

June 2021 Volume 14

# THE CANOE

## Journeys of Indigeneity

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SCHOOL  
DISTRICTS

No. 43  
(COQUITLAM)

No. 78  
(FRASER-CASCADE)

No. 75  
(MISSION)



RESILIENCE



Dream Catcher Escape By Bayleigh Sumner  
Bayleigh is Cree and Ojibway, Cobe Secondary School, Grade 11

## Message From The Editor

Well another school year has come and gone, and it certainly was a year that most of us won't soon forget. To say that this past school year felt long and short at the same time, may best symbolize the dissonance felt by many as the pandemic positioned all of us to negotiate and re-negotiate the kind of human we aspire to be.

Many of us in these times looked inward and leaned on our non-human relatives to help facilitate and make sense of what's important and what's real. Amongst this negotiation invariably lies place. The land. "The land grows you up" is a sentiment often expressed within Indigenous circles. The implication being that social relations with the land are as important as any other to one's experience and is an orientation that always places you somewhere, and never in the middle of nowhere as part of a reciprocal relationship.

I once heard the land described as an Elder. An incredibly caring presence, that wants the best outcome for everyone involved. A presence that reacts to trouble in the world as if it's seen it all before in some form. Not shocked, not ever really surprised.

For those of us who have had the privilege to receive that kind of attention and care through the connection of an Elder, it's not hard to imagine that the wisdom found in places is there if we approach it with curiosity, respect and trust the invitation that, like an Elder, the land wants the best outcome for all involved.

Happy paddling,

Kirk Gummow Managing Editor, The Canoe

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*"I came here to inhabit a body that would allow my soul to experience. So I am not my body. I am here to experience the grandest thought. So I am not my mind. I came to experience the deepest feeling. So I am not my feelings. I am all of it: thought, feeling and experience. That translates to awe, joy and reverence. For all life, for all beings, for all Creation. Knowing this, understanding this, makes living the hardest thing of all – but the joy is in the challenge, the gradual day-by-day becoming."*

— Richard Wagamese, *Embers*



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QUOTE HERE

# Noons Creek Hatchery Celebrates The Kwikwetlem People

By Tasha Evans

**Come down to the Noons Creek hatchery and put your hands on a 600-year-old cedar tree that has been carved into a house post by Kwantlen First Nation artist Brandon Gabriel called, “The Spirit of Kwikwetlem”.**

This house post tells a history about the strong spirit and resilience of the Kwikwetlem people and the sockeye salmon that the Nation carries their name from. “Kwikwetlem” means “Red Fish Up the River” and refers to a unique run of sockeye that once thrived in the waters of their territory prior to occupation and the construction of the Coquitlam Dam. The Coquitlam River was so healthy with sockeye salmon that the Elders speak about how you could walk from bank to bank without getting your feet wet. Nowadays, great efforts are in place to restore the health of a salmon run that was destroyed by the construction of the Coquitlam Dam in 1905 and a stronger one in 1915.

Even by 1899, Kwikwetlem Chief Johnny was seeing the devastating impact that the new settlers were having in this area, and he wrote a letter pleading for construction around the river to stop. Nevertheless, the dam was built not only preventing the salmon from completing their life cycle but also burying Kwikwetlem’s winter village under water, displacing Kwikwetlem from their ancestral territories to this day. For those first few years, the Kwikwetlem families carried their Sockeye relatives up and over the dam in baskets, until a gate was built, and the people were not allowed to pass through. But our ancestors are strong, and they keep our people and all of our relations

resilient. A few years ago, some Kwikwetlem people headed up to the headwaters and to their great surprise they discovered that their big red fish had adapted to being landlocked and had survived! Not only that, BC Hydro, Kwikwetlem and other community groups such as the Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable are working together to restore the run of sockeye salmon and released fingerlings down the river, letting these babies make their journey to the ocean for the first time in over forty years.

***“...our ancestors are strong, and they keep our people and all of our relations resilient. A few years ago, some Kwikwetlem people headed up to the headwaters and to their great surprise they discovered that their big red fish had adapted to being landlocked and had survived!”***

Here is the proof that our ancestors are always there to call us home and that the Kwikwetlem people remain true to the values of our ancestors of being stewards of the lands and waters. This keeps us strong because, even after generations after generations, these great-great-great-great-grandchildren salmon instinctively knew how to come home, back up the river and towards the headwaters. Come down to the hatchery and see this history carved into this cedar tree. Know that today, when you are drinking water out of your taps, washing your clothes and watering your garden that this water is sacred and comes from the ancestral territories of the Kwikwetlem people.

# The Power Of Courage In Covid Times

By Jenelle McMillan & Michele Dekok, photos provided by Lisa Oike

**Boston Bar Elementary School uses the Circle of Courage as their guiding principle and it has helped us to stay grounded and centered during these trying time.** Our language and cultural sharing program is two pronged. Our teacher visits K-6 classrooms on alternate weeks to work on language and reinforce teachings and then at the end of each term, during our Courage Weeks, the language and culture teacher provides extended learning opportunities in 4 half day intensive workshops. This allows students and teachers to really dig in, learn and create as a group. Each class gets 2 of these week-long culture programs during the year. This also allows our culture and language teacher to work within our Covid cohort system and keep both herself and the students as safe as possible.

Our senior cohort (grade 7-12) has worked through 2 Courage Week Culture Camps.

**The senior students were involved in making hand drums to support their morning drumming circle activities. Students also participated in the teaching of generosity from the Circle of Courage. For many this was the first drum they had ever made. The teachings that were shared included the gifting of the first of any item you make. Students were paired with each other so they could make the drum for their partner. The students were very proud of their work, as they should have been!**



A few of the vocabulary words for this term project included: pumín drum, putés beat something as a drum, puwáyq<sup>w</sup>m to drum on a log for playing slahal, puxíc beat the drum for someone, pwóm beat a drum, pwómxe tell s.o. to hit the drum and sækín drumstick.

Their second Courage week Culture Camp involved the skills of weaving. Students worked with a variety of materials and created both woven bags with wool and cedar bark bracelets. This tied in with the idea of Mastery from the Circle of Courage. Mastery is the hard work and detailed practice needed to succeed at any skill.



The intricacy of weaving and threading looms was a challenge welcomed by the students as part of their practice.

Our junior cohort (K-6) has worked through one Courage Week Culture Camp and will attend their second at the start of June. They made rawhide rattles as their first project. We used deer skin, sinew, pebbles and alder/cedar for our main rattles and some children adorned their rattles with feathers and beads. We went outside after completing our rattles and brought them to life.

***"They made rawhide rattles as their first project. We used deer skin, sinew, pebbles and alder/cedar for our main rattles and some children adorned their rattles with feathers and beads. We went outside after completing our rattles and brought them to life."***

The children really enjoyed this activity. Students learned about some of the uses of a rattle in Indigenous cultures such as ceremonies, Medicine People's use in healing, dancing and singing, for

personal use to ground and center oneself, and to use with babies and young children. The children did an amazing job on their rattles! In the K-3 class we have been learning to use the rattles while singing the Children's Song. We will continue to explore songs with the rattle to accompany their singing.

Vocabulary Words for Rattles: cénwén' ne make a rattling sound, c'əşes shake a rattle, ʔesnk'wł rawhide, skin scraped clean, skə'l leather, skə'l buckskin and ptq'wētn needle for sewing.

We are looking forward to moving into some beadwork such as making miniature chest plates, headdresses' and choker style bracelets to build fine motor skills, practice pattern making and learn about the history of beads and their uses in Indigenous communities.

In our regular bi-weekly culture program, Courage week teachings are extended and reinforced for K-6 students. For example, a selection of feathers and wings were brought in for the children to learn about the ceremonies, protocols and practices of harvesting feathers for the purpose of ceremony and regalia making. Children were able to see an eagle wing, barred owl wing, barn owl wing, great horned owl wing and feathers from a peacock and a wild turkey. They saw the detailing of an owl's



wing and learned what makes the owl fly silently, while other birds can be heard flapping their wings. Vocabulary word: ǎémn feather.

They were also introduced to the Laws of Canada with respect to the rules and regulations surrounding possession of birds of prey and other animals.

***"As part of the cultural component for Grade 4 – 6 students, we were learning about the Medicine Wheel and how students could apply the teachings to their day-to-day life by creating their own Wellness Wheel. This way, student's could set goals and track their progress. This was especially fitting during Covid times."***

They learned that although First Nations', Métis and Inuit are the only people legally able to have animal parts and pelts from restricted birds and animals, that they also must have a permit that says they have registered the bird or animal with Conservation to be able to carry the item. Feathers can be gifted to others but to non-

Indigenous people, they need a letter with the permit number on it to have it in their possession.

As part of the cultural component for Grade 4–6 students, we were learning about the Medicine Wheel and how students could apply the teachings to their day-to-day life by creating their own

Wellness Wheel. This way, student's could set goals and track their progress. This was especially fitting during Covid times. Students worked to be self-aware, evaluate their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and come up with personal goals to address any areas where they felt support is necessary.

The language program with the K to 3's was focusing on reviewing action words and applying TPR (Total Physical Response). They have just begun TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) using paper masks to tell/act out/ create stories for the animal characters. We also made dice and played action games, assigning an action to a number on the dice, all numbers are written in Nlekepmecín. Some of the action word vocabulary: Ła?xańs eat, téyt hungry, x<sup>w</sup>énte hurry, q<sup>w</sup>nóx<sup>w</sup> sick, ill, sey'si? playing, twíyx run, miceq sit, q<sup>w</sup>incút talk, k<sup>w</sup>énte take it, məsténte try it, k<sup>y</sup>ém wait, klíyx stop, x<sup>w</sup>esit walk, télix stand, qáziyx jump, p<sup>w</sup>ént back, kncéme help me, łyínm sing and cúk<sup>w</sup> complete/finish.

The language program for the 4 to 6's is the learning of the 47 alphabet sounds in the Nlekepmecín language. We use the assistance of YouTube, with Elders speaking the words and

enunciating the sounds. We then stop to practice the sounds and words that contain those sounds.

We added extra vocabulary for special events during the year like Orange Shirt Day and Pink Shirt Day: y'éhełús kind and yèmyemt loving/kind/compassionate.

**This Covid influenced school year has required Courage and patience both of which are important teachings. By using our traditional Circle of Courage teachings to tackle these new and challenging situations, Boston Bar students have worked hard to succeed. Grounding ourselves in our cultural practices and using the concepts of independence, mastery, belonging and generosity to guide our choices has allowed us to grow, learn and most importantly enjoy ourselves as a learning community.**



*"The senior students were involved in making hand drums to support their morning drumming circle activities. Students also participated in the teaching of generosity from the Circle of Courage."*



# Halq'emeylem Qel Contest

This year, for the very first time, Coquihalla Elementary grade 2 classes participated in the Halq'emeylem language contest. There were 21 other competing teams ranging from grade 4 to high school, with our group being the youngest. The criteria the judges were looking for was sounds of the phenome chart, proper use of vowels and blended sounds of Upriver Halq'emeylem and counting 1-10 in Halq'emeylem. There were two video submissions produced to present to the judges.

Congratulations grade 2's for winning the Halq'emeylem Kwosels video submission contest!!! All the students worked so hard learning all the sounds and we are all so proud of them!!!



# Farewell to our friend Rod

A message from The Canoe:

The Canoe would like to give a warm thank-you to longtime contributor Rod Peters. His support and caring presence will be sadly missed, and we wish him all the best in his next chapter.

Thank you for being welcoming and supportive when I started in the role for SD42. Your kindness was so comforting. Wishing you a relaxing retirement focusing on the people who bring you joy,  
— Kirsten Urdahl-Serr

Rod, when I think about the personification of a servant leader, I think of you. Your humility, care for others, and quiet leadership are qualities that I have always admired. You have served your community, the district, and the region well. I hope you enjoy a well-deserved retirement. Thank you for everything that you do to support Indigenous education. Kukwstsétsemc ~ thank you,  
— Perry Smith ~ Kʷanilqʷa?

Rod, you are a true inspiration. In the short time that we have known each other, it is your gentle ways that matter to me the most. You invited me into conversations and included me in the work. You encouraged me, and nudged my thinking in new ways. And most recently, you gave me courage, when you messaged me to say, “Take a hold of you. Keep the balance. See the difference in just a SMILE.” Such a strong, but gentle message, and one that I will carry in my heart. I wish you the most fulfilling retirement, Rod. Kwas’hoi for showing me the way. — Vivian

Thank you very much for being a role model for me and providing an example of the kind of human that I wish to be. When I get into an unfamiliar situation that makes me nervous, unsure or scared you are one of the people that instantly come to my mind. I picture in my mind how you would work in a good way to make sure that people get what they need. You have helped transform me and for that I am forever grateful. — Michael Morgan

Congratulations Rod on your upcoming retirement. Thank you Rod for your friendship, mentorship and guidance over the past few years. Take care my friend and enjoy your retirement.  
— Mike Pue

I wish you the very best for your well deserved retirement. You will be missed. I will miss your quiet and humble example of leadership. Happy retirement.

— Nadine McSpadden

Rod, my friend, it’s been an honour and privilege working with you. Siyá:ye Yoyes will not be the same without your guidance!

Remember to relax and have fun, and avoid anything that resembles work for as long as possible.

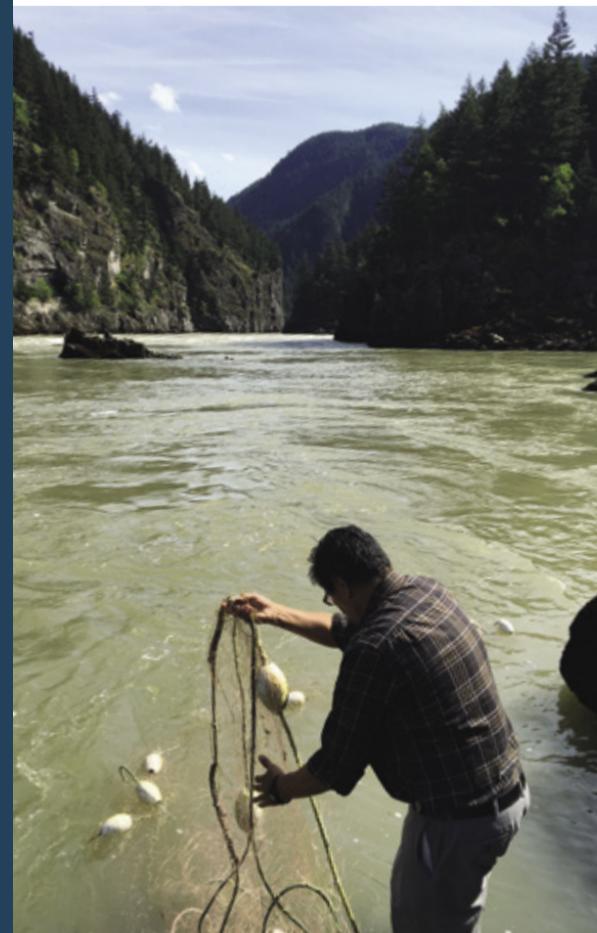
May all the years ahead bring you great joy and relaxation.

— Sincerely Gladys

Rod Peters.. Forever Siyam. I snapped this shot of you as you threw the net in the water at your ancestral fishing territory on the Fraser River back in 2016. We didn’t catch any fish that day, but I was forever transformed during this visit. As a relatively new Indigenous District Principal, I jumped at the chance to join you on the land for conversation, teachings, laughs and a good meal. It was hard to keep up to you as we nearly jogged through the path that led to the river! You then invited me to dip my feet in the river to reflect and wait for the fish to come. We sat and listened to the river in silence for several minutes. Since that day, I have felt pulled back to the river, in my dreams, to the right teachings, to what has always been good and great in this territory.

Before, and since then you have transformed countless leaders and have brought such honour and strength to Indigenous Peoples near and far. While I am saddened that you are retiring, to me you will always continue to be, like that great river; strong, surprising, resilient, creative and with boundless wisdom and treasures hidden just under the surface.

Thank you for guiding me and so many others Siyam. — Joe



It has been my privilege to work Rod Peters for 12 years. He has taught me so much over this time... the lasting lesson for me is his quiet and respectful way of working with folks. He embodies what I understand to be “Servant Leadership”. Through his work, connections and knowledge he manages to make everyone else’s work go more smoothly. He has been committed to helping Indigenous students be more successful for over 30 years and also helping teachers, administrators and support workers become more knowledgeable and aware how we make our school districts more responsive to our students needs. He has given many lessons in the schools and talked about the importance of salmon... this has been one of his favourite teaching opportunities and it also often included Rod cleaning and preparing a salmon for cooking on the fire. All students and staff have benefitted from these lessons from Rod. I am lucky to count Rod as a friend and teacher who has helped me along my journey. I wish him all the best in his next chapter if his life.

— Stan Watchorn, Principal Kent Elementary School.

# Experience Of A Lifetime

My name is Sage Eckhart and I am an Indigenous student in grade 11 at Encompass 10-12 in Coquitlam.

I was lucky enough to have been able to attend the 2021 Junior Firefighting Academy in Coquitlam. The academy took place for 8 days at the fire station on Pinetree Avenue.

Words can't even begin to describe how much I loved and enjoyed the fire fighter academy and found my inner passion for firefighting. I woke up each day looking forward to a full day of learning and experiencing new

adventures. I savoured each minute. The firefighter academy was a dream of mine that I got to realize.

I feel so privileged to have obtained many new skills and to have met some amazing people and to have made so many incredible memories.

I learned how to use different techniques of tying ropes, the proper way to use a fire extinguisher and the different types of extinguishers for specific fires. I learned the different parts of a hose and ladder, and how to roll a fire hose into a

perfect donut roll. I learned valuable new first aid skills and techniques that added to what I had learned previously. One of the most exciting things I learned was how to use the jaws of life which was thrilling and not as scary as it sounds, but really cool. It made me appreciate the extreme level that is sometimes needed to help extract people from dire situations.

**The academy really opened my eyes to the intense amount of training that firefighters put in daily. Firefighters don't stop training after they get their job. They have to continue to maintain their physicality and continue to update their skills.**

It was so inspiring to witness the determination they have to practice and get better every single day at what they do. I was surprised to learn that they go to the gym almost every day and practice the same drills over and over to improve their time. I was shocked to learn how much weight firefighters have to carry. They need to carry their gear, hoses and possibly people on their shoulders. Firefighters can

end up carrying between 200 to 300 pounds of extra weight. This has given me a new appreciation for how strong you need to be to do this job.

The academy has really helped me to understand the role of a firefighter, beyond just putting out fires. I wish the academy was longer so that I could continue to learn and immerse myself in

*"It was so inspiring to witness the determination they have to practice and get better every single day at what they do."*

this experience. The only thing that disappointed me about this career field is that you have to retire at the age of 60.

One of my favourite activities was being able to repel off a tower with my teammates. It was empowering to learn the proper knots to tie and how to use our own knots to secure ourselves. It was an amazing team building experience as we had to help, encourage and trust each other by helping to lower our teammates. It was nervous at first to climb over the safety rail and trust that I would be safe. I had to push myself out of my comfort zone. Once I took a literal leap of faith, I loved every second of it and wanted to do it again.



It was an amazing feeling to prove to myself that I could push through my fears and trust my training. This career challenges you to be confident and fearless in a safe way. You are constantly putting yourself into dangerous situations to help others. It is truly about serving the community and helping those in need.

I am eternally grateful to have been given the chance to experience the academy. It was life changing and a remarkable

opportunity. I will never forget the people I met, the things I learned and the fun memories that I will cherish.

**I would whole-heartedly recommend this amazing experience to other students who have an interest in firefighting and want a challenge.**

**I'd like to say a special thank you to Fire Fighter Milne who was an amazing instructor and mentor and to Captain Shirley and Chief Young.**

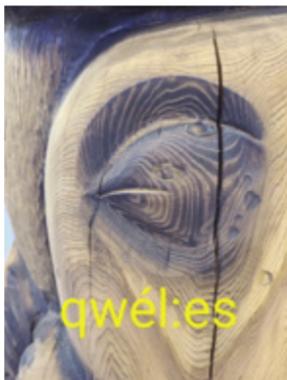




skwówéls



sqelá:w



qwé:es



steqó:ya



speplól

# Coquihalla Elementary Sqáqeltel

On November 27, 2020 Coquihalla Elementary hosted the unveiling of our long, awaited Housepost! We are grateful to the Housepost committee team for coming together along with the artist, Rocky LaRock, to make the Housepost very special and come to life. Our Housepost's name is Spath, which means bear in Upriver Halq'emeylem. The Housepost features nine animals. Spath (bear), Sp'oq'es (eagle), sqelá:w (beaver), qwél:es(whale), Sth'oqi(salmon), Steqo:ya(wolf), Skwowels(raven), P'esk'a(hummingbird), Speplol(little crow), which all represent the story of who we are as a school.



spá:th

# Joselynn Burgess and Rachelle Burgess

**Submitted by Holly Gallant,  
Indigenous Liaison Worker at  
Windebank Elementary.**

(she, her, remaining fluid to them their)

The twins are both proud to identify as 2 Spirited.

Rachelle and Joselynn are grade 6 students at Windebank Elementary. They are from Gitxsan First Nations. Gitxsan means People of the River Mist, referring to the Skeena River. The area is know as Lax Yip and includes the Hazelton area, the Babine, Bulkley, Kispiox and Skeena Rivers.

They both love math and all Traditional First Nations arts. They love anything they can create with their hands. Lovers of homemade soups, they say Mom's is the best, but Dad's comes very close. Rachelle's favorite foods are steak and soups. Joselynn loves those foods too but finds she eats lots of hot dogs at Dads, and a lot of lettuce at Moms. LOL They love anything to do with outdoors and spend as much time as they can outside. When staying Inside they love the challenge of 1,001 piece puzzles.

I choose the twins to represent Windebank Roles Models because they shine as wonderfully empathic and tender old souls. The girls are extremely proud of their heritage and traditions. They demonstrate their kindness in everything they do. It has been my honor to get to know them here at Windebank. I wish them all the best as they journey on to middle school. They have promised to come back to visit me next year after school one day.



*"The twins are both proud to identify as 2 Spirited."*



# Breathe Project HPMS 2021

This year has been very challenging due to COVID for the staff and students. We have had to get creative when it comes to our Cultural Presentations and artwork. This year we invited Lisa Shephard into our classrooms virtually to work with the students on “The Breath Project”.

Lisa Shephard: A Metis Beading Artist (Co-creator: “Breath: A collection of traditionally crafted masks demonstrating resiliency through 21st century pandemic”)

Nathali Bertin: A multidisciplinary Visual Artist (Co-creator: “Breath: A collection of traditionally crafted masks demonstrating resiliency through 21st century pandemic”)

This project was based on the healing process of mask making. The act of creating the mask allowed students to unpack their feelings stemming from the pandemic. This enables them to work through blockages and get on with their lives. Lisa and Nathali felt that it was only natural that the healing could occur in education to help students and teachers work through their emotions and blockages through these unprecedented times.

The Breath Project touches on multiple curriculum such as Indigenous Studies, Wellness, Art, Social Studies, and History.

Students were able to upload their masks virtually to the Isolation Museum with an artist statement explaining the meaning of their mask.

These are some of the mask’s students created at Heritage Park Middle School in Shawn Marten’s Art classroom.

Indigenous Liaisons: Sukhi Pangli, Katie Cochrane

Student Success Coach: Katy Brooks  
<https://isolationmuseum.com/mr-martens-class>



# Indigenous Artists – Dewdney Dragons

*Riley Penner – Grade 6, Dewdney Elementary, Metis*

*Kolton Chahley – Grade 6, Dewdney Elementary, Metis, Chipewyan, Iroquois*

*Jacob Scoones - Grade 4, Dewdney Elementary, West Coast Salish*



## Jacob Scoones

In school we drew a Coast Salish dragon. Our school mascot is a dragon. We are the Dewdney Dragons. I’m not sure how we got the name, but it has been the mascot for a long time. The dragon to me means being powerful, smart, brave and courageous. We used red and black for the colours because they are some of the oldest colours used in Coast Salish art and red is a colour that is said to be seen by the spirits.

## Ovila Mailhot

Ovila Mailhot is a Coast Salish Artist from Seabird Island. He did a Zoom session with three classes at Dewdney Elementary, all the way from Indiana in the US! He misses home and the mountains as Indiana is very flat with no mountains.

Our school’s mascot is the dragon. A dragon means to be strong, fierce, and being able to stand tall. We liked drawing the dragon because it is one of our favourite mythological beings. We also like that Ovi likes anime, just like we do, and he does cool art!



# Indigenous Artisans: Relationship with the Land

Written by Haylie Chisholm, Metis/Inuit, Hatzic Middle School, Grade 7

My name is Haylie Chisholm, I am of Metis and Inuit heritage and I go to Hatzic Middle School in Mission British Columbia. I have had a love for art and nature my entire life. I use watercolors, acrylic paint, pastels, pencil crayons, crayons, pens, and charcoal in my work. I was very excited when I heard there was an art contest that encapsulates the things I love. I have represented my relationship to the land by visually expressing a coyote in a drum with land, water, nature, and sky. I have also added a smudge bowl, made of abalone with a falcon feather. The smudging represents many thanks and prayers to the creator for providing this beautiful land we live on.

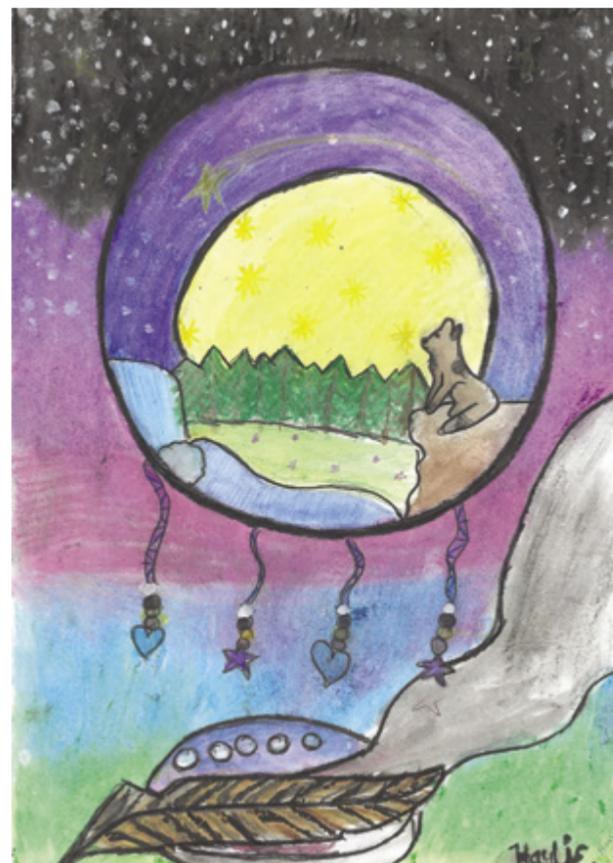
My relationship with nature is important because it makes me feel calm and like I have a place in the world where I belong. The land is beautiful and wonderful in every way; I appreciate the clean air, the cedar trees, the babbling brooks, the stary night skies, rose gold sunsets painting the mountains pink and all the interesting animals. I learn from the animals, plants, and environment around me.

This piece represents my awareness of the loss of nature due to humans destroying and polluting the earth. Humans have been taking animals habitats away for hundreds of years and the animals deserve a healthy, safe place to call home.

The elements of this piece that demonstrate my own feelings about the land are the clear sky, the lush green grass, the crystal-clear streams, wild growing flowers, and the trees that could grow wherever they want. I believe this is how the world used to look before people took over the beauty of

nature. People have over harvested plants and animals for their own selfish needs, without thinking the long-term effects.

I hope this piece can bring awareness to others about habitat loss, pollution and over harvesting. I want people to see the beauty that can be when we don't take nature for granted. There is so much beauty in the world around us and we need to appreciate and take care of it.



# My Learning Journey

By Mackenzie Jackson,  
Grade 8 Montgomery  
Middle School

Hi, I'm MacKenzie. When I grow up, I want to be an indigenous teacher. I found out I was part indigenous a few years ago around the age 9-10. My dad is 50% indigenous, although I don't know much about my indigenous culture as my dad never grew up with his dad who I get my indigenous heritage from. My dad isn't as connected to his indigenous culture as much as I am. I'm always trying to learn more. I feel learning about my culture is part of my journey to specialize in indigenous history and culture, because I don't know about my culture as much as I wish, so instead I want to keep learning about indigenous culture and heritage in general. I've found pride in being indigenous because of the way my school has worked on sense of belonging in the school for indigenous students. I'm proud I'm indigenous because I don't know a lot of people who are, and I find it's cool, especially that the school I go to gave me a chance to make a drum and paint a drum. I most proud I'm indigenous because of Ryan Williams. He taught me so much about indigenous people, heritage, and culture. Without my school belonging the indigenous students I wouldn't know the things I do now about indigenous people.

I feel ever since grade 6 Monty has made sure that indigenous culture, and people are respected and celebrated by all teachers and kids, by having orange shirt day, and giving indigenous students like me, a chance to drum and participate in an important topic. And by having signs around the school, I personally feel that all cultures including indigenous cultures are included at Monty. I feel as an indigenous person, that Monty has made me realize how lucky and proud I'm indigenous. I feel now there are so many more allies in Monty from when I started grade 6, because I now have notice more of a shift, in the people I'm around verses when I was in grade 6, as my friends now support me that I'm indigenous and are happy that I'm learning about indigenous heritage as they all know I don't know much from my own heritage, and they also take part in orange shirt day. I have one awesome friend, who I met last year, he is a Allie by doing orange shirt day with me and talking in front of the school with me about orange shirt day. I never want to stop learning about my heritage and culture. Even though I don't know much about my indigenous heritage I won't let that stop me from learning. I want to be like Ryan and teach other people about indigenous people, and their heritage.



# A Student Profile in Resiliency and Strength

by Jennifer Sherif

Raven Searle, a Metis student at MSS, is the very definition of resiliency and strength. Raven's purpose in sharing her story is so that others may relate to her journey, and see that life does not just go on, but that one can thrive after being through hardship. Raven has overcome incredible obstacles to get to where she is today—a happy, hardworking, successful young woman who dreams of giving back to youth and society.

Born in Kamloops, Raven's parents were unable to care for her, and so she was placed in care

where she remained until the age of two, when she was adopted. Her new family moved to 100 Mile House, where Raven would live for many years. Her adoptive parents divorced not long after her adoption, and she remained living with her (adoptive) mother, while seeing and maintaining a relationship with her (adoptive) father.

Raven grew up learning some of her Metis background and was always eager to learn more. In elementary school, she participated in the Indigenous Education program at her school and

was able to connect culturally in meaningful ways. Working with her Indigenous Support Worker Charmaine, she began to learn how to prepare traditional foods, as well as learn about Indigenous visual art forms. It was during these years where she developed an immense interest in nature and connection to the land.

In Grade Seven, Raven moved to Langley after having some challenges with her adoptive mother, then lived with her adoptive father for about two years before moving to Mission. She moved into the home of her Great Auntie, who has remained her caregiver, and has been instrumental in Raven finally gaining a sense of belonging, safety and security.

*"It was during these years where she developed an immense interest in nature and connection to the land."*

At MSS, Raven has created and experienced a major shift in her schooling. Her attendance has improved, she feels motivated to do more work because of the support she gets from MSS staff, and she has confidence in her academic abilities. Last year, she was awarded a Siwal Si'wes Bursary and is hoping to win more, as well as scholarships, towards her future schooling. She credits the Indigenous Education team at MSS with giving her a space to belong and grow culturally. She continues to find great fulfillment in cultural teachings and land-based learning.

Raven spends as much time as possible outside. She feels that the "energy forces of Mother Nature are watching over" her, and finds being near running water very healing. Her favourite local adventure spots are Cascade Falls and Heritage Park, where she says she never gets bored, because there is always something new

to discover. She finds that being out on the land brings her great peace of mind and comfort. She smudges to reduce stress, and has recently started growing her own sage, as well as herbs, that she prepares into her own medicine bundles. When she is not working hard at school, out exploring, or gardening, Raven loves to hone her art skills. She loves to draw and paint, make dream catchers, and do photography. She is taking place in our Table Journey art project, being led by local artist Peter Gong, and will be helping leave a legacy piece at MSS to be enjoyed for years to come.

Raven works many hours per week at Save-On foods in the deli department, where she prepares food "with love". Eventually, she plans to attend a post-secondary program to become a Community Service Worker, with her greatest desire to work directly with youth. Raven's wish is to provide for and give back to young people, particularly those at risk, in a way that they can feel safe and cared for, knowing firsthand what so many of them go through. She is also passionate about fostering children someday.

Raven has a bright future ahead, and things keep looking up for her. She knows that if she remains connected to culture and learning, through formal education, land-based learning and life's lessons, she will be able to face anything that comes her way—and meet successes at every turn.

*"She credits the Indigenous Education team at MSS with giving her a space to belong and grow culturally. She continues to find great fulfillment in cultural teachings and land-based learning."*

# Salmon Release at Silverdale Creek Wetlands

Written by Trentin White, Metis & Swampy  
Cree, Silverdale School, Grade 5

On Friday April, 30th 2021, we released salmon. We went on a field trip to Silverdale Creek Wetlands on the school bus. I am in grade 5 and this is my second year participating in the salmon release and it was a lot of fun. My name is Trentin and I also have an Indigenous name. My Indigenous name is Thunder Horse. My Grandma gave me this name. I also love horses and I like to horseback ride. Kwantlen Elders met us at the creek. We invited them to come and release the salmon fry with our school. At the beginning, the Elders introduced themselves and told us about the salmon and how they make their journeys and they have to be strong and smart, not to get eaten by prey. I think that was good. The Elders also drummed, and this is when some baby geese came by to listen. After they released the salmon we got to speak more with the Elders. This is when Walter, Kwantlen Elder gifted me with his blanket and bandana. The bandana is to help with good thoughts. I really love my blanket I have it at home now and I showed my parents.



Kwantlen Elders Cheryl Gabriel,  
Lekeyten, Hazel Gludo and Walter Knott



Mrs. McGowan and Elder Hazel Gludo



Mrs. Schelllauf and Elder Lekeyten



Elder Hazel Gludo Releasing the salmon



Trentin White and Walter Knott

# Student Role Models



## Ts'ts'mthumnomit (Myrna Williams)

Submitted by Rachel Schooner & Jenny Snow  
HMS Indigenous Liaison Workers

My name is Myrna Williams, and my ancestral name is Ts'ts'mthumnomit and comes from Cultas Lake territory. I am from Sqewlets First Nation and I am 15 years old. I am the oldest girl of 6 matching siblings. My family is very involved in our community and my father is the Chief of Sqewlets.

I am involved culturally in my community with canoe pulling. My greatest gift I feel is stamina that I have developed through canoe pulling. I also was able to help my dad in making a traditional strip canoe. I am the lead puller of our canoe team and I encourage my team and work hard at being a good role model. I also participate in long house traditions and will sing and dance for special events. In addition, I fish and go hunting with my family. I enjoy traditional art and feel it is one of my greatest strengths with room to grow.

I would have to say that my late grandfather, John Williams has been my greatest role model. He taught me how to can fruits and salmon and how to preserve traditional foods. He also taught me to be proud of who I am and where I come from.

My favorite classes at school are foods, media arts and working with computers. I love coming to school to see my friends and hang out with them at lunch.

In December I entered a contest for the Indigenous Policing team, and I received a text letting me know that I had won 1st place. My design will be displayed on the RCMP fleet and RCMP swag.

I am honored to be chosen for the student spotlight and will strive through the year continuing to be the best role model I can be.

*"Our stories are unending connections to past, present and future. And, even if worst comes to worse and our people forget where we left our stories, the birds will remember and bring them back to us."*

— Leanne Howe,  
Choctaw Nation

## Kelser Levitt, Saulteaux/Metis, Cherry Hill Elementary

Submitted by Susan O'Soup, Cherry Hill  
Indigenous Liaison Worker

Kelser is a Grade six student at Cherry Hill Elementary. Kelser has eight siblings and lives with his Mom and Dad in Mission. This Christmas Kelser received a gun as one of his gifts and has been going out to the Gun Range outside of Mission to practice shooting with his Father.

Kelser is learning to hunt the traditional way which is part of his culture. One day Kelser hopes to hunt 'wild meat' for his family to help supplement their meat supply.

At home Kelser watches his Mom make bannock and his Mom makes homemade 'Indian Soup.' The Levitt family love to attend Pow Wows and one day Kelser hopes to become a dancer or drummer at the Pow Wows. He currently is growing out his hair for traditional reasons.

Kelser was chosen for a role model because he is kind, considerate, caring, and always polite. He constantly thinks of others and their needs and is extremely proud of his Indigenous heritage. It has been a pleasure working with Kesler at Cherry Hill Elementary.



## Okeymow-pisim-iskwew (Sheanan Littlechild)

Submitted by Jasmin Wells, MSS Indigenous  
Liaison Worker

Sheanan is a Grade 11 student from Mission Secondary School. Her cultural name Okeymow-pisim-iskwew is which means Leading Thunderbird Woman. Sheanan travels on the powwow circuit yearly, often competing in jingle, fancy and traditional; she has been involved with powwow since she was born. Sheanan is an excellent beader; she likes to make jewelry, regalia and traditional clothing. She also likes to be with her grandma picking medicines and/or berries in Saskatchewan. Sheanan is also a traditional singer and is often asked to sing at ceremonies. She is looking forward to getting back to normal life, so she can continue on the powwow circuit. Sheanan is kind, smart and caring and always a joy to talk to when she comes to visit and/or work in the Indigenous room at MSS.



*"Out of a past, I make truth for a future."*

— Beth Brant,  
Mohawk Trail



## Red Dresses Provide Students Opportunity to Educate and Advocate

By Megan Leslie

Students at Dr Charles Best Secondary in Coquitlam undertook a meaningful display of allyship during this year's Red Dress Day. Students in three Social Justice 12 classes taught by Ms Megan Leslie were given an inquiry project on 'why indigenous women and girls are the most vulnerable group in Canada'. This led to a journey of enlightenment on many past injustices towards indigenous peoples in Canada. Students researched the intergenerational trauma effects of the Indian Act, disenfranchisement, the 60's Scoop, forces relocations, man camps and residential schools. After collecting the evidence, students say the link between Canada's treatment of indigenous peoples and the current systemic racism faced by indigenous people in Canada.

Students then learned the power of advocacy by writing letters to their MLA and MPs to demand the government fulfill the Calls to Action as laid out by Justice Buller in the National Inquiry to MMIW. To further the education of the community beyond the walls of the school, we chose to participate in the Red Dress Project.

This is a visually stunning performance art that demands the view to actively inquire and learn about the crisis indigenous women and girls face in Canada. 40 dresses were collected and hung outside the school, along one of Coquitlam's busiest commuter routes. This called the attention of several news outlets as well as the Mayor, Local MP and Judge Buller herself. Students were proud to share their knowledge about this ongoing genocide as we learned that one of the most important ways to stop injustice is through education.

Work done by students and teacher while planning the unit was centred around indigenous voices. Students who were interviewed are indigenous or have indigenous ancestry. District Mentor teachers such as Terri Galligos and Kirk Gummow were consulted and the indigenous youth worker, Alanna Waunch, had great involvement as well. Members of the Kwikwetlim First nation were invited to honour the dresses with drumming and singing of the Warrior Woman song on May 5th.

Here's why those red dresses are hanging in Coquitlam trees | Tri-City News ([tricitynews.com](https://www.tricitynews.com))

Red dresses hung across B.C. to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls | [Globalnews.ca](https://www.globalnews.ca)

# My Enemy - Racists/Racism

By Emmanuel Dawson-Amoah

"I can't breathe! They'll kill me, they'll kill me!" These were George Floyd's last words as he was killed in cold blood by a police officer. Today my enemy (as well as a lot of other peoples) Racists or Racism. The George Floyd murder is only one example of racism in our world today. Racism is everywhere whether we want to admit it or not. Today I will explain why racism exists, in what ways It exists, my experiences and throughout my whole paper, you will see my opinion on racism itself.

Racism. Unfortunately, a topic I'm too familiar with. Now I haven't experienced racism even close to the degree I know other people who look like me have. But yet it has still affected me. Just last week I was riding home on a bus with my friend and was called a racial slur by a white man several times. Saying things like that I don't deserve to be on the bus simply because of the colour of my skin. This is my enemy. But of course, this isn't the only racism I've experienced. In elementary school, I was excluded from games because of my skin colour, I've been called many things like the n-word, a thief, a thug again simply because of the colour of my skin. This is my enemy. Racism also exists in other ways as well. Simply by making jokes. Now don't get me wrong I love dark humour. But consistently making racist jokes isn't just racist it also normalizes it. It makes it okay to say those kind of things because it's "just a joke". Because people who are not of colour think it's "funny". It's not. Let me say this, if you sit by silent and say nothing as racism and racist things are said and happening around you are just as bad as the actual racists. If you sit there and choose not to stand up against that you are no better. I believe in today's world this is one of the reasons why racism still exists the way it does. And the fear of speaking out against it in worry you will be called "sensitive" or things like that. However,

the majority of racist people from older generations have a completely different reason. Simply because that's all they've known their whole life. Taught by their family, or have grown up around racists in schools or at home. It's almost brainwashed into them. The older generations normally have a different cause for why they still choose to be racist. At the end of the day, we still have the same general problem on both sides.

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Jemel Roberson, Oscar Grant, Daunte Wright, John Crawford, Eric Garner. These are just some names of innocent unarmed black people who were murdered by racists or as you may call them Police officers. Not to even mention the Rodney King incident of 1992. Now please, do not mistake me as one of those people who believe all police officers are bad. I understand the majority of them are good and risk their lives everyday. I recently came across a quote that explains the way I think about this. It read. "if there are 10 bad police officers in a police unit of 1000, and those other 990 do nothing to stop the racism from the other 10, you have 1000 bad police officers". In conclusion, racism and racists are some of the biggest problems in our world today. Causing conflict, traumatizing experiences and even death. People don't deserve to be discriminated against because of the colour of their skin. I know that racism will never be eliminated from the world. There will always be racist and ignorant people in the world. But if we can speak out and fight against it we will change people's minds. Maybe not all, but if we can change some people's minds and educate people from thinking in that sick twisted mindset. Then that's a difference and that's change.

Racists don't deserve a voice.

# Poems by Kaylie Watts Nisga'a

Grade 8 Hillcrest Middle School

## I know we will

I love you and I always will.

I'm happy I met you.

I'm glad I got to get to know you and even call you a "friend".

But I wish we never got so close.

That way it wouldn't be so hard saying "Goodbye".

I will embrace every memory of us, one last time.

I will try to grow on without you by my side.

I hope one day, we will meet again.

Maybe in the future, maybe in another life.

Whenever it may be, I will wait for you.

I know we will meet again.

Some sunny day.

## Her

I love the rain for many reasons.

Mainly because she always loved the rain.

She was the most beautiful woman I ever seen.

Her smile became the sun to my life.

She gave me hope after years of being hopeless.

I loved everything about her.

Her smile when I came home from work.

Her laugh when I did something foolish.

Her hair blowing in the wind.

Her eyes full of determination.

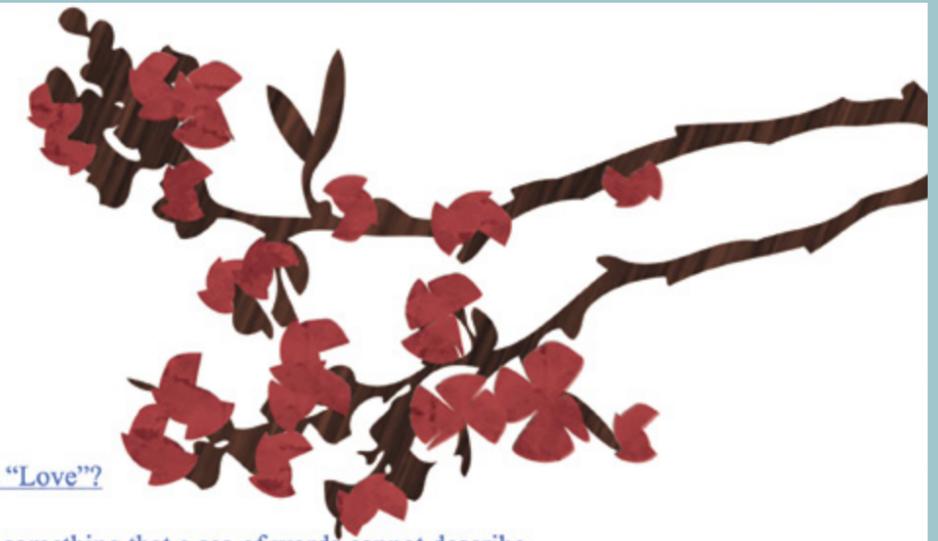
Her hands intertwined with mine.

I loved her with everything I had.

I would fall in love with her all over again.

It was her from the beginning.

It will always be her till the very end.



## What is "Love"?

Love is something that a sea of words cannot describe.

Will you risk getting in the water? Or do you stay on the land.

Love is something not even the brightest doctors can stop.

So, will you join me on this adventure and take my hand?

I will show you the true beauties in this world.

But only if you give me that chance.

I only wish that you could see yourself the way I see you.

I would do anything I can in my power to see your frown turn upside down.

You ask "why" well, it's because I see and understand your pain.

I don't want to see you in pain anymore, it hurts too much.

I love you. Not what you pretend to be.

I love every bit of you, even your "flaws".

But you love them, you are completely clueless to my love

Why couldn't it be me? Why not me?



# Blessing the Garden

by Shyloh Watchorn, Grade 4 student at Harrison Hot Springs Elementary

We stood in the rain, the sky spirit crying down her fast falling tears on us all. “Ladies and gentlemen!” shouted a teacher. And then, out like a light, there were no sounds to be heard. A wave of honour and respect splashed over all of us as the fire and medicine woman caught our eyes. Shoneena Loss has come from Boston Bar to teach us about medicines. Ms. Loss taught us how every plant, animal and person is connected. She also taught us about teas, salves, syrups, and how plants can be used for healing. We reached out to the world as everything around us ever so slowly grew in more ways than one.

“Elderberries,” said Shoneena, lifting up our new elderberry plant, “are used for many things.” She uses the elderberries to make a syrup that prevents and helps to heal colds. Her kids also think it is great tasting (just like me) and they look forward to having a spoonful every morning. The white pine tea tastes strong until you add some honey; then it is quite nice. She gifted us with instructions for making certain teas from saps, flowers and plants (the bark, the sap, the roots, and more). I’m starting to realise no part of the plant is wasted and how it seems like there’s no such thing as a weed. I stare in awe as the rain still falls.

Ryan Charlie has come from Sts’ailes to bless our soil (lucky us!) because it just isn’t right to grow things in their territory without their blessing (especially because some of these plants will be used for medicines).

“Everyone is connected to nature” said Ryan. He smiled and started to tell a story. (lucky us times two)! I could tell it was a story from the bottom of his heart by the smile on his face and the twinkle in his eyes. A sacred story of the man who gave and gave from the second he knew how to the second he could no longer. I was amazed how the tale just flowed from his lips like honey from a bottle. I felt blessed

already even though the blessing hadn’t yet begun.

Just when I thought I couldn’t be blessed anymore Ryan gingerly took a cedar bough and swept the soil to bless the ground. Then he began to sing with his drum in sync with his voice. Again, I could tell this was from the bottom of his heart. It was a song of heart and bliss. I let the song swallow and hug me tight. It’s like a barrier blocking out everything around me. It’s my shield against sadness. I’m on cloud nine! I love this and I feel truly blessed.

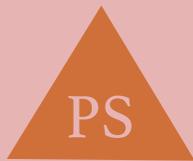
*“Everyone is connected to nature”*

In conclusion this is a very memorable moment and I’d like to thank Shoneena and Ryan for all their help. I still feel the song’s barrier. Even the rain felt good. Thanks to Shoneena, I know quite a bit more about plants (including the plants in my own garden). This wonderful moment has now come to an end. The sky spirit is still crying but this time for joy. There’s always an opportunity to learn because each seed is a thought and if you take good care of it the seed will grow strong. Its roots will grow deep into the ground and it’s only when it rains it will grow. The leaves will become homes for birds and bugs and when that tree dies new ones will sprout.



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## Personal Awareness & Responsibility

I CAN SHOW A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT  
AND JOY

I CAN IMAGINE AND WORK TOWARD CHANGE  
IN MYSELF AND THE WORLD

I CAN ADVOCATE FOR MYSELF AND MY IDEAS

I CAN PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES THAT  
SUPPORT MY WELL-BEING, AND TELL/SHOW  
HOW THEY HELP ME

New curriculum connections found inside