



INDIGENOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL (IEC) MEETING

Friday, November 28, 2025 – 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm

School Board Office – Board Room 1

(1040 Hollywood Road South, Kelowna, BC)

MINUTES

Voting Council Members

Westbank First Nation (4)

- Jordan Coble (*arrived at 2:36 pm*)
- Sara Tronson
- Denise Clough (by Zoom)

Absent: Nicole Werstuik

Elder Representative (1)

- Elder Wilfred Barnes (WFN) (by Zoom)

Okanagan Indian Band (2)

- Allan Louis

Absent: Peggy Joe

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (2)

- Bill McKenna
- Ethel Lariviere (Alternate)

Absent: Rob Bullock

Kelowna Metis Association (2)

- Cheryl Dodman
- Richard Gauthier

Lake Country Native Association (1)

- Ann Bell
- *Shannon Isnardy, Guest/Observer*

Indigenous Parent & Family Education Council (2)

- Deanna Necan
- Candace Jack (WFN) (by Zoom)

Central Okanagan Public Schools: Trustee Representatives

Trustee Julia Fraser (by Zoom)

Absent: Trustee Lisa Guderyan

Central Okanagan Public Schools: Staff

Director of Instruction - Indigenous Education, Diversity, and Student Wellbeing: Jesse Bruce

District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education: Christie Russell

District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education: Kevin Kaiser

Secretariat: Lise Bradshaw

Absent: Superintendent of Schools / CEO: Jon Rever

Assistant Superintendent: Raquel Steen

Welcome

Jesse Bruce, Director of Instruction - Indigenous Education, Diversity, and Student Wellbeing opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and explained that he would serve as Acting Chair until Jordan Coble arrived from a prior meeting commitment.

Opening Prayer

Elder Barnes led the Council in an opening prayer.

Introductions

Jesse Bruce invited council members to introduce themselves, given the number of new members to the IEC.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

Adoption of the November 28, 2025, Agenda

MOVED by Ann Bell and SECONDED by Allan Louis

THAT: The Agenda for November 28, 2025 be adopted as presented.
CARRIED

Review and Approval of Minutes

Indigenous Education Council Meeting Minutes – June 3, 2025

MOVED by Cheryl Dodman and SECONDED by Ann Bell

THAT: The Minutes for the June 3, 2025 meeting be adopted as presented.
CARRIED

PRESENTATION

Implementation Day – Indigenous Focused Learning: Mt. Boucherie Secondary School

Jesse Bruce advised that the team from Mount Boucherie Secondary School had to cancel their presentation to the IEC regarding Indigenous Focused Learning.

STANDING ITEMS

District Updates

With new IEC members, an IEC alternate and a guest alternate in attendance, Jesse Bruce took the opportunity to review Section 3 of the IEC Terms of Reference to clarify the roles of members and alternates at IEC meetings.

Jesse Bruce passed along regrets from Jon Rever, Superintendent of Schools who was unable to attend the IEC meeting as he was at a conference in Vancouver with Trustees, including Trustee Representative Lisa Guderyan. Assistant Superintendent Raquel Steen was also unable to attend as she was travelling on behalf of the International Education Department.

District Vice-Principals Christie Russell and Kevin Kaiser were commended for their work organizing the Equity In Action Agreement Signing Ceremony earlier in the week. Jesse Bruce emphasized that the signing of the Agreement signals the important work to begin, actioning the priorities and commitments made in the Agreement.

In a parallel process, Jesse Bruce advised that the District's District Human Rights Committee is working on a 'Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Anti-Racism Framework', and the IEC will likely be invited to consult with the working group to discuss the language, priorities and commitments.

1:58 pm: Deanna Necan, Indigenous Parent and Family Education Council rep, joined the meeting

Department Updates

Currently the Department is fully staffed with two Wellness Workers and a large cohort of approximately 50 Indigenous Student Advocates. The District endeavors to have an Indigenous Advocate at each school. There is a new Cultural Coordinator in the Department, as well as a new program secretary. Most secondary schools and some middle schools have Success teachers (formerly known as tutor-teachers). Two elementary schools have early primary literacy Indigenous support.

Community Updates

The Indigenous Education Council Members spoke of the following:

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society:

- Supporting the City of Kelowna in collecting winter clothing items, blankets and sleeping bags.
- Hosting monthly meetings for Elders.
- Harvesting tobacco seeds for use in ceremonies.
- Rutland Community Clinic – organization with doctors, physiotherapists, kinesiologists, counsellors, etc. The clinic clientele is Indigenous families who aren't connected with a family doctor.

Kelowna Metis Association

- Hosting a gathering for Elders every second Wednesday.
- A Christmas luncheon is planned for December 14th.
- A Solstice event is planned for December 21st for Indigenous artisans.
- A new Board was elected in October, and the Association is happy to have Richard Gauthier join the Board and the IEC.

Westbank First Nation

- There is now an app that can be used to browse the many events and programs happening at Westbank First Nation, some of which include: Wild Play for Early Years, Wellness Retreats, Community Wellness Circles, Chronic Disease Management, Grief counselling, Bootcamp/Yoga, etc.
- There is a First Speakers Gathering December 5-7, 2025 in Osoyoos for Okanagan Nation Members
- A Community Christmas Dinner is planned.
- WFN Members' Quarterly Open House and Membership meeting on December 11, 2025, students are encouraged to join.
- The sənsisyustən winter concert is on December 16.
- 'Our Roots' Ancestry project.

Okanagan Indian Band

- They are offering a public safety program to help students with safety in communities, equipping students as they transition into public school in grade 8.
- The new OKIB school has opened. There is now a gym, commercial kitchen and all classrooms have outside doors. The greenery outside is thoughtfully designed with berries and fruit trees, and shade offered for students.
- School governance: Chief and Council are still responsible for the school, but welcome input from community. There is a school PAC that meets monthly

Lake Country Native Association

- The 28th Annual Family Gathering/Pow Wow was another success, and they are very proud of the event and all the volunteers.
- There is a themed youth drumming circle led by Randy Swanson that meets once per month.
- Once a month there is a family cultural gathering with a presenter and a dinner.
- The Family Christmas party is coming up that is funded by the 50-50 proceeds from the Pow Wow.
- The Association is very excited to welcome Shannon Isnardy, who is being mentored on both the cultural and business aspects of the Association.
- At the recent AGM, a new president, Marie James was elected.

Indigenous Parent and Family Education Council

- Rutland Secondary School is hosting a parent bingo night and hoping to engage some families in these events that can become an annual tradition.
- A group of students attended a 10-day excursion to New Zealand and were inspired by the Māori culture and language integration

Board of Education

- Trustee Julia Fraser spoke of Trustee attendance at the Westbank First Nation Indigenous Veterans Day ceremony, the joint Board meeting with members of the Westbank First Nation Chief and Council and the Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation signing ceremony.

Elder Barnes

- Shared news regarding the nursing program being expanded to first and second nursing students at UBCO.
- Recommended the Kelowna Heritage Museum language workshop “The Truth Shows Itself”.

Junior Advocate Update

Jesse Bruce advised that last year, the IEC directed \$10,000 into a new account in the Department for the prototyping of a “junior advocate” position. The required job description has been drafted, and once it is reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Department and CUPE, hopefully there will be an opportunity to try this part-time position in the new year. Qualifications for this position would be different from an Indigenous Advocate, and the pay would be less for this part-time, temporary position.

After School Care

Christie Russell, District Principal of Indigenous Education shared details of the two schools that offer after-school care for Indigenous Students.

Spring Valley Elementary School is piloting an after-school program for the young learners who wait for their middle school siblings after school. There are approximately 4-6 kids each time. Students are being supported in a holistic way with food and cultural programs.

Black Mountain Elementary is offering an after-school cultural program on Mondays and Thursdays. Students are engaging with the creation of ribbon skirts, shawls and shirts.

2:36 pm: Jordan Coble joined meeting and assumed the role of Chair.

Indigenous Kids in Care

The IEC spoke of the ongoing concern of Indigenous Kids in Care. Several IEC members attended a recent FNESC regional session which provided data on kids in care. The focus is to continue to work with the Ministry of Children and Families together at provincial level to provide clarity as to how they can better communicate with one another at a school level, as it is difficult to support kids in care if school administrators are not provided with details.

Councillor Sara Tronson provided some academic statistics from the FNESC regional session. The IEC members discussed the data, what can be done to prepare students for post-secondary, and ways to engage parents in their child’s education.

3:37 pm: Elder Barnes left the meeting.

Annual Work Plan

Jesse Bruce shared a draft of a 2025-2026 Annual Workplan, which can help guide the work of the IEC. The suggestion is that a Work Plan is presented and approved by the IEC annually. The Work Plan is not a rigid document and can be refined. The published and approved Work Plan will give an opportunity to direct the District’s and Department’s work at certain times in the year. For example, it would cue the IEC in the spring to start consulting regarding the District’s Orange Shirt Day in the fall.

The IEC members expressed appreciation for the Work Plan, agreed that conversation and consultation would be valuable, and the Work Plan would keep the IEC organized for important items.

The IEC discussed the BCTEA Indigenous Focused Professional Learning and the creation of a sub-committee that could provide recommendations for the Work Plan regarding resources, activities and presenters that the District could draw upon to design learning for school and Department staff.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation / Orange Shirt Day

Jesse Bruce shared that the District has an expectation that all schools and Departments annually recognize National Day for Truth and Reconciliation/Orange Shirt Day. There must be learning happening in schools regarding reconciliation on that day. In the Work Plan, there will be an item to cue consultation with the IEC re: resources and activities.

To answer Councillor Tronson's question on whether it is an expectation or a requirement to recognize this day, Jesse Bruce advised that currently it is an *expectation*. A District Admin Procedure could be drafted for IEC feedback and District consideration. Jesse Bruce advised that he could confidently state that every school has shared the learning that took place at their school for Orange Shirt Day and shared some photos with the IEC.

IEC members discussed offering personal perspectives and contributions to the Orange Shirt Day resources, and a statement from the IEC each year at the beginning, and possibly the end of the school year.

Implementation Day

Jesse Bruce shared the following from the BC Tripartite Education Agreement regarding Indigenous Focused Professional Development:

Provide teachers with an opportunity to participate in discussions and activities that focus on enhancing Indigenous Student Achievement and integrating Indigenous worldviews and perspective into learning environments.

Details of some of the professional learning that occurred at some of the elementary, middle and secondary schools were shared, along with photos. Jesse Bruce noted that there is now a focus on learning in circles in classrooms and spoke of educators decolonizing science and math classes.

Indigenous Student Attendance

Jesse Bruce advised that the District continues to scan attendance data and trends across the District due to Indigenous students with chronic absences (20% or more). Due to the COVID pandemic years, there is a gap in the data, but the trend shows the absences grow when students transition to secondary school. The District is looking deeply into attendance trends so that decisions can be made for next steps in the long term. For example, are staff who are only focussed on attendance needed? How can the Indigenous Education Department work with Principals and Vice-Principals to connect with students? Once more is known, future staffing decisions will be made.

Currently, to address the situation, the District is involving:

- Indigenous Student Advocates to offer student and family support,
- Principals and Vice-Principals to monitor absences and contact families,
- Indigenous Education Department to add cultural connections at school,
- Additional staffing to support absences and graduation.

The new language in the updated Equity in Action Agreement states that each Indigenous learner will be connected to two caring adults in the school, besides their advocate. Also, each Indigenous family will be contacted to two caring adults in the school, in addition to their advocates.

The IEC discussed the data, school and class sizes in West Kelowna, and the opening of the new George Pringle Secondary School. IEC members queried whether there is a difference in the attendance data in Lake Country, cohorts, male or female students, student achievement and the various reasons for absences (excused/unexcused).

nsyilxcən Language Instruction

Jesse Bruce advised that the District is making progress with nsyilxcən Language Instruction at several schools, with Tyler Ernst teaching at Middle and Secondary schools, and Kim Kosec teaching at Chief Tomat Elementary School. The District is also working on an Admin Procedure for nsyilxcən signage in schools.

The IEC celebrated the progress thus far, and Chair Coble reminded all Okanagan groups to support learners with language. The IEC discussed language programming from K-12 and into post-secondary school and emphasized that starting to teach nsyilxcən language to children as young as possible is the most beneficial.

NEW BUSINESS

Launch of Year 1 of the Implementation of the District Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation 2025-2030

Jesse Bruce thanked everyone who was able to attend the signing ceremony. The work continues now and there is the opportunity as a team to have time at the District's January Central Okanagan Leadership Team (COLT) Meeting to bring the refreshed Agreement forward and reaffirm priorities and spark the work that comes next. One of the goals of the Agreement is for it to be a living document – the following priority areas have been prioritized through the Four Food Chiefs:

1. Nurturing Reciprocal Relationships
2. Indigenous Student Leadership
3. Connecting to Culture Continuum
4. Framework for Continuous Growth.

Going forward, there will be an invitation in early 2026 for IEC members or related individuals to join a working group for this purpose.

Jesse Bruce is working toward building an Indigenous Leadership Series to build capacity amongst indigenous staff who hope to explore leadership roles in the District. Secondly, creating a leadership series for Principals and Vice-Principals for carrying out the priorities in the Equity in Action Agreement.

Blanket Exercise Discussion

Deferred to January 13, 2026 meeting.

Indigenous Education Budget Update

Jesse Bruce briefly reviewed the IEC budget process for the new members. He advised that after he requested a review by the finance team, a \$194,752 surplus was identified, due to an error in payroll calculations (budgeted payroll for 12 months, but employees did not work Winter, Spring or Summer breaks).

The following proposal was put to the IEC members for consideration, discussion and direction, on how to spend this one-time surplus:

\$12,500	École Okanagan Mission Secondary School: Success Teacher (1 block)
\$25,000	Central School: Success Teacher (2 blocks)
\$25,000	École Glenrosa Middle School: Success teacher (2 blocks)
\$60,000	Itinerant Resource Teacher (assigned to any school, any task, any time. i.e.: students at risk of not graduating)
\$30,000	North Zone ISA (Advocate)

\$42,500 remaining – divided into funding for cultural programs, Elders in residence, land-based learning, language, the Primary Winter Gathering and graduation ceremonies.

District staff answered queries from the IEC on Success teachers, Language teachers, Indigenous Advocates, the timing of the plan and the breakdown of percentages of the remaining funds to each program.

MOVED by Denise Clough and SECONDED by Richard Gauthier

THAT: The Indigenous Education Council approve the amended budget as presented, and as recommended by staff with the considerations, requesting the breakdown of percentages as an update.

CARRIED

4:05 pm: Allan Louis left the meeting.

INFORMATION ITEMS

IEC Appointments – letters received

- (a) Rob Bullock - Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society
- (b) Jordan Coble and Sara Tronson – WFN
- (c) Richard Gauthier – Kelowna Metis Association
- (d) Allan Louis – Okanagan Indian Band
- (e) Lisa Guderyan and Julia Fraser – Trustee Representatives from Central Okanagan Public Schools

REVIEW ACTION ITEMS

Action Item: *Reach out to the language speakers in the territory to ensure the translation of the acknowledgement poster into the nsyilxcən language is done correctly. (Christie Russell/Elder Barnes)*

FUTURE IEC MEETINGS (Tuesdays 1:30 to 4:00 pm - School Board Office Board Room)

January 13th, February 10th, April 14th, June 9th

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Impact of the new personal student digital device restrictions at school (from June 3, 2025 IEC Meeting)
- Language Teaching
- Election of Vice-Chair

Chair Coble commended Jesse Bruce for his engagement and thorough responses to all IEC questions, noting that he is doing an excellent job.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:07 pm.