

The Highlighter

April 5, 2022

Delegation

Fatima Da Silva, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Nourish Cowichan: Nourish Cowichan recently celebrated its fifth anniversary, which wouldn't have been possible without the support of the School District. During the past two years the pandemic caused Nourish Cowichan to adapt and grow beyond anything it had projected. Prior to the pandemic Nourish Cowichan focused mainly on providing breakfast and had a budget under \$200,000. In 2020 the budget jumped to \$600,000, and this year will rise to \$700,000. Since 2017 over \$2.5M has been raised, mostly in community, and those partnerships continue to grow. The opportunity to participate in the Ministry of Education/ District equity scan caused the organization to re-examine its path going forward. One reason Nourish Cowichan has been able to grow and adapt is because as an organization they never consider saying no; they first say yes and then figure out a way to safely, financially and logistically deliver what's being asked. They requested an opportunity to meet with the District to create a more robust communication strategy prior to the next school year to ensure all schools are aware of the resources and services provided by Nourish Cowichan. The Board thanked Fatima, Nourish Cowichan and all its volunteers for their valuable contribution to our schools and community, and passed a motion to meet to discuss communication.

Board Chair

Vancouver Island School Trustees Association (VISTA) AGM: VISTA's AGM was held via Zoom on March 5, 2022. Conversations at the meeting included concerns about mental illness in our communities and schools, corporate messaging in our curriculum and corporate sponsorship in our schools.

National Day of Mourning: Flags at schools across the District and at the School Board Office will fly at half mast on April 28, 2022 in recognition of the National Day of Mourning, which honours those who were injured or killed in workplace accidents, and collectively renews our commitment to improve health and safety in our schools and in our workplaces.

Early Learning Manager: The District has a number of early learning initiatives on the go, including five new child care centres being put into operation on school properties, an out-of-school care program being piloted at Bench Elementary, six StrongStarts and two StrongStart outreach programs. In order to support these initiatives, as well as the move of child care to the Ministry of Education and the Board's priority of early learning, the Board passed a motion to create an Early Learning Manager in the 2022-2023 Budget.

Education

Personnel Update: The role of Health and Wellness Manager (previously called the Health and Wellness Coordinator) was posted March 11 and closes April 8, 2022.



COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

New Indigenous-Focused Graduation Requirement: The Ministry of Education and Child Care in collaboration with the First Nations Education Steering Committee implemented a new graduation requirement. Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, all secondary students will be required to complete four credits of Indigenous-focused work to graduate. The Ministry is accepting feedback on the proposed approach for the new graduation requirement until April 22, 2022. Feedback received through this engagement will inform a finalized implementation plan for the new graduation requirement.

Youth Train in Trades Transition Grant: The ITA is transitioning from a two-payment model (\$1,200 per student provided to school districts upon registration, and an additional \$1,000 following successful completion of the program) to a single payment of \$1,800 based on the projected number of students registering for the Youth Train in Trades program the following year. The process for registering apprentices has been streamlined and is expected to result in an increase in the number of apprentices in the District.

Mill Bay Nature School: Qwiqwul tst tse (Let's Talk) New Clan Concept: Trustees passed a motion approving the addition of Qwiqwul tst tse – 'Let's Talk' Clan to Mill Bay Nature School to create a Kindergarten to Grade 9 school by the 2024/25 school year.

Superintendent's Update:

Acknowledgements:

- Administrative Professionals Day on April 27 is a day to acknowledge the contributions of the District's administrative support which keeps the learning community operating smoothly.
- Thank you to staff who worked during the Spring Break including Payroll, Finance, Human Resources, Operations and Technology.

Graduation Requirements Exemption: Following the cancellation of the January 2022 Literacy and Numeracy Assessments, students in Grade 10 and 12 who have completed all their course work required for graduation by March 31, 2022 may receive an exemption for the Literacy and Numeracy Assessments.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: The Provincial Government has advised all provincial public sector employers to observe the September 30th National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in the same manner as last year. The 2022-2023 school calendar has been adjusted to reflect that schools will not be in operation on September 30, 2022.

Annual Strategic Plan Survey: The annual staff survey will open on April 19 and close May 3. Results will be shared with the Board at the May 24, 2022 BEBC meeting. Information collected will inform the District's Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) report due to the Ministry in September.

Cowichan Secondary Replacement: Photos of the work taking place on site were shared. Meetings with the architect and builder are continuing, with almost 60% of the design now complete.

Non-Instructional Day (NID) on April 11, 2022: Ilsa Govan will present a keynote "Unpacking Privilege in Schools" in the morning session. There will be 35 learning opportunities in the afternoon on a range of topics. To name but a few: reimagining self care, sound walls in action, math as a language, and K-9 new reading assessment re-design.



Decolonizing Instruction Learning Series with Maribel Valdez Gonzalez: The Learning Team and Indigenous Education partnered to provide this four-part learning series for Principals, Vice-Principals and Managers. These sessions will occur on April 21, April 27, May 9 and May 25.

Ignite Sans Bite: The District Learning Team is providing a series of learning opportunities for staff from 4:00-5:30 p.m. on April 21. Offerings include an introduction to the District Learning Commons' new booking system with a chance to explore the available resources, ethical aspects of social studies and building cultural empathy, a chance to discover the Salish Weave print collection and corresponding classroom resources, and tech time: engage your learners with a social media type activity without the social media.

K-12 Mental Health Initiatives: CVOLC, Frances Kelsey, Lake Cowichan and Chemainus Secondary are using the results of a recent survey of staff, students and the community to develop mental health plans to support mental health and well-being in their schools. Bench, Ecole Mount Prevost, Ecole Cobble Hill and George Bonner Elementary are pilot schools for the Elementary Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Plan. Bench has reported that staff, students and parents are being surveyed to identify strengths and stretches within their community and develop opportunities for students to learn skills to manage their emotions and their interactions at school and at home.

Alexander Wolf Pack: Hul'q'umi'num' Language and Culture Advisor Claudia Sylvester and Indigenous Education teacher/Vice-Principal Kelly Girvan have been working with classes to make meaningful connections between the land and their learning as they take their culture and language lessons outside in the spring weather. Students in Grades 4-7 are being supported as they reflect on their personal and cultural identity and literacy confidence before, during and after their land-based lessons. It is exciting to see how the students self-report their connections after spending more time on lands such as Pi'paam (Mt. Tzouhalem), Qwaqwyuqun (Stoney Hill), Cowichan Bay and Glenora.

Ecole Mt. Prevost Ukrainian Fundraiser: Kindergarten teacher Deborah Smith has a Ukrainian-Canadian student who has been teaching the class words in Russian and Ukrainian since September. During a class discussion about the events in Ukraine a fellow student suggested doing something for peace. Students coded the letter "P" for peace in both English and French in binary, using pony beads in the colours of the Ukrainian flag and sold the bracelets to raise funds for peace.

The Grove - Nanaimo Legion Poster Competition: Dredan Lee, a Grade 7 student at the Grove, took home top prize in his age group for his painting "No Soldier Forgotten" which features a spirit bear in honour of Indigenous veterans and fallen soldiers. Dredan's Grandmother had shared the story of his Great-Great-Uncle who, as a First Nations Veteran who served in WWII, was not allowed to vote or even enter a bar with the men he served with. Today there are still Indigenous soldiers, both living and dead, who are not recognized. No soldier should be forgotten.

CVOLC Students Make Tables for Gathering Space: Students have been hard at work creating beautiful picnic tables as a place for the new residents of the Cowichan Housing Association's "Village" to gather.

Tansor Update: Intermediate students have been fortunate to have Robin MacDowell, who runs the Rugby Academy at CSS, working with them to build non-contact rugby skills. The students will be participating in the 4th Annual Cowichan Valley Rookie Rugby Jamboree in May. At the May 6 Pro-D Day some of the school's staff will be building a Localized Nature Resource to go along with their



wonderful forested area. The resource would include activities of STEM, outdoor play, seasonal scavenger hunt, First Peoples' Principles of Learning, and nature journals.

FKSS Registered as Community Volunteer Income Tax Clinic: Students in Grades 11 and 12 will be helping each other with their personal income tax returns and filing. Students will participate in four 45-minute seminars on tax return processing, understanding tax law and compliance, and using the CRA tax filing software with teacher Mary Brinkman and Associate Secretary-Treasurer (and Tax Professor at VIU and UBC) Erin Egeland. The activities, which were coordinated in tandem with Student Parliament, provide a great learning opportunity for students, offer a valuable service to their peers, and give participating students 30 hours of work-related experience.

Skills Competition Update: On April 7th Dual Credit students will be competing in a Chowder Competition at the Cowichan Campus of VIU. On April 21st 24 young women will be attending the Women in Trades event at Camosun College. Also on April 21st, Culinary Dual Credit students and high school students will compete at VIU's Cowichan Campus in a Skills Canada regional competition.

Youth Apprentices: 45 Youth Apprentices were each awarded \$1,000 (no presentation ceremony was able to be held due to COVID).

Research Projects: District Psychologist Lila Boulet, with the support of UVIC, is researching the impact of COVID-19 on developing component literacy skills. The research is focused on current Grade 3 students, who were in Grade 1 when the pandemic began, at five District schools. The project will help us better understand any learning gaps and how we can successfully support these learners as they emerge from two years of navigating the pandemic. Approval was also granted to Matthew King, National Project Coordinator at Queen's University, for his Masters' research project "Health Behaviour in School-aged Children." The purpose of the research is to compare health and health behaviours of adolescents across time and across countries, provinces and territories. This study provides an excellent platform to determine the impact of COVID-19 and related health and education policies on specific aspects of adolescent health and well-being. Ecole Mt. Prevost and Chemainus Secondary were selected to participate in the project.

Learning Sessions: The Superintendent will be participating in a British Columbia School Superintendents' Association (BCSSA) learning session April 6 on "System Leadership and Contextual Literacy" by Jordan Tinney. April 8 a group from the District will be attending an event on the topic of reconciliation featuring Monique Gray Smith and Drew Hayden Taylor.

Business

2022-2023 Budget Progress Update: At the March 29, 2022 BEBC Meeting the Secretary-Treasurer reviewed the funding estimate from the Ministry, identified a number of inflationary pressures, and presented an opening budget position of a \$2.4M shortfall before bringing in any surplus. Last Friday the Board held a liaison meeting with rights holders to collect feedback on the budget and surplus. Staff has developed options to assist the Board in balancing the budget as well as options that aren't currently in the budget but support the Board's strategic priorities. These options will be brought to the Board at a Special BEBC Meeting on April 14. Liaison meetings with partner groups will be held April 8.



2022-2023 Capital Plan Response Letter: Highlights of the Ministry's response to the Five Year Capital Plan include:

- Support for the demolition of AB Greenwell which is expected to go to tender in the near future. Once demolished the property will revert back to the Crown.
- Three ventilation/HVAC upgrade projects totaling just over \$1.7M have been approved for Frances Kelsey, Chemainus Secondary and Quamichan.
- The Board has received approval should it wish to enter into a school site acquisition bylaw for the purchase of future school sites in the south and north ends, and at Maple Bay.

Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events

Meeting	Date/Time	Location
Partner Group Liaison Meetings	April 8, 1:00 – 5:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
Special Closed Board Meeting	April 11, 4:00-6:00 p.m.	Arbutus Ridge
Board Planning Session	April 12, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
DSAC Meeting (Trustee Thorne)	April 14, 10:00 a.m.	CVOLC
Special BEBC Meeting	April 14, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
Advisory Committee Meeting	April 19, 4:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
Public Budget Consultation Meeting	April 19, 5:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
DPAC Meeting (Trustee Croft)	April 21, 7:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
BCSTA Annual General Meeting	April 21 – 24	Westin Bayshore
Provincial Council (Trustee de Groot)	April 23	Westin Bayshore
BEBC Meeting	April 26, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
Special BEBC Meeting	April 28, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
Closed/Open Board Meetings	May 3, 3:30/4:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
Board Planning	May 10, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
DSAC Meeting (Trustee Doman)	May 12, 10:00 a.m.	TBA
Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee Meeting	May 12, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
Advisory Committee Meeting	May 17, 4:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
DPAC Meeting (Trustee Spilsbury)	May 19, 7:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
BEBC Meeting	May 24, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom

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