



PHOTO - NICK PROCAYLO / VANCOUVER SUN

Morning classes at Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver.

How do they start the day?

The students and teachers start the day sitting in a circle. They talk about birthdays, class activities and “basket fillers”. Basket fillers are good deeds done to help others.



PHOTO - NICK PROCAYLO / VANCOUVER SUN

Morning assembly at Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver.

Education, First Nations style

LEVEL 3

Eighty children go to a special school in Vancouver. They learn in First Nations style.

The Aboriginal Focus School is the only one in Vancouver. Seventy of the students are aboriginal and 10 are not aboriginal. They have room for more students.

The school helps students develop cultural pride. Students learn about the values, experiences and histories of First Nations people. All the teachers are aboriginal.

Why do parents choose this school?

Some parents bring their children from other parts of the Lower Mainland. They want their children to learn and gain confidence.



PHOTO - NICK PROCAYLO / VANCOUVER SUN

Jolene Andrew brings her daughter, Raine, from New Westminster every day

Students become more confident

Jolene Andrew drives her seven-year-old daughter to school everyday. Her daughter's name is Raine.

Raine brings her drum to school every morning.

"Raine is going to be so much more confident in her identity. She will learn our history in a healthy way," says Andrew. She drives her daughter to school from New Westminster.

Often a child's attendance is better after moving to the school. One boy missed about one-third of his school days in his other school. He has not missed one day since he started here.

Who is the school's elder?



PHOTO - NICK PROCAYLO / VANCOUVER SUN

Lucy Chapman, from the Thompson and Sto:lo First Nations, is the school elder at Aboriginal Focus School in Vancouver..

Lucy Chapman is the school's elder. Chapman is from the Thompson and Sto:lo Nations. She is a residential school survivor.

She is also the grandmother of one of the students. Her granddaughter, Rosita, is 11 years old. Rosita is excited to be able to learn First Nations languages at school.

The Vancouver school board promises to keep the school open for at least five years.

Where is the Aboriginal Focus School?

The school is in Sir William Macdonald elementary school located near East Hastings and Victoria Street in Vancouver.

"I'm here if they need somebody to talk to. A lot of aboriginal kids don't have grandparents nearby. They give me a hug and call me grandma."

-- Lucy Chapman

Story adapted from [The Vancouver Sun](http://www.vancouver.ca) by Patty Bossort
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Vocabulary

confidence	identity	elder	residential	survivor
kon-fi-duh ns	ahy-den-ti-tee	el-der	rez-i-den-shuh l	ser-vahy-ver
belief in yourself	qualities, beliefs that make a person or group different from others	a person who is older and wiser	used as a place where students live	someone who is able to keep living or succeeding despite a lot of problems

Exercise

Fill in the blank with the right word. Choose from the list above.

1. Lucy Chapman is the school's _____.
2. She is a _____ school survivor.
3. They want their children to learn and gain _____.
4. She is a residential school _____.
5. Raine is going to be so much more confident in her _____.

Answer key
1. elder 2. residential 3. confidence 4. survivor 5. identity