

# Cariboo Chilcotin School District #27

## First Nations Language Review

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## **School District #27 First Nations Language Review**

The Cariboo Chilcotin School District #27 has a long history of supporting First Nations Language and Culture. That commitment is evident by the number of First Nations Languages classes that are being offered in the elementary and high schools. The students that benefit from these studies are First Nations and non-First Nations children. There are 13 First Nations Language Teachers in 12 schools. There are 484 First Nations and 175 non-First Nations students enrolled in language and culture classes. A total of 659 children benefit from the program.

In the 2007 school year, the First Nations Education Council initiated a language program review. The goal was to obtain input from the stakeholders and review the language learning resources. The review has highlighted some strengths and located some areas that need attention. The long-term commitment to culture and language programs within the school district is based on historical cooperation between First Nations and the School District. This relationship can provide a basis for future partnership. The fact that non-First Nations students are enrolled, is noteworthy.

The First Nations language program involves a substantial number of students and staff. The teaching of Chilcotin, Carrier and Shuswap is a formidable challenge given their historical context and current state. Unlike other language groups, First Nations do not have a source of teachers and learning resources.

The framework for the language program's administration, instruction and learning resources are in place and could be built upon. There is a wide variety of expertise within the School district that could be utilized. It would be beneficial to locate the people in the district who are fluent and literate in Chilcotin, Carrier or Shuswap and give them a role in revitalizing the language program.

To build on the potential that already exists, someone needs to have the program as part of their responsibilities. This would include planning and coordinating all activities that are related to the language and culture program: creating a district language program vision and goals, Integrated Resource Package (IRP) and course development, language staff evaluation, professional development, creating/gathering learning resources and exploring partnerships.

The response from all the students and language staff was positive. The language program validated the First Nations identity within the school system. It provides an opportunity to generate ownership in the school goals, including academic success. To capitalize on this potential, the language courses must be strong. A language program that promotes a positive First Nations identity will create a sense of self-confidence. This can be accomplished by developing a language IRP and individual courses. Appropriate learning resources would be required for each course.

## **Cariboo-Chilcotin School District Coordination**

Director of Instruction, Joan Gentles wrote to all the schools to outline the project and to introduce me. First Nations Coordinator, Mamie Hall prepared the background information on all the schools and people involved in the Language Program. She also accompanied me to the initial 5 schools to make sure that everyone was clear about the review. It was stressed that it was a program review and not a personnel review. Joan Gentles assisted in writing the contract terms. Mamie Hall assisted in distributing and collecting the questionnaires.

### **Review Process**

The First Nations Language review involved four components: interviewing First Nations Language Teachers and some Principals, a survey questionnaire, reviewing the teaching material and a review of the Districts' First Nations Learning Resources.

- \* 10 out of 13 schools were visited.
- \* 10 out of 13 First Nations Language teachers were interviewed
- \* 10 Principals were interviewed.

A fifth part was a select bibliography of secondary sources.

### **Curriculum Background**

The FN Language curriculum goes back decades. The most recent curriculum development consists of theme units for Shuswap, Carrier and Chilcotin. Each is divided into grade levels. They provide a good starting place but need to be expanded.

### **School District Resource Centre**

The resource centre has a First Nations collection. Most of the material is suited for Social Studies courses (in English). The collection has few professional development books or AV material suitable for teaching First Nations Languages.

# Summary of Recommendations

## 1. Vision

### a. Recommendations

- i. Develop District wide Vision and Goals for the First Nations Language Program.
- ii. Work plan that outlined everyone's role and level of participation.

## 2. First Nations Language Program

### a. Recommendations

- i. Contact the Provincial Aboriginal Branch to explore opportunities to develop a First Nations Language IRP and course outlines or
- ii. Form a working committee to;
  1. Review existing language IRPs
  2. Develop a First Nations Language framework that has different levels of coursesor  
hire a curriculum consultant to work with the Language teachers to develop an IRP.

## 3. First Nations Language Teachers

### a. Recommendations

- i. The Language teachers be offered a way to self assess their skills and develop a personal professional development plan.
- ii. The First Nations Language Program include on-going professional development.
- iii. Periodically, the First Nations Language Teachers should add Team Building activities and problem solving to their gathering.

## 4. Language Courses

### a. Recommendations

- i. The lessons should teach oral fluency as well as literacy.
- ii. The language classes need definable outcomes so that the students experience definite growth from year to year.
- iii. The Language Teachers and their students should be given opportunities to share what they have learned.
  1. Language celebrations, local and First Nations radio stations, newspapers

## 5. Administration

### a. Recommendations

- i The School District First Nations Administration review the job descriptions. The goal would be to eliminate overlap or gaps in program delivery.
- ii That the Shuswap Language be represented at the district level by a teacher fluent and literate in the Shuswap Language, Secwepemctsin.
- iii Single agenda meetings that focus on the development and implementation of a quality language program.

## 6. First Nations Teacher Role and Responsibilities

### a. Recommendations

- i. Provide professional development for all First Nations Language Teachers. (see Pro-d recommendations)
- ii. Review the BCTF Standards and Competences Document with all FN Language Teachers
- iii. Provide all FN Language Teachers with the above document
- iv. Develop and implement a thorough job orientation for new staff who do not have formal training. Review the roles, responsibilities and expectations of a teacher.
- v. Evaluate the FN Language Teachers and use the information to focus Professional development (in accordance with any Collective Agreement that may be in effect)
- vi. Provide a tool for self-evaluation for teaching.
- vii. Formally adopt and implement the 'School District #27 Values- Local First Nations Language Program" self-evaluation checklist.
  1. Use the results to assist in making individual professional development plans

## 7. Language Curriculum

### a. Recommendations

- i. Research and gather generic learning resources that can be adapted to any language or dialect.
- ii. Provide yearly workshops on curriculum development.
- iii. Record mini lessons, 5 to 15 minutes. These could be used by teachers who are not fluent speakers or by teachers who don't have an expertise in that area.

- iv. A forum for sharing be established whereby all the participants obtain new material. If there is a mutual benefit, then Language teachers would be more likely to share material.

8. Unit and lesson planning

a. Recommendations

- i. Provide in-service on unit and lesson planning.
- ii. Provide lesson plan templates that includes: learning objective, target vocabulary and grammar, activity, learning resources needed and assessment.

9. Teacher placement – Intermediate and High school

a. Recommendations

- i. At the start of the year, the Principal assist in student placement.
- ii. Research alternate delivery methods whereby the Language teacher is not left alone in a class that they cannot manage.
  - 1. Team teaching, where an experienced teacher assists in planning the lesson and is on hand to help with classroom management. The language teacher is responsible to teach language. Cost is a factor.
  - 2. Offering multi-grade classes in some schools on alternate years.

10. School First Nations Budget

a. Recommendations

- i. Set up a district fund for larger projects. Only a few schools would be funded each year. Over several years, all the schools with programs would benefit. The base budget be increased based on a school and per capita formula
- ii. Provide funds for Professional Development.
  - 1. Workshops, travel, meals, accommodation, substitute teachers, salary for Pro-D days etc.

11. Implement existing Binders

a. Recommendations

- i. The language teachers should review the Curriculum Binders each year and high light which topics will be taught to which grades. In a two-grade split, the unit can only be taught every second year. In a 3 grade split, the unit can only be taught every third year

## 12. District resources

- a. Recommendations
  - i. A Learning Resources Working Committee be formed. The committee could include: District First Nations Director or Coordinator, Language Teachers, Educators knowledgeable in Second Language Resources.
  - ii. The task would include:
    - 1. Sort and weed the existing collection
    - 2. Generate an acquisition list
      - a. Professional books for language teachers
      - b. Learning Resources that can adapted for student use
      - c. DVD/videos on demonstration lessons
    - 3. Develop a plan to promote the use of district
  - iii. A budget be generated to support 2/3 meetings a year.
    - 1. Substitute teacher, travel, room meals etc
  - iv. A Learning Resources budget be established to purchase new material
  - v. Where it is cost effective, copies of learning resources be supplied to rural schools.

## 13. Technology

- a. Recommendations
  - i. Provide professional development in using technology
  - ii. That the Chilcotin, Carrier and Shuswap font be downloaded onto all the computers that the students have access to during the day.
  - iii. That equipment be located, listed and shared
  - iv. A budget for consumable supplies be established
    - 1. Colour ink for printers, DVD and CD disks, rechargeable batteries, memory cards for cameras, paper etc.

## 14. Language Profile

In school with a very high First Nations population there is an opportunity to increase the use of the First Nations language.

- a. Recommendation
  - i. The Principals and First Nations Language Teachers explore ways to use the First Nations Language outside the classroom.
    - 1. Morning, recess, noon hour and after school announcements
    - 2. Signage
    - 3. Bi-lingual school events

- ii. Language successes need to be shared. Videos of children speaking, doing projects in their language, singing in their language, perhaps burned to DVD and shared or played at different types of gatherings.

15. First Nations Community Outreach/Partner

a. Recommendation

- i. That the School District explore partnerships with the First Nations to research and develop language programs and curriculum