

**FOSTERING SUCCESS FOR FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS**

**A REPORT  
ON THE 20-HOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES**

**CO-SPONSORED BY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 63 (SAANICH)  
and  
CONTINUING STUDIES IN EDUCATION (UVIC)**

**offered in the Saanich School District  
October to December 2004**

**This report is respectfully submitted to School District No. 63 (Saanich) by:**

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**CONTEXT:**

In the spring of 2004, a second 20-hour, non-credit, off-campus, professional development series—“Fostering Success for First Nations Students”—was developed in conjunction with personnel in the Continuing Studies in Education department at UVIC. The decision to do so was based on strong support for the initiative and recognition that the challenges and need for success for children and youth of First Nations ancestry remained present.

Evaluation ratings and participants’ responses to the first series were used to refine and revise the offerings for the second series of presentations and workshops. Samples of feedback provided by participants in the first series follow. Those participants said they needed:

- *more concrete examples of what to do in the classroom.*
- *more strategies to help students (and teachers). I feel I learned a lot about who First Nations students may be, but I still don’t feel confident in helping.*
- *more practical strategies... What can I do to help my First Nations children to be successful?*
- *more focus on elementary programs—maybe more on secondary level as well.*
- *to hear from older students—even High School as to how we can help them more—possibly hearing from parents—currently role-models who have gone on to greater heights in their learning... What made the difference?*
- *less “how to teach” subjects and more depth to understanding of how to teach the students.*
- *definition of what success looks like for First Nations students.*
- *more time or a bit less content.*
- *a reading list of short articles as pre-information before each speaker’s topic.*
- *to tour the Tribal School...*
- *a later start time, shorter and more frequent sessions.*
- *to discuss some of the hard questions—i.e., students with non-supportive families...*

**GOALS:**

Our goals for 2004 remained consistent with those of the series offered in 2003—to address issues such as: building community connections, building relationships with students/families/communities, supporting the emotional and social needs of First Nations students. Specific objectives included the following:

- to foster the achievement and success of First Nations students in public schools.
- to increase awareness of the historical, cultural, and contemporary social contexts of First Nations students.
- to develop literacy & numeracy skills and improve students’ performance in reading, writing, & mathematics.
- to provide practical examples of best practices and connect these with theories of learning.
- to draw upon the expertise of participants and involve them in classroom- or school-based inquiry.

**PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATION:**

The philosophic foundation underpinning both the 2003 and 2004 series was the construct of a “Circle of Courage,” developed by Dr. Martin Brokenleg et al, in *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future* (2002/1990). That foundation has four principle elements: belonging, competence, independence, and generosity. Brokenleg and his colleagues contend that all youth are fundamentally “at risk,” but those who have a deep sense of their connectedness to others, who are developing mastery, and who understand the responsibility that comes with independence, are youth who have the capacity for generosity and the ability to contribute positively within their communities.

While we depended upon print material for reference in the 2003 series, we decided to invite Dr. Brokenleg to open the 2004 series, and to make his presentations open to all staff in Saanich District, educators from other districts, as well as parents/guardians, and members of the public.

**STRUCURE AND RATIONALE:**

The series consisted of three elements—six after-school workshops from 3:30 to 6:00 (which included presentation and an action-research component) and a full-day “cultural field trip” on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Reasons for the approach are many. Primarily, though: Funding for the “Saanich Fostering First Nations Success” Project was limited. The guiding question was, “What is the most effective way to spend limited dollars?” We worked from the premise proposed by Dr. Barrie Bennett: “If you have a dollar to spend, spend it on professional development.”

**PARTICIPANTS:**

57 people participated in the fall of 2003; an additional 45 people enrolled in the 2004 series. Most participants were from the Saanich District. The 2004 cohort included enrolling and non-enrolling teachers, teaching assistants, teachers-on-call, and administrators from elementary, middle, and secondary schools. As well, there were a number of student and intern teachers, a UVIC instructor, Restorative Justice volunteers from the community, an art therapist, youth and family/drug and alcohol counsellors, a school trustee, and an assistant superintendent from another district who joined the group. All employees of the Saanich District were offered a substantial subsidy to facilitate their participation.

**EVALUATION RATINGS AND PARTICIPANTS’ COMMENTS:**

Of the 45 people who registered for the 2004 series, 30 people provided formal written responses. Their ratings and anecdotal responses related to each of the sessions appear on the pages that follow.

**SESSION ONE: Dr. Martin Brokenleg**  
**TOPIC: The “Circle of Courage” Model**

Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Could not attend
29	0	0	0	0

**Comments:**

- *I would make every effort to listen to Dr. Brokenleg again. What an incredible gift he is to us all.*
- *Unbelievable—both in content and presentation. A great overall experience.*
- *Would like to hear more from him and his lectures, books, etc.*
- *Martin educates in a way that is holistic—he inspires curiosity and taps spirituality—his metaphors are never far away.*
- *Very wise, articulate leader; I enjoyed his stories very much!*
- *Dr. Brokenleg is a powerful speaker... I could listen to him all day.*
- *Incredible speaker, motivating and informative.*
- *Inspirational, an excellent opening speaker who gave a wonderful overview.*
- *Very natural charismatic speaker—insightful*
- *It would have been nice to have more time to develop dialogue.*
- *Dr. Brokenleg’s stories and messages are critical—for all educators, helping professionals and parents/guardians.*
- *I liked the way he says First Nations and all children.*
- *This was amazing—actually my favourite part of the series.*

**SESSION TWO: Frank Conibear**  
**TOPIC: Belonging**

Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Could not attend
16	11	0	0	1

**Comments:**

- *Great info—wonderful participation and input from the students.*

- *I don't think the best way for students to communicate their thoughts/ideas was to have them sit up front. Maybe a video of them talking would have allowed them to express more!*
- *Interesting views from students.*
- *Good example of what is happening at school level; it instills hope!*
- *Thanks for the student panel.*
- *The panel of students was awesome, but the topic could have been more structured.*
- *A good idea, felt a bit too intimidating for students.*
- *I really like the chance to hear kids and their views. This was very important.*
- *I loved those kids!!*

**SESSION THREE: Cultural Day**

**ACTIVITY: Longhouse Visit**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (3)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
18	8	1	0	2

**Comments:**

- *A privilege*
- *I am thankful that we were welcomed into the Longhouse. I know it is a sacred place and I appreciate that.*
- *From traditional to practice—brings learning alive.*
- *Thank you for inviting us into Longhouse at Tsartlip and Tsecum.*
- *Thanks for the great efforts that went into this.*
- *Because the longhouse is such an integral part of the Salish culture, this was important.*
- *Appreciated the inclusion and generosity of everyone on this day.*
- *Interesting; it could have included more information. I had a sense of intrusion.*
- *I appreciated the generosity of our hosts in each community and learned much. This was my third time in a longhouse. Each time, I have learned new information, and developed a deeper appreciation for the cultural traditional of First Nations people.*

- *I had no idea. Thank you for allowing me to see.*
- *Great—last year. (I took part in 2 of these days in  $\frac{3}{4}$ , so chose another activity.)*

**SESSION THREE: Cultural Day**  
**ACTIVITY: Tribal School Tour**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (3)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
15	9	1	0	4

**Comments:**

- *This was very useful in seeing the theory in practice.*
- *Informative and interesting, very valuable as many students make reference to this school.*
- *I would like to learn more about the programs at the school.*
- *Great teachings about within-group differences.*
- *Good tour—would appreciate hearing SENCOTIN spoken/translated.*
- *Thanks for the great efforts that went into this.*
- *Very informative.*
- *It was interesting to see the inside of this beautiful facility and to get some sense of the pride people have for its establishment.*
- *It is very encouraging.*

**SESSION THREE: Cultural Day**  
**Activity: Bus Tour of Four Local Villages**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (3)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
16	8	0	0	4

**Comments:**

- *Again, a valuable visual experience.*
- *Please do not remove any sessions.*
- *A privilege to be given this tour, meeting the Chiefs and their reps.*
- *Our tour guide was awesome...very knowledgeable!*

- *Thanks for the great efforts that went into this.*
- *Excellent experience—people need to witness*
- *Much improved bus tour—it felt better visiting getting off the bus. Thanks to those who spoke to us, and to Bruce.*
- *Good to see First Nations people working in offices of Villages as opposed to 20 years ago. Very positive.*
- *We were very privileged to be invited into these places.*
- *An “eye-opener.”*
- *This was actually the first time I had become aware of the 4 different bands and their connections and yet separateness—Illuminating!*

Further to the preceding ratings and comments obtained at the end of the 2004 series, participants were asked, at the end of activities on the “Cultural Day” experience to respond to three questions:

- As a result of experiences today, what did you learn?
- What do you still wonder about?
- Do you have suggestions for the organizers?

**1. As a result of experiences today, what did you learn?**

- *I have a better understanding of some of the difficulties members of the First Nations Community face in keeping their culture alive, educating their children and living within “Canadian” society.*
- *There seems to be a lot of care taken to help the membership of the communities cope with the challenges in a very positive, caring manner.*
- *Networking with outside agencies is what I benefited from today’s sessions and the concerns that they have with our youth (in particular FN youth).*
- *As First Nations people, we need to educate non-native people about who we are. I found that most people (educators) know little about the Four Nations that live here.*
- *The depth and richness of the culture, the goal of self-sufficiency and independence in each village.*
- *The pride of the First Nations in their history, and their struggle to maintain their culture.*

- *I gained a better understanding of the people who are part of this community. I now understand why some students may miss school for cultural events, and I learned what the Tribal School is like.*
- *Importance of generational transmission of culture through ceremonies, schooling, and games. Traditions and cultural values of different First Nations Bands.*
- *I learned the respectful ways of First Nations people. I learned about some of the discrimination that occurs.*
- *We have a lot of work to do to “bridge the gap” between the two cultures.*
- *I have a greater appreciation of the First Nations culture on the Saanich Peninsula. Thank you for organizing a very educational experience and the opportunity to connect with First Nations people.*
- *The meaning of the names of the four territories (and a 5<sup>th</sup>). The initiative to expand the [Tribal] School. The comprehensive nature of programs, and many other things.*
- *I have a greater sense of the determination of the elected leaders to move forward in the interests of the people they represent.*
- *More about longhouse activities. Cultural practices and how important preserving culture is to the leaders of each band.*
- *Confirmation of concerns re: longhouse experiences, pulling students out from receiving an education and not returning to continue and or not being the same/hopeful student.*
- *I learned more about the background of my First Nations students—the context of their lives.*
- *Better knowledge of history of people. Bone game—kind of. How SISB came to be and plans for future.*
- *I learned about the differing “time” concept of the Longhouse.*
- *First Nations people are survivors. Learning about the longhouse and the dual education students have during their time there.*
- *About the depth of the culture in the community; how very different First Nation/Saanich culture is from my culture; greater respect for First Nations culture; more about cultural values and politics.*
- *The importance of: connection, history and tradition. We all need to explore this in our lives. What an honour to be welcomed into a Big House.*

- *So much I can't put it all down in a few minutes.*
- *A better understanding of the background and way of life of the students that I teach.*
- *How much I appreciate story telling, songs, games, carving, crafts and talks by the Elders. A wonderful start to bridging Native education understanding. I'm amazed how well spoken all the Chiefs and Elders have been. Thank you.*
- *A lot—just to familiarize myself with the four bands and reserves—how the longhouse works.*
- *Lots—I should have done this years ago! Who/where/what of the four bands—what they share as well as the daunting complexities of living “apart” and trusting their children to us.*
- *That the school system is maybe working against what the First Nations families are teaching. Education is not just about the academics (food for thought).*

## **2. What do you still wonder about?**

- *The pressures and adjustments faced by First Nations youths when they enter the public school community must be great. How can that best be addressed in a seamless manner?*
- *Can we find ways to involve non-First Nations students at a young age with the First Nations students and culture to promote better understanding?*
- *What about those students who are pushed into the longhouse initiation...what happens with encouragement of their schooling?*
- *How can we even begin to help?*
- *During longhouse gatherings, are visitors who are from different bands welcomed to visit or partake?*
- *How property is decided—how education and longhouse traditions can both be acquired.*
- *How the young people can practise speaking and maintaining the language; how can we keep First Nations students in high school, while observing need to be absent for ceremonies, etc.*
- *How can I use these things I'm learning?*
- *I wonder just how long it will take for Western society to stop all efforts to maintain status quo of white privilege (stealing roads, denying funding).*
- *Spiritual “customs” that I could incorporate into classrooms.*

- *How can I foster a positive attitude about First Nations' cultures with students while equipping them or helping them to "succeed" in the modern world?*
- *I would like to learn more about the cultural similarities and differences of the four villages.*
- *How can students keep up with their grade level when months are taken out of their school year? I believe character development is very important. So...how to prevent the dilemma?*
- *How can we help communities put children at the forefront, or in the center of the First Nations agenda? Fostering the knowledge and strength of the young—tomorrow's leaders—in their own culture and in school is critical.*
- *More ways to increase success of First Nations students in high school classes.*
- *I wonder why the younger 40's etc. are being ruled by elders who often had devastating experiences in the school system... To become empowered requires a change in how we do things... How can we belong together?*
- *Elders' ideas regarding public school—how to make it more First Nations sensitive.*
- *How are the children to reconcile the demands of school when living in the Longhouse? (While they are still in school.)*
- *How best to support these students at school?*
- *What parents/communities would most like to see in terms of helping First Nations kids succeed in school.*
- *How to balance the two worlds the First Nation children live in.*
- *Very much, for example: If everyone speaks their own language, what language are you teaching to the kids?*
- *How to bridge the difference between school and home.*
- *How can I, as a Métis, be involved in cultural events (I am already a member of the Métis association)*
- *How to include more cultural aspects into my class—I teach Home Ec. How can I introduce some culture into my foods and cafeteria program?*
- *Keeping the communication positive, open and ongoing support for this.*
- *How the whole puzzle fits together. Where do we want to be in 10, 20, 30 years? How do we get there?*

### 3. Suggestions for the organizers...

- *Thanks to everyone who volunteered their time.*
- *To have Dr. M. Brokenleg facilitate more and to have more elders participate in the sessions.*
- *I was fortunate enough to be on this tour for the second time. I really enjoyed the school tour, the Long House events and to be invited into the Administration Band Offices. It gave me a sense of belonging and made a special tour even more special. Thank you.*
- *Written material, handouts regarding our visits to each local community.*
- *Could we please have a storyteller as part of the a.m. tour of Longhouse? Or, listen to an elder?*
- *It was very enjoyable and informative. Thanks!*
- *Very well done!*
- *It would be interesting to know what First Nations leaders would like us to do.*
- *Continue to organize such events and attempt to get even more people involved in the future.*
- *Thanks for the well-organized event. Perhaps a quick way for people to get to know each other at the very start. The “fellow travellers” were a very interested group of educators.*
- *It was an outstanding day! Thanks so much! Do more...*
- *Video of some of the activities/celebrations.*
- *Great tour, wonderful lunch too! At times, I asked difficult questions and felt the speakers made an honest effort to respectfully respond. Thanks!*
- *Nothing! It was great to go in small groups—easier to get to know people.*
- *I thought it was good. Thank you.*
- *No suggestions, but a great big THANK YOU!*
- *Thank you; it was great. I appreciated the First Nations people who shared their culture.*
- *No suggestions, just thanks. It was a fabulous experience. The organizers did beautifully.*

- *This should be a requirement for any School District 63 employee. Very important to do this! Give yourself a “pat on the back” for a job well done. I realize this took much time and effort on many people’s part—THANKS TO ALL!*
- *Could be just a bit shorter, but no big deal.*
- *Offer the program again next year.*
- *Because I’m not a teacher, I would be interested in even more Native crafts and culture.*
- *Contact names and phone numbers of resource people. Many thanks.*
- *It was perfect. Everyone should do this.*

**SESSION FOUR: Marie Cooper**  
**TOPIC: First Nations’ Ways of Knowing**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (3)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
16	11	0	0	2

**Comments:**

- *Providing history gives context and enhances learning.*
- *A very gifted speaker.*
- *Marie Cooper is a powerful speaker who recognized the challenges faced by local children and their families. Still, she continues to exude HOPE. What a role model!*
- *The historic sequence helped my understanding.*

**SESSION FOUR: Dr. Nancy Turner**  
**TOPIC: First Nations’ Knowledge: Ethnobotany**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (3)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
12	13	2	0	2

**Comments:**

- *A little too much detail about plants—I needed more about the context of plants in the daily living.*
- *Great stories but difficult to follow some ideas she had.*
- *More emphasis on native plants and use and connections.*
- *Wonderfully different perspective to learn about a culture through ethnobotany.*

- *Again a wonderful speaker. A different perspective.*
- *Although the room was freezing cold, and the session went until after 6:00, we all stayed. Dr. Turner’s presentation was outstanding—packed with information and presented in a comfortable way.*

**SESSION FIVE: Donna Klockars**

**TOPIC: Competence—Literacy**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
8	10	4	7	

**Comments:**

- *More about the methodology of implementation of her ideas.*
- *Great info and resources.*
- *A little too much thrown at us. Better to concentrate on a few very important ideas.*
- *Knowledgeable, and a good role model for white people but a little too much info – too fast!!*
- *Good ideas – got good resources/strategies*
- *Unbelievable enthusiasm.*
- *Ms. Klockars had too much material, and too little time. Although obviously committed to her work, and knowledgeable, the session lacked coherence.*
- *Less is more.*

**SESSION FIVE: Terri Mack**

**TOPIC: Competence—Literacy**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
10	12	0	6	

**Comments:**

- *Great books and resources*
- *Quite nervous*
- *Inspiring and informative. Creativity is a gift for this woman.*
- *Ditto (Unbelievable enthusiasm).*

- *This lady is awesome!*

**SESSION SIX: Nella Nelson****TOPIC: Independence**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
21	3	1	0	4

**Comments:**

- *I appreciate how each speaker brings their point and view and experience.*
- *I really enjoyed Nella's thoughts, I could have listened to her for hours.*
- *Good access to books.*
- *A fantastic speaker who is passionate, open, and fun, a great sense of knowing.*
- *A wonderful teacher; riveting presentation.*
- *Honest, forthright.*
- *Again, dynamic inspirational. Such an excellent delivery.*
- *More time*
- *This session was a wee bit long, but her messages were important, and well presented. Nella Nelson is a wonderful speaker!*
- *Thank you for making me feel welcome as a white person.*
- *I missed this but heard she was fabulous.*

**SESSION SEVEN: Bill White****TOPIC: Generosity**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>	<i>Could not attend</i>
22	5	0	0	0

**Comments:**

- *gave me some excellent insights*
- *Thank you for having this speaker last. I needed to have the information in the previous speakers to appreciate Mr. White's.*

- *At first I had difficulty following him but once he explained that it is not traditional for him to speak in an organized methodical way (point 1 a, b, c, point 2, a, b, c, etc.) then I appreciated his thoughts more!*
- *More time—interesting topic.*
- *Inspiring and playful l— provides context and allowed me as a counselor to see alternatives to traditional approaches I have read about but he pulled things together for me.*
- *This session could have gone on forever. Giving the duality and making it work for our students and our community. I attended the sessions last year and found attending these sessions an enhancing of those. I am very happy that I took part in the sessions again. They were not a repeat but helped me continue to grow in my understanding of the First Nations students that I work with and to be more helpful to them in the furthering of their education. Thank you.*
- *Much more information provided this year.*
- *Bill’s presentation was very thorough. I liked how he used the Native language to further carry out his point of generosity.*
- *Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! For bringing “wholeness” back.*
- *Great discussion, good info, good answers to questions.*
- *Warm, open, generous. An excellent organization of a new topic that was huge and difficulty. Again, rather than expressing anger and frustration, he tried to open our eyes to another way.*
- *Many thanks for your wisdom on the duality of the cultures and life.*
- *More time.*
- *Bill White was a good choice as the last speaker. I left feeling sad the sessions were over, but encouraged by knowing that there are many wonderful people working on behalf of First Nations students and communities—and, that many of these people are of First Nations ancestry.*
- *Again he made me feel welcome.*
- *I would like it to be written somewhere: “We of FN ancestry are like an apple, red on the outside, white on the inside. Meaning that we as FN have to be a part of 2 worlds. In understanding this, the people that work with our FN need to be sensitive to this.”*
- *I could listen to Bill forever.*

**OVERALL RATING OF THE SERIES**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>
22	6	0	0

**Comments:**

- *I would take the series again if it is offered.*
- *Incredible—very valuable in my work and personally.*
- *I found this course valuable and wish it was longer.*
- *Knowledge gained through belief.*
- *Excellent speakers who showed and illustrated the First nations' ways of teaching and learning, particularly Dr. Brokenleg and Dr. Nelson. Their generosity in teaching us in a traditional way through stories and personal anecdotes liberally laced with self-deprecating humour was very powerful.*
- *I learned so much. Thank you!*

**PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT****(Refer to "Appendix A" for expectations of participants)**

<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>
7	16	4	0

**Comments:**

- *Valuable for self-learning.*
- *Nice to chat and get to know others.*
- *Not enough time.*
- *Two worlds the differences between First Nations' and the dominant society's culture and expectations—similarities as well.*
- *I participated in all sessions and discussions. I still have questions, but I also know some people who I can talk with about them.*
- *I spent a lot of time reflecting and listening and I really enjoyed the peacefulness and silences that were allowed to shape the series.*

**What was the greatest strength of this professional development series?**

- *Awareness of other ways of perceiving*

- *The speakers—their willingness to share with us. Dr. Brokenleg gave so much info for continued learning.*
- *Ability to participate/discuss/be involved.*
- *Awareness of spirit and First Nations.*
- *Variety of teachers. Balance between theory and practice.*
- *The variety of speakers and topics. Well rounded and enriching for all learners. A deeper concern and passion for the needs of First Nations Peoples.*
- *Provides as many (or more) Questions and Answers re: “Bridging the Gap” between cultures.*
- *The strong, culturally educated First Nations presenters. The spirit of living in 2 cultures held strong by the speakers.*
- *The expertise of the presenters.*
- *Engaging speakers and it covered so much info/background of Saanich people.*
- *Understanding or opening my mind to other ways of thinking, other perceptions.*
- *Hearing the students’ opinion—the student panel.*
- *First Nations people presenting who have a wealth of backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge.*
- *Dr. Martin Brokenleg, especially, but all the speakers’ power through experience.*
- *Testing First Nations students on the dominant society’s expectations. Government testing is not fair to First Nations People. We can learn, but differently from dominant society.*
- *Choice of speakers.*
- *Cultural Day, going out into the community and meeting community members. Seeing where they live and sharing their culture, long house, drumming.*
- *Dr. Martin Brokenleg was outstanding.*
- *Guest speakers.*
- *The speakers and the local community.*
- *Perspectives of speakers.*

- *In general, the speakers were first-rate. I liked the in-depth nature of the series, the pace was “just right” for me.*
- *Teachings from people.*
- *The repeated words: “work, help, listen, respect of others.”*
- *A deeper understanding.*

**Participants were asked to identify one aspect of their practice that has changed as a result of participation in this series. They said:**

- *Try to include Indigenous teaching methods in my practice*
- *Increased awareness of this culture and respect.*
- *Seeing how/what students WILL BE, not are now.*
- *More sensitive to First Nations; more awareness in the therapy room.*
- *Literacy, retelling your own stories—students reading and retelling has opened, doorways to writing experiences. Exciting, positive gains. THANKS!!!*
- *Finding a balance between advocating for students.*
- *Attempts to discover how to volunteer effectively with First Nations (i.e., What needs could we address appropriately?)*
- *Belief that, while a challenge, we can live peacefully in a multicultural society.*
- *One aspect of my practice that has changed is how I listen better and acknowledge and reward the youth who are around me.*
- *Overcoming feeling of not knowing how to relate.*
- *My knowledge specific to the Saanich people has become so much stronger. I now ask children specifics about their cultures (and they’re happy to share) so I can learn more.*
- *More focus on one-to-one interaction.*
- *Communication style—better understanding of the First Nation experience.*
- *Knowledge and understanding create better practice.*
- *Being able to be confident in my First Nation values and beliefs and to express my educational level with a First Nations perspective learned from my*

*community Elders. I value that because I would be as knowledgeable in families, Big House. Teaching has helped my job position as an Educational Assistant.*

- *Better understanding of my ethnocentric view of culture and how I need to be constantly vigilant.*
- *Using my two ears, two eyes and one mouth.*
- *My understanding of the background and context of students has been heightened and inspires me to improve my approach to teaching.*
- *My daily communication with kids continues to be respectful.*
- *Knowing and passing on the fact that all youth belong.*
- *I have a new perspective on the challenges students face; I now THINK before I speak...*
- *Taking time to listen.*
- *Building more knowledge and understanding of First Nations and applying it more than my teaching and talking.*
- *My “wait” time has increased when responding to a question.*

**Participants were asked: What changes would improve a series such as “Fostering Success for First Nations Students?”**

- *Make it longer.*
- *More lectures about strategies to reach First Nations students and appeal to their learning.*
- *Longer; provide a bibliography.*
- *None.*
- *The “Belonging Panel” could be later in the sessions, then perhaps we would have had a deeper understanding with the ability to discuss at a deeper level.*
- *More questions from the teachers. It is risk taking to ask questions which may be interpreted as criticism, but the questions brought out some wonderful revelations.*
- *Change title to “Fostering Understanding...”*
- *More student participation.*

- *One more session with First Nations young people.*
- *Express generational transitions. \* Elders (Residential school abuse. \* Grandparents/Parents—lost generation. Day schools/public schools. Addictions. \*Children—Public School System—why they are angry.*
- *I preferred the previous venue; it was closer and warmer!*
- *More time for discussion.*
- *Perhaps recommendations on how we can apply what we are learning and use it to help the students cope and strengthen themselves.*
- *Include more students with presentations.*
- *Some required reading such as “My Heart Soars” or whatever would be recommended.*
- *I was sad to see the attendance drop. It would be nice to be able to help address this.*
- *Can some way be found to have more close contact with the speakers? For example: smaller groups in a seminar format?*
- *Getting to know at least one other participant—maybe a 5-minute presentation of Who? What? Where? they are involved with First Nations people.*
- *Break in the middle of the session.*
- *Just a warmer (smaller) presentation room.*

**Participants were asked to rate the following:**

	<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Good (3)</b>	<b>Fair (2)</b>	<b>Poor (1)</b>
<b>Admin. Assistance</b>	20	5	0	0
<b>Location</b>	17	7	2	0
<b>Catering</b>	17	7	3	0
<b>Time: 3:30 to 6:00pm</b>	10	14	1	0

**Comments:**

- *Start up time of 4:00 or even 3:45 would be less stressful given we are all at school and it's difficulty to get away.*
- *Time (sometimes too long).*
- *Thank you for taking the time and making the effort to put together this program.*

- *I understand the financial pressures that mitigate against release time, but after-school sessions are hard to get to...*
- *Please have a break.*

**Finally, participants were asked to suggest topics for other professional development events or courses they would like Continuing Studies in Education, UVic, to offer in collaboration with their district or school.**

- *How to help interns gain the awareness they need to teach First Nations students.*
- *Native art, more cultural events.*
- *Literacy.*
- *Can't think of any at the moment!!*
- *Sessions with traditional elders' attitudes re: education, and how we can counsel students.*
- *Social Responsibility.*
- *First Nations generational impacts, learned behaviour—good and bad.*
- *Understand we are still healing. We need to bring this into the school system with parent/teacher/administration meetings with parents. Anger, hopelessness, low self-esteem. I feel this way.*
- *Multiculturalism: What does it mean? What are best practices?*
- *At-risk students, behaviour.*
- *I would love to see a Part II to this program.*
- *Pick any topic—literacy, numeracy, inclusion of children with special needs, dealing with behaviour/classroom management, differentiated instruction—and structure it this way.*
- *Panel with varying views.*

**Other Comments:**

- *Terrific, well organized and fun— wonderful learning.*
- *Overall the course provided additional strategies to foster success with all learners and certainly an understanding of the realities facing First Nations students and hopefully a deeper sensitivity within each member attending.*

- *THANK YOU ALL for the great organization and great speakers...and the revelation of a rich culture.*
- *Thank you, Sheilia and Daphne. Your work has given me inspiration and hope that we can all work together when we understand each other and spend time together.*
- *I can't thank Daphne and Sheilia enough for all their work; the series was a highlight of my professional development experiences!!*
- *Thanks !!*

## **CONCLUSION:**

At the end of the second “Fostering Success...” series, there was a palpable sadness that the series had come to a close. At the same time, it was clear that participants had learned much and that they were prepared to make a new or renewed commitment to connect with and support First Nations students and their families.

It was clear from the evaluation ratings and comments that the series was viewed as a powerful and positive experience for the participants. It was also evident that a number of the respondents would recommend finding ways to overcome logistical and attitudinal impediments so that more people could participate in a similar form of professional development, and so that they might have opportunities to deepen their understanding.

Initiatives such as the series described and evaluated here often generate more questions than answers, and give rise to new issues and concerns. Means of addressing these requires more than knowledge of what to do. The designers of the “Fostering Success...” series believe that some answers—those aspects of the series that were valuable, and should be repeated; as well as what could be deleted, improved, and added—are contained in this report. It is our hope the report will be studied, and discussed; and that ways will be found to continue to develop intercultural awareness and understanding, and to sustain the momentum for fostering the success of First Nations students in the Saanich School District.

## **APPENDIX A:**

### **ACTION-RESEARCH COMPONENT—FOCUS QUESTIONS “FOSTERING SUCCESS FOR FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS” Professional Development Series 2004/05**

**CONTEXT:** The success of each session depends, in large measure, in the ability of individuals and groups to engage—with the presenters and your colleagues—in the search for questions, and answers to questions. Your participation in the “Action-research Component” of this series is fundamental; we are “counting on” you to help make the professional development series meaningful and successful.

Sheilia and Daphne

#### **SESSION 1: October 6<sup>th</sup>**

- Reflect upon statements made, or stories told, by Dr. Martin Brokenleg.
- Please be prepared to share your reflection with others at the beginning of the session on October 13<sup>th</sup>.

#### **SESSION 2: October 13<sup>th</sup> —“Belonging”**

- Ask yourself: What can I/our school do to help all students know they belong?
- Please be prepared to share your answers with others at the beginning of the session on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

#### **SESSION 3: October 22<sup>nd</sup> —“First Nations Cultural Day”**

- As a result of experiences this day, what did you learn? What do you still wonder about?
- Sheets will be provided for recording your responses; sheets will be collected at the end of the day, collated, and used to facilitate the process of evaluation.

#### **SESSION 4: November 3<sup>rd</sup> —“Competence: Ways of Knowing” and “Knowledge/Ethnobotany”**

- How can what I learned in this session be incorporated into my practice with children and youth?
- Please be prepared to share your ideas with others at the beginning of the session on November 17<sup>th</sup>.

#### **SESSION 5: November 17<sup>th</sup> —“Competence: Literacy”**

- Stories—whether from children’s literature, novels, or the accounts of a storyteller—can teach us much about “finding our way in the world.”
- Recall one story or book that you have used, with success, with students or to guide your own life.
- Be prepared to share your story(ies) with others at the beginning of the session on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

**SESSION 6: December 1<sup>st</sup>—“Independence”**

- What have you done... or do you plan to do to help foster independence in children and youth?
- Make a list of five factors you believe most important determinants to developing independence.
- Bring your list to Session 7, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, so we can compare and determine critical factors.

**SESSION 7: December 8<sup>th</sup>—“Generosity”**

- Bring an artifact symbolic of the spirit of generosity shown to you during the sessions.
- Be prepared to talk about your article and experience with others.
- You will be asked to spend about 15 minutes to complete an evaluation form.

The most powerful form of learning, the most sophisticated form of staff development comes not from listening to the good words of others, but from sharing what we know with others.

*Learning comes more from giving than receiving.*

*By reflecting on what we do, by giving it a coherence, and sharing and articulating our craft knowledge, we make meaning, we learn.*

Roland Barth. *Improving schools from within.*  
San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995.