INDIGENOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL (IEC) MEETING

Tuesday, September 29, 2026 – 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm
Room 300 – Learning Centre
(1040 Hollywood Road South, Kelowna, BC)

MINUTES

Voting Council Members	
Westbank First Nation (4) - Jordan Coble *(by Teams)* - Sara Tronson *(by Teams)* - Christopher Alexander *(by Teams)* - Nicole Werstuik *(by Teams, joined at 3:24 pm)* **Elder Representative (1)** - Elder Rose Lube (WFN) *(Joined at 1:58 pm)* **Okanagan Indian Band (2)** - ~~Peggy Joe~~ *Absent* - ~~Allan Louis~~ *Absent* **Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (2)** - Bill McKenna - Christina Verhagen - *Maureen Ziprick (Alternate)* *Joined at 2:15 pm by Teams)* **Quorum: 8 members**	**Kelowna Metis Association (2)** - Cheryl Dodman - Richard Gauthier **Lake Country Native Association (1)** - Ann Bell - *Shannon Isnardy (Alternate)* **Indigenous Parent & Family Education Council (2)** - Deanna Necan *(by Teams)* - Candace Jack (WFN) *(by Teams)*
Central Okanagan Public Schools: Trustee Representatives	
Trustee Julia Fraser ~~Trustee Lisa Guderyan~~ *Absent* Trustee Chantelle Desrosiers (Alternate)	
Central Okanagan Public Schools: Staff	
Superintendent of Schools: Jon Rever Assistant Superintendent: Raquel Steen Director of Instruction – Indigenous Education, Diversity, and Student Wellbeing: Jesse Bruce ~~District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education: Christie Russell~~ *Absent* District Vice-Principal of Indigenous Education: Kevin Kaiser Secretariat: Lise Bradshaw	
Guests	

Opening Prayer

Chair Jordan Coble led the Council in an opening prayer.

Welcome
Chair Jordan Coble called the meeting to order at 1:39 pm and acknowledged the upcoming National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day. He recognized the RCMP Truth and Reconciliation Paddle, noting that participants had crossed the lake in the rain, and expressed appreciation for their meaningful effort.

He emphasized that September 30 is a day for reflection and recognition rather than celebration - a time to honour the journey to date and reaffirm a shared commitment to reconciliation. Reflecting on the weight of recent days, he encouraged everyone to let the rain wash away some of that heaviness and make room for renewed lightness.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

Adoption of the September 29, 2026, Agenda:

MOVED by Sarah Tronson and SECONDED by Cheryl Dodman
THAT: The Agenda for the September 29, 2026 meeting be adopted as presented.
CARRIED

Review and Approval of Minutes: Indigenous Education Council Meeting – June 2, 2026.
MOVED by Cheryl Dodman and SECONDED by Candace Jack
THAT: The Minutes for the June 2, 2026, meeting be adopted as presented.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Indigenous Education Council Meeting – August 25, 2026.
MOVED by Richard Gauthier and SECONDED by Christina Verhagen
THAT: The Minutes for the August 25, 2026 meeting be adopted as presented.
CARRIED

DISTRICT/DEPARTMENT UPDATES

District Updates

The Superintendent of Schools acknowledged the unfortunate reports of a hate group intimidating the Kamloops community, particularly as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation approached. He reaffirmed the Board's support for Indigenous peoples and families, noting that this commitment is central to the District's allyship.

He reported that the Board had approved the 2026–2031 Strategic Plan, now publicly available on the District website. The plan opens with a statement about the District's relationship with Indigenous peoples, reaffirms the Equity in Action Agreement, and incorporates its language and commitments into the District's strategic direction.

He also provided an enrolment and financial update. Following an unexpected enrolment decline that affected earlier projections, the District adopted a conservative budget and is now in a stronger financial position, with overall enrolment exceeding projections. Indigenous student enrolment remained slightly below the previous year's level; however, schools and Indigenous Advocates were still completing the annual process of identifying students and linking them to programs before the Ministry reporting deadline.

Because he was participating remotely, Chair Jordan Coble appointed Jesse Bruce to chair the meeting.

The Committee discussed Indigenous Advocate staffing and reviewed the history of the Land-Based Learning program. Members requested clarification on the program's planned expansion for 2026–2027 to all middle schools, and information on how it was funded.

1:58 pm: Elder Rose joined the meeting.

Department Updates

Jesse Bruce reported that the Indigenous Education budget was based on a projected enrolment of 3,060 students, reflecting a large graduating cohort and uncertain kindergarten numbers. The current count was 3,022 and continuing to rise as Indigenous Advocates completed student identification. Funding would decrease by $1,800 for each student below the projection, creating a potential shortfall of approximately $60,000. However, a $204,000 surplus is available. Staffing proposals could be presented to the IEC in November.

Jesse also advised that the District has finalized an Administrative Procedure for Orange Shirt Day. The procedure establishes school responsibilities for meaningful observance before September 30.

Ann Bell asked about the supervision, scope, and staffing of Indigenous Wellness Workers. Jesse Bruce explained that the two Wellness Workers no longer have a clinical supervisor and now work closely with school counsellors, Indigenous Advocates, and school-based teams. They provide tier two and tier three wellness and cultural supports; students requiring clinical counselling are referred to community services.

Jesse noted that the Wellness Workers hold bachelor's degrees and are not master's-level, registered clinical counsellors. The Department is aligning their qualifications with the supports normally provided in schools. Ann expressed concern that two positions are insufficient and advocated for more culturally responsive, direct services for Indigenous students. Jesse noted that additional Wellness Workers could be considered when the IEC reviews staffing priorities and available surplus funds in November.

Richard Gauthier queried the apparent reduction in Jordan's Principle grants and asked who currently oversees applications. Drawing on his experience as an advocate and wellness worker, he emphasized the importance of enabling frontline Indigenous Education staff to identify needs and support families through the application process.

Jesse confirmed that Indigenous Advocates may still complete Jordan's Principle applications. Under an Administrative Procedure developed with the Inclusive Education Department, Advocates and Indigenous Education staff can work with school Principals on applications. Christie Russell meets regularly with the Okanagan Nation Alliance regarding Jordan's Principle applications.

Jesse stated that reduced funding reflects tighter Jordan's Principle criteria, not a lack of applications by the District or schools. He will provide application numbers for the previous two years and report back to the IEC in November. He also noted that the District has historically been a provincial leader in securing Jordan's Principle funding for teaching, CEA, and other staffing supports.

Trustee Fraser noted that Indigenous Services Canada introduced significant operational, eligibility, and funding restrictions in early 2025. The changes have limited or removed some funding categories, including certain school-related requests, and suggested that the District may wish to consider greater advocacy.

Chair Coble asked members to direct operational questions that fall outside the agenda to staff by phone or email so the meeting could remain on schedule.

Jesse advised that a surplus was expected even if enrolment fell below projections. Staff had planned to seek the IEC's direction on restoring a 0.6 FTE Success teacher position at École George Elliot Secondary School and adding an Indigenous Advocate in the North Zone. In light of the discussion about Wellness Workers, the IEC could defer the staffing decision until November's meeting.

MOVED by Ann Bell and SECONDED by Cheryl Dodman
THAT: The two positions as put forth by Jesse Bruce, to expand the academic Success teacher and 1 North Zone Indigenous Advocate are funded with the surplus.
CARRIED

2:37 pm: The Superintendent of Schools left the meeting.

Dr. Dustin Louie Request
Jesse Bruce presented the IEC with the District's funding request for Dr. Dustin Louie's work with the School District.

MOVED by Cheryl Dodman and SECONDED by Sara Tronson
THAT: The IEC accept the District's funding request for Dr. Dustin Louie.

The IEC reviewed the total cost of the collaboration, the District's contribution, the available surplus, and the additional staff who could take part with additional funding support

AMENDMENT:
MOVED by Cheryl Dodman and SECONDED by Sara Tronson
THAT: The IEC accepts the funding request for Dr. Dustin Louie in the amount of $40,000.
CARRIED

2:42 pm: Jesse Bruce left meeting due to another commitment. Assistant Superintendent Raquel Steen took over as Chair.

NEW BUSINESS:

OMRIE-IEC Retreat

District Principal Kevin Kaiser announced OMRIE's second annual regional gathering, scheduled for November 25–26, 2026, at Spirit Ridge in Osoyoos. The IEC Capacity Fund will cover the costs. He outlined the topics and asked interested IEC members to contact Christie Russell to register.

2:43 pm: Candace Jack disconnected from the meeting.

Elder Recruitment

The IEC discussed Elder recruitment, including plans to invite WFN and OKIB Elders to an upcoming Elder Circle and to recruit four additional Elders, bringing the District total to seven. Members noted the importance of the role, the high demand of approximately six requests for Elders per week, and concerns about scheduling fatigue. Elders may also support restorative circles.

2:51 pm: Maureen Ziprick joined the meeting by Teams.

Cheryl Dodman will provide Christie Russell with a list of potential Métis Elders. Sara Tronson emphasized respecting the local territory and its teachings, while Chair Coble reflected on the vital leadership and cultural influence of Elders.

Members discussed balancing respect for syilx territory with representation of the diverse Indigenous identities of students, including Métis, Inuit, Cree, and other communities. Chair Coble confirmed that the District will continue expanding Elder recruitment.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation/Orange Shirt Day

Kevin Kaiser highlighted Rutland Senior Secondary School's collaborative approach to creating a meaningful National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day. A committee of Indigenous Advocates, teachers, and administrators organized activities that included a living library, Land-Based Learning students leading stations, Métis fiddling and storytelling, and drumming by RSS and RMS students. He noted that the day has gained increasing significance over the past three years.

Land Based Learning Update

Kevin Kaiser reported that the Land-Based Learning program has increased participation from each middle school and strengthened its visibility within the schools. Of the 28 program days, seven now take place at students' home schools to support cultural safety and help carry the learning back into the school community.

In response to Maureen Ziprick's question, Kevin advised that approximately 120 students in Grades 6–9 participate, representing the middle grades from each middle school.

Christina Verhagen raised concerns about students withdrawing or falling behind in other classes and asked whether a semester-based format could increase access. Kevin explained that the program follows seasonal teachings and that changing its structure could reduce its long-term impact.

STANDING ITEMS

Community Updates

Lake Country Native Association: Ann Bell noted that she was happy to have Christina Verhagen and Richard Gauthier on the IEC, and that she values their perspective and experience. Ann noted the various events of the Lake Country Native Association and the upcoming Powwow on November 21.

Kelowna Metis Association: Cheryl Dodman advised that the KMA took a summer break but is now busy with various programs. She spoke of the loss of a bear cub on their lands in Black Mountain, and a beautiful ceremony held to acknowledge.

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society: Christina Verhagen shared information about the new Partner Assault Response Program (PARS) starting at the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society.

3:24 Nicole Werstuik joined the meeting by Teams.

Elder Rose shared her enjoyment and connection with students in the Land Based Love program.

Richard Gauthier, representing the Kelowna Métis Association, asked whether the IEC Terms of Reference would allow him to retain a voting role on the IEC if elected as a School Trustee. Chair Coble advised that the Terms of Reference would need to be reviewed with the District staff at the executive level and that a special IEC meeting may be required.

In response to Richard Gauthier's question, Trustee Julia Fraser shared her perspective that a Trustee's role cannot be separated from their participation on committees. She also announced her decision not to seek re-election and instead run for city council. She reflected with gratitude on her 12 years as the Board's IEC representative. Chair Coble thanked her for her service, commitment, and allyship.

Chris Alexander (WFN) welcomed Elder Rose to the IEC, wished Trustee Fraser well, and reported that he was working on the Nominal Roll and a back-to-school event at the Youth Centre.

Nicole Werstuik (WFN) apologized for missing part of the meeting and shared updates on the Hunting 101 series, to be held Wednesday evenings at the Youth Centre throughout October. The workshops

cover hunting, butchering, and smoking. She also announced an October 30 community Halloween party supporting the new women's shelter on the Westside and wished Trustee Fraser well.

Maureen Ziprick (KFS) reported that she had been actively volunteering at École Peter Greer Elementary and École George Elliot Secondary School.

Trustee Chantelle Desrosiers announced that this would be her final IEC meeting as well, because she had chosen not to seek re-election as a Trustee serving West Kelowna. Members thanked her for her service, work in West Kelowna, and allyship.

Sara Tronson (WFN) shared that she had welcomed her baby and hoped to attend the next meeting in person. She also announced the Sncewips Museum's Truth and Reconciliation event, scheduled for September 30 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

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

Chair Coble shared that part of work he does outside of WFN is contract work for the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, there is an upcoming event on October 22 and some seats will saved and offered to District staff and anyone interested.

Indigenous Student Attendance

Kevin Kaiser emphasized the importance of student attendance, while noting that September efforts focus on confirming enrolment and ensuring students receive appropriate supports. He stated that declining attendance is a continuing concern, even nationally. The District appointed a Success Teacher to support students transitioning between MBSS and Westside Learning, providing continuity across both settings.

nsyilxcən Language Instruction

Kevin Kaiser confirmed Tyler Ernst is teaching nsyilxcən again for 2026/2027. Chair Coble enouraged the District to reach out to graduates of the UBC nsyilxcən language program in order to continue and possibly expand the language program.

INFORMATION ITEMS

IEC Appointments

Elder Rose was welcomed to the IEC.

FNESC Proposed Topics for Indigenous Education Councils in BC

The First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) developed “Proposed Topics for Indigenous Education Councils in BC Public Schools” to support First Nations representatives in advocating for learners and strengthening public education. Members noted that the Central Okanagan Public Schools IEC is well established and continues to function very effectively.

Indigenous Education Council Capacity Funding Interim Policy

This item has been moved to November Agenda.

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

- Tuesday, November 3, 2026
- Tuesday, January 12, 2027
- Tuesday, February 9, 2027
- Tuesday, April 13, 2027
- Tuesday, June 1, 2027

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:07 pm.