

Equity in Action Agreement For Truth & Reconciliation 2020-2025

2022 - 2023 Third Annual Report

Equity empowers each learner to thrive holistically

“Matriarchs, Grandmothers, Mothers, Aunties, many are residential school survivors, and have never lost faith in their grandchildren or education. Grandmothers’ love, support, and pride, flows through generations, maintaining and reconnecting future generations to healthy and sustaining kinship with each other and the land.

tum, mother of daughters; tmtimaʔ/təmaʔ, maternal grandmother; tmixʷ, everything with a life, spirit, and Food Chief communities are tmixʷ; tmxʷulaʔxʷ, land/whole ecology - all the tmixʷ intertwined into an interdependent self-renewing earth mother. Schools have potential to connect all children to healthy, appreciative, and sustaining kinship relationships with each other and the earth mother who gives us all we need to live well.”

Dr. Bill Cohen

Syilx Okanagan Artist and Educator
Assistant Professor
UBC Okanagan
School of Education



GESS Graduate, Michael Robins
with grandparent, Donna Robins

Kʷu knknxʷtəwix iʔ kl snaqsilxʷ

We are walking hand in hand with our relatives.
Nous marchons main dans la main avec nos proches.

Together We Learn



**Central Okanagan
Public Schools**
Indigenous Education



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action Agreement 2020-2025

Central Okanagan Public Schools and the District's Indigenous Education Council acknowledge and honour the traditional territory and history of the Okanagan (Syilx) People and Westbank First Nation as our host band. We also acknowledge the traditional teachings of all our Elders and the wisdom of their Indigenous culture.

EQUITY IN ACTION AGREEMENT IS BETWEEN

Central Okanagan Public Schools

AND

Westbank First Nation, the Okanagan Indian Band, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Lake Country Native Association, Kelowna Métis Association, Indigenous Parent and Family Education Council

AND

The Ministry of Education in the Province of British Columbia



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This report has been prepared by Terry Beaudry, April Strickland, Jasmine Lemon, and Evelin Mueller.

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation

Our Third Year (2022 - 2023)

Way' [Hello] everyone,

We are excited to share with you **Central Okanagan Public School's Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation Third Annual Report**. As the pandemic slowed and restrictions were lifted, we found ourselves returning to more Gatherings and events this year. Throughout this report, you will read about the return of the Primary Winter Gatherings, the Grade 12 Retreats, the Indigenous Student Summit, Indigenous parent and family evenings, and the return of sit-down family dinners at the five Indigenous Graduation Blanket Ceremonies. To gather - coming together for ceremony, celebration, and connection enabled us to live this year's District theme of **"Caring Communities"**.

This year **3,169** students (K-12) identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit), representing over 61 Bands. Central Okanagan Public Schools remain committed to equity, as a core value, and Truth and Reconciliation. As written in the Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation Agreement:

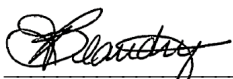
"Equity empowers each learner to thrive, holistically"

Even though the past few years have presented many challenges for our parents and families, we have had many successes. During the 2022-2023 school year, we are most proud of setting a District record with over **86%** of Indigenous students graduating on-time and with purpose, dignity, and options. We recognize we remain on a journey towards all Indigenous students achieving their potential and realizing their dreams!

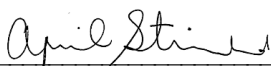
As you read through the pages, may the stories, photos, links (and even QR codes), embedded within this report, reflect our District's commitment towards Equity in Action and describe our journey towards Truth and Reconciliation.



Kevin Kaardal
Superintendent of Schools/CEO



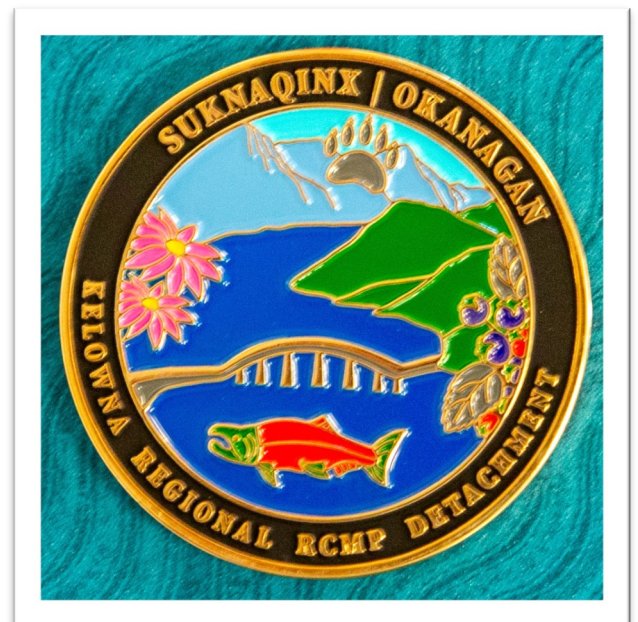
Terry-Lee Beaulieu
Deputy Superintendent of Schools



April Strickland
District Vice-Principal
Indigenous Education and Equity



J. Lemon
Acting Vice-Principal
Indigenous Education and Equity



To learn more about Land-Based Love's involvement in the design of the RCMP Coin Challenge, please refer to page 34.

Please Note: Each school and workplace, in Central Okanagan Public Schools, is on a journey towards equity. This report reflects only some of the work being done in each of the goal areas.

Edited by Ann Bell, Lake Country Native Association,
Anne Tenning, Director of Instruction - Indigenous Education and Equity,
April Strickland and Christie Russell, District Vice-Principals - Indigenous Education and Equity

Central Okanagan Public Schools

How Are Our Indigenous Learners Doing?

Central Okanagan Public Schools is committed to the ongoing gathering of data to determine how each Indigenous learner is doing (K-12). Through conversations, collections of learning evidence, locally-developed assessments, and Ministry of Education and Child Care data collection, we learn more about each learner and where they are in their learning journey at a given time. A thoughtful approach to data collection and interpretation is reflected in the words of Westbank First Nation Councillor, Jordan Coble:

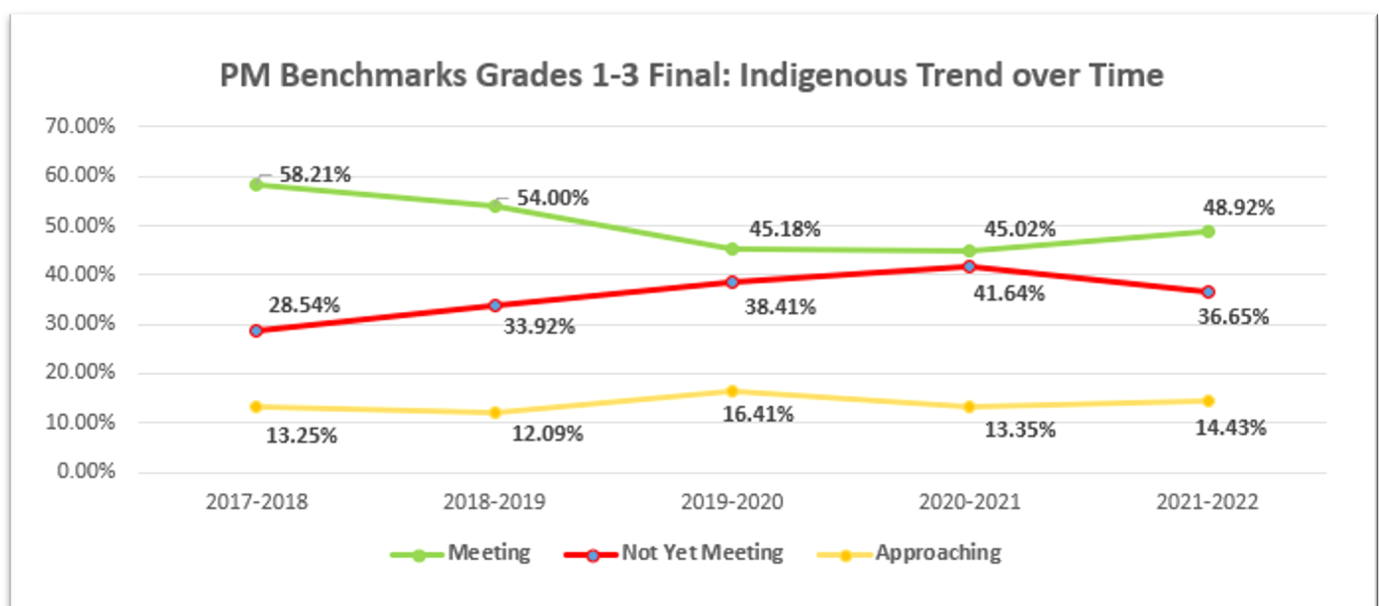
"I know so much of the district and province's work is largely based on data but what I truly appreciated during the report on stats at Jointly Convened Annual Meeting (JCAM) was the acknowledgement that every data point is a student, is a life and has so much more meaning than just the number represented through the data sets. I know so many of our district staff work with this mentality in their heart and so I just thought it would be a good and respectful acknowledgement of this."

Central Okanagan Public Schools Indigenous Education Council Chair, Jordan Coble

Qualitative data is continually sought through talking circles, meetings with parents, community members, and collaborative discussions between Indigenous Education staff, classroom teachers, and School-based Teams. Additionally, the locally-developed Indigenous Information Management System (IIMS) enables the Indigenous Education staff to input data related to each Indigenous student's intellectual achievement, emotional well-being, cultural connectedness, and physical well-being. Indigenous Student Advocates are required to input student data each day to ensure meaningful connections are being made with each Indigenous student in the District.

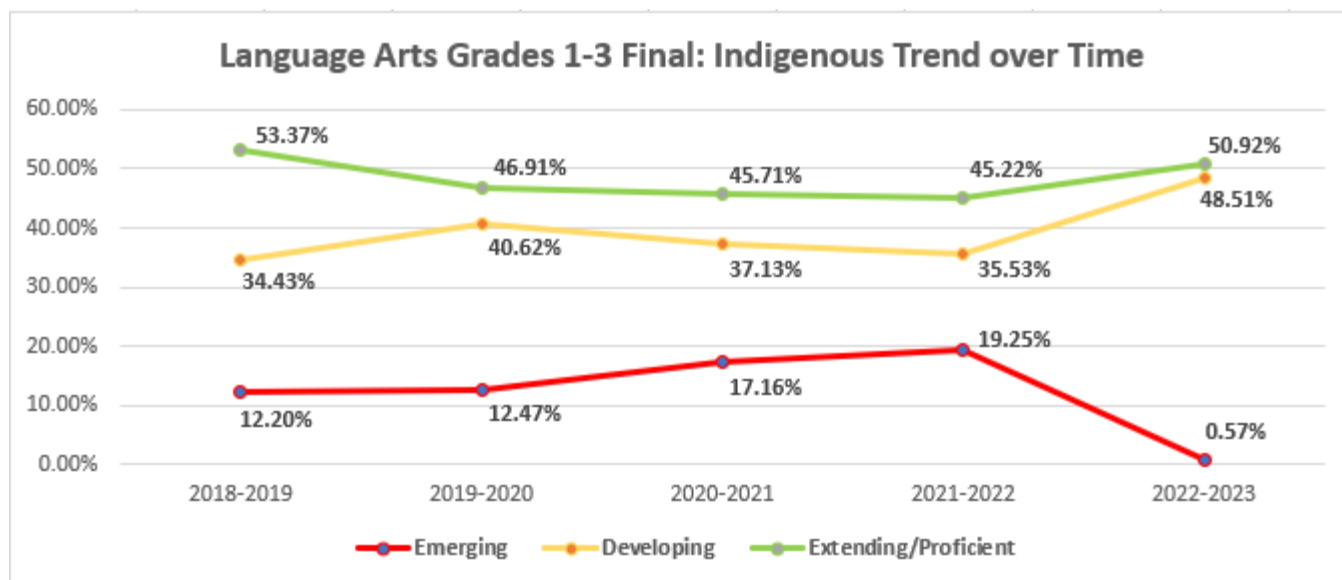
Primary Reading Performance

Central Okanagan Public Schools collection of early learning data shows a decline in early learning achievement and reading readiness for Indigenous early learners during the pandemic. Recognizing the trending up of Indigenous early learners not yet meeting expectations at the end of grade three, a number of supports and services, including Jordan's Principle supports, have been put in place. The most recent yearend data is reflecting a more positive trend in achievement data. Early learning will continue to be a focus in the years ahead.



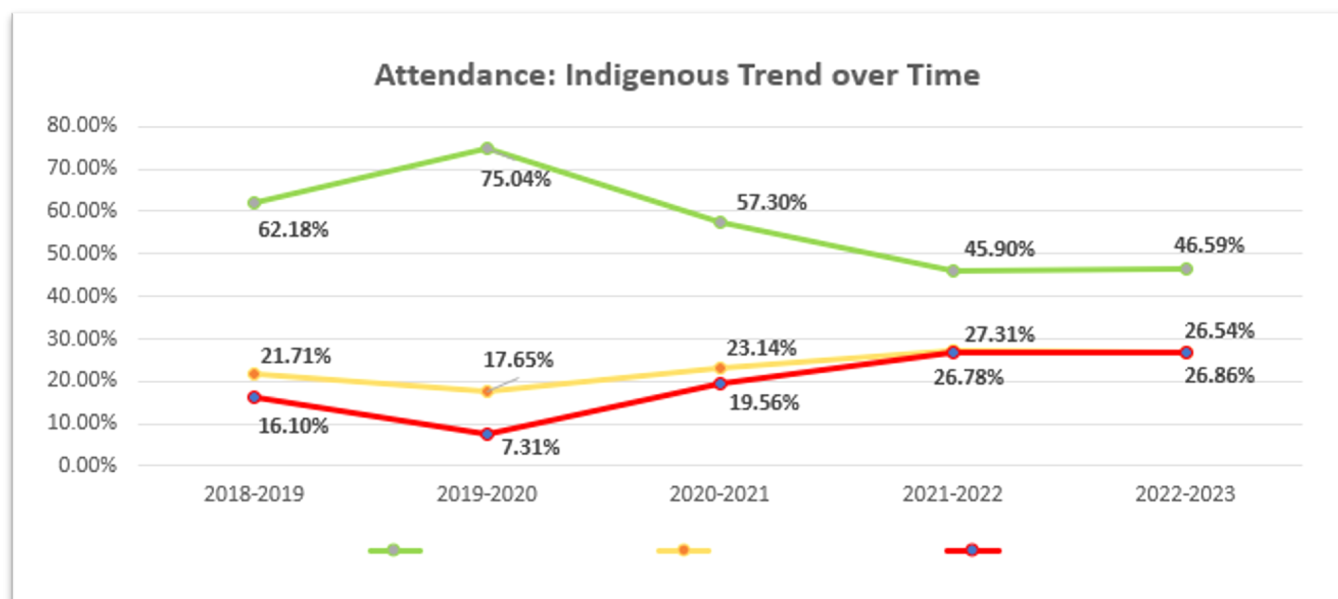
Central Okanagan Public Schools

How Are Our Indigenous Learners Doing?



Attendance: Indigenous Trends over Time

Consistent attendance for some Indigenous students continues to be a concern. The graph below shows the patterns of attendance over the past few years. The 2020 data is skewed and unreliable, resulting from schools being closed for a period of time due to the pandemic. It is evident that more needs to be done to increase consistent attendance for some Indigenous learners (K-12).



Legend

Green: 47% of Indigenous students demonstrating consistent attendance
 Yellow: 27% of Indigenous students demonstrating inconsistent attendance
 Red: 27% of Indigenous students demonstrating significant absence

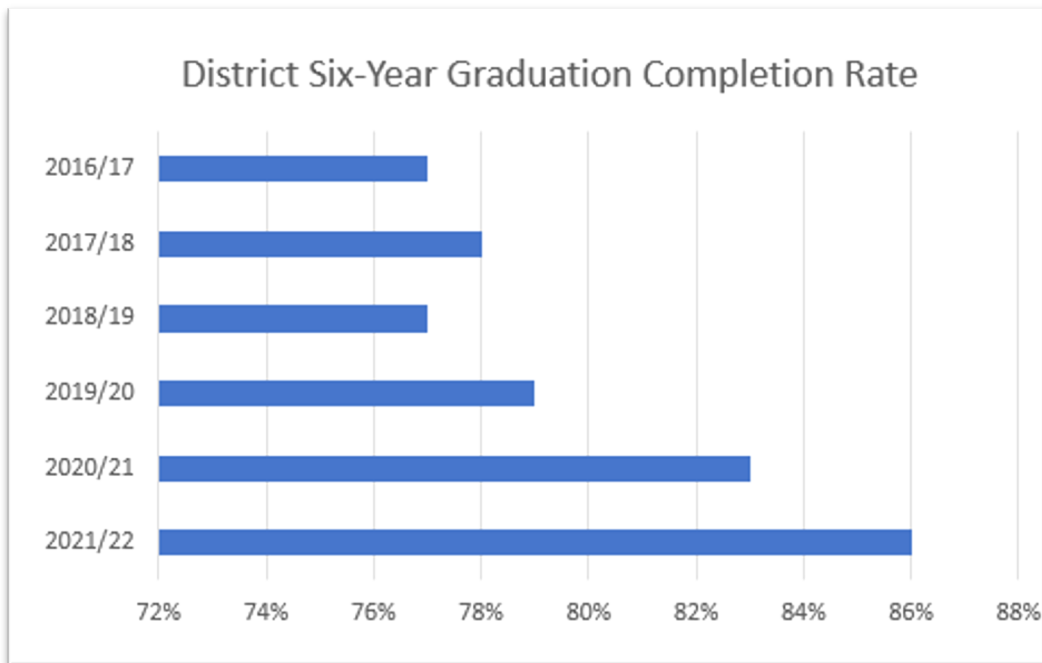
Please refer to the Ministry of Education & Child Care's
["How Are We Doing?" Report for all Indigenous student achievement results.](#)



Central Okanagan Public Schools

How Are Our Indigenous Learners Doing?

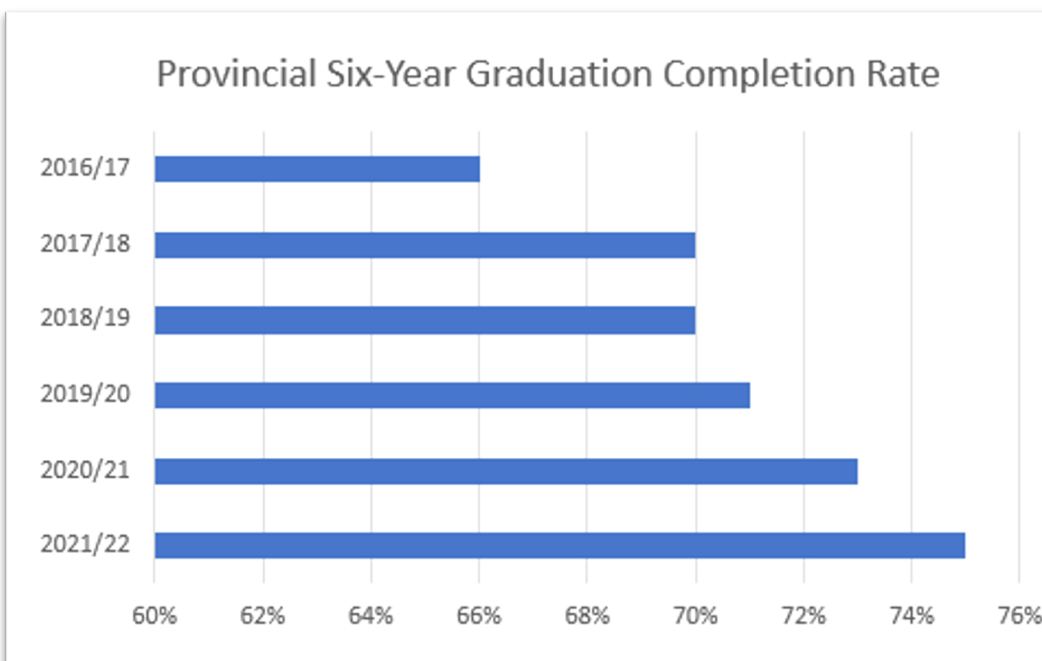
SIX-YEAR COMPLETION RATE: 2016/17 - 2021/22



GESS graduate, Harmony Pronyshyn
with student Advocate, Lisa Middleton

In 2022, the six-year Ministry of Education and Child Care graduation completion rate was **86%** which is the District's highest Indigenous graduation rate in District history!

The six-year completion rate is the percent of grade 8 students who graduate, with a B.C. Certificate of Graduation ("Dogwood") or a B.C. Adult Graduation Diploma ("Adult Dogwood"), within six years from the first time they enroll in grade 8, adjusted for migration in and out of B.C. It is not the inverse of a "dropout rate" as students may graduate after the six-year period.



KSS graduate, Maria Dargatz
with Indigenous Student Advocate, Steve Kelly
and Indigenous Academy Teacher, Rob Bennett

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - District Responsibilities 2020 - 2025

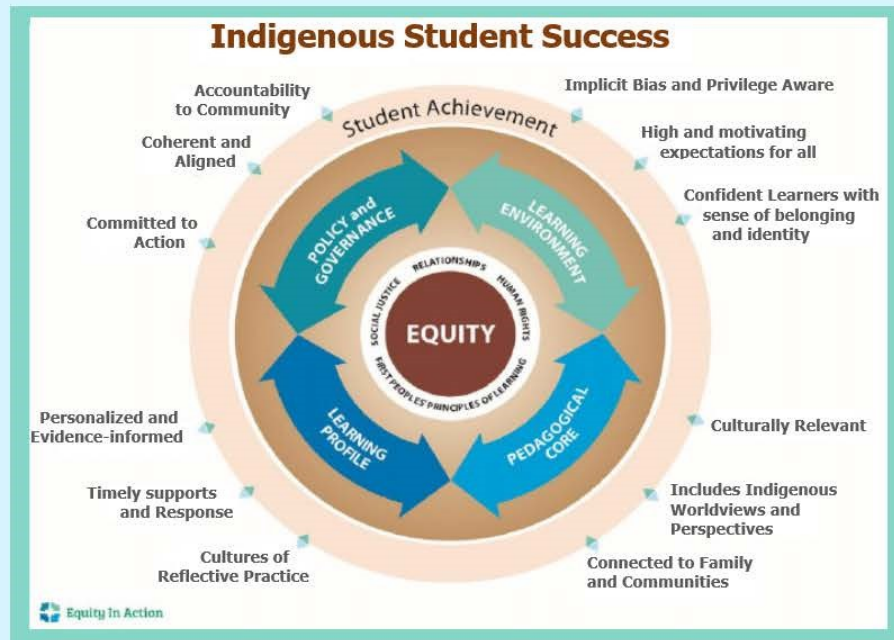
The following outlines the goals and priorities of the current Equity in Action Agreement

Policy and Governance

- Maintain a District Multi-year Equity Committee
- Request the Board of Education review policies to support equity
- Request the Superintendent to review administrative procedures to support equity
- Provide annual reports on the goals of the Equity in Action Agreement

Learning Environment (School Culture)

- Implement and expand Elders in Residence programs, ensuring access to Elder wisdom
- Reflect a strong culturally-appropriate Indigenous presence in each school
- Ensure quality, culturally relevant space or Gathering Rooms in every school



Learning Profiles

- Continue to develop a holistic definition of success for each learner, with a focus on personalizing the learning journey
- Develop a timely response plan for 5th & 6th year, Grade 12 and year after Grade 12
- Collaborate to implement culturally responsive interventions and alternatives to suspension

Pedagogical Core

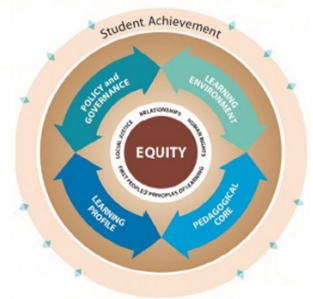
- Embed Truth & Reconciliation in teaching and learning K-12
- Ensure Indigenous worldviews are incorporated into classrooms and embedded into school culture
- Create understanding with ALL students through authentic Indigenous presence
- Continue to foster partnerships between Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and non Indigenous educators through reciprocal learning opportunities
- Continue to foster community relationships through ongoing collaboration
- Incorporate culturally relevant land-based learning for all students

EACH SCHOOL'S JOURNEY TOWARDS EQUITY WILL BE EMBEDDED WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEARNING PLAN, UPDATED REGULARLY AND SHARED WITH PARENTS.

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Policy and Governance

We are pleased to share that the Central Okanagan Public Schools' Board of Education and Westbank First Nation (WFN) signed the eighth Local Education Agreement (LEA) on June 27th, 2022. This school year marks the first year of implementation for the five-year Agreement. For the first time, in the District's history, an LEA Oversight Team (consisting of District and Westbank First Nation staff) has been created to assume responsibility for the implementation of the LEA. Additionally, a Community Table is in the process of being created, enabling District and WFN staff to collaborate in co-designing services and supports for Westbank First Nation students and families. The LEA Oversight Team has co-designed a Terms of Reference to bring clarity to shared responsibilities in the implementation of the Local Education Agreement.



The Terms of Reference reflect the attributes and priorities of the District's Strategic Plan and were unanimously supported by Westbank First Nation and the Board of Education in June 2023.



Central Okanagan Public Schools District Strategic Plan



Westbank First Nation Chief, Council and staff members, and the Board of Education and senior staff gather together after the annual Interchange

District Anti-Racism Action Committee

The District Anti-Racism Action Committee (established June 2023) will move forward with key areas of focus including (but not limited to):

- Training and education of staff: Collaborating to create opportunities for training and learning within our schools and communities.
- Disaggregated race-based data: Collecting and using disaggregated race-based data to better serve and develop awareness of the students we serve.
- Diversity within positions of leadership: Developing community points of connection that represent the leadership of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized peoples.
- Racially equitable programs, services, policies, and systems: working towards accountability of educational programs offered with interested parties.
- Anti-Racist safe spaces and processes: supporting community engagement that promotes racism-free environments for safe and open conversation.

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Learning Environment

Our collective understanding of the significance of acknowledging the territory on which our learners grow deepens each year. We continue to recognize Syilx territory in all District meetings, assemblies and events. Additionally, we are grateful to receive teachings from local Elders that help us understand the differences between a land acknowledgement, and a welcome to territory.

Constable Neil Bruce Middle School, situated adjacent to Westbank First Nation, demonstrates this value through their creation of a “Conversation Corridor,” highlighting the deep connection of their student body to the land and territory.



Depicted here is student leader, Lozen Lindley, who was one of several students who contributed to the displays. Lozen belongs to Westbank First Nation and was in grade 8 during the 2022-2023 school year. It was impactful to see staff, students and community members taking the time to read and comment on the displays throughout the school year.



During Truth and Reconciliation Week, Davidson Road Elementary School had two assemblies – on Monday to learn about Truth and Reconciliation, and then on Thursday to share and celebrate their learning. We started on Monday by reading "With our Orange Hearts", by Phyllis Webstad and talked about what "Together, as a caring community, we can heal hearts" meant. Throughout the week, students took pledges by creating posters with their handprints to remember that 'Every Child Matters' and the

reminders that Phyllis shared on how to take steps towards reconciliation. Thursday was the second assembly to share our learning. One class shared how they can ‘heal hearts’ and what steps they could take towards reconciliation, grade 4/5 students performed “O Siem”, and the whole school learned to say “Way” (hello) and “l’młəmt” (thank you). Friday, families were encouraged to connect with the land and with each other, and to paint orange rocks as a reminder that every child matters.

Prepared by Jennifer Adamson, Acting Principal, for the week prior to Truth and Reconciliation, September 2022

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Learning Environment

The Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee at **École Kelowna Secondary School (KSS)** is looking for contributions from the community to help fund their Outdoor Classroom Project.

A dedicated group of student leaders from the KSS Indigenous Academy continues to pass the torch of their Indigenous Inquiry Project, and they are now fundraising to make the outdoor learning space a reality. Graduating Leadership student Amelie Guignard had the idea of spreading the fundraising effort beyond the school.

"With the Indigenous course requirement opportunities coming in the next school year, an outdoor classroom is a perfect space for some of the learning to occur," says Guignard, who is also Métis. "As a graduate, I'm glad to know the work on this project will continue to benefit future students and help the journey toward Truth and Reconciliation."
Amelie Guignard



The purposes of the project are to bridge all students with the land, honour local Indigenous teachings, create a welcoming outdoor gathering space, and partner with people interested in being a part of Reconciliation. Planning included consultation with local Indigenous Elders to ensure the space includes Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

"The value of this Outdoor Classroom lies in its profound ability to mend the cracks within our often-fragmented community," says Abdalla Tall, Grade 11 Leadership student. "Like a meticulous tapestry, it holds the potential to stitch distinct perspectives and cultures together with threads of understanding and empathy. I genuinely hope this space will be pivotal toward Truth and Reconciliation."



Donations to the project can be made through School Cash Online, which ensures that all funds go directly to the project with no fees. Donors can register with an email to receive a charitable tax receipt, then click "Make a Donation" and choose "KSS Indigenous Inquiry Project" as a Fund Destination. Donors can also contact the school office at KSS by calling 250-870-5105.

Depicted Above: Members of The Truth and Reconciliation Advisory Committee, Kelowna Secondary School

Pictured: Henry Pyo, Grade 11; Leana Marton, Indigenous Academy Teacher; Christey Hughes, Vice-Principal; Amelie Guignard, Grade 12; Pooja Lal, Grade 11; Abdallah Tall, Grade 11; Kailey Gross, Grade 10; Ava Cudmore, Grade 10; Libby Reis, Grade 10; Nash Contois-Laroche, Grade 10; Rob Bennett, Indigenous Academy Teacher; Steve Kelly, Indigenous Student Advocate

Not pictured: Trina Manca, Teacher Librarian; Pamela Horton, Math Teacher

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Learning Environment

Outdoor Learning

Throughout the 2022-2023 school year, students across the district spent time learning outside, exploring the significance of place, as well as building understanding of ethnobotany, Indigenous plants, weather, and water. From finding personal “sit spots” to gathering in circle to share their wonders and learning, connection to the land was evident.



CMS/OKM Spotted Lake Trip May 2023

“This afternoon grade 8 Indigenous students from CMS with Rubina Waterhouse (Indigenous Advocate) and Sarah Watson (CMS Principal) and grade 9 Indigenous students from OKM with Martina Escutin (Indigenous Advocate) and myself, as well as Land-Based learning team, Kevin Kaiser and Kyla Shields, had the privilege to travel to Spotted Lake together and listen to Elder Leon Lewis share the story of Spotted Lake and the Creation story. What a gift to learn together as the Mission Family of schools and build relationships with each other and our greater community.”

“Thank you to Rubina and Martina for organizing this. Thank you to Sherri Roche for approving this opportunity through the Mental Health SEL funding for cultural and school transition supports.”

Stephanie Gerber

Vice Principal, Okanagan Mission Secondary

Braiding Sweetgrass at Springvalley Middle School

Springvalley Middle School is home to Hidden Haven - an Indigenous garden on the property which provides an opportunity for provocation and exploration. This past spring, students at SMS worked with Indigenous teacher-tutor Joy Richardson to harvest and braid sweetgrass. Sweetgrass is a foundational plant in Indigenous cultures, and when braided, it tells a story of how the mind, body and spirit are mutually dependent and connected to each other.



“We have been growing sweetgrass in the SMS garden this year and this morning some students helped me braid it! Thought you would like to see!”

Joy Richardson, SMS Indigenous Teacher-Tutor

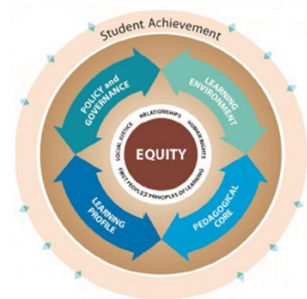


Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Pedagogical Core

We Believe:

- Reimagining teaching and learning with a shared responsibility for inspiring social justice, equity and understanding truths reflects our commitment to reconciliation.
- Integration of Indigenous world views and perspectives and First People's Principles of Learning are at the core of instruction, assessment and learning.
- Incorporation of local culturally relevant curriculum builds understanding with ALL children through an authentic Indigenous presence.



What We Are Doing:

Across the school district, learners experienced opportunities to explore a broad range of topics that connect to Indigenous Education. These included opening assemblies which began with land acknowledgements and the Okanagan song, to recognizing Truth and Reconciliation Day (Orange Shirt Day) at the end of September, to authentically embedded integration of the First Peoples' Principles of Learning, celebration of Indigenous role models, and activities and teachings connected to the Moosehide Campaign, the Red Dress Project, which honours missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and National Indigenous Peoples' Day.

The theme capturing our learning this year was "Caring Communities," which is translated in nsyilxcən as "we are walking hand in hand with our relatives." You can view the video of Elder Grouse Barnes sharing this phrase in nsyilxcən [here](#).



9th Standard

The 9th Standard of the Professional Standards for BC Educators explicitly states that educators are to respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada and the impact of the past on the present and the future. Educators contribute towards truth, reconciliation and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

You can view the video created by the Ministry of Education and Child Care which affirms the intention and requirements of this standard [here](#).



Central Okanagan Public Schools

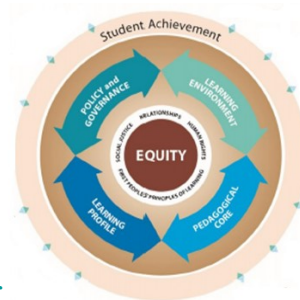
Our Year Three Progress - Pedagogical Core

Truth and Reconciliation Week

École Kelowna Secondary School

KSS student announcement Monday, September 26, 2022

"Hello, my name is Maria Dargatz from KSS's Truth and Reconciliation Committee to remind everyone that today is the beginning of Truth and Reconciliation Week. We will begin with 215 seconds of silence for the 215 unmarked graves discovered at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in 2021. Only a year later, the number of children identified rose to 4,100 nationwide as of September 2022. If we held a moment of silence for all these children, it would last just over an hour, and it would take just under two days of silence for all the estimated children who attended residential school. Each day this week will have a message. Monday is Truth, Tuesday is Reflection, Wednesday is Healing, Thursday is Resilience and Reconciliation, and Friday is Orange Shirt Day. We urge everyone to wear orange throughout the week and to learn historical truths so we can all actively practice reconciliation."

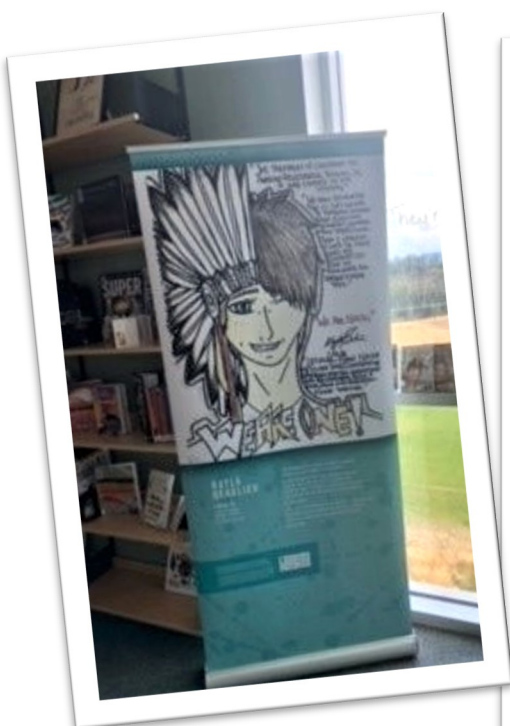


Canyon Falls Middle School

CMS school community action shared by Advocate, Rubina Waterhouse:

"I wanted to share what we are doing at CMS for Truth and Reconciliation.

Thanks to Canyon Falls Middle School Admin, we have the amazing opportunity to have the Youth Truth and Reconciliation Display in our school. The display banners are provided by Imagine a Canada—Legacy of Hope Foundation. All students will have the opportunity to spend time viewing each banner, discussing with peers, making a personal connection, and then moving into circle to share about how they can be part of Truth and Reconciliation. There will also be a Truth and Reconciliation assembly that will include a video and make a beautiful connection to Terry Fox and his Métis ancestry. I have forwarded a few images of our banner display. Feel free to visit as we have the display until December."



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Pedagogical Core

Chief Tomat Elementary School

"At Chief Tomat Elementary this year, our theme is "At CTE... We All Fit Together". We are working on building deep connections between all members of our school community and we are helping students see that they are part of something bigger than themselves, which is represented in the photo. Each member of our school community has their name on one piece of this image to demonstrate how we all fit together! To support our work this year, we are also incorporating The Seven Grandfather Teachings of Truth, Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Humility and Wisdom into our learning as a way of building common vocabulary to describe what a truly caring community looks, feels and sounds like."

Prepared by Ryan Ward, Principal



Truth and Reconciliation Week at Casorso Elementary

"Our Casorso community recognized the National Truth and Reconciliation Day by having 6 sacred storytellers sit in circle and read aloud "When We Were Alone" by David A Robertson. Our storytellers sat on a quilted blanket that was made 5 years ago at Casorso for Every Child Matters. We hosted two assemblies (primary and intermediate). We sat in a circle to listen to the story. We will continue to work at decolonizing our practices and indigenizing our way of teaching at school. I'm proud of our story tellers, our Indigenous Advocate and our students for participating in this important assembly."

Prepared by Natalie Morin, Vice-Principal



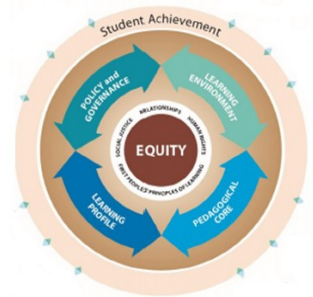
Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Pedagogical Core

October Implementation Day



Implementation Day at École KSS



École Glenmore Elementary School staff collaborating on a scavenger hunt designed to build community and decolonize thinking.



To learn more about Implementation Day, please view QR code above

Comments from South Kelowna Elementary staff when creating poems:

"Ours is not necessarily a poem, ours is a story woven together of all of our identities. We are blending together our knowledge to create an inclusive, diverse, caring community."

"Like buffalo, we form a circle around our children to keep them safe."



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Pedagogical Core

Indigenous Course Requirement Preparation

The 2022-2023 school year was our opportunity to prepare for the implementation of this new graduation requirement. A number of learning sessions were created and offered for secondary educators throughout the year, with the intention of bringing people together to deepen knowledge, explore resources and build a strong and sustainable network of educators passionate about teaching these courses, which include English First Peoples 10, 11, 12, BC First Peoples Studies 12 and Contemporary Indigenous Studies 12.

Additionally, through the leadership of Mr. Jim Elwood, and the partnership of Westbank First Nation, including knowledge keeper Coralee Miller, our school district successfully put forward a proposal for a locally-developed course, Indigenous Visual Arts 12: Exploration of Indigenous Culture through Visual Art, to be approved as meeting this graduation requirement. We look forward to offering this additional pathway to students.



Depicted here is Okanagan Indian Band Elder Randy Swanson sharing story with a group of educators at our May 18th, 2023 Indigenous Course Opportunity learning session.

Learning from the voices of our students is a foundational belief within our pedagogy. The video linked to [here](#), created by Sherrie Farquhar (RSS teacher-librarian) shares the thoughts of a small group of Rutland Secondary students in regards to the upcoming graduation requirement.



Feedback from the teachers who participated in these learning opportunities:

"We all benefit from new ideas & epiphanies & "failures"...just sharing learning!"

"Loved Elder Randy. He modeled excellent storytelling."

"There is a "sense of community knowing that others are doing the work."

"It is essential to continue to build networks that will support teachers who are just starting, or about to start, new courses."

"The resources are very valuable - Deanna, the Indigenous Education Cultural Coordinator, was amazing and opened my eyes to what is available. It has really inspired me."

To view the resource package created for educators who will be teaching and facilitating these courses, scan this QR code.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Pedagogical Core

Instructional Learning Team - Indigenous Pedagogy Initiatives

In 2022-23, educators from across Central Okanagan Public Schools took up many offerings from the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to explore both indigenizing the curriculum and decolonizing our teaching practices.

In consultation with Elder Pamela Barnes and facilitated by Jasmine Peone, the ILT hosted **eight nsyilxcən language lessons**. The language learning series was an opportunity for over 60 educators, advocates, and administrators to explore how learning nsyilxcən can help everyone in our community better understand Syilx ways of knowing and being.

Language lessons were also connected to the nature learning network. The **Nature Network** is a cross-district learning community facilitated by the ILT where K - 12 educators come together in cycles of learning, trying, and reflecting to grow nature-based learning practices together. Some of the questions explored through the Nature Network are:

- How does nature provoke, inspire, and sustain inquiry?
- How might we harness each other's diverse perspectives as we learn, try, and reflect together through story and experience?
- How might we collectively empower each other on our journeys of reconnecting to the land, decolonization, and stewardship?
- How might learning on, from, and with the land benefit all of our learners?

The learning journey of the *Nature Network* can be found at sd23.org/nature-network. Another part of the *Nature Network* was a **Lunch Club** to learn about captikʷł (stories that are connected to places, resources and practices within the Okanagan territory). Over 20 K - 12 educators took part in this opportunity to learn more about the Syilx story systems and ways to invite students into this learning.



Another way that the ILT supported educator learning was through the **Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle**. This is an online zoom conversation that invites all interested educators into conversation with collaborators from the Okanagan School of Education, as well as Elder Pamela Barnes, Elder Grouse Barnes and Kelly Terbasket. These sessions are an opportunity to reflect on decolonizing curricular efforts together and to build new understandings that support transformative action.

In May, more than 400 students, Elders, Trustees, educators, support staff, and administrators from all of the 47 schools in our District, along with senior admin, took part in a **learning symposium** guided by the wonder, **“What Could School Be?”** that involved storytelling, school visits, and panel conversations with students from across the district. Many of the learning stories and experiences were shared by educator teams across the district working with local Elders and knowledge keepers to indigenize learning.

The adult learners in Central Okanagan Public Schools had many opportunities throughout this year to gather. One of the main collective learning environments for school district staff is the gym at Hollywood Road Education Services. This year, “Lifeline - Sqilxw Resilience,” an original mural created several years ago by an art class at Kelowna Secondary, with the support of teacher Tim Mayer and local artist Sheldon Louis, was mounted permanently in the facility.

Entering the space, each individual is greeted with this visual depiction of the story and strength of the local people and the important symbols of this land.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - Learning Profiles

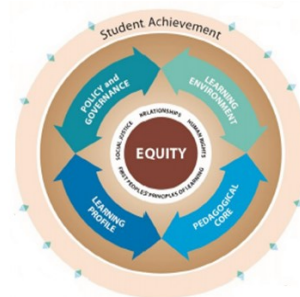
We Believe:

Learner success is achieved through personalized learning, timely supports and culturally relevant interventions.

What We Are Doing:

In the 2022-2023 school year, the Administrative Procedure – Student's Adjusted School Schedule Plan was edited to include:

- For students with a Ministry Designation, the appropriate District Consultant must be a member of the team assessing and planning for the adjusted schedule, and must liaise with the Director of Instruction of Indigenous Education and Equity for Indigenous students being considered for an adjusted school schedule.
- The District continues to develop a definition of success which focuses on the personalized learning journey for Indigenous students. We understand the importance and power of culture and connection and relationship to the land as our teacher. Many opportunities and programs were put in place to respond to Indigenous Learners' interests and learning styles, including multiple ways of assessing learning.



Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle is named in honour of Jordan River Anderson, a young First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation in northern Manitoba, who spent his entire life in hospital while caught in a jurisdictional dispute between the governments of Canada and Manitoba. The ongoing dispute prevented Jordan from returning to his home community to receive in-home care. Through advocacy efforts, Jordan's Principle has now become a legal requirement, resulting from the Orders of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

From Certified Education Assistant (CEA) support to Classroom Support Teachers to additional funding for assessments and learning resources, school teams and community organizations were very successful in receiving over \$350,000 in funding for educational enhancements during the 2022-2023 school year.



This year's priority has been on the development and implementation of a District Administrative Procedure to streamline the process for applying to Jordan's Principle for equitable services and support for groups of Indigenous learners. Westbank First Nation staff, District staff, and community members collaborated over a series of months to develop the public administrative procedure to ensure transparency for all interested in applying for additional supports and services.

The Inclusive Education Department together with the Indigenous Education Department will continue to work together with school administrators to ensure applications are approved for the upcoming school year.

To view the new Admin Procedure, [here](#) is the link.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

The following nine schools were selected this year to present their School Community Learning Plans. Each school shared their focus on equity in action.

Anne McClymont Elementary



Equity in action towards Truth and Reconciliation at Anne McClymont Elementary has been ongoing for students and staff, and action can be seen, heard and experienced in many different ways:

- Culturally responsive curriculum incorporating Indigenous voices, stories and perspectives.
- Indigenous cultural events that help us foster a sense of pride and belonging amongst Indigenous students.
- Working with Indigenous knowledge keepers and Elders that share wisdom and traditional knowledge, additionally their presence and teachings provided us with valuable insights in promoting cultural understanding.
- Indigenous support through our advocate who helped us embed the Four Food Chiefs and The Seven Grandfather teachings into the fabric of our school and school priorities



This past year we began with the theme of

Caring Communities, and together we worked to leverage this theme in order to engage in the work around equity and inclusion, that Every Child Matters.

At AME, there is a longstanding school goal that fosters student leadership and character building. This past year we worked together as a staff and in consultation with the Indigenous Education Department to shift how we go about this important work. The staff and students came together to transition from the Leader in Me program and instead use the wisdom and knowledge from the Four Food Chiefs, along with the Seven Grandfather Teachings as a way to explore and learn about ourselves and the impact we have on our community and world.

Throughout the year we elevated Indigenous voices and stories with adult performers, speakers and authors as well as Indigenous student voices as they took leadership roles in the school, including student-led assemblies and speaking at AME's Community Learning Plan Conversation. Throughout the school, students and staff created their personal land acknowledgements and our boardroom became the Den, a place where both Indigenous students, alongside our advocate, made connections and deepened their learning around Indigenous culture, and ways of knowing and being.

Every Child Matters and the caring community at AME was and is still committed to creating opportunities to continue our journey to Truth and Reconciliation through Equity in Action.



Prepared by Tamalee Middleton, Principal
and Bryce Owens, Vice-Principal

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - School Community Learning Plans

Focus on Equity

Bankhead Elementary



At Bankhead Elementary School, the staff and students are on a continuous journey to deepen our understanding of Indigenous culture. We strive to create a more equitable learning environment as we take steps towards reconciliation.

As a staff, we collaborate to develop instructional practices that help embed Indigenous content and ways of knowing across the curriculum. We consistently grow our library of Indigenous resources to support student learning.

There is a focus on outdoor learning at Bankhead Elementary. Many teachers take their classes to Redlich Pond to provide an opportunity for students to learn from the land and to deepen their connection to the land. Some examples of this learning include identifying and learning about local Indigenous plants, using Indigenous plants as writing prompts, and creating personalized land acknowledgements.



On Implementation Day, the staff learned traditional Indigenous games. Teachers shared these games with their students throughout the school year. Two of the games were also stations at the Primary Play Day this spring.



The Indigenous Advocate works alongside teachers to bring cultural experiences to the students in many classrooms. She also runs a culture club every lunch hour out of the Gathering Room.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - School Community Learning Plans

Focus on Equity

École Casorso Elementary



At École Casorso Elementary School, we have made a commitment to celebrate and incorporate Indigenous worldviews into our regular classroom and school routines.

Our school year started with staff learning about the power in celebrating and making use of Indigenous cultural norms such as learning in circle; this has become the routine of classroom morning meetings throughout the school and in our own staff meetings. This protocol helped us observe the legacy of Canada's Indian residential school system on Orange Shirt Day through student-led assemblies held in circle where we commemorated those who survived and those who were lost.

We also learned about the significance of Indigenous Land Acknowledgements and the power of creating and sharing our own personal acknowledgement, answering the question "Who is your name?". This led staff to taking students through the process of creating personal land acknowledgments of their own. These personal land acknowledgments have become the normal practice for opening staff meetings, assemblies, and morning announcements in the school.

Our staff also took part in an ethnobotany tour provided by local knowledge keepers Jasmine Peone and Pamela Barnes. Our teachers and support staff learned how to identify some of the plant life found locally and its importance to our local Syilx Okanagan peoples for food and medicine. Teachers have passed this learning on to our students as they take part in field studies to Fascieux Creek and nearby parks.

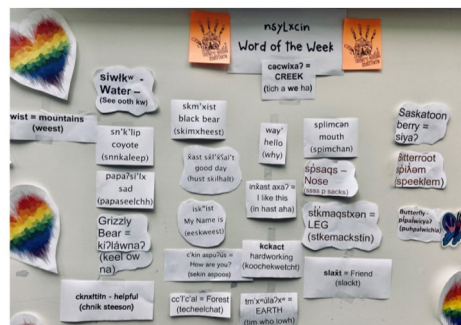
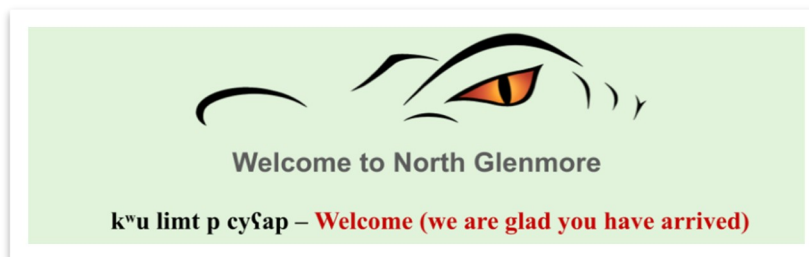


Prepared by Jared Birkeland, Principal

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - School Community Learning Plans

Focus on Equity



Each day, the staff and students of North Glenmore Elementary (NGE) are committed to a deeper understanding of Equity through our teachings and learnings about Indigenous Cultures and Truth & Reconciliation.

We are the Gators of NGE and we believe that to help every child thrive, we need to understand their individual needs



and interests to help them feel safe, and to create a sense of belonging. Our intentional focus on deepening our understanding of Indigenous cultures has included information shared and discussions throughout the year such as; Orange Shirt Day, Red Dress day, the Moose Hide Campaign and Indigenous Peoples Day. With the help of our Indigenous Advocate, our school and classrooms are filled with Indigenous teachings and ways of knowing. Each day our school practices an Indigenous “nsylxcn Word of the Week”, which is then posted prominently for all to continue to practice.

Our community believes that the land is our teacher and our classrooms regularly take learning to local parks, ponds and the cc’l’c’al (forest), where some activities include “sit spots”, “tree friends”, and “nature journals”.



Our students write and share their land acknowledgements at all formal gatherings. Elder Maureen Ziprick joined our school this fall sharing stories and food from her culture and we learned that an Elder is medicine for our school community through their presence and their wisdom. Furthermore, classrooms are learning Indigenous games, Indigenous beading as part of math activities, various crafts, and about the local Four Food Chiefs throughout their exploration of the curriculum.

We are frequently reminded of our commitment to Truth & Reconciliation and the First Peoples Principles of Learning here at the “Swamp”.

ǰast sǰl’ǰsal’t (Good Day)



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - School Community Learning Plans

Focus on Equity

École Peter Greer Elementary



The staff, students, and parents of École Peter Greer Elementary School have taken several different actions in order to improve our learning around truth and reconciliation. Our goal is to make local Indigenous culture be better recognized as a regular part of every students' educational experience.

Our efforts start during Truth and Reconciliation Week and the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation at the end of September. During the week, students recited a call to action and shared pronunciation of Indigenous communities on the PA, planted a garlic garden, painted orange rocks with one of 94 calls to action written on them and placed them in our front gardens. Our Intermediate students held tours of our garden beds where they checked out some freshly planted orange flowers and recited calls to action, and made bracelets with staff from our Indigenous Education

Department as a

way to remember the impacts of residential schools. On Orange Shirt Day, we held an assembly where students learned about the Syilx Peoples' territory, recited a land acknowledgement and sang the Okanagan Song led by our Indigenous Student Advocate, Rose Alexis. At the end of the week, students were provided with a small paper shaped like an orange shirt. They reflected on their learning of the week, wrote down a word or phrase, and then added their mini orange shirts to our giant orange shirt in the foyer.

During our Implementation Day, all staff viewed the film, *We Were Children*, a story of the profound impact of the Canadian government's residential school system through the eyes of two children. This was followed by informal, emotional and thought-provoking small group discussions.

On National Indigenous Day in June, we again had an assembly and from there students participated in a variety of hands-on Indigenous themed games and activities (storytelling, making bannock, dancing etc.) on a rotational basis. We have a group of teachers and support staff meeting on a regular basis to continue their

work as part of the Network of Indigenous Inquiry and Education (NOIIE). Their work focuses on two main hunches: how can we meaningfully integrate learning in our natural environment throughout the year, and how can we embed Indigenous ways of knowing and First Peoples Principles of Learning in this place-based learning?

Throughout the year, Syilx Elder Maureen Ziprick, visited the school to support our students in our number one focus area - improving reading fluency and comprehension.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - School Community Learning Plans

Focus on Equity

Peachland Elementary



Our focus this year was on belonging in community, with others and the land. We wove Indigenous ways of learning and growing with the help of our Indigenous Advocate and local elders. During our first term, we co-wrote with students a musical called, "The Friend Ship". Students looked to the animals for wisdom on how to be a kind and caring friend. This Winter, our beautiful nature mural was created with the whole community of students and staff. The mural represents the flora and fauna that surrounds us each day at Peachland Elementary. We were guided by professional artist and Mount Boucherie Art Careers students. In our last term, we have celebrated Spring and our connection to the plants coming back to life to provide us food and beauty.



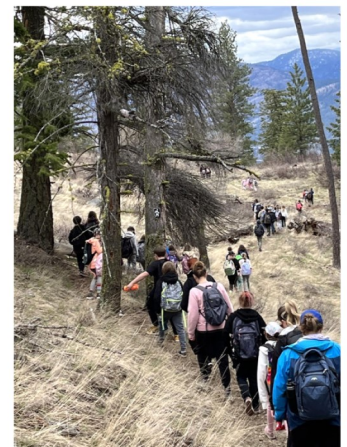
This year we had Elders Grouse and Elder Pamela Barnes spend time with us in cultural teaching about sacred animals in the Syilx culture. The learning was infused in what students chose to paint on the nature mural representing the seasons. Language lessons were interwoven with the teaching about the creatures on the ground, under that ground, in the air and in the water. The photo of the whole school in our gym shows our celebration of the completion of the mural and the preparation for the smudging of the new images on the mural in March.



We often visit sit spots gathering places in the forest. We need to be connected to the land in order to protect it. Our Indigenous Advocate is leading a sharing circle in the forest in the fall in preparation for the new national Indigenous day. Peachland Elementary is surrounded by the forest trails, Trepanier Creek and Okanagan Lake, where we visit regularly all year round.



The students below are cooking buddies. Peachland Elementary and Mount Boucherie Secondary students met several times on the land to explore and cook together. The highlight in May was a hike on Mount Boucherie where students gathered local plants to make tea and food to share. Our students hiked Peachland forests to continue learning about how we are interconnected with the land



around us. Our actions matter. This coming year, we plan to go deeper into culture and language learning for all members of our Peachland Elementary community.

Prepared by Wendy Briggs, Principal

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - School Community Learning Plans

Focus on Equity

Shannon Lake Elementary



At Shannon Lake Elementary School, our staff have been working towards reconciliation and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and doing into our school community. The school year started with activities surrounding Truth and Reconciliation week. Each class participated in learning about different aspects and history of Indigenous culture and how we, as learners, can contribute to reconciliation in meaningful ways throughout the week.



The teachers and staff consistently work at creating an inclusive and safe community for all of our learners and their families.



Inclusive community is created by creating a space where Indigenous families feel welcome in our school.

Our grade 2 and 3 classes had the honour of having one of our Indigenous grandparents come in and share about his life growing up as an Inuit hunter in the Yukon. He shared his knowledge on drum making and brought in a polar bear hide.

On National Indigenous Peoples' Day, the grade 4's and 5's learned about traditional Indigenous culture in a meaningful way by partaking in traditional Indigenous games with the Indigenous student advocate.

Prepared by Barrie McLeod, Principal



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Year Three Progress - School Community Learning Plans

Focus on Equity

South Rutland Elementary



At South Rutland Elementary, we continue on our pathway of learning in support of Truth and Reconciliation. Our classrooms have embraced the First Peoples Principles of Learning and these principles can be witnessed throughout our Learning Community. With the support of our Advocate, our Gathering Room at SRE is bustling throughout the day with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. We have engaged in Learning around the Four Food Chiefs and, in the spirit of reciprocity, our students partnered with Food for Thought and Hope for the Nations to decorate and auction off Bird Houses in support of their School Breakfast and Backpack Programs. This year we were excited to welcome three time World Champion Hoop Dancer Dallas Arcand to perform and celebrate with our students. Our intermediate students continue to engage in deeper learning around residential schools and attended a Virtual Tour of the Witness Blanket. We are thankful for our relationship with our on-site partners **Awasisak Achakos** (Children of the Stars Preschool) as part of our growing community. Together, we look forward to deepening our understandings of Indigenous ways of knowing and being.



Central Okanagan Public Schools



At Springvalley Elementary, we wanted to do our best in moving toward Truth and Reconciliation. There is a lot of talk about Indigenization, where we wear orange shirts once a year, and have a big celebration on June 21st. But instead of being a typical BC school with a few Indigenous elements, how could we take steps toward being an Indigenous Centric school that incorporates the settlers?

We began unpacking one principle from the First Peoples Principles of Learning, each week, in our weekly email to staff and now hold our staff meetings in a circle. We have learned some simple phrases in the Syilx language for our land acknowledgment in our daily announcements and ordered bilingual signage for the school in English and nsyilxcən. Every weekly assembly now begins not just with the land acknowledgement, but also with the singing of the Okanagan song.

Our Gathering Room is in use all day long, either scheduled groups, or those who drop in seeking a connection. We have been so fortunate to also have the support of an Indigenous Early Learning teacher.

On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, each child in the school wrote why they mattered on a paper orange shirt, and then they were hung in the hallway all year long.



We had a visit from Dallas Arcand at the beginning of October who reinforced the message of being proud of where you come from.

On Implementation Day, we began the day with 'Who is my Name' and learned so much about each other, and about how many of our staff have family directly affected by residential schools and the Sixties Scoop. We ended the day with the Blanket Exercise, and after Elder Maureen Ziprick spoke, we were all moved and even more determined to do our very best to counter years of trauma for so many.

In January 2023, we had students from Dr. Knox Middle School come to share with us all "How Food Was Given" and then in February, Anona Fawn Kampe shared with us as well.



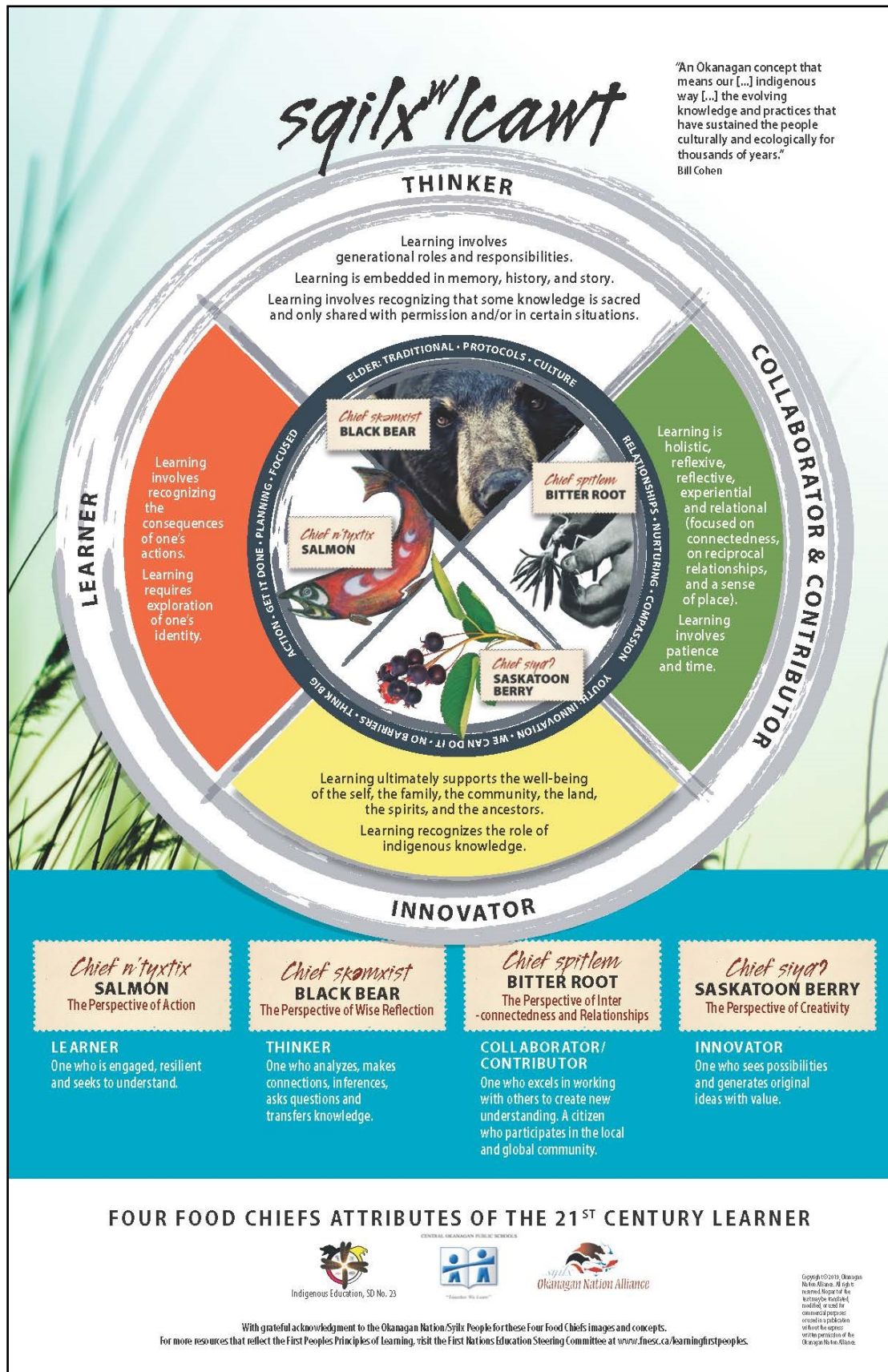
For National Indigenous Peoples Day, this year, we celebrated all week long with games, activities, and assemblies to celebrate all of our learning from this wonderful year of going deeper in our understanding of reconciliation.

Prepared by David Coats, Principal

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Our Indigenous Education

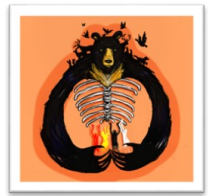
Department Responsibilities



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department Our Progress

Chief skəmxist Black Bear
*Elders: Traditional*Protocols*Culture*



Our Commitment:

We are committed to fostering intellectual and cultural growth through an Indigenous mindset.

What We Are Doing:

The Indigenous Education Department provides academic support to Indigenous learners (K-12) in a variety of ways:

Indigenous Student Advocates provide support in and out of classrooms, attend academic support meetings, fostering home and school connections, and provide one to one academic, social and emotional assistance in Indigenous Gathering spaces at all school sites.

Middle and Secondary School Indigenous Education Teacher Tutors provide academic support to middle/secondary Indigenous students grades 6-12. Indigenous students are supported, on an ongoing basis, to ensure ongoing academic needs are being met.

Indigenous Education Early Learning Support Teachers provide early literacy support to Indigenous learners (K-6) with a strong emphasis on early literacy intervention for Indigenous learners K-3.

Academy of Indigenous Studies at secondary schools provide opportunities for Indigenous students to receive credit in courses such as English First Peoples, BC First Peoples, and Indigenous Leadership with Indigenous curricular content taught through Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

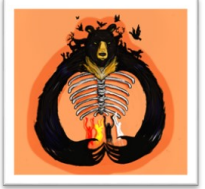


Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department Our Progress

Primary Winter Gathering

On January 10-13, 2023, the Indigenous Education Department welcomed back their annual Primary Winter Gathering (PWG) for all grade 3 Indigenous students at Hollywood Road Education Services. Students engaged in cultural learning with the goals of exploring what it means to be Indigenous, celebrating culture through song, dance, captikwł, drumming, and storytelling, and fostering relationships with Elders, teachers, and each other.



Check out the Global News article, please see the link [here](#).



Primary students explored local protocols, The Four Food Chiefs, Elder respect, land acknowledgements, the origins of traditional dance, and the intentions of gifting and reciprocity in Indigenous culture. Students were also able to witness and participate in drumming with special guest, Birch Creek Drummers.

A student shared that, *“I learned that the drum sounds like a heartbeat”* and the Primary Winter Gathering *“is about connecting and bonding with the environment.”*

The event filled the District hallways with the heartbeat of

the drum and also filled the hearts of those attending with joy, pride, and a renewed sense of belonging.



“Some students have never had exposure to powwow dance, to drumming, to singing. We really want to ensure that families and students have this exposure through field studies.”

Deanna Necan, Cultural Coordinator, Indigenous Education Department

Central Okanagan Public Schools

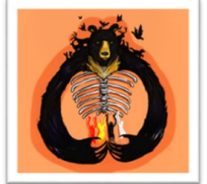
Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department

Our Progress

Indigenous Early Learning Program



Indigenous Early Learning Consultants, Reanna Lamb and Christie Russell, employ culturally responsive, differentiated and targeted instruction, to promote equity and literacy success for Indigenous students. The team focuses on demonstrating and utilizing the First People's Principles in their practice and work to encourage a love of literacy through sharing oral stories and engaging in story workshop. At the heart of the program is creating opportunities for learners to engage in local teachings through literacy and enabling all learners to thrive holistically.



The team works alongside Elders in residence and connects with Okanagan Nation Alliance, Kelowna Métis Society, and Westbank First Nation to provide wrap around support to learners and assist in meeting students' wellness and learning needs. The team works to support early learners in the district in their goals to localize, indigenize, and decolonize learning in classrooms through collaboration, modeling, providing resources, and connecting teachers to community, Elders, and our cultural department.



Summer Learning 2023.

The Indigenous Early Learning Consultants supported the implementation of culturally responsive lessons at Summer Literacy Camp in July.

Lessons focused on story, First Peoples Principles, oral language, identity development, foundational literacy skills and local and Canadian Indigenous teachings.



Picture top left: Reanna Lamb connecting with culture using story workshop. Pictured above: 'People Who Care About Me' Tree created to build community and remind students about everyone who cares about them from an Inclusive lens.

Right: Lettie from Chief Tomat Elementary holding the class-made talking stick.

Pictured top right: Pictograph rocks used to connect with nature and tell stories.

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department

Our Progress

Chief sp̓łtlem Bitter Root
*Relationships*Nurturing*Compassion*



Our Commitment:

We are committed to fostering reciprocal relationships for the health and well-being of each Indigenous learner, inspiring confidence and a sense of connectedness to others.

What We Are Doing:

The Indigenous Education Department's 75-member staff (Indigenous Student Advocates, Teacher Tutors, Indigenous Youth Wellness Workers, Indigenous Resource/Support teachers, Land-Based Learning Team, Cultural Coordinator and Presenters, Administration, and Clerical Team) and Elders in Residence strive to support all Indigenous students in a compassionate and nurturing manner throughout the school year. Strong connections and relationships foster emotional well-being. Support in and out of the school is provided through Indigenous wellness perspectives and practices twelve months of the year.

Buttercup Girls Group at Springvalley Elementary (SVE)



At SVE, Elder Maureen Ziprick, Shannon Wynne (Advocate), and Christie Russell (District Vice Principal, Indigenous Education) collaborated to build community, connection, and relationships within the Buttercup sknirmən Girls Group at Springvalley Elementary. Students engaged in the First People's Principles of Learning as they shared who is their name and learned about local protocols and traditions.

Five bright and vibrant Indigenous grade 5 girls met

weekly in the Gathering Room; growing in friendship, talking about traditions, sharing what it means to be strong and proud, developing leadership skills, meeting in circle, and connecting with joy. The girls of the Buttercup Girls Group demonstrated joy and pride as they connected with each other, the land, and Elder Mo. The girls shared their learning with the school through a video at their National Indigenous Peoples' Day assembly.



SVE student, Arianna Cummins
with Christie Russell



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department Our Progress

Yukon First Nation Education Directorate Visit

In 2019, a delegation from Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) visited Central Okanagan Public Schools to learn more about the Indigenous Education Department and, specifically, the role of Indigenous Student Advocates within schools. Within a year, YFNED secured funding to hire 15 Advocates (as well as a team of Junior Advocates) to support Indigenous students in the Yukon.



This past November, YFNED delegates returned to learn more about ways Central Okanagan Public Schools is decolonizing learning environments and supporting Indigenous student success. The delegation included Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Junior Advocates (students), and an Education Advocate team. Over the course of a week, our Yukon friends visited many school sites. With each school visit throughout the week, reciprocal learning took place as cultural teachings and languages were shared. We are grateful for the YFNED's visits and welcome the co-creation of Caring Communities with our northern neighbours.



Please use this [link](#) to hear Elder Annie Bernard share about the YFNED visit.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department Our Progress

RCMP Challenge Coin Celebration



A Challenge Coin Celebration Event was held on Wednesday, June 28th, at École Okanagan Mission Secondary School, to recognize the collaborative project between the Land-Based Learning program (also known as Land-Based) and the RCMP. Over 100 middle school Indigenous students submitted their designs for the coin and the final piece was created by Land Based Learning teacher, Kyla Shields, and one of the Indigenous students enrolled in Land Based Learning.

Since the mid-20th century, the Challenge Coin has been distributed between officers as a gift or show of respect. Students in the Land-Based Love program explored the connections between the meaning and intention of the coin, along with ways to represent this land and place. The final design incorporates the Four Food Chiefs, along with Okanagan Lake and the bridge that links both sides. This bridge can be seen to symbolize the importance of connection and relationship.



View the story from
Global News [here](#).

Depicted here are
Constable Michael
Della-Paolera,
student Jonah Doyle,
teachers Kyla Shields and
Kevin Kaiser and
Kelowna RCMP
Chief of Police
Kara Triance.

Central Okanagan Public Schools

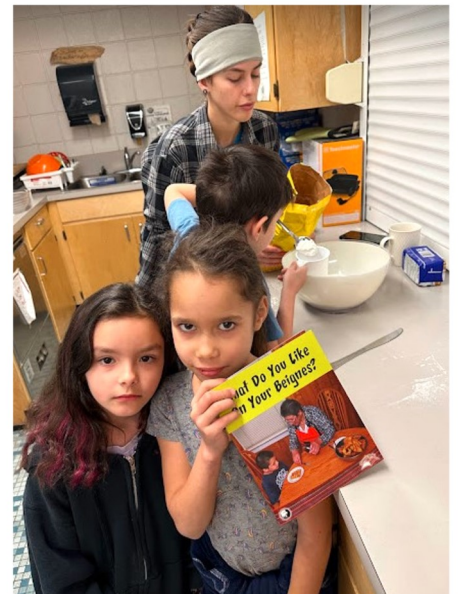
Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department Our Progress

Kelowna Métis Association Donation

In a heartwarming gesture of cultural enrichment, the Kelowna Métis Association generously donated \$10,000 to Central Okanagan Public Schools. This extraordinary gift was given to purchase Métis cultural learning materials, particularly for early learners. Indigenous Education Early Learning Consultants, Reanna Lamb and Christie Russell, thoughtfully handpicked an array of resources including picture books that highlight Métis art, food, language, culture, and values.



The consultants created story workshop bins and beading kits to provide hands-on learning experiences that honour Métis culture and story. As the books and materials graced the eager hands of students, excitement and gratitude could be heard from the students as they discovered the depth of Métis culture.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department

Our Progress

Chief siya? Saskatoon Berry

*Youth*Innovation*We Can Do It*No Barriers*Think Big*



Our Commitment:

We are committed to co-creating cultural opportunities that strengthen home, school, and community connections.

What We Are Doing:

Indigenous students at all grade levels are encouraged to participate in a variety of cultural opportunities throughout the school year. In and out of the school, students participate in classroom presentations, lunch and after school programs. Through the 2022/2023 school year, students were able to participate in community events such as *siya?* hosted by WFN, and the Turtle Island Festival, hosted by the Kelowna Friendship Society. The Indigenous Education Department strives to strengthen home, school and community connections through cultural teachings.

Land-Based Learning: The Knowledge-Keepers of Tomorrow

Rosalyn Tiessen
Student Reporter, KSS

Grandma Rose is an Elder in Residence and supporter of the Land-Based Learning Program at Okanagan Mission Secondary where she assists in helping [middle school] youth to do their best and advance their knowledge by telling them stories and passing on information that connects them to Indigenous history. Elder Rose was connected to the program by her granddaughter, originally at the elementary level, before later changing direction due to the heightened risk of COVID-19. She has now been at OKM for two years, and her position at the school is highly-valued. She was asked to speak to an OKM graduating class, as well as record a video for the Moose Hide Campaign, which is a campaign founded in response to the violence and injustices that women and children face in Canada – specifically those who are Indigenous.



As an Elder, Rose believes that the Land-Based Learning Program is very beneficial to young people, taking the focus away from the electronically connected population and encouraging students to become familiar with First Nations traditions and culture. She finds that children are eager to learn and grasp the benefits of land-based education quickly, but acknowledges that it is important to have teachers with a keen interest in the concept of what outdoor/land-based education involves, which would require training and an understanding of what this type of learning entails, in order for other schools and communities to follow suit with this type of learning.

The Land-Based Learning Program demonstrates the value of a program which teaches students the practices needed to keep our world functioning for generations to come, and Grandma Rose's work at OKM shows the benefits this type of learning has.

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department

Our Progress

Summer Indigenous Wellness Circles

The Indigenous Youth Wellness team continued to provide support to Indigenous students throughout the summer through Drop-In Wellness Circles in the community. The Indigenous Wellness Team partnered with ARC, Foundry, the RCMP liaison and Westbank First Nation to ensure Indigenous students and families were supported throughout the summer.



Wellness Workers Jen Jefferies, Amanda Berry and practicum student Tiana Mager held the Circles over the course of two months in four separate locations, and on four different days in each location. These Circles were accessible throughout the entire Central Okanagan Public School District community, from West Kelowna to Lake Country. The circles were held at the WFN Youth Center in West Kelowna, City Park in downtown Kelowna, Ben-Lee Park in Rutland, and Swalwell Park in Lake Country. The Indigenous Wellness Team set up twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, from 10am - 2pm.



The Circles enabled Indigenous students in grades 8-12 to come by for cultural connection, hygiene supplies, wellness journals, and mental health support. The team also provided supplies, snacks, and lunch to students during the drop-ins. At each session, students had the chance to learn about traditional medicines/smudging, making sage bundles, Seven Grandfather Teachings, traditional crafting (including pine needle baskets, painting rocks, creating answer feathers), self-care, wellness support, connection with other students and the wellness team, and, of course, gathering over food.

The goal of the Wellness Circles was to enable students to access support and resources over the summer months to ensure that their mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional needs were met. The wellness team was very successful in serving many students across the district through a holistic and traditional lens and has received significant positive feedback about the Wellness Circles across the Okanagan Territory.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

Equity in Action - Indigenous Education Department Our Progress

2023 Indigenous Student Leadership Summit

This year the Okanagan Mainland Regional Indigenous Educators (OMRIE) thoughtfully planned an Indigenous leadership and learning opportunity for secondary school Indigenous student leaders from the ten School Districts in the Okanagan Mainline Region. Up to ten students from each of the OMRIE districts attended the Summit hosted in Kamloops, BC on May 16th and May 17th, 2023.



OMRIE is a group of Indigenous district leaders who come together regularly to share resources and practices across districts, from the Mainland to the Okanagan, to the Kootenay regions. The OMRIE chapter meets throughout the year to share initiatives that are improving results for Indigenous learners and enhancing students' sense of belonging in a collective pursuit for equity.



Indigenous students participated in youth workshops to share their ideas on the following topics: Anti-Indigenous racism, Indigenous culture in schools, Indigenous Health and well-being, and community/belonging in schools. The workshops were interactive and engaging! The goal of the event was to expose students to different perspectives and allow them the opportunity to share their ideas with change makers in the education system. These ideas were then shared with District leaders, Ministry of Education and Child Care representatives, and community knowledge keepers to inform educational initiatives and reconciliation practices.



Central Okanagan Public Schools

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Chief n'tyxtix Salmon
*Action*Get It Done*Planning*Focused*



Our Commitment:

We are committed to empowering each Indigenous learner to take action to explore and strengthen their personal identity.

What We Are Doing:

The Indigenous Education Department helps empower each Indigenous learner by providing meaningful cultural opportunities through recognizing milestones and events in their lives.

National Indigenous Peoples' Day at Black Mountain Elementary



On June 21st, the entire Black Mountain school community recognized and celebrated the history, resiliency, and culture of Indigenous people everywhere. It was also a day to celebrate just being the beautiful people we are, and the ones we are raising.

The Black Mountain team celebrated by feeding students!

Ms. Wikenheiser (Indigenous Advocate), Mrs. Popoff, and a BIG group of helpers (Ainzley's mum, Jen Jefferies, Mrs. Lovich, and so many more) made 600+ pieces of bannock. Donations for the bannock raised more than \$1000 for the Residential School Survivors' Fund.

Picture features Ainzley Wikenheiser and Rochelle Popoff (gr. 5 teacher).

AS Matheson Elementary Nest and Gathering Room



The AS Matheson Elementary school team collaborated to re-imagine and bring together the "Nest" (Social Emotional Learning regulation space) and the Indigenous Gathering space.

As the Gathering Room was very small and not conducive to gathering groups of Indigenous students, the Indigenous Student Advocate and the Social Emotional Learning Teacher collaborated to bring these spaces together and support our learners in team! All students are benefitting from the new Gathering space – a decolonized learning environment, embedding Indigenous teachings of wellness and self-regulation.



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The Indigenous Academy at Dr. Knox

Ava Cudmore
Student Reporter, KSS



The Indigenous leadership class at Dr. Knox is a student-driven course that focuses on Indigenous knowledge and teachings. Students are taught by Teacher Holly Rooke and Kelly Andrews, the Indigenous Advocate, at Dr. Knox. So far this year they have worked on land acknowledgments and introducing themselves in the local Okanagan nsiyłxcən. For Truth and Reconciliation Week, they made orange pins, posters, and a display case. They also ran a shoe drive for the 215 children that were found at Kamloops residential school.

They celebrated their efforts during Truth and Reconciliation Week by making bannock and chili. On September 23rd, the Indigenous Academy went to the Okanagan college Pow-Wow. The students said that it was very interesting to see all of the dancers and vendors.

When I went to talk with them, the class was working on things such as beadwork by making mini moccasins and medicine bags.

Going forward they are looking at collaborating with younger students at North Glenmore Elementary. All of these things work towards truth and reconciliation. Many Canadians are starting to learn about the reality of Canada's past. But many people only learn about the negative things that happened to Indigenous people and do not learn about the culture that still exists today. However, with this course, they learn about Indigenous history, the issues they still face, and the culture that still exists today.



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Indigenous Grad Retreats

The Indigenous Education Department hosted two graduation retreats for 2023 Indigenous graduates. The first, on November 24, 2022, featured Alex Wells, internationally renowned hoop dancer, along with an opportunity for students to try some of the skills themselves.



The second retreat, on February 23rd, provided students with teachings around sacred medicines. Students were then able to create their own medicine bundle, including a gift of a shell for smudging. Bringing our students together to celebrate their achievements and to deepen their connection to culture is empowering for all participants!



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Indigenous Graduation

Although the District's Indigenous graduation rate continues to improve, we recognize that there is still work to do in order for each Indigenous student to realize their potential and graduate with dignity, purpose, and options. The District is committed to continuing to explore transition rates, Kindergarten to grade 12, as well as garner greater clarity on the success of Indigenous students transitioning to post-secondary learning opportunities.



Dancers at MBSS



Grad ceremony at RSS



Elders Grouse and Pamela Barnes together with School Board Trustee Wayne Broughton and Vice-Chair Julia Fraser at KSS Graduation Ceremonies



Birch Creek Drum Group at GESS

Overall community and parental feedback is reflected in this one piece of writing from a parent:

"I positively and confidently need to extend my warmest gratitude and appreciation to the teachers, mentors, volunteers, Elders and; of course, topped off by the fabulous talent of the drummers and dancers. The vibe and frequency of the ceremony captivated a crystal clear message of compassion, love, [and] understanding that blossomed into a sense of community unity made obvious as conversations, communication and laughter with perfect strangers were made apparent between tables. The paramount part of the night and absolute Babe Ruth grand slam was the blanket ceremony ... That my friend was in no doubt a five star class act and the perfect memory my wife and I shall share with our daughter for the rest of our lives"

(Cory Anthony, parent)

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How Are Our Indigenous Learners Doing?

In preparation for celebrating this year's **253** Indigenous student graduates, Indigenous Education staff facilitated talking circles, during the fall of 2022, with representative groups of Indigenous grade 12 students at all secondary school sites to hear what was important in the redesign of a Traditional Graduation Ceremony.



Blanketing Ceremony at
George Elliot Secondary Indigenous Graduation



Okanagan Mission Secondary Graduate, Kanani Coon

All student input received was shared with local Elders who assisted with co-designing Ceremonies that reflected the voices and wishes of the graduates as well as aligned with the local protocols of the Nation. The result was beyond initial expectations. The students requested separate school celebrations, a dinner, local traditional teachings embedded within all aspects of the evening, a moment of silence for all survivors of residential schools and all impacted by the residential school system, traditional drumming, dancing, and the Blanketing Ceremonies.



Rutland Senior Secondary Graduate,
Saby Jobin



Central Programs Graduate, Cliff Carlson



Mount Boucherie Graduate,
Caleb Cunningham

Each Indigenous Blanketing Ceremony reflected the students' wishes as well as the unique context of each school culture. Five Blanketing Ceremonies were held at secondary schools and at Central Programs and Services during the months of May and June.

"Being wrapped in a blanket is one of the highest honours one can receive in the Indigenous community and is a custom that is shared by many nations across Turtle Island. This recognition is a reminder of one's responsibility within their community and throughout life's journey."

Jordan Coble, Westbank First Nation

Central Okanagan Public Schools

Our Priorities for the 2023/2024 School Year

The following Priorities will be a focus during Year Three of Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation:

- Continuing to support inter-cultural competency learning for staff and students;
- Prioritizing targeted interventions and community supports for Indigenous early learners;
- Broadening culturally-responsive interventions as an alternative to students on suspensions or adjusted school schedules;
- Implementing Year Two of Westbank First Nation and Central Okanagan Public Schools Local Education Agreement (2022-2027);
- Implementing Year Three of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Grant Project:
[Co-Curricular Making: Honouring Indigenous Connections to Land, Culture and the Relational Self](#)



Additionally, next year's priorities will also include:

- Exploring pathways for Indigenous youth to be role models for younger Indigenous students;
- Collaborating with school teams to reimagine Indigenous student transition plans with next year's focus on culturally-responsive transitions from elementary to middle schools;
- Continuing to monitor Indigenous student attendance and collaborate with parents/caregivers, community members, and school teams to co-create individual support plans that focus on increasing student connectedness and engagement in learning in an effort to improve attendance and student satisfaction levels with their school experience.



This was supported by research undertaken through a Partnership Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. For more information, please use this [link](#)

