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Being respectful, caring and passionate about Aboriginal research

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Learning to Indigenize: Kwantlen First Nation and the Maple Ridge Environmental School Project
(www.es.sd42.ca)

Imagine “schooling” without walls, a “community of learners” who participate in a variety of settings and activities, engage in hands-on, real lived experiences. The land, its histories and knowledges, becomes a place for learning: respect; the landscape, plants and animals; the language and stories of the land; Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations; and change. Our story is woven into the stories of past, present and future, allowing learners to engage in many learning possibilities.

In many ways, we are indigenizing our learning processes by discovering connections with an indigenous pedagogy. Emergent learning possibilities have enabled parents, First Nation elders and educators, Simon Fraser University and extended community involvement. What would it look like if we were to provide “lived” learning experiences, engaging in a complete, or expanding, “circle of learning”?

Our school district is located within Kwantlen and Katzie First Nations territory, Coast Salish and Sto:lo ancestors. Our drum making is connected to local traditional knowledge. Learning with Elder Lekeyten (Kwantlen First Nation), we develop greater understanding of culture, honoring the trees (Cedar) and animals, engage with tools, making the hoop and skinning the drum, creating the stick, learn the stories, drum and song, and then present to others. Connecting the learning to hands-on activities, lived interactive and social experiences, with story-telling, engaged all aspects of learning. Discovering this way of thinking and learning broadens understanding and forms connections with our whole community.