

The Highlighter

February 2, 2021

Board Chair

Recognition of Support During School Fires at Drinkwater and Ecole Mount Prevost – The Board recognized the support of those who quickly identified and put out two small, early-morning fires. On January 11th Constable Margo Howley of the North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP put out the fire at Drinkwater Elementary with a fire extinguisher, before the North Cowichan Fire Department arrived to ensure the fire was completely out. On January 15th teacher Wanda Younge smelled and reported smoke inside Ecole Mount Prevost. Neighbor Randy Wong noticed a fire near the front of the school and with the assistance of teacher Sylvie Rosmus entered the building. Along with Wanda Younge they secured nearby fire extinguishers and began to extinguish the fire. The RCMP and North Cowichan Fire Department arrived soon afterward to fully extinguish the fire inside the wall. We appreciate the combined efforts of everyone involved to quickly identify, report and extinguish the fires which allowed students to return to their schools the following day. Thanks also to the North Cowichan/Duncan RCMP for their investigations which resulted in the arrest of an individual for arson.

2021 Partner Liaison Meetings – Board Chairs, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers and Ministry staff met via Zoom to talk about COVID's impact on learning, mental health and equity of outcomes. Guest speakers included the Minister of Education, Deputy Provincial Health Officer and John Hattie from Australia, who spoke about student achievement. The second portion of the meeting will take place on February 5.

Quamichan Campus – At a Special Open Meeting on September 28, 2020, the Board passed a motion to consider whether Quamichan School should be designated a closed campus until the unsafe activities in the York Road corridor are resolved. The Board was waiting for information from a safety audit, parent/community survey, and feedback from the Superintendent and School's administrators, which has now been received. Trustees passed a motion to keep Quamichan as an open campus, subject to a number of conditions, including: a continuation of the current level of supervision support from York Road agencies, Blackbird security, Noon Hour Supervisors and Quamichan administrators; representation on the North Cowichan Safety Response Model Gap Analysis by the Board and District staff; continued proactive student education work at the school; institution of a contractual form for parent signature to allow their student to leave the campus during school hours, understanding the limited supervision and releasing the School District from risk of liability; and an annual review of the status of the school to be conducted by the Board of Education to ensure the safety of students is being well monitored.

Community of Care Pledge/Board Ad Hoc Committee on Anti-Racism – Trustees have signed the "Community of Care Pledge", in which they commit to combatting hate in all its forms. Among other



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things, the pledge states, “We value all races, cultures, faiths, socio-economic diversities, sexual orientations, and gender identities, and the incredible contributions that these differences bring to our collective well-being.” The community is invited to sign the pledge alongside the Board, at www.sd79.bc.ca/pledge. Trustees have also convened a Board Ad Hoc Committee on Anti-Racism.

Letter of Support for Cowichan Tribes – The Board passed a motion to write a letter expressing its support for Cowichan Tribes and its opposition to racism.

Letter of Support for Vancouver Island University (VIU) – VIU is outgrowing the current Career Centre located at the former Koksilah Elementary site and has applied to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training for funding for a new Centre. The Board passed a motion to write a letter in support of VIU’s application.

Education

Introduction of Rhonda Laforge – The position of Temporary Vice-Principal at Cowichan Secondary has been awarded to Rhonda Laforge, who was introduced by the Superintendent. Rhonda comes to Cowichan Secondary from a teaching position at Alexander Elementary. Rhonda’s appointment will run from February 1 to July 31, 2021.

Introduction of Darren Hart – The Superintendent introduced Darren Hart, who has been appointed Temporary Vice-Principal at Frances Kelsey Secondary from February 1 to July 31, 2021. Prior to assuming the role, Darren was a teacher and Department Head at Frances Kelsey, and taught for many years at Cowichan Secondary.

COVID 19 Update – During January there were exposures at Chemainus Secondary (x2), Quamichan School, Cowichan Secondary (x2), Alexander Elementary, Lake Cowichan School (x2), and Crofton Elementary. Medical Health Officer, Dr. Sandra Allison from Public Health, has worked with the District through these events. Trustees thanked teachers, staff and students for adhering to the health and safety protocols.

Kindergarten Registration Update – On January 22 a lottery was held for kindergarten seats at Mill Bay Nature School and Ecole Cobble Hill. Presently there are 13 children on the wait list for Mill Bay Nature School and 3 on the wait list for Ecole Cobble Hill. A lottery was not needed for Ecole Mount Prevost this year. Kindergarten registration for the rest of the District’s elementary schools took place from January 25 - 29.

Superintendent’s Update:

Acknowledgements:

- The Superintendent expressed acknowledgement and appreciation to school secretaries for their amazing work during the kindergarten registration process.
- Mill Bay Nature School provided an outstanding response to the flood and COVID challenges that impacted Cowichan Tribes. The deep relationship Mill Bay’s students have with Tousilum and



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Louis Sylvester caused them to be moved by the crises in that community. Students voted in their town hall meeting to put \$1,000 of their move-a-thon proceeds towards Superstore gift cards for families in need, instead of their school playground fund. A bottle drive raised \$1,050, with families involved in the collection, sorting and cleaning up. This money will be shared with Darla Smith, who is organizing fruit and vegetable distribution to affected families. The Smuqwa Pod, the eldest students in the school, held a campaign to gather practical items needed by the Cowichan people and children who were in quarantine at home, and collected two large truckloads of items. In addition, Mill Bay Nature School and Stuart Pagaduan partnered to create magnets of Stuart's "I Stand" image which are for sale for \$30, with proceeds going to the Cowichan people.

Wendy's House: Wendy's House opened its doors at its new location next to the School Board Office on January 11. Operating hours are 10:00-11:15 and 11:45-1:00 Monday through Thursday on a first-come first-served basis. A sign on the fence indicates whether space is available (green = come and play; red = not today). Many thanks to Operations staff for the smooth, successful transition to the new location, which was necessary due to the building of the Cowichan Secondary School replacement.

Foundation Skills Assessment: Students in Grades 4 and 7 will be writing between February 15 and March 12.

Literacy/Numeracy Grade 10 Assessments: Assessments took place January 18 - 29. Additional assessments will take place in April and June.

Student Learning Survey: The Survey, which was formerly called a "Satisfaction Survey", is open until April 30 for all Grade 4, 7, 10, and 12 students.

Ignite Sans Bite: The second session in the series will be held February 11 from 4:00 - 5:30 p.m., and will feature nine learning opportunities for staff. The third session will be held May 13.

Pink Shirt Day: The annual anti-bullying campaign will take place February 24.

School Events: A Drama challenge will take place in early March for Grades 4/5 and 6/7. The traditional Young Author's Conference for Grades 5-12 will take place on May 4.

Proposed Three-Year School Calendar: The District is now in the last year of the previously-approved three year calendar. The Board is proposing a new three-year school calendar for the 2021 –2024 school years, and must make it available for public feedback at least one month prior to submitting the calendar to the Ministry. Public consultation will take place via the District's website, social media, and Survey Monkey. The Board will make its final decision on the proposed calendars at the March 2, 2021 Open Board Meeting.

Rugby Academy at Cowichan Secondary School! The Board approved the establishment of a Rugby Academy at Cowichan Secondary School. Fees for the Academy will be: \$275 per month or \$2,750 per



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year for local district students; \$750 per month or \$7,500 per year for students enrolling from out of province; and \$1,500 per month or \$15,000 per school year for International students.

Board Authority/Authorized (BAA) Courses: Four BAA courses were approved by the Board for implementation at Cowichan Secondary School in September 2021. Social Media Marketing 10, 11 and 12 will teach marketing from a local perspective using a variety of social media platforms. Orientation and Mobility 11 was also approved and is specific to visually impaired students.

Business

2020-2021 Amended Annual Budget – The Board approved the 2020-2021 Amended Annual Budget in the amount of \$111,621,185.

Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events

MEETING	DATE/TIME	LOCATION
Vaping Task Force Meeting (Trustees Spilsbury/Kemmler)	February 3, 9:00 a.m.	Via Zoom
The Ministry of Education's Joint Partners Liaison Meeting	February 5, 9:00 a.m.	Via Zoom
Board Planning Meeting	February 9, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
DSAC (Trustee Kemmler)	February 11, 10:00 a.m.	Via Zoom
Advisory Committee Meeting	February 16, 4:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
DPAC (Trustee Doman)	February 18, 7:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
BEBC Meeting	February 23, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
Board Ad Hoc COVID Transition Committee Meeting	February 25, 9:30 a.m.	Via Zoom

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