

Infusing Aboriginal Content Home Languages into the

Within the Peel District School Board, many of us work in very diverse communities and we work together to create welcoming and inclusive school environments.

At Floradale Public School, our students represent more than eighty countries and speak over fifty languages in their homes. At Floradale, we believe that “newcomer students need to be valued and respected regarding their own language, culture, heritage and knowledge base...” (Manners et al., 2010 Summer, p. 30). The immigrant experience is often marginalized and dismissed instead of celebrated, and this, sadly, mirrors many of the experiences of the First Peoples of Canada. Our school has taken positive steps towards infusing the heritages of both the First Nation, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada, and our students, into our teaching and learning, and the students have benefited greatly.

We have worked closely with Dr. Jim Cummins, renowned expert in English Language Learners, to affirm the identities of our multicultural and multilingual students and to welcome their heritage as a rich resource and a valued contribution to our multiple perspectives, critical thinking curriculum. When members of the Floradale staff attended the Circle of Light Conference in 2009, we found several resources that proved useful as we worked toward an inclusive, responsive curriculum. This Toronto conference was a partnership between the Ontario Ministry of Education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the local First Nation, Métis, and Inuit groups. The Ministry of Education document, Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007), and The Learning Circle: Classroom Activities on First Nations in Canada (2006), from the federal Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, inspired us. Many of the suggestions aligned perfectly with the curriculum (see sidebar).

At Floradale, we take several approaches to harmoniously wed aboriginal culture to the school climate and the life experiences of our students. Teachers read aboriginal legends and incorporate aboriginal culture and knowledge into science, social studies, drama, art, and language expectations. The



Left and opposite: the “Integrating Aboriginal Content into School Curriculum” Poster Session at Super Conference 2011.

Photo by: Padma Sastri