

Indigenous Day of Learning

May 5, 2025



K'waskwátnéws ne Secwepemcú'lecw (SD83) respectfully acknowledges that we are situated on the traditional, unceded, and contemporary lands of the Secwepemc people.

We are immensely grateful for the generosity and hospitality of Adams Lake Indian Band, Neskonlith Indian Band, Skwłāx te Secwepemcú'lecw, and Splatšin for inviting and welcoming us to your communities and for working alongside us in the planning of this day. We are also grateful for the creative and open work of the planning committee for this year's Indigenous Day of Learning. Kukstsémc to all of you.

Background

In 2015/2016, the Ministry of Education added a sixth non-instructional day to the school calendar to support our province with the implementation of the (then) new curriculum. In 2017/2018, when the curriculum was no longer “new”, the focuses, as designated by the Ministry, were mental health, SOGI, or Indigenous education. The following year, in consultation with FNEESC, the focus of the day was changed solely to Indigenous education. Over the years, this day has been called by many different names, such as Curriculum Implementation Day or Ministry Designated Day. For the past few years, for the sake of clarity, we have been calling this day “Indigenous Day of Learning”.

In April 2024, Bill 40 was added to our School Act. Bill 40 helps to address some of the actions for the Ministry of Education and Childcare in DRIPA. While the Indigenous Education Department has always worked with the Quelmúcw Education Council in the planning of Indigenous-focused learning for staff, that collaboration is now legislated, and this year's Indigenous Day of Learning is a celebration of the strength of that relationship.

We had a large and active planning committee composed of all members of the Quelmúcw Education Council who wished to be involved, Chelsea Prince, Kristen Crawford, Jennifer Findlay, and many teachers who included the Indigenous Education Resource Helping teachers, the NOSTA Professional Development Chair, members of the Shuswap Environmental Educators Professional Specialist Association (SHEEPSA), and retired Principal Kim Fulton.

To guide our planning, we kept these learning intentions at the heart of all activities:

- Engaging in land based/place-based learning connected to Indigenous education
- Opportunities for relationship building with local Secwepemc communities

The ambitious plans for the day included all district staff members, regardless of their role. Educational staff such as Principals and Vice Principals, teachers, secretaries, CEA's, and IEW's learned alongside Operations staff such as bus drivers, custodians, mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, all learned alongside each other at schools, in communities, and on the land.

In the following pages, we describe the many learning sites and activities. In the descriptions, it is apparent that this was an event that required a huge amount of collaboration and team work to pull together, especially

from the communities and Operations! It is essential that we recognize the generosity and hospitality of Adams Lake Indian Band, Neskonlith Indian Band, Skw̓l̓ax te Secwepemcú'lecw, and Splatšin for welcoming us into their communities and helping us to learn more about this beautiful place where most of us are settlers, and contributing to create stronger connections between the district and the communities.

Kingfisher Interpretive Centre

Kim Fulton, retired Principal, was on our planning committee and was instrumental in organizing this site, working alongside Shona Bruce, who works at Kingfisher. Kim was unfortunately injured just before our Indigenous Day of Learning and was not able to be part of the fun. He was greatly missed! **Hillcrest Elementary, South Canoe Elementary, and North Canoe Elementary** spent the day at this site. Laureen and Edna Felix, from Splatšin, opened the day and welcomed participants to the territory. This ceremony, accompanied by releasing salmon fry, was a powerful and impactful way to start the day.

There will be several stations that participants rotated through. Marion and Lawrence Lee were there for the morning to tell stories and teach about Secwepemc history in the kekuli. Gloria Morgan led participants through a forest bathing activity, and other activities included learning about invasive plant species, planting as an act of reciprocity, and salmon learning. Laureen and Edna Felix, after leading the opening, also guided participants at a station that focused on learning about the importance of the salmon and the river to the Secwepemc people.

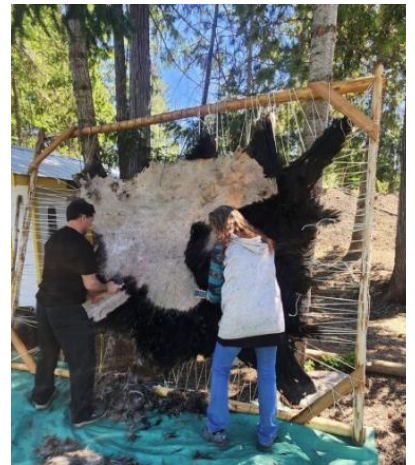




Kris Hryniw's Property

Kris Hryniw teaches the CAMP program at **JL Jackson Secondary**, and organized a day of learning on his property (just off Black Road) that will include the entire JL Jackson staff along with some staff members from Operations. That day included an opening with Ralph McBryan, who also entertained and taught participants through Secwepemc storytelling.

Staff members chose from several different activities that included storytelling with Ralph McBryan, learning how to make pine needle baskets with Diane Jewel, taking part in preparing a hide with Fawn Herrington and Grace Bose (IEW's), an interpretive plant walk with Tekki Brown-Hryniw using the plant identification cards, archery, and Indigenous games. Because the day took place on Red Dress Day, they recognized the day with a moment of silence and hanging red dresses from some trees.





Neskonlith IR3 (Switzmalph)

The Neskonlith Indian Band hosted **Salmon Arm West Elementary** and **Silver Creek Elementary** along with carpenters from Operations on IR3 to engage in learning and an act of Reconciliation. Students from this reserve attend school at Salmon Arm West, so visiting this community is a good way for the school staff to learn about their home. Shuswap Food Action and Serena Caner were important partners in the planning of this day. There are 12 families in the community who expressed interest in getting a garden box for their home. Canoe Mill donated lumber, and the Band had funds for soil and braces. Working with SD83 carpenters, school staff and community members built the garden boxes for the families.

Jane Kelodichuk, a Neskonlith Elder, organized this collaboration between the school district and the community, and was present for the day. Knowledge Sharer, Louis Thomas (never "Elder" or "Knowledge Keeper" for Louis!), told some stories and shared some learning about traditional plants, and traditional harvesting areas. At this time of year, there are many plants in flowering glory such as spring beauty, chocolate lily, and high-bush cranberry. Serena Caner sourced some traditional plant cuttings and bulbs, and planted some of them in a box in front of the wellness centre. The group all ate lunch together at the Melamen Centre (their wellness centre).





Shuswap Middle School

Shuswap Middle School has been focusing on Indigenizing their space for a couple of years, and continued this work on the May 5 Indigenous Day of Learning by painting the pillars at the front of their school (working with John Sayers, a Metis artist and Knowledge Keeper) and planting Indigenous plants in a school garden, working with another Knowledge Keeper. They had a staff potluck lunch to have time to connect with each other and share food.



Sicamous

Linda August is a Knowledge Keeper who grew up in Sicamous, very traditionally, and in her adulthood became a clinical counsellor. Linda generously spent the day with the staff from **Eagle River Secondary** and **Parkview Elementary**, starting the day at Eagle River Secondary. Linda welcomed the staff to the territory, and Tina Lepine and Katie Taber, Indigenous Education Resource Helping Teachers, led the participants through the interactive timeline activity in the morning, which focuses on a map of Secwepemc territory and leads participants through the history of colonization toward Reconciliation. The staff members from the two schools shared a lunch together and then went a bus tour with Linda to learn about important landmarks in the Sicamous area and to hear stories about her childhood.

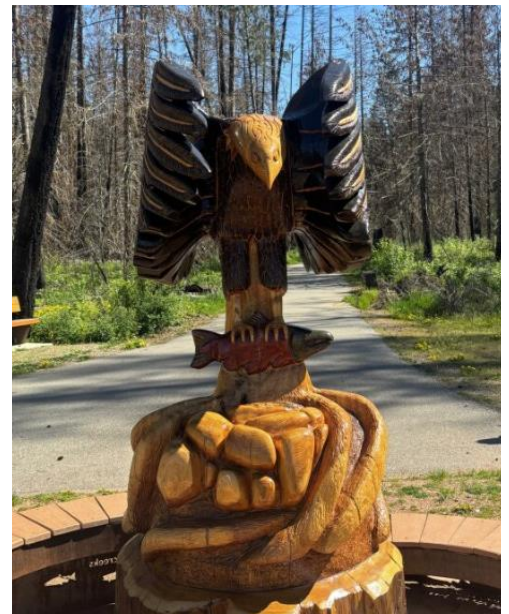


Skw̓lāx te Secwepemcu'lecw

The community of Skw̓lāx welcomed staff members from **North Shuswap Elementary**, **Salmon Arm Secondary**, **Ranchero Elementary**, **Bastion Elementary**, and **South Broadview Elementary** to start their day of learning in the Pow Wow Arbour. Kukpi7 Jamie Tomma provided a welcome to the territory and some learning for participants. As a gift to the community, Kim Fulton organized a donation of 200 conifer plugs (trees) which were gifted in advance to the community.

After the opening, half the group (approximately 100 people) stayed in the Skw̓lāx community to engage in several different activities organized by Tanya Tomma, the Band's cultural coordinator. Participants were able to experience storytelling in the kekuli, walking through the traditional village, and an interpretive walk.

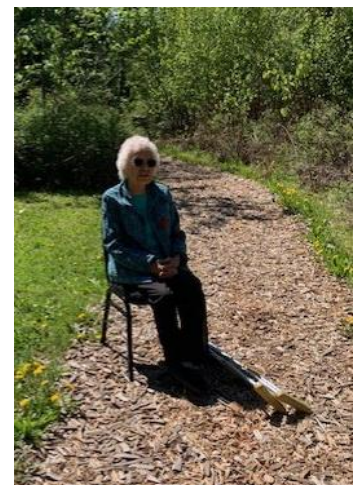
The other half of the group rode the bus to Tsútswecw Park and were split into two different groups to enjoy storytelling with Kenthen Thomas, and an interpretive walk with Cammeo Goodyear (in which she spoke about her work with Skw̓lāx and the Guardian Program). At lunch, the groups switched locations and had the opportunity to engage in the same learning the other group experienced in the morning before getting back on buses to travel back to Salmon Arm.



Splatsin Community

In consultation with Splatsin, the Armstrong schools engaged in learning with that community specifically. This includes **Pleasant Valley Secondary, Armstrong Elementary, Highland Park Elementary, Len Wood Middle, and Falkland Elementary**. The day began at the Splatsin Community Centre with a territorial welcome and some learning about traditional territory from the Title and Rights Department. We also had a brief overview of the Canoe Journey, a symbolic canoeing trip that many Indigenous communities in BC have been involved with. The canoe used in the Splatsin participation in the canoe journey is the same one in the river for one of our most popular activities of the day.

After the opening, the group was divided in half to take part in activities in two different sites. Like Skwlāx, the same activities ran at those two different sites in the morning and the afternoon, with a swap at lunch time. At the kekuli site, participants were all greeted by Trina Antoine with a Coyote story, followed by learning to play lahal, or sitting in the kekuli learning about Secwepemc culture. From this site, participants were able to climb on a shuttle driven by Kyle Crump to the river to take part in a canoeing activity in the large voyageur canoe with instructors, led by Colton William. At the Splatsin Community Centre, participants learned about Splatsin history and governance with Darrell Jones, took part in a Community Gathering/Circle to discuss the importance of strong relationships between the Splatsin community and the district with Knowledge Keepers, youth, and community members, learned from John Jones about the impact of residential schools and the Sixties Scoop on the Splatsin community, or worked with Jody Leon to learn about the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls grassroots movement.



Switzmalph (Pierre's Point)

The Adams Lake Band was excited to host **Salmon Arm Storefront**, **Sorrento Elementary**, **Carlin Elementary Middle**, and the **DESC staff** at Switzmalph, also referred to as Pierre's Point. This is a beautiful location, right on the lake, and we were grateful to be invited to spend the day here.

The day began with an opening led by Joyce Kenoras, Adams Lake Band Councillor. Diane Anthony and Joan Arnouse were a huge part of the organization of this day, leading plant learning walks, teaching people to make soap berry "ice cream", and sharing some of their stored huckleberries for tasting.

Youth Worker Tim Johnson joined us for the day and took people on some canoeing lessons. A few brave souls jumped in the lake for a cold dip as well.



Sugarcane at the Salmar, and Enderby Activities

Working with the Salmar Theatre, we brought in two showings (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) of the documentary *Sugarcane*. *Sugarcane* was filmed in Williams Lake and is the first time a documentary directed by an Indigenous person was nominated for an Oscar. It is about the residential school experience. Splatsin has reached out to the Chief of the Williams Lake Band, Willy Sellers, who sent us a short video to play before each showing. We were grateful to welcome community partners from the Indian Residential School Society, the Integrated Child and Youth Team, and the Canadian Mental Health Association. Shirley David, from the Indian Residential School Survival Society, joined participants at each of the viewings to introduce the film, and to provide a debrief and option to smudge/brush after the film. She also provided cultural support during the film if needed. Nadine Moore, an ICY clinical counsellor, and Denise Butler, a Canadian Mental Health

Association clinical counsellor, were available during the showing for anyone who might have required a break or support. Staff from **AL Fortune Secondary** and **Shihiya** took part in the afternoon showing, while staff from **Grindrod Elementary**, and **MV Beattie Elementary** took part in the morning showing. Some DESC staff and Operations staff joined these groups as well.

The showings were paired with a choice of activities in the other half of their day, that included Inuit games with Duane Kroeker, Indigenous games with Wes Sandy, or making medicine pouches with Alexandra Johnson.



Future Plans and Feedback

As we progressed through the planning for this day, it became increasingly apparent that the vast amount of work we were investing in creating this opportunity could be applied to future years. There were ten different learning sites around the district, attended by almost 1200 staff members. The conversations changed from simply planning this year's Indigenous Day of Learning into creating a three-year plan for the day. In school calendar committee meetings, we have chosen a day in early May as the 2025-2026 Indigenous Day of Learning, because it is an ideal time of year to be on the land and to be outside. While our planning committee will meet again early in the next school year, our initial thinking is that schools will be rotated to a different location to engage in different learning. We also expect that we will have additional ideas for places to go, and perhaps more opportunities to work with communities.

At the end of the day of learning, we shared QR codes that brought participants to a form to provide feedback on the day. There were prizes from NOSTA, Splatsin, and our department to share as a bit of an incentive to fill out the form, and we had almost 300 responses.



Here is some of the feedback we heard from participants:

- Loved this location [Kingfisher]! I'd love to see this provided for other schools next year while we enjoy a new locale.
- More language-based learning, as has slowly been increased in our school would be amazing.
- Being quiet in nature can be challenging for some. Taking a moment to breathe and touch the arrow heads was very grounding.
- I would love to see this day happen in the fall. Starting early in the school year with this day I think would have greater overall impact. It also shows how much we value the learning and deepening connections with Secwepemc communities by emphasizing it early and not last.
- The storytelling throughout the day helped me develop a deeper connection to the land, ecological knowledge and land stewardship.
- It was amazing to hear about some of the culture and personal stories directly from the Indigenous people. Each of the stations provided a different perspective on what life for each of the presenters. Also, being on the land, by the river and in the forest really connected us all to mother nature. It was absolutely the BEST DAY!
- I really liked the format this year and think you could use the same locations, but have schools go to a different location next year. It would be helpful to get our district staff to as many locations as possible in the area with a focus on appreciating the indigenous perspectives.
- Kris Hryniw's location was AMAZING! Being with nature while we listened to traditional stories, participated in hands on learning, and sharing in different circles..... it was the best one yet!
- Really enjoyed building planter boxes for the community to use. More building things next year please.
- Supporting local families, to grow their own food, was a positive connection between the land and the district staff. As the ways of life have changed so much for local indigenous peoples, it is an honour to participate. We were so warmly welcomed.
- I had never been on the reserve land. I was able to see where my students live. I enjoyed the connections I was able to make with my colleagues. I was honoured to be able to build the garden boxes.
- I'm open to any knowledge or practice that is willing to be shared whether positive or negative. I think we, as non-Indigenous people, also need to hear some hard truths to help us understand so we can all move forward.
- Linda's story was epic! On a personal, spiritual, and place level. It changed how I "see" this place.
- The day as a whole helped to shed light on the past as well as the present making a better connection with the community.
- Our learning gave us a strong understanding of what it used to be like to grow up as an indigenous person. It painted a picture to help build connections and develop an understand of the struggles that First Nations people live with.
- I am often struck by a feeling of what now when I contemplate the injustices of the world. I feel like learning more, brainstorming more about what we can do now may be helpful - hearing from the

knowledge keepers about where to go from here may be helpful. This would be a huge and overwhelming topic - but bringing knowledge and awareness to our students is a start.

- My favourite part of the day was our time in the Kekuli learning of how the speaker learns from the animals and how he also gives gratitude to the feminine and masculine in our world. I feel so inspired and will continue this way of thinking moving forward. Truly a beautiful and moving morning. I have never been in a Kekuli and felt deeply connected to this indigenous community.
- I really enjoyed the walk and nature in the afternoon but for the morning session I'd rather be doing rather than listening. Taking us for a walk specific to medicinal uses would have been great.
- Being here in person was powerful and lead to a lot more understanding and respect for the community and what they are going through. There are some questions I have and would have possibly liked more information about the land and the plants here. Very appreciative of the time taken for today and the chance to connect with colleagues as well.
- Come back to the land. The intent was excellent and I think it's important for everyone to be on the land together. However, there needs to be more focus on teaching of this place. Specific games, community practices, local history of the land and family histories to the place, lessons on harvesting at this time of year, what uses that food/medicine serves.
- More of the same. Right from 'bussing' out with our school teams, participating with other schools, enjoying lunch together, and especially the time of the year - it all worked beautifully. Thank you!
- I so deeply appreciated the resilience of the folks who weathered the devastating fires that ravaged the area. There was a spirit of rebirth, regrowth and resilience throughout the conversations.
- I enjoyed learning about some specific Splat sin things especially the youth program. The canoeing was really great and it was awesome to have the kids part of teaching us the game.
- Connecting to local history and peoples and learning about Splat sin. How we as educators can help to foster a positive relationship between local communities.
- I wonder if an indigenous meal could be incorporated as part of the day. Continuing this learning is important work. I liked seeing our community partners so involved. I think their involvement will have a positive impact on many levels. Thank you all for the learning and for the day.
- I would like to learn about local Falkland Indigenous stories and landmarks, such as Pillar Lake and Coyote Canoe
- Had a great conversation in the afternoon about how education works in Splat sin. We talked about some of the things our indigenous students are struggling with and the reasons why.
- Alex's session on medicine pouches was great. She is a very engaging presenter. I learned a lot about the 4 medicines. The Sugarcane documentary was heart wrenching and really made me think about the generational trauma in our Indigenous community. The facilitators were very kind and supportive.
- I did not realize the reasons for the division of bands between Chase and the west coast of the Arm and the seasonality of residency in the area pre-colonial settlement. That was good to know.
- Identifying plants & trees on the nature walk, and how they are harvested, and used for different purposes. Joan and Dianne sharing their knowledge of the traditional use of plants and enabling us to experience by feeling, tasting, listening.