



# Elvin Case Study

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# Alvin's Story

- ▶ Northern First Nation Cree Community
- ▶ English is his second language
- ▶ In grade 8
- ▶ Born with a hearing impairment



(Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018)

# Environmental Conditions

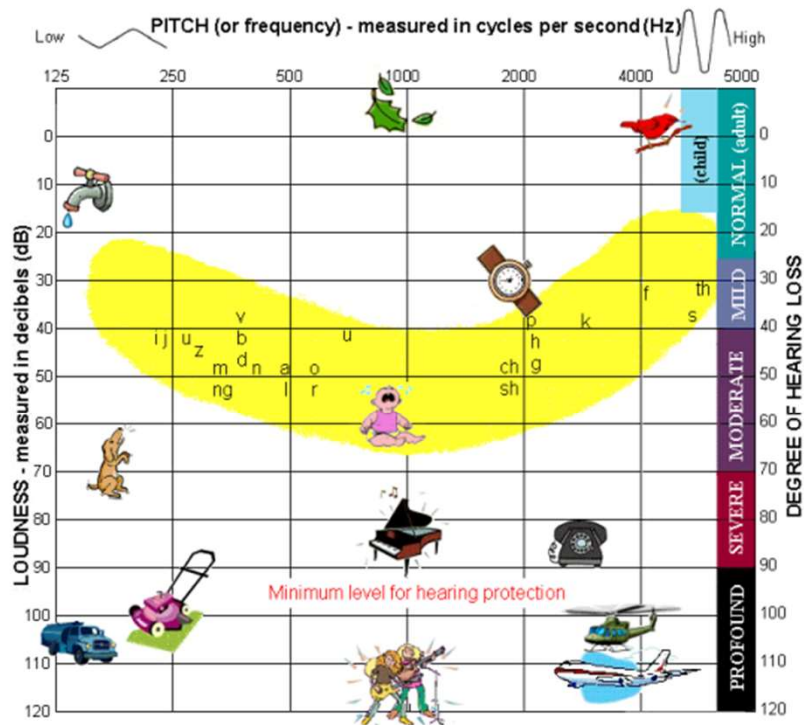
- ▶ Lives with his Mother, grandmother, and three siblings
- ▶ Lives in a northern first nations community with sparse medical care because of a lack of northern access and therefore no audiology support.
- ▶ Batteries for hearing aids are a special order and can cost upwards of \$100 for a small pack.
- ▶ Food is extremely expensive and is prioritized over batteries.
- ▶ K-12 school under the umbrella of a public-school division.
- ▶ The school operates with a significant level of independence.
- ▶ Student body is approximately 90% First Nations students.
- ▶ Most teaching staff are non-aboriginal and from urban environments.

# Learning Disabilities and Contributing Factors

- ▶ Born with a hearing impairment with hearing loss in both ears between 40-60 dB.
- ▶ Without hearing aids, he only hears sounds greater than 60 dB (most communication missed).
- ▶ With hearing aids, he hears sounds greater than 30 dB (can participate in classroom learning activities).
- ▶ Family experienced violence from father until Elvin was 4. Father is no longer in contact with the family.
- ▶ Diagnosed with a mild intellectual disability at 3 due to language delays.
- ▶ Entered school with limited language.
- ▶ Has since become proficient orally but struggles with written language.
- ▶ Categorized with ADHD and ODD

# Visualizing Hearing Impairment

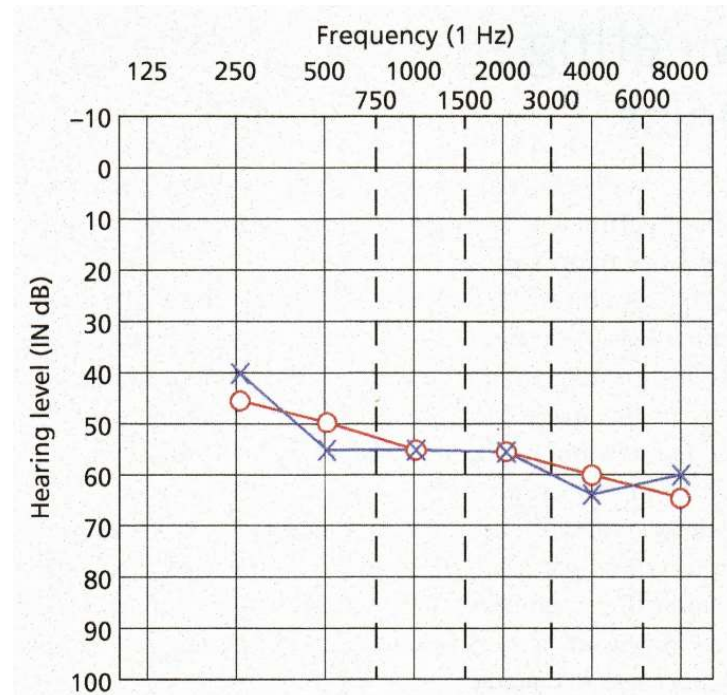
## Speech Banana



Loudness Levels of Common Sounds (in decibels)

-10 dB	Leaves rustling	80 dB	Rush hour traffic	120 dB	Rock band
10 dB	Breathing	90 dB	Food blender	120 dB	Airport
30 dB	Whisper	100 dB	Train	140 dB	Shotgun blast
40-60 dB	Conversation	110 dB	Chain Saw		
70 dB	Typewriter				

(Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018)



(Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018)

# Audiology Reports

- ▶ Level B test (Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test II (K-BIT2)) - Completed by resource teacher after mother declined psychological testing.
- ▶ Verbal IQ in mild disability range (SS=68)
- ▶ Verbal scores well below average (SS=52)
- ▶ Tests ability to reason, problem solve, and draw analogies using words and symbols.
- ▶ The verbal subset of most cognitive ability tests have been shown to be culturally biased (Elvin is ESL so this is more pronounced)
- ▶ Non-verbal subset uses symbols that are culturally neutral.

# Initial Meeting

## Parent Voice

- ▶ Elvin is often angry he yells and hurts his siblings
- ▶ He has a strong spirit and will not be beaten down
- ▶ He has a big heart and carves and drums and has magic in him.
- ▶ He needs someone at the school who sees his spirit.
- ▶ When his mother was sick with pneumonia Elvin watched over her with a makeshift net "I'm making sure she doesn't fly away"

## Resource Teacher Voice

- ▶ Elvin is a handful.
- ▶ Thinks he is being punished when sat at the front of the room so he can hear, which leads to anger.
- ▶ Doesn't complete work even when it is modified for him.
- ▶ His mother never answers messages when called.
- ▶ Needs more EA support.

# Second Meeting of SBT

- ▶ It was decided that Elvin's initial IEP was too deficit-based and remedial and didn't honour his strengths.
- ▶ This led to a decision to use the Three Block Model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL; Hutchinson & Specht, 2019).
  - ▶ Block 1: Creating a Community; Social and Emotional Learning; Consider using the Respecting Diversity Program
  - ▶ Block 2: Planning for Diversity: Inclusive Instructional Practice
  - ▶ Block 3: System and Structures; Leadership, Policy, and Practice; Inclusive Policy, Collaborative Practice, Team Planning, Assistive Technology
- ▶ Professional development was provided for all staff involved on the Three-Block Model of UDL.
- ▶ Built a profile of the class based on strengths and challenges and planned out an inclusive learning community for all students.
  - A) Introduced spirit buddies, the Respecting Diversity Program, the seven teachings, and the medicine wheel.
  - B) Planned an integrated multidisciplinary unit based around the fishing trade (a common interest of the class)
  - C) An elder lead students through explorations of Cree culture, spiritual beliefs, and perspectives.
  - D) An EA was assigned to the class rather than directly to Elvin, and Elvin was paired with a few students he had a good relationship with.
  - E) The school requested an FM system to make Elvin less reliant on hearing aids.



# Outcomes of Second IEP

## Resource Teacher Voice

- ▶ More focus was placed on academic goals and strategies.
- ▶ Reconstruction of the learning environment to better suit Elvin and the other students.
- ▶ Reduction of anger in the classroom due to reduced frustration and increased feelings of efficacy.
- ▶ Community based explorations of meaningful topics led to richer learning.

## Classroom Teacher Voice

- ▶ We previously focused on his weaknesses and what he couldn't do. Focusing on his strengths helps him thrive and is important for his family.
- ▶ He is now happy, cooperative, and energetic.
- ▶ Having experienced success, he is more willing to work on his reading and writing.
- ▶ By being more involved in the class he has developed supports and strategies to help him cope with difficulties.

## Parent Voice

- ▶ Elvin now comes home happy and doesn't fight so much anymore.
- ▶ His younger brother wants to have the same teacher.
- ▶ *"My children and grandchildren won't be terrified when they walk into school. They will go to high school and maybe even university."*

# Summary of Elvin's Case Study

- ▶ "They took the emphasis off of fixing Elvin and put it on designing a learning environment where he and his classmates could be successful."
- ▶ Focus on strengths to allow Elvin to experience success.
- ▶ This leads to a natural desire to continue that success and motivates him to continue learning and improving his skills.

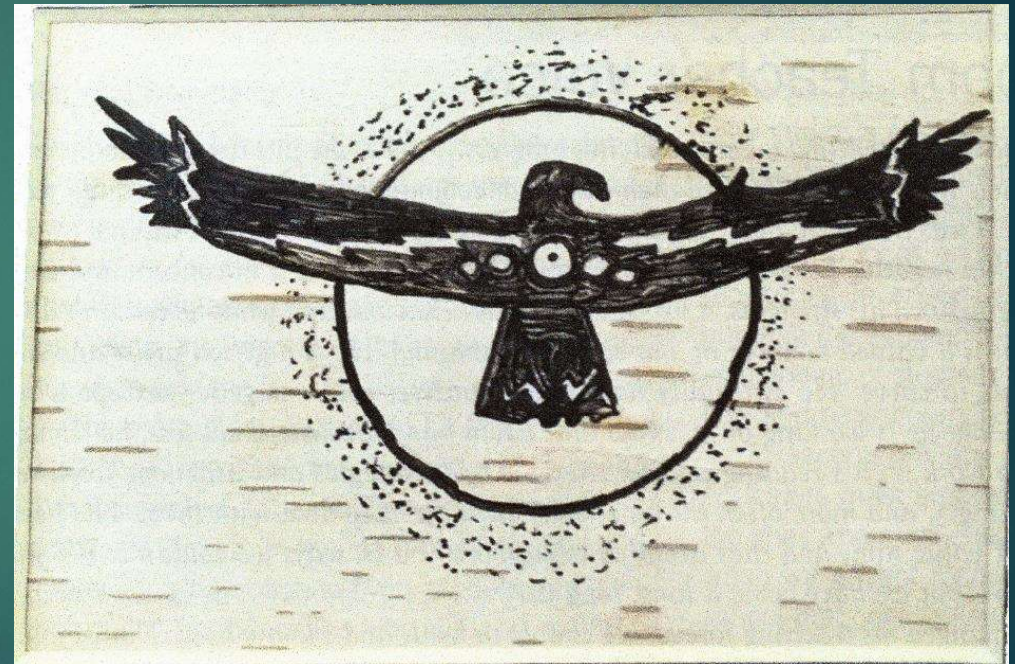
## General Lessons

- 1) Create a positive social and emotional environment.
- 2) Take an interest in figuring out why individual students act the way they do.
- 3) Start where students are at and engage their interests.
- 4) Encourage risk taking.
- 5) Monitor students to ensure you are effectively using these first four lessons.
- 6) Celebrate the accomplishments of learners and their families.

Question 1: What are the unique circumstances we must be aware of when discussing northern, First Nations schools? Would this case have been different in any way had it been set in an urban environment.

**Unique Considerations:**

- ▶ Language differences
- ▶ Cost of living and excessive shipping costs (food, batteries, etc.)
- ▶ Limited access to health care (Hanlon, 2005)
- ▶ Common interests
- ▶ More homogenous student population (90% FN)
- ▶ Community economics, industrial communities, and ways of living (Fishing village; Hanlon, 2005).
- ▶ Connection to land
- ▶ Generational Knowledge
- ▶ Residue effects from historic racism and residential schools
- ▶ Shortage of support teaching staff.



(Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018)

# Question 1 continued: Urban Environment

## Differences in an Urban Environment:

- ▶ Greater access to health care.
- ▶ Likely to have more EA access.
- ▶ Possibly more testing done on Elvin.
- ▶ Likely would have a more varied set of student interests.
- ▶ Would have to find a different common thread of interest.
- ▶ More heterogenous community and opportunities.



<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/crosstown-elementary-school-downtown-vancouver>

## Question 2: How do the **initial** thoughts of Elvin's mother and teacher reflect cultural differences in educational philosophy and child development?

### ▶ Elvin's Mother:

- ▶ Sees Elvin's frustration, anger, and aggression towards others, his grandmother, and her.
- ▶ Also sees his spirit as a good thing. She talks of being beaten down, like so many others in the community. Sees Elvin's Spirit as strong, fierce resilient to such things.
- ▶ Sees Elvin and wants others to also
  - ▶ Big heart, carves, drums, has magic in him.

### ▶ Elvin's Teacher:

- ▶ Viewed Elvin's issues as "...all behavioural, and all about Elvin becoming obedient and doing what was asked of him" (Stegemann & Angela Aucoin, 2018, p.158).
- ▶ Response to Intervention (RTI) oriented initially
- ▶ Blames lack of support from home and in schools.
- ▶ Focuses on changing Elvin's behaviour rather than adapting the learning context

## Question 2 Continued: Mother's story about Elvin

- ▶ *"I will tell you a story about Elvin. Last year I got really sick with pneumonia. I was sleeping all day. Elvin went and got a big piece of fishing net and attached it to a pole, like you use for catching butterflies or jumping fish. He sat in my room all day and all night. When grandmother asked him what he was doing, he said, 'I'm making sure she doesn't fly away.' Nobody at that school sees his magic" (Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018, p. 156).*

### Question 3: Do you agree with the resource teacher that "they didn't need an IEP" for Elvin? Why or why not?

- ▶ Could still be useful to show the accommodations for his hearing difficulty, but his learning difficulties were solved by class wide design/policy
- ▶ *Personal Example from Practicum*
- ▶ *"Within a month of beginning the process, we were stunned to realize we didn't really need an IEP for Elvin. This was not because Elvin was magically cured! It's just that we realized all of our students needed the same supports. Yes, Elvin's needs were sometimes more intense/frequent, but other than the FM system, they really weren't that unique" (Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018, p. 159).*

## Question 4: What do you notice about the changes in the first, second, and third IEPs? How does this reflect a shift in mindset?

- ▶ The first IEP was focused on behaviour intervention
- ▶ The second IEP was focused on redesigning learning activities to ones that focus on Elvin's strengths.
- ▶ The third IEP was focused on designing the classroom learning to best fit the strengths and interests of the entire class.
- ▶ This reflects a shift in mindset from one that focuses on and tries to solve behavioural issues by specific intervention to a mindset of addressing the root of student problems (frustration, lack of self-efficacy, etc.) by engaging students through their interests and starting where they are at.
- ▶ The shift from 2nd to 3rd shows the realization that all students needed the same support—an adapted way of teaching that fit the community (oral and visual communication emphasis).



# Question 4 continued: IEP Comparison

IEP Version	Goal	Strategy	Assessment
1	Elvin will be able to express his feelings in appropriate ways.	Counselling Positive behaviour intervention support (PBIS) Reward System	Fewer incidents of aggression
2	Elvin will be able to express his feelings in appropriate ways.	Class meetings Teach group work skills Sharing circles Songs, artwork	Elvin participates in circle, shares his thoughts and feelings. Elvin represents his feelings and beliefs through art and music
3	Students will be able to express their feelings in appropriate ways	Class meetings Teach group work skills Sharing circles Songs, artwork	Students participate in circle, share thoughts and feelings. Students represent their feelings and beliefs through art and music.

## Question 5: Elvin has been identified as having an intellectual disability, ODD, and ADHD. How do you feel about these diagnoses? What role might his hearing impairment have played in this?

These diagnoses are likely to have been caused (or at least exacerbated) by Elvin's hearing impairment and early life experiences.

Role of Hearing Impairment and other considerations:

- ▶ can affect ability to learn language (Canadian Hearing Society, 2021)
- ▶ Lack of hearing reduces his opportunities to interact with others to develop language and social-emotional skills.
- ▶ Access to aid and support (battery cost)
- ▶ Developmental difficulties due to hearing impairment (presumptions)

Supporting Research:

- ▶ Meta-analysis results from Stevenson et al. (2015) demonstrate higher rates of emotional and behavioral difficulties among youth with hearing impairment.
- ▶ ADHD diagnoses and treatments have been described as not always culturally appropriate for aboriginal children (Loh et al. 2017)
  - ▶ Treatment non-compliance from parents resulting from observed changes in child's behaviour after medication as a loss of identity/self

# Question 5 Continued: Other considerations on the diagnoses

- ▶ English as a Second Language (ESL)
- ▶ Difficulties in executive functioning—Elvin "just puts his head down" at challenging questions and sees being put at the front of the class as punishment rather than aid.
- ▶ Why might Alvin lash out and hit peers when they come too close?
  - ▶ Maladapted reactive response to his experience with real threat—violence in the home from a young age during early development
- ▶ Environment felt unsafe to take risks



(Stegemann & Aucoin, 2018)

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