

Framework for Enhancing Student Learning



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5
SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)
Indigenous Education Council Feedback



September 2025

IEC Response

Decolonization in SD5's Framework for Enhancing Student Learning

By Sancira Steelgun, Bonnie Harvey, and Aminda Joseph with SH Chung, PhD

Key Appreciations

- **Systemic Acknowledgment:** District explicitly names systemic racism and colonial structures.
- **Governance:** Indigenous Education Council, Elders in Residence, and local LEAs embed Indigenous leadership.
- **Equity Lens:** Resources shifted from ratios to needs-based allocation, aligning with Administrative Procedure 169.
- **Land-Based Pedagogy:** Outdoor education and gathering places integrate Indigenous knowledge.

Key Concerns

- **Metrics Misalignment:** Provincial literacy/numeracy benchmarks still dominate, limiting recognition of Indigenous knowledge.
- **Fragmentation:** Decolonization initiatives spread across programs without a unified accountability structure.
- **Capacity:** Marginalized voices underrepresented in district engagement; participation remains “developing.”
- **Symbolism Risk:** Cultural practices risk tokenism if not paired with structural reform in governance and curriculum.

Recommendations

1. **Redefine Success:** Develop parallel metrics that recognize Indigenous knowledge, community contribution, and well-being.
2. **Strengthen Accountability:** Establish a district-wide decolonization framework with measurable goals.
3. **Deepen Governance:** Formalize Indigenous co-governance in decision-making and budget allocations.
4. **Sustain Engagement:** Resource marginalized student voice processes beyond advisory councils.

Relational Brief for Educators & Community Partners

Walking Together in Decolonization: SD5's FESL

Appreciations

- Relational Accountability: The shift from “our students” as ownership to collective responsibility reflects Indigenous worldviews.
- Cultural Presence: Elders in Residence, Indigenous Support Counsellors, and Gathering Places foster belonging.
- Land as Teacher: Outdoor learning, micro-grants, and land-based pedagogy honour Ktunaxa knowledge and connection.
- Equity in Action: Needs-based funding replaces ratio-based allocation, reducing systemic barriers.

Key Challenge

- Whose Measures Count? Provincial tests define “success” more than Indigenous knowledge or community well-being.

Moving Forward Together

- Honour multiple ways of knowing in how we define learning and success.
- Tell a unified story of decolonization that guides all district work.
- Create safe, ongoing spaces for marginalized students and families to share truth.
- Pair cultural presence with policy change, ensuring actions match words.

With Humility: How to Systemically Decolonize a Hiring Panel

Sancira Steelgun and Bonnie Harvey with SH Chung, PhD

1. Purpose

Conventional HR says fairness is compliance, consistency, law.

Decolonization says fairness is repair, presence, justice (Smith, 2021).

2. Panel Composition

Conventional HR seeks diversity to avoid bias.

Decolonization requires Indigenous rights bearing presence as principle—Elders and Knowledge Holders as equals, not guests (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

3. Merit

Conventional HR defines merit as degrees, years, polish.

Decolonization defines merit as community trust, humility, lived experience, and courage to work relationally (Battiste, 2013).

4. Interviews

Conventional HR insists on standardized questions.

Decolonization insists on land-based story, breath, spirit, and questions about trust: How do you restore trust when harm is done? (Kovach, 2009).

5. Evaluation Tools

Conventional HR trusts rubrics and numbers.

Decolonization trains panelists to score humility, community engagement, and relational accountability—not leave them to “gut feeling” (Wilson, 2008).

6.Risk

Conventional HR fears liability.

Decolonization reduces risk by aligning with law, policy, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Province of BC, 2019).

7.Accountability

Conventional HR measures compliance through headcounts.

Decolonization measures belonging through stories of retention, resurgence, and community testimony (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2020).

A hiring panel can serve the law and sovereign land.

It can be compliant and healing.

Decolonization is not indulgence but leadership, not risk but remedy.

With gratitude to the Ktunaxa elders and knowledge holders who have taught us that true fairness begins in relationship.

References

- Battiste, M. (2013). Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit. Purich Publishing.
- Canadian Human Rights Commission. (2020). Reconciliation: A Call to Action for HR. Ottawa: CHRC.
- Kovach, M. (2009). Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts. University of Toronto Press.
- Province of British Columbia. (2019). Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Victoria, BC.
- Smith, L. T. (2021). Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (3rd ed.). Zed Books.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Calls to Action. Winnipeg, MB.
- Wilson, S. (2008). Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods. Fernwood Publishing.