

Learning Knowing Sharing



Celebrating
Successes
in K-12



Aboriginal
Education
in
British Columbia



Jo-ann Archibald
Q'um Q'um Xiem
& Jan Hare

Book Review

by **Amy Parent**
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As a professor teaching in Indigenous education, I am often met with questions by educators about “what constitutes successful Aboriginal pedagogical practices?”, “how can systemic transformation for Aboriginal education happen?” and “what are successful curricular exemplars for Indigenizing the curriculum?” Jo-ann Archibald (Q’um Q’um Xiem) and Jan Hare’s new book *“Learning, sharing knowing: Celebrating Successes in K-12 Education in British Columbia* provides answers to these questions and is a much-needed resource educators, academics, school districts, and professional organizations who want to ensure that Aboriginal ways of knowing are meaningfully integrated into programs, services, curriculum, pedagogies of K-12 schooling (12).

Archibald and Hare’s new book provides thoroughly researched teaching exemplars and stories of success in K-12 Aboriginal education in Canada. The BC Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association worked in partnership with the University of British Columbia’s Faculty of Education’s Indigenous Education Institute and the authors (Archibald and Hare), who are the former and current Associate Dean of Indigenous Education to create this publication.

The authors’ carry out the book’s goal by celebrating recent developments in B.C. Aboriginal education by sharing a unique range of stories that illustrate ‘how’ educators, academics, schools, districts, universities, and Aboriginal organizations are creating change and demonstrating innovative transformation in K-12 education (viii). The editors and contributing authors in this book share 18 stories of Aboriginal success that are located in the diverse and rich context of Aboriginal education in British Columbia. Archibald and Hare provide a strong introduction by detailing significant local, provincial, and national policy directives that historically and contemporarily guide Indigenous education in B.C. and Canada. Respectful consideration is given to all regions of B.C. to ensure diversity including: rural, urban, public, First Nation Schools, research and professional networks, and local province wide settings are represented in the book’s stories. The authors’ thoughtfully provide background information to those new to Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing by detailing epistemological and ontological connections to the book’s four themes: transformational change, relationships, learning processes, and identity.

The book’s success stories are written by educators, administrators, faculty and graduate students, and advocates and cover a diverse range of topics to include: Aboriginal enhancement agreements, Indigenous language revitalization, curriculum and program development, technology, Elders, Aboriginal community and family engagement, policy development and leadership (vi). Each chapter (i.e. story)

*Learning knowing sharing:
Celebrating successes in K-12
Aboriginal education
in British Columbia*
by Jo-ann Archibald Q’um
Q’um Xiem and Jan Hare

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addresses the following questions: “What is working well? How do you know? What contributes to success? How have you overcome challenges? What is the impact of your project? What messages do you have for educators, parents, schools, professional associations, government, or teacher education programs? (vi)”

However, the author’s do not shy away from the challenges that occur in current educational settings that create barriers to learning and teaching Aboriginal education. A significant asset to the book is that most stories begin with an honest appraisal of what has not worked in the past. This honest appraisal provides the reader with a level of authenticity and encouragement to see how the various contributors to this volume have courageously moved through these challenges to achieve success. Archibald and Hare emphasize that it requires “commitment, effort and cooperation” needed to make changes in order to ‘do’ Aboriginal education differently and create transformational change for all learners (xiii).

The book also provides a nice balance between Eurocentric and Indigenous understandings of success. Most chapters provide district and B.C. ministry data for student achievement primarily through student graduate rates. However, it also clear that success is not focused solely on conventional Eurocentric markers of success (ie: external factors that emphasize individual academic achievement, merit, competition, and superiority). Rather, the concept is broadened within Indigenous epistemological and ontological understandings to ensure that a wholistic understanding of success is woven through its stories. A wholistic understanding of success ensures that a student’s physical, intellec-

tual, emotional, and spiritual needs are met by their schooling and life experiences (Pidgeon, 2008). The concept also includes strong interconnections to a student’s family and community through their schooling and life experiences. Wholistic success for Aboriginal learners and communities can be more important than externally-defined concepts of success. Further, wholistic wellbeing is measured throughout the course of a person’s life. Given, the centrality of the concept of wholistic success that shines through in numerous stories throughout the book, it may have been helpful to include this definition in the introduction of the book. However, the rich examples provided in the book’s stories detail significant clues for the reader to follow, so that they can learn more about wholistic success.

Over spring term, I used *Learning knowing sharing: Celebrating successes in K-12 Aboriginal education in British Columbia* as a course book for *Education 311: Introduction to Indigenous Education, Culture and Language* at Simon Fraser University. The course is comprised of a high number of pre-service educators who are at the end of the Professional Development Program. I invited the students in the course to share their reflections about the book. Here is a highlight of some of their reflections on the ways that they will incorporate some of the teaching exemplars in the book into their future practice:

“In chapter 12, Strawberry Fields Forever: Planting seeds, growing poets, I began to notice how the author Sandra Lynxleg and the organizer of the Elder Project, Wendy Morton viewed the success of the project from an Indigenous wholistic perspective (pp. 155-171). Nowhere in the chapter did it speak of the students’ success in terms of grades or individual curricular

growth; instead it spoke of the relationship and mutual respect that developed between the Elders and the students. It spoke of the increased interest and engagement of the students in being part of a school project and of their increased interest and enjoyment in working with the community. Success was spoken about in terms of how the Elder Project books were received within the community and how the project grew as more community members became involved. I now am beginning to understand success in a different way, as the success of the whole individual. This new understanding is something I will bring with me into my teaching practice. Within my classroom, I would like to begin to look at the whole of my students when I think of their success. I no longer believe that it is best practice to singularly consider students academic abilities when thinking of their success. I believe it is important to consider a student’s whole self, their well-being, their growth and development, and their strengths and needs. As for my teaching practice, I plan on discovering and playing with the various ways I can incorporate an Indigenous view of success into my practice, as well as in my personal academic career. This new outlook on success has rejuvenated me with the idea that there is more to life than the Western views of success” (Nicole Pacquan).


“I really enjoyed reading Chapter 7 Sustaining living and learning culturally responsive pedagogy by Cynthia Nicole, and Joanne Yovanovich (pp. 83-100). This story (chapter) put the emphasis of place on Haida Gwaii, Haida teachings, Haida culture, and Haida traditions. The story did not try to tell the story of Indigenous peoples everywhere and it was my favorite read of the semester due to the specific and authentic connections it portrayed. Through this chapter I gained a realization that this is exactly the connection I need to strive towards achieving in my classroom if I am to bring authentic Indig-
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unanticipated challenges that could have been ameliorated by a more thoughtful approach to the restoration of previous contractual terms.

The BCPVPA Board of Directors is attentive to both the positive and negative impacts of the MoA. President Kevin Reimer has been a tireless advocate for members in

working to ameliorate the negatives. Our Association works closely with other partner groups and with the Ministry of Education to ensure that decisions, policies, and resources are informed by the realities of the workplace.

Most of the challenges arising from the court decision and the

MoA will be short-lived, while the benefits will be enduring. Other challenges, such as ensuring that schools house an adequate child care system and that principals and vice-principals have access to non-enrolling positions, require long-term strategies and solutions. 


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enous perspectives that connect with my students. Through such methods I also feel the First Peoples Principles of learning come into context far more naturally, the one that stuck out to me the most was the connection to land and place; I realized recognizing the individual nations that make up this bigger picture inherently has a land and place context, but when considering Indigenous education as a whole, say across Canada, how can one relate to a land that spans the distance of a continent. This connection will be a key for me moving forwards, when considering if what I plan to teach is meaningful, I will try to reflect if it specifically connects to a land, and a place, and if it does not re-consider the authenticity of the material (Christoph Schuab)”

“Chapter 8 Supporting Aboriginal students’ transition to high school through the transition program. One of the main messages that I have gained from reading Nicole Hamel’s story (chapter) is the importance of “creating a sense of belonging and enhancing student-teacher relationships” (pg. 101). In my new position I will be teaching grade 12 students. I feel that I have a responsibility to support my students through the transition to postsecondary school. I hope to take some of these important insights that I have learned and apply them in my practice. I am inspired to start a buddy program where high school students work with younger students. I envision this program incorporating different activities, such as having the older students share projects they have completed or working together to complete an art piece, such as a mural. I hope that through extra curricular programs such as this idea, I will be able to better support students transition between elementary and high school and ensure equal opportunities for all students to succeed. Furthermore, to support my high school students’ transition to after secondary school, I hope to get to know what their goals may be and help support them to accomplish these goals (Brianna Visser).”

However, the book need not apply to only new teachers. The authors were thoughtful to include questions in their introduction to go alongside the major themes in the book; with the intent of these questions to serve as guides for administrators, faculty, and graduate stu-

dents’ professional development (xiii). In particular, the book will be of great assistance to in-service teachers who are currently trying to ensure that the new BC K-12 curriculum is realized in their practice. It’s accessible writing style offers practical tips and suggestions to help ease anxiety around Indigenizing the curriculum and will be a much sought after book for district professional development days and inquiry-based professional learning circles.

My hands are held high to Dr. Archibald and Dr. Hare for providing a much needed resource in Indigenous education. 

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