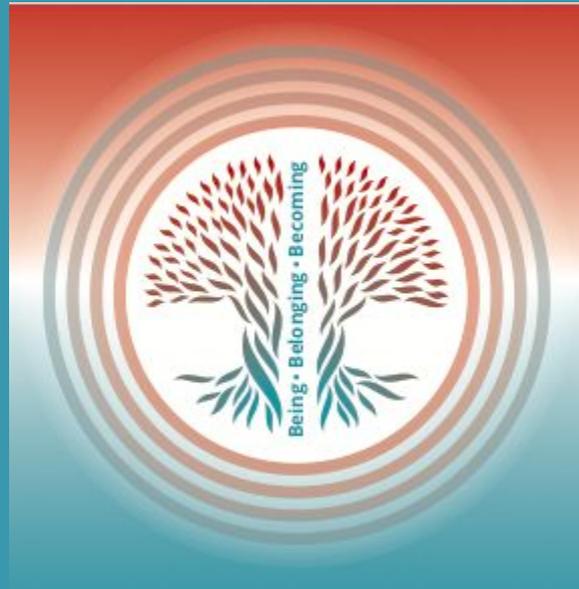




Re-Imagining Transitions for Indigenous Learners: A Collaborative Inquiry





Exploring Transitions

How do you define transitions?

What's happening for learners
during key transitions?

How do we support Indigenous
learners during key transitions?



"Transformation" by Andy Everson

AESN Transitions Study

- 3 Years
- 10 teams from across BC
- Focus on Indigenous student learning at points of transition



10 Inquiry Transitions Teams

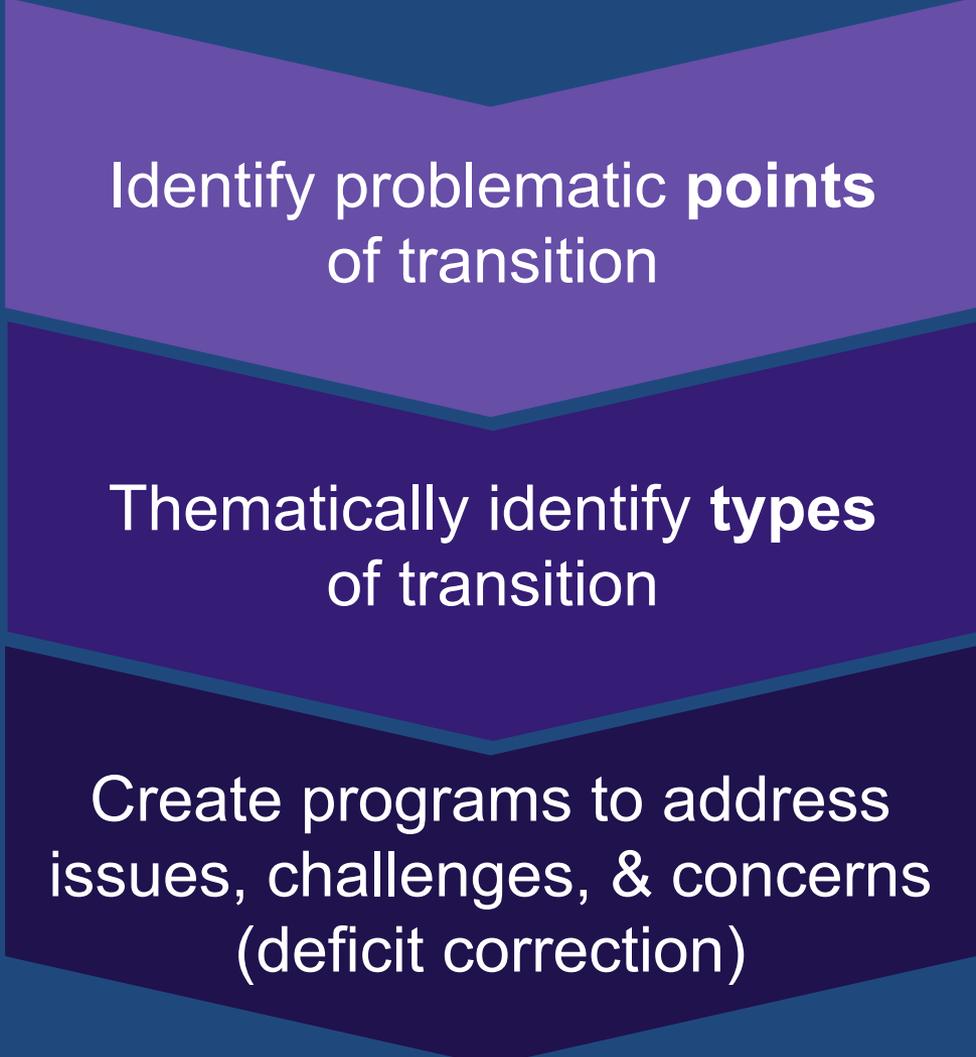
- Ballenas Secondary School, *Parksville*
- Charles Hays Secondary School, *Prince Rupert*
- Dover Bay Secondary School, *Nanaimo*
- Eke Me-Xi Learning Centre, *Port Hardy*
- Frank Hurt Secondary School, *Surrey*
- Gudengaay Tlaats'gaa Naay Secondary School, *Masset*
- Peace River North Secondary School & partner middle schools, *Fort St. John*
- Smithers Secondary School, *Smithers*
- South Okanagan Secondary School, *Oliver*
- WL Seaton Secondary, *Vernon*



Why are we concerned about transitions?



Traditional transition research focuses on students as problems &/or deficiencies



Identify problematic **points**
of transition

Thematically identify **types**
of transition

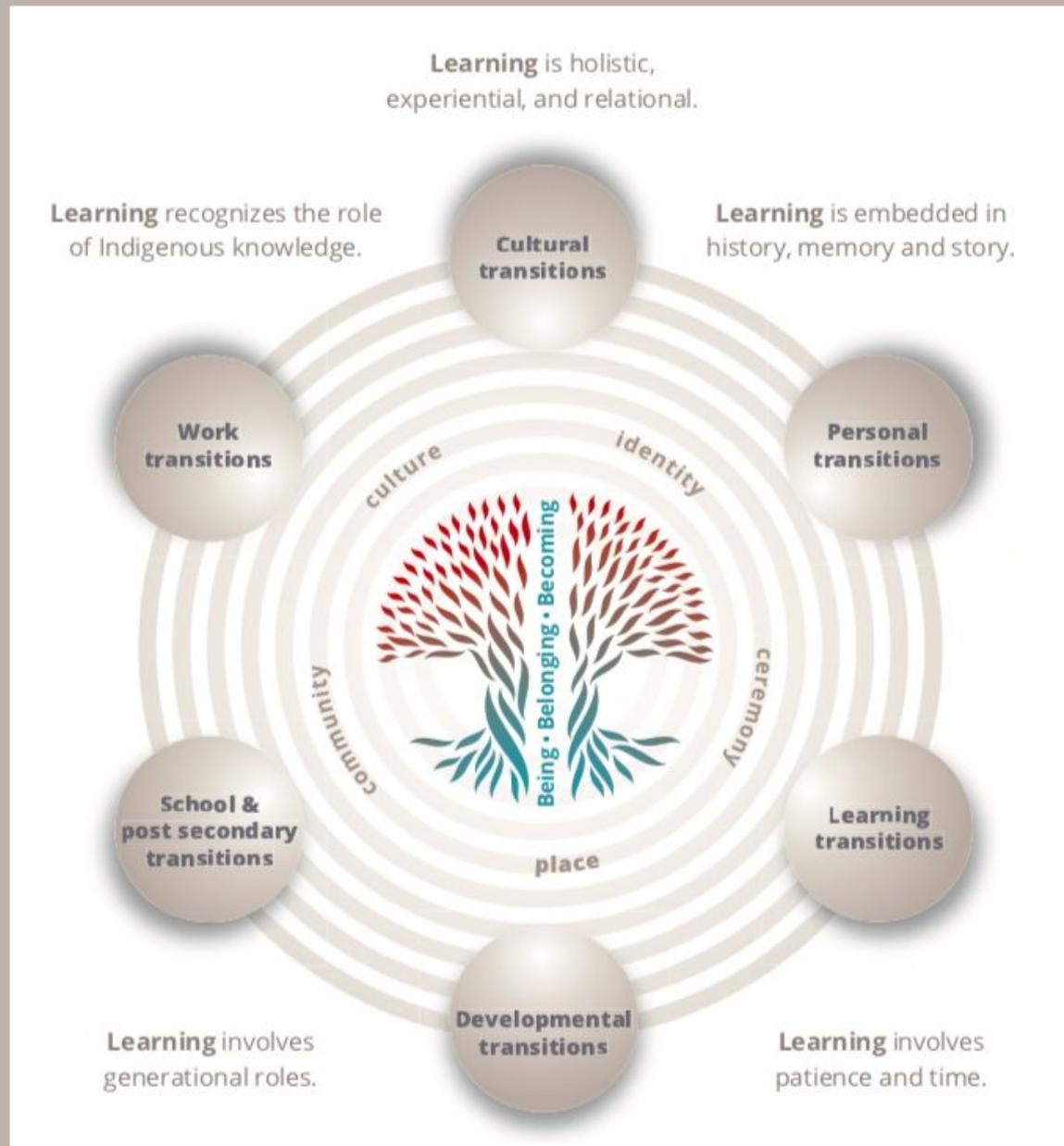
Create programs to address
issues, challenges, & concerns
(deficit correction)



Re-examining Transitions

- Transitions are holistic & embedded in all life experiences, not just school transition points.
- Supporting students in transitions requires us to re-imagine learners engaged in a journey of being, becoming, & belonging.

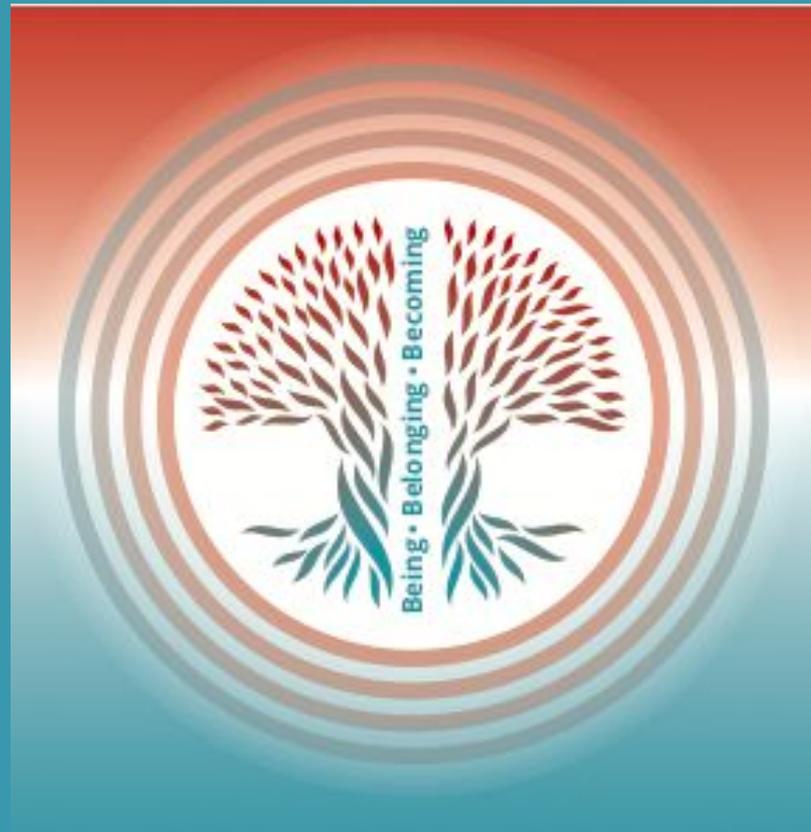
A Learner Centered Transition Strategy Framework





Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education

The Inquiry Work

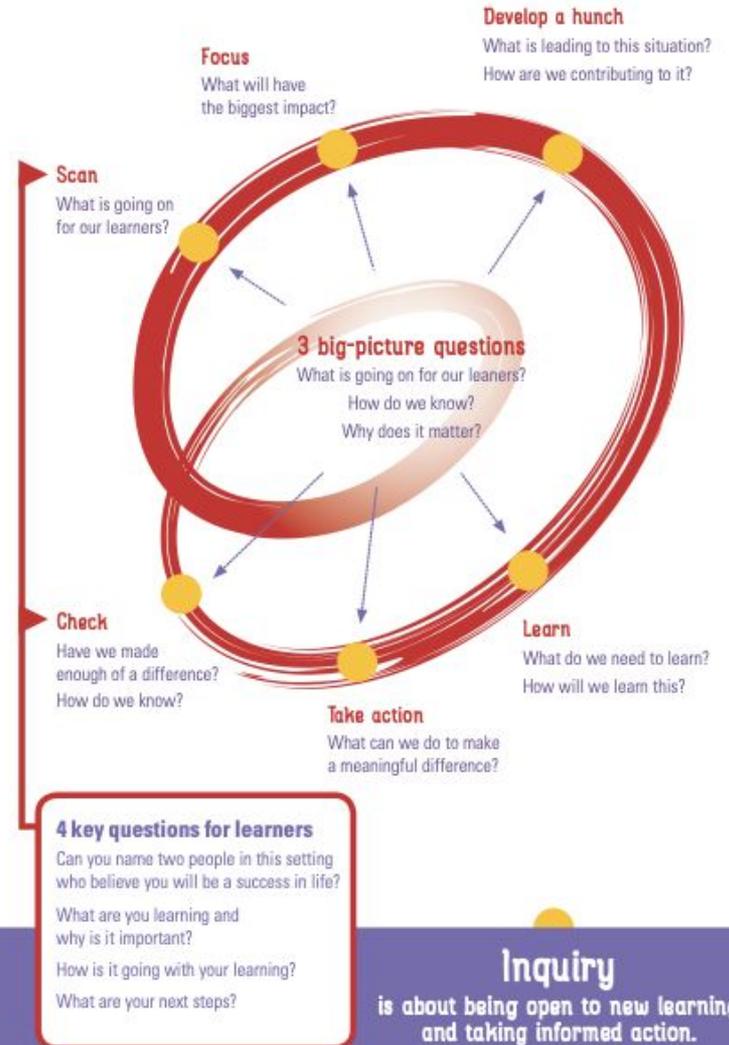


The Process of Inquiry Matters

An evidence informed & disciplined approach to professional inquiry:

- builds collaborative teams
- provides opportunities to share projects with other teams
- learner centered
- allows teams to reflect, consider next steps, & deepen understanding

the spiral of inquiry



FIRST
PEOPLES

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).

Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities.

Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge.

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

Learning involves patience and time.

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Learning involves recognizing that some knowledge is sacred and only shared with permission and/or in certain situations.



For First Peoples
classroom resources
visit: www.fnesc.ca



Approaches to Improving Transitions for Indigenous Learners

- Land based
- Elder engagement / co-teaching & mentorship
- Shifting school wide culture of recognizing Indigenous learners and learner experiences
 - e.g. transitions learning feast
- Interdisciplinary pathways
 - e.g. cross curricular programs
- Focus on growth mindset & displacing stereotypes (staff & students)
- strengths based, relational activities
- Coaching with care for the whole student's life experience



SD53

South Okanagan Secondary School

How do we make student engagement & success, particularly for Aboriginal learners, our focus?

Action:

- Multidisciplinary education, cross curricular learning, land based approach (EPIC), teacher collaboration, experiential education, project-based approach

Key Learning:

- Student engagement is linked to motivation, passion, & a connection to community
- interdisciplinary approaches create connections & engagement



SD60

Peace River North School District

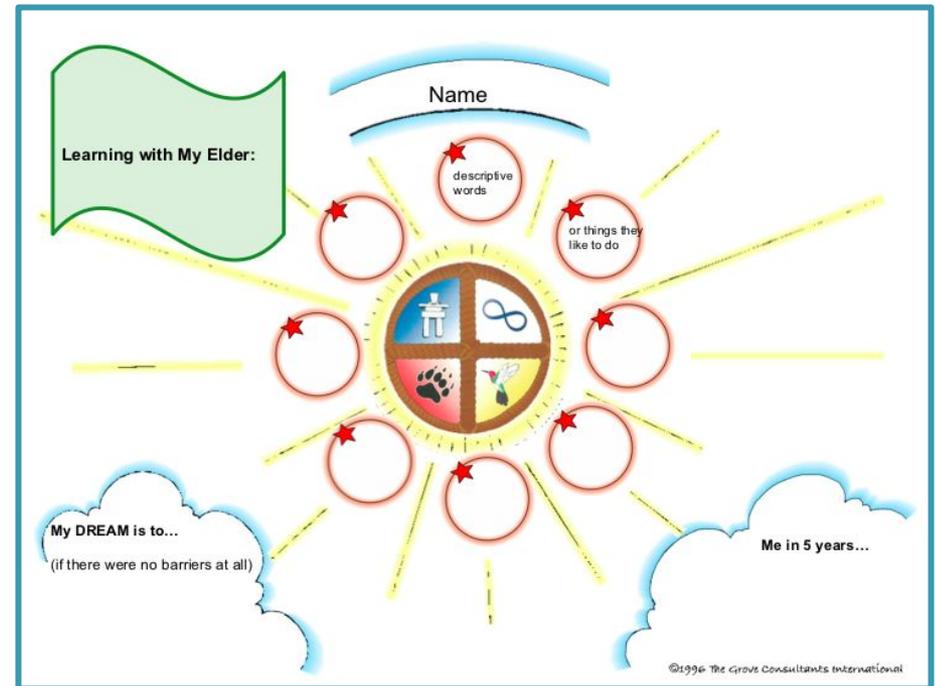
How can we support grade 9 students to successfully transition from middle school to high school?

Action:

- Aboriginal support coaches, teacher collaboration, relationship building, academic preparedness, connecting with Elders (Learning from Elders course), Inquiry mindset.

Key Learning:

- Relationships are vital to supporting Indigenous students in transitions
- Place based & cultural learning outcomes are central to success



SD52

Charles Hays Secondary School

What would it feel like, look like, sound like (& taste like) for all learners to be connected to the school?

Action:

- Relationship building, grade-to-grade transitions, inquiry mindset, Hagwilaan (walking slowly), connecting to local culture & tradition, graduation rates, flexible learning spaces



Key Learning:

- Genuine relationships, grounded in community & cultural traditions, connect students in positive & meaningful ways



SD69

Ballenas Secondary School

How can we best create & foster learner-responsive school structures to support Aboriginal transitions through grade 10 & beyond?

Action:

- Mini-lessons (LINK, a program designed to enhance Indigenous student connections to our school), professional learning, physical representation of Indigenous culture, teacher collaboration, incorporation of Indigenous resources, Circle of Courage

Key Learning:

- Transforming teacher beliefs about Indigenous students will create an accepting & inclusive environment
- Embracing diversity will shift the culture of our school & staff





Inquiry Partners: An Island of Sanity

- Coaches developed trusting, authentic, & professional relationships with the inquiry teams
- Critical friends & allies who describe themselves as learners
- Keep teams dynamically engaged & attentive to their inquiry, asking questions that encourage reflection & re-focus
- Hold space for ideas that can be returned to or grown over time
- Build confidence & encourage risk taking
- Help teams get unstuck and move forward



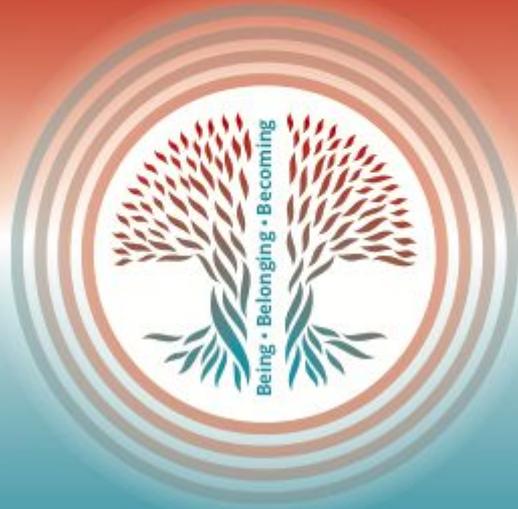
Networks of Inquiry and Indigenous Education

AESN Indigenous Student Transitions Inquiry Schools Video

<https://vimeo.com/334525720>

Improving Transitions

for Indigenous Learners



What can we learn from schools that are working in a spirit of collaborative inquiry to improve transitions for Indigenous learners?

Key Findings

The goal of supporting students in transition requires us to re-imagine our learners as engaged in a journey that isn't defined by the spaces between—the transitions—but as part of a continuum of **being, becoming and belonging**. (pp 15-16)

Inquiry teams sought to map solutions that came from the life experiences of their students. The primary concerns students had were about feelings of **inclusion, safety and belonging**. (p 51)

The First Peoples Principles of Learning drive innovative and creative thinking because they reflect a way of learning that is holistic, shared and collaborative, and that values place, culture, spirituality and community. (p 52)

Relationships matter, and matter most. Relationship building is the first, middle and last step in inquiry work. (p 54)

Question your bias and privilege. Challenge your assumptions and listen deeply to honour all learners. (p 55)



Key Findings

Improving Transitions for Indigenous Learners



The goal of supporting students in transition requires us to re-imagine our learners as engaged in a journey that isn't defined by the spaces between—the transitions—but as part of a continuum of **being, becoming and belonging**. (pp 15-16)

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What are your experiences with the ideas in the key findings & guiding questions?

What do you celebrate and what are the challenges?



Questions to Guide Your Practice

Roots

Are you learning from the Elders in your community?
Are you strengthening a sense of place through your inquiry? Are you infusing the **First Peoples' Principles of Learning** into everything you do?

Relationships

Are you ensuring that relationships are nurtured, valued and respected? With your learners? With your colleagues? With your community?

Learners at the centre

How are you using what you hear directly from your learners to both inform your inquiry and to check that you are making enough of a difference?

Reaching out

Who are you connecting with outside your school – especially when you are not quite sure what your next steps might be?

Right-sized actions

Are you encouraging new actions with the right degree of risk for everyone involved?
Are you celebrating small steps? How are you building and sustaining momentum?

Integrating

Are you building connections across curriculum areas and with your community?

Assumptions

Are you creating the conditions to test assumptions and explore hunches?

Vulnerability

Are you open to uncertainty? Are you becoming more comfortable expressing your own doubts and concerns?

Emotions and motivation

How are you checking in with your team to share feelings about the steps you are taking?

Stories

Are you sharing stories to build understanding of what you are doing and to create images of a preferred future?
How are you doing this? With whom?

Impact

What difference is your inquiry making to learners?
How do you know? Is it enough?



Next Steps

NOIIE Indigenous Student Transitions Inquiry
Schools 2019 - 2021

- Second cohort of 10 schools





Deepen your learning:

Improving Transitions for Indigenous Learners Through Collaborative Inquiry: AESN Transitions Research, 2016-2018

Full report, poster, & handout: <https://www.noii.ca/indigenous/>

South Okanagan Secondary School Epic Program

<https://sossepic.weebly.com>



Questions Comments

