

INSIDE BURNABY SCHOOLS

January 26, 2021



LITERACY WEEK IN BURNABY SCHOOLS

Every year throughout the District, schools participate in Literacy Week, which is currently underway across BC. “Reading in the dark” at [Montecito Elementary](#) is just one example of the many ways schools focus on activities surrounding literature for Literacy Week. In other years, guest readers are invited into classrooms. But with the pandemic, some schools are hosting virtual visits, instead – such as with [Kiana Sosa](#), who is doing online readings of her book for students in Burnaby schools. The [Brentwood Park Elementary](#) student published it during the last school year, as an extension of a “passion project” classroom assignment.

BLACK SHIRT DAY IN BURNABY SCHOOLS

Many of our schools participated in the first Black Shirt Day on January 15. In addition to raising awareness of the challenges faced by Black and racialized Canadians, it provided an opportunity for many classrooms to extend the learning around anti-racism. At [Marlborough Elementary](#) Kindergarten students learned about social justice through the story of Canadian civil rights activist Viola Desmond. [Seaforth Elementary](#) was one of many schools to study Martin Luther King Jr, whose birthday was chosen by organizers as the date for Black Shirt Day. Research on BIPOC leaders, art projects – including this poster project by students at [Burnaby North Secondary](#) – books, daily announcements and classroom conversations are just some of the many ways students throughout the District explored learning. The grassroots efforts of students and staff were also seen widely in the media, including interviews featuring Grade 7 [Marlborough Elementary](#) students [Jacqueline Luong](#) and [Jayden Henwood](#), as well as Board Chair [Jen Mezei](#), and [Beth Applewhite](#) – the District Vice-Principal of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, who works with students and staff facilitating learning around anti-racism. Students from [Buckingham Elementary](#) shared their thoughts and learnings – some of which are captured in this video.

RECONCILIATION THROUGH A PROJECT OF THE HEART

Students from [South Slope Elementary](#) and the [BC School for the Deaf](#) came together in the Fall, with health and safety protocols in place, to learn about reconciliation with members of the [Tla’amin Nation](#). They met outdoors with Indigenous community leader [Laura Ward](#), who is also the Chair of the [District Parent Advisory Council](#) – along with her daughter [Hailey](#), a Grade 8 student at [École Cariboo Secondary](#). Students learned about the devastation of the residential school system. After reflection and meaningful classroom discussion, they went to work on a reconciliation project in the form of a mural. Each student created a tile of hope and love for survivors. The finished art installation is displayed at the school as a symbol of their commitment to reconciliation.

INDIGENOUS TEACHINGS SHARED VIRTUALLY WITH FAMILIES

A unique and meaningful community gathering saw a small group of **Windsor Elementary** students and their families connecting virtually just before Winter Break. Eight Indigenous students took home specially prepared packages that included strips of wood to make a cedar rose. **Tsawaysia Spukwus** – also known as **Alice Guss** – from the **Squamish Nation**, shared her cedar teachings through the making of the cedar roses. Following the gathering, **Destiny Willier**, a Grade 3 student, proudly shared with her classmates the cedar teachings she learned. Her classroom teacher commented that Destiny showed a lot of confidence and did a fantastic job.

VIRTUAL SESSIONS ASSIST STUDENT PLANNING FOR NEXT FALL

Each year at this time, students begin their planning for the next school year. Registration for priority placement for most of the District's Programs of Choice takes place in February. Options include a focus on technology, sports, trades, career training, and educational enrichment such as French Immersion and AP Capstone. In preparation for students to make their course and program requests, each year all eight of our high schools host information sessions. This year everything to support students and their families with planning for the Fall is virtual, due to the pandemic. Kicking off the sessions, hundreds of families attended a live virtual evening held earlier this month by the **Career Education** department.

DEAFBLIND STUDENT PUBLISHES ACCESSIBLE CHILDREN'S BOOK

A deafblind student in Grade 10 at **École Alpha Secondary** has written a children's book with large text that is accessible for people who are visually impaired. While becoming a published author is a major accomplishment for anyone, when **Scott Mallinson** arrived at Alpha in Grade 8, he struggled to communicate his thoughts. In addition to being deafblind, cerebral palsy makes sign language a challenge for Scott. He had a major communication breakthrough nearly two years ago when he developed the ability to type on an iPad. And now he has published a book. While Scott enjoys seeing how much children like his published story, Scott says *A Bee's Journey* is more than a book to him and that it represents the start of his future. The magical illustrations for the book were created by **Burnaby Mountain Secondary** student and family friend **Rachel Gsponer** – the two have known each other since they were babies. While all credit for the book goes to Scott and Rachel, his parents believe staff at Alpha influenced Scott's trajectory, citing their support of his learning and confidence in him to succeed.