

# COMMUNITY SHARING

2024



# SD85's VISION

Every student graduating with dignity,  
purpose and options for the future.

## MOTTO

Bringing Learning to Life!

## VALUES

- **Honour** all students, families, and communities through excellence in service;
- **Transform** learning experiences through high quality instructional practice and effective leadership;
- **Promote** respectful and engaged relationships among and between the Board of Education, employees, students, families and communities;
- **Ensure** relevant and meaningful learning for each individual student;
- **Support** and promote self, staff and district-directed professional growth



Indigenous Education team  
professional development



Early learning pop-up-play  
activities



Gardening for Wellness Day at  
Sunset Elementary School

We would like to recognize the Elders and Knowledge Keepers and peoples from Kwakwaka'wakw nations, who share these traditional territories with us so we can live, learn, work and play side-by-side. We also want to acknowledge our people who have come before; our ancestors who have guided us and taught us how to live on these lands in a good way.



# Chair & Superintendent MESSAGE

03



Dear Community Members,

We are thrilled to share with you our inaugural "Community Sharing" publication to highlight a few of the remarkable achievements and significant milestones that have shaped the 2023-2024 school year in SD85, Vancouver Island North. This compilation of stories serves as a testament to the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of each member of our educational community.

The 2023-2024 school year focused on building the foundations for strong relationships, furthering our collective understanding of mental health and wellness, increasing access to place-based, on-the-land learning opportunities, honouring Kwakwaka'wakw traditional knowledge, and furthering the academic success of all students.

This year the Board of Education increased supports for youth by implementing a second full time elementary school counsellor and established a district literacy network. Further, through targeted grant funding we were able to employ a Community Outreach Manager and a District School Foods Coordinator to help support staff, students, and families.

We are extremely grateful to all who took the time to contribute to this year's publication. We highly recommend you visit individual school websites or follow SD85 social media sites to learn more about the amazing opportunities offered by Vancouver Island North schools.

Gilakas'la!

**Leighton Wishart**  
Chair  
Vancouver Island North  
Board of Education

**Christina MacDonald**  
Superintendent  
Vancouver Island North  
School District



Empowering students through opportunities at the Kwakwaka'wakw Career Health Fair



Trustees from left to right: Leighton Wishart, Kat Tjepkema, Carol Prescott, Eric Hunter, and Jeff Field  
(missing: Lawrie Garrett and Janet Deane)

# Cultivating Cultural and Educational Excellence

By: Irene Isaac, District Principal of Indigenous Education

At School District 85, we embrace and integrate traditional Kwakwaka'wakw knowledge into the curriculum with the guidance of our Role Models, Elders in Residence, and Indigenous team members.

What sets our district apart is the rich diversity of our student body, with 50 percent identifying as Indigenous. This diverse mix has paved the way for many positive opportunities for all students, including access to mentors, resident Elders, tutoring services, experiential learning on the land, and various initiatives focused on Kwakwaka'wakw language preservation.

On northern Vancouver Island, we are fortunate to have mother nature right in our own backyard. Many of our Indigenous education programs are held in the traditional territories of the Kwakwaka'wakw, where ancient origin stories of both the community and the land are passed down and celebrated.



Recently, our school district has dedicated itself to sending at least four schools annually to a weeklong immersion camp focused on the Kwakwaka'wakw language. This camp is nestled in the breathtaking Great Bear Rainforest of British Columbia, specifically at the Hada River



estuary - a place of supernatural beauty.

Another unique experience offered in SD85 is the opportunity to paddle in our traditional Kwakwaka'wakw ocean canoe, known as Galtam (meaning "long face"). Students often visit nearby islands in the Galtam canoe, guided by local knowledge keepers who share the deep significance of these sacred locations. They also teach the wisdom of maya'xala, a principle centered on respecting all things - the land, sea, sky, self, and knowledge. Nearly every student can share with you the importance of maya'xala.

We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering support of the local Kwakwaka'wakw nations and community partners, who actively contribute to the Indigenous Education Council in School District 85. Their involvement plays a vital role in shaping the educational experiences within our school systems, ensuring cultural sensitivity and the practice of maya'xala.

Recently, our district marked a significant milestone by signing its fourth Indigenous Education Enhancement Agreement in collaboration with local Kwakwaka'wakw nations. The goals outlined in this agreement are being woven into the District's strategic plans and policies. Our primary mission is to ensure the academic success of Indigenous students, and this requires the embedding of Kwakwaka'wakw knowledge systems into the educational framework through close collaboration with our local nations and

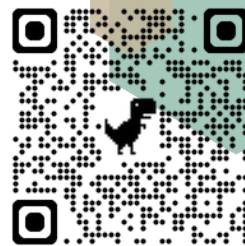
community partners.

The EA event was named Nanwakola (working together for a common purpose), symbolizing unity and collaboration, to commemorate the local Chiefs signing the EA and the students sharing Indigenous culture. It served as a platform for students to demonstrate their progress towards the objectives set in the Indigenous Education Enhancement Agreement.



In the newly renovated Kwakiutl gukwadzi (big house), students showcased their new regalia from school cultural treasure boxes, shared traditionally prepared salmon, and expressed their views through the newly established Indigenous Youth Council. A special moment occurred as Métis students took the floor to dance in the Fort Rupert Big House for the very first time, receiving applause and cheers from the audience. The event also paid tribute to the trailblazers of Indigenous education, past and present.

While there is still progress to be made, we are moving forward in a good way. Our current emphasis is on promoting mental well-being and overall health for everyone, whether they are students, staff, or community members. Healthy minds, healthy schools.



# Collaborative Literacy

By: Stacia Johnson, Principal

At Eagle View Elementary School, we have focused on improving literacy and language outcomes this year. The primary team has been working collaboratively with each other and other primary educators in the school district while using assessments that pin point where learners are struggling in their reading. Each primary teacher is using a variety of resources consistently to teach reading and writing. These resources include but are not limited to Heggerty, The University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) program, Words Their Way, Fly Leaf and Six

Minute Solution. Many of the primary teachers have been involved in professional development and collaboration sessions throughout the year. For instance, some have taken workshops with the Cowichan School District, and some met with a visiting Literacy Team from the Campbell River School District. Campbell River shared with us their past three years of research and programs that are working for them. At EVES, we have also dedicated time for emerging students to work with a primary literacy expert on literacy skills.

Intermediate teachers have worked closely with one of the Learning Assistant Resource Teachers (LARTs) to support students with reading comprehension. All teachers in all grades have been using visual schedules and picture cues for non-verbal students with suggestions from SETBC and POPARD, provincial outreach support teams. With this consistent effort and these resources, we have seen improvement in oral development and reading and writing outcomes.



**Six-Minute  
Solutions**

**Words  
THEIR WAY**



## Microtopias Project

By: Melody Watson, Principal



Recently, A.J. Elliott spent an amazing week with artist Alysha Serianai to complete a media-art-meets-citizen-science project called Microtopias. Alysha is a video maker and social practice artist who works with other artists, performers, and children of all ages and was the artist in residence at the Sointula Art Shed for March. Alysha worked with both classes to make small surface water trawls using baby nylons and recycled bottles or containers that could be used to skim the surface of local shorelines for marine microplastics.

On Monday, Alysha nudged students to explore their understanding of microplastics. This led the way to deep philosophical discussions on "What is Nature?", "What is plastic?", and "Where does plastic go?".

On Tuesday, students got to "Try, Fail, and Learn" while creating their baby legs trawls.

On Wednesday, the whole school loaded onto our bus and headed to the harbour and beach to put our baby legs to the test and collect samples. The intermediate and primary students were buddied up and then divided between the dock and beach sites. Upon returning to the school, students worked in small groups to prepare their samples for drying. We worked in small groups again on Thursday to create stop-motion animations with our findings! Our finished movie was shown to the whole school on Friday and then played each evening in the Sointula Art Shed Window Gallery for the rest of the month.

## Healthy Eating

By: Jackie Peterson, Principal



Sea View students have been learning about healthy eating habits. Last spring the school created a garden in which classes planted a variety of fruits and vegetables. During the fall months students were able to harvest the fruits of their labour, learning about how food goes from seed to the table. Our grade 2-4 class also collected various seeds from their harvest in order to regrow them.

Thanks to the 2023-2024 Feeding Futures grant, students have been able to enjoy two healthy meals a week at the school. These meals have ranged from sandwiches and soup to stir-fry, wraps, and homemade pasta dishes. Students also have healthy snacks available to them throughout the day in the form of fresh fruits, vegetables, yogurts and cheeses.

On March 11th the school participated in the Great Big Crunch. The Great Big Crunch is a Canada-wide movement in which students, teachers, and parents join the food movement by crunching into apples or other crunchy fruits or vegetables to make noise for healthy school food. Our District School Food Coordinator, Ms. Anne Kashty, organized this event for us and brought in a variety of crunchy fruits for students and staff to enjoy. Some of the fruits sampled were dragon fruits, mangoes, apples, pomegranates, and Asian pears. This event was well received by all and students were appreciative of the variety of new fruits they could sample.

## Celebrating Six Years of Collaborative Growth

By: Jill Cook, District Principal of Early Years and Child Care



For the past six years, a dedicated Community of Practice, known as Changing Possibilities 4 Young Children, has flourished, bringing together Kindergarten teachers, Strong Start facilitators, and Early Learning Childhood Educators. The group meets six times a year, providing a consistent platform for professionals committed to the early years of education. Some members have been with us since the beginning, fostering a deep sense of connection and continuity within our community.

Our community of practice is built on the foundation of shared professional knowledge and common understanding. By working collaboratively in learning sessions, we create opportunities to deepen our understanding and reflect on emotional development in young children while blending in sections of the Early Learning Framework. This

process fosters a shared ownership of the social and emotional development of our young learners, ensuring that we are all aligned in our approaches and strategies.

Throughout our meetings, participants have dedicated, focused time to dive into their research inquiries within one or two of the six key facets: Building Relationships, Kindness and Empathy, Personal Well-Being, Self-Regulation, Contributing to the Learning Community, and Sense of Agency. By concentrating on these areas, members have been able to delve deeply into specific aspects of early childhood development, enhancing their practice through targeted exploration and reflection. This focused inquiry not only enriches individual professional growth but also strengthens our collective capacity to support the holistic development of children.

The longevity and consistency of our meetings have been instrumental in

building and maintaining these strong professional connections. Over the last six years, even meeting online during the Covid year, our community has become a cornerstone for many of its members, providing a reliable space for ongoing professional development. As we continue to grow and evolve, we remain committed to fostering this collaborative spirit, ensuring that our collective efforts contribute to the holistic development of the young children we serve.

Our community of practice stands as evidence to the power of collaboration and shared learning. By bringing together diverse professionals dedicated to early childhood education, we have created a dynamic and supportive environment that enhances our ability to nurture the academic, social and emotional development of our youngest learners. Here's to many more years of growth, learning, and shared success.

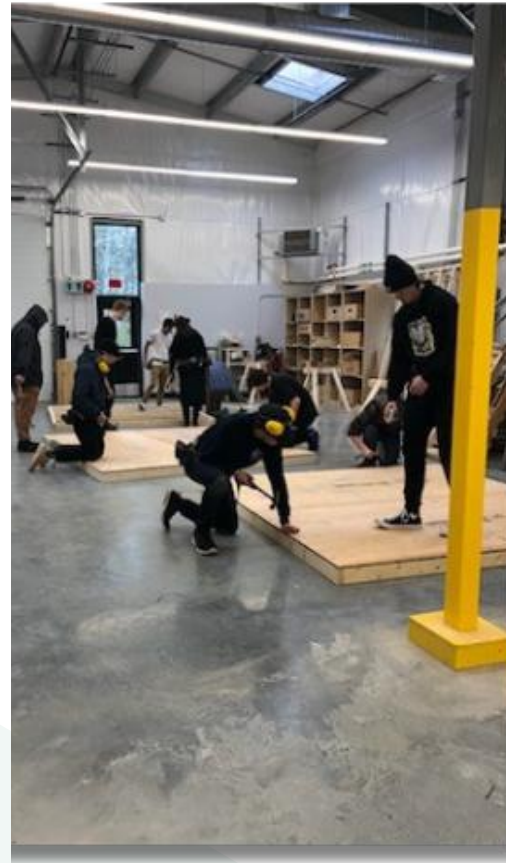
## Skilled Trades

Contact: Jillian Walkus, Principal

Three students from School District 85 had the opportunity to participate in hands-on training through the Skilled Trades BC program this year. Through Youth Work in Trades placements, these students gained valuable experience in various skilled trades industries. This program not only allowed the students to gain practical skills and knowledge in their chosen trades, but also to work towards their apprenticeship hours as they earned credits necessary for their high school graduation. We extend our gratitude to the local businesses that collaborated with us and supported our students in their learning journeys. The businesses

that played a crucial role this year include Allmac Repair, Port Hardy Bulldozing Ltd, and Aussie Diesel Services Ltd. Their commitment to mentoring and training young apprentices has been instrumental in helping these students develop their trades skills and prepare for future careers in the industry. Thank you for your partnership and dedication to fostering the next generation of skilled trades professionals.

Grade 11-12 students interested in skilled trades can contact their school administration for details or reach out to Ms. Jillian Walkus at PHSS directly.



## District Forestry Academy

Contact: Jen Turner, Principal

The SD85 Forestry Academy is offered to all grade 11-12 students across the District and operates outside of the regular timetable. This Board approved course provides engaging learning opportunities focused on: Local Forest Ecology, Forest Operations, First Nations' Forestry, Silviculture, Non-Timber Forest Use and Credentialing. Students gain skills, knowledge, employable-skills certificates, and make industry connections to pursue a career in the Forestry industry. Each year we see an increasing number of students completing the Forestry Academy. We are grateful to North Island Secondary School Principal Jen Turner and partnerships with local Nations and Forestry Companies for supporting this learning academy. Without these partnerships, the Forestry Academy wouldn't be able to offer such engaging, experiential learning opportunities to students.



# Outdoor Education

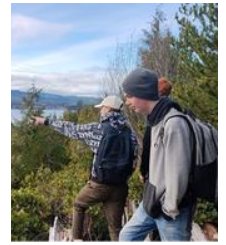
By: Marc-André Gosselin, Teacher  
Jillian Walkus, Principal  
Anna Cunningham, Vice-Principal

If you haven't noticed the seven canoes on a trailer in the PHSS garden, it's time to take note — the PHSS Outdoor Education program is expanding! Thanks to the expertise and guidance of teacher Marc Gosselin, five cohorts of students have thrived in the great outdoors. Every day, they engage in social emotional learning and practice core competencies, with a strong emphasis on teambuilding. Students learn to rely on each other, meticulously plan outings, and adhere to leave-no-trace camping principles.

This program goes beyond theory, providing multiple opportunities for students to showcase their outdoor skills in authentic settings. The final assessment is a three-day kayaking trip to Johnstone Strait or other local waters. In preparation, students hone their camping and nature skills on progressively longer trips, including hiking and canoeing expeditions.

They've camped at Georgie Lake, San Josef, and Marble River, hiked the Tex Lyon and Dave Farrant Trails, and taken kayaking and canoeing lessons. On our beautiful North Island, traveling with expertise is an invaluable life skill.

The community's support for the PHSS Outdoor Education Program has been overwhelming, which is essential as enrollment continues to grow. At the Water's Edge and North Island Kayak have donated tents, dry bags, and other gear. Recently, a community member procured seven used canoes for PHSS and organized their transport to our garden. The PHSS Outdoor Education Program, which began two years ago as a small, once-a-year course with just a few raincoats and gumboots, now boasts the skills and equipment for multi-day camping trips. The program will keep expanding, and we are looking forward to the canoe programs planned for the 2024/2025 school year.



Pop-Up Play activities designed to support the transition to Kindergarten were recently hosted in partnership with a Kindergarten teacher. These events took place during the school day; providing incoming Kindergarten students and their families the opportunity to interact with current Kindergarten students, staff, and the teacher.

During Pop-Up-Play, incoming students participated in various activities such as nature walks, story time, group games, and creative arts. At one of the events everyone made

## Easing Kindergarten Transitions

By: Jill Cook, District Principal of Early Years and Child Care

hanging bird feeders by covering a paper roll in peanut butter then rolling it in bird seed. This was followed by time together exploring the playground. These experiences helped children become familiar with the school environment while allowing them to form early bonds with their peers and teachers. Parents were able to observe and participate, giving them insights into their child's upcoming school experience, fostering a sense of community.

Our Pop-Up Play activities are designed with a focus on the social and emotional well-being of students. By engaging in play-based learning and social interactions, children develop essential social skills in a relaxed and supportive setting.

One parent shared, "The Pop-Ups

have been wonderful for me daughter. She's getting to know friends and the school. The forest afternoon was very low pressure and lots of fun". Another parent remarked "This is great; he now has a buddy for the first day of class." This feedback highlights the positive impact these events have on easing the transition for all students, especially those who may be more reserved.

A particular highlight was over-hearing a present Kindergarten student saying "I loved being a leader today! We should do this every day!" We are delighted with the positive feedback from both parents and students and look forward to continuing these Pop-Up Play activities. They play a vital role in ensuring a smooth and joyful transition into Kindergarten, laying a strong foundation for future academic and social success.

# Alternative Learning Environments

By: Roberta Harris, Principal

Our school has been acquiring knowledge through alternative learning environments that inspire enthusiasm, motivation, and increased academic performance. Students gathered wild cranberries at our ecological park, picked blackberries from school grounds, raised salmon to be released into our nearby ecosystems and created a "fake news" story at Gator Gardens.

Our newest passion is gardening. We are literally "Bringing Learning to Life" spending time outdoors, replenishing our energy and learning practical skills. In all instances, students are engaged, on task and genuinely enjoying learning.

Raising salmon and growing plants teaches the responsibility of living organisms. Students take a genuine interest in the raising and well-being of the salmon and the plants.

Practical skills include measurement, geometry, estimating, and documenting their learning in a variety of ways.



Evidence of their learning includes recording the growth and development of the salmon and plants and ensuring they receive the care needed for survival.

The cycle of life is examined while students acquire the life skills of cooperation, teamwork, responsibility and social skills. Knowing the salmon we raised will return to the river they were released to is fascinating and exciting.

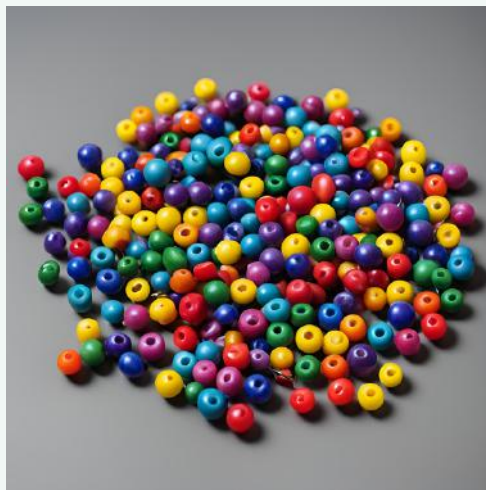
Enjoying the "fruits of our labor" by growing and harvesting our own food is rewarding and gratifying. Students experience success and a sense of accomplishment. Lifelong

lessons are learned while participating in land-based learning. Imagination and creativity were inspired by a "fake news" assignment about Gator Gardens. Students created stories that featured an alligator in Gator Gardens. A class trip to digitally document the event was engaging and enjoyable.



Located on the traditional territory of the Kwagu't, Fort Rupert Elementary is committed to fostering a comprehensive understanding of numeracy among its students. One of our primary goals is to ensure that every learner acquires strong foundational skills in mathematics. By integrating real-world math problems, we aim to cultivate an appreciation for mathematics that extends beyond the classroom.

As part of this goal, 'Numeracy Afternoons' with multi-age groups are hosted every other Friday. Each Math Assembly follows a similar format: concept description, real-life application, example, and then task. Our first Math Assembly focused on Number Concept. Learners first brainstormed careers that use math, then one specific career was elaborated upon; in this case it was



an Astronaut. Students were then introduced to the task and were asked the question, how many?

The task for this session was: "Our school has many pony beads. Each year we have a Cultural Celebration.

## Counting Beads

By: Alison Webber, Principal

We are going to create gifts using the pony beads and want to make sure we have enough or determine if we need to purchase more". Learners were told they may need to count, or skip count up to possibly a million in order to estimate the number of beads. They would have a time limit of 30 minutes and each team member needed to participate. Students were shown examples of different groupings of beads. 10s, 100s, 1000s, 100 000s and 1 000 000s of beads. After being divided into teams, staff poured 10s of 1000s of beads on the gym floor, in the middle of each team. Staff circulated, guided and offered encouragement.

That particular Numeracy Afternoon was a wonderful reminder of how our learners thrive when they work together, and how they are highly engaged and motivated during hands on-learning.

# Inclusive Strategies Enhance Behavior

By: Stacia Johnson, Principal

With the growing number of diverse needs among the learners at EVES, the staff decided to use the Spirals of Inquiry<sup>1</sup> to delve into the best way to support these needs. We worked closely all year with Shelly Wadden and Joan Astren, Behaviour Specialists. Nancy Gilette, an RDI consultant, also helped us create comprehensive communication strategies among staff when working with non-verbal students. Staff learned effective declarative sentence starters, visual referencing and co-regulation techniques they can use while working with students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



We also worked closely with POPARD, SETBC, and the Provincial School Outreach (PSO) team. Staff from these provincial teams came to our school, joined classes and supported teachers and education assistants in delivering consistent and visual communication strategies to learners. With this focus, we have noticed an increase in regulated behaviours by students. Our focus on promoting positive behaviours has minimized dysregulation and has resulted in students participating in more classroom activities.

<sup>1</sup> Halbert & Kaiser, Spirals of Inquiry for Equity and Quality

## Learning Outside Together

By: Keegan Payne, Teacher

Students at Eke Me-Xi Learning Center have the opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities outside of the classroom with weekly place-based learning excursions. Once per week students participate in an educational experience outside of the classroom. This learning experience allows for important community connections. This year Eke Me-Xi participated in activities from wilderness survival to community catering.

Place-based learning is a form of experiential education that allows students the freedom to demonstrate their curiosity and knowledge outside of a traditional classroom setting. One of the important advantages for Eke Me-Xi is that it allows the school to come together as a community and to find ways to participate that are meaningful to the individual student.

Experiential education at Eke Me-Xi reflects the commitment of the Vancouver Island North school district to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's calls to action. It allows students to engage with local Elders and mentors to meaningfully connect with diverse ways of knowing. A graduate of Eke Me-Xi who spent years coming on clam-digging trips shared "For three years I sat on the beach watching people do this

and this year I'm the last one doing it!" Place based learning had allowed them to engage in ways they were comfortable and allowed them to nurture and develop their natural leadership skills.

In a world where it can be more and more difficult to connect with real people, place-based learning allows opportunities for staff and knowledgeable community members to connect in meaningful ways with students and form relationships that carry into other areas of learning. Isaac Asimov wrote "The most exciting phrase to hear in science... is not 'eureka', but 'that's funny...!'" We live in an online world where students can struggle with not knowing all the answers and place-based learning offers the space for students to point out and wonder about the funny/interesting or curious things that they observe.



# Celebrating Heritage and Building Global Citizens

By: Stephanie Boal, Principal

In May 2023 Sunset Elementary held a Cultural Fair with their students and staff. Students, families and school staff were invited to share some information about their own heritage or a country they were interested in. In honouring the Ministry of Education and Child Care's mandate to develop student capacity as global citizens in a changing world, we hope this event provided an opportunity to better understand the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion. The

students were able to bring in objects and items of significance from their culture, complete family trees and find out interesting facts and information about who they are and where they are from. The projects were shared in class and then put on display for the school community to see. It was wonderful to see conversations happening with all members of the school community. Staff and students are already planning ideas for the next event!



## Teaching Learners to Read

By: Alison Webber, Principal



Fort Rupert Elementary School (FRES) is on the traditional territory of the Kwagu'ł. One of our school goals is to ensure that all learners have a solid understanding of the foundational skills in literacy. We have worked this year to ensure how we are teaching literacy is reflective of current best practices. We want our learners to recognize the crucial role literacy plays in their lives, in other areas of learning, and to see its potential in their futures as educated citizens.

One part of our revamped literacy initiative was the introduction of explicit and systematic programs that taught learners the foundational skills for reading. All Fort Rupert staff agreed to use the same programs and took part in professional development which built everyone's confidence.

Our staff is becoming proficient in this instruction, and we are setting the tone for our learners' reading journeys. Staff serve as guides in supporting learners every step of the way as they navigate the complexities of reading. Teachers are creating nurturing effective learning environments where children can thrive and grow as independent readers.

At the end of the 2022-2023 school year, we assessed our learners and made small groupings. In the fall of 2023, we implemented the programs for those small groups. This has led to improvements in literacy skills for all

learners. Teaching reading is a crucial skill for educators to master to support their learners' literacy development.

When engaged staff and enthusiastic learners are together, that's when the magic happens. For example:

Our team was assessing our primary learner's phonics skills. I was helping by giving a quick phonics survey to one of our kindergarten learners. I pointed to a group of 5 letters and before I could ask, this little person said, "I know what those are, those are vowels." This little person then proceeded to tell me all the long and short vowel sounds for each letter. They read some CVC (consonant vowel consonant ex: dog/cat) words, some consonant blends using short vowels, and even a few short vowel digraphs (ex: hill). The best part of this was the look of accomplishment on the learner's face.

We are excited to continue building our literacy program at FRES.

# The Galtam Experience

By: Darby Gildersleeve, Manager of Operations



As part of the cultural experience in School District 85, our dedicated Maintenance and Operations team is pleased to be an integral part of helping to ensure that the Galtam, a 52 foot cedar canoe which is housed at our Tacan site, is available and safe to enjoy for staff and students during the school year. Launching the canoe is done by hand and generally takes 6-8 people to complete. Our staff works closely with the schools to ensure that the weather conditions and tides are favourable for an enjoyable trip and that the schools have all of the necessary equipment for paddling and safety.



## Building Bridges for Youth Success

By: Mark Whitworth, Community Outreach Manager

The Community Outreach Manager started in February of this year and soon began a supportive role with schools while also strengthening relationships with partner agencies. Funded by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, this and similar positions were staffed in some districts to reduce risk for youth on a pathway toward violence.

Creating a community outreach strategy is the intended objective; however, the Outreach Manager role has taken several different tracks, with student success remaining at the forefront. Working with at-risk youth and facilitating interventions through wrap-around services is a key focus of the position, which requires collaborating with supports within and outside of school settings for a similar purpose.

Opportunities have included participation in discussions among students, their parents, teaching staff, and partner agencies about successful practices and ideas for improvement. This proved invaluable in discovering what is working well and how the Community Outreach



Manager could contribute to building on what is in place while offering ideas for alternate approaches to this work. For example, the Community Outreach Manager is often called upon to assist with safety planning, communicating with partner agencies, and facilitating communication with a parent or care provider. Insights gathered from these interactions help inform the development of an outreach framework that will lead to a more meaningful strategy. Creating a strategy from the ground up, with knowledge of good practices as a baseline, is anticipated to achieve a high degree of success for this initiative.

Another Outreach Manager role is participating in the Port Hardy Situation Table. Though relatively new to our area, this group meets regularly to discuss concerns brought forward, and efforts are underway to streamline the referral process to facilitate timely responses by the Table.

School staff have been very welcoming and keen to explore new ideas for reducing risk by removing barriers that could impede the success of learners. Educational presentations on topics such as respectful behaviour and discussions on risk-reducing practices are ways to strengthen safety for everyone within our schools and achieve our goals.

It is a pleasure working with such a passionate and motivated group of people. Please reach out to me anytime, and I will do my best to assist you and contribute to your work in supporting our youth.

## WellNISS

By: Jen Turner, Principal

At North Island Secondary School (NISS), one of our school goals for the past three years was to continue to improve the overall mental health and wellbeing of our students. During the 2022-2023 school year our school started a joint WellNISS committee. Staff and students collectively came together to plan activities that focused on mental health awareness and education for our school.

This school year, we opened a WellNISS Centre for all students in our school that focuses on skills-based education around mental health and social emotional learning. With a centralized location in the school for wellness supports, it allows for easier and more timely access to services for students and staff. Through our school counsellor and child & youth care workers we offered weekly sessions on: challenging anxiety, building positive

relationships, becoming "unstuck", understanding stress, positive decision making, calming strategies and grief and loss, to name a few.

Our joint WellNISS committee continued their work surveying students and staff to find out what was needed to improve overall wellness for our school. One of the activities planned this year was a WellNISS Day. This day was designed for students to participate in a wellness activity or workshop that they enjoyed or wanted to try. Friday May 10, 2024, was our NISS WellNISS Day. Workshops centered around wellness and improving mental health. Students were able to choose from: biking, hiking, gardening, soccer, yoga, cross-fit, silent reading, nature-based therapy, crochet and textiles, photography, basketball, jewelry-making, Lahal, drumming,



soccer, and weight room fit. Healthy foods were also available throughout the day for everyone that attended.

It truly was an incredible day where students choose activities that helped their overall wellness. NISS staff and students are committed to keeping student health and well-being at the forefront of our school community. All students and staff are encouraged to follow the motto that was developed for WellNISS Day; "Be athletic, Be creative, Be mindful, Be YOU!".



The students of Cheslakees Elementary enjoyed a lot of time in nature this school year. We've played in the surrounding forests, gone for walks looking for signs of changing seasons, built homes for fairies, searched for 'dens' and 'burrows', and gone on field trips to Beaver Lake Interpretive Trail and Cluxewe Campground and beach. Our school feels fortunate to have so many opportunities for learning on the land.

The staff often guide an intention for the students as we go on our walks and play time. We draw attention to their surroundings in various ways such as:

- "What makes you think it's fall?"
- "How do you know?"

- "What might be living in that hole?"
- "What do you notice about this leaf?"
- "Oh! Shhh, what can you hear?"
- "Can you make a pattern with those sticks?"

Often they want to share their findings with us and bring a collection of rocks, twigs, and other loose parts they have found on the ground for us to look at and wonder about together.

If we aren't outside learning in nature we are often inside learning about nature. Cheslakees is one of many schools in the District that are part of the Stream to Sea program at the Quatse Salmon Centre. Our salmon

## Nature Play

By: Jacqui Sneazwell, Acting Principal

were with us from January until late April when we released them back into the Cluxewe River where they will grow and hopefully make it out into our oceans. After releasing our fishy friends the students enjoyed the day walking along the estuary, playing in the playground, and then exploring the beach for the afternoon.

Their experiences in and learning about the forest and nature fosters resilience, mental and physical health benefits. We learn to be observant and find wonder in tiny creatures and enormous trees. When we play and interact in this way, we hope to spark a love of nature and stewardship for our natural surroundings that lasts a lifetime.

## Makerspace

By: Melody Watson, Principal

A.J. Elliott's makerspace is in its second year. The makerspace is a place where the student's ability to design, make, acquire, and apply skills and technologies is developed. These skills and concepts support students in dealing with everyday challenges and help them to develop social and emotional skills and competencies (resilience, self-efficacy, responsible decision-making, self-awareness, self-management, communication skills, organization, goal setting, teamwork, and empathy).

In the makerspace, we have tried to create an atmosphere of inclusivity and possibilities where the students feel safe to "Try, Fail, and Learn". Students are learning to trust themselves, take risks, and see

challenges and failures as opportunities for new learning. We want our students to become flexible and resilient problem solvers. The makerspace allows them to build this resilience and see themselves as capable learners.

The space is used by students throughout the day for different projects and is also home to our after-school Maker Club. Staff and students learn together as we expand our skill sets and add to the space.

This year we have added a sewing bench, 3D pens, a 3D printer, a laser cutter/engraver, and more materials for tinkering and circuit building.



## The Blanket Exercise

By: Jen Turner, Principal  
Nimfa Casson, Teacher

Over the course of this school year the North Island Secondary School Law 12, BC First Peoples 12, Social Justice 12, and English First Peoples 11 classes hosted our students, as well as intermediate classes from Sunset Elementary for several hour-long participatory workshops called "The Blanket Exercise".

The goal of the Blanket Exercise is helping participants understand how colonization of the land we now know as Canada has impacted the people who lived here long before settlers arrived. Through this exercise, participants explored the nation-to-nation relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, how this relationship has been damaged over the years, and how we can work toward reconciliation.



One of our Truth and Reconciliation goals at NISS for the 2023-2024 school year was to build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect in our school community. The Blanket Exercise is based on using Indigenous methodologies and the goal is to build understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada

by walking through pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization, and resistance. Everyone is actively involved as they step onto blankets that represent the land, and into the role of First Nations, Inuit, and later Métis peoples. By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the Blanket Exercise helped to educate and increase empathy in our school community.

We were honoured to have our Elders and mentors Sharon Whonnock, Ralph Bell, Eva Dick and Irene Isaac, District Principal of Indigenous Education, to walk alongside us, be present, and witness our events.



# Fostering Intergenerational Bonds

By: Stephanie Boal, Principal



Sunset students have been working towards raising awareness and thinking beyond self in terms of social responsibility and respect for diversity, including intergenerational relationships. In fall of 2023, Grade 6 students were invited to spend one afternoon a month connecting with community Elders to play games, and share food and stories together. It has been wonderful to see students learning how to play new games (Cribbage was a big hit) and hear the stories shared by the Elders. Indigenous Home Support Worker Janice Ellis and Cultural Teacher Rosalind

McKinney connected with Mt. Waddington District's Better at Home program to facilitate intergenerational relationship building through these activity afternoons. Students are always asking when the next trip will be and they are excited to learn new things. These afternoons prompted baking, canning and crafting classes to create small care packages to share with the Elders over the holiday season. As a school, students are being encouraged to develop a sense of collective efficacy and identify ways we all can play a role in social change.

## Mathematics in our Thinking Classrooms

By: Darcy House, Teacher

For the last three years, learners have engaged in a community of learning as they progressed through their mathematics courses. Their programs, designed as increasingly difficult sequences of puzzles, challenge them to discuss, extend, and incorporate mathematical ideas. Staff are using practices based on the research of SFU Professor Dr. Peter Liljedahl to create a classroom atmosphere where students feel encouraged and empowered. They cooperate to solve problems that stretch their understanding. Think alouds are common practice as they work together on tasks, share solutions with each other, and receive feedback from staff that furthers independent thinking.

Thinking classrooms invite learners to uplift each other, be patient, explain, build community, and participate kindly. We work together, wait for each other, help each other learn, and celebrate each other's successes. This positive

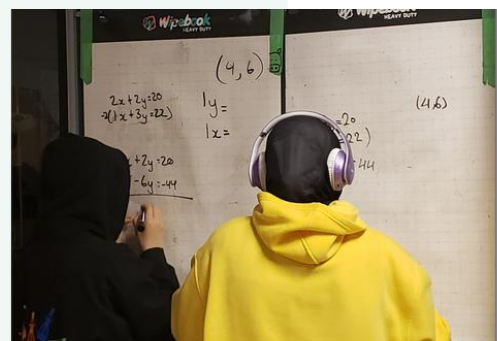
shift in our community of learning is made possible when staff show students that they value perseverance, risk-taking, and collaboration through assessment that is inclusive of observations, conversations, and products.

What does this mean for our classrooms? It means that collaboration is not only required, but practiced just as we practice mathematics. It means that mutual support is not only applauded, but extended so that knowledge is made readily available, mobile, and shared. Were you to join us, you might be surprised to see how noisy, messy, and chaotic the learning appears. And it means that tests no longer hold significant importance; instead, learning and growth are prioritized.

As teachers, we curate learning activities for our learners, acting as sounding boards for ideas and guiding when appropriate. Students are active participants -- they ask

questions, seek out information, and take responsibility for their learning. This helps learners develop the skills that foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. We believe that the engagement demonstrated by our students stands as a testament to a growing interest in mathematics, and more importantly, a love for learning.

Pictured here, learners in grade 10 engage in parallel learning at vertical surfaces as they solve difficult mathematical puzzles together.



## Nourishing Bodies and Minds

By: Anjela Howard, Administrative Assistant

The BC School Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program at Eke Me-Xi Learning Centre provides students with a variety of fresh produce throughout the week. This initiative not only supplies essential vitamins and minerals but also encourages healthy eating habits from a young age. By introducing students to a range of fruits and vegetables, we aim to broaden their palates and instill lifelong nutritional awareness. This program plays a crucial role in combating food insecurity, ensuring that every student has access to the vital nutrients they need to succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

The program also includes hands-on activities where students learn about canning and preserving fruits and vegetables. This practical education helps students understand food preservation techniques, which can be vital for maintaining food security and reducing waste. These skills are not only practical but also culturally

relevant, as they can tie into traditional methods of food storage and preparation, enriching the students' connection to their heritage. Overall, the Fruit and Vegetable Program equips students with valuable knowledge and skills that contribute to their long-term well-being and personal development.

A cornerstone of our food programs is the principle of zero barrier access. We believe that no child should face obstacles in obtaining healthy food. By eliminating costs and ensuring accessibility, we create an inclusive environment where every student can focus on learning without the distraction of hunger or nutritional deficiency. This approach has a profound positive impact, improving academic performance, attendance rates, and overall well-being.

The impact of our food programs extends beyond the immediate provision of meals. By addressing food insecurity and promoting healthy



eating habits, we lay the foundation for lifelong wellness. Our students exhibit better concentration, higher energy levels, and improved emotional health. The sense of community cultivated through our programs enhances social skills and creates a supportive network that extends beyond the school.

Eke Me-Xi Learning Centre's food programs are integral to our mission of nurturing well-rounded, healthy, and culturally grounded students. By providing access to nutritious meals, engaging with the community, and celebrating our Indigenous culinary heritage, we enrich the lives of our students, paving the way for their future success.

## Welcome Guests

By: Jacqui Sneazwell, Acting Principal

This year at Cheslakees we had the great pleasure of having special guests into our school to help support the health and wellness of our students. Yoga instructor Dana Mahon gave us the pleasure of learning about yoga. The students were able to gather in a circle in the gym and practice different poses and breathing techniques in a fun and engaging way. We also had Art Therapist Christy Greenwood visit. The children explored feelings and expressions and music as they sat in a circle and drew a big collage of ideas on a group mural. Elder Sharon Wonnock, whose calming presence is always a joy to witness, helped the children sew their button blankets. Mary McKinley came to teach the students how to work with clay. Trudy LaCasse was a special visitor too. She taught us a lot about salmon and how to take care of their eggs until they were ready to be released.



Having Marine Detective Jackie Hilderling come to teach about the amazing Giant Pacific Octopus was a big highlight for students and adults alike. You can ask any of our students what facts they know about the octopus, and they will likely know more than you! Our own School District Counsellor, Charlene Purdey, has been coming to support our students with friendship groups and social stories. Ms. Jill Cook, our District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care was able to spend some time teaching Snowman Science! We cannot forget about our big buddies who come over to visit us from Sunset School! Our students are so excited to have a friendship with a student who they can look up to. It has been an amazing year of learning and so special that we have been able to have so many members of our community come to support our learners in their mental health and wellness.

# We Are All Related, Family Heritage Project

By: Roberta Harris, Principal

To share who we are and where we come from, our staff initiated a whole school project based on the book "We Are All Related, A Celebration of Our Cultural Heritage" (1996).

We feel it is important to live by the view that "you can't know where you are going until you know where you come from."

We also think it's important to honor each other's heritage and realize and appreciate the diversity among us. Both staff and students were encouraged to participate. We presented our projects to our families and community by hosting an event celebrating our family legacies.

Students were encouraged to find out who they are by talking to family members and creating a collage that represents them. They contemplated symbols that represented their heritage and told their stories through their art and photos.

Students interviewed an elder and asked "What would you like young people to learn from you?" Not surprisingly, the answers were very similar. Being kind and respectful was a universal theme around their words of wisdom.

Students had to ponder the idea of what "we are all related" meant to them. We are intrigued at the thoughtfulness and depth of their thinking.

This project was heartwarming in the way it allowed students to connect with their families and learn more about their family connections and histories. Families had an opportunity to share their history and memories. Students reaching out to a loved one initiated a conversation that created lasting memories.

We had an opportunity to connect in ways we never had before. It is gratifying to witness students looking up maps and flags that represent their families and learning about



names and relationships that were new to them.

Family relationships, connections and interactions are very complex. Students were given autonomy about how they would represent their heritage and lineage. Witnessing the progress of their endeavors as they represented who they are and where they come from is truly rewarding and fulfilling.

Together we initiated an opportunity to further connect with each other and our families. Elders were given the opportunity to share their wisdom and stories and as a collective we are forming a stronger and more connected school family. Learning about each other in such depth truly reminds us that "we are all related."

Every year, schools across Canada have the opportunity to apply for the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation's Adopt A School fundraiser, in which Indigo, Chapters, and Cole stores fundraise on behalf of a single elementary school. Sea View was selected to participate in the 2023 fundraiser and was supported by the Nanaimo Chapters store. Donations were collected from October 10 – 31, 2023 resulting in \$2530 being raised, as well as 48 new books being gifted to our school. This amounted to the addition of 219 books to our school library.

Students were eager to make purchasing recommendations and thrilled to get these new books in their hands. This influx of books has resulted in more students checking

out books on a weekly basis and an increase in students reading for pleasure. The influx of new books also prompted a library makeover, sponsored by our Parent Advisory Committee. Now students can enjoy their new reading materials in their updated library.

As we still have gaps in our library collection and sections that require updating, Sea View is proud to share that we have been chosen to participate in the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation's Adopt A School fundraiser a second time. This time we will be sponsored by Indigospirit located in Richmond Center. We are excited to see how many books the 2024 Adopt A School fundraiser will add to our school's library collection.

## Adopt-A-School

By: Jackie Peterson, Principal



# Feeding Futures

By: Anne Kashty, School Foods Coordinator

This year marked the first formal year of Feeding Futures! The staff at SD85 have long practiced nourishing the bodies and minds of learners. However, this targeted funding to provide food to students meant that school food programs could be created and grown in new and exciting ways.

In October, SD85 hired a School Food Coordinator to assist in coordinating the food programs across schools. This role has evolved throughout the year from preparing school lunches on the ground level, to coordinating multiple vendors or food champions, and attending the many community outreach events SD85 hosts.



*(Food Coordinator at Ready, Set Learn)*

Food access and provision needed to be stigma-free. This essential value of SD85 was met by providing meals universally to all students. Meals were shared together, and students were able to enjoy their favorite foods or try new dishes with the help of our school food champions. These school food champions assisted with prepping, serving, cleaning up and shopping to ensure that healthy meals were ready to go at the sound of the bell.

Students also acted as food champions, and, at many of our schools learners prepared, served and enjoyed lunch with their peers.

This had substantial impacts for our learners, increasing food and nutrition literacy in a fun, education-rich, interactive environment.

In order to assess our success, SD85 needed to create concrete metrics that we could use as benchmarks in evaluation. The decision was collaboratively made to focus our efforts on providing food to students in school, during school hours in the form of breakfast, hot lunches and accessible, healthy snacks. The goals that were created were to offer breakfast five days a week, and a hot lunch two days a week to all learners in our district. We are proud to share that we met this goal!

Our school food programs were able to meet and go beyond this goal, by integrating celebratory aspects into our lunches. For example, this year North Island Secondary School hosted the first Cabane à Sucre Celebration, a traditional French welcoming of spring.



*(Students at Cabane A Sucre)*

Embracing Indigenous culture through land based education and food, song, dance and gathering is also a core practice and way of being for SD85. Feeding Futures funding was able to support more yusa (fish soup), xq'mas (smoked salmon), t̓ubqkw (barbecued salmon), k̓wak'wax'sqm (bannock), t̓i'na'gakw (fried bread) and other traditional foods.

This year SD85 has also grown their partnerships with many organizations that support healthy foods at school.

Loaves and Fishes, Island Health, Parents for French, and beyond all helped develop and promote healthy food for our school food programs. The BC Coalition for Healthy School Food generously provided a grant to Sea View School to host their first ever "Big Crunch!". Students were able to try a variety of fresh, healthy, crunchy vegetables and raise awareness for healthy foods at school.



*(Students at the "Big Crunch!")*

As we reflect on the past academic year, we are filled with gratitude to those who made this year such a success. Our fearless learners in the kitchen, our dedicated school food champions, and our local food suppliers – we thank you! And look forward to once again Feeding Futures in the coming year!

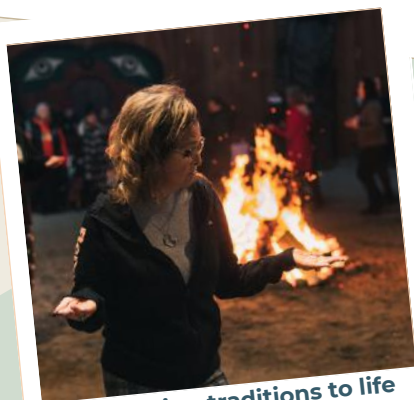




**Sunset student rocking long jump**



**A.J.E students skim the surface of local shorelines for marine microplastics**



**Staff bring traditions to life with vibrant dance at the Kwakiutl gukwodzi (big house)**



**Students in the woodworking class at PHSS crafting their skills with precision and creativity**



**School leaders proudly adorned in regalia, embodying tradition and leadership**



**Cheslakees took part in the Stream to Sea program at the Quatse Salmon Centre and raised salmon**



**Eagle View students making traditional bannock**



**Proud members of the Indigenous Youth Panel**

## LOCAL RESOURCES

### **Adult Mental Health & Substance Use (Island Health)**

Port Hardy 250 902-6051

Port McNeill 250 956-4461

### **North Island Building Blocks**

250 949-7330

### **Fort Rupert Health Centre**

250 949-6625

### **Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Health & Family Services**

250 949-8131

### **K'wak'walat'si Child & Family Services**

250 974-5356

### **Ministry of Children & Family Development**

250 949-8011

### **North Island Community Services**

250 956-3134

### **Public Health**

Port Hardy 250 902-6071

Port McNeill 250 956-4711

### **Quatsino Health Centre**

250 949-7161

### **Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre**

250 902-0552

### **Salvation Army**

250 949-8125

### **Victim Services**

Port Hardy 250 949-6335

Port McNeill 250 956-4441

## 24HOUR SUPPORTS

### **BC Crisis Line**

1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

### **First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day**

1-855-344-3800

### **Here2Talk**

1-877-857-3397

### **Hope for Wellness Helpline**

1-855-242-3310 or

chat @ [www.hopeforwellness.ca](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca)

### **Indian Residential School Crisis Line**

1-866-925-4419

### **Indian Residential School Survivor Society**

1-800-721-0066

### **Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868 or text "CONNECT",  
"FIRST NATIONS", "METIS" or "INUIT" to  
686868 (youth) or 741741 (adults)

### **Kuu-Us Crisis Line Society**

1-800-588-8717

### **Namgis Health Centre**

250 974-8015 (on call)

### **Mental Health Support and Info line**

310-6789 (no area code needed)

### **Métis Crisis Line**

1-833-MétisBC (1-833-638-4722)

### **Suicide Crisis Hotline**

9-8-8

### **Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society**

1-888-403-3123

### **The Recovery Village**

1-844-386-0410



SD85



250-949-6618



[www.sd85.bc.ca](http://www.sd85.bc.ca)