



COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

Our Stories are **Beyond Education**
Storytelling Strategy 2021 - 2024

WHY STORIES?



The stories we tell literally make the world. If you want to change the world, you need to change your story. This truth applies both to individuals and institutions

-Michael Margolis, CEO Get Storied, Educator, Futures Anthropologist

Storytelling has long been the most effective way to build community, elicit emotions, teach culture, or speak to values of a group. From stories around a campfire, to a lesson from an Elder, a memorable presentation, or a speech that acts as a rallying cry, they are all woven together with the common thread of great storytelling. We are hard-wired to love a good story. Building a strong and vibrant community, based on trust, through understandable and relatable stories serves our organization, employees, and most importantly, our learners and our future.

The Storytelling Strategy is a document that guides the stories of our district and lays out a hopeful narrative throughout all elements, with a consistent tone and focus. The ongoing work of framing our stories in a hopeful way, and one that shows education as a public good, is assisted by the important work of the Shared Story Partnership.



The Storytelling Strategy is guided by the District's Strategic Plan, 'Beyond Education', and is part of a larger Communications Plan which also encompasses our Brand Standards and Crisis Communications Plan

WHAT IS A STORYTELLING STRATEGY?

This Storytelling Strategy serves as a guiding document that helps overlay a consistent theme across domains. Instead of molding or forcing activities to fit a certain narrative, the Storytelling Strategy seeks out the deep learning that is present, frames it properly as a story of hope, and brings it to the surface to highlight it.



DEFINING OUR STORY

Our district is fortunate to have a strong Board of Education, engaged staff, passionate administrators, and creative teachers, all of who are on a journey of transformational change. With over 8300 learners doing unique, creative, powerful work, our story has to reflect all aspects of our organization, but at the same time, it has to convey a simple, direct, and understandable message while fulfilling a need within our audience. Our educators and learners do impactful things every day and our stories should be received as such.

Our District story, the thread that binds our transformational change to the everyday work and experiences of our learners and staff, is a story of HOPE.

ANALYSIS

The 2018/19 School year was the first year where storytelling was used as the primary method to communicate the deep learning happening every day in the Cowichan Valley School District. This method has seen huge response and healthy engagement from our communities.

While the 2019/2020 School Year started with a number of projects, the COVID-19 pandemic stalled the full implementation of this plan, it is hoped that the 2021 school year will see a reinvigoration of this work.

HOW DO WE TELL OUR STORIES?



Captivating photography



Compelling text



Inspiring Videos

WHERE DO OUR STORIES GO?



WHAT STORIES RESONATE WITH OUR COMMUNITIES?



Indigenous Education



Community Service



Land-based Learning



Individual Contributions to Community

These stories were already hopeful in nature and the response to the stories was substantial. The common theme, when all of these stories were distilled, were that they were hopeful and future-focused. Our stories must reflect that.

WHO IS OUR AUDIENCE?

In analyzing our analytics through Facebook and Instagram, we can see that our audience is predominantly people who self-identify as 'female' and self-selected ages of 35-44 years (with the second most active group being females between the ages of 25-34). This metric has not changed over the last three years.



AUDIENCE STATISTICS

An overview of our Facebook and Instagram followers.

32%

OF OUR FACEBOOK AUDIENCE SELF-IDENTIFIES AS FEMALE, BETWEEN THE AGES OF 35-44

82-86%

AUDIENCE ON BOTH FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM THAT SELF-IDENTIFY AS FEMALE

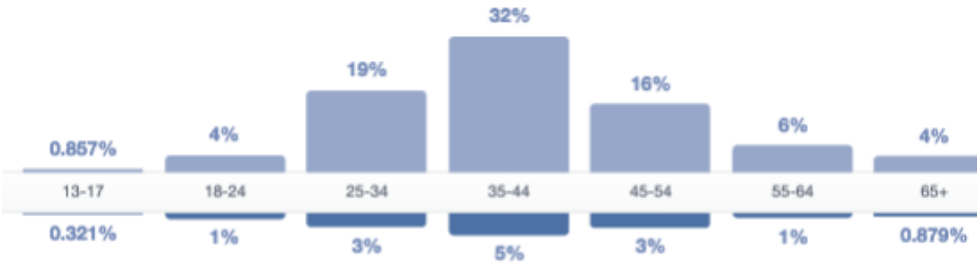


Women

82%
Your Fans

Men

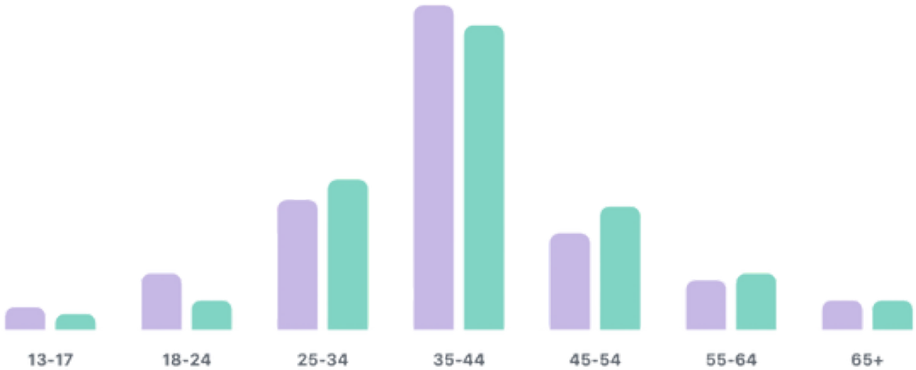
16%
Your Fans



Age and Gender of Your Followers

Metrics are estimated.

14% Men 86% Women



GEOGRAPHY AND POTENTIAL AUDIENCE

The majority of our audience lives in Duncan or the surrounding area. Our second most popular area for story engagement is Victoria. According to Facebook's demographic research, within a 25 mile radius of Duncan, we have a potential audience of 150,000 people.

WHAT ARE THE HARD NUMBERS?



2019/20

Likes: 3207 / Followers: 3584

Oct 2021

Likes: 4933 / Followers: 5728

Year Increase

Likes: 1726 / Followers: 2144



2019/20

Followers: 373

Oct 2021

Followers: 992

Year Increase

Followers: 619



2019/20

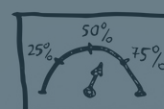
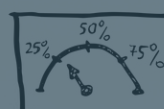
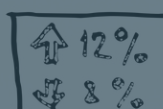
Followers: 199

Oct 2021

Followers: 739

Year Increase

Followers: 540



There are many other metrics to analyze in these tools to examine their effectiveness, and 'followers' and 'page likes' are not the only, or best, measure. However these numbers do show growth, and brand recognition.



WHAT MUST OUR STORIES DO

We distilled this list of Story Guidelines through careful analysis of our stories

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: OUR STORIES MUST

Be Hopeful

Stories of hope grab onto the emotion of our readers

Be Future-Focused

Hope is a future-focused emotion, our stories must show hope for the future

Be Learner-Centered

Our learners are at the heart of everything we do, our stories must reflect that

Be Unique / Interesting

Eye-catching, unique and interesting stories help propel our messages

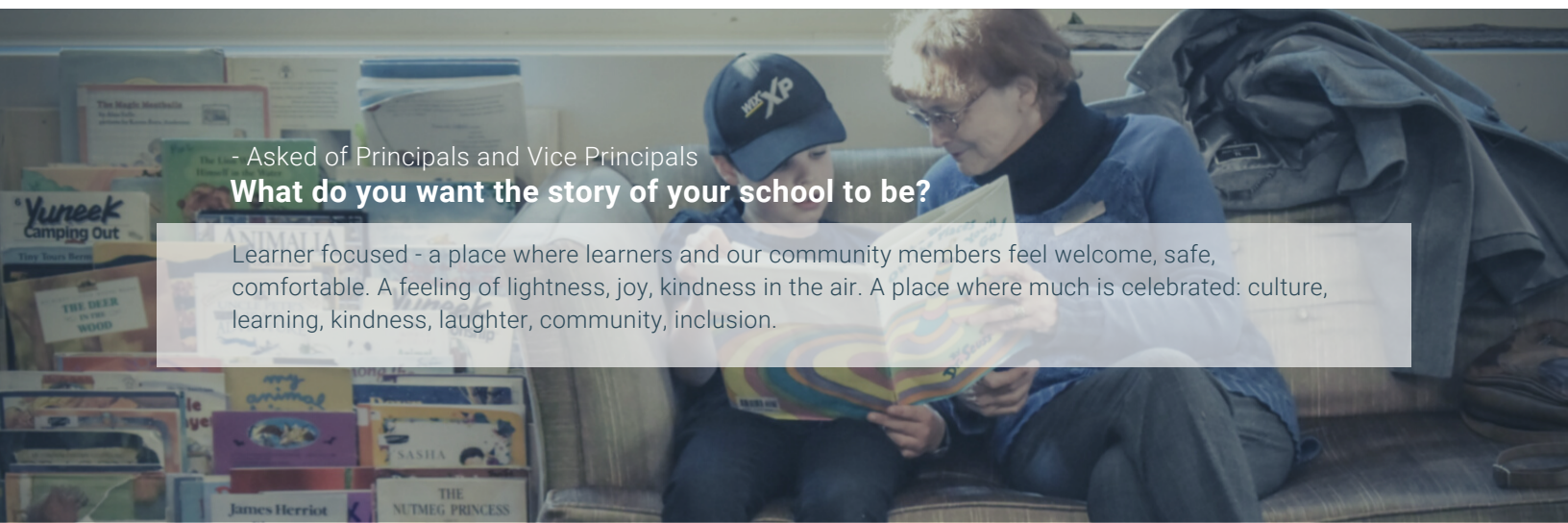
Be Reflective of Our Communities and our Roles Within

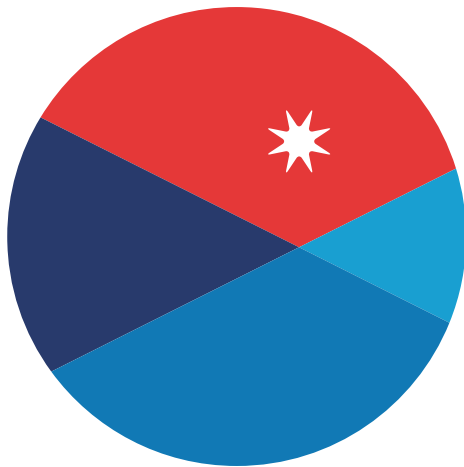
We are a vital part of the community at large, and strong school communities give our learners hope

- Asked of Principals and Vice Principals

What do you want the story of your school to be?

Learner focused - a place where learners and our community members feel welcome, safe, comfortable. A feeling of lightness, joy, kindness in the air. A place where much is celebrated: culture, learning, kindness, laughter, community, inclusion.








PARTNERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE *of* LEARNING

SHARED STORY

The Cowichan Valley School District is the only Canadian participant in Shared Story. This partnership has among its contributors, a large group of educational advocates, non-profit organizations, and researchers, who seek to have public education seen as a public good.

Shared Story is a collaborative effort to create a narrative shift that centers public education as a public good. Shared Story operates under the theory that if we can engage a network of communicators from the education field, align the ways they communicate about education to their audiences, and amplify shared stories to broader audiences, then we can shift the cultural narrative about public education, which will have ripple effects on policy change, community engagement, and other supports. We are shifting the way the education field talks about the value of public education by engaging, aligning, and amplifying our network:

-  **Engage** the network to build individual and collective capacity toward network power.
-  **Align** the network around a shared narrative framework to avoid traps, counter harmful narratives, and create new frames for narrative resilience.
-  **Amplify** the network by sourcing and sharing stories that advance the Partnership's shared vision and values using a widening range of media types and story packages. ⁽¹⁾

SHARED STORY STRATEGY SCREEN

The following information is adapted from the Shared Story Strategy Screen which is licensed as Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike CC BY-NC-SA under the Creative Commons

REFINING OUR APPROACH

Strategy Screen refines our storytelling vision and provides a guide to our framing and the telling of our stories

ADVANCE A BOLD VISION

Paint a picture of the future that
people can see themselves in,
and invite the
viewer into that future

**OFFER
SOLUTIONS AND
INSPIRE ACTION**

Have a clear message

NAVIGATE, LEVERAGE, & SHIFT FRAMES

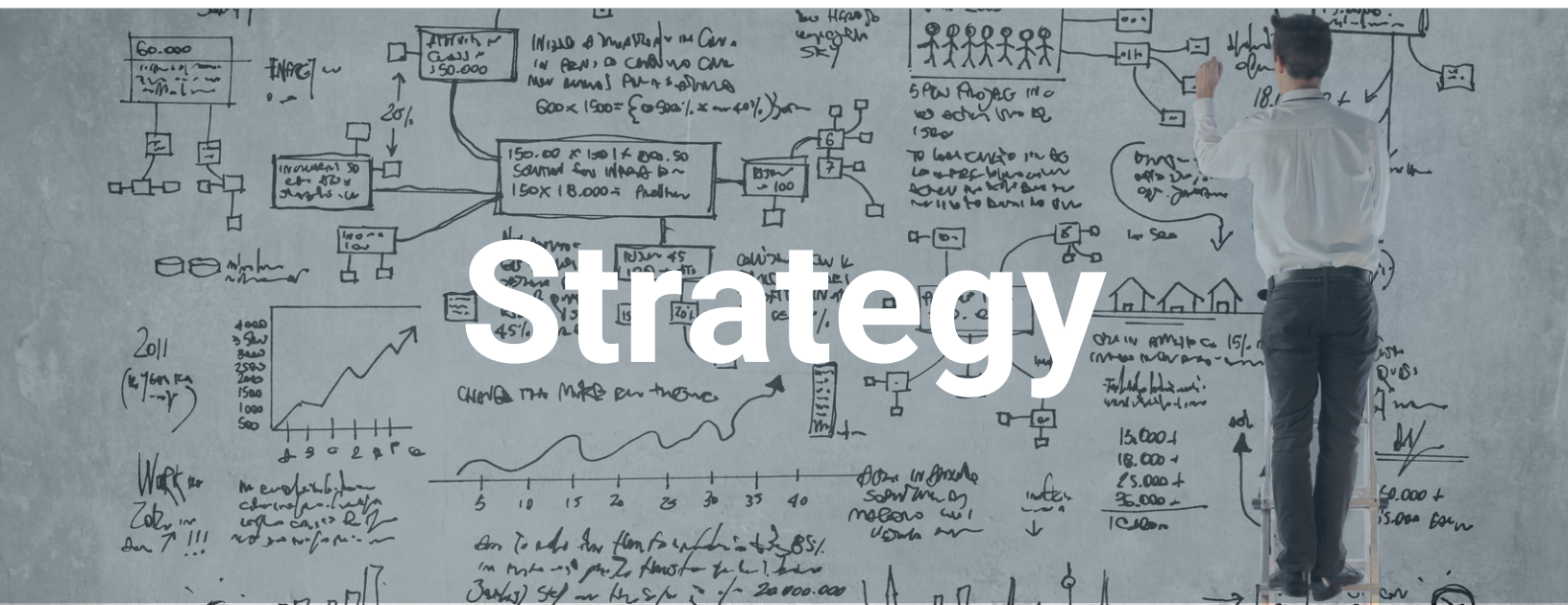
Offer new thinking around
a dominant narrative

**ILLUMINATE
STRUCTURAL
INEQUITIES**

Illustrate how structural inequities, create inequitable contexts and outcomes

BUILD POWER & PARTICIPATION

Feature diverse people and communities



INSPIRE HOPE

2021 - 2024 GOAL

The goal this storytelling strategy is to
INSPIRE HOPE and to build our audiences

HOW DO WE TELL STORIES THAT INSPIRE

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

How do we take our Guiding Principles and our Story Screen and turn them into stories?

INDIVIDUAL STORIES

We will produce short video stories from individual schools, that fit our Guiding Principles

MINI-DOC SERIES

Continue our Mini-documentary series.

IN-HOUSE STORIES

Continue the strong stories from this past year. Heavy photo presence and compelling stories

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Hello Dolly - Everything you wanted to know from an Elder but were afraid to ask.
Hul'q'umi'num Language Lessons

MEDIA OUTREACH

Pre-packaged stories for local media





2-3minute video stories from individual schools, that fit our Guiding Principles, and told within the Shared Story Strategy Screen

2-3
MINUTE VIDEOS

Using the Guiding Principles and Strategy Screen, each school will be asked to help showcase a story of hope within their school. The topics for these stories will be chosen at the school level by students, staff, and administrators and approved by the Director of Communications. Since the implementation of the original Storytelling Strategy, eight school stories were told and recorded!

8
VIDEOS IN
2019 /2020



WATCH HERE



In the 2018/19 school year, Keywork Productions was hired to help film Xe' Xe' Smun'een (Our Sacred Children), an in-depth, hopeful look at what our efforts towards reconciliation are throughout our district. This video was followed up by 'Nuts'a' maat shqwaluwun kw tst yaayus (Working together with one heart, one mind, one thought)': the story of how our district came together to provide for everyone during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, Using the Guiding Principles and Shared Story Strategy Screen as a guide, another video will be commissioned. The topic is yet to be determined.



Xe'xe' smun'een, Our Sacred Children



**Nuts'a' maat shqwaluwun kw tst yaayus
(Working together with one heart, one mind, one thought)**



During the 2018/19 school year, over 125 stories of hope were told throughout our district. The stories used compelling photography, captivating text, and traditional, free, social media accounts to inform the public on what was happening in our district. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic we were only able to tell 78 stories.

220

**IN-HOUSE STORIES TOLD SINCE 2018/19
SCHOOL YEAR**

Our Stories will continue, and using the Guiding Principles and Shared Story Strategy Screen. An ambitious goal of 100 in-house stories is being set to compliment the other storytelling methods. This number may fluctuate depending on the comfort of staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the 2021/22 school year, these stories will be 'deeper-dives' and be framed in a consistent way. They will continue to be photo-heavy and use compelling imagery to connect on a deeper level with our audience.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

There are two Indigenous Education projects that will act as resources for our community, learners, staff, and beyond.



1st

FULL-TIME DISTRICT ELDER IN BC

In 2019 the Board of Education for the Cowichan Valley School District appointed the province's first District Elder and Knowledge Keeper, Dolly Sylvester. There are many questions regarding Dolly's position and about Elders in general.



Hello Dolly

To help inspire hope, the Hello Dolly video series will be continued. The bi-weekly feature is short in duration and is a question / answer format. The 14 current videos have been incredibly popular and have been shown across BC and on Shaw Cable. More videos will be filmed as COVID restrictions allow.



'Uy' skweyul

We are lucky to have several fluent Hul q'umi'num' speakers on our staff. As part of our resources and education for our community, and to act as a resource for we want to continue to produce Hul q'umi'num' word of the week videos.

Over the last year and a half, we have filmed 42 Hul'q'umi'num' Word of the Week videos. These videos have been shown around BC and on Shaw Cable. The first series focused on the teachings of the month for elementary students. The next iteration of this will focus on conversational Hul'q'umi'num'. There is a strong desire to highlight student language speakers in this series.



Watch Hul'q'umi'num' Word of the Week



In-House stories will be pre-packaged for local media and include photos and information in the form of media releases or full written stories.

**THERE WAS
OPPORTUNITY TO
SHARE OVER 220
STORIES OVER THE
LAST TWO YEARS**

MORE SHARING TO COME!

In an effort to increase earned media through local, provincial, and national outlets, a concerted effort will be made towards media outreach. This strategy will be based heavily this framework and will aim to increase our media coverage while providing a consistent narrative.

Increased media releases or advisories will be prepared and sent to an expanded media list.



STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION



Engagement of staff in their own stories, and the representation of stories of all distinct staff is a key component of this Storytelling Strategy.

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE

Storytelling in this manner is new to the district. To encourage more participation and comfort with this, all stories that are told will be reflected back to our school communities through the weekly 'Our Story' profile that will be sent to all staff. This creates a sense of pride in the work that is being done, as well as making more staff feel comfortable in telling their stories and contacting Communications.

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Stories have traditionally been about what happens within or near the four walls of a school and are focused on education. It is a focus of this plan to enhance the recording and stories from all work groups throughout the district and to highlight work done by everyone. Enhancing this will bring a sense of comfort and pride.

We are building staff familiarity with the storytelling process and product and when this plan ends, a fulsome engagement will take place on how to adjust this plan. This engagement will be inclusive of staff, students and the community.



HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS

Principals and Vice Principals were asked what criteria they think would let them know that the Storytelling Strategy was working within their schools.

Measurable data includes:

- Satisfaction surveys
- Student feedback surveys
- Increased followers on Social platforms
- Increased engagement and positive conversations on Social platforms
- Increased amount of earned media locally, provincially, and nationally

Street-Level data includes:

- Positive 'parking lot' or 'grocery store' conversations
- Increase in public speaking of Hul' q' umi'num language
- Staff / Students / Parents seek out stories and want to be involved
- Student voice will be more reflected in work
- Stories are retold

SHARED STORY PARTNERSHIP WORK

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