**The Highlighter**

**October 6, 2020**

**Board Chair**

**World Teachers’ Day** – Chocolates and cards of appreciation were delivered to all sites by district staff, an op-ed was published in the Citizen newspaper, and the Board Chair was interviewed on Juice FM. She hopes staff will hear how much they are appreciated.

**Thetis Island Centennial** - September 2020 marks 100 years since the first school on Thetis Island opened with 15 students. During the past 100 years three schools were built. When the current school was built it was considered a "modern" one-room school house because it had electricity, indoor plumbing and a phone line. The cost for the land and building was $14K. The school's opening had a great deal of community support and involvement, and people still talk about it as the heart of the Thetis Island community. A virtual celebration is being held on Facebook, with plans to create a memory book at the end of 2020-2021 with photos that have been shared. Congratulations and best wishes for a happy celebration of 100 years are sent on behalf of the Board to Thetis Island School and community!

**New Cowichan Secondary School Community Consultation** – A community consultation plan has been developed. A meeting with the Cowichan Leadership Group set for last week has been postponed due to the upcoming election and will be rescheduled for later in the Fall.

**Quamichan School** - Adecision on whether to consider closing Quamichan campus is not on today's Agenda as the safety audit has not yet been concluded. A Special Open Board meeting will be scheduled after the results of the audit have been received.

**Community of Care** - The Board endorsed a Community of Care pledge. The document states that the District is an inclusive and respectful organization that values all ethnicities, cultures, faiths, and socio-economic diversity, and the incredible contributions that these differences bring to our collective well-being. It also states that the District fosters healthy, safe and resilient school communities while supporting everyone in making a positive difference in their lives, and the lives of others. Trustees will pledge to uphold and promote these values and commit to speak up to oppose hate in all its forms and to create a culture of caring.

**Education**

**COVID Exposure Plan –** Director of Communications, Mike Russell, shared the District's COVID Exposure Plan, which was created with the help of the District's Health & Safety Manager, Health and Wellness Coordinator, and others. The goal of the plan is to have a transparent process that helps the community understand all stages of exposure, and addresses the mental health and wellness of staff, students and the community. Dr. Shannon Waters, Medical Health Officer for the Cowichan Region, and her team helped produce the plan in order to ensure the messaging and advice to staff, families and the community is consistent with Provincial health and safety guidelines. The plan includes the following 8 steps:

1. Island Health will notify the Superintendent and Director of Communications following identification of COVID exposure.
2. Notification of the Board, affected Principal/Vice-Principal and District Leadership Team.
3. Document packages for affected Principals/Vice-Principals will be prepared, including: letter to staff; letter to parents; news release; script for head secretaries; staff meeting PowerPoint; Administrator Q&A, and "How to talk to your class" document.
4. The Cowichan Valley Teachers' Federation, CUPE and USW will be notified.
5. Principals/Vice-Principals will share the documents from step 3 with their school communities, ensuring TTOC's, casuals, noon hour supervisors and bus drivers are included in staff notifications. A staff meeting will be arranged.
6. The Director of Communications will issue a news release and attend the affected school to manage any on-site media.
7. Principals/Vice-Principals will facilitate a staff meeting (with the PowerPoint from step 3), allow for questions/answers, and offer a follow-up debriefing with staff and members of the District's Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT). Resources from CIRT may be requested for the meeting.
8. District staff will be available for follow-up assistance and staff debriefing.

**Strategic Plan: Operational Plans** – A companion document to the Strategic Plan has been created. The document is a dynamic, working document, which takes the District's priorities, principles and beliefs, and includes a work plan for the next four years built around them. Measurements of success will be brought to the Board for review semi-annually. The document will be shared with the community on the District's website.

**Enrollment** – Enrollment on September 30 came in at 8,074, which is down about 97 students from the projection of 8171. Elementary numbers were down by 139; Secondary were down by 110; while enrollment at Cowichan Valley Open Learning (CVOLC) and Distributed Learning were up by 159. These numbers are preliminary and have not yet been finalized. These revised enrollment numbers will be put into the funding model to determine the financial impact. Students at Distributed Learning receive less funding (80%), which may be offset by an increase in special education numbers. The District may see funds come later on in the school year through other forms of grants to the Board.

**Orange Shirt Day** – The District acknowledged Orange Shirt Day on September 30, 2020, to recognize the impact of residential schools in Canada, and to walk the path towards reconciliation. A slide show and description of activities from across the District was shared with Trustees.

**Superintendent’s Update:**

Quamichan School: Following conversations with the RCMP and Warmlands, police and security patrols have increased in the York Road corridor. The District has added an additional noon hour supervisor. Quamichan School is no longer staggering lunch breaks, which allows the facility to be used for other activities, which may decrease student traffic to fast food establishments. Results of the recent survey were shared: 62% of the 475 adults, students, and parents responding would like to see the campus remain open, with 38% preferring the campus be closed. A survey of Quamichan students was also conducted, with 93% preferring the campus remain open; 4.4% wanting the campus closed; and 2.4% not providing a response. When asked if they feel safe leaving the campus, 82% of students indicated they feel safe; 9% do not feel safe; and 8.5% did not respond.

Appreciation: The Superintendent acknowledged the work of the Fire Department, RCMP, and Operations staff members who identified and quickly extinguished a small fire in an out building at Cowichan Secondary School on September 30, 2020. The fire only impacted a few classes which were moved to another area of the school for the day.

Non-Instructional Day: On the morning of September 21, 2020 Shane Safir, author of *The* *Listening Leader,* provided a keynote presentation on building compassionate communities to all personnel. Following the presentation, facilitated learning events on trauma informed practice and Indigenous ways of knowing were held.

Environmental Stewardship Program: This exciting new program out of Cowichan Secondary School is off to a fantastic start. Students have been learning more about the local watershed by visiting and following the development of this year's salmon run on the Cowichan River, participating in the Cowichan Stewardship round-table meetings, and partnering with Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society and the Department of Fisheries for stream keeping workshops and seminars.

Safer Schools Presentation: On October 2, 2020, students from Quamichan School attended Zoom presentations by Ocean Van Samang from Safer Schools on mental health and resiliency, and strategies to self-soothe and cope.

Terry Fox Run: Approximately 2/3 of the District's schools participated in this year's Terry Fox Run, which was adapted for COVID.

Great BC Shakeout: A number of schools will be participating in the earthquake drill, which will be held on October 15, 2020. The drill will be modified to accommodate physical distancing.

Fire Prevention Week: Palsson Elementary, which is bordered by a forest, will hold a variety of classroom activities October 5 - 9, 2020 to mark Fire Prevention Week.

Ministry of Education's Indigenous Outcomes Team: The team will visit the District on October 13, 2020 to speak with senior staff on how Indigenous learners are being supported.

Foster Family Month: October 2020 marks the 30th Foster Family Month in BC. Some members of the community have been foster parents for all 30 years!

Dyslexia Awareness Month: Canada recognizes Dyslexia Awareness Month in October, and encourages wearing and/or decorating with red during the week of October 19th to increase awareness of dyslexia.

Remote Learning Transition Program: Approximately 365 students are engaged in the program, through either remote learning or Indigenous outreach. Eleven remote learning teachers and six Indigenous outreach teachers have been hired. In a four-week period the concept was created, program developed, staff hired and program implemented. This is a great opportunity to celebrate the work staff has done to support students and families who are not yet ready to return to face-to-face learning.

September School Visits: During September the Superintendent check in with Alex Aitken, George Bonner, Palsson and Khowhemun Elementary Schools, Mill Bay Nature School, Frances Kelsey Secondary School, and Quamichan School.

**Business**

**Mental Health in Schools Grant –** This year's mental health grant is part two of a three-year investment in mental health. This year's grant of $52K is up from the $28,500 received by the District last year. The Province has provided substantially more funding so that Districts can build upon programs put in place over the last couple of years. The District is required to provide the Ministry with a plan on how the funds will be spent by December.

**Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events**

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| **MEETING** | **DATE/TIME** | **LOCATION** |
| DSAC (Trustee Doman) | October 8, 10:00 a.m. | Via Zoom |
| Board Planning Meeting | October 13, 4:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| DPAC Meeting (Trustee Thorne) | October 15, 7:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| BCSTA Board Chair Meeting | October 15, time TBA | Via Zoom |
| ~~Joint Partner Liaison Meeting – Session 1~~ | ~~October 16, a.m.~~ | Postponed |
| Advisory Committee Meeting | October 20, 4:30 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| BCSTA Indigenous Education Committee (Trustee Thorne) | October 23, 8:30 a.m. | Via Zoom |
| Provincial Council (Trustee de Groot) | October 24, 8:30 a.m. | Via Zoom |
| BEBC Meeting | October 27, 4:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| ~~Joint Partner Liaison Meeting – Session 2~~ | ~~October 30, a.m.~~ | Postponed |
| Trustee Academy | November 27 – 28 | TBA |