

The Highlighter

May 3, 2022

Recognition

Recognition of Cowichan Representatives at the BC School Trustees' Association (BCSTA) AGM:

Speakers: Siem-Tun (Joe Thorne), Tousilum (Ron George), Qualqwaletza (Albie Joe Charlie)

Student Ignite: Student Ellashani George, Coordinator of Indigenous Student Success Hannah Morales

AGM Team: District Elder Dolly Sylvester, District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Student Achievement Mary Peter, Hul'q'umi'num' Language and Cultural Advisor Laura Antoine, Itinerant Indigenous Education Teacher Karalyn Joyce, Superintendent Robyn Gray, Secretary-Treasurer Jason Sandquist, Director of Instruction Larry Mattin, District Principal of Indigenous Education Charlie Coleman, Trustee Joe Thorne, Trustee Johanne Kemmler, Trustee Elizabeth Croft, Trustee Candace Spilsbury. A great deal of work took place over the past few months to plan the **Indigenous Day of Learning** at the BCSTA AGM, which was hosted by the Cowichan Valley School District, and led by Trustee Thorne. SD79 student Ellashani George was one of six students from Districts across the province who were chosen to talk about their involvement in projects designed to improve the success of Indigenous students. Attendees at the event were greatly impacted by the unique and powerful experience, which was developed from protocols of the Coast Salish people, and looked and felt different from any other BCSTA AGM. Thursday's event was called Q'ushin'tul (Walking Alongside)/Going Home. Our District's students prepared 215 cedar paddles, representing the spirits of the 215 children's bodies that were uncovered at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. The paddles were given out by Karalyn Joyce, Larry Mattin and Charlie Coleman to the first 215 participants (of over 500 who attended). The AGM was called From Grief to Medicine – Moving Forward with Good Hearts and included stories and wisdom sharing by Elders from across the province. A special ceremony will be held on May 25th to recognize and honour the team from Cowichan for their dedication and efforts.

Board Chair

Board Chair Announcement: Trustee Spilsbury announced that after 47 years as a teacher, administrator and Trustee, including 21 years in the Cowichan Valley School District, she would not be running for Trustee in the upcoming election.

BC School Trustees' Association (BCSTA) Annual General Meeting: The AGM, which was titled From Grief to Medicine: Moving Forward with Good Hearts, was planned and implemented under the leadership of Trustee Joe Thorne. Elders shared stories of the grief of residential schools and the experiences of the children with the wisdom and knowledge of Indigenous culture. It was a profound experience for all in attendance. Students from 6 districts spoke about their projects highlighting reconciliation and pathways to success. The new BCSTA executive has been elected.

Board Performance Review/Pro-D Retreat: The focus of the Retreat will be on vulnerable children, mental health and Indigenous Education, and will be led by facilitator Gordon Li of the BCSTA.

Wellness and Recovery Centre Tour: Trustees confirmed Thursday, May 19, 2022 at 8:00 a.m. for their tour of the Wellness and Recovery Centre with Medical Health Officer Dr. Shannon Waters and Dana Leik from Island Health.

Moose Hide Campaign Day – May 12, 2022: The Moose Hide Campaign is an Indigenous-led grassroots movement of men and boys intent on raising awareness of the crisis of violence against

Indigenous women and children. Wearing the moose hide pin shows the wearer's commitment to honour, respect and protect the women and children in their life. Moose Hide Campaign Day is when all Canadians are called to join together to take a stand to end the violence. For further information or to order pins, see <https://moosehidecampaign.ca>.

National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S), also known as Red Dress Day – May 5, 2022: A local event is being organized by Warmland's Women's Support Services Society, which provides services and support for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Pride Flag: The Board passed a motion requesting that the Pride flag be flown at the School Board Office from May 31, 2022 to the end of June 2022 to symbolize its support of diversity and inclusion.

Education

Personnel Update: Several changes have been made to Principal/Vice-Principal assignments for the upcoming school year. These changes were communicated to schools and District staff on April 20. Congratulations to Claire Whitney, the successful candidate for the Secondary Principal posting, and to Kim Darbyshire, the new District Vice-Principal of Inclusive Learning.

District Scholarship Update: This year the District received 83 District Scholarships, each valued at \$1,250, to be shared between its four high schools and CVOLC/The Grove. Students are judged on achievement in and commitment to an area of non-academic study, involvement in community/extra-curricular activities and citizenship, and their overall ability to prepare and perform a presentation. The dates, times, locations and methods of presentation were reviewed for each of the schools.

Frances Kelsey Secondary Academies: The Board approved establishing a Trails Outdoor Academy, Fine Arts Academy, Computer Studies Academy and Soccer Academy, and the re-establishing of a Hockey Academy effective September 2022.

Out of School Care: The Board passed motions to continue the Out-of-School Care program at Bench Elementary, and to expand the number of Out-of-School programs within other elementary schools for next year.

Superintendent's Update:

Acknowledgements:

- The Human Resources team was recognized for its work to implement innovative initiatives to simplify processes and increase efficiencies, including a new electronic posting system and activating a new teaching staffing process.
- School, Operations and Transportation staff were recognized for their work and efforts to provide exceptional year-end activities including celebrations, field trips and other large scale community events.

Surveys/Assessments: The Student Learning Survey, an annual province-wide census of Grade 4, 7, 10 and 12 students, their parents and staff in public schools, closed on April 29. The survey's questions included topics related to health and wellness, sense of belonging and feelings of safety.

Provincial Assessments: Grade 10 Numeracy and Literacy Assessments and Grade 12 Literacy Assessments took place last week.

District Assessments: While the District is looking at revising its assessments, some schools may continue to use the assessments that occurred in the fall, such as DART and Early Screener, to inform their instruction and school plans.

Ready, Set, Learn: These community-based events will be held at parks throughout the Cowichan Valley during May and will be facilitated by our StrongStart educators. Advertising will be provided by Learning Links once the dates and locations have been confirmed.

Ready, Set, Go: Each year a team of Kindergarten teachers work collaboratively to design developmentally-appropriate events that create an atmosphere of welcome to our schools. The team has designed a story walk for this year's events.

Catalyst Update:

- The video entries for the recent drama challenge were judged by senior drama students at Frances Kelsey. Medals will be distributed to the winners for their hard work and creativity.
Grade 4/5: 1st - Ecole Cobble Hill; 2nd - Ecole Cobble Hill; 3rd - Khowhemun
Grade 6/7: 1st - Ecole Cobble Hill; 2nd - Maple Bay; 3rd - Khowhemun.
- Catalyst is working with Careers to have schools build birdhouses. Catalyst teachers are supporting teachers with the builds by using Careers resources.
- Catalyst also continues to share monthly outdoor education and primary Stem challenges to help support teachers to embed learning enhancement in their classrooms.

Careers Department Updates:

- Robotics Skills Competition - Congratulations to Frances Kelsey Secondary teacher Josh Page and students Tyler Bosence, Christopher Mary and Ethan Barnett who advanced to the Provincial competition, where they placed fifth.
- Culinary Skills Competition - Regional competitions were held at VIU Cowichan for post-secondary (dual credit) and secondary students. Congratulations to SD79 dual-credit students Jennifer Senkpiel (1st place), Michael Brimbombe (2nd) and Oscar Marchant (3rd), and secondary students Ethan Mellings (2nd) and Bree Smith and Phillippe Chen (3rd).
- Women in Trades Event - On April 21 a bus load of students travelled to Camosun to attend this super event which sparked interest in the trades for many young women.

Cowichan Secondary Replacement Site: An aerial view of the site was shared in which the footprint of the new school could be seen.

Decolonizing Instruction Learning Series with Maribel Valdez Gonzales: Over 40 leaders from across the District attended the first two learning sessions in the four-session series. The final sessions will take place on May 9 and May 25.

Crofton Elementary: On April 20 Grade 5 and 6 students from Alex Hall's and Cassie Ward's classes showcased their school projects on invisible disabilities. Students selected and researched an invisible disability and then presented their projects in the gym for parents to view.

Discovery Elementary: The school recently purchased a new kiln. During the April 27 PLC staff were trained to use the kiln so they can bring pottery into all the classes.

Mill Bay Nature School: Head Learner/Principal Kim Ondrik, Arianna Augustine and Tousilum collaborated on the imaginings and writing for a \$20,000 Telus StoryHive Grant, which they were successful in receiving. The project, titled "10,000 Beads: One Strand Connecting Time and People" will document 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. 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 10,000 lives.

\$80,000 Language Technology Program Grant: Cowichan Tribes in partnership with the District has been approved for funding to support language revitalization using technology. During the 12-month program recordings of 500 words and phrases in Hul'q'umi'num' will be uploaded to the First Voices Portal. The District will work with Cowichan Tribes to outline what content (classes and courses) the platform would deliver, as well as overseeing the project. All resources will be shared with First Voices, Cowichan Tribes, and Cowichan Valley School District.

Mental Health Week: May 2-8, 2022 is the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Mental Health Week. Yesterday the Health and Wellness Coordinator sent links related to mental health from CMHA and LifeSpeak to District staff.

Deeper Learning Dozen: A team of educators, Principals and Directors from the District are joining representatives from eight districts across the USA and three other districts from BC at the Deeper Learning Dozen convening #12 in Abbotsford this week.

Non-Instructional/Pro-D Day: On May 6 the Superintendent will welcome CUPE members to the Pro-D session at Quamichan School. It's the first time in two years the event will have been held in person. Principals and Vice-Principals will attend a session on Indigenous Ways of Knowing lead by a representative from the First Nations Educational Steering Committee (FNESC). An example of the learning opportunities taking place at school sites that day includes Alex Aitken, where teachers will focus on Tier 1 reading instruction and Tier 2-3 reading intervention.

Business

2022-2023 Annual Budget: The Board has been actively engaged in the budget process for the past 2 1/2 months. The process began with an enrolment estimate and has gone through a significant amount of public consultation, meetings with partners, rights holders, a survey, and a public meeting. Thank you to the Board for the time they devoted to the project, the senior team who met and worked on the proposals for the Board under the Board's direction, the public and partners who provided their input, and the finance team for getting documents, and estimates created.

Revenues are down by \$4.4M from the amended budget, the majority of which is due to the way we report capital and site works. Expenditures saw a small increase to teaching staff due to increased enrolment. The Board provided operating funding to ensure the continuation of grant-funded mental health supports. The budget contains increased funding for assessments, funding to maintain a successful literacy initiative at Khowhemun and Alexander that was previously funded through provincial and federal COVID grants, and created an Early Years Manager to help guide the District as that mandate expands. The budget includes a technology dashboard that will offer better analysis and communication of student data, and provides funding to revise the District's website to improve

communication. The Board also had to adjust to new information during the budget process, including changes to the Employment Standards Act to provide five days' sick leave for casual employees.

In order to balance the budget, it was required to bring in \$2.23M of surplus. The budget includes a total of 982.84 FTE, making the District the largest employer in our community. The 2022-2023 budget of \$111,845,469, made up of the operating budget, special purpose funds, and capital funds, was passed by the Board.

2022-2023 Annual Facilities Grant: Director of Operations Richard Dyble took Trustees through the Annual Facilities Grant Project list which included nearly fifty items such as new/upgraded phone and PA systems, intrusion alarms, sprinkler repairs, site upgrades, drainage upgrades, water treatment upgrades, and portable moves/repairs, for a total of \$1.9M.

Elections Bylaw: As the Board is nearing the end of its four-year term, it passed a bylaw to outline how the October 15, 2022 election will be conducted, to give authority to the Chief Election Officer to establish voting protocols and locations, and to give the Secretary Treasurer authority to enter into cost-sharing agreements with local governing bodies.

Five-Year Custodial Equipment Replacement Plan: The Board approved a five-year custodial equipment replacement plan, which would see the purchase of ten floor scrubbers and a chariot scrubber during the term.

Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events

Meeting	Date/Time	Location
Board Planning	May 10, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
DSAC Meeting (Trustee Doman)	May 12, 10:00 a.m.	Via Zoom
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
Equity Scan Team Meeting	May 25, 12:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Arbutus Ridge
Climate Change Committee Meeting	May 27, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00	Via Zoom
Board Closed/Open Meetings	June 7, 3:30/4:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
DSAC Meeting (Trustee de Groot)	June 9, 10:00 a.m.	TBD
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
Advisory Committee	June 21, 4:30 p.m.	Via Zoom