



INDIGENOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL (IEC)

IEC Meeting

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 – 1:30 pm
School Board Office – Board Room 1
 (1040 Hollywood Road South, Kelowna, BC)

MINUTES

Council Members:	Elder Wilfred Barnes (on Zoom) Westbank First Nation Elder Brad Dahl Kelowna Métis Association Lisa Guderyan Board of Education Aaron St Pierre Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society	Ann Bell Lake Country Native Association Cheryl Dodman Kelowna Métis Association Bill McKenna Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society Nicole Werstuik (on Zoom) Westbank First Nation	Jordan Coble Westbank First Nation Chantelle Desrosiers Board of Education Deanna Necan Indigenous Parent & Family Education Council Maureen Ziprick Okanagan Indian Band
School District Staff:	Jesse Bruce Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education and Equity Raquel Steen Assistant Superintendent	Kevin Kaiser District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education Yvonne Hildebrandt Secretariat	Christie Russell District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education
Absent:	Denise Clough Westbank First Nation Allan Louis Okanagan Indian Band	Candace Jack Indigenous Parent & Family Education Council Rachel Marchand Okanagan Indian Band	Kevin Kaardal Superintendent of Schools

1. Welcome

Chair Jordan Coble welcomed everyone to the IEC meeting. The Council proceeded with round-table introductions.

Chair Coble gave a special welcome to Maureen Ziprick, representative from the Okanagan Indian Band. The Chair shared that he is waiting for a formalized letter from the new OKIB Chief and Council that will outline two appointed OKIB voting representatives to the IEC. The IEC agreed that the process established in the IEC's Terms of Reference should be followed and that IEC meetings have space for Elders and guests as they attend.

2. Opening Prayer

Elder Barnes led the Council in an opening prayer.

3. FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

3.1 Adoption of the April 8, 2025 Agenda

MOVED by Nicole Werstuik, SECONDED by Ann Bell

THAT: The agenda for April 8, 2025 be adopted as presented. CARRIED

3.2 Review and Approval of Minutes

MOVED by Cheryl Dodman, SECONDED by Aaron St Pierre

THAT: The Minutes for February 4, 2025 be adopted as presented. CARRIED

4. EARLY LITERACY PRESENTATION

Jordan Kleckner, Director of Instruction – Learning and Innovation, and Brenda Kirsch, District Principal – Early Learning and Child Care, shared the K to 3 Early Literacy requirements from the Ministry of Education and Child Care:

- The main requirement is for the District to have a K to 3 Early Literacy assessment in place, which the District already has established, along with a plan for professional learning opportunities for teachers. The District addressed this by capturing educator's hopes and areas for growth in Literacy during a recent district-wide engagement process with all 32 elementary schools.
- The other requirement is to focus on providing families with information and resources to support Literacy.

The IEC members were led into conversation and asked for feedback on the following questions:

1. What should the District consider when providing families with information and resources on literacy?
2. What literacy information and resources would be most beneficial for families?
3. How can we effectively share this information and these resources with families?

The IEC provided the following insights and suggestions about how to support families through the literacy learning process:

- Encourage parents to volunteer with reading in school, afterschool and at lunch.
- It is important to have 'borrowed' aunties and uncles read with children.
- Provide simple tips, pointers and information for parents to help guide the teaching process.
- Bring in Elders and storytellers.
- Make a functional sign-out kit for Indigenous language learning. Post the language in the home where you brush teeth and wash the dishes. Include the phonics process.
- Example: A teacher sent home a bag of games (a deck of cards with letters and different sounds, a booklet, and 10 different games included). When the student reached the next level, a different kit came home.
- The toolkits could be provided in bitesize chunks and they should be defined as for comprehension, etc.
- Oral literature practice may come from storytelling or from a book. Could be part of oral tradition.
- Home visits after school with highest risk students need to be done in a way that respects dignity and privacy.
- Students will feel more confident when an educator spends time with them.
- Bite-size resources to parents will make them more likely to engage.
- Talk with your children about milestones, about the first 6 years of their life.
- Encourage more conversation during the reading and learning process.
- Have a list of questions that parents can ask their children that could generate conversation. The parent may be at a loss, but a question could stimulate discussion.
- What goes home should be joyful. Parents are not teachers and the experience needs to be positive.
- Communicate clearly and early with families about assessment, what it is, the purpose, the process, expected outcomes, and that it is a valuable experience. The term 'assessment' can make parents reluctant and needs to be demystified.
- Acknowledge that families in Indigenous communities are much broader, they include aunties, uncles, and whomever is around the home. If learning to read at home with parents is difficult, they may learn better with a cousin or with grandma. Leave openness for others to help support the learning.
- Have a 'Build A Bear' event, coffee event. Need to be mindful of budget.
- Could have a learning night and a 'Build-A-Tool-Kit' night.
- Provide technology tools, like Tablets, for sign-out.
- Provide an App with ideas that are accessible because parents don't always know what they should be doing. Send an email every so often with ideas of what to try with your child.

- Regular communication, not reporting out, but an invitation to partner with and engage families. The idea that parents and families are not additional, but they are partners. If parents feel part of it, the children will feel part of it.
- Sound of the week and ideas of how to utilize the sound. Provide ideas to post around the house. Ongoing communication with a little bit of teaching about what is going on in the classroom.
- Professional learning for teachers to consider how to engage families.
- Provide data for parents when you discuss the benefits of assessment, as a reminder of why you are doing this work and to ensure the parents are engaged with this.
- When teachers are working with the students, they are working with families as well. Advocates are crucial to this, as well as the other support staff. Make sure there is a buy-in and focus on the child.
- Some of teachers' professional learning should be cultural. When the teacher is delivering the kit, they need to use language that reflects the Indigenous families. Extended families need to be acknowledged, including auntie, grandma, etc., in the language of the communication.
- The messaging we are giving to caregivers is important.
- Use easy stories like 'Dick and Jane' with repetitive use of words.
- Read words that children can read and build into their vocabulary and comprehension.
- Ideas of how to build curiosity: books without words in them encourages using the imagination to tell the story.

Jesse Bruce, Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education and Equity, thanked Brenda Kirsch, Jordan Kleckner, and the IEC for the meaningful, deep and positive conversation about Early Literacy in schools. The value of the conversation will show up in what the Early Literacy team considers when providing information and resources to parents, caregivers, and families.

5. STANDING ITEMS

5.1 District Updates

Raquel Steen, Assistant Superintendent, shared that Jon Rever, Acting Deputy Superintendent, will become the new Superintendent of Schools starting July 1, 2025, and will be introduced to the IEC at a future Council meeting.

5.2 Community Updates

- Chair Coble is currently taking a Transformative Reconciliation course.
- Trustee Guderyan, Trustee Desrosiers, and Elder Maureen Ziprick attended the IEC school visits this morning (April 8th) to Mount Boucherie Secondary School (MBSS) and Constable Neil Bruce Middle School (CNB). At MBSS they visited with Success Teachers and Advocates, and at CNB, they joined Tyler Ernst in the classroom with 30 learners receiving nsyilxcən language instruction and learning stories of culture. Additional school visits are planned for April 9th to École Kelowna Secondary School and Springvalley Elementary School.
- Assistant Superintendent Raquel Steen supports the Welcome Centre, where newcomers to Canada register their children for public education. About 17 settlement workers, most are first generation to Canada, help newcomers understand the importance of Truth and Reconciliation, and land acknowledgements. More than 700 newcomers and their families were settled into the District and community during the past school year.
- Elder Maureen Ziprick is helping non-Indigenous people in the community to move forward with Truth and Reconciliation. She is also taking online courses to keep learning.
- The Kelowna Métis Association tries to educate others about Indigenous and Métis people, who they are and where they started. Both Métis representatives, Cheryl and Brad, are encouraged by working together with the IEC.
- A series of four 'lunch-and-learn' sessions took place at Chief Tomat Elementary School with 16 teachers and CEA in attendance. The series involved language learning, talking about the importance of taking the language back to classrooms, the 94 Calls to Action, and games, with kits to take home. These sessions will be offered next at Springvalley Elementary School.
- The District of Lake Country is working with the Okanagan Indian Band to collaboratively plan a new Indigenous cultural centre in Lake Country.
- Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society has been engaging with the community about various programs and services with the City of Kelowna. KFS had their Annual General Meeting and re-elected their Board of Directors.

- Red Dress Day is on May 5th and the march starts at KFS and ends at Kelowna City Hall.
- National Indigenous Peoples Day is on June 21st.
- The event, 'You Are Enough', will be hosted by WFN in the community on May 20th from 12 noon to 9:00 pm and is about mental health, self care, and uplifting Indigenous youth. Every Band is being invited, including leadership classes from CNB and MBSS for the afternoon. There will be a key-note presentation about 'Blazing Your Own Trail', a hip hop artist, and a hoop dancer. The event will be combined with the 10-year celebration of the WFN Youth Leadership Council and will be open to all community members. There are limited tickets available through Nicole Werstuik.
- IEC members spoke about the following: non-Indigenous scholars from other provinces embracing Indigenous pedagogies for learning, attending festivals, the upcoming Federal election, the recent Basketball Tournament involving 200+ Indigenous student athletes, and the Junior All Native Tournament hosted at a school gymnasium in the District.

Chair Coble acknowledged that being part of the Indigenous Education Council is his act of reconciliation and that it is a privilege to be part of the Council. He thanked the IEC for being focussed on solutions and the wellbeing of Indigenous students and their families. It is the Chair's hope that everyone feels welcomed at the IEC table.

5.3 Indigenous "Kids in Care" in the School District, Tutors, and Wrap-Around Services of Support

The IEC discussed the concern of unhoused Indigenous students and how the District supports them. The Indigenous Education Department works in collaboration with School Based Teams (SBTs) since Advocates have a unique connection with Indigenous students, and the Wellness Workers can take an active role to provide support and referrals to community resources. The IEC were assured that Advocates and Wellness Workers do not work alone in the schools, that they are supported by many District trained counsellors that work closely with them and are connected to the community organizations that can provide support and resources to the students. In addition to the Central Okanagan Public Schools, there are many other community tables inclusive of community resources and professionals, that work together to support unhoused youth.

The IEC spoke about the absence of a liaison connection between the District and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The Chair added that not all families are open to working with MCFD and that families need to be offered services and support that are respectful to their wishes. The Kelowna Métis Association (KMA) shared that KMA works together with families and MCFD to get kids back to their families.

5.4 Bursaries and Scholarships for Indigenous Grads

Jesse Bruce thanked the IEC for distributing the community letter to their organizations and networks to solicit bursary funding for Indigenous graduates. The District appreciates the contributions from community members to the bursaries and scholarships. The date for selecting the award winners will be shared soon.

5.5 Parent and Family Community Engagement

Spring Event for Parents and Families

Jesse Bruce shared that families were surveyed regarding planning an event for parents and families. Over 100 responses were received and 96% of responders said they would attend an event. Most prefer a dinner time event in the Central Kelowna or Rutland areas during Spring and again in the Fall. For now, a Spring event will be planned for mid to late June in either Kelowna or Rutland and will focus on culture and community supports. The Indigenous Parent and Family Education Council representatives will help organize the event.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Indigenous Education Department Updates

Primary Winter Gathering

Christie Russell, District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education, shared that 247 Grade 3 Indigenous students from Central Okanagan Public Schools, Revelstoke, and Sosisyusten attended the Primary Winter Gathering from January 21st to January 24th at the Kelowna and District Fish and Game Club. There was traditional song and dance, drumming, teachings about the dancing, beading, and storytelling with Anona. Many Elders and guests joined from the community. The highlight for Christie was watching the children share what they learned with the media. The theme of the event was sparking a sense of pride by celebrating what it means to be Indigenous.

Nsyilxcen Language Instruction

Kevin Kaiser shared that the District is fortunate that Tyler Ernst returned to instructing nsyilxcen Language this past January 2025, in the Academy of Indigenous Studies program at MBSS and KSS, the Land Based Learning (LBL) program, and to all students in Grade 6 at CNB. Jesse shared that the District is optimistic that all Grade 6, 7, and 8 students at CNB will receive language instruction starting in September 2025.

Jesse Bruce, Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education and Equity, and the Superintendent of Schools/CEO will be meeting with the WFN Chief and Council and Sosisyusten later this month to discuss more language instruction opportunities.

Jesse shared that some school-based principals currently invite nsyilxcen language instructors and language speakers into the schools from the community, in addition to the District's nsyilxcen Language program, showing the positive work being taken on by the schools, their commitment to reconciliation, and how much they value language instruction. The District continues to collaborate with all the schools and has a multi-year goal of delivering quality nsyilxcen language instruction.

6.2 How Are We Doing? Report (Question and Answer Period)

Each year, the Ministry of Education and Child Care releases the 'Aboriginal How Are We Doing?' report and then they provide the Superintendent of Schools with highlights of the data to be considered, focussing on graduation and the 5-year completion rates. Jesse shared that Indigenous graduation and completion rates are increasing over time and the increases should be celebrated; however, the rates are not on par with non-Indigenous learners, so there is still work to be done. In School District 23, the five-year completion rate has increased from 75.6 percent in 2019/20 to 79.1 percent in 2023/24. The District's aim is to graduate students with dignity, purpose, options and pride. This school year, the District is on track to graduate over 320 Indigenous students.

6.3 Indigenous Student Attendance

Jesse Bruce, Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education and Equity, shared a 'plan-on-a-page' overview of Indigenous student attendance in schools. Positive things are happening to get students to school and attendance at school is supported by the School Based Teams; however, the question remains of what more can we do? The connection with families is important and there are opportunities to support schools as they work with students and families to increase attendance.

Chair Coble shared that attendance is a challenge throughout the educational journey, that parents of today's students may not have had the best experience when they attended school, and there are many complexities in the different communities. It is important to communicate about the quality of education that is provided today. School is perceived as a safe place and seeing the school as more than an educational place (i.e. a place used for Indigenous athletics, yoga, etc.) is healthy for children and families.

6.4 Refresh of the Equity in Action Agreement for Truth and Reconciliation (2025-2030)

Jesse Bruce shared that an Equity in Action (EIA) Refresh Committee has been formed and includes District employees from all employee groups and IEC members. Community consultation gatherings are being scheduled with Westbank First Nation, Lake Country Native Association, Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, Kelowna Métis Association and Okanagan Indian Band. The committee will meet with each community and listen to gather feedback and input for the next Equity In Action Agreement for Truth and Reconciliation 2025-2030. Surveys will be sent to District staff and families in the next month, the refreshed EIA will circle back to the IEC for feedback prior to the summer, and the final

edits will be completed over the summer. The District is planning a signing and celebration of the refreshed EIA in the Fall.

4:02 pm – Deanna Necan left the meeting.

7. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

7.1 **Indigenous Graduation Blanketing Ceremonies**

- May 29th – Central School Programs
- June 4th – École George Elliot Secondary School
- June 10th – Mount Boucherie Secondary School
- June 12th – École Kelowna Secondary School and Okanagan Mission Secondary School (at KSS)
- June 19th – Rutland Senior Secondary School

The IEC were asked to 'save the dates' for the Indigenous Graduation Blanketing Ceremonies and RSVP to Jesse Bruce about which ceremonies they plan to attend.

The Kelowna Métis Association will be supplying sashes for the Métis graduates.

7.2 **Initial Implementation of IECs – Review and Update from Ministry of Education and Child**

The letter from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, provided with the agenda, is a reminder to Districts and IECs of their responsibilities to establish and maintain an IEC.

8. **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)*

9. **ITEMS FOR FUTURE IEC MEETINGS**

- September 30th National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Orange Shirt Day (June 2025)
- October 10, 2025 District Implementation Day (June 2025)
- The impact of the new personal student digital device restrictions at school
- "How Are We Doing? Report" – agenda item for the remainder of the year
- Indigenous Student Attendance – agenda item for the remainder of the year

10. **FUTURE IEC MEETINGS** (Tuesdays 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm)

2024-2025 IEC Meeting Schedule

June 3rd

11. **IN-CAMERA MEETINGS**

(The in-camera meetings, if required, will take place after the regular IEC meeting.)

11.1 The voting IEC members did not require an in-camera meeting at this time.

11.2 The Local First Nation members of the IEC did not require an in-camera meeting at this time.

If a voting IEC member has an item they would like to discuss at an in-camera meeting, please forward the item to Chair Jordan Coble in advance so that time can be allocated for an in-camera session after the regular IEC meeting.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm.

<u>ACTION ITEMS – In Progress:</u>	<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>
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 Grouse Barnes
Choose a focus area of interest in the How Are We Doing? 2023/2024 Aboriginal Report for School District 23 (Central Okanagan) and formulate questions for discussion at future IEC meetings.	All IEC members

<u>ACTION ITEMS – Completed (2024/2025):</u>	<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>
Set up school-based visits or a tour of the District for IEC members.	Jesse Bruce
Support the Draft 2025/2026 Preliminary Indigenous Education Program Budget	All IEC members
Add the Indigenous Education logo to the District mileage claim form and distribute the form to IEC members.	Yvonne Hildebrandt
Email an invitation to the IEC to join the Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation Refresh Committee.	Jesse Bruce/ Yvonne Hildebrandt
Spearhead the community Zoom meetings to discuss the restart of the Indigenous Parent and Family Education Council (IPFEC).	Jesse Bruce/ Ann Bell
Follow up with the IEC about the selection process of two parents to serve on the IEC and IPFEC.	Jesse Bruce
Provide a template letter that can be used to solicit donations to start a new bursary for Indigenous graduates.	Jesse Bruce
Forward the amended IEC Terms of Reference to the Board of Education after receiving the new Terms of Reference template for Indigenous Education Councils from the Ministry of Education and Childcare.	Terry Beaudry
Notify the ONA that their representative seat has been removed from the Indigenous Education Council.	Jordan Coble