

# SUPERINTENDENT'S MONTHLY UPDATE



## OCTOBER 2024

*This monthly update features stories of success from schools around the district, as well as highlights related to the implementation and impacts of the Board of Education's Strategic Plan in Rocky Mountain School District. I hope you enjoy learning how we are moving forward together. Aaron Callaghan, Superintendent*

## MARTIN MORIGEAU ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



*On September 27, MMES staff worked to grow in their capacity to extend student learning beyond the classrooms with a visit to the headwaters of the Columbia River.*

On the September 27 Professional Development Day, staff reflected on the power of place-based learning. Canal Flats Mayor, Matthew Doherty, supported staff with visits to local sites including the town hall, Ktunaxa Interpretive Centre, arena, recreation park, community hall, and local businesses. The afternoon was spent at the headwaters of the Columbia River with staff considering outdoor opportunities that could be shared with students.

Finally, as the day concluded, staff brainstormed age-appropriate opportunities to meet their goal, such as local history projects, partnerships with service groups for school and community events, and learning with local seniors at school or in community. Other ideas, too, were generated related to using local parks and recreational facilities.





## COMMUNITY & CULINARY LEARNING AT GOLDEN SECONDARY SCHOOL



*Zucchini Fritters at Golden Secondary School made as part of the Local Produce Program.*

This summer, GSS Foods Teacher Rhys Badenoch launched the Local Produce Project, a creative culinary adventure that not only engaged students but also fostered strong community connections. Inspired by local residents with an abundance of garden produce, Mr. Badenoch reached out for donations of vegetables and the response was overwhelming. What began as a week-long project turned into a two-week exploration of food sustainability and creativity in the kitchen.

Students crafted many delicious dishes, including stuffed patty pan squash, zucchini fritters, roasted pumpkins, and homemade pickles. Beyond cooking, the project aligned with the school's curriculum goals, emphasizing the importance of food security and community involvement. It also built on a previous spring initiative, where students actively participated in maintaining the GSS Garden Beds.

This experience deepened students' understanding of where their food comes from and highlighted the significance of reducing waste. The project also strengthened partnerships with local organizations like the Golden Food Bank and Local Food Matters.

## NEW TEACHER ORIENTATION SESSION

Aligning with the district's Strategic Plan focused on providing meaningful learning opportunities and structures, 17 teachers new to the profession and/or to Rocky Mountain School District participated in a day of onboarding at the district office on October 3. The agenda allowed for conversation across key topics including the BC Learning Pathways, Human Resources, Indigenous Education, and student assessment among others. The day ended with an introduction to the Rocky Mountain Teachers' Association supported by the three local Co-Presidents Ashlee Dearin, Catherine McKenzie, and Caroline Carl.



*Asst. Superintendent Steve Wyer leads dialogue with New Teacher participants.*

Feedback from the participants will inform future meetings in the 2024-25 school year, and those on hand were encouraged to connect in the months ahead to further build collegial relationships and support one another in their professional practice.

Thanks to district team members Amanda Garand and Steve Wyer for organizing the day!





## TRUTH & RECONCILIATION WEEK 2024

During the week of September 23-27, schools and worksites throughout Rocky Mountain School District participated in Truth & Reconciliation Week. School engagements included age-appropriate learning centres, virtual programming via the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation, the creation of art installations and heart gardens, book readings, hearing from guest speakers, and much more. In all locations, learners and staff reflected on those Indigenous children who attended residential schools, remembered those who never returned home, and recognized the ongoing impacts of residential schools on Indigenous communities and families.

Aligning with the organizational commitment to advance Truth & Reconciliation, a flag raising ceremony took place at the Rocky Mountain School District Office in Invermere on Tuesday September 24. Opening remarks were supported by local First Nations and Métis representatives, and the event saw several local Shuswap and Akisqnuq drummers and dancers perform.



*Every Child Matters t-shirt featuring a Ktunaxa design at Windermere Elementary School.*



*Dancers and drummers from both Akisqnuq First Nation and Shuswap Band perform at the recent 'Every Child Matters' flag raising ceremony.*

Also, during the week, the Kairos Blanket Exercise was held in multiple locations including the District Administrative Building. Along with office staff, participants included Strong Start Facilitators from around the district, as well as a local elder and residential school survivor from Akisqnuq First Nation. The exercise provided valuable teachings about the history of colonization in Canada, and those who took part reflected on both new learnings and ways to move forward in their personal and professional Truth & Reconciliation journeys.







## J. ALFRED LAIRD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Learners from J. Alfred Laird Elementary School are exploring Secwepemctsin, the language of the Secwépmc people.

With a School Success Plan goal of improving student outcomes across all domains (academic, social-emotional, spiritual and physical) by furthering the school's collective journey toward Truth & Reconciliation, students at J. Alfred Laird Elementary School have been learning Secwepemctsin, the traditional language spoken by Secwépmc people, including our local Shuswap Band. This has been happening throughout the school with an introduction to basic Secwepemctsin words each morning during announcements, along with additional support on vocabulary development being provided to classes by Shuswap elder Diana Cote.

During Truth & Reconciliation Week, students at the school painted rocks orange and added words in Secwepemctsin, then scattered the beautiful rocks all around the community of Invermere. It is the school's hope that this simple activity will build awareness of this local language throughout the local community, as the Shuswap Band relearns their native language and forms deeper connections with the land and culture.

## MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

As part of the Board's Strategic Plan, the Rocky Mountain School District is continuing its implementation of the Mental Health in Schools Strategy. The month of October began with more than 75 helping professionals, fondly referred to as our "SEL Team", gathering to collaborate and set programming priorities for the upcoming school year. Informed by the Middle Years Development Index, Youth Development Index and McCreary Adolescent Survey, Indigenous Education Support Workers, Youth Care Workers, Community Link Student Support Workers and School Counsellors reflected on the well-being concerns identified by districts' students in their school communities. Considering their collective capacity and professional commitments, the team set intentions for how they will work together to provide layered supports for students with varying needs. This group of professionals were enthusiastic and thoughtful in their commitment to promote well-being and prevention programming, with intensive support for those who require it.

