

The Highlighter

June 7, 2022

Recognition

Recognition of Humble Hooves – Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Program: The Board recognized and thanked Jessica Lake, whose Horsemanship for Life Project provides financial support for the Equine Assisted Learning program, and Tammera Merkens for her work as EAL facilitator at Humble Hooves. EAL with Humble Hooves is a non-riding learner-based educational experience with horses as teachers. Each week participants move through objectively driven exercises and obstacles in teams of 2 humans and 1 horse. EAL facilitates the learning of life skills through positive reinforced interaction with horses. There is no "right" or "wrong" way of moving through the exercises as participants learn through their experience while working as a team. The program's environment has been specially developed to encourage self-confidence through validated hands-on experiences. This school year, a total of 144 Grade 6-7 students from 14 schools participated in one of the 18 ten-week sessions (eight students per session). The Board is proud to acknowledge all that Jessica and Tammera do to support our students, and will arrange to send a token of thanks to them both.

Board Chair

BC School Trustees' Association (BCSTA) AGM Recognition: On May 27, 2022 Gordon Li, Director of Education Services for the British Columbia School Trustees' Association (BCSTA), traveled to Duncan to present a plaque recognizing the Board for hosting the BCSTA AGM's Indigenous Day of Learning. He reported that Trustees attending the event submitted more post-event surveys than for any previous event, and the ratings were the highest ever received, with 50% "excellent" and 49% "good." Special notes of thanks were offered to Siem-Tun (Trustee Joe Thorne) for his contributions organizing and during the event, and to Cowichan Valley Elders Tousilum (Ron George) and Whulquletse (Albie Joe Charlie) who were really magnificent! Thanks were also extended to staff to attend the event.

Trustee de Groot Not Running for Re-Election: Trustee Barb de Groot announced that after many years being a Trustee and teaching in the District she will not be seeking re-election, and thanked the Board, District and school staff for the amazing journey. She stated that the District is moving forward in a very positive way and has so much to look forward to. Trustee de Groot was thanked for all her contributions and years of dedication.

Cowichan Valley Indigenous Day of Learning: After it was suggested at an Advisory Committee Meeting that an Indigenous Day of Learning be held locally (similar to the one held at the BCSTA AGM), the Board began working on plans for the event. DPAC has come on board as a partner, and Trustee Thorne is planning a program with Elders. The location is tentatively set for S'amuna' House on Monday, September 26, 2022, beginning with a dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Local Education Agreement (LEA) Celebration: For the first time in the District's history, Local Education Agreements with all First Nations have been signed. The Board would like to celebrate this achievement with First Nations at an event on September 28, 2022. More information will be forthcoming.

Board Performance Review/Pro-D Retreat: The Board completed its performance review with a high performance rating and an interest in Pro-D related to increasing vulnerable student access. Facilitator Gordon Li connected with Jennifer Charlesworth, the BC Representative for Children and Youth, who is interested in facilitating the Pro-D but unfortunately is not available during the remainder of this Board's term. The next Board may follow up with her if they wish to continue with that professional development.

School Trustee Candidate Orientation: The Board will host an orientation for interested Trustee candidates on Monday, August 29, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in Yuxwule' Eagle (Board) Room.

Pride Month: The Pride flag is flying at the School Board Office, and many activities are happening at schools to recognize Pride Month. Our Board is pleased to be able to support the message of diversity and inclusion represented by those activities.

National Indigenous Peoples Day: The Board passed a motion recognizing National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21, 2022.

Annual Review of Quamichan School: The Superintendent provided Trustees with a summary of the annual review. During the 2021/22 school year two noon hour supervisors provided lunchtime supervision on the corridor and Operations staff assisted with garbage/sharps pickup and power washing. A senior staff member met regularly with the Wellness and Recovery Center staff to address challenges. The Director of Operations is participating in the District of North Cowichan's Gap Analysis which focuses on long-term solutions in the corridor and other areas. Lunchtime expectations were reviewed with students on a regular basis, and whole-school lessons on homelessness and empathy took place. The Substance Use Integration Team and Needle Recovery, Blackbird Security, Bylaw Officers and RCMP continue to provide support. The District has formed greater partnerships within the community and increased safety for students, staff and community members.

Board of Education Standing Committee - All Nations Education Committee: As a result of a previous Board motion, Trustees Thorne and Spilsbury have been meeting with local Nations to get feedback on forming an All Nations Education Council, with representation by Chief and Council members and Trustees with a focus on increasing Indigenous student success and strengthening the relationships between First Nations and the Board of Education. The Trustees were received very graciously, and the Nations expressed interest in participating. A tentative date of September 28, 2022 has been set for the inaugural meeting of the Committee.

Board Ad Hoc COVID-19 Transition Committee: At the beginning of the pandemic the Board formed the Ad Hoc COVID-19 Transition Committee which worked with staff to design the health and safety protocols. A report outlining the steps that were taken to enhance health and safety and support students, staff and the community was reviewed. The Ad Hoc COVID-19 Transition Committee is now dissolved.

Board Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee: The Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee's work and meetings over the year have concluded and the Committee has been dissolved. The Committee did impressive work around building bridges and understanding. A sub-committee of 6-8 people is being created to develop a draft policy on anti-racism for consideration by the Board.

Education

Personnel Update: Cheryl Fotos has returned to the International Student Program as a Homestay Coordinator. We have welcomed Gina Kueber back to the District as Health & Wellness Manager.

School Calendar 2022/2023: The Cowichan Valley Teachers Federation has confirmed the following Non-Instruction Days for the 2022/23 school year:

- October 21, 2022
- February 17, 2023
- May 5, 2023

Expansion of Out-of-School Care Program: The Superintendent informed the Board that Principals from Mill Bay Nature School, Ecole Cobble Hill, George Bonner and Drinkwater Elementary have expressed interest in adding out-of-school care programs at their sites effective September 2022. A second after-school program will be added to Bench Elementary.

Approval in Principle of 2022/2023 Grade 11 French Immersion Student Exchange with Académie de Lyon: The Board gave approval in principle to a four-week reciprocal educational exchange that would pair Grade 11 French Immersion students from our District with similarly aged students from Lyon, France. Students from Lyon would visit the District in October 22 and stay with their Grade 11 exchange host families and attend school with their student partners. In March 2023 our Grade 11 students would travel to France to stay with their exchange host families and attend high school in Lyon for four weeks. A request for final approval will be brought to the Board next school year.

Superintendent's Update:

Acknowledgements:

- Congratulations to Louise Thomson, the newly-elected President of the Cowichan Valley Teachers' Union, and Mike Greenslade, who was re-elected as President of the Lake Cowichan Teachers' Association. Congratulations also to Erica Roberts, who was elected Vice-President of the Cowichan Valley Teachers' Union.
- Early Learning Coordinator Brenda Lee, StrongStart BC Educators and Kindergarten teachers were recognized for their work around the successful Ready Set Learn and Ready Set Go events. Ready Set Learn (community-based) events were held at three outdoor settings, facilitated by StrongStart BC educators and supported by Learning Links, Parkside Society Academy, Island Health, Clements Centre, and Chemainus Community Schools Association. The story walk events were attended by 138 children and 154 adults. Ready Set Go events were held for incoming kindergarten students at every elementary school in the District. These events also featured story book walks and were facilitated by Kindergarten teachers. Children received swag bags including scissors, crayons, glue stick, playdough/mat, dice, a deck of cards, math game booklet, and a Welcome to Kindergarten brochure.

District Scholarship Update: The District has been allocated 83 scholarships of \$1,250, for a total of \$103,750. The distribution among schools is: Chemainus Secondary - 9; Cowichan Secondary - 31; Frances Kelsey Secondary - 24; Lake Cowichan School - 7; and CVOLC - 12. All judging has been completed and recipients' names submitted to the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

Careers Department: Over 100 competitors took part in the Gravity Car Skills Regional competition at the Vancouver Island Motorsport Circuit on May 18. The builders of the fastest car and the best designed car both won a lap around the circuit with a professional driver. Thanks to Trustees Croft and Kemmler for judging the best designed cars. The fastest car winners were: 1st - Zoe Hillyard, Ecole Cobble Hill; 2nd - Josh Spooner, Ecole Mt. Prevost; 3rd - Lucy Healthy, Chemainus Elementary. The Sumo Bots and Gear Bots Skills Regionals were also held May 18 at the Motorsport Circuit, with over 50 competitors taking part. The Sumo Bots winners were Quentin Best, Lenox Zeeuw, Graham Sheperd and Luk Dorian. Winners of the Gear Bots were Cash Hendley, Lincoln Kowski and Wil Baker.

DSAC Leadership Retreat: DSAC students and staff traveled to Capernwray on Thetis Island May 23-24 to enjoy a leadership retreat featuring kayaking, boating, swimming, beach volleyball, as well as a number of activity challenges. The students had a fantastic time learning and bonding as a leadership group.

ISP Year End Event Celebration held at Camp Pringle: Superintendent Robyn Gray, Director of Instruction Larry Mattin, and Secretary-Treasurer Jason Sandquist joined the year-end celebration at Camp Pringle in Shawnigan Lake. Over 150 students participated in activities including archery, a tightrope, fort building, kayaking and volleyball. Grade 12 students were acknowledged.

Rookie Rugby Jamboree: After a two-year hiatus, Rookie Rugby returned to Cowichan Valley schools, with 13 teams from 11 public and private schools competing at the Cowichan Rugby Football Club (CRFC) on Herd Road. Athletes from Grades 5, 6 and 7 competed in over 40 matches, cheered on by a huge turnout of parents, siblings and supporters. Volunteer referees from MacDowell Rugby helped everyone learn more about the game. Special thanks to Robin MacDowell of MacDowell Rugby Academy and Sherry Spence, President of the CRFC Juniors Program and to all the coaches who supported their young athletes.

Mill Bay Nature School - Witness Mountain Exhibition: On May 26 a Witness Mountain Exhibition by the Smuqw'a' Clan of Q'shintul/Mill Bay Nature School showcased the Clan's year-long exploration of heart, mind, spirit and body, climbing to the top of the six mountains of the warm land of the Cowichan Valley, the traditional territory of the Hul'q'umi'num speaking people. Carey Newman, carver and curator of the Witness Blanket (the Smuqw'a' Clan's inspiration) attended the exhibition and was gifted a handmade drum by student Simon Gleeson and pottery made by the Simmons family. Carey presented a Witness Blanket coin to the children, and provided words of affirmation and support for their work. Every student was represented at the event which was organized and led by the students.

Ecole Mt. Prevost: Students joined forces with Municipality of North Cowichan staff to hunt down and eradicate invasive plant species in Heron's Wood Park. For students, this was a continuation of their exploration about climate change and the environment.

Khowhemun Elementary: An artist will be painting a mural on the school during the first two weeks of June. On June 10 Khowhemun and Alexander students will be travelling to S'amuna' House to learn to play the Bone Game. Every Child Matters Banners created by students from Khowhemun Elementary and Queen Margaret's School will be unveiled on June 16. The official opening and naming of Khowhemun's garden will take place on June 17.

Crofton Elementary: Students and staff are inviting the public to witness and celebrate their learning from a close study of the Salish Weave Collection on June 10 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. Students have created their own artwork inspired by the Salish Weave Box Set and will showcase their re-imagined Coast Salish Art inquiry projects alongside their inspiration.

Mill Bay Nature School Recipient of \$20,000 Telus StoryHive Grant: The school's project (renamed "10,000 Gifts: Witnessing Q'shintul") will document through video the struggle of largely non-Indigenous students, staff and families as they strive to understand and reconcile the local history of colonization and residential schools. With the honesty and candor of children's voices, the school community will listen and learn from Elders and Knowledge Holders. The project strives to inspire deep change with the goal of reaching beyond the school community, across the valley, the island, and the province, connecting with 10,000 lives. Through embarking on the project of collecting 10,000 beads, the school continues to deepen its understanding of the Hul'q'umi'num people and build a village encircling the children.

Terry Fox Run: A letter has been received from the Terry Fox Foundation announcing that \$14,598.57 was raised for cancer research through Terry Fox Runs held in the District this past school year.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant: School Psychologist Lila Boulet and her research partner Gina Harrison were awarded a \$24,900 Partnership Engagement Grant for their research project "Early Literacy Learning During the Pandemic." The five elementary schools involved in the research are Ecole Cobble Hill, Ecole Mt. Prevost, Crofton Elementary, Chemainus Elementary, and Drinkwater Elementary.

Master's Research Approved: Quamichan School teacher Ricky Carr has been granted approval for his research study "Exploring how the utilization of place-based education (PBE) practices can enrich the school community and our students' achievement." The aim of the project is to explore perceptions and practices around PBE and the conclusions drawn from the research may be used to inform best practices moving forward.

Business

School Board Office Summer Hours of Operation: The School Board Office will be closed to the public from Monday, July 4 to Friday, August 26, 2022, re-opening Monday, August 29, 2022. Central Receiving summer hours of 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (closed for lunch noon to 12:30 p.m.) will be in effect July 4 to August 26, 2022. Operations Department summer hours of 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. (closed for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) will be in effect from July 4 to August 26, 2022.

Elections Bylaw: Trustee Election Bylaw 22-04 was passed, which rescinded Trustee Election Bylaw 22-03 passed at the May Open Meeting. Bylaw 22-04 includes a new legislative requirement to identify the District's public notice location, which is outside the School Board Office.

Policy 24 – Financial Planning and Reporting: The Ministry of Education and Child Care now requires Boards to adopt a policy detailing their annual reporting framework, and how the Board will consult with its partners on how funding is aligned for achievement and resources. The new Policy was adopted by the Board.

Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events

Meeting	Date/Time	Location
Board of Education Retirement Reception (by invitation only)	June 13, 5:00 p.m.	Ramada Inn
Board Planning	June 14, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
CSS Replacement Site Tour	June 28, 3:30 p.m.	CSS Replacement Site
Duncan Panago Parade	July 9, 10:00 a.m.	Island Savings Centre Parking Lot
School Trustee Candidate Orientation	August 29, 6:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room (Board Room)
Board Closed/Open Meetings	Sept. 6, 3:30/4:30 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room (Board Room)
Cowichan Valley Indigenous Day of Learning	Sept. 26, 5:30 p.m.	Tentative: Somena House
LEA Celebration	September 28	TBA

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