

**LEAP Action Learning Report 2013**

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| Topic area(The What) | **Comparative Indigenous Education** |
| Context(The Where and When) | **Simcoe County (Ontario) Board Schools focusing on****Barrie Central Collegiate** |
| Research methods(The How) | Site visits to elementary/secondary/outreach schools; visits to two reservations; interviews with key Board staff, Principals, executive staff, classroom teachers, Native Studies Teachers; participant observation; data review; literature and resource review. |
| Initial findings | * NSW and Ontario share many of the challenges of providing high quality education to indigenous students. Performance averages well below average standards for non-indigenous students prevail in both systems. Post school outcomes are likewise lower.
* Indigenous communities in both jurisdictions share many of the challenges in health, employment, income, substance abuse, etc.
* However, the circumstances are not identical, nor are the education systems. As a result the responses to the challenges are, while similar in some ways, also different in others.
* Schools in Simcoe County have the challenge of addressing the needs of FNMI (First Nations, Matis, Inuit) students. The FN people in Simcoe County are the Ojibway people but the Windat (Huron) people originally inhabited the area. Matis (descendants of FN women and Hudson Bay Company workers) and, to a far lesser degree in terms of numbers, Inuit people all have discrete cultural and learning needs to be met. This complex mix makes some important symbolic strategies used in Australia such as flying an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island flag, giving a welcome to (or acknowledgement of) country, displaying art and artefacts, and embedding culturally significant content more difficult.
* A pedagogical framework like the “8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning”, designed to embed Aboriginal learning styles in regular classroom lessons, does not exist (to my knowledge) in Simcoe County. Initial response to exposure to this framework in Simcoe County was very positive (acknowledging that it is the idea behind the framework and not the framework itself that is of most value).
* The” 7 Grandfather Teachings” and the use of the” Medicine Wheel” were observed being used as a cognitive framework very effectively, in various ways, from Kindergarten to senior years. Rather than being about cultural content or teaching styles it was most often used as a scaffold to address values to which cultural/historic content and/or personal experience were related. It was an important focus of Native Studies classes observed. Such a rich, structured and culturally accepted ways of addressing important indigenous values does not appear to exist in NSW.
* The formal structures that support the use of Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) in NSW were not evident formally in Simcoe County but appear to occur informally.

Outcomes:* Sharing of various resources between Great Lakes College Senior Campus and various schools and personnel in Simcoe County
* A shared intention to establish Indigenous Video Conferences between Barrie Central Collegiate and Great Lakes College Senior Campus
* Ongoing connection and exchange .
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