



# BOARD BUSINESS

New PRIDE stairs for Cumberland

June 2025

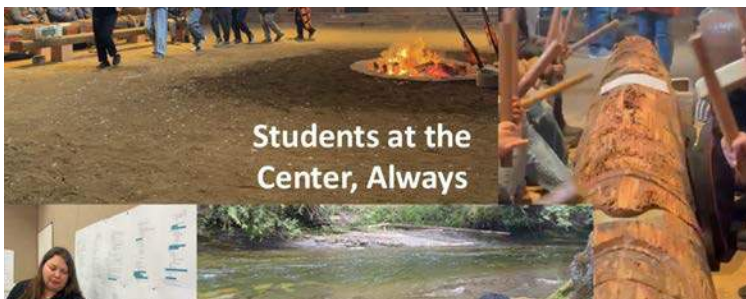
## BOARD MEETING IN REVIEW

The Board of Education for Comox Valley Schools held its final Regular Public Board Meeting of the 2024–2025 school year on Tuesday, June 24, 2025.

## Indigenous Education - Year in Review

A powerful and reflective presentation was delivered by Associate Superintendent Joe Heslip and Acting District Principal Lelaina Jules, highlighting the significant milestones achieved through the Indigenous Education department this year. They began with a reminder that students are always at the center. Framed around themes of empowerment, truth, respect, and collective responsibility, the presentation celebrated the work of students, staff, families, Elders, and community members. An incredible amount of work is underway on key initiatives such as the Equity Scan, meeting the commitments in the Local Education Agreement and the Province's Indigenous Education Council Policy. The Board expressed its deep appreciation for the leadership, partnerships, and learning opportunities that continue to shape this important work.

*The Board of Education acknowledges that we are on the traditional territories of the K'ómoks First Nation. We would like to thank them for the privilege of living on their land and the gift of working with their children.*



Students at the Center, Always

## Board votes to approve 2025-2026 Annual Budget Bylaw

The Board unanimously approved the 2025–2026 Annual Budget Bylaw, totaling \$164,928,867. The budget reflects the district's ongoing commitment to student learning, inclusion, and responsible stewardship of resources. The bylaw was given all three readings and adopted at the meeting.

**WATCH  
JUNE 24  
BOARD  
MEETING**

## Other Approved Items and Reports:

- NIDES Program Review Summary – The Board received the 2024–2025 NIDES External Program Review Executive Summary.
- 2025–2026 School Fee Schedules – Approved as presented.
- 4th Quarter Financial Update – Received for information.
- Anticipated 2024–2025 Accumulated Reserves – Report received.
- 2026–2027 Five-Year Capital Plan Submission – Approved for submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care.
- 2025 CCTV/Video Surveillance Annual Report – Received as required.
- 2024 Climate Change Accountability Report (CCAR) – Accepted by the Board.
- Safe and Active Schools Program – The Board supported a partnership with the City of Courtenay to pilot the program at three elementary schools.
- Committee Reports – Received from the Open Committee of the Whole and the Ad Hoc Policy Committee.
- 2025–2026 Board Meeting Schedule – Approved.
- Student Voice in Governance – The Board directed the Superintendent to work with the district student council to further integrate student voice in board processes.



**Comox Valley Schools**

The next Board Meeting will take place in August 2025.

JUNE 2025



# BOARD BUSINESS

Jigging with Kookum Sheila at Arden

June 2025

## Board Chairperson Update - Michelle Waite - čěčhaθeč

June brings with it many moments worth celebrating from our community of schools. The following are some highlights for June from Comox Valley Schools.

We honour National Indigenous History Month by recognizing the rich history, heritage, resilience, and diversity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day, and we hope you find an opportunity to participate, learn, and celebrate—whether in your own way or at one of the events in our community.

June is also Pride Month—an opportunity to reinforce, through education and action, our commitment to diversity and to celebrating our 2SLGBTQAI+ community.

On June 12, we presented to the BC Government's Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services on behalf of Comox Valley Schools. Our advocacy focused on the need for an overall increase in funding for public education. We asked the Committee to recommend bold, legacy investments in public education in the 2026 budget. Despite broad recognition of its importance, the financial foundation of BC's public education system is eroding. In 2001–02, BC school districts received 15.49% of the provincial budget. By 2023–24, that figure had dropped to 7.97%. BC now ranks near the bottom nationally for K–12 spending relative to GDP. While per-pupil funding has increased slightly, inflation has outpaced those gains, leaving districts under unsustainable financial pressure.

We emphasized that this isn't just about balancing budgets—it's about student outcomes and equity of opportunity. Without sustainable funding that meets today's realities, our schools risk becoming places of triage rather than learning. Our strategic plan focuses on the core competencies of learning, equity, reconciliation, and inclusion—but these priorities require resources. Districts have become adept at doing more with less, but we have reached the limit. Further stretching and reallocating will compromise student outcomes and staff well-being. Educators are experiencing occupational fatigue as they are asked to do more without adequate support.

We asked the Committee to imagine what meaningful investments could achieve: smaller class sizes, more Educational Assistants, expanded mental health services, stronger early learning interventions, and modern, inclusive learning environments that meet the needs of every child. It's time to turn recognition into action for today, and for future generations through bold investment in public education.

June is traditionally a time in our schools to acknowledge and celebrate a year of exploration, learning, and growth. It is also "grad season," when we honour students as they transition from one stage to the next, culminating in our Grade 12 graduation ceremonies. We've already celebrated ceremonies at Highland Secondary, NIDES, Nala'atsi, Mark R. Isfeld Secondary, and Glacier View, with G.P. Vanier's event scheduled for June 25. Each ceremony is unique, but all share a common spirit of celebration and pride as we acknowledge each graduate's journey.

It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes every employee in our district to educate, support, and help make these graduation events possible. Thank you to each and every one of you and congratulations to the Class of 2025!

Over the past year, we've continued to implement our Strategic Plan across schools, departments, and the Board. We're excited to move forward with the parameters and pathways that will ground and guide our collective work in the years ahead.

It has been a remarkable school year. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who volunteered, supported, and worked collectively on behalf of students in the Comox Valley School District. To those retiring or moving on to new opportunities, thank you for your positive contributions. To those continuing—including the many working through the summer—we look forward to building on our shared work together.

Thank you for your continued interest in, and commitment to, the Comox Valley Schools community.

Gilakas'la,  
Michelle



Comox Valley Schools

June 2025



# BOARD BUSINESS

Learning inquiry celebration 2025

June 2025

## Board Members

Michelle Waite, Chairperson (Lazo North)  
Sarah Jane Howe, Vice Chairperson (Village of Cumberland)  
Susan L Leslie (Town of Comox)  
Janice Caton (City of Courtenay)  
Shannon Aldinger (City of Courtenay)  
Chelsea McCannel-Keene (Baynes Sound, Hornby & Denman Islands)  
Cristi May Sacht (Puntledge, Black Creek)



## DISTRICT NEWS

### Isfeld student wins silver at Skills Canada Nationals

Comox Valley Schools is proud to celebrate the outstanding achievement of Vladislav Gubarev, a student from Mark R. Isfeld Secondary, who earned silver in Web Technologies at the 2025 Skills Canada National Competition, held earlier this month in Regina, Saskatchewan.

The Skills Canada National Competition is the only event of its kind in Canada, designed to highlight the importance of skills training and career pathways in skilled trades and technology sectors. Vladislav's silver medal finish in such a competitive national field is a remarkable accomplishment — and a true inspiration to fellow students. Congratulations, Vladislav!





June 2025



## 4th Annual Indigenous Rugby Day: A Celebration of Culture, Connection, and Sport

What a day! The 4th Annual Indigenous Rugby Day brought together more than 100 students, staff, coaches, and community members for a powerful day rooted in connection, culture, and sport.

Held on the turf field at G.P. Vanier Secondary, the event is about much more than rugby. It's about creating space where youth feel seen and supported, fostering mentorship, and strengthening relationships through shared experiences. The day opened with a heartfelt Welcome to the Territory from K'ómoks Elder Donna Mitchell, setting the tone for a day of learning and togetherness. Students then rotated through skill-building stations, participated in small-sided games, and gathered in a closing circle to reflect and share gratitude.

This year's highlights included:

- Over 70 Grade 6/7 student participants
- 15 youth and community coaches
- A total of 108 individuals contributing to the day in meaningful ways

A heartfelt thank you goes out to co-organizers Cheryl Graham and Mimi Appelbe, whose passion and leadership continue to shape this event into a deeply impactful experience for all involved.

Indigenous Rugby Day is made possible through strong collaboration between Indigenous Support Workers, community members, educators, and the Indigenous Education team—with continued support from Comox Valley Schools.



## RCMP Camp Offers Students an Inside Look at Policing Careers

Comox Valley Schools, in partnership with the Comox Valley RCMP, recently hosted the 15th RCMP Camp at HMCS Quadra—offering students a unique, hands-on opportunity to experience what it's like to train as an RCMP recruit.

Over the course of six intensive days, students from across the Valley engaged in a wide range of activities designed to simulate real police training. From drills and fitness testing to nighttime scenarios alongside active RCMP members, students were fully immersed in the world of law enforcement.

This unforgettable experience not only introduced students to potential careers in policing but also helped them develop teamwork, confidence, and leadership skills.

A sincere thank you to all community supporters for making this event possible.

The next RCMP Camp is scheduled for Spring 2027.



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# DISTRICT NEWS

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## DHH Regional Camp at Elkhaven Celebrates 3 Years of Connection and Growth

This spring marked the third successful year of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Regional Camp at Elkhaven on Denman Island—an empowering and inclusive experience for students from across Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast. Nestled in the natural beauty of the Gulf Islands, the camp has become a cherished tradition where DHH students come together to connect, learn, and grow. It offers a safe and supportive space for students to build friendships, strengthen communication skills, and foster a sense of belonging. Throughout the week, students took part in a variety of engaging activities, including team games, arts and crafts, storytelling, and language development sessions. The camp also emphasizes American Sign Language (ASL) learning and encourages peer mentorship, with older students supporting younger participants.

Now in its third year, the camp continues to grow in both scope and impact. Its ongoing success is thanks to the dedication of educators, interpreters, and the Provincial Outreach Program: Deaf and Hard of Hearing (POPDHH)—all working together to create a space where every student can thrive.

Comox Valley Schools is proud to be part of this important initiative and looks forward to many more years of community, learning, and connection at Elkhaven.

## Honouring National Indigenous Peoples Day Across the District

Comox Valley Schools proudly celebrates the vibrant cultures, languages, and traditions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in recognition of National Indigenous Peoples Day—held each year on the summer solstice, a day that reflects the strength, knowledge, and enduring presence of Indigenous Peoples across Canada. One highlight this year was the I SPARC Story Walk event at Arden Elementary, part of the school's two-month Run. Walk. Wheel. program, supported by the Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council (I SPARC). Led by Indigenous Support Worker Ms. Sandi Phye, students and staff took part in a nearly 4-kilometre story walk through the forest behind the school. Along the way, teachers read from the book *Walking Together*, guiding students through a narrative rooted in Indigenous knowledge, values, and land-based learning. A heartfelt thank you to Ms. Phye, Pauline, Gina Taylor, the Arden staff, and I SPARC for creating such a rich and memorable experience—and to all schools and staff across the district who continue to make space for learning, celebration, and reconciliation.

