

INSIDE BURNABY SCHOOLS

October 23, 2023



POWERFUL COAST SALISH ART UNVEILED

A house post representing the house of education for Burnaby was unveiled at the District Administration Office. Master Carver **Xwalacktun** from the **Squamish Nation** worked for many months on the post with students and staff from several schools. As they carved the red cedar together at **Burnaby South Secondary** and the **BC School for the Deaf**, Xwalacktun shared stories, teachings and culture. At the end of the last school year, he led a ceremony at **Burnaby South** to “wake up” the finished post before it was transferred to its new home. Xwalacktun was present to witness the process as district facilities staff guided the post into its permanent place of honour. **Tsleil-Waututh Nation** community members led a ceremony in celebration of the journey to create the **Coast Salish** house post. At the end of the ceremony, Xwalacktun described the many stories the post tells that came from conversations with the students, as they thought about what would embody the school district. For example, salmon represent a school of fish, schools, as well as the Burnaby Board of Education and District. A butterfly with aluminum wings represents the deaf community, with two hands below it signing the word butterfly. We are invited to consider what tracks we are leaving behind for others to follow, including our footprint on the environment. Many more meanings are carved into the post. Local Indigenous protocol was followed at the ceremony, which was both a celebration honouring the artist and an official transfer of the artwork into the District's care.

At a separate ceremony earlier this month, a **Coast Salish** weaving was unveiled at the District Administration Office. It was created by **Qwenot Angela George** from the **Tsleil-Waututh** and **Sts'ailes Nations**. Following local protocol, the ceremony was led by **Elder Alroy Baker** alongside community members of the **Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations** – including the artist's sons. The Master Weaver began the work with a series of online engagement sessions with students and staff during the pandemic. The students mailed her stacks of papers, sharing their ideas that helped to inform the story and design of the weave. **Qwenot** shared at the ceremony that the stories come together and build the strongest bond with the fibres of the weave. The final piece is layered with meaning. Among the symbolism that she shared, is the representation behind the shapes that are empty and then become full. These signify the learning journey. The dotted blue line denotes when you're first learning something; there's a space between it as you relate it to what you know and make connections. The second one is when you start to solidify it. Then you're internalizing it. And lastly, it becomes a part of who you are and part of your truth; that's the blue shape with the black outline. The black colour signifies truth and is one of the four laws of the Coast Salish people. The special ceremony honouring the artist officially transferred the care of the weave to the school district. Together the Coast Salish weave and welcome post serve as powerful symbols: that the District acknowledges the Coast Salish land on which it stands and welcomes all who come to our schools and workplaces.

REGISTRATION GOING STRONG FOR STRONGSTART

Nearly fifteen-hundred children have registered to be part of the **StrongStart** program at the District. The province-wide program is for children who are not yet school age. They attend with their parent or caregiver. Funded by the Ministry of Education and Child Care, there is no cost to participants. Twelve of our schools serve as locations for the popular District-wide program. It is open to children from birth to age 5, with registration taking place throughout the school year. Early Childhood Educators focus on play-based learning with the children, marking a joyful beginning to their experience with the Burnaby School District.

THE STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Partnerships in the community enhance learning and well-being, with contributions both by students to the wider community and support from partners for schools. A group of **Burnaby North Secondary** Leadership students walked and ran for the **Down Syndrome Research Foundation**. The students raised funds for Down syndrome research with **Willie's Corner**, alongside the **Vancouver Whitecaps Football Club**. Club sign-up days were held at high schools, including **Moscrop Secondary** and **Burnaby North**. Many of the clubs on offer are service-oriented. Partnerships, such as **Rotary Coats for Kids**, support students and families. Seen here at **Brentwood Park Elementary**, the organization helps children throughout Burnaby stay warm and dry. **Edmonds Community School** has a partnership with local store **Fit First Footwear**. The store provided shoes for newcomer children at the school and their families. The District's adult education program was featured in the **Vancouver Sun** for their partnership that benefits new immigrants. **Burnaby Community & Continuing Education** partners with the **Canucks Family Education Centre**, **Canucks for Kids Fund**, **Britannia Community Services Centre Society**, and the Sun's **Raise-a-Reader** campaign. The partnership provides funding and other supports for new immigrants while they take the **Early Childhood Education Program**. Grade 8 students at **Byrne Creek Community School** went into the community to learn how to strengthen their own school community. The youth gathered at **Edmonds Community Centre** where the centre's staff, along with teachers and students, led the group in a **Building a Respectful Community Retreat**, also known as **BARC**. Opportunities in the community are also seized to enhance classroom learning. At **South Slope Elementary** aspiring student authors and illustrators were treated to presentations from the **Vancouver Writers Fest**.

HUNDREDS OF REASONS TO CELEBRATE

In 1923, **Capitol Hill Elementary** opened as a four-room school with two-stories, and ninety-seven students. The Arts and Crafts style building was built in a fast-growing part of the city. It replaced a one-room schoolhouse of a different name at another location. This month, the school community had several festivities to mark their centennial year, culminating in a celebratory event. Knowledge Keeper **Les George** of the **Tsleil-Waututh Nation** provided a meaningful welcome with District Principal of Indigenous Education Rob Smyth. The Capitol Hill Choir delighted the appreciative audience of families, staff, fellow students, alumni, and community members. The number 100 was filled with self-made portraits of students and staff. Attendees also had the chance to contribute to a board, sharing their favourite memory of the school. There was much excitement as students hoped to take home the coveted candy basket raffle. And of course, there was cake. In an effort to capture history in the making, a photo booth caught some of the many smiles of families, students, school staff, and alumni at the event – including those of adults who were students at the school in 1977.