

The Highlighter

September 7, 2021

Board Chair

Indigenous Education Committee – Trustee Knowledge Series #3: The BCSTA's Indigenous Committee third poster in its five-part Trustee Knowledge Series focuses on student success. The poster includes information on applicable areas of the BC Tripartite Education Agreement, and recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Trustee Spilsbury noted that the Cowichan Valley was one of two Districts referenced on the poster for their Indigenous resources, and thanked staff for their work creating them.

Board Retreat: The Board Retreat will be held from 9:00 a.m. - noon on Saturday, November 6, 2021. The meeting will be facilitated by Gordon Li of the BCTA, at a location yet to be determined.

New Cowichan Secondary School Blessing/Preparation of the Land: Trustees Spilsbury and Thorne have been meeting with Cowichan Tribes Elders to arrange a blessing for the property, as well as a blessing of the Indigenous children as they enter the school to protect them on their educational journey. The ceremony will be held at noon on September 28, 2021 (note the date has changed from September 24) at the new school site, and will feature Cowichan Tribes Councillor Albie Charlie and a performance by the Tzinquaw Dancers.

September 30: Truth and Reconciliation Day: In honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a community walk from Vancouver Island University to Si'em' Lelum Gymnasium will be held.

Diverse Learners: A motion was passed directing staff to develop an Inclusive Education Communications Plan for effective communication with parents and the community.

Education

Personnel Updates:

- The Board welcomed Darlene Crane, District as District Principal of Instruction (Literacy and Numeracy), who brings a wealth of experiences from across North America with regards to literacy and numeracy.
- The Board welcomed Erin Egeland, who was an educator and lead at Vancouver Island University prior joining the District as Associate Secretary Treasurer on July 1, 2021.
- The Board was advised of the following temporary Principal/Vice-Principal assignments which took place over the summer:
 - Scott Jackson, Principal, Bench Elementary
 - Rhonda Laforge, Vice-Principal, Chemainus Secondary
 - Venessa MacDowell, Principal, Maple Bay Elementary
 - Darren Hart, Vice-Principal, Frances Kelsey Secondary



COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

COVID-19 Guidelines for K-12: The District takes its direction on COVID protocols from the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Health Office. Highlights of the COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines include:

- The District will see a near normal school year;
- Students and staff will continue to perform a daily health check and remain at home if ill;
- Use of effective hygiene practices (washing hands and respiratory etiquette);
- Cleaning and disinfecting high-touch areas;
- Supporting improvements to HVAC/ventilation systems;
- No cohorts or physical distancing requirements, but ensuring giving adequate personal space;
- Extra-curricular and inter-school events may take place as usual, with promotion of outdoor activities;
- Encouraging use of masks for Kindergarten - Grade 3 students;
- Mask use expected for staff and students in Grades 4-12 when inside buildings and on buses;
- Regular meetings will be held with Medical Health Officer Dr. Shannon Waters;
- Joint Health & Safety Committees will work closely together to address any issues that arise.

Island Health has contacted the District to coordinate the use of several school sites as pop-up vaccination clinics.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - September 30: The school calendar has been updated to reflect the new statutory holiday on September 30.

Orange Shirt Day: Indigenous Education is looking at how to change our activities for Orange Shirt Day, which falls on September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Non-Instructional Day – September 27, 2021: Kevin Lamoureux will provide the Keynote for the Indigenous-focussed non-instructional day. A number of excellent workshops will be offered to staff in the afternoon.

Summertime Student Engagement: Transitional support was offered at 15 District schools to students who hadn't attended schools in person last year. Support was provided by Indigenous Support Workers, Ts'uwatuns, Hul'q'umi'num Language Cultural Advisors and teachers who came to work a week before schools opened to help students reengage with their schools, staff and friends. Alexander, Khowhemun, Quamichan and Cowichan Secondary also hosted Open Houses, with food, school swag, and school supplies.

Before and After School Care – Bench Elementary: Staff members have developed a manual of policies and procedures for operating a before and after school program at Bench Elementary. The District is anticipating receiving final approval from licensing for the program this week. An informal expression of interest indicated sufficient parent interest to fill the after-school program, with spaces still available for before-school care. The District will continue to work with licensing and families.

Summer Learning Opportunities: Coordinators and helping teachers put on a number of excellent learning opportunities for staff last week on a variety of topics. Staff and Trustees thanked the leads who developed, implemented and hosted the workshops.



International Student Program Update: A small group of students remained in the District over the summer and participated in an experiential program featuring themes such as robotics, environmental studies, fine arts, forensic science, Canadian culture and English language learning. There are currently over 200 students in the District, primarily from across Europe, with applications continuing to be received. The majority of students are attending Cowichan Secondary and Frances Kelsey Secondary, with nine at Chemainus Secondary and five at Lake Cowichan School. The Board thanked the International Student Program Staff for their hard work during this challenging time for International Education.

Superintendent's Update:

Acknowledgements:

- Thank you to the custodial, operations, payroll and other staff members that didn't have summer holidays but were busy preparing for the school year.
- Custodians were acknowledged for their excellent work over the past 18 months keeping our schools clean and safe.
- Operations staff were thanked for their great job preparing and refreshing buildings for the upcoming school year.
- Thank you to Secretary-Treasurer Jason Sandquist, Associate Superintendent Sheryl Koers, Cowichan Secondary School Principal Darcy Hoff, Director of Operations Richard Dyble, and Director of Communications Mike Russell, for spending so much of their summer working with the Chief Project Officer on the Cowichan Secondary School replacement project.

Updates:

- Nourish Cowichan and the Rotary's Starfish Program have been working with Associate Superintendent Tom Longridge, supporting staff and schools to make ensure the food programs are ready to go, preparing meals for our learners.
- The Transportation Department provided a number of professional learning opportunities for its employees, who heard from our Indigenous educators on truth and reconciliation, who provided information on the traditional territories that they drive through on their routes.
- Members of the Senior Management team participated in the BCSSA's summer leadership academy "Reimagining Systems With Equity and Compassion", which featured keynotes from Dr. Susan Crichton and Dr. Sara Davidson.
- District teacher Jennifer Ylagan's Masters project "Improving literacy supports through collaborative inquiry and action" is one of three Masters projects recently approved.
- With the exception of Thetis Island School (which has a gravel parking lot), all schools in the District now have rainbow crosswalks.

Business

Restart Funding: Last year the Board received almost \$3.8M of COVID-related federal and provincial grants. This year the District received \$275,174 comprised of \$70,845 of Mental Health Allocation (in addition to \$52K in funding for mental health supports that were received outside of the grant) and \$204,329 of Health and Safety Allocation. Staff is formulating a plan to expend the health and safety funds on items such as custodial, cleaning supplies, and ventilation upgrades. As the Board's budget included funds for additional health and safety protocols, the grant could be used to either enhance procedures already in place or reimburse itself for the items it has already budgeted. These options will be brought back to the Board through the amended budget process.



Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events

| MEETING | DATE/TIME | LOCATION |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|
| Early Learning and Child Care Committee | September 14, 2:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| Board Planning | September 14, 4:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| DPAC Meeting (Trustee de Groot) | September 16, 7:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| Advisory Committee | September 21, 4:30 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| Ad Hoc Anti-Racism Committee | September 23, 4:30 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| Audit Committee | September 28, 3:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| BEBC | September 28, 4:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| Special Closed Board | September 28, 5:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| Special Open Board | September 28, 5:30 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| National Day for Truth and Reconciliation | September 30 | |
| Orange Shirt Day | September 30 | |
| VISTA Fall Conference and Business Meeting | October 2, time TBA | Via Zoom |
| Closed/Open Board of Education | October 5, 3:30/4:30 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| Board Planning | October 12, 4:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| DSAC Meeting (Trustee Doman) | October 14, 10:00 a.m. | Via Zoom |
| BCSTA Board Chairs Meeting | October 14 | Vancouver |
| Ministry of Education's Joint Partner Liaison Meeting | October 15 | Vancouver |
| Advisory Committee | October 19, 4:30 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| DPAC Meeting (Trustee Kemmler) | October 21, 7:00 p.m. | TBA |
| BCSTA Provincial Council | October 23, Time TBA | Via Zoom |
| BEBC | October 26, 4:00 p.m. | Via Zoom |
| BCSTA's 2021 Trustee Academy | December 2-4 | Vancouver |

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