

Memorandum

vancouver school board



April 5, 2012

ITEM 1

TO: Committee III

FROM: Lynda Gray, Valerie Overgaard Co-Chairs of the Aboriginal Focus
School Steering Committee

RE: Aboriginal Focus School

Attached please find a report from the Steering Committee for the Aboriginal School.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Aboriginal Focus School be developed at Sir William MacDonald Elementary School beginning in September 2012 with students in grades Kindergarten through three.

Attachment

VO/ml

ABORIGINAL FOCUS SCHOOL - Report to the Board of Trustees – April 2012

Background

Following the successful series of forums in the spring of 2011, the Board approved a plan to establish an Aboriginal Focus School. Since October a Steering Committee of representatives and an Aboriginal Caucus have been meeting bi-weekly to plan for the implementation of the school. Previously, we reported that the Steering Council had developed a Work Plan which included tentative dates for achieving a set of goals. This is attached for information (Appendix 1). The first steps in the plan are to:

- 1) choose a location for the Aboriginal Focus School (AFS),
- 2) recruit a targeted group of students, and
- 3) recruit staff.

The Aboriginal Caucus, consisting of members from the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) continue to take the lead role in providing direction on what kind of information is required to move the project forward. In that regard, they have paid due diligence to considering the most pertinent data for the selection of the school. Some information they have requested and which VSB has assisted are:

- Space availability within the schools, flexibility of the space for a variety of uses;
- The enrolment patterns for the catchment areas for those schools, including:
 - Numbers of Aboriginal students living in the catchment
 - Numbers of Aboriginal students attending by grade,
 - The numbers of students who attend from outside the catchment areas,
 - The number of special needs students by grade,
 - Transition patterns from grade to grade.
- Distance from other schools;
- Proximity of Native housing;
- Seismic and other facility considerations of the schools.

In addition to these data, the Aboriginal Caucus and Steering Committee agreed more information was needed before a location for the school could be suggested. Since our last Update, the additional information was gained through a number of activities undertaken.

Parent Survey

A Parent/Caregiver survey was developed to determine the level of support the school might expect through enrollment (attached as Appendix 2). This work involved the Steering Committee developing appropriate survey questions; enlisting the support of IT services to install on the VSB website, planning a distribution of paper surveys to schools, developing an insert for school newsletters, inputting the results on to an Excel spread sheet for analysis, and analyzing the data.

A Fact Sheet about the intent of the school was developed to be distributed with the paper surveys and to be put on the website to give context to the survey. In addition, an Update on the development of the school was posted on the website.

The results of this survey showed significant interest in the AFS by both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal parents. Of 311 people who responded by the deadline of March 1st nearly one third or 89 respondents said they might send their children to the school if they received more information on the curricula. The majority of these respondents had children in school from K-Grade 5.

The results of this survey (attached as Appendix 3) gave direction in choosing the location for the AFS and grade levels to be considered for the Aboriginal Focus School.

Service Agency Survey

To determine the kinds of services that would be available for parents and children of the school, the Aboriginal Caucus felt a survey was needed to gauge the level of support available from community service agencies. A one page questionnaire was developed which asked whether or not the agency wanted to be or could be involved with providing services to parents or children. Information was collected by telephone interview. Of the 48 agencies interviewed, most of whom are located on the east side of Vancouver, nearly 2/3 or 27 respondents stated they wanted to be involved with the school, the parents or children. The agencies offered workshops in a variety of topics, daycare, traditional teachings and one-on-one counseling.

The results of this survey (summary attached as Appendix 4) show clear community support for the Aboriginal Focus School.

School Visits

The Aboriginal Caucus felt they could not make a location choice for the school without doing on-site visits. With previous information in hand, the Caucus visited four schools which had been narrowed down from a larger list. On March 20th, 2012 Don Fiddler, District Principal for Aboriginal Education, took the Aboriginal Caucus to Sir William Macdonald, Britannia Elementary, Queen Alexandra, and Templeton Secondary schools.

Recommendation

School Location

After much deliberation and discussion the Steering Committee came to the conclusion that Sir William MacDonald Elementary is the best location to become the Aboriginal Focus School. Staff had a brief initial meeting with some staff and parents of the school to advise

that a recommendation would be presented to the Board on April 10, 2012 and asking them for their thoughts on this direction.

Grade Levels for Initial Recruitment

The Aboriginal Caucus and the Steering Committee considered a number of factors in selecting which grades would begin the school. Some were educational such as what research tells us about effective implementation of these kinds of program. Some were practical and related to facilities: availability and size of washrooms, etc. Parents and caregivers were also asked in what grades their children were. The majority of parents who responded to the surveys had children in early elementary grades. Given all these factors, it is recommended that the Aboriginal Focus School start Kindergarten through grade three. This will allow the school to start small and build on successes as a strong foundation is built.

Next Steps

Once the Board approves a location for the school, the Aboriginal Caucus is planning another consultation with the community to determine further planning. A community forum is planned for mid-May at Sir William MacDonald elementary school. Notices and the agenda are currently being developed.

Communication is going to be critical over the next weeks. The Steering Committee learned from the parent/caregiver survey that people are seeking more detailed information about the School. The website will be used for posting updates, messages will be sent directly to those attending forums and to those who left their contact information on the parent/caregiver survey. Work is being undertaken to articulate a vision for the School which can be widely circulated as additional information.

A graduate class in Indigenous Pedagogy of Dr. Jo-ann Archibald of UBC has created a blog on which they have presented advice for the development of the school, based on research. This includes suggestions about curriculum, leadership, classroom management, teacher selection, pedagogy, and the learning environment. Staff and committee will use this information in developing detail for the school implementation.

A letter has been drafted to go to Human Rights Tribunal asking for an exemption on staffing. Discussions with the VESTA and VSTA are underway.

Staffing will be undertaken as part of the District Staffing Spring Process.

The Steering Committee remains optimistic that the Aboriginal Focus School will open by September 2012.

APPENDIX I

	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Location												
* identify												
* consult and confirm												
* renovation												
Curricula												
* locate existing												
* adapt/write required												
Student Recruitment												
* identify target												
* advertise												
* school visits, newsletters												
* registration												
Staff Recruitment												
* meetings with union												
* exemption application												
* posting, hiring process												
Governance												
* decisions, consultation with Board and Ministry												
	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG

Aboriginal Focus School – Fact Sheet

It is a momentous time for Aboriginal Education in Vancouver. As we approach the 40th anniversary of the release of the national policy paper, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, the Vancouver School Board and leaders from the urban Aboriginal community are excited about working together to open one of British Columbia's first urban, Aboriginal focus schools; a school that will offer quality, culturally responsive education to Aboriginal students and others who choose to learn in this unique and creative environment. The Aboriginal Focus School is one of many exciting initiatives in a changing landscape for Aboriginal education in British Columbia. It will put into practice what educational research has proven over time: that culturally responsive education, together with parental and community engagement, leads to student success.

Creating an Aboriginal Focus School has been under discussion for many years within the VSB. Recently, following several public forums where interest was clearly demonstrated, the Board struck an Aboriginal Focus School steering committee comprised of VSB representatives along side an Aboriginal Caucus appointed by the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council.

The Caucus provides leadership and direction to its VSB partners. The members ensure that the core principles of the policy paper on *Indian Control of Indian Education* as well as those of our District's, *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement* are realized within this initiative. Our core principles include commitment to: parental, family, and community engagement; culturally appropriate curricula; Indigenous knowledge based teaching methods; and Aboriginal community driven governance.

An Aboriginal Focus School will embrace the cultural and linguistic diversity of our urban Aboriginal community and it will include common, Aboriginal core values. From that core, Aboriginal Focus School educators will teach the true history of Canada and its intergenerational implications. Those core values will guide the school's planning, implementation, evaluation, reporting and governance practices.

It is our belief that grounding our new school in these principles will improve the academic and social outcomes for Aboriginal learners – indeed all learners – who choose to attend. We have begun an exciting journey together. Our plan is to start small, focusing on a few grades, and then expand through years to come. Stakeholder commitment is strong and we look forward with optimism to a September, 2012 opening.





Aboriginal Focus School Expression of Interest Survey for Parents/Guardians



In this planning phase for the Aboriginal Focus School, the Vancouver School Board and urban Aboriginal planning group seek feedback from parents/guardians about possible student enrollment. Please complete this survey as soon as possible and return it to the Aboriginal Enhancement Worker or to your child's school by **Thursday, March 1**. You may also complete this survey online at: <http://www.vsb.bc.ca/aboriginal-school>. Thank you for your time.

I am the parent / guardian of _____	Aboriginal student(s)	_____	Age _____	Grade _____
_____	Aboriginal student(s)	_____	Age _____	Grade _____
_____	Aboriginal student(s)	_____	Age _____	Grade _____
_____	Non-Aboriginal student(s)	_____	Age _____	Grade _____
_____	Non-Aboriginal student(s)	_____	Age _____	Grade _____
_____	Non-Aboriginal student(s)	_____	Age _____	Grade _____

I would send my child/ren to an Aboriginal Focus School: Yes ⑨ No ⑨ Maybe ⑨

If your answer is **Yes**, why would you send your child/ren to this school?

If your answer is **No**, what would change your answer to Yes?

If your answer is **Maybe**, what would change your answer to Yes?

I would consider sending my child/ren to the Aboriginal Focus School if it is located:

Up to _____ blocks walking distance from my home.

Up to _____ minutes on a bus from my home.

Up to _____ kilometers by car from my home.

In choosing a location for the Aboriginal Focus School, it is important for us to know the part of the city in which you live. Please provide us with your postal code: _____

Any other comments, questions, concerns? Please let us know.

If you would like to receive information as the planning proceeds, please include your name and email address or a mailing address here:

Responses to Aboriginal Focus School Parent/Guardian Survey – March 2, 2012

As of March 2nd we have had 304 families respond (excluding duplicates).

This includes both hard copies returned to the VSB and those completed on-line.

- 59 families said yes, 37 Aboriginal and 22 Non Aboriginal
- 96 families said maybe, 31 Aboriginal and 65 Non Aboriginal
- 146 families said no, 11 Aboriginal and 135 Non Aboriginal
- 3 families were undecided, 1 Aboriginal and 2 Non Aboriginal

“Yes” comments spoke to an appreciation of:

Aboriginal culture, values, traditions, lineage, pride and self-esteem, identity, roots, holistic approach and broader horizons and more accurate history, Aboriginal governance, commitment to Aboriginal students, environmental focus, outdoor education, Aboriginal peer to peer relationship opportunities,

“Maybe” comments spoke to questions such as:

what benefits would there be, if French instruction would be provided, what assessment model/measures would be used, if curricula would be Provincially based, would special needs be addressed, would there be Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal staff, if it would have an alternate time table, if it facilitated entrance to post-secondary institutions, If there were going to be more AEEW's, if it was safe, if it would start at Kindergarten, if it would start at Grade 8, if it had small classes, if it taught a FN language, if it was not another alternative program, if it allowed parent involvement, if it offered breakfast and lunch programs, if it had a strong staff and....if it were close by.

“No” comments spoke to:

not enough info on such items as curricula, timetabling, and core values etc., it being a form of segregation, it's a great idea but “not for my child”, it being too limiting and not multicultural, the fact that their children loved their present school, that it would need to focus on world-wide Aboriginals (i.e. South American), that it's not practical, that a FN language is like Greek or Latin, that it is too expensive, that they were fearful of their children's safety, and....that all schools should have an Aboriginal focus.

Numbers and Grades:

“Yes” respondents indicated that a total of 81 students (56 Aboriginal/25 Non Aboriginal) would attend:

➤ “Yes” Aboriginal Students by Grade:

3 Kindergartens
 5 Grade 1's
 10 Grade 2's
 9 Grade 3's
 8 Grade 4
 5 Grade 5's
 6 Grade 6
 3 Grade 7
 1 Grade 8
 4 Grade 9's
 2 Grade 10's
 0 Grade 11's
 0 Grade 12's

➤ “Yes” Non Aboriginal Students by Grade:

3 Kindergartens
 1 Grade 1
 5 Grade 2
 1 Grade 3
 4 Grade 4
 4 Grade 5's
 3 Grade 6's
 2 Grade 7's
 1 Grade 8
 0 Grade 9's
 1 Grade 10
 0 Grade 11's
 0 Grade 12's

“Maybe” respondents indicated that a total of 130 students (48 Aboriginal/ 82 Non Aboriginal) may attend:

➤ “Maybe” Aboriginal Students by Grade:

9 kindergartens
 2 Grade 1's
 11 Grade 2's
 7 Grade 3's
 4 Grade 4's
 2 Grade 5's
 2 Grade 6
 3 Grade 7
 1 Grade 8
 1 Grade 9's
 1 Grade 10
 3 Grade 11's
 2 Grade 12's

➤ "Maybe" Non Aboriginal Students by Grade:

11 Kindergartens
19 Grade 1's
12 Grade 2's
6 Grade 3's
11 Grade 4's
5 Grade 5's
7 Grade 6's
3 Grade 7's
5 Grade 8's
2 Grade 9's
0 Grade 10's
1 Grade 11's
0 Grade 12's

Parent/Guardian Survey

Further Analysis

Of the 304 families responding:

- 59 or 20% of families indicated yes – they would send their children to the Aboriginal Focus school
 - Of these, 62% were Aboriginal families and 37% were non-Aboriginal families
- 96 or 31% said maybe
 - Of these 32% were Aboriginal families and 67% were non-Aboriginal families

Of the Aboriginal families who said yes, 56 children in total were in grades as follows:

- 27 or **48%** were in grades kindergarten through grade 3
- 22 or **39%** were in grades 4 through 7
- 7 or **12%** were in grades 8 through 12

Of the Aboriginal families who said maybe, 48 children in total were in grades as follows:

- 29 or **60%** were in grades kindergarten through grade 3
- 11 or **23%** were in grades 4 through 7
- 8 or **17%** were in grades 8 through 12

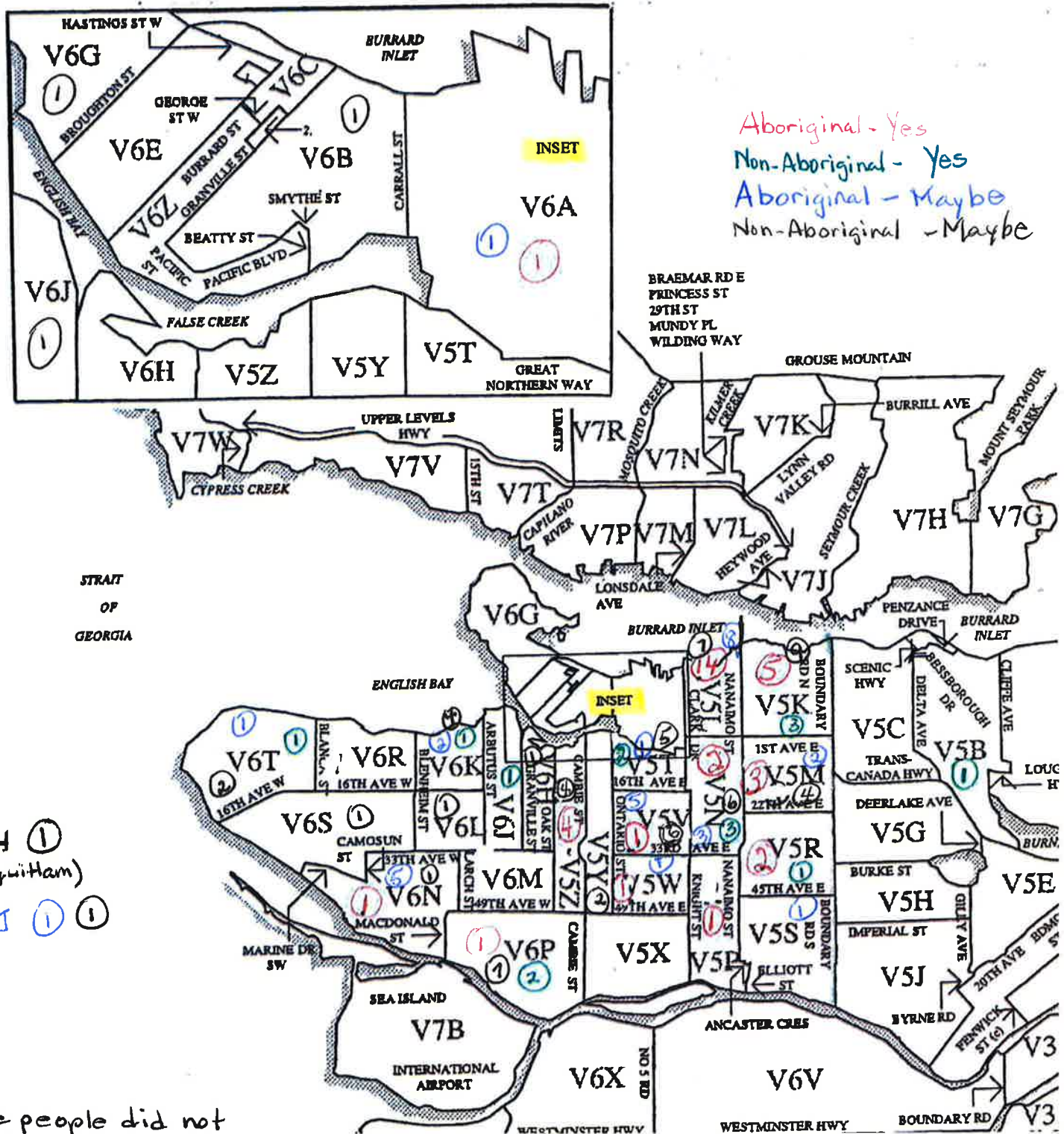
Of the Non-Aboriginal Families who said yes, 25 children in total were in grades as follows:

- 10 or **40%** were in grades kindergarten through grade 3
- 13 or **52%** were in grades 4 through 7
- 2 or **8%** were in grades 8 through 12

Of the Non-Aboriginal Families who said maybe 82 children in total were in grades as follows:

- 38 or **46%** were in grades kindergarten through grade 3
- 26 or **31%** were in grades 4 through 7
- 8 or **10%** were in grades 8 through 12

Parent/Guardian Survey – Where Respondents who Said They Would Send Children to the Aboriginal Focus School Live



- * Some people did not include postal codes

*² The additional late 74 surveys are not included, but do not change overall patterns

Report on the Service Agency Survey

Feb. 29, 2012

The survey was conducted during the month of February with 44 service agencies. The survey was conducted in order to find out if these agencies wanted to partner with the Vancouver School Board in delivering services to families and children involved with the Aboriginal Focus School.

Most of the agencies interviewed were physically located on the east side of Vancouver or near the downtown east side. Although a site has not been chosen for the Aboriginal Focus School it will likely be on the east side of Vancouver where the majority of Aboriginal families live.

The survey consisted of five questions: short description of focus of the agency; area of program delivery; whether they were willing and able to partner with VSB; if so, what kinds of services could they deliver; could they deliver services at the school site and if so, how much space would they need to deliver service. There was also an "Other Comments" section.

The category options of programs that the agencies delivered were as follows:

Addictions, Arts, Advocacy, Child Welfare, Children, Community Development, Culture, Downtown Eastside, Education, Elders, Employment, Families, Family Violence, Healing, Health, Housing, Justice, Men, Mental Health, Political, Sports/Rec, Volunteering, Women and Youth.

A common question from the agencies was whether a site/location had been chosen and what grades were being considered. These questions affected how they answered the questions because some groups dealt only with babies or only with adults. Similarly, if they were close to the school this would affect their answer because they did not know where the school would be located. Such was the case with Britannia Community Centre who said they did not want to offer services in another centre's catchment area.

The general nature of the categories allowed many groups to define that they worked in a particular area even though this was not the primary focus of their organization. Other groups were in the process of evolving into community development such as Lu'ma Housing now getting into Addictions support work in addition to their meeting Aboriginal housing needs.

Some groups fell under all the categories or did not fall under any of the categories of service listed. The latter include media outlets: First Nations Drum, CFRO Co-op Radio and Redwire Youth Magazine. To capture their input a category called Media was created.

Another category added was Training to capture the services provided by the BC Council for Families and Chee Mamuk Aboriginal Program (STI/HIV). These groups only provide professional training for people who work with parents and families.

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The last three questions, the most useful to consider for planning wrap-around services to the Aboriginal Focus School were: 1) whether the agency is willing and able to partner with VSB and provide services to the Aboriginal Focus School; 2) if the answer was 'Yes' what kind of services were being offered and 3) how much space would be required for the delivery of that service.

Of the forty-four groups who were offered a chance to do the phone survey nearly all of them responded with the exception of 7 groups:

The following are the results of the survey: (agencies are listed separately)

Agencies willing and able to provide services to families and children at the school: 32

Agencies not willing or able to provide services to families & children of the AFS: 5

Agencies that did not respond to either the email sent or returned phone calls: 7

Kinds of services that agencies offered to deliver to parents or children: (broken down into two parts: workshops and program delivery.)

Workshop delivery would need a classroom and program delivery would need a confidential office.

Workshops: 22 agencies.

Kinds of workshops: preventative behavior, healthy food choices, learning to garden, medicine gathering, role of justice system, cultural and historical information, Metis history, caregiver information, FAS information, art, video making, understanding residential school effects, diabetes prevention, safe sex, HIV information, anti-bullying, how to spot a predator, signs of child abuse and preservation of families.

Some groups can put on more than one workshop and some only one hence the discrepancy in number of groups and workshops.

Program delivery: 10 agencies need a confidential office for counseling or referral work:

Program delivery that required an office, classroom, gymnasium or located at the agency's office or field camps) fell under the following categories:

Physical Health related: immunization/inoculation/flu shot clinics on as-need basis, health practices counselling, healthy dieting-healthy eating counseling, emergency access to food bank and emergency housing.

Recreation/sport: pre-teen gymnastic program that could also be used as curriculum, bringing cultural dance groups to the school, canoe cultural journey.

Preventative Behaviour Counselling: suicide prevention, safe sex, HIV, family violence, women seeking emergency housing, children in care, abused children.

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Education Support: recruiting adult students as volunteer tutors, reading and homework clubs, after school programs, credit program for Gr. 11 & 12, child care services, Strongstart, FAS awareness, and presentations at job fairs.

Three groups offered programs off-school sites: Circle of Eagles Lodge for youth canoe trip; Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Society offering youth summer camps and CFRO Co-op Radio offering radio skills training at their station. Warriors Against Violence also offer youth camps but their funding is not secure and were not sure when they would next offer a camp.

*One group would need a classroom on an on-going basis is Cedar Cottage Neighborhood which is offering Child Care services and Strongstart.

FN Health Institute, UBC offered workshops in gardening and medicines at UBC gardens.

Other Comments section:

Of the 32 groups five groups offered best wishes for the success of the school and were very excited to be asked to participate.

Other comments from three groups were that it was difficult to offer services without knowing where the school was located or what grades would be entertained. (Britannia Community Centre, UBC Aboriginal Centre for Health Research and Redwire Native Youth Media) Despite not knowing the location of the proposed school all three agencies offered workshops and program delivery.

Redwire Media is transitioning from federal funds to volunteer funding and although they offered workshops in art, social media and video development found it difficult to propose services unless they knew the grades offered. Due to their funding situation they would offer workshops on a case specific basis.

A number of groups already collaborate with VSB on a range of programs such as: handing out post-secondary scholarships for Gr. 11 and 12, workshops in preventative addictive behavior, pre-natal program referral from school nurses, outreach reading clubs, Big Sister referral from schools and preventative behavior education tool for parents.

One group, Vi Fineday Family Shelter did not want to concern itself specifically with Aboriginal parents or children stating its emergency housing services were open to everyone from around the world.

Another group, YWCA Crabtree Corner already work closely with women and families in the DTES. Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services believe they already work with VSB through the referrals they get from schools now.

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Another group, First Nations Legal Studies offers legal services to Aboriginal people in the Gastown area.

Two groups hoped the school would offer native language training.

Another group wanted to offer workshops on which jobs were in demand but did not want to entice the kids into leaving school early. (waiting for grade selection).

Finally, some groups wanted to be involved and did offer workshops but were hesitant without knowing the location of the school. These groups included Britannia Community Centre and Cedar Cottage Neighborhood House. They do not want to offer services that may already be delivered by another community centre.

There is tremendous interest in the school and many of the groups expressed appreciation about being asked to partner with VSB to provide services to families and children of the Aboriginal Focus School.

Agencies expressing interest in collaboration:

Aboriginal Front Door Society:

ACCESS

Britannia Community Services Centre

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

Cedar Cottage Neighborhood

Circle of Eagle Lodge Society

CFRO Vancouver Co-op Radio 102.7 FM

Chee Mamuk Aboriginal Program STI/HIV

Circle of Eagles Lodge Society

Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents

First Nations House of Learning

Healing Our Spirit, BC HIV/AIDS Society

Hey-Way' Noqu' Healing Circle

Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association

Institute for Aboriginal Health, UBC

Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Assoct'n

Lu'ma Native Housing Society

Native Courtworkers & Counselling, BC

Native Education College

Nisga'a Ts'amiks Vancouver Society

Pacific Assoct'n of First Nation Women

Redwire Native Youth Media Society

Vcr. Aboriginal Child & Family Services

Vcr. Aboriginal Community Policing Centre

Vcr. Metis Community Association

Vcr. Metis Cultural Society

Warriors Against Violence Society

Aboriginal Front Door Society

Aboriginal Mother Centre Society

Britannia Community Centre

Healing Our Spirit, BC HIV AIDS Society

Helping Spirit Lodge Society

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Warriors Against Violence Society
Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services
Vancouver Native Health Society
Redwire Native Youth Media Society
Warriors against Violence Society
Urban Native Youth Association
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society
SFU, Faculty of Education
UBC, Faculty of Education
Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council