

community report 2025

On the last day of the Skw'unc-was Program at the Cheakamus Centre, Grade 3 Eastview Elementary students join teacher Rebecca Jackson for a story during 'Teacher Time.'





The First Nations' Emergency Services Society of BC hosts a Firefighting Bootcamp where students explore various career paths within fire service.



In a program by Vancouver Coastal Health, Grade 2 students learn about healthy eating, exercise to get the brain more alert and active, maintaining a healthy body through sleep and hygiene, and kindness through positive relationships.



Sherwood Park Elementary band performs as part of the Annual School District Band Festival.

VISION

We provide world-class instruction and a rich diversity of engaging programs to inspire success for every student and bring communities together to learn, share and grow.

VALUES

TRUST We act with integrity. We are open and honest in our communication with one another.

RESPECT We relate to each other with care and appreciation. We honour diversity and recognize the exceptional in everyone.

RESPONSIBILITY We are accountable for our actions. We support positive change, continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence.

COLLABORATION We develop relationships and affiliations to achieve shared goals and consider each other in our decisions and actions.

STRATEGIC GOALS

-  **Student-Centred Education:** Provide equity-based education that supports the learning needs of all students.
-  **Innovative Instruction:** Enhance innovative and effective approaches and curriculum to develop educated citizens.
-  **Welcoming and Inclusive Culture:** Enhance our welcoming, safe and inclusive culture and learning environment.
-  **Mental Health and Well-Being:** Promote mental health and well-being through social emotional learning and trauma-informed practices.
-  **Truth, Healing and Reconciliation:** Champion truth, healing and reconciliation, and embed Indigenous ways of knowing.
-  **Environmental Stewardship:** Lead on sustainable practices and nature-based learning to address environmental challenges.



Each month, Carson Graham staff and students plan, prepare, and serve nutritious meals to community members in need.

Message from the Chair and Superintendent



LINDA MUNRO



DR. PIUS RYAN

Dear Community Members,

On behalf of the North Vancouver School District and Board of Education, we are so proud to share the 2025 Community Report. Published each spring, the Community Report provides snapshots of the outstanding work happening across the school district.

The following stories demonstrate how we continue to build upon the school district's reputation for excellence in academics, art and music, athletics, and outdoor learning at the Cheakamus Centre. Schools play a significant role in nurturing learners as whole individuals. This can be seen in the micro-communities created by teachers in classrooms where learners become engaged as responsible, thoughtful, and compassionate citizens of their community.

Public schooling is a complex enterprise. Working on multiple levels to support diverse needs, we help learners grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Extracurricular activities like school-based clubs, sports, and arts programs are vital in this process. These activities foster resilience, teamwork, and empathy—skills that last a lifetime. They also allow learners to explore passions, develop new skills, and build meaningful relationships, which supports a student's sense of identity and belonging. We invite you to visit the Learn, Share, and Grow blog, where you will find more learning stories as they are added throughout the year on www.sd44.ca.

Thank you for your interest in the teaching and learning across the school district and for your ongoing support of the K-12 public education system in North Vancouver.

LINDA MUNRO
CHAIR
NORTH VANCOUVER
BOARD OF EDUCATION

DR. PIUS RYAN
SUPERINTENDENT
NORTH VANCOUVER
SCHOOL DISTRICT

The North Vancouver School District would like to thank the Coast Salish people, specifically the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation, upon whose traditional territory the school district resides. We value the opportunity to learn, share and grow on this traditional territory.

North Vancouver Board of Education



BACK ROW (L TO R): George Tsiakos, Daniel Anderson, Antje Wilson
FRONT ROW (L TO R): Linda Munro, Leilani Tumaneng, Cyndi Gerlach, Kulvir Mann



Staff from the Education Services Centre come together on National Truth and Reconciliation Day.

Outdoor place-based learning and teacher mentorship

BY HEIDI LESSMAN SIMM
TEACHER MENTOR

At the beginning of each school year, teachers spend a lot of time and energy developing learning routines with students. Students practice these routines for many weeks until the routines become a core part of their learning experience. Regular outdoor place-based learning also benefits from developing and practicing core routines.

Students are used to going outside for recess, lunch, outdoor gym class, or perhaps for a short time to burn off some energy at the end of a longer class. Most students are not used to thinking about learning outside in the same way as learning in a classroom setting. While there are some obvious differences, there are great similarities as well.

Outdoor place-based learning can be playful, structured, and silent. It can also be creative, engaging, and active. Students can use their senses to explore the place around them and feel connected and curious. By facilitating classes and

learning lessons outside, teachers provide students the opportunity to "notice" and "wonder" in ways they might not have otherwise during recess or lunch.

Beginning in 2022/23, two teachers from the Outdoor School Program, Heidi Lessman and Joni Danielson, started the Outdoor Place-based Learning Mentorship Series supported by the Director of Educational Programs at Cheakamus Centre, Conor McMullan.

This series is offered as part of an effort to increase opportunity and capacity for outdoor place-based learning in the school district. Teacher mentors work directly with teachers and their classes in supporting instruction and assessment around outdoor place-based learning.

Working with teachers and classes from Kindergarten to Grade 7 this series is meant to support outdoor learning opportunities for students that focus on care for self, community and the local environment while developing a



During a mindful nature walk, Ross Road Elementary students practice using their senses in a colour in nature activity.

connection to place. It enhances school-wide understanding and culture of place-based learning across all grades. Identifies and share outdoor place-based learning instructional and assessment resources for teachers. As well as supports school-based initiative(s) to make place-based learning active and engaging across all

instructional areas.

Teachers and students have come outside to learn in all weather, rain or shine. Students often share that they feel "happy," "calm," "connected", and "at peace" after learning outside. Building these positive connections can help them respect and value nature. ■

Centering Indigenous perspectives with Counter stories and Skwxwú7mesh sníchim

BY BRANDI PRICE
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION
LITERACY TEACHER

Indigenous literacy students from Queen Mary, Westview and Sherwood Park Elementary schools are working to decolonize their understanding of Canadian history by assembling a digital picture book showcasing an Indigenous perspective on this land we call Canada.

In their digital stories, students explain that the land we call Canada was known by some Indigenous people as Turtle Island. The name comes from oral histories of creation stories where the turtle is seen as a symbol of life and earth and where the turtle holds the world on its back. By telling the story of Turtle Island,



students are centering Indigenous perspectives and highlighting how Indigenous people have lived on this land since time immemorial.

Counter storytelling is the practice of telling lived experiences and perspectives by and of those who are historically oppressed, excluded, or

silenced in educational settings.

On April 9, at Queen Mary Elementary, district Indigenous support worker Elizabeth Nahanee organized the Spring Skwxwú7mesh Language Festival. After the four seasons, spring brings new growth.

Elementary students were guided in games and activities led by Indigenous student leaders Fin, Gregory, Francis (Grade 7) and Kimberlee (Grade 5). Students were taught colours, how to count to 10, and the names of seven animals, all in the Skwxwú7mesh language.

The festival emphasized diversity, encouraged connectivity within our surrounding communities, provided a sense of cultural inclusion to all students, and enhanced the sense of leadership among Indigenous students. ■

Early learning and the classroom environment

**BY ANNE LAWSON
PRINCIPAL**

Within the School Plan, Carisbrooke Elementary staff chose to spotlight Early Learning as early learning experiences establish the foundation for all learning, K–12. This is especially true for literacy. At Carisbrooke, primary teachers, learning service teachers, and education assistants have looked closely at early literacy in the last three years through attended reading workshops, research on the brain, purchasing new literacy resources, read the British Columbia Early Learning Framework, and, as a team, worked together to create the best instructional practices and services for our students.

Knowing how critical the early years (birth to age 8) are for growth and development, we wondered what more can we do for our early learners. Asking “how important is the classroom environment and, what would we see in an ideal early learning space?” Kindergarten staff visited early learning spaces at Queensbury Elementary and the Capilano University Children’s Centre, both with outstanding learning

spaces for young children. We saw how children’s learning experiences are shaped by their relationships with space and materials and experienced how a room that is calm, clutter-free, organized, and adorned with natural materials has a positive impact on the imagination, creativity, and well-being of children and teachers too.

With proceeds from a school district Collaborative Inquiry Grant and monies from the Carisbrooke Parent Advisory Committee, we redesigned a classroom. Our goal was a clean, simple space that invite children to fully explore, create, and play without distraction. After looking closely at everything from lighting, furniture, carpet, clutter, wall colours, materials, and toys we began work in one of the Kindergarten classrooms. First, we removed plastic toys and chairs then painted neutral colours on the walls. We installed soft cloud lights and sky-blue silks which hung from the ceiling. We purchased objects and materials that children can experiment with and investigate in ways that are meaningful to them, including toys that invite creativity such as coloured silks and storyboard materials.



The difference is profound. For students, the wooden play arches have become a store front, a forest, and a castle entrance to visit the Queen. The benches have become logs at a campfire, a stage for puppets, and a spot for three friends to work together side by side.

Environments are integral to well-being and learning. Children learn in

relationships with the people around them but are also profoundly affected by their relationship with spaces and materials. The objects and materials in a child’s learning space truly makes a difference. We hope that every child who begins their education journey at Carisbrooke will benefit from a beautiful early learning environment. ■



Ennovation: The Inkless Metal Pen

**BY SORAYA RAJAN
TEACHER**

Ennovate is a transformative four-month program designed to equip high school students with essential business and soft skills. Through engaging workshops and guidance from UBC’s Ennovate mentors, students build a foundation in entrepreneurship and establish a social enterprise tackling real-world issues. The program culminates in a final pitch to industry experts, highlighting their innovative solutions and dedication.

In January 2024, the Ennovate Team from Seycove Secondary secured 3rd place at a competition

at UBC, receiving recognition from a range of industry professionals.

The Seycove team honed their business and soft skills, ultimately delivering a compelling presentation that reflected the team’s creativity, innovation and collaborative spirit. Their Inkless Metal Pen not only serves the community but also contributes to environmental well-being.

We commend all students who participated in the Ennovate program for their hard work, commitment, and passion. Their dedication is genuinely inspiring, and we are incredibly proud of each one of them. ■

Jill of All Trades

BY JANICE KNAPP
WORK EXPERIENCE FACILITATOR

Seycove Secondary students, Hannah and Sophia, had the incredible opportunity to be two of five North Vancouver School District delegates to participate in BCIT's Jill of All Trades. The students enjoyed a full day of trying out various trades and learning from women in the trades.

Hannah was curious about what a career in trades might entail and enjoyed demoing the various trades options. She was most surprised by how much she enjoyed the plumbing demo.

"I ended up having a lot of fun trying to build this piping structure, and having to cut the pipes, measure everything and assemble it in the

right formation. It also helped that me and my partner did it the fastest. We killed it!"

Although Hannah is not sure she will pursue a career in plumbing, she expressed that the event "helped me learn so many new things and it really expanded my idea of what the 'trades lifestyle' can be like."

For Sophia, the day revealed a lot more than just what each trade was all about. Her biggest takeaway was the people.

"I found it very interesting to hear their perspectives and why they wanted to go into trades. I found most people there were quite different from me and had widely different views towards our education system. Even so, they were all very informed and I gained a lot of respect for trades as a whole." ■



Cove Cliff honours Black History Month and Black Excellence

BY BRIDGET O'BRIEN-KOPACEK
PRINCIPAL

In the spirit of diversity, inclusion, and in celebration of Black History Month, the Cove Cliff Elementary community, took an innovative approach to honour the achievements and contributions of influential Black Canadians. The front windows were lined with posters of notable contemporary Black Canadians, including artists, politicians, athletes, authors and musicians, whose contributions were featured on morning announcements, and incorporated into classroom teachings in innovative ways. The posters served as conversation starters, prompting students and staff to delve deeper into the lives and accomplishments of the individuals featured. This immersive approach helped foster a sense of understanding, empathy, and appreciation for the diverse experiences within the Black Canadian community.

The highlight of the month was the visit of Naa Sheka Riby-Williams, an Afro-Canadian artist whose recent and most notable work includes the design of the Vancouver



Students pose with Afro-Canadian artist Naa Sheka.

Canucks 2024 Black Excellence logo and jersey. Naa Sheka not only brought her artistic excellence to Cove Cliff but also shared her powerful story and imparted valuable lessons on anti-racism and cultural communication. During her visits, Naa Sheka shared her personal

journey, providing insights into the challenges she faced growing up in Vancouver. Her narrative was both inspiring and eye-opening: emphasizing the importance of resilience, self-expression, and breaking down racial barriers. Naa Sheka's teachings highlighted

the power of sport and art as mediums for community creation, personal expression, and cultural understanding. Through her work, she demonstrated that creativity and teamwork have the potential to bridge gaps, break stereotypes, and foster a sense of unity among diverse communities. Naa Sheka shared her passion beyond the classroom walls and challenged grade 6 and 7s students to a pick-up game of basketball. The game was electric!

As February ended, we were thrilled to share the enriching journey our Cove Cliff community has embarked upon and our plans to continue learning and honouring beyond a single month. Through exploring Black Canadian history and contemporary contributions, we not only broadened our understanding but also reaffirmed our commitment to fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. Encouraged by the impactful art and cultural exchanges, we are eager to carry forward the lessons learned into our daily interactions and conversations. Together, we continue to nurture an environment where every person feels valued, celebrated, and empowered to thrive. ■

Windsor Wolves win first-ever provincial soccer title



Windsor's Jude Cortiulla battles an opposing player in the semi-final match against Mark Isfeld. PHOTO: BLAIR SHIERS

BY NICK LABA
NORTH SHORE NEWS

After staring down an early end to their soccer season, the Windsor Wolves clawed their way back into a contentious playoff where they eventually went all the way.

On Nov. 20 in Burnaby, Windsor's senior boys took their first-ever provincial AA banner, defeating tourney-favourites Langley Christian in a shootout following a 0-0 tie.

It's flip-flop comeback from last

season, when the team went undefeated until losing to Mulgrave in a final game shootout.

Unlike last year, when the Wolves seemed to cruise through many of their games, this season involved more trials and tribulations, explained coach Aaron Bruce.

The Wolves lost a couple games during the regular season in shootouts, coming second in the league. From there, the team had to win a play-in game to make the Sea to Sky Zone playoffs – which they did

against Templeton Secondary, also in penalty shots. In those playoffs, Windsor fell in the semi-finals to St. Thomas Aquinas, in a shootout again.

That meant Windsor had to fight for a third-seed spot in provincials. Facing Notre Dame, the Wolves won 2-0, which Bruce said was a turning point for the embattled squad.

Being the zone's third seed put them in a challenging pool in provincials, but Windsor won three-straight pool games to take them to the semis. "The boys played incredible," Bruce said.

The Wolves beat Mark Isfeld 2-1 in the semi-finals, which took them to the final matchup against top-seeded Langley Christian. Knowing they were facing a tough opponent, Bruce put together a defensive plan to diminish Langley's speed and attack.

Several high-pressure shootouts prepared team for overtime final.

While the plan was working, things turned dire in the second half when a Windsor player received a second yellow card, knocking their player count down to 10. But they held Langley off, getting them into overtime at 0-0.

That's when goalkeeper Dylan Spires stepped up, saving the first shot from Langley in the shootout.

That really got the boys amped up, Bruce said. "Everyone was quite excited."

All of the Wolves put their shots past the Langley keeper, including the game-clincher scored by Sam Saedzadeh. Spires made another save to secure the tournament win and the team's first-ever provincial banner.

Unlike last year, Bruce said the team's exposure to several high-pressure shootouts during the season set them up for success in the final.

"When the overtime finished and the players on the field came over to the bench, I just looked at them and just said, 'It's our time,' he said. "Everybody just felt really confident that it was our turn to win these penalty shots."

For his outstanding play in front of the net, Spires won the Golden Gloves for the tournament's top goalkeeper. Alex Boardman was named MVP of the provincial tourney, and Ty Whyte was part of the Super 16, which is essentially the all-star roster.

At school on Monday, the team's historic win was celebrated by the school in the cafeteria, with a highlight reel rolling on a big screen.

"They replayed the penalty shot winner, and the kids all went crazy," Bruce said. ■

Graduates honoured at Superintendent's Celebration of Learning

BY MADDY PHILLIPS
COMMUNICATIONS

On June 19, the North Vancouver School District hosted its annual Superintendent's Celebration of Learning event.

The long-standing district tradition recognizes the top 10% of graduating students across all seven secondary schools. Students are selected based on their well-roundedness and exceptionality in two or more of the following categories: leadership, citizenship, service, athletics, arts, and academics.

Each student has made outstanding contributions to their school communities. They have excelled in music, athletics, arts, and academics,



but most importantly, they have each made their school community better, which in turn has made the community of North Vancouver better.

In attendance were municipal leadership from both the City and District of North Vancouver, North Vancouver Board of Education

trustees, school district executive members, and school-based administration and staff.

Students were treated to an inspiring keynote address from Jane Channell, a distinguished Handsworth Secondary alumna and two-time Olympian from North Vancouver School District. Channell provided support and advice to the students as they start their next chapter post-graduation. She parted by sharing her favourite motto:

"Stop. Breathe. Take it all in. Appreciate the moment. Live in the moment. Leave nothing undone. Have no regrets. Live out loud."

On behalf of the North Vancouver School District, congratulations to the class of 2024! ■

From Kindergarten...



Ready, Set, Learn! Children aged 3 to 5 and their families join schools, school district staff, and community partners to develop early language and literacy skills. The theme for 2024, "Learn, Play, Discover," emphasized the importance of discovery through play for well-being and learning.



Primary Literacy Teacher Facilitators share and discuss the UFLI literacy resource with elementary teachers.

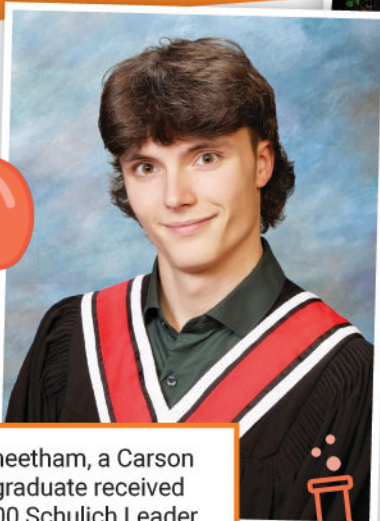


Kindergarteners become detectives at Norgate Xwemélch'stn as they explored the school and inquired about the roles and responsibilities of different members in the school district community.



Queensbury Kindergarteners give a thumbs up on their first full day in school, a significant milestone for the school district's youngest learners.

... to Grade 12



Cohen Cheetham, a Carson Graham graduate received a \$120,000 Schulich Leader Scholarship to study Science at the University of Victoria.



The 2024 graduation class at Mountainside Secondary are welcomed to their ceremony.



Summer Learning students take on Chemistry 12 over the month of July to prepare for the year ahead.



Argyle Secondary graduates toss their graduation caps in celebration.



Windsor Secondary receives an envelope upgrade which includes new glazing and siding.

On September 22, 1911, members of the community gather for the laying of the cornerstone at Ridgeway Elementary. The event was officiated by Albert Steacy, the first chairman of the North Vancouver School Board. NVMA, 699



Digital renderings of the new four-classroom addition coming to Westview Elementary. This will allow for an expansion of 100 spaces for students.



Construction has started on a six-classroom addition at Lynn Valley Elementary School.



Construction underway on new North Vancouver elementary school

BY ABBY LUCIANO
NORTH SHORE NEWS

Excavators and trucks moved gravel and dirt as construction is underway for a new elementary school in North Vancouver's Cloverley neighbourhood.

Local and provincial politicians as well as school district trustees went on a walking tour of the construction site to announce the progress of a new elementary school in the Cloverley neighbourhood.

"We have incredible growth in terms of the number of families that are choosing to make North Shore home," Bowinn Ma, minister of infrastructure and MLA for North Vancouver-Lonsdale, said after the tour.

"And with that growth comes additional needs. This school is part of our government's continued commitment to investing in the infrastructure that communities need."



School district staff tour guests on the site of the new elementary school in the Cloverley neighbourhood.

The old Cloverley Elementary closed as a public school in 1982. The new school is expected to hold more than twice the capacity of the old school and will seat 585 students from kindergarten to Grade 7. The new school will also include a

neighbourhood learning centre with 50 before-and-after-school spaces and a 37-space childcare facility.

The province has provided \$61 million for the school, with the North Vancouver School District contributing an additional \$3 million.

The childcare facility will cost \$7.2 million, with the province funding \$3.7 million and the City of North Vancouver contributing \$3.5 million.

The new school aims to address overcrowding problems in the district, as nearby schools have seen large increases in enrolment over the last few years as more young families move into the area.

"With this new elementary school and child care centre, we're building a brighter future – ensuring our children have the support they need to learn, grow and thrive close to home," City of North Vancouver Mayor Linda Buchanan said in a provincial news release.

Since 2016, the government has approved more than \$233 million to create 1,030 new student seats and 3,150 seismically safer seats in the North Vancouver School District.

Cloverley Elementary is expected to open by fall 2026. ■

Celebrating culture and food diversity at Seymour Heights

BY LAUREN VANDERHAM
VICE PRINCIPAL

Food brings people together and can be a window into tradition and culture. This was evident at Seymour Heights' Grade 1 Cultural Food Fair, in which families were invited to bring in food from their homes to share with the classroom community.

Prior to the Food Fair, students explored different facets of diversity. They learned that food is only one component of someone's culture, and that each family has their own unique customs when it comes to eating. After reading stories and hearing peer examples, students in Division 11 were eager to try some of the food they had learned about. Families were able to participate in a number of ways, including sending in food with a written description or cooking within the classroom.

One of the highlights was having Dharshini and her family cook Vada, Dosa, and Sambar in the room. Trustee Wilson joined us and

brought in Sausage from Friesland and Gouda from Holland. Every student in the classroom decided to try something new, whether it was Dragon Fruit or Sticky Rice Dumplings. Aside from taking part in the actual event itself, the Grade 1 students were involved in planning, organizing, decorating, and cleaning. Students also reflected on their experience through journaling.

Holding a celebration such as this helps support a positive attitude towards food differences and allows students to experience a range of sensory input that they may not be exposed to in their regular daily routines. It shines a necessary light on the vibrant cultures within our schools and the global community.

Though there were many apparent differences among the food samples at the celebration, it was also clear that all of the food wove a common thread. This experience helped connect parents, students, and staff, and brought curiosity and joy into our classroom. ■

FrancoFête at the North Vancouver School District

BY TRACY LANGER
FRENCH IMMERSION FACILITATOR

From April 8 to 11, the vibrant atmosphere of French language and culture filled the The Pipe Shop at the Shipyards as 1600 elementary and Grade 10 French Immersion students came together for an unforgettable event, FrancoFête.

Primary students jammed it out with the musical talents of Juno nominated 'Will's Jams' and laughed out loud through the performance wits of a French clown. Intermediate students had the privilege of rocking it out to acting and performing recording artist, DJ Samian. The extraordinary talents of recording artist Missy D concluded the event with her beautiful songs. It was amazing to see many students singing along word for word.

Between performances students were able to participate in activities which included crêpe tasting, photo booth, and tattoo stations.

For Grade 10 French Immersion students, FrancoFête offered more than just entertainment; it provided valuable insights into the professional opportunities that await bilingual individuals. Between captivating performances, students engaged with representatives from various organizations, discovering firsthand how bilingualism can open doors to a multitude of career paths. From conversations with representatives from Simon Fraser University and British Columbia Institute of Technology about specialized programs and scholarships to exploring bilingual job opportunities, students gained invaluable knowledge about leveraging their language skills in the real world.

This was an amazing and unique opportunity for our French Immersion students to experience the French culture outside of the confines of the classroom while meeting and interacting with students from other schools. ■



Students line up to sample food at the Food Fair.



Braemar Elementary rocks Earth Day recycling relay

BY CHERYL HAM
VICE PRINCIPAL

Students at Braemar Elementary had a blast during their Earth Day celebrations with a super engaging recycling relay. Led and organized by the school's Environmental Club and cheered on by teachers Mme. Plaisant and Ms. Turnbull, the event took over the basketball court on a sunny spring day.

Before the relay kicked off, students got a crash course on the ins and outs of recycling. They learned all about the importance of sorting trash right and how it helps our planet stay clean and green.

They watched a video made by the Environmental Club, showing off the new bins including ones Braemar has added for soft plastics. Shoutout to Ms. Turnbull for leading the charge on that



and taking the soft plastics to the transfer station herself!

Armed with their newfound recycling smarts, the kids dove into the relay. The Environmental Club rounded up

all sorts of materials – paper, plastic, and even organic waste – just like what you'd find at home or school.

With teamwork and high spirits, each class took their turn at the

sorting stations. They carefully looked at each item and decided where it belonged. Compostables went straight to the compost bin, while recyclables got sorted into bins for soft plastics, paper, or mixed recycling. Anything that couldn't be recycled found its way into the garbage bin.

The energy was off the charts as the kids raced to finish the relay. Every time a class nailed the sorting, there were cheers all around. And it was awesome to see the older kids giving high-fives to the younger ones!

This hands-on activity wasn't just about sorting trash – it was about showing love for our planet. The students left the Earth Day celebration at Braemar Elementary with a renewed commitment to keeping things eco-friendly every day. ■

Restoring the Welcome Pole: A commitment to place, people and reconciliation

BY MARK BARRETT
PRINCIPAL

One of the most meaningful projects undertaken by the Sutherland Secondary School community was the refurbishment of the Welcome Pole, a prominent symbol of our connection to the land and both the Indigenous peoples who have called it home since time immemorial. Standing proudly at the entrance of the school since 2012, the Welcome Pole has greeted visitors, staff, and students alike, offering a daily reminder of the history and spirit of this place.

The Pole was originally carved by Ray Natraoro, a highly respected Coast Salish artist from Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation). It serves as a reminder not just of the school's location on the unceded territories of the Skwxwú7mesh and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, but also of the deep, ongoing relationship between these First Nations and the land. The Welcome Pole has stood as a testament to this

history, but the wear and tear of time had begun to take its toll. Exposure to the elements and the attention of local woodpeckers meant that it was time for the Pole to be restored so that it could continue to serve as a lasting tribute to the community and its values.

The refurbishment was carried out by Victor Harry, who was an apprentice of Ray Natraoro when the Pole was first carved in 2012. Victor's role in this project brings the story of the Welcome Pole full circle. Having worked alongside Ray to bring the original carving to life, Victor's hands once again touched the Pole, ensuring its renewal for future generations. This continuity reflects not only the importance of preserving physical symbols but also the transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

For students, staff, and visitors of Sutherland, the Welcome Pole stands as a daily acknowledgment of the land's original stewards and a reminder of the school's ongoing commitment to truth, healing,



and reconciliation. As we strive to create a learning environment that recognizes the full history of this land, we are reminded of the importance of connection—to each other, to the earth, and to the cultural traditions that have shaped this place long before the school was established.

The act of refurbishing the Pole is symbolic of our commitment to care for and honor the past while also looking toward the future. By preserving this beautiful work of art, we are also preserving the stories and spirits it represents.

Sutherland is fortunate to be situated on these sacred lands, and this project is one small way we can express our respect and gratitude for the opportunity to live, work, and learn here. As we walk past the Welcome Pole each day, we are reminded of our shared responsibility to protect and nurture our connection to the land and to continue working toward a future that honors the legacies of the Skwxwú7mesh and səliwətaʔ peoples. ■

Grade 8 retreat at the Cheakamus Centre

BY CONOR MCMULLAN
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMS, CHEAKAMUS CENTRE

Now in its 3rd year, the district-wide Grade 8 Retreats held at Cheakamus Centre are becoming a North Vancouver School District tradition for secondary students and staff.

With a focus on building connections with self, others, and place in an inspiring natural setting, the retreat experience provides countless opportunities for Grade 8 students to make new friends and develop a sense of belonging within their school community. The success of the retreats has been built on the important role played by Grade 11 and 12 student leaders who serve as mentors and guides for the day. From reflective forest activities to team-building challenges and traditional Indigenous games



accompanied by hot chocolate at the teaching longhouse, groups of Grade 8's and student leaders shared in a wide range of activities requiring cooperation and team-work.

Another integral part of the success of the retreats has involved the support of the school staff team. The guidance, leadership, and enthusiasm of teachers, counsellors and administrators has been critical to developing the culture of this program. It's also provided valuable time for staff to connect with and learn more about their students in a less formal educational setting.

Creating lasting memories for all involved, the retreats continue to strengthen the bonds within the school community while fostering a deeper connection to the natural world. ■

Inspiring future health care professionals: Lions Gate Hospital supports career exploration

BY JENNIFER KINAKIN
DISTRICT CAREERS COORDINATOR

Lions Gate Hospital (LGH) is dedicated to developing its future workforce and has partnered with the NVSD to provide career exploration opportunities for students of all ages.

Recently, LGH welcomed 48 enthusiastic grade 6 students from NVSD's pilot program, Exploration of Careers in Health, for an exciting and immersive tour. This unique initiative gave students a hands-on look into the world of healthcare, sparking curiosity and potentially igniting a passion for careers in this vital field. Through this experience, students connected directly with professionals and learned about the impactful roles they might one day pursue. Outfitted in scrubs, the students toured many departments, including Pharmacy, Rehabilitation, Medical Device Reprocessing, Lab, Medical Day Care, Oncology, Emergency, Medical Imaging, Kitchen, and Biomedical Engineering.

The students hit the ground running, diving into a whirlwind of activities that made them feel like real health care professionals on their first shift. They were immersed in hands-on learning opportunities with an automated external defibrillator, explored cutting-edge biomedical imaging tools, and measured vital signs like seasoned pros. They checked oxygen saturation levels, marveled at AI use in the pharmacy, and viewed X-rays that revealed the inner workings of the human body. Students also had the opportunity to glimpse into the fascinating world of blood types, learning what they are and how to identify types. These dynamic, interactive experiences made the tour educational and unforgettable - the students were exhausted after their 'first shift'!

LGH also supports a pilot for the school district's Work Experience Program (WEX). This Grade 11 and 12 course offers students 10 or more volunteer hours where they can observe the operations of various departments and gain



practical experience in health care professions.

These enriching experiences were made possible by the support and dedication of Welman Lee, Director of Allied Health, and Ambulatory Clinics & Special Initiatives. Special thanks to the volunteer staff, department members, and Rocio

Andrews, Manager of Volunteer Resources, and her team, for interviewing and scheduling 34 students in the WEX program

Lions Gate Hospital's initiatives are a shining example of how institutions and large corporations can inspire the future workforce by opening their doors and sharing their knowledge. ■



▲ L to R: In the production *Almost, Maine*, Grade 12 Kerensa Cooper appears as 'Shelly' along with Hailey Watson (Grad 2024) as 'Deena'.

Finding a home in theatre

BY CHLOE SCOTT
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO
THE SUPERINTENDENT

For the past decade, teacher Kaitlyn Gruetzner has been the heart and soul of Sutherland Secondary's theatre program. Ms. G— as she is affectionately known by her students—has cultivated a space where learners of all backgrounds can find their place, whether on stage or behind the scenes.

In reflection on what initially brought them into the theatre program, Grade 12 student Julia Ferraz

shared, "Initially, I was seeking an opportunity to make friends, and instead, I found family here." For fellow classmate Shea Jackson, it was his elementary school music teacher who first inspired and encouraged him to step into the world of theatre, and it was the friendships and connections he made that kept him involved throughout his high school experience.

Grade 12 student Kerensa Cooper had already garnered some film and television acting experience while in elementary school, so enrolling in Sutherland's drama program upon transitioning to high school was a natural fit. "There was an excitement moving from

elementary school that this is what I would get to be part of." McLaren Nelson-Quine, also in Grade 12, can relate. "I was into it from a young age. I was enrolled in dance classes and loved musical theatre."

When asked if they had any advice to share with elementary students soon to transition into secondary school and curious about theatre, Ms. G's students had some words of wisdom. "Don't be nervous to put yourself out there and have fun," Shea shared. "It's a continuous cycle of always elevating yourself."

"Grade eight me would not be doing what I'm doing now!" McLaren shared with a laugh, a sentiment echoed by her classmates. "Theatre has made my high school experience." ■

English 12 Windsor students share poetry with Prince Harry at Invictus Games event

BY CAREN HALL
PRINCIPAL

On November 18, Windsor Secondary School Grade 12 students participated in an event at the Seaforth Armory to learn more about the athletes in the Invictus Games. They had the opportunity to meet active Canadian Armed Forces members and Invictus Games Athletes and engage in a Poetry Study lesson with them based on the poem "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley. Windsor students analyzed the poem *Invictus* with their English teacher, Chantal Dubé. They learned how the power of this poem is used to inspire wounded Veterans competing in the Invictus Games and use this inspiration in their own lives.

I AM is the motto for the Invictus Games and is inspired by the last two lines of *Invictus*: "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." I AM reflects and defines the Invictus Games' core purpose: to provide a platform for personal achievement, to compete not just against each other, but against oneself.

The Invictus Games Vancouver-Whistler in February 2025 will bring



Windsor Secondary students Olivia, Lisa and Matthew engage with Prince Harry.

together over 500 wounded, injured, and sick military service members and Veterans from around the world on a courageous journey of recovery through the healing power of sport. Windsor Grade 12 students had a unique opportunity to interview and co-write poetry based on their experiences and through the themes of the original *Invictus* poem. Students were able to share their work with the patron of the Invictus

Games, Prince Harry. Students learned how their experiences at the Games have transformed their lives and helped them in their quest to be "unconquerable."

The Poetry Study activity was facilitated as multiple small group circle discussions by serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces and Prince Harry. The focus is on having an open discussion about topics including PTSD and

mental health and recovery using the lines of the *Invictus* Poem to relate back to. Members of Canadian Armed Forces have been briefed on sharing their experiences of what it means to deploy and then reintegrate into the community and some challenges they face.

Windsor students Nicolo Edralin Alcanse and Eva Stoelting read the poem *Invictus* during the formal speaking program which included the Squamish Nation Council Member Sxwixwtn Wilson Williams, Vancouver Mayor Ken Sim, Invictus Athletes, and Invictus Games Founding Patron, Prince Harry.

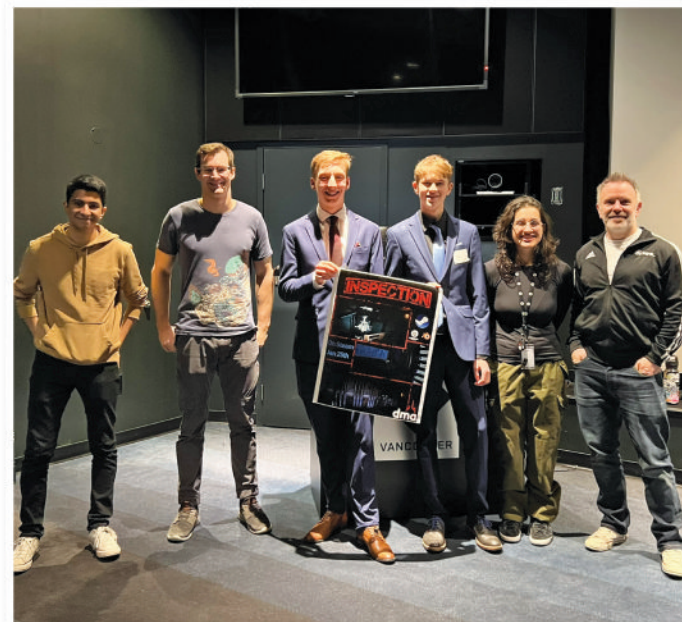
Chantal Dubé graduated from the University of Ottawa with a Specialization in English Literature and a Minor in Religious Studies, before earning her bachelor's degree in Education. She has taught senior English at Windsor Secondary School for five years. Ms. Dubé is passionate about what she teaches, and encourages students to always consider their passions as a lens through which they can explore literature. Ms. Dubé is an avid reader who enjoys studying Shakespeare and writing poetry. ■

Digital Media Academy students pitch game designs to EA Sports

BY JENNIFER VANDERMYE
DMA ACADEMY ASSISTANT
& **MURRAY BULGER**
TEACHER

Digital Media Academy (DMA) students have been learning video game design and development alongside receiving mentorship from industry professionals. By emphasizing partnerships with a variety of industries helps provide a meaningful and collaborative environment where students are offered pivotal guidance and feedback from real-world situations. This is evident in the opportunity where three Grade 12 DMA students had the privilege of pitching their game designs and share ideas with representatives from EA Sports and designers from The Sims.

Isabella Spies has been programming since she was in elementary school. In her online pitch to EA and The Sims team, Izzy presented a game she programmed in C# using the game engine, Unity. Designed for younger audiences, the game encourages players to deploy a personal organization tool and rewards them with options to build



their own living space and to choose unique furniture and accessories. She asked The Sims team insightful questions on model design and programming, and they in turn were very impressed with Izzy's penchant for self-directed learning and ability to extend her skills beyond the fundamentals to evolve her project to a high level.

"It was an amazing experience, and I am incredibly grateful to feel so welcomed and encouraged by those I met from EA," Izzy says, reflecting on the experience. "I have renewed excitement in pursuing video game design as a career."

Grade 12 students Will Hargrave-Pawson and Adam Crockford, and Grade 11 student Callum

Skinner worked together as a class team developing a horror inspired 3D game in Unreal Engine. Will developed the key 3D objects, Adam spent most of his time on the programming and environmental design and Callum created graphic design elements. Will and Adam visited the EA campus in Burnaby and presented their game to an audience of EA professionals where they were provided feedback. As a team, these students were truly able to push their learning to a high level in video game design and development.

"An amazing moment was to see the wide variety of roles from all the people in the room," said Will reflecting on their pitch. "And realizing how Adam, Callum and I managed to fill those roles ourselves."

Adam shared a similar sentiment. "Standing up in front of many industry professionals, suited up, presenting something that we were very proud of was such a great experience. They were all very supportive and impressed that we each played every roll across the development journey. We look forward to showing them what we create next."

Izzy, Will and Adam were exemplary professionals and performed their pitches spectacularly. ■

Students turned sous chefs at Highlands Elementary, while learning food literacy

BY JENNIFER SHERLOCK
TEACHER

"Can I have a third bowl of potato soup?" "Delicious!" "It smells soooo good!" declared many of the approximately 170 students, who help make six large pots of soup, from the potatoes and carrots grown and harvested from Highlands' school garden. Additional costs were minimal as only a few items needed purchasing from the store.

Teacher, Mairead O'Brien-Kent, and retired teacher, Edie Rustemeyer (along with supporting adult volunteers) kept up to the whirlwind

pace. Six classes rotated through the "sous chef" station as part of their Wednesday Food Literacy session with teacher Jennifer Sherlock. This is clear evidence that when students are involved in growing, harvesting and preparing food they are eager to eat it!

As Brent Mansfeld, Edible Education Specialist Teacher puts it, "food literacy is having the knowledge (head), skills (hands) and attitude (heart) necessary to grow, harvest, prepare, share and enjoy healthy food to support one's health, community and the environment." ■



Highlands students peeling and chopping potatoes and carrots for their soup.

Work Experience program shines a light on accessibility

BY MADDY PHILLIPS
COMMUNICATIONS

Caleb, a student at Carson Graham Secondary School, has been working at the Education Services Centre (ESC) as part of the Work Experience program (WEX). He works one day per week assisting with inter-office mail and package deliveries. Accompanied by one of his job coaches Tracy Day or Shannon McCallum, he has quickly become a valued member of the office. Caleb is known for his upbeat personality and love of engaging with people.

When Caleb and I met for this interview, he made it clear his passion for his role extends beyond the typical responsibilities of his position. Unofficially, he has taken on the role of Accessibility Inspector, assessing the building for its inclusivity. While the floors in the building that are available to the public have automatic doors, behind the scenes as an employee Caleb has encountered several challenges,



While delivering inter-office mail to the Communications department, Caleb shows off the standing 'Transformers' mode on his power chair.

such as manual entry doors, fob access points positioned too high, and doorways that are difficult to maneuver in his power chair. Caleb's insights have shed light on barriers faced by individuals with disabilities, leading to recommendations about the need for better accessibility measures in workplaces.

"No one, except people in wheelchairs, fully understand the struggle I go through."

Despite the challenges, Caleb's independence and confidence shine through. "I feel invincible," said Caleb when talking about how his power chair has empowered him to explore the world on his terms. When he's not working or focused on school, he enjoys playing video games and discovering new places in the city. These activities not only bring him joy but also fuel his critical eye for inclusive design. His adventures are often infiltrated by moments of reflection on how the world can become more accommodating for everyone.

Looking ahead, Caleb has clear career goals. He hopes to work in the field of assistive technology, specifically selling and providing power chairs to others with disabilities. Having experienced firsthand the freedom and independence a power chair can provide, Caleb is passionate about helping others achieve the same sense of empowerment. His dream is to create a world where everyone, regardless of visible or invisible disabilities, can navigate life with ease and dignity.

Caleb's work experience has not only allowed him to grow personally and professionally but has also highlighted the importance of accessibility in workplaces. His determination, kindness, and forward-thinking vision for a more inclusive world make him an advocate for change. Caleb remains steadfast in his mission to ensure that no one is left behind—whether it's in a school district office, a city street, or anywhere else life takes him. ■

Now and Then: North Shore Waterways through the Lens of Secondary Students

BY AMELIA EPP
PROGRAM COORDINATOR AND
DISTRICT VISUAL ARTS TEACHER

Senior secondary students nominated from the North Vancouver and West Vancouver school districts had the opportunity to work with artist-in-residence Michael Love for a three-day photography workshop with Artists for Kids in November 2023.

The geographic focus for the workshop was the Burrard Inlet and its feeding tributaries on the North Shore. Students visited and photographed Maplewood Flats, the Cleveland Dam, and the Capilano Fish Hatchery. They engaged with the rich resources at the Archives of North Vancouver (MONOVA) to inform their approaches to these sites. Students worked with historical photographs and

maps from the archives and combined these with their own location-based photographs. The resulting artworks took on diverse forms, incorporating weaving, paper folding, and collage.

After the workshop concluded, the finished student artworks were exhibited at both the Museum of North Vancouver (MONOVA) at 115 Esplanade, as well as at the Gordon Smith Gallery lobby at 2121 Lonsdale Ave. In November 2024, with the generous support of North Vancouver Recreation and Culture, the student artworks were printed on vinyl and mounted publicly in the Village Plaza at Lynn Valley Village (1277 Lynn Valley Road). If you're heading to Lynn Valley, be sure to check out these original artworks in person! ■



Students explore analogue processes for altering photographs.

PHOTO: KHIM MATA HIPOL

Norgate Xwemélch'stn Community Elementary students showcase their work at the first Exhibition of Learning after becoming an authorised IB World School.



Handsworth Secondary senior girls field hockey team show off banners for the North Shore finals, Vancouver-Sea to Sky Zone, and provincial championship.



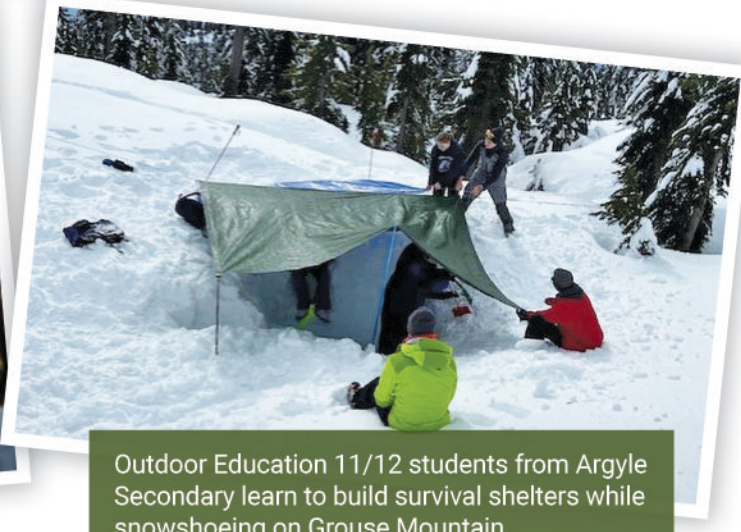
Cleveland Elementary spends 20 minutes reading anything they would like while participating in the Drop Everything and Read challenge.



Lynn timer Elementary students plant ceramic poppies commemorating Remembrance Day.
PHOTO: PAUL MCGRATH



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau answers questions from students at Sutherland Secondary.



Outdoor Education 11/12 students from Argyle Secondary learn to build survival shelters while snowshoeing on Grouse Mountain.