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For immediate release

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### **Youth ReconciliAction project comes to Lake Trail Middle School**

**Comox Valley, B.C.** – Senior middle school students at Lake Trail engaged in a half-day session Wednesday exploring the importance of reconciliACTION to deepen their understanding and discuss actions at a personal level and within the context of the school and greater community.

Reconciliation through Education is an ongoing project in Comox Valley Schools and takes on many different forms whether in the classroom, throughout a school or across the District, and includes cultural events, art and literature projects, and lessons embedded in the curriculum such as Humanities or Social Studies. [ReconciliACTION](#) is a term used to describe tangible activities to reconcile with the past and build respect among one another.

One activity is the Youth Leading Reconciliation (YLR) conference, an annual event that began with one BC school district in 2016 and has grown to include many more districts nation-wide. Comox Valley Schools is now in its third year participating in the movement among youth that was born from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) and its 94 calls to action.

The size and magnitude of YLR in the District has varied from year to year. Whether hosting a large District-wide conference in 2018 with more than 120 participants, or a small-scale contingent of 10 students traveling to Nanaimo for a more intimate regional setting, each opportunity is geared for youth to receive hands-on learning experiences. The intent is always in keeping with the goal of the Board of Education's Strategic Priorities Plan to embed the TRC recommendations throughout the District.

This school year, Jeannine Lindsay, a former Indigenous Support Work (ISW) nearing completion of her Education degree at Vancouver Island University, and Lelaina Jules, Indigenous Education Curriculum Support Teacher, created and delivered a scaled back COVID-19 safe approach for a YLR session to students.

With the assistance of her Indigenous Support Workers, Lindsay led the 20 students of Miss Dawnn Thorson and Mr. Will Baker's classes through a discussion on reconciliation tying in Canada's discriminatory policies that students had learned in their Humanities studies.

"We are really only at the beginning stages of reconciliation. What is reconciliation? What could it look like and how can students fit into that story," expressed Lindsay. "Part of that is being an ally, not only to Indigenous people but to people in general."

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Due to the heaviness of the subject, Lindsay was mindful to focus on bridging the gap between our nation's history and the feeling of shame, to becoming more inclusive of one another. YLR aims to inspire youth to take action, which can be as simple as being allies through a show of respect, by honouring the past and to be willing to let others share their story. In other words, action through empathy.

"We all share this heavy history, but we can all learn about it and that is a part of reconciliation," explained Lindsay. "We all have the ability to be an ally. We all have an ability to work toward reconciliation."

"These weren't good things. We need to do something about it," expressed Kadence Klassen, Grade 9 student. "To me when I hear 'ally' I think of a companion, someone who is close and someone who trusts you. At my home, we sit around the dinner table and have conversations about these things, what we learned and what we can do to change."

Using ReconciliACTION as a catalyst for meaningful conversation, students partnered into small groups to discuss examples of inclusiveness they see in schools and the community. Their list identified several examples to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people including [Orange Shirt Day](#), the traditional territorial welcome and acknowledgement, and art exhibits that celebrate Indigenous language, culture and history such as [Public Place / Sacred Space](#), an exhibit currently on display at Comox Valley Art Gallery.

Lake Trail students are the only youth in the District this year to participate in a YLR organized event, a session that was planned specifically to coincide with other school districts' activities this time of year around reconciliAction. In partnership with Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre, Lelaina Jules was able to secure funding to offer a workshop locally.

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For more information about ReconciliACTION visit <https://downiewenjack.ca/our-work/reconciliations/>

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