

NEWS & EVENTS

June 2023

Simon Fraser University respectfully acknowledges the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səlilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh), qí'cəy (Katzie), k^wik^wəłəm (Kwikwetlem), Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo and Tsawwassen peoples on whose unceded traditional territories our three campuses reside.

A Look Back at Kazakhstan Team Visit (April-May 2023)

Overview of Kazakhstan Team Visit to Vancouver for the REACH Project

The Kazakhstan Team visited Vancouver from April 26 to May 3, 2023, as part of the REACH:Pathways project. The purpose of their visit was to gain insights and gather information about the Canadian context and education system. The team had a packed agenda that included community site visits, meetings, and cultural experiences. Here is an overview of what transpired during their visit:

Wednesday: April 26

The team arrived at Vancouver International Airport (YVR) at 19:10, where they were picked up by Robert and Aia.

Thursday: April 27

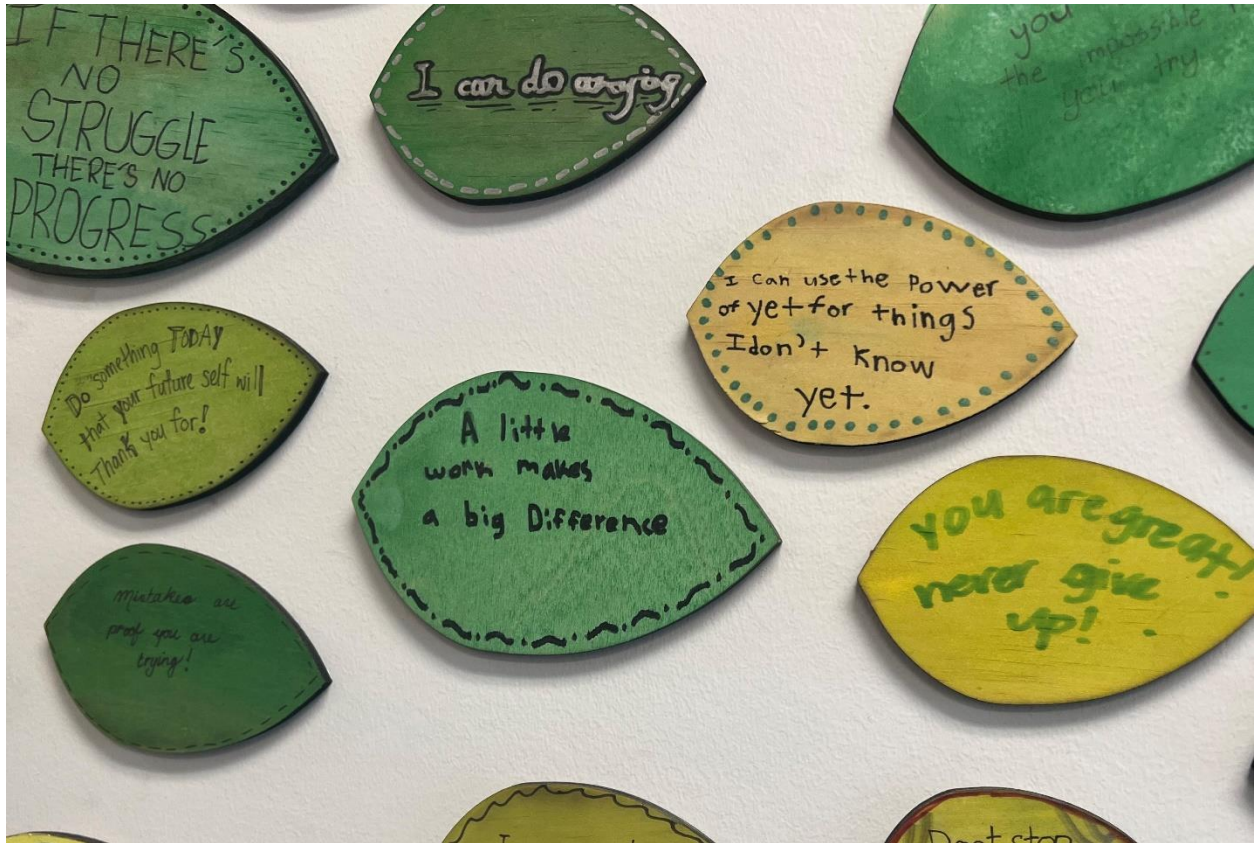
In the afternoon, the team was transported to Simon Fraser University (SFU) Burnaby Campus.

They were welcomed by Robert and attended a session on the Canadian context in EDB 7608, SFU Burnaby. Significantly, Dr. Vicky Kelly welcomed all through generously sharing the context of the Canadian context and history beginning far before settlers arrived in this place. Vicky's beautiful sharing of music, story and First Nations history provided the context upon which the Canadian systems are founded which grounded the purpose of the visit firmly within a context of truth and reconciliation.



Friday: April 28

The team visited New Westminster Secondary School (NWSS) and MOSAIC, gathering insights and information. They returned to SFU Burnaby for a session on gathering initial thoughts (RQ2) and visited Friends of Simon, an organization at EDB 7608. The team also went on a campus tour of SFU Burnaby and later enjoyed a tour of Burnaby Mountain Park.



Saturday: April 29

The team embarked on a tour, visiting various area sites including the First Nations cultural center located in Whistler, BC. This trip was unexpectedly disrupted by a 5-hour delay due to an auto accident on the only road leading to Whistler. Far from casting a shadow on the day, however, all engaged in games, sang songs, and generally made the most of the outing. Guests even visiting the roadside wilderness. This was a true welcome to British Columbia!

Monday: May 1

The team started the day with a visit to Burnaby Mountain Secondary School, followed by a trip to SFU Burnaby Campus.

Lunch was provided at the research hub on campus.

They walked to University Highlands Elementary Campus and concluded their school visits on Burnaby Mountain.

The team gathered final thoughts (RQ2) and discussed 'translating inclusion' at the Research Hub, SFU Burnaby.





Tuesday: May 2

A culminating dinner was provided at Saray in Burnaby, allowing the team to reflect on their visit and share experiences.

Throughout their visit, the Kazakhstan Team had the opportunity to explore three educational institutions, the MOSAIC Welcome Centre, and immerse themselves in the Canadian context. They also enjoyed cultural experiences in Vancouver and its surroundings that inform and connect the context in BC to its history and land. This visit provided critical insights and information for the ongoing REACH project. Much was discussed by the team, both formally and informally, which drove our mutual understanding of refugee children with disabilities in both the Canadian and the Kazakh contexts.

Blog Post (by Olessya)

Hello, everyone! My name is Olessya and I am a PhD student at SFU. I would like to share my experience participating in the REACH Project. First, I would like to mention that while my main research interest is different (teacher identity), I have always been drawn to the topics of diversity and inclusion. As a matter of fact, I did discuss these topics with my students

during the courses I have taught. But participating in this project allowed me to look at the notions of diversity and inclusion from multiple perspectives: Palestinian, Canadian, and Kazakhstani. I have not realized before that inclusion is not exactly a defined concept but could mean different things in different contexts. And that all together these perspectives emphasize how geopolitical our perceptions are.

The above was also evident in my conversations with fellow researchers and educators from Kazakhstan, whom I had the great pleasure to translate for. I must say that my work with them was also a great learning opportunity. Together with my fellow Kazakhs, I learned a great deal about approaches to diversity and inclusion in Canadian schools. I was happy to serve not only as a translator, but a “culture decipherer” telling them more about the Canadian context both educational and social. While some things really surprised our colleagues from Kazakhstan, they also admired many things they saw, such as for example, the arrangement of educational space in Canadian elementary schools. I also enjoyed an opportunity to learn more about inclusive education in Kazakhstan from my fellow Kazakhs, as unfortunately, I didn’t have the chance to do it when I still lived in Kazakhstan.

Overall, participating in this project was an enlightening experience and a huge learning opportunity. And I am very grateful to Dr. Susan Barber and Dr. Robert L. Williamson for inviting me to participate in it.