

# Equity in Action

Examining the equity gaps and priorities  
that impact Indigenous learners  
in the Comox Valley

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**Comox Valley Schools**

A Community of Learners

INNOVATIVE • INQUISITIVE • INCLUSIVE



# Equity In Action Final Report

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## School District No. 71 (Comox Valley)

Equity for Indigenous Learners

Prepared by: Dr. Gerald Morton & Dr. Joe Heslip

June 2026

Prepared for: Community Led District Equity Scanning Team



## Preface

### Land Acknowledgment

Land acknowledgements may be formalized or personalized. As the district leader responsible for implementing the Equity Scan, I have chosen to begin this report with a personalized land acknowledgement that embraces an Indigenous worldview respecting multiple perspectives, histories, and ways of knowing. Honouring ALL local First Nations members' perspective means that there is currently no *singular* way to acknowledge the territory that our schools operate on. Therefore, I would like to acknowledge that this Equity Scan was conducted on the unceded ancestral territory of the Pentlatch, E'ik'w'sən, Sahtlout, and Sasitla Peoples. I respectfully acknowledge the territory of K'ómoks First Nation and honour our responsibilities and reciprocal relationship with KFN Chief and Council as we serve K'ómoks students. The way that we acknowledge territory on this Land may change as we learn more, and I will endeavour to listen carefully and walk gently moving forward.

### Acknowledgment of the Equity Scan Committee

This work would not have been possible without the Community Led Equity Scanning Team (CLEST). The CLEST is an all Indigenous group consisting of individuals with First Nations, Inuit and Métis heritage. Their guidance, trust, and commitment to Indigenous students shaped every stage of this engagement.

[Hereditary Chief Rob Everson, Hereditary Chief Trevor Hardy, Hereditary Chief Wedlidi Speck, KFN Elected Councillor Candace Newman, KFN Elected Counsellor Susan Savoie, Inuit rep, Letitia Pokiak, MIKI'SIW Metis Elder Colleen Devlin, MIKI'SIW Metis rep Heather Grealey, (alternate), IEC rep Trish McPhail, IEC rep Keisha Everson, KFN Elder Fernanda Pare, Community Elder Evelyn Voyageur, Community Elder Edna Leask, (alternate) Former KFN student rep Mahatta Price, Current Indigenous student reps Greg Hanson, Sophia Martin, CUPE rep Cheryl Graham, Trustee Susan Leslie, CDTA rep Lynn Swift, PVPA rep Lelaina Jules, PVPA rep Jeannine Lindsay, Exempt staff rep Chettie Macdonald, BCSSA rep Joe Heslip] – Thank you to Ilana Blunt for data support.

We raise our hands in gratitude and respect for their time, brilliance, thoughtful consideration and care.



Community Led Equity Scanning Team

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# 1. Executive Summary

Despite having trusted and caring adults, engaged communities, and committed staff, Indigenous students and community lack confidence that schools will take effective, accountable action when bias and inconsistency are reported. This report documents students' equity concerns, inequitable experiences and outcomes, the district's response gaps and their underlying causes, and proposes seven action priorities to close them.

At a Glance	Value
Students surveyed	560 of 1,822+ (328 elementary; 232 secondary)
Teachers surveyed	531 of 694 (based on Q2 EDAS, July 1, 2025 – Dec 31, 2025)
CUPE members surveyed	188 of ~639
Schools (Qualitative data)	11 of 22
Schools (Quantitative data)	22
District Programs	Indigenous Ed, Inclusive Ed, Centralized Staff,
Trustees / District Leadership	Anonymized
Comments from Quantitative and Qualitative Data	54,000+
Major Findings (Themes)	8 identified
Action priorities	7 identified



St'iXim / Spilus at Pentlatch (Comox) Lake

## 2. Background & Context

### 2.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation Project Overview

This report presents the findings of a data analysis and interpretation contract awarded to Dr. Gerald Morton by School District No. 71. The work drew on quantitative surveys from Indigenous students, teachers, CUPE members, principals, trustees, and district leadership, qualitative coding of facilitated discussion notes from 11 schools, and ministry attendance and school completion data. Administered by Dr. Joe Heslip, the contract ran December 20, 2025 through May 29, 2026. *\*Direct quotes articulated in this report are verbatim (unless edited to ensure anonymity). No quotes are attributable to Artificial Intelligence.*

Project Detail	
Contractor	Dr. Gerald Morton
Client	School District No. 71, Comox Valley
Contract period	December 20, 2025 – May 29, 2026
Administered by	Dr. Joe Heslip

### 2.2 Policy Context

[The calls to provide Equity for Indigenous Learners is supported through local, provincial, national and international agreements and legislation]

#### Local Education Agreement

K'ómoks, pursuant to its inherent jurisdiction over the education of its children, has the authority and responsibility for the education of K'ómoks Students and desires to ensure its students all have access to, and receive, quality education that is respectful and reflective of their unique culture and history; Principals, teachers and other staff in BC Public Schools have a critical role to play in the provision of quality education programs and services for K'ómoks Students and in the implementation and effectiveness of the LEAs they enter into.

(Source: Local Education Agreement, 2022)

#### Enhancement Agreement

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA) is designed to enhance the educational success of Aboriginal students. It is a working agreement between our school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education designed to improve Aboriginal student success. The AEEA also establishes a collaborative partnership between Aboriginal communities and school districts that involves governance, shared decision making and specific goal setting to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students. AEEAs highlight the importance of academic performance and stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional culture to Aboriginal student development and success. Fundamental to AEEAs is the requirement that school districts provide strong programs on the culture of local First Nations' Peoples on whose traditional territories the districts are located.

(Source: Enhancement Agreement, 2014)

### **Distinctions Based Approach**

The Province is required to take a distinctions-based approach in all of its relations with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. This requirement has a legal foundation in the Constitution Act, 1982; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration); the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act); treaties; as well as the respective and distinct laws, legal systems, and systems of governance of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. The Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed that section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982 includes a recognition of the “distinctive societies” of Indigenous Peoples, with “their own practices, traditions, and cultures.” First Nations and Inuit are “distinctive societies” that pre-existed the arrival of Europeans, as sovereigns over their territories; and, Métis are “distinctive peoples who, in addition to their mixed ancestry, developed their own customs, way of life, and recognizable group identity separate from their [First Nations] or Inuit and European forebears.

(Source: Government of British Columbia, 2023)

### **B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) in 2007. This Act includes 46 articles covering all facets of human rights of Indigenous Peoples including: culture, identity, religion, language, health, education and community. In November 2019, the provincial government unanimously passed legislation to implement the UN Declaration, which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission affirms as the framework for reconciliation. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act articulates a process to align B.C.’s laws with the UN Declaration. The Act mandates the province to ensure laws are in alignment with the UN Declaration. This requires the creation and maintenance of an action plan to achieve this work over time, thereby providing transparency and accountability.

(Source: Government of British Columbia, 2019)

### **Professional Standards for BC Educators, Standard 9**

In British Columbia, standard 9 came into effect in 2019. This standard requires educators to respectfully embed Indigenous ways of knowing and being into their pedagogy. “Educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values and practices to facilitate change. Educators value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing and being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Educators understand the power of focusing on connectedness and relationships to oneself, family, community and the natural world. Educators integrate First Nations, Inuit and Métis worldviews and perspectives into learning environments.

(Source: Government of British Columbia, 2019)

## 2.3 Decision Makers

[CLEST Rightsholders have authority over the scope, objectives and processes of the Equity Scan. District Leadership are responsible for acting on prioritized recommendations]

The Equity Scanning framework, data analysis, and interpretation has uncovered and highlighted barriers for Indigenous learners. This report articulates themes and includes recommendations of targeted strategies. Responsibility rests with CLEST Rightsholders to prioritize themes to address inequities and provide direction and recommendations to district leadership.



Community Led Equity Scanning Team

## 3. Methodology

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### 3.1 Data Sources

- 328 Indigenous elementary students surveyed (Quantitative)
- 232 Indigenous secondary students surveyed (Quantitative)
- 11 schools; facilitated staff discussion notes coded (Qualitative)
- 13 schools; facilitated K-12 student discussion notes coded (Qualitative)
- 22 schools; facilitated staff and student surveys
- Indigenous Education, Inclusive Education, centralized staff (Quantitative/qualitative)
- IEC (Qualitative)
- HAWD Report, MOECC, Power BI attendance, Suspension data (Quantitative)
- Community Engagement: KFN, MIKĪ'SIW, Wachiy & Indigenous Community (Qualitative)
- CUPE staff, (Quantitative & Qualitative)
- Indigenous Support Worker Circle (Qualitative)
- CDTA staff, (Quantitative & Qualitative)
- Trustees, (Quantitative & Qualitative)
- District leadership (Quantitative & Qualitative)
- Community Led Equity Scanning Team Circles x 7 (Qualitative)
- PVP (Quantitative & Qualitative)

## 3.2 Protocols Observed

[Prior to the creation of the CLEST, senior leadership sought to engage respectfully with Hereditary leadership and elected KFN Chief and Council members]

September - November, 2024, in person visits, phone calls, and/or written information with gifts of blankets shared with Hereditary leaders (Alan Mitchell, Cory Frank, Kerry Frank, Bruce Billie, Rob Everson, Trevor Hardy, Wedlidi Speck) and K'ómoks First Nation Elected Chief (Ken Price) and Councillor (Coral MacKay). *\*Appendix 1A*

CLEST circles begin with welcome or acknowledgement of territory and grounding with all participants.

CLEST circles end with Cedar Brushing from local knowledge holders to release negative feelings.

## 3.3 Communications

[IEC, KFN, MIKI'SIW, BOE, DPAC, CUPE, CDTA, PVPA, MOECC]

During the fall of 2024, district leadership held individual meetings and presentations with Rightsholders and partner groups to initiate and maintain reciprocal relationships, answer questions, dispel myths, gain insights from previous Equity Scan, provide draft messaging to executives to share with members, ensuring alignment with the purpose of the work. Share draft workplan *\*Appendix 1B*

October 2024 BOE meeting, associate superintendent shared 8 key themes from 5 years of Equity Scanning across the Province *\*Appendix 1C*

## 3.4 CLEST Planning and Implementation of Scan

[Meeting structure, timeline, planning, deliverables]

**January 10, 2025** - Introduction to the Equity Scan Process. Provincial themes, Draft Workplan, Video [Equity in Action: Moving Forward Together](#)

**February 21, 2025** - Create and review template survey (147 Questions) *\*Appendix 1D*

**April 11, 2025** - Finalize all survey questions for staff / student / community discussions. Finalize staff scanning process. Creation of School based equity scanning teams and materials. [School Based Equity Scanning Instructional Video](#), *Appendix 1E*

**June 13, 2025** - District update on PVP, CUPE, CDTA quantitative survey data (totalling 362 respondents) and qualitative inquiry circles. Initial data review through SD71 data analyst Ilana Blunt. Equity Scanning Circle Inquiry of the CLEST,

**October 17, 2025** - Complete Equity Scanning Circle Inquiry of the CLEST. Review and advise next steps of equity framework. Indigenous student scanning. [Resources for Equity Scanning Indigenous Students](#) Review suspension data and direct anonymous quotes from staff/community surveys. Videographer hired to document CLEST and the Equity Scan.

**December 12, 2025** - Filming of meeting for Equity video to be shared with the public. Online Survey Closed Dec 11. Review 5 community circle gatherings. CLEST directs staff to work with Gerald Morton for data analysis and interpretation. Data analysis begins.

**February 13, 2026** - Equity video screening and recommendations to final edit. Gerald shared initial themes, [emerging patterns and propositions](#) from the data.

**May 29, 2026** - Review draft final report. Review final [equity video](#).

**June 15, 2026** - CLEST provides direction regarding next steps of Equity Action Plan.

### 3.5 Analytical Approach

The analysis ran two streams. Quantitative: surveys from students, staff, and community groups were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Cross-tabulations identified patterns across respondent groups. Results were benchmarked against School District 71 and provincial averages. Qualitative: facilitated discussion notes from 11 schools and seven community circles were thematically coded. Themes emerged from the data, not from prior assumptions. Where both streams converge, confidence in a finding is higher. Divergence is noted in the text.

### 3.6 Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, voluntary participation introduces self-selection bias, meaning that participants with particularly strong views—either positive or negative—were more likely to respond. Second, the facilitated discussions may be subject to a social desirability effect, where participants moderate their responses in a group setting. Third, the qualitative themes are illustrative, not exhaustive; they capture only what was reported, not what may have been withheld. Finally, the assessment data used in Section 5 ("Being in School") includes only students who participated in the assessments, a limitation whose impact is discussed further in that section.



Kumugwe Big House

# Findings



## 4. Survey Findings

Eight findings. Each integrates quantitative evidence and voices from the field.

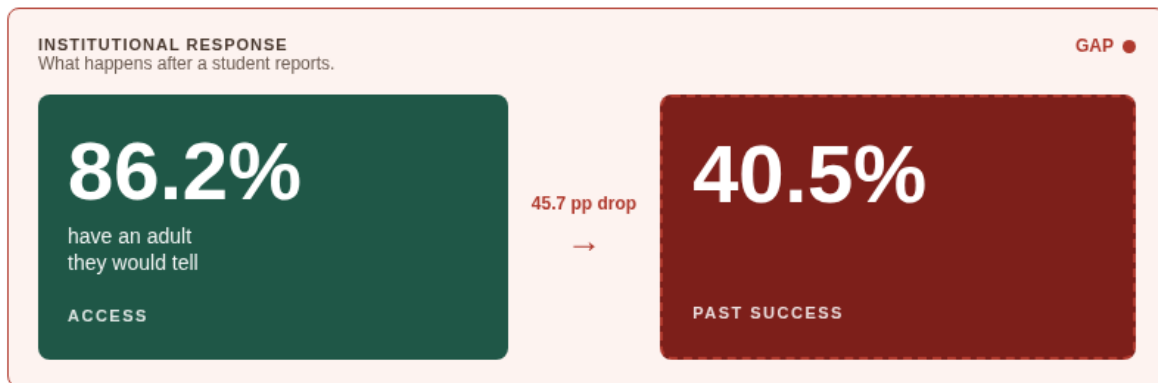
### Finding 1: The Reporting Trust Gap

86.2% of students have a trusted adult. Only 40.5% say past reports were acted on. Gap: 45.7 points.

## The Trust Gap

Where Indigenous students experience the system — and where the system fails them.

**Most students know who to tell. Far fewer believe it will make a difference.**



**The system has the people. It does not yet have the method.**

*Source: SD71 Indigenous student surveys, secondary level (n = 232).*

“I was bullied for 3 years straight and sometimes right in front of adults and they did nothing.”

— Indigenous Elementary Student, Survey

“My kid got harassed all the time at school. I’m not satisfied with how the school dealt with the racism my kid experienced.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“I have been a victim of racism, and I did not feel confident or comfortable to ask someone for help.”

— Indigenous Student, Discussion

“Teachers desperately want to do well by our vulnerable students. But we can only do so much when we ourselves are so vulnerable.”

— Teacher, Survey

“The school system is screwed up over dealing with racism...guess who gets in trouble?!”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“Things have gotten better, but 2 years ago, a teacher humiliated an Indigenous student in front of the class.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

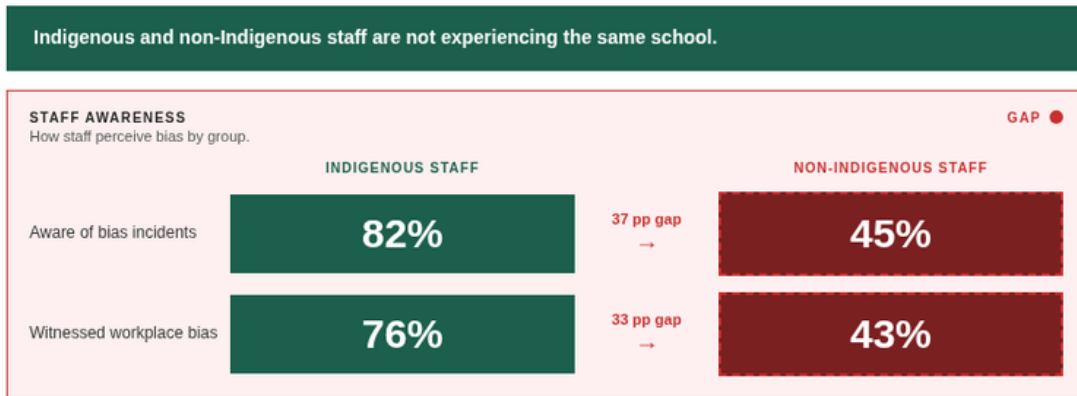
### **Notes & Reflections**

## Finding 2: The Adult Perception Gap

Indigenous **CUPE** staff: 82% aware of bias incidents. Non-Indigenous staff: 45%. Gap: 37 points. Workplace bias witnessed: 76% vs. 43% (+33 pp).

### The Perception Gap

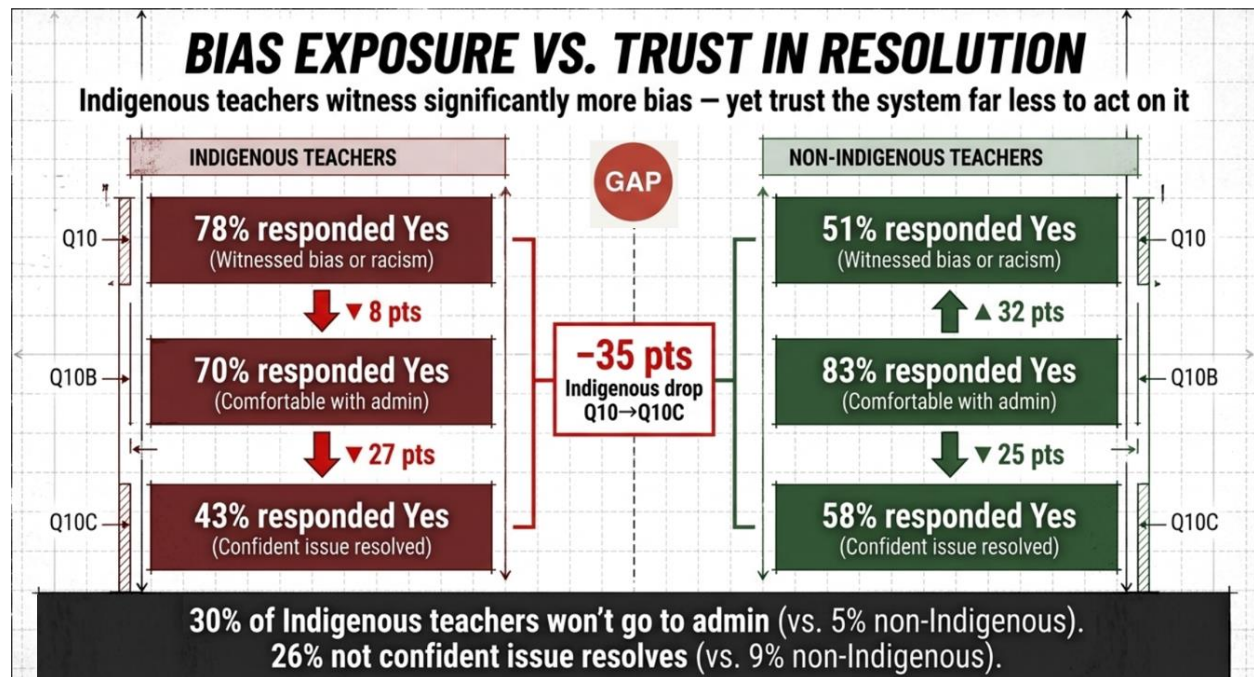
Where Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff experience school climate differently.



The school looks different depending on where you stand in it.

Source: SD71 staff surveys (n = TBC).

Indigenous **Teachers** report far higher exposure to bias and racism (78% vs. 51%). Their comfort with addressing it with admin is lower (Yes 70% vs. 83%). Only 43% of Indigenous teachers are confident an issue would be resolved appropriately, compared to 58% of non-Indigenous colleagues.



Structural Trust Gap

“We see racism in our school board and admin as they acknowledge that Indigenous students take less academic courses, and they expect less from us.”

— Indigenous Student, Discussion

“I know that there are teachers that are absolutely LIVID at having to complete this survey. They feel that they are post racial, unbiased, colourblind or whatever. Indigenous students will experience racism in the delivery of their classes.”

— Teacher, Survey

“Foundational knowledge is key. Cultural safety means looking at our biases and inviting everybody to come to the circle with open hearts.”

— Trustee, Discussion

“Is racism really that bad that we have to have a staff person hired for it?”

— Principal/Vice-Principal, Discussion

“I’ve never heard an indigenous student complain about bias or racism even though I’ve asked about it.”

— Teacher, Survey (Non-Indigenous)

“Several of my students have told me about the experience of being tokenized in their classroom. IE ‘You’re Indigenous, what do you think about fish farms’. Often well intentioned but not appropriate.”

— Teacher, Survey (Indigenous)

“I don’t think there is implicit bias or discrimination in this district. Every school has an indigenous support worker and a designated room.”

— CUPE, Survey (Non-Indigenous)

“I have asked: am I the only Indigenous person in this room? Stereotypes are widely used. We don’t always feel comfortable - and neither does the teacher. You don’t always have to be right. But you can always try.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“I haven’t really thought about it.”

— Teacher, Survey (Non-Indigenous)

*\*CDTA Indigenous vs. Indigenous data in Supplementary Reports 3, p. 54.*

**Notes & Reflections**

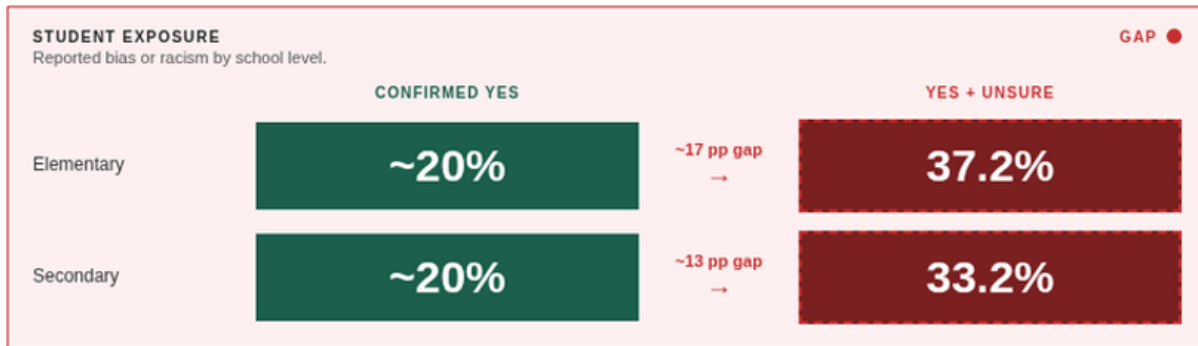
### Finding 3: Bias and Racism Exposure

~20% of students report direct experience of bias or racism, at both elementary and secondary levels. Yes + unsure: 37.2% (elementary), 33.2% (secondary).

## The Exposure Gap

How widely bias and racism touch Indigenous students at school.

**One in three students has experienced or may have experienced racism. One in five is certain.**



**Confirmed exposure is just the floor.**

Source: SD71 Indigenous student surveys (elementary n = 328; secondary n = 232).

“During school, someone said it was unfair that I was Indigenous and that they should bring back residential school.”

— Indigenous Elementary Student, Survey

“In class kids complain that I get everything I want because I’m Indigenous.”

— Indigenous Elementary Student, Survey

“I have been called a lot of slurs, got made fun of because I’m ‘lying’ about being Indigenous.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student, Survey

“In the Indigenous program you feel included, but in the mainstream classes you are treated differently, worse.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“I have heard teachers tell me that ‘Indigenous students learn differently, it’s so hard to get them to listen and follow’ — as if that were a defect of the students or their ethnicity.”

— CUPE Staff, Survey

“I have three children. Two are darker skinned and they get treated differently.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“My son was sent to the Indigenous room when he was disruptive - treated like a disability because he was Indigenous. My daughter was not treated like that. She doesn't look Indigenous.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“You are not really Indigenous, look at your skin color.”

— CUPE Staff, Survey

“I don't know if my kids will share their Indigenous identity at school.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

### **Notes & Reflections**

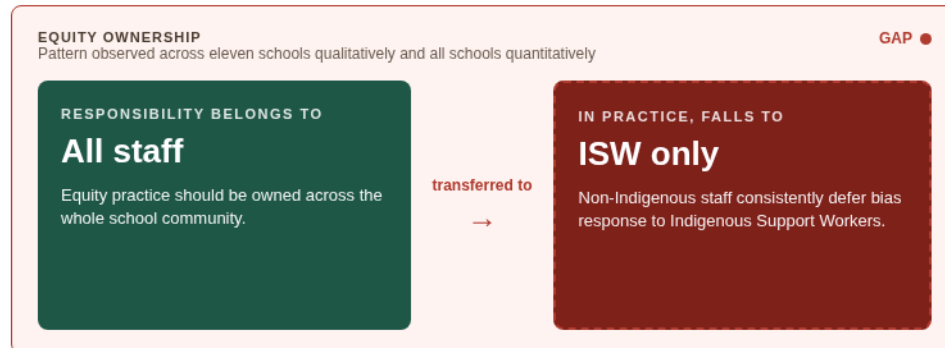
## Finding 4: Over-Reliance on Indigenous Support Workers

Qualitative finding across 11 schools + Quantitative survey results. Non-Indigenous staff consistently defer bias response to ISWs. Ownership of equity practice is not shared.

### The Delegation Gap

How responsibility for bias response gets distributed in schools.

Equity work is frequently offloaded to the indigenous support worker.



ISWs are being asked to carry what belongs to everyone.

Source: SD71 staff inquiry circles (11 schools) and all 22 schools quantitatively.

“My teacher talks badly about another student who asks for help from the ISW or counsellor, so I am scared to ask for help myself.”

— Indigenous Student, Discussion

“We have wonderful ISWs and great support — but is it enough? I also feel that some students go to the ISWs for academic support, but it can be difficult if that staff member is not able to help in that subject.”

— Teacher, Survey

“Our school-based team often does not invite or inform the ISWs about meetings regarding our white-presenting Indigenous students. We are often left out of these conversations.”

— CUPE Staff, Survey

“My kids find safety in the Indigenous education room, but many of our Indigenous kids never finish high school.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“I didn’t feel comfortable going to anyone but the ISW. It’s a hierarchy. One hundred percent. Thank goodness for the ISW - It made a huge difference.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“We need Indigenous support workers to sit with parents at parent teacher interviews. It can be scary there on your own.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

## **Notes & Reflections**

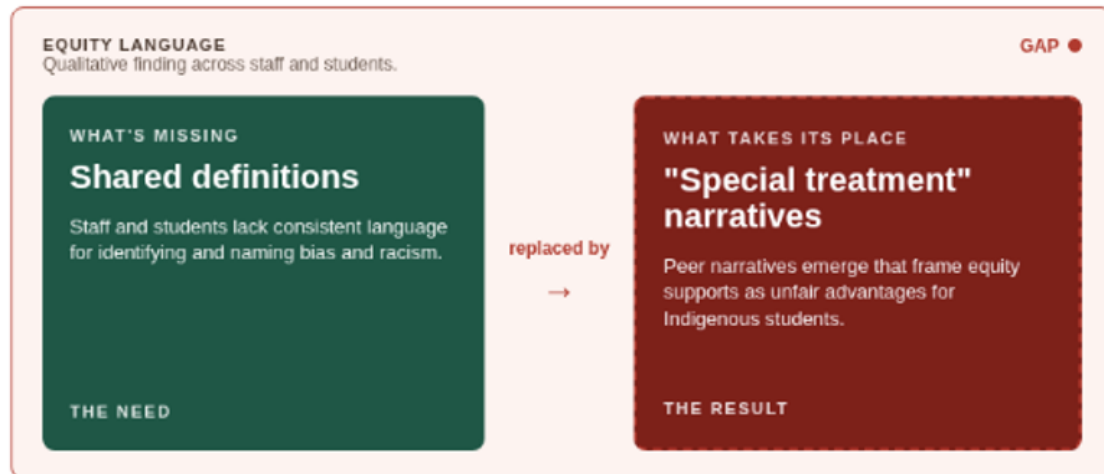
## Finding 5: No Shared Language for Equity

Staff and students lack consistent definitions of bias and racism. Peer narratives of ‘special treatment’ emerge where shared language is absent.

### The Language Gap

When equity has no shared definition, misunderstanding fills the space.

Without a shared language for racism, students fill the silence with "special treatment" narratives.



**Where equity has no name, resentment finds one.**

*Source: SD71 student and staff surveys and inquiry circles.*

“No, they don’t know a lot about me. They treat me like being punished for being myself.”

— Indigenous Student, Discussion

“I would just get bullied for being Indigenous and my friends always say it’s unfair that Indigenous people get everything they want — but it’s not like that.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student, Survey

“Hearing children having a discussion about Indigenous students getting to leave the classroom — that conversation felt racist to me. It was shocking.”

— Principal/Vice-Principal, Discussion

“There is a racism of low expectations. We are seen as not smart. This is why they put our kids in the workplace math instead of the foundations math. We see academic streaming of our kids.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“Referring to ISWs as sitting in a room and doing nothing, must be nice to have that job.”

— CUPE, Discussion

“The principal said Metis students won’t get culture from the ISW. The principal should see the gap. Different Nations, different territories - I understand that. But I want my child’s identity acknowledged.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“When we talk about culturally safe, we need that to be defined.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“It is beautiful when staff are curious about our kids and culture.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

## **Notes & Reflections**

## Finding 6: Curriculum Content Narrowness

Qualitative finding. Indigenous content and ways of knowing and being referenced primarily in relation to National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (*Orange Shirt Day*). Cross-curricular integration is rare.

# The Learning Gap

How Indigenous content is — and isn't — woven into school learning.

**Indigenous culture appears once a year. It belongs in every subject, every term.**



**A culture reduced to one day is not a curriculum.**

*Source: SD71 staff and student inquiry circles (11 schools).*

“I would like learning it more often than just on indigenous day.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student, Survey

“I have a fear of being disrespectful when teaching Indigenous content...I am not sure what mistakes I will make or how to fix them.”

— Teacher, Survey

“Indigenous content is not taken as seriously as other content. Indigenous content is not seen as important as other learning.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“Balancing the call to support my Indigenous students as judiciously as I can with all of the other demands of this profession...doing the best I can, when expectations of teachers are increasingly nebulous and unattainable.”

— Teacher, Survey

“More culture in schools should be normal - Metis studies, First Nations studies, Inuit studies. This is what everyone should be learning.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“We are Indigenous Peoples. We don’t fit in a box.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“avoid others from seeing it as a singled out area of learning that they, although incorrect, feel it is overdone.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student, Survey

“Instead of solely focusing on Comox First Nations, we should include other tribes. Indigenous people have such diversity in cultures — only focusing on one Nation is harmful to those whose culture isn’t celebrated.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student, Survey

“At this point, the realities of this scan seem to have been tokenized and dismissed by the admin introducing it. It was brought up as an inconvenience rather than an opportunity — that was shocking and disappointing.”

— Teacher, Survey

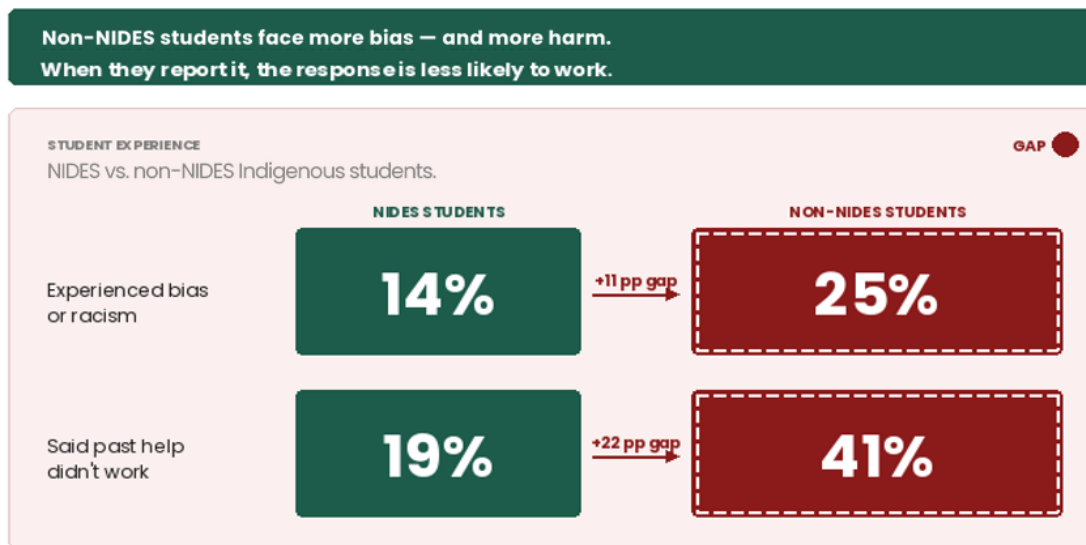
## **Notes & Reflections**

### Finding 7: NIDES and Non-NIDES Students: Where They Differ

Both groups share common ground. Teachers and ISWs are trusted. School experiences are broadly positive. The divergence is about harm and repair. Non-NIDES students face bias at nearly twice the rate. When they report it, repair is less likely to follow. Forty-one percent say past help didn't work. For NIDES students, that figure is 19 percent.

## Exposure and Institutional Response Gap

Where NIDES and non-NIDES students diverge most.



**The issue is not only what students experience. It is whether the response works.**

Source: SD71 Indigenous student surveys, secondary level (NIDES n = 94; non-NIDES n = 135).

“Real diversity doesn’t require constant nudging or never-ending conversations. Constantly mentioning and treating Indigenous peoples like sore thumbs is the literal root cause of the racism toward Indigenous peoples.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student (NIDES), Survey

“I have seen racism and bias towards other students go unmentioned.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student, Survey

“Other than a few micro-aggressions from some parents, the only discriminatory comments I have encountered during my time at work have been from other teachers.”

— Teacher, Survey

“I feel safe around my teachers, and I know the adults care for me.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student (Nides), Survey

“I am different.. how I feel during big emotional moments that sometimes I can’t erase out of my mind.”

— Indigenous Secondary Student, Survey

*For Full NIDES / Non-NIDES Report see Appendix 2 Supplementary Report*

## **Notes & Reflections**

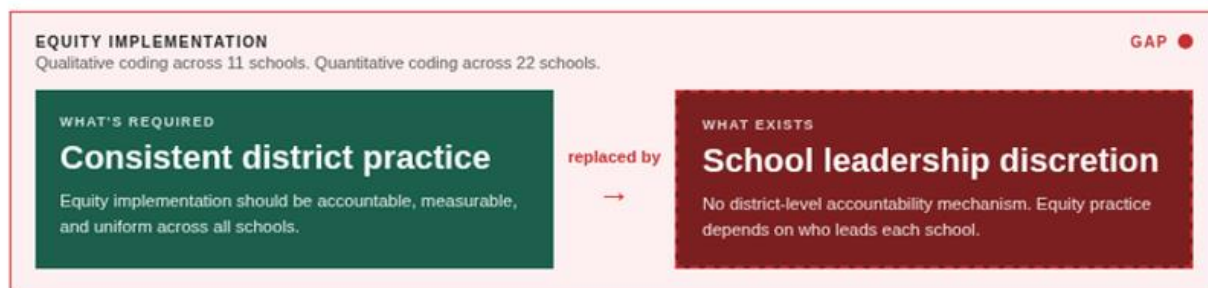
## Finding 8: Implementation Variance Across Schools

Quantitative coding across 11 schools and qualitative data from all 22 reveals uneven equity practice. No district-level accountability mechanism exists. Principal discretion and unique contexts within schools produces drift.

# The Accountability Gap

How equity practice varies when no one is measuring it.

**Which school a student attends should not determine whether they experience equity. Right now, it does.**



**Different schools, Different outcomes. That is not equity — it is luck.**

*Source: SD71 qualitative inquiry circles (11 schools). Quantitative coding across 22 schools.*

“No, nothing was done. It was reported to teacher, to teacher, to admin — nothing.”

— Indigenous Student, Discussion

“I get bullied — I don’t really know the reason why — but I sometimes think it’s because I have Indigenous culture. We all know the saying: treat people the way you want to be treated. Sometimes people don’t treat me nice back.”

— Indigenous Student, Discussion

“We have to look critically at our system and the discrimination of low expectations that leads to so many Indigenous students ending up in alternative programs.”

— Principal/Vice-Principal, Discussion

“He finally, finally felt that he belonged there. And that was grade 11.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“Elementary school is supportive. Middle school is a little supportive. High school? There is nothing.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“Two high schools. Two completely different experiences. Everything depended on who was at that school.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“It is hard going into the school as an Indigenous parent. It all depends on the school and the principal.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

“Some schools are more welcoming than others. I feel safe in some schools, but not all schools.”

— Indigenous Community, Discussion

## **Notes & Reflections**



# Attendance and Suspensions



## 5. Being in School - Attendance and Suspensions

Quantitative outputs reflect the 2024/25 school year. Qualitative staff and student data reflect fall 2025.

### Attendance

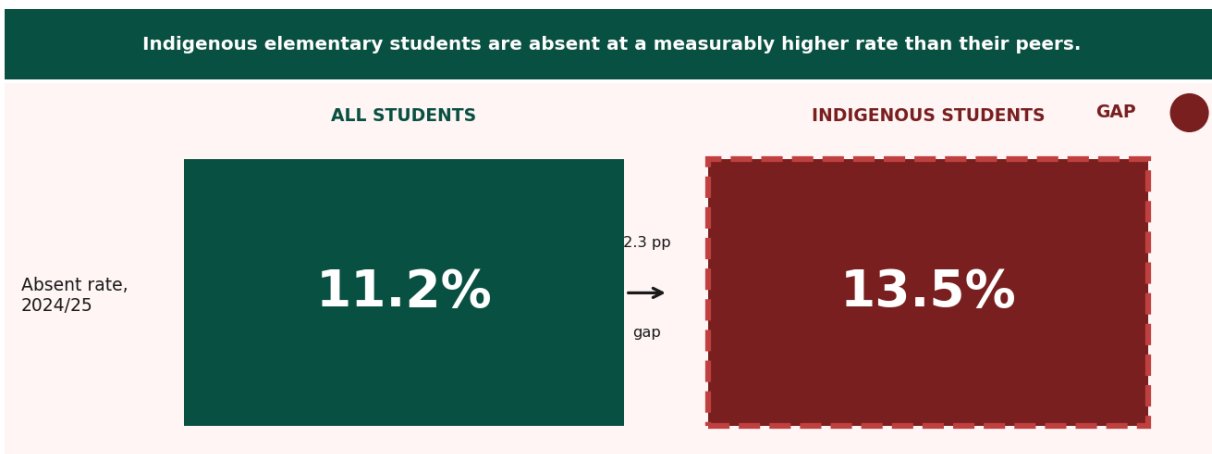
Attendance data for SD71 covers three school years: 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25. The data is drawn from the BC Ministry of Education Hybrid Attendance Web Dashboard (Power BI). Absent rates measure days a student is registered as absent, regardless of whether the absence is excused. Data is reported separately for all resident students and for Indigenous students, at both the elementary and secondary levels. This data does not incorporate filtering by absence reason. Observed differences between student groups may be influenced by diverse cultural, social, and contextual factors, including legitimate obligations that are not reflected in the dataset (IE. Cultural work). Interpretation should be undertaken with caution.

### Elementary

Indigenous elementary students were absent at a rate of 13.5% in 2024/25, compared to 11.2% for all resident elementary students — a gap of 2.3 percentage points. The gap is not new and shows no sign of closing. It has held between 2.2 and 2.8 percentage points across all three years measured.

### The Attendance Gap — Elementary

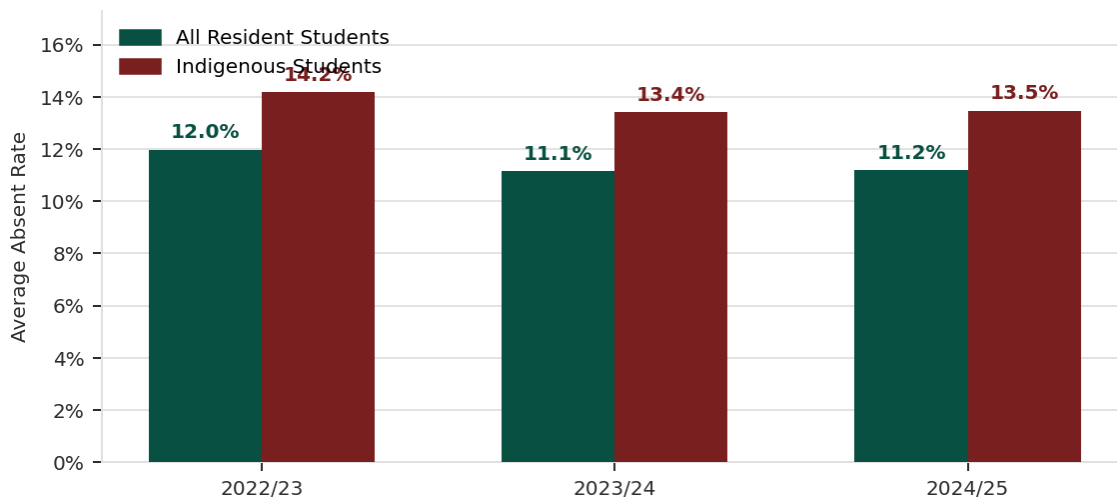
Absent rates for all resident students and Indigenous students compared.



**The gap has persisted across all three years measured.**

Source: BC Ministry of Education, HAWD dashboard. SD71 Comox Valley. School year 2024/25.

### Elementary Absent Rate — Three-Year Trend



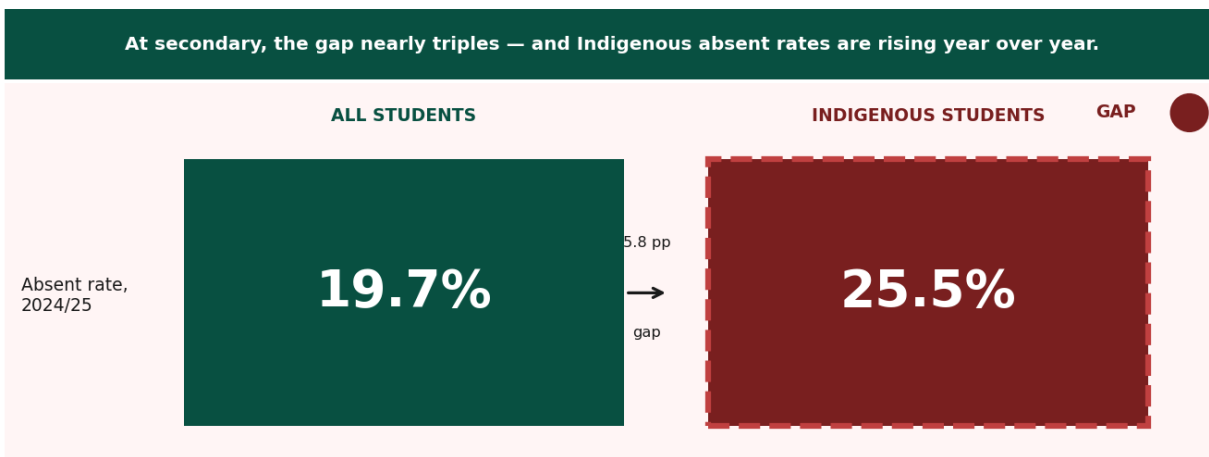
Source: BC Ministry of Education, HAWD dashboard. SD71 Comox Valley. Resident students.

### Secondary

At secondary, the gap is larger and the trend is moving in the wrong direction. Indigenous secondary students were absent at a rate of 25.5% in 2024/25 — one in four school days — compared to 19.7% for all resident secondary students. While the all-student rate has remained essentially flat across three years (19.8%, 19.8%, 19.7%), the Indigenous rate has risen from 23.2% in 2022/23 to 25.5% in 2024/25. The gap is widening.

### The Attendance Gap — Secondary

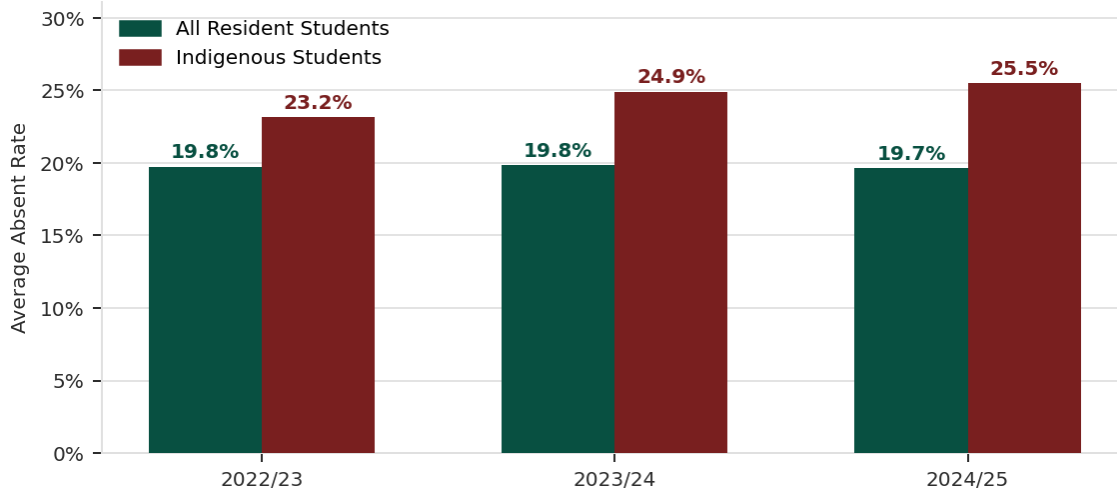
Absent rates for all resident students and Indigenous students compared.



**Indigenous secondary absenteeism rose from 23.2% to 25.5% across the three years measured.**

Source: BC Ministry of Education, HAWD dashboard. SD71 Comox Valley. School year 2024/25.

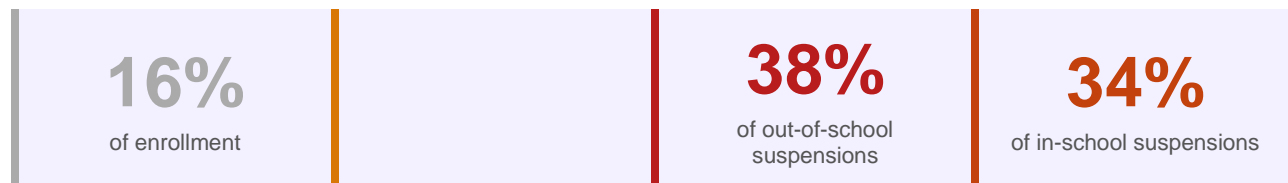
### Secondary Absent Rate — Three-Year Trend



Source: BC Ministry of Education, HAWD dashboard. SD71 Comox Valley. Resident students.

## Suspensions

Data covers the 2024/25 school year. Top 6 incident types. Indigenous students comprise 16% of SD71 enrollment.



Indigenous students are 16% of enrollment. They are 34% of in-school suspensions. They are 38% of out-of-school suspensions.

The gap is not uniform. It concentrates in specific incidents.

**Disrespect and defiance** is where it breaks hardest. Indigenous students received 71% of out-of-school suspensions for this reason — and 44% of in-school suspensions. The same incident label, a different exit. For non-Indigenous students, the same label routes inside more often.

**Vaping** repeats the pattern. Indigenous: 36% of out-of-school, 18% of in-school. The severity of response diverges.

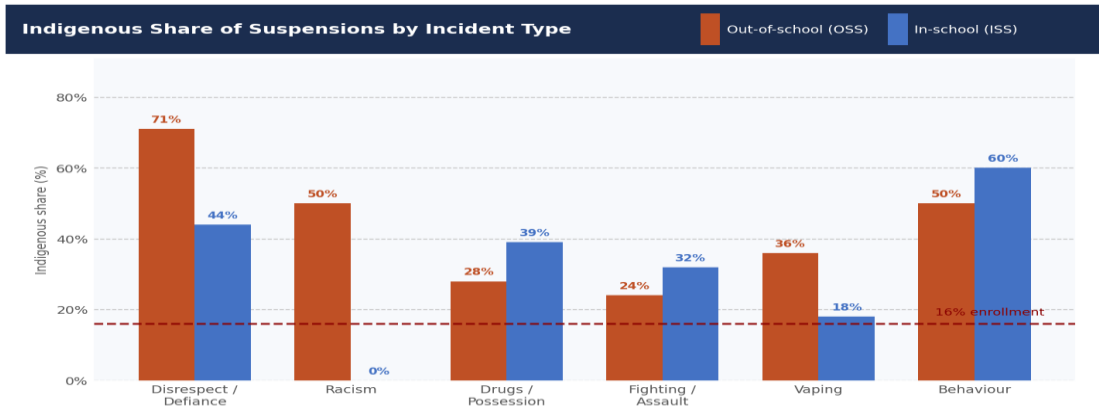
**Racism:** All in-school racism related suspensions involved non-Indigenous students. 50% of all out of school suspensions involved non-Indigenous students and 50% involved Indigenous students.

For drugs, fighting, and behaviour, non-Indigenous students received out-of-school suspensions at higher rates. The pattern is not uniform across all incidents.

The aggregate matters. For in-school suspensions — the lesser consequence — Indigenous share is 34%. For out-of-school — the greater one — Indigenous share is 38%. Both figures are more than double the enrollment share.

## Suspensions by Incident Type

Each pair of bars shows the Indigenous share of out-of-school and in-school suspensions for the same incident label. The dashed line marks 16% — the enrollment baseline.



## Severity Gap by Incident

Indigenous students received a higher share of the more severe consequence (out-of-school) than the less severe (in-school) for the same incident.

### Notes & Reflections

# School Completion



## 6. School Completion

### Thirteen years in the making

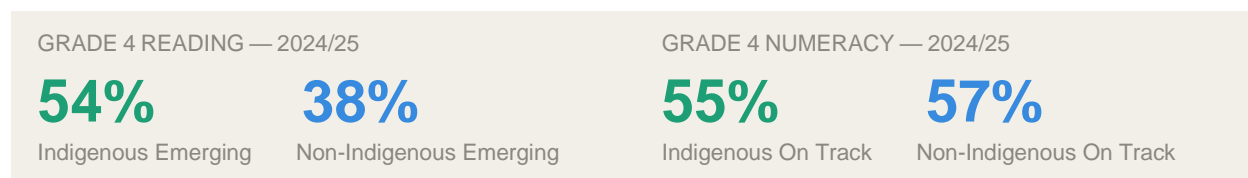
A child who enters kindergarten today will graduate in 13 years — if they graduate. The literacy and numeracy data we review at Grade 12 is not a current measurement. It is the final accounting of 13 years of schooling. Every number in the Grade 12 column was shaped by what happened in Grade 1, Grade 4, Grade 7, and every year in between.

A methodological note: the assessments at each grade level are not administered to the same children. Students move in and out of the district between assessment points, so Grade 4 and Grade 7 cohorts are not identical populations. That said, the volume of this movement is unlikely to materially alter the patterns visible in the data — the gaps are large enough, and consistent enough across years, that migration in and out does not explain them.

#### GRADE 4 Year 5 of 13

The FSA tells us something is wrong early — in both domains. In reading, 54% of Indigenous Grade 4 students were Emerging in 2024/25. In numeracy, On Track sits at 55%, and while the Emerging percentage is masked this year, 2023/24 data — when it was visible — showed 62% of Indigenous Grade 4 numeracy writers were Emerging. More than half, in Year 5 of 13.

The Non-Indigenous trend in both subjects is also deteriorating. Reading Emerging has climbed from 18% in 2020/21 to 38% in 2024/25. Numeracy Emerging has risen from 28% to 36% over the same period. Both groups are losing ground in the early grades. Indigenous students are simply further behind from the start.

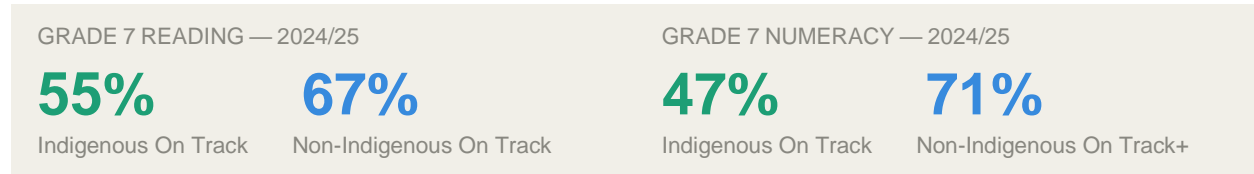


Note: Grade 4 numeracy Emerging is masked for Indigenous students in 2024/25. On Track rates appear similar between groups, but 2023/24 data showed Indigenous Emerging at 62% — well above Non-Indigenous at 38%.

#### GRADE 7 Year 8 of 13

By Grade 7, reading and numeracy tell different stories — the numeracy story is worse. Indigenous students On Track in reading: 55%, down from 65% in 2020/21. Indigenous students On Track in numeracy: 47%. Fewer than half. By the midpoint of a student's school career, numeracy has become the sharper deficit.

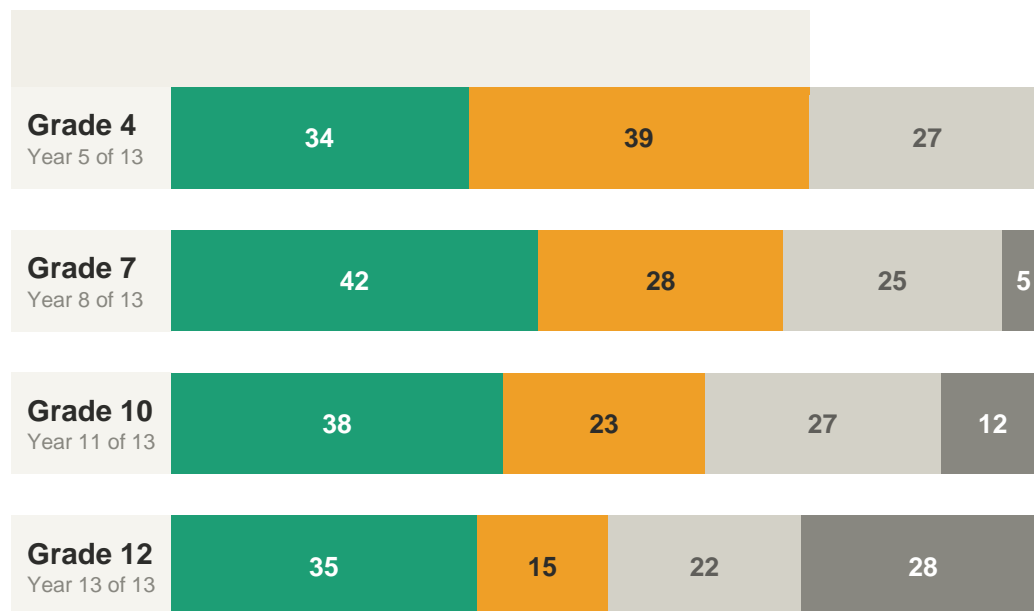
Non-Indigenous numeracy, meanwhile, has partially recovered after a troubling dip — Emerging peaked at 42% in 2022/23 but has since pulled back to 29% in 2024/25, with On Track plus Extending reaching 71%. That recovery has not extended to Indigenous students, where the numeracy On Track rate continues to fall.



By Year 8, a student who was Emerging in Grade 4 has spent the majority of their school life behind — in both reading and numeracy. The system has had eight years. The data says the gaps haven't closed; in numeracy, they've widened.

### Thought Experiment: Literacy — If all Indigenous students were represented as 100 students

Across the final years of the 13-year journey. Each bar represents the numbers of students who are on track, struggling, enrolled, or left school.

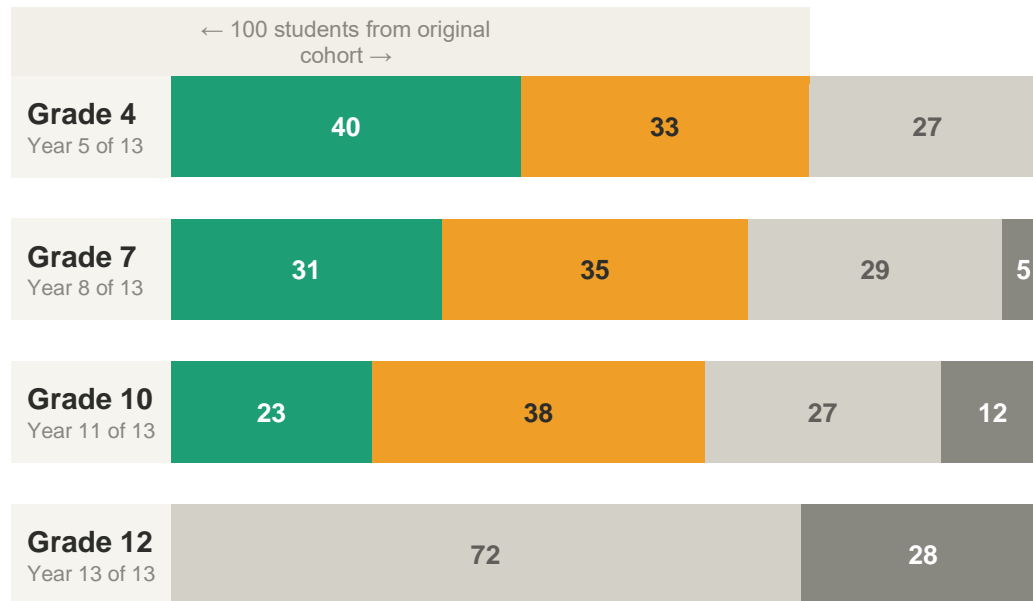


■ Proficient / On Track ■ Struggling, in school ■ Enrolled, not assessed ■ Left school

Estimated from reported FSA scores, participation rates, and Grade 8 cohort completion data (2019 cohort). Grade 7 reading proficiency estimated (Extending masked). "Left school" in grade 7 indicates students who left the district. Grades 10 & 12 indicates students who either left the district, the province, or dropped out.

## Thought Experiment: — Numeracy

Across the final years of the 13-year journey. Each bar represents all 100 students from the original cohort



■ Proficient / On Track ■ Struggling, in school ■ Enrolled, not assessed ■ Left school

Cohort and participation assumptions match the Reading chart above. Grade 4 numeracy Emerging is masked in 2024/25 source data — Emerging count estimated from writers minus On Track. Grade 12: no provincial numeracy assessment exists; all enrolled students shown as not assessed. “Left school” in grade 7 indicates students who left the district. Grades 10 & 12 indicates students who either left the district, the province, or dropped out.

### GRADE 10 Year 11 of 13

By Grade 10, two years from the end of a 13-year journey, the reading and numeracy gaps tell markedly different stories. In reading, Indigenous students report 62% Proficient or Extending versus 73% for Non-Indigenous — an 11-point gap. In numeracy, the gap is 37% versus 57% — 20 points. The numeracy gap is nearly double the reading gap, and 37% means that nearly two-thirds of Indigenous students still writing the assessment are not meeting proficiency in math.

These Grade 10 numbers reflect only students still enrolled and still writing — roughly 61 of the original 100 Indigenous students, after 10% have already left school and 27% opted out of or were absent from the assessment. The true proficiency rate across the full original cohort is substantially lower than either reported figure.

### GRADE 12 Year 13 of 13

Reading proficiency at Grade 12: 70% Indigenous, 80% Non-Indigenous. A 10-point gap that, on its face, looks like progress from Grade 4. It is not. By Grade 12, 28 of the original 100 Indigenous students have left school. The assessment measures the

remaining 50 who were enrolled, present, and writing — a progressively more selected group.

The Adult Dogwood data adds context. Indigenous students are 16.6% of all Comox Valley students, yet they account for 26% of Adult Dogwood credentials — an alternative pathway typically taken by students who couldn't complete the standard program. That over-representation marks where struggling students are routed rather than retained. There is no Grade 12 numeracy assessment, so the numeracy trajectory simply goes dark after Grade 10.

**There is also a deeper question worth sitting with. We pursue graduation because we expect graduates to leave school literate and numerate — ready for work, further education, and civic life. The Grade 12 literacy data should prompt us to ask whether that expectation is being met. Among Indigenous students who wrote the assessment, 30% did not reach proficiency. These are the students who made it through all 13 years. Graduation is not certifying what we assume it certifies. And for numeracy, we simply don't know: there is no Grade 12 assessment, so the question of whether graduates are numerate is one the system currently cannot answer.**

---

The Grade 12 literacy gap of 10 points is not the real gap. The real gap opened in Grade 4, widened in Grade 7, and is most visible — in numeracy — at Grade 10. It has been 13 years in the making.

**Taken together, the data describes a system that loses *priority* Indigenous students gradually and quietly — and then reports the scores of those who remain.** The Grade 12 improvement is not a literacy success story. And the numeracy picture, visible only to Grade 10, is significantly more concerning than the reading picture it sits beside.

### **Notes & Reflections**

## Defining Success: A Cross-Group Analysis

Secondary students (n=232) • CUPE support staff (n=187) • Teachers (n=530) • Principals/Vice-Principals (n=49)  
• Multi-tag coding; totals exceed 100%. Survey questions: "What does success mean to you regarding the students you serve, when considering their future?" (adults); "This is how I describe success at school" (students).

---

### The Core Finding

Students define success as grades — 37%. No adult group mentions grades at all: not one respondent in 187 CUPE staff, not one in 530 teachers, not one in 49 school leaders.

Four groups. Four definitions. They do not align.

### What Students Say

Grades lead at 37%. One in ten names passing — not failing — as success. Fourteen percent gave no interpretable answer. Taken together, roughly six in ten students hold a narrow, outcome-focused definition: pass, not fail, get the grade.

Twenty percent name effort. Eighteen percent each name belonging and wellbeing. Seven percent frame success as a future goal.

"doing the best you can, not necessarily getting high grades" — Student

"success at school is being able to go in and feel safe and like you are wanted there and feeling like you have a purpose to be there" — Student

One student named the structural gap directly:

"The ability to thrive in my own way. Thriving the way the school sees and my own way of thriving are different and I wish that school worked harder to meet in the middle." — Student

### What Adults Say

All three adult groups lead with effort — CUPE at 71%, teachers at 81%, PVP at 76%. Wellbeing follows in every group. Grades appear in none.

CUPE holds the lowest future orientation among adult groups: 28%, half the teacher rate. On time horizon, CUPE respondents sit closer to students than to teachers or principals.

Teachers and PVP are the most future-oriented adult groups, both at 49%. PVP holds the highest social orientation across all four groups at 57% — school leaders weight belonging above everyone else.

"Success means that students leave my classroom with a stronger sense of identity, confidence, and purpose. It is not only about academic achievement." — Teacher

"Success means empowering each student to develop the skills, confidence, and character needed to thrive beyond the school environment." — Principal/VP

## Indigenous Identity and Success

PVP: 25%. CUPE: 18%. Teachers: 8%. Students: 5%. Each step up the authority hierarchy, Indigenous identity is named more often. School leaders define success through cultural connection at five times the student rate.

"That we as a community wrap around our Indigenous students to celebrate them in such a way that they embrace who they are." — Principal/VP

One student defined success the same way:

"As an Indigenous student who loves math, success is not just about grades — it is showing others what is possible and uplifting my community and creating a future where I am successful and proud." — Student

## Where They Meet

Belonging appears across all four groups. Students: 18%. CUPE: 28%. Teachers: 39%. PVP: 57%. The concept is shared; the weight is not. Every step up the hierarchy, belonging matters more.

Identity appears in every group. It is most prominent where authority is highest, least prominent where students live.

## Three Questions for District Leadership

The definition of success held at the top of the system does not reach students at the bottom. Students work toward grades in a system where adults define success as growth, belonging, and identity. This is a structural gap, not a communication one.

1. What signals does the district send to students about what success means?
2. How are Indigenous identity and cultural connection present in what students encounter each day?
3. Why does CUPE — the group in closest daily contact with students — hold lower future orientation than teachers or principals?

Theme	Students (n=232)	CUPE (n=187)	Teachers (n=530)	PVP (n=49)
<b>GRADES</b>	37%	0%	0%	0%
<b>EFFORT</b>	20%	71%	81%	76%
<b>WELLBEING</b>	18%	50%	68%	63%
<b>SOCIAL</b>	18%	28%	39%	57%
<b>COMPLETION</b>	16%	0%	0%	0%

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<b>UNCLEAR</b>	14%	1%	0%	0%
<b>PASSING</b>	10%	0%	0%	0%
<b>FUTURE</b>	7%	28%	49%	49%
<b>ATTENDANCE</b>	7%	0%	0%	0%
<b>IDENTITY</b>	5%	18%	8%	25%

Table 1. Theme frequencies by respondent group. Multi-tag coding; totals exceed 100%.

**Notes & Reflections**



# Priorities



## 6. Considerations for Change

Seven priorities follow. All depend on the first. Build the accountability mechanism. SD71 has none at district level. Individual leadership discretion and staff awareness drives practice. Different schools provide different outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous students. Discretion produces variance. Variance produces drift. Priority 1 addresses this.

---

### Priority 1: Build the accountability mechanism

Uneven equity practice. No district mechanism to measure, report, or correct. An equity accountability measurement tool per school is the lever. Systematic reporting to district leadership. Annual review by Rightsholders.

#### Suggestions for ACCOUNTABLE ROLES

Senior leadership designs the accountability measurement tool with CLEST. Principals report each quarter. The Board of Education receives the summary. CLEST Rightsholders review annually.

#### HORIZON

- Year 1 — Baseline set. Accountability measurement tool created. Communication to partner groups.
  - Years 2–3 — Quarterly reporting cycle active.
  - Years 4–5 — Equity variance across schools reduced and tracked.
- 

### Priority 2: Repair the reporting pathway

Students have trusted adults. 86.2 percent of them. Institutional response fails them. Only 40.5 percent say past reports worked. Gap: 45.7 points. The system has the people. Not the method.

An incident micro-protocol is the lever. A student reporting pathway. First-response guidance for staff. A visible definition of “addressed.”

#### Suggestions for ACCOUNTABLE ROLES

Senior leadership leads protocol design with CLEST. Principals implement it in their schools. Indigenous Education to co-develop the student-facing language.

#### HORIZON

- Year 1 — Protocol designed and published.
  - Years 2–3 — Staff trained. Feedback loop established.
  - Years 4–5 — Trust metric embedded in climate survey.
-

### **Priority 3: Calibrate adult bias, racism perception**

Indigenous staff see bias at 82 percent. Non-Indigenous staff at 45. Gap: 37 points. Same institution, different experience.

Cultural humility framework is the lever. Senior Leadership models the behaviours and expectations. Scenario-based calibration Led by senior leaders and administrators. Cross-role disclosure forums follow.

#### **Suggestions for ACCOUNTABLE ROLES**

Senior leadership co-creates and maintains Cultural Humility Circle with CLEST and other Rightsholders. Principals lead school-level calibration. CDTA co-designs professional development in alignment with Professional Standards for BC Educators. Associate Superintendent monitors change.

#### **HORIZON**

- Year 1 — Cultural Humility Circle operationalized and maintained. Calibration sessions begin.
  - Years 2–3 — Embedded in annual PD cycle.
  - Years 4–5 — Perception alignment measured annually.
- 

### **Priority 4: Audit bias hotspots**

One in five students reports direct bias or racism. Hotspots are known. Buses. Unstructured time. Where supervision is light. Where routine is loose.

A supervision audit is the near-term lever. Curriculum audit follows.

#### **Suggestions for ACCOUNTABLE ROLES**

Principals conduct the audit in their schools. CUPE, CDTA and Exempt staff identify hotspots from their vantage. Senior leadership reviews results across schools.

#### **HORIZON**

- Year 1 — Hotspot audit complete.
  - Years 2–3 — Supervision adjusted. Curriculum audit underway (in conjunction with Cultural Humility Circle)
  - Years 4–5 — Bias exposure tracked to target.
- 

### **Priority 5: Clarifying the role of INED Department**

Non-Indigenous staff defer bias response to ISWs. Ownership is not shared. The mechanism is role ambiguity. The role is not understood universally. Neither has its boundary.

INED department shift toward capacity-building. Other staff take on frontline response. The transition is significant. It requires district support.

#### **Suggestions for ACCOUNTABLE ROLES**

Senior leadership collaborates with INED to define the revised role. Indigenous Education leads co-design of the transition. Principals enforce the boundary in their schools.

**HORIZON**

- Year 1 — Revised ISW role and boundaries documented, communicated and understood by the system.
  - Years 2–3 — Whole-staff capability built.
  - Years 4–5 — ISW functions as equity coach.
- 

### **Priority 6: Establish shared definitions**

Staff disagree on what counts as bias or racism. “Special treatment” narratives fill the gap. Without shared language, calibration fails. Student-facing communication becomes incoherent.

**Suggestions for ACCOUNTABLE ROLES**

District leadership co-authors the definitions with Rightsholders. CDTA and CUPE utilize definitions in member communications. Principals embed definitions in school culture.

**HORIZON**

- Year 1 — Definitions published.
  - Years 2–3 — Staff calibrated. Student-facing communication in place.
  - Years 4–5 — Equity literacy embedded in curriculum.
- 

### **Priority 7: Integrate Indigenous content across curriculum**

Indigenous content in SD71 is largely limited to Orange Shirt Day. Calendar management, not integration. Cross-curricular integration is the lever. Co-developed with Rightsholders.

**Suggestions for ACCOUNTABLE ROLES**

CLEST Rightsholders define scope and cultural parameters. CDTA co-leads instructional integration. District administration provides resourcing.

**HORIZON**

- Year 1 — Partnership scope agreed with Rightsholders.
  - Years 2–3 — Pilot across grades.
  - Years 4–5 — Embedded across curriculum.
-

**Priority 8+: CLEST Recommendations**

-

**Notes & Reflections**

## 7. From Evidence to Action

Each finding informs one or more considerations for change.

Finding	Considerations for Change
1. The Reporting Trust Gap	Priorities 1, 2
2. The Adult Perception Gap	Priority 3
3. Bias and Racism Exposure	Priorities 3, 4
4. Over-Reliance on ISWs	Priority 5
5. No Shared Language for Equity	Priority 6
6. Curriculum Content Narrowness	Priority 7
7. Nides and Non-Nides Students	Priorities 2, 4
8. Implementation Variance	Priority 1

### **Notes & Reflections**



# Appendices



## Appendix 1 Process Notes

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### Appendix 1A: Letter to Hereditary Chiefs

Gilakas'la and čěčhaθěč Chief \_\_\_\_\_.

My name is Joe Heslip, and I work at the Comox Valley School District. Please accept this blanket and honorarium as I wish to be respectful and follow the appropriate protocols as I reach out to you, Hereditary Chief.

I am heading up an Equity Scan in our school district in the 2024/25 school year and I would very much like to invite you to join us (and guide the district in doing a better job of serving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students).

We will be having 3 or 4 Meetings this year to set the agenda and work for the Equity Scan. There will be a \$250.00 honorarium (per meeting) for anyone attending these meetings that would not be paid by their organization to attend.

These meetings will be 2.5 to 3 hours in length. **We will be having our first Equity Scanning meeting in early January.** The Equity Scanning meetings will have representation from the partner groups below. The names in yellow have indicated that they are interested in being a part of the scan.

If you are interested in guiding us in our work to make a more equitable education system here in SD71, please call my cell number ANYTIME at **250-207-3801**, or email me at [joe.heslip@sd71.bc.ca](mailto:joe.heslip@sd71.bc.ca). This is an open invitation but not an obligation. If you miss the first meeting and would like to attend any of the following meetings you are ALWAYS WELCOME.

Also, if you would prefer not to meet with the big group above, but would prefer to sharing your thinking with me individually, (or have a delegate share on your behalf) I would be happy to meet with you (or them) individually, at KFN, the school district, or anywhere in the community. I would be honoured to take you out for a meal, and speak with you. Lastly, if you would rather meeting individually, I want to assure you that you would be provided with the honorarium for your time.

Thank you very much for reading this letter. I am hopeful that we can learn from you and honour you and your family in our work moving forward.

Joe Heslip

Associate Superintendent

Comox Valley School District

Phone: 250-207-3801

Email: [joe.heslip@sd71.bc.ca](mailto:joe.heslip@sd71.bc.ca)

## **Appendix 1B: Draft Workplan**

### **Proposed Draft Workplan 2024/25**

#### **Student Voice – (Learning Environment / Pedagogical Core)**

1. Nala'atsi (Circle + Student Lunch and Learn) x 2
2. Glacier View, Vanier, Highland, Isfeld (Indigenous student Lunches) x 4
3. District Youth Leadership Committee x 4
4. One on one anecdotal conversations – Interviews with early school leavers
5. Microsoft Forms Survey – (Anonymous) (ISW's facilitate \$100.00 gift card raffle per school)
6. Student Learning Survey Results

#### **Indigenous Community Voices – (Learning Environment / Pedagogical Core)**

1. K'ómoks First Nation Dinner and Learning Sessions x 2
2. Microsoft Forms Survey (\$100.00 gift card raffle x 2)
3. East / West - Indigenous Parent and Community Dinner and Learning Sessions (Metis / Inuit / non-status Indigenous families) (\$100.00 gift card raffle x 2)
4. Indigenous Education Council Guided Discussion

#### **Indigenous Support Workers / Indigenous Support Teacher / District Indigenous Mentor Teachers / Manager – (Learning Environment / Pedagogical Core)**

1. East - ISW Guided Discussion
2. West - ISW Guided Discussion
3. Microsoft Forms Survey (Anonymous)

#### **Teachers and Support Staff (Pedagogical Core / Learning Environment)**

1. Microsoft Forms Survey (Anonymous)
2. Staff Meeting Qualitative data (3 question Prompts @ 5 PGT schools) Joe Facilitates discussions and collects data
3. Teacher Librarians: Indigenous resource review

#### **PVP – District Staff – (Learning Profile / Policy and Governance / Learning Environment)**

1. Learning and Connecting Meeting – Guided discussion and anecdotal evidence gathered + Anonymous written questions submitted.
2. Microsoft Forms Survey (Anonymous)
3. Administrative Procedures Review
4. Quantitative Data Analysis, (Suspensions, FSA, A&W Math/Pre Calc, Alternate, Adult dogwoods, Gifted, 5-6 year completion rates, Attendance)

#### **Trustees & Superintendent– ( Policy and Governance)**

1. Syeyutsus Policy Review
2. Anti-Indigenous Racism Policy Review / Creation?
3. Roberts Rules / Alternative Approaches

### **Equity Scanning Structures:**

#### **Communication Plan:**

1. JH to assemble Equity Scanning Team – (In Progress)
2. JH to seek guidance from KFN – (In Progress)
3. JH to seek guidance from IEC – (In Progress)
4. JH to communicate Equity Scanning Process with Hereditary Chiefs to seek guidance (In Progress)
5. JH communicate with CDTA, CVPVPA, CUPE re: participation and planning (In Progress)

#### **District Co-lead Equity Scanning Activities:**

1. District staff co-create Microsoft Survey Forms – Quantitative Data
2. Facilitate “Learning and Connecting Meetings” with exempt staff – Qualitative Data
3. Ministry and district data analysis – Quantitative data
4. JH to personally conduct Nala’atsi / Glacier View / Vanier / Hillside / Isfeld (Indigenous student pizza lunch and Circle) – Qualitative Data
5. JH to facilitate 2x K’ómoks First Nation Dinner and Learning Sessions (Qualitative Data)
6. JH to facilitate Individual Hereditary Chief’s Learning Conversations (Qualitative Data)
7. JH to facilitate 2x ISW Equity Scanning Sessions (Qualitative Data)
8. JH to co-facilitate 5 school staff meeting equity scanning sessions (Qualitative / Quantitative Data)
9. JH / JM to facilitate Trustee Equity working session (Qualitative data)

#### **Equity School Teams: Teacher, P & or VP, Indigenous Support Worker (Student?)**

1. Communicate Equity in Action (Scan) to all staff
2. Facilitate online anonymous scan – Quantitative Data
3. Facilitate Equity Scanning Lunch and Learn with students – Qualitative Data
4. Facilitate Equity Scanning Staff Questions
5. Link scanning data to short / medium / long term Equity School Goals

## **Appendix 1C: 8 Provincial Themes**

# 8 Key Themes



- **Commitment and Tenacity**
- **Collective Responsibility**
- **Truth at the Center**
- **Connection to Community**
- **Bias & Privilege Awareness**
- **Respect for IWVP**
- **Evidence Informed**
- **ProD Collaborative Culture**

## **Appendix 1D: SD71 Equity Scan Survey Questions - All Groups**

[SD71 Equity Scan Surveys](#)

## **Appendix 1E: School-based Equity Scanning Team Materials**

[School-based Equity Scanning Team PPT](#)

[Parent-Guardian Equity Scan Letter](#)

[Ways of Being in Circle \(Qualitative Dialogue\)](#)

[Equity Information Poster for Schools](#)

[Equity Infographics and QR Code](#)

[Equity Framework for School Based Equity Scanning teams](#)

[Cultural Safety Resources](#)

**Appendix 1F: Survey Methodology** [Sampling. Coding approach. Limitations detail.] 54,000+

## Appendix 2 Supplementary Reports

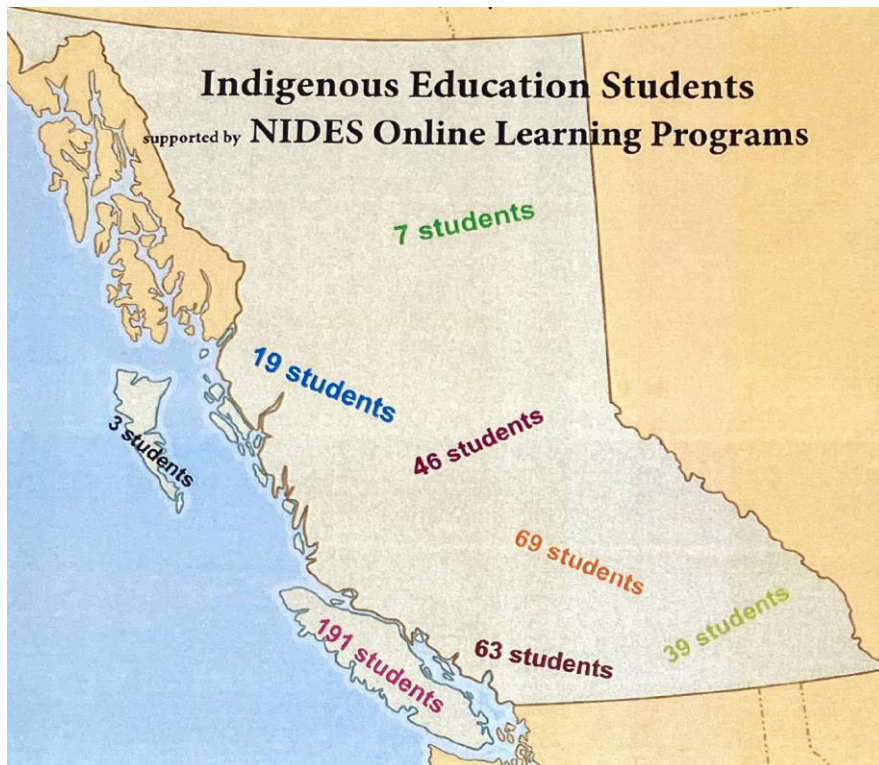
### Supplementary Report 1

#### NIDES and Non-NIDES Indigenous Student Survey

##### Secondary School Comparison Report

Comox Valley School District

Nides (n=94) vs. Non-Nides Secondary Students (n=135)



## Introduction

This report compares survey responses from two groups of Indigenous secondary students in Comox Valley School District: 94 students enrolled in NIDES (referred to here as Nides students), who attend school primarily online, and 135 students attending district in-person schools (Non-Nides). Both groups completed the same survey. The 16 question areas covered in this report include experiences of bias and racism, cultural support, participation in class, appropriateness of Indigenous learning, language learning opportunities, staff belief in student success, school inclusiveness, available supports, impact on achievement and wellbeing, what non-Indigenous students should know, academic grades, choice in learning, mental health support, cultural comfort and identity, how students define success, and satisfaction with Indigenous learning.

Each section of the report presents a question, a response rate line, a summary table, and a short narrative. Closed questions (Yes/No/Unsure or frequency scales) show counts and percentages for each response option. Open-text questions are coded into themes; percentages reflect the share of each full group (Nides n=94, Non-Nides n=135), not just those who answered. For questions where respondents could select more than one option, percentages do not sum to 100.

### Three notes on reading the data.

First, the two groups are not equivalent. Nides students attend school online, which means questions about physical school environments — hallways, classrooms, face-to-face staff — apply differently to them. Read differences with that context in mind rather than as straight comparisons.

Second, response rates vary by question. Closed questions typically drew responses from all or nearly all participants. Open-text questions were answered by a smaller share of each group, sometimes fewer than half. The response rate line at the top of each table shows the exact count.

Third, the Q10 sub-items (10c through 10h) use a different denominator. Those items were shown only to students who answered Yes or Unsure to Q10a. That gives a base of 26 Nides students and 51 Non-Nides students, not the full groups.

The survey was completed by 232 Indigenous secondary students in total. Three students declined to answer the question identifying them as Nides or Non-Nides and are excluded from this report, leaving 229 students in the comparison. The data are not broken down by Nation, age, or grade.

## Overview

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This report compares survey responses from 94 students enrolled in Nides (online learners) and 135 students attending district in-person schools (Non-Nides) across 16 question areas. The two groups are not directly equivalent — the online versus in-person context shapes how many questions apply — and differences should be read with that in mind. Nonetheless, the data reveal a striking degree of common experience alongside several meaningful divergences.

## Where the Groups Were Similar

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Across most of the survey, Nides and Non-Nides students gave responses that were close in proportion and consistent in theme.

**Academic identity and success.** Both groups define school success primarily through grades and academic performance (Nides 30%, Non-Nides 31%), with effort, completion, and showing up as the next

most valued qualities. Social and holistic definitions of success — belonging, safety, being who you are — appeared at comparable rates in both groups.

**Positive influences.** Teachers are the top positive influence on achievement and well-being in both groups at an identical 37%. Indigenous Support Workers (ISWs) rank second in both (Nides 16%, Non-Nides 15%), and both groups name specific individuals whose consistency and care made a tangible difference — a finding that holds across every school setting.

**Supportive staff.** Approximately 77–80% of students in both groups can identify two staff who believe in their success. Teachers and ISWs are the most frequently named roles. Both groups also identify bus drivers and janitors as believing adults — confirming that meaningful relationships are not confined to classrooms.

**Appropriateness of Indigenous learning.** Satisfaction is high and nearly identical: 85% of Nides and 84% of Non-Nides students find what they learn about Indigenous peoples, cultures, and histories appropriate. Despite this approval, both groups produce high open-text response rates with consistent requests for more hands-on experiences, content that spans beyond local Nations, and deeper rather than surface-level treatment.

**What non-Indigenous students should know.** Both groups most want peers to understand the history of colonization and residential schools. A strong secondary theme in both is that Indigenous peoples are not a single culture, and that identity cannot be assessed by appearance. Several students in each group acknowledge knowing very little about their own culture — a reminder that the intended audience for cultural education includes Indigenous students themselves.

**Grades and learning.** The pattern is nearly identical: "Most of the time" is the top response in both groups (Nides 46%, Non-Nides 47%), and approximately 13% in each say they know or understand more than their grades reflect. Attendance, submission habits, and learning-style mismatches are cited at similar rates.

**Participation.** Both groups report strong access to school activities. Combined positive responses (all the time + most of the time) sit at 87% for Nides and 86% for Non-Nides. Neither group attributes any participation limits to Indigenous identity.

## Where the Groups Differed

Several areas produced gaps large enough to warrant attention. The table below highlights the most significant.

Area	Nides (online, n=94)	Non-Nides (in-person, n=135)
Experienced bias/racism	14% Yes	25% Yes — nearly double
Past help for bias was successful	19% say No	41% say No — a sharp gap
Want more cultural support	32% Yes	44% Yes

Area	Nides (online, n=94)	Non-Nides (in-person, n=135)
Learning local Indigenous languages	33% Yes	21% Yes — Nides higher
School respect & inclusiveness	93% positive	87% positive
Food/snacks available	74% aware	94% aware — in-person visibility
Mental health: uncertainty	28% Unsure	22% Unsure
Choice in learning (Not often)	17%	22% — more structured timetable
Satisfaction with Indigenous learning	67% satisfied	56% satisfied — Nides higher
Comfortable being self at school	71%	81% — Non-Nides higher
Comfortable saying 'I am Indigenous'	78%	72%
Indigenous support room comfort	85% Yes; 14% Unsure	92% Yes; 5% Unsure
EA named as believing adult	12%	22% — physical school context

**Bias and its aftermath.** The most striking divergence is not in the rate of reported bias — though Non-Nides students do report it at nearly twice the rate (25% vs 14%) — but in what happens after. Of students who experienced bias, 41% of Non-Nides say past help was unsuccessful, compared to 19% of Nides. Confidence in the response process declines in both groups as it moves from disclosure toward resolution, but the gap at the end of that chain is the largest in the survey.

**Language learning.** Nides students are more likely to report learning local Indigenous languages (33% vs 21%), likely reflecting online programming that includes language components. In both groups, the most common experience is no access or incidental exposure only. A recurring frustration — appearing in both groups — is that French and Spanish are offered while Indigenous languages are not.

**Cultural comfort and belonging.** Non-Nides students are more comfortable being themselves at school (81% vs 71%), which may reflect greater opportunity to establish identity and belonging in an in-person social environment. By contrast, Nides students are slightly more likely to say they feel comfortable identifying as Indigenous (78% vs 72%) and show more uncertainty about the Indigenous support room, which they cannot physically access (14% Unsure vs 5%).

**Satisfaction with Indigenous learning.** Nides students are more satisfied overall (67% vs 56%), and Non-Nides students are more likely to say "Not often" (17% vs 9%). The high "Unsure" rate in both groups (18–20%) may reflect uncertainty about whether what students receive constitutes meaningful Indigenous learning, not just dissatisfaction with its quantity.

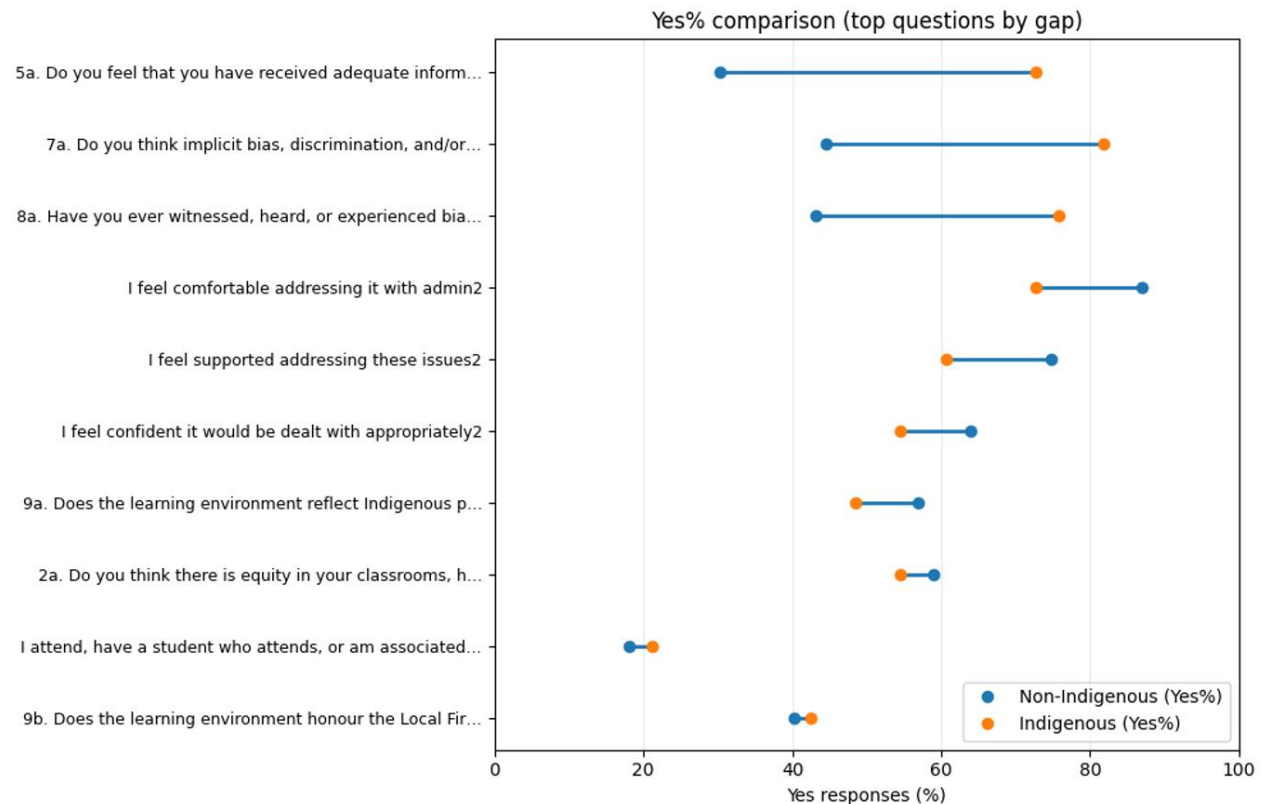
**Mental health support.** Overall rates are comparable (Nides 57% Yes, Non-Nides 60%), but qualitative differences emerge. Nides students occasionally cite the online environment itself as protective — it removes social stressors. Non-Nides students are twice as likely to describe unmet needs (6% vs 3%), including accounts of concerns being dismissed and support that is generic rather than individually responsive.

## Key Takeaway

The two groups share a common foundation: high regard for teachers and ISWs, broadly positive school experiences, and consistent themes in what they want to learn and how they define success. The divergences that matter most are not about program satisfaction or academic confidence — they are about safety and repair. Non-Nides students encounter bias more often, and when they do, they are far less likely to say the response worked. That gap between the rate of harm and the effectiveness of the response is where the most significant work remains.

## Supplementary Report 2

# Indigenous VS non-Indigenous Staff



\*CUPE Staff

## Supplementary Report 3

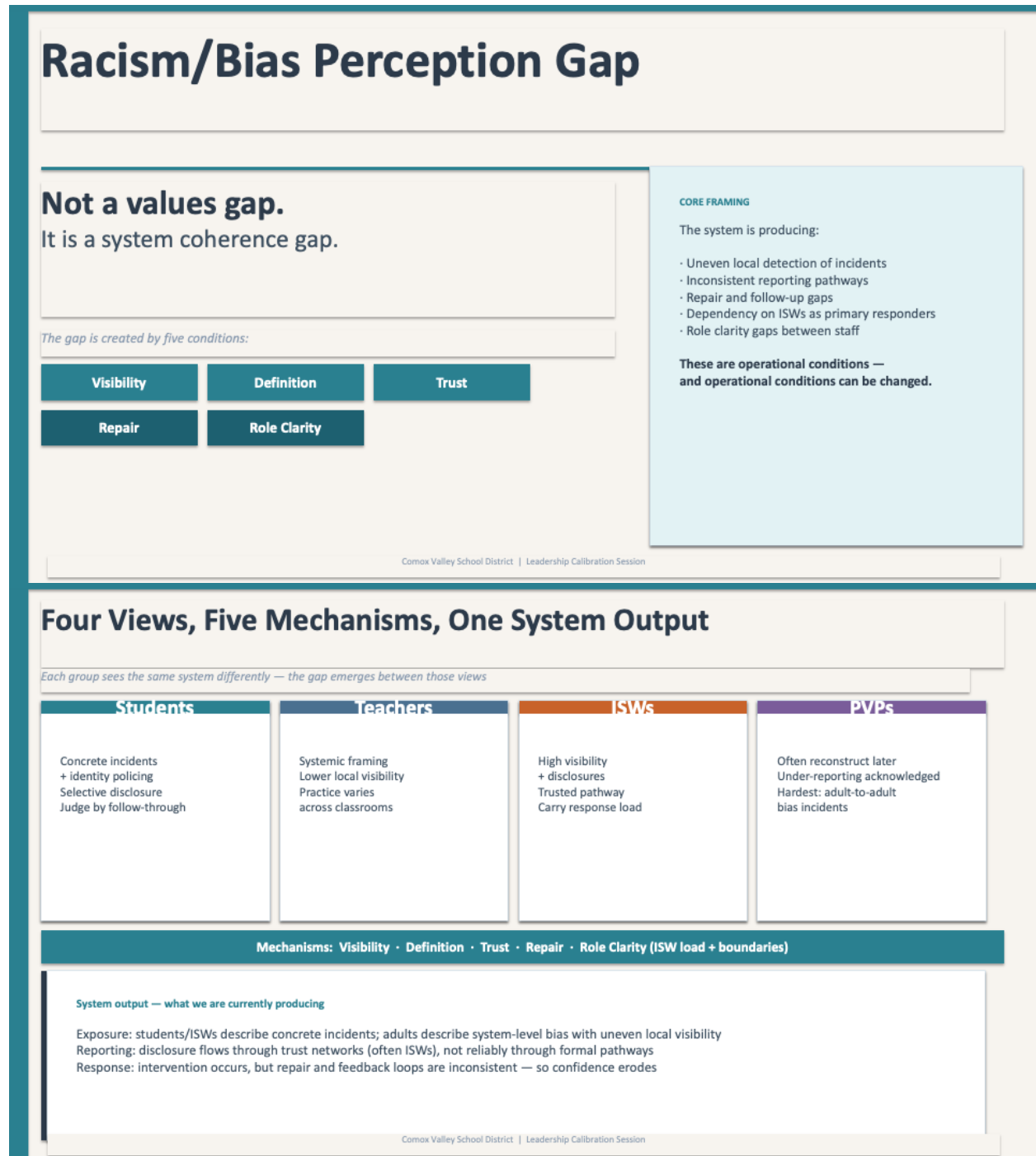


Table 1. Theme frequencies by respondent group. Multi-tag coding; totals exceed 100%.

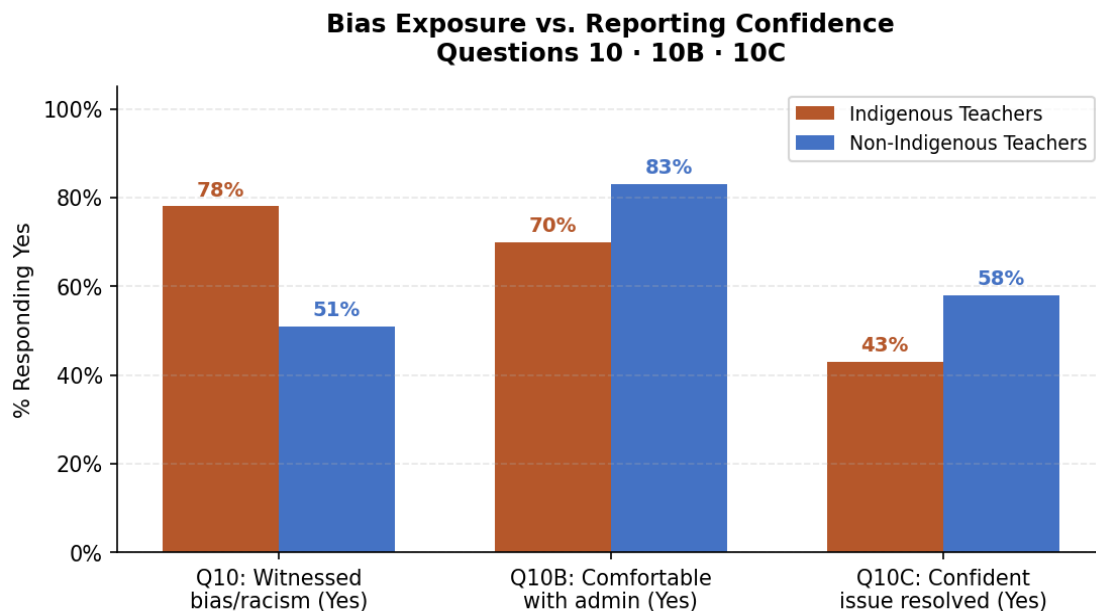
## Teacher Survey (Excluding Nides) Bias Exposure & Reporting Confidence

### Key Findings

Indigenous teachers report far higher exposure to bias and racism in the workplace (78% vs. 51%). They are not, however, more likely to act on it. Comfort with addressing the bias with administration is lower (Yes: 70% vs. 83%), and the gap widens when teachers consider outcomes: only 43% of Indigenous teachers are confident an issue would be resolved appropriately, compared to 58% of non-Indigenous colleagues.

The pattern is consistent across all three questions. Indigenous teachers move from highest exposure to lowest confidence — a 35-point drop from witnessing bias to trusting resolution. Non-Indigenous teachers show a smaller decline (51% to 58%), and their confidence actually exceeds their exposure rate, suggesting a fundamentally different relationship with institutional reporting processes.

The "No" responses reinforce this. On Q10B, 30% of Indigenous teachers are not comfortable going to admin, versus 5% of non-Indigenous. On Q10C, 26% lack confidence in resolution, versus 9%. These are not marginal differences — they reflect a structural trust gap.



\* Some percentages do not total 100% due to blank responses or rounding.

## Supplementary Report 4

### CUPE Teacher Survey Comparison Report

Percentages are within-group and rounded to one decimal place. Difference is Teacher % minus CUPE % (percentage points). Cells with n < 5 are suppressed.

#### Section A: Yes / No / Unsure Items

##### 2a Equity for Indigenous students

**Question text (CUPE):** 2a. Do you think there is equity in your classrooms, hallways, spaces for Indigenous students?

**Question text (Teacher):** 2a. Do you think there is equity in your classrooms, hallways, spaces for Indigenous students?

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	109	58.3	251	47.3	-11.0
No	29	15.5	105	19.8	4.3
Unsure	49	26.2	175	33.0	6.8
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0

##### 5a Sufficient information

**Question text (CUPE):** 5a. Do you feel that you have received adequate information to support Indigenous students in a culturally sensitive way?

**Question text (Teacher):** 5a. Do you feel that you have received adequate information to teach indigenous content in a culturally sensitive way?

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	73	39.0	198	37.3	-1.7
No	55	29.4	182	34.3	4.9
Unsure	59	31.6	151	28.4	-3.1
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0

##### 7a Bias/discrimination exists

**Question text (CUPE):** 7a. Do you think implicit bias, discrimination, and/or racism exists for Indigenous learners in this district?

**Question text (Teacher):** 7a. Do you think implicit bias, discrimination, and / or racism exists for Indigenous learners in this district?

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	94	50.3	351	66.1	15.8
No	20	10.7	29	5.5	-5.2
Unsure	73	39.0	151	28.4	-10.6
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0

##### 8a Witnessed bias/discrimination/racism

**Question text (CUPE):** 8a. Have you ever witnessed, heard, or experienced bias and/or racism in the workplace?

**Question text (Teacher):** 10a. Have you ever witnessed, heard, or experienced bias and/or racism in the workplace?

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	93	49.7	268	50.5	0.7
No	78	41.7	199	37.5	-4.2

Unsure	16	8.6	64	12.1	3.5
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0

### **9a/11a Environment reflects Indigenous histories**

**Question text (CUPE):** 9a. Does the learning environment reflect Indigenous peoples/cultures/histories, and the First Peoples' Principles of Learning?

**Question text (Teacher):** 11a. Does the learning environment reflect Indigenous peoples/cultures/histories, and the First Peoples' Principles of Learning?

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	103	55.1	350	65.9	10.8
No	27	14.4	53	10.0	-4.5
Unsure	57	30.5	128	24.1	-6.4
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0

### **9b/11b Environment honours identities**

**Question text (CUPE):** 9b. Does the learning environment honour the Local First Peoples' ways of knowing and cultures?

**Question text (Teacher):** 11b. Does the learning environment honour the Local First Peoples' ways of knowing and cultures?

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	76	40.6	240	45.2	4.6
No	24	12.8	61	11.5	-1.3
Unsure	87	46.5	229	43.1	-3.4
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	1	0.2	0.2

## Section B: Question 6c (Success Scale)

**Question text (CUPE):** 6c. How successful do you feel the school has been in acting upon or upholding these policies and agreements?2

**Question text (Teacher):** 6c. How successful do you feel the school has been in acting upon or upholding these policies and agreements?

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Unsure	57	30.5	129	24.3	-6.2
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	0	0.0	0.0
nan	Suppressed		Suppressed		
nan	Suppressed		20	3.8	
nan	62	33.2	210	39.5	6.4
nan	50	26.7	138	26.0	-0.7
nan	15	8.0	34	6.4	-1.6

## Section C: Workplace Experience ('I feel...') Items

### *I feel comfortable addressing it with admin*

**Question text (CUPE):** I feel comfortable addressing it with admin2

**Question text (Teacher):** I feel comfortable addressing it with admin

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	155	82.9	422	79.5	-3.4
No	14	7.5	33	6.2	-1.3
Unsure	18	9.6	68	12.8	3.2
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	8	1.5	1.5

### *I feel confident it would be dealt with appropriately*

**Question text (CUPE):** I feel confident it would be dealt with appropriately2

**Question text (Teacher):** I feel confident it would be dealt with appropriately

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	116	62.0	302	56.9	-5.2
No	23	12.3	60	11.3	-1.0
Unsure	48	25.7	161	30.3	4.7
Missing/Blank	0	0.0	8	1.5	1.5

### *I feel supported addressing these issues*

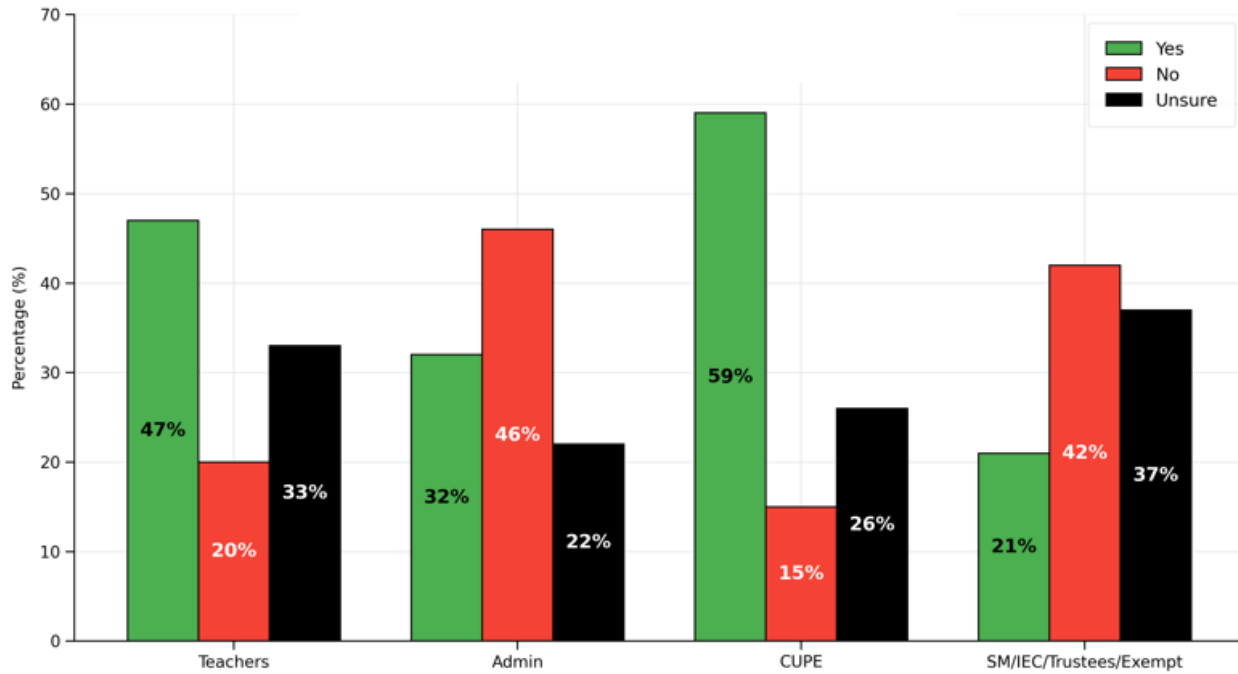
**Question text (CUPE):** I feel supported addressing these issues2

**Question text (Teacher):** I feel supported addressing these issues

Response	CUPE n	CUPE %	Teacher n	Teacher %	Difference (pp)
Yes	133	71.1	368	69.3	-1.8
No	16	8.6	45	8.5	-0.1
Unsure	38	20.3	110	20.7	0.4

## Supplementary Report 5

### PERCEPTIONS ON EQUITY FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS



Do you think there is equity in your classrooms, hallways, spaces for Indigenous students?

## Final Summary:

### Thank you and Call to Action

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This report could not have been completed without the brilliance and advocacy of KFN, MIKI'SIW, The IEC, the CLEST, Indigenous families, staff, students, and community. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to walk alongside community during the equity scanning process.

While this report articulates the inequitable experiences and outcomes of Indigenous learners in the Comox Valley, importantly, this report and the direction of the CLEST provides a roadmap for the district to address these inequities.

If we are to adequately address all gaps articulated in this report, it will require everyone in the system to actively commit to and participate in creating an equitable system for All students. This will take time, commitment, courage and humility. **It is time.**



Kumugwe Big House



