

NEWS RELEASE
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Ministry of Education

Drumbeats herald second Aboriginal agreement-signing

SALMON ARM - Students played handmade drums today to launch a celebration marking the signing of a second Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement for the North Okanagan-Shuswap (SD 83) school district.

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements are a commitment by school districts, local Aboriginal communities and the Ministry of Education to work together to support Aboriginal students. North Okanagan-Shuswap's first agreement was signed in 2005.

The initiative has proven successful. Over the past five years, the six-year completion rate for Aboriginal students in SD 83 has been above 54 per cent with a high of 64 per cent in 2009-10. This is consistently well above provincial six-year completion rates for Aboriginal students.

A number of programs in the district have been created since the first agreement was signed including:

- * Early Intervention Reading programs offered at M.V. Beattie, Salmon Arm West, South Broadview and Parkview elementary schools.
- * Students at South Broadview, Hillcrest and Bastion elementary schools meet after school for a literacy program called "Coyote Cafe".
- * Afterschool "Girl Power" and "Young Warriors" groups are available at a number of schools.
- * The Sacred Circle Leadership Program for students from grades 6, 7 and 8 is designed to help Aboriginal youth develop leadership skills and a sense of social responsibility.
- * A number of schools are moving toward implementing "Adopt an Elder" programs.

The first agreement has also promoted a greater awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal culture and history:

- * There are field trips to the Kamloops Museum to explore its strong Aboriginal history component.
- * Many schools are inviting Aboriginal authors and artists into their classrooms.
- * A number of secondary school teachers are integrating Aboriginal literature into regular English curriculum.
- * M.V. Beattie Elementary has a young drum group of students in grades 5-7. They make their own drums and performed at today's signing ceremony, along with the A.L. Fortune Secondary Drum Group.

Quotes:

Minister of Education George Abbott - "It's a great pleasure to come and celebrate with all those who have made this significant effort to support Aboriginal students in the district. It is essential that we continue to support Aboriginal students and ensure that all our students benefit from exposure to Aboriginal history and culture."

North Okanagan-Shuswap board of education chair Bobbi Johnson - "Many meetings with all of our partner groups has resulted in an AEEA that meets the needs of our students in many different ways and we are proud of what our group has accomplished. I would like to thank our elders, parents and families, students and staff for their commitment to the process - this has been the work of a whole village."

Quick Facts:

- * SD 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) has approximately 900 Aboriginal students who make up 14 per cent of the overall student population in the district.
- * SD 83 is located in the traditional territory of the four Secwepemc bands (Adams Lake, Little Shuswap, Neskonlith and Splotsin Nations).
- * Over the past 10 years, the completion rate for Aboriginal students in B.C. has increased by 11 per cent.

Learn More:

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements:

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements/>

SD 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap): <http://www.sd83.bc.ca/>

BC's Education Plan: www.bcedplan.ca

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