboriginal employees throughout the district.

#### *Indicators:*

Indicators are provided in Appendix A. They are displayed to show how the indicators will be used in each of the goal areas and in some instances in more than one goal area to provide evidence of progress for Aboriginal students. Indicator tools, baseline and targets will be set and reviewed annually.

*Examples of Possible Action Items: (items will be reviewed, analyzed and adjusted annually)*

- Increase the number of Aboriginal role models in schools by inviting Aboriginal guests/speakers into schools and by continuing to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers / employees throughout the district (see LEA Strategies)
- Expand displays of cultural significance and history
- Create posters highlighting local Aboriginal role models
- Create a series of posters featuring Community Elders
- Mental health and residual effects of Residential School and history (intergenerational impacts)
- Increase communication in relation to student success and celebration across the district and the community
- Provide for an Aboriginal topic to be presented at Summer Institute for all teachers
- Provide ongoing staff development in the area of Aboriginal Education
- Promote participation in the Provincial Aboriginal Education Conference
- Provide signage in local languages
- Parent Appreciation Evenings
- Provide opportunities to share traditional foods and dress at celebrations and related events
- Expand Aboriginal content in school libraries and online and connect them to local resources
- Increase connections with Band Schools through invitations to activities / celebrations
- Provide cross-cultural training for all staff on the impact of residential schools



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### Goal #4

To improve the graduation/six year completion rate of Aboriginal students (Dogwood Certificate).

#### *Rationale:*



It is important to recognize that success and life chances will mean different things to different students and that it will not always be measured with a Dogwood Certificate. However, it is also clear that graduation and six year completion rates continue to be below a satisfactory level, and although we have seen improvements, this is still the case for our Aboriginal learners.

With this in mind it is important that we address this concern by fully understanding Aboriginal students as learners and what they require in order to be successful. The creation of a new BC curriculum with a focus on Indigenous ways of learning will continue to assist Aboriginal students identify with their learning in a more personal way. Improving literacy skills through appropriate strategies across the grade levels will be a priority in this work. In addition we believe it is important to increase the opportunities for parental involvement and to support adults and students in understanding the connection between resilience and academic success. Motivating students to graduate with the necessary post-secondary (life chances) requirements will also be addressed through increasing student engagement. Engagement will be increased by providing opportunities for students to explore their interests and to be exposed to new experiences in order for them to develop realistic goals. Academic success continues to be a priority. It is our belief that all the goals outlined in this document will provide a holistic foundation for achievement.

#### *Indicators:*

Indicators are provided in Appendix A. They are displayed to show how the indicators will be used in each of the goals areas and in some instances in more than one goal area to provide evidence of progress for Aboriginal students.

Indicator tools, baseline and targets will be set and reviewed annually.

- Provide clear academic counseling to Aboriginal students and families (Grades 6-12)
- Continue to list and advertise all Aboriginal activities on the SD58 website
- Support transitions between schools
- Develop an interview process that includes Aboriginal students and parents to plan for completion of the graduation program
- Provide parental education; graduation information, drug & alcohol awareness etc.
- Focus on early years; literacy, numeracy and attendance
- FN Grad Ceremony
- Student Academic Progress Reviews
- Provide flexible opportunities for upgrading and continued success
- Develop partnerships with universities, trades, industry, business and community agencies for the purpose of transitioning students into post-secondary or the workforce
- Expand assessment and programs / services to address human development
- Develop common assessment and responses across the district
- Develop a more focussed approach to addressing literacy shortcomings in Primary grades
- Share information about university offerings for FN content and courses

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### ***Goal # 4: Academic Success - Action Items Continued***

- Increase the amount of project based learning at the elementary and high school years with a First Nations focus
- Provide leadership opportunities for students
- Increase the number of Independent Directed Studies opportunities for Aboriginal students (Aboriginal Leadership credits)
- Provide field trip experiences outside of the community (NVIT, UBC, TRU, Youth Conferences) for Aboriginal students
- Continue to expand on the Trades program
- Continue to expand on the Aboriginal Education website
- Provide more parent communication & support
- Support the transition of Aboriginal students from the primary program to the intermediate program in the areas of numeracy and literacy
- Provide information sessions in the Aboriginal communities
- Develop school and district calendars highlighting parent events
- Get school staff into the Aboriginal communities to meet families and community members



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#### Appendix A: Indicators

##### **Goal #1 Health and Wellness**

###### *District Level Indicators:*

- Attendance
- Grade to Grade Transitions
- Six Year Completion Rate
- Satisfaction Survey Results

###### *School Level Indicators:*

- Extra-curricular participation rates
- Student Survey

###### *Action Indicators:*

- # of health & wellness related activities
- # of health & wellness related programs
- # of home contacts

##### **Goal # 2 Culture and Language**

###### *District Level Indicators:*

- Attendance
- Language classes enrollment

###### *School Level Indicators:*

- Student marks
- Work habits
- Student Survey

###### *Action Indicators:*

- # of language programs
- # of language classes
- # of staff development activities
- # of resources
- # of resource people
- # of related activities

##### **Goal # 3 Self-Worth and Identity**

###### *District Level Indicators:*

- Attendance
- Grade to Grade Transitions
- Six Year Completion Rate
- Satisfaction Survey Results

###### *School Level Indicators:*

- Extra-curricular participation rates
- Student Survey
- Parent Survey
- Anecdotal information

###### *Action Indicators:*

- # of school / class presentations
- # of elder visits
- # of role model visits
- # of Aboriginal employees
- # of staff development activities

##### **Goal #4 Academic Success**

###### *District Level Indicators:*

- Grade to Grade Transitions
- Six Year Completion Rate
- Graduation Rate
- Foundation Skills Assessment
- Post-Secondary Transition Results

###### *School Level Indicators:*

- Primary Literacy Results
- Academic Language Results
- Classroom Marks / Grades
- Aboriginal Academy Results
- Independent Directed Studies results

###### *Action Indicators:*

- # of district assessment and program/services
- Aboriginal Representation on School Base Team / District Based Team
- # of Independent Directed Studies courses
- # of Field Trip experiences
- # of staff development activities

\* Some Action items / student participation will be monitored by FNSW via Fluid Technology Survey

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Indicators provided in Appendix A are displayed to show how the indicators will be used in each of the goals areas and in some instances in more than one goal area to provide evidence of progress for Aboriginal students. Indicator tools, baseline and targets will be set and reviewed annually.

Appendix A: Indicators	Health & Wellness (Goal #1)	Culture & Language (Goal #2)	Self-Worth & Identity (Goal #3)	Academic Success (Goal #4)	Target	Tool / Collector
<b>District Level Indicators</b>						
• Language classes enrollment (see example)		✓				
• Attendance	✓	✓	✓			
• Grade to Grade Transitions	✓		✓	✓		
• Six Year Completion Rate	✓		✓	✓		
• Satisfaction Survey Results	✓					
• Graduation Rate				✓		
• Foundation Skills Assessment				✓		
• Post-Secondary Transition Results				✓		
<b>School Level Indicators</b>						
• Extra-curricular participation rates	✓		✓			
• Student Surveys	✓	✓	✓			
• Student marks		✓				
• Work habits		✓				
• Parent Survey			✓			
• Anecdotal information			✓			
• Primary Literacy Results				✓		
• Academic Language Results				✓		
• Classroom Marks / Grades				✓		
• Aboriginal Academy Results	✓	✓	✓			
• Independent Directed Studies results				✓		
<b>Action Indicators</b>						
• # of health related activities	✓					
• # of health related programs	✓					
• # of home contacts	✓					
• # of language programs		✓				
• # of language classes		✓				
• # of staff development activities		✓				
• # of resources		✓				
• # of resource people		✓				
• # of related activities		✓				
• # of school / class presentations			✓			
• # of Elder visits			✓			
• # of role model visits			✓			

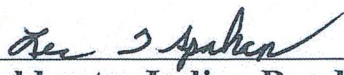
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Appendix A: Indicators	Health & Wellness (Goal #1)	Culture & Language (Goal #2)	Self-Worth & Identity (Goal #3)	Academic Success (Goal #4)	Target	Tool / Collector
• # of Aboriginal employees			✓			
• # of staff development activities			✓			
• # of district assessment and program/services				✓		
• # of Independent Directed Studies Courses				✓		
• # of Field Trip experiences				✓		
• # of staff development activities				✓		
<b>Task Completion</b>						
• Grade 8/9 Team in place						
• Grade 9/10 interview developed						
• Aboriginal Representation on School Base Teams / District Based Teams						
• Parent communication						
• Grade 8/9 Literacy and Numeracy supports						

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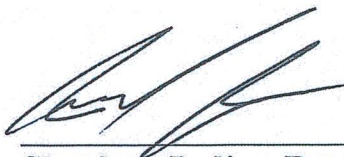
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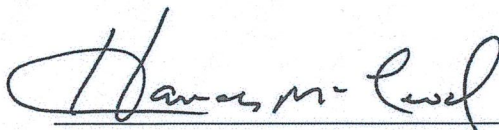
**November 2017 to November 2022**


  
Coldwater Indian Band

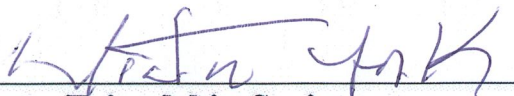
  
Lower Nicola Indian Band


  
Nooaitch Indian Band

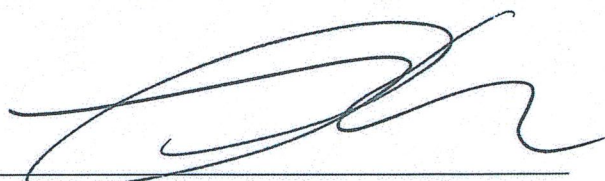
  
Shackan Indian Band

  
Upper Nicola Indian Band

  
Upper Similkameen Indian Band

  
Conayt Friendship Society

  
Metis Association

  
Board of Education  
School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)