

For immediate release

11 May 2022

Indigenous students hit the field for Rugby Day

COMOX VALLEY B.C. – The first ever Indigenous Rugby Day in SD 71 was a big hit with participants as over 80 Indigenous students from Comox Valley Schools in Grades 6 to 8 attended for a day of skills training and flag rugby games held at G.P Vanier Secondary School.

Local Elder Fernanda Paré (traditional name is Nageg) of Kwakwaka'wakw, Namgis, K'ómoks and Carrier Sekani ancestry welcomed students and shared her inspirational story of recently participating in the Times Colonist 10K. Students were also welcomed by Elder Rick Peters (traditional name is Sitaluk) from Khowutzun Nation (Cowichan) who sang and drummed to open the event.

Players were divided into groups to start the day for a series of skill development drills lead by coaches from Rugby Canada, Thunder Rugby and support from Comox Valley based Rapids Rugby. After lunch, teams were formed for some action-packed games of flag rugby. No experience playing rugby was necessary for students to participate.

Rugby is growing in the Comox Valley and we are very excited to introduce the sport to Indigenous students,” said Cheryl Graham event co-organizer and SD 71 Indigenous Support Worker. “It was inspiring to have the support of so many different people and groups to make this event happen.”

Helping make this event possible was a grant from Rugby Canada and HSBC, and many different volunteers. This event took a community to make happen and featured:

- co-organizers Mireille Appelbe (Vice Principal at Brooklyn Elementary) and Cheryl Graham (Indigenous Support Worker at Brooklyn Elementary);
- 13 Indigenous education staff from several Comox Valley Schools;
- seven coaches coordinated by Thunder Rugby (including from UVic);
- two youth volunteer coaches from Highland Secondary;
- two international students;
- Aimee Burley with Comox Valley Rapids Rugby.

This event was held in conjunction with Indigenous Thunder Rugby from Victoria. The philosophy at Thunder Rugby is Num'way'ut, a Kwakwala word for “we are all one.”

Their goal is to see more Indigenous youth take up rugby. Based on the smiles seen on students playing rugby that day, they've found some future talent.

Learn More:

Thunder Rugby: <https://thunderrugby.ca/>

Comox Valley Rapids Rugby: <https://cvathletics.ca/cvaa-rapids-rugby/>

Rugby Canada (funding): <https://rugby.ca/en/news/2022/02/rugby-canada-announce-recipients-of-inaugural-hsbc-bank-community-rugby-fund-initiative-1>

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Pictures for publication





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