

## **South Canoe Outdoor Learning FAQs**

The following are common questions asked about the Outdoor Learning School at South Canoe:

### **What is the background?**

In June of 2017, a committee was approved by the SD83 Board of Trustees to explore the potential for outdoor learning programs at South Canoe School. The teachers and administrators that were appointed to the committee had experience in both Outdoor Learning and/or program development. The committee consulted many experts within and outside our school district, visited other outdoor learning-focused schools around BC, visited with researchers and consulted with many parents and community organizations to develop a framework and philosophy that best suits the specific needs and desires of our students and our community.

### **What is the timeline?**

It is most likely that this project will seek approval at the Meeting of the Board of Trustees on December 19, 2017 at 6:00 pm at the DESC. If approved, registration may be in January and facility upgrades would begin in early Spring with the goal of finishing before summer. The school would open in September 2018.

### **Will bus transportation be provided? How will students get from place to place?**

At this stage, no bus transportation will be provided as with other programs of choice within our school district. Sometimes, the school day will occur at other sites, in which case parents will be asked to drop-off and pick-up at that site. Parents may wish to work together to build a carpooling system to help with transportation. Students will walk a great deal at this school to get from place to place around the South Canoe community, with regular visits to the South Canoe trails, Klahani park and local South Canoe residents' properties.

### **My child is in French Immersion. If they go to South Canoe, can they re-enter French Immersion at SMS?**

A student who is absent for several years from the French Immersion program would re-enter with a disadvantage compared to his/her peers. Therefore, if a child has missed one year of French Immersion, he/she would be able to re-enter French Immersion, but an absence of longer than one year would put too much stress on the learner to be justifiable. Primary students who take off more than one year but then return to SMS are still eligible to enter the Late Immersion Program in Grade 6.

### **Whom does the school serve?**

All students within School District No. 83 are eligible, which 'areas' or age groups might have priority still need to be decided (e.g. K-5, k-8, k-12, South Canoe residents, students from schools with space issues, etc.). Depending on parent/student interest and staff recommendations the school will likely run as a K-5 or K-8 (based on early intent to register information). However, ultimately the Board will decide if the school will open and what grade configuration.

### **How will registration happen?**

There would be no line-up. Registration may happen by phone or online, and if there are more students than spaces at the school, an equal opportunity phone-in system (think camping reservations) would be used to ensure that everyone has equal access to registration. Again, decisions around who has priority (age and catchment areas still need to be decided).

## **Where will learning and teaching take place?**

Depending on the weather and the subjects being taught, students at this school will move through many locations. They will include: the school forest/fields/garden, Klahani Park, South Canoe trails, local ponds, local streams/creeks, community and private farms. We also aim to change locations based on seasons and animal movements throughout the year, with parents dropping-off/picking-up off-site on some days.

Having the school site itself also provides an indoor learning environment, which will be used in conjunction with the outdoors. Most outdoor school models in B.C. seem to begin around 20% outdoors early in the year, leading up to spending as much as 85% outdoors by years-end. These numbers are based on other sites and may not reflect exactly what actually happens at South Canoe.

## **What is the current state of the South Canoe school facility?**

The school in general is in good shape but does need some work in order to meet current standards and code. Some of the work that needs to be done are the roof, wiring/technology within the school, painting.

## **What will this cost the district vs. buying portables to house extra students at current schools?**

Initial estimates by the district in regards to bringing South Canoe school up to code is \$455,000, including the work mentioned above. Additional annual operating costs of the school (school administrators, custodians, secretary, utilities, maintenance etc.) work out to around \$387,000.

With the population pressures facing Salmon Arm schools over the next 5-10 years, it is believed that at least 6-8 portables may need to be purchased in order to accommodate numbers at each school. Buying and installing one portable costs around \$196,000 per unit, and the annual upkeep cost is around \$10,000 per unit.

## **Will the school follow the BC curriculum?**

Yes, the B.C. curriculum will be taught at South Canoe - the same curriculum as will be taught in every school in our district and province as a whole. Learning outdoors means that the way this curriculum is taught will be different than in 'conventional' classrooms.

## **How will students' comfort and safety be assured?**

For all participants, there will be ongoing training in first aid, risk assessment, emergency preparedness, and planning for outdoor experiences. With preparation and support, students will be exposed to a variety of weather conditions and physical challenges. Dressed in the right gear, students around our province have proven able to handle all weather conditions, and students and teachers at South Canoe

will be no different. Temperature cut-offs will be clear to parents once the school begins, and attention will always be given to other possible safety concerns such as under-dressed students, windy days in or near forests and sightings of animals in the area.

## **Will special needs students be fully integrated with adequate support?**

The school is covered by the same policies and guidelines with respect to inclusion as other district schools. The goal is to build a learning community in which all students can flourish. Students with needs that garner CEA support will do the same at South Canoe, and an LRT will be hired to meet the demands of the school population.

## **Who are the teachers?**

The hiring of the teachers will occur once the motion to pass the school is passed and the principal has been chosen. There is no set timeline for teacher hiring at this moment.

In addition to the teachers who are hired as School District 83 staff, there are many others who would be involved with the school. They include students, community educators, elders, family members, the natural spaces around the school and community (i.e. plants, animals, rivers, wetlands, forests, and mountains) and locations around the Shuswap (i.e. farms, businesses, public institutions, public streets and squares, artists' studios).

## **On what ideas is the school based?**

Inquiry-based learning: Learning through curiosity, asking personally meaningful and relevant questions, wondering and seeking solutions, story, play, and science. Developing life-long learning habits such as problem solving, creativity, and reflection.

Experiential learning: Learning through doing, exploring, trying, failing, reflecting, and bravely trying something new. Learning how to take appropriate learning risks. Making sense of the world through real lived experiences.

Place-based learning: Learning outdoors, developing emotional intelligence through a sense of self as part of the natural world. Becoming familiar with the animals, plants, physical features, history, and intricate interconnectedness between components of the natural world, and thereby developing a sense of connection and being "rooted." Learning how to balance care of self and others.

Learning within a Community: Developing strong and compassionate relationships within all the communities of which we are a part, such as a class, multi-age groups, whole school, neighbourhood, city, etc. Deliberately nurturing gratitude, compassion, resiliency, collaboration, emotional regulation, and confidence.

## **What are our hopes?**

The vision for South Canoe is to develop and run an Outdoor Learning school where teaching and learning support the four dimensions of health: mental, physical, emotional, and social. Among students, the mission is to inspire learners to act wisely by cultivating healthy relationships with nature, community, and self. Among teachers, the mission is to work collaboratively to develop curriculum and best practices for optimum learning outdoors. Teachers at the Outdoor Learning school will encourage,

critique, and fuel each other's practice so as to be better able to support all teachers throughout the district in the delivery and growth of their own Outdoor Learning programs. At a macro level, the mission is to develop a successful program that is replicable and contributes to the cultural shift in education towards human and planetary health.