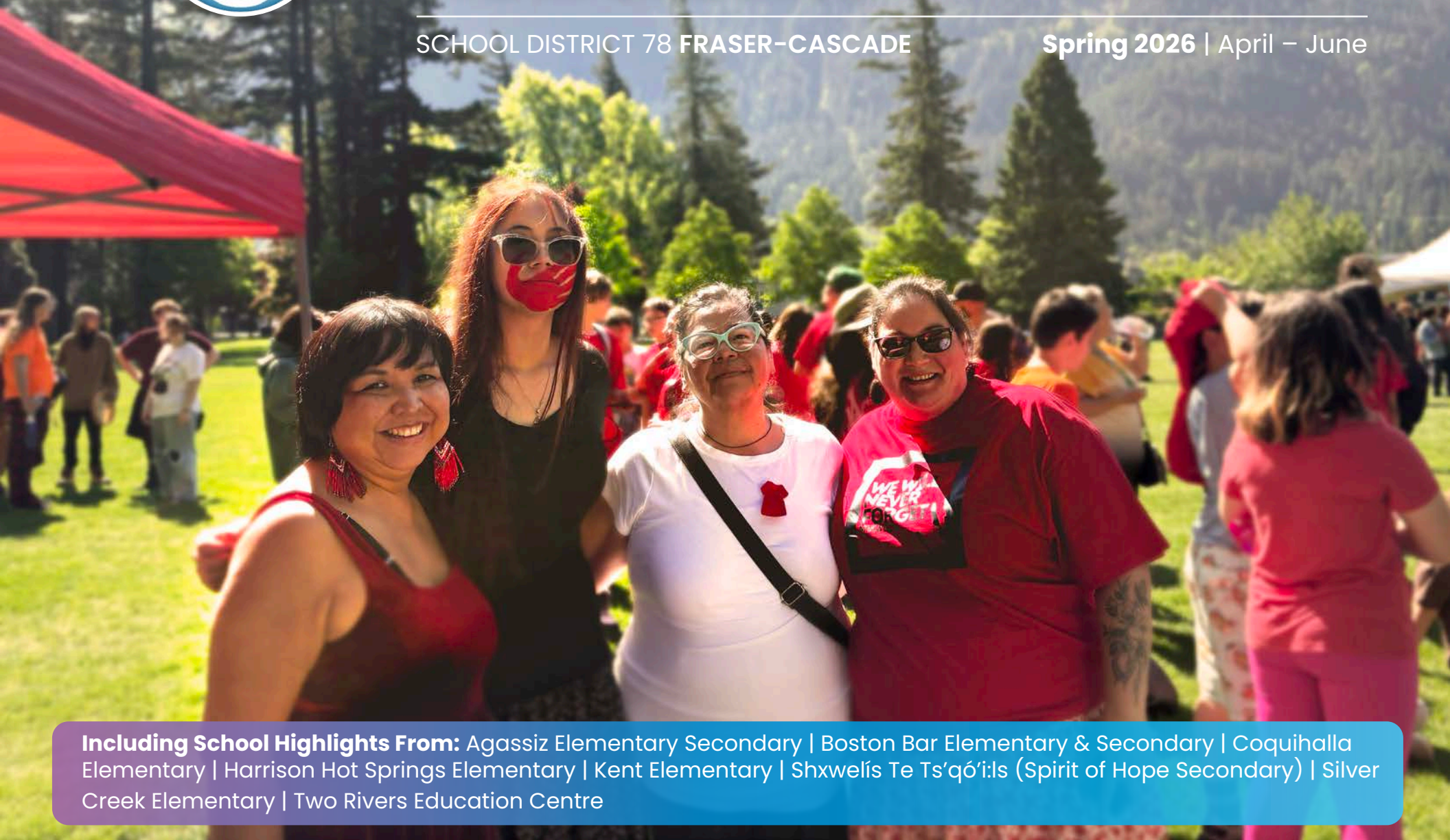




Indigenous Education Newsletter

SCHOOL DISTRICT 78 FRASER-CASCADE

Spring 2026 | April – June



Including School Highlights From: Agassiz Elementary Secondary | Boston Bar Elementary & Secondary | Coquihalla Elementary | Harrison Hot Springs Elementary | Kent Elementary | Shxwelís Te Ts'qó'i:ls (Spirit of Hope Secondary) | Silver Creek Elementary | Two Rivers Education Centre

Welcome to Our Spring Edition

Éy swáyel SD78 Community,

Spring has arrived across School District 78 — and with it, a season bursting with cultural celebration, language learning, land-based connection, and milestone moments for our students and community.

From drum groups and MMIW Day ceremonies to year-end gatherings, graduation blanketing ceremonies, and adventures at Syexw Cho:leqw Adventure Park, this term has been rich with the kind of learning that lasts a lifetime.

In this edition, we are proud to share stories from Agassiz Elementary Secondary, the Agassiz Centre for Education, Boston Bar Elementary and Secondary, Coquihalla Elementary, Harrison Hot Springs Elementary, Kent Elementary, Silver Creek Elementary, TREC, and Shxwelis te Ts'qó:ls | Spirit of Hope Secondary.

A particularly moving moment this spring was the grad blanketing ceremony — where graduates were wrapped in blankets to honour their accomplishments and support them as they move into their next chapter.

To every Elder, Knowledge Keeper, Indigenous Support Worker, language teacher, school administrator, community member, and student who made this spring possible — Kw'as hó:y.



Christine Seymour
District Principal of Indigenous Education
School District 78 (Fraser-Cascade)

District Highlights



Leadership Day at Shxw'ōwhámel First Nation

The youth leadership team gathered beside the Fraser River at Shxw'ōwhámel First Nation for a day that wove together leadership, culture, and land in equal measure. The morning was filled with team building activities that strengthened bonds and built trust among the group. At midday, students sat down for lunch with Elders — an opportunity to share a meal, listen, and connect across generations. The afternoon brought stories about the history of Shxw'ōwhámel, shared in the place where that history unfolded. Hearing those stories at the river's edge, on the land itself, made the learning impossible to forget.

MMIW Day

On May 5, schools across SD78 paused to honour the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people. In collaboration with Chawathil, Yale, and Shxw'ōwhámel First Nations, the district once again opened the day's events to the public — deepening the reach of this important recognition beyond school walls and into the broader community. Red dress displays, reflective activities, and classroom conversations ensured that students of all ages engaged with this day of remembrance and solidarity.



Indigenous Day Celebration

SD78 joined Chawathil, Shxw'ōwhámél, and Yale First Nations for a day of culture at Memorial Park in Hope— face painting, cedar rose making, beading, vendors, and info booths from FNHA and Seabird College, plus a free salmon and bannock lunch for all. Attendees sang the Stó:lō Women's Song with its creator, Carrie Lynn Victor, and drummers from Chawathil and Shxw'ōwhámél filled the park with music.



Indigenous Languages Week

The district's commitment to Halq'eméylem language revitalization continued to flourish this spring. With three Language Teachers supporting schools across the district, students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 had meaningful opportunities to hear, speak, and use Halq'eméylem in their daily learning.

Graduation Season

Graduation ceremonies across the district were marked with cultural ceremony and pride. Blanketing ceremonies at AESS and Spirit of Hope Secondary honoured graduates in a deeply meaningful way. The ACE program celebrated multiple graduates who completed their high school journeys — a testament to their resilience and to the dedicated staff who supported them.

ISW Year-End Reflections

Indigenous Support Workers across SD78 reflected on a year of extraordinary work — from Elder teas and drum circles to raft trips, career fairs, and graduation ceremonies. Under the leadership of ISW Team Lead Vanessa Hope, the team continued to be the backbone of Indigenous education in the district.

ISWs Recognized

ISWs Lillian Isaac, Lisa Berry, Alicia Pete, Caitlin Demmitt, and Patti Dubreuil were recognized and celebrated at the district ISW outing at Cultus Lake — a well-deserved acknowledgment of their dedicated support for Indigenous students.





School Highlights:

Agassiz Elementary Secondary

Drum & Singing Group

Every Tuesday throughout April, AESS Indigenous students gathered with two Knowledge Keepers for drumming and singing. Students learned traditional songs and built connections to their culture, giving them a meaningful and consistent space to connect with their heritage.



MMIW Day

For MMIW Day, students created red dress cut-outs to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people. Students wrote facts about MMIW Day on the dresses to raise awareness and help others learn about the meaning behind the red dress symbol. The display was a powerful, visible statement of solidarity and remembrance.



Grad Blanketing Ceremony & Graduation

AESS honoured its graduates with a blanketing ceremony before the convocation — wrapping each graduate in a blanket to recognize their accomplishments and carry them forward with community support. The graduation ceremony itself was attended by Sts'ailes Chief Ches-Kin-Xen Chadley Paul and Seabird Island Chief Maggie Pettis, both of whom brought congratulations and words of wisdom to the Class of 2026. A parade through Agassiz followed the ceremony.



Agassiz Centre for Education (ACE)

Halq'eméylem Language Learning

ACE students participated in Halq'eméylem language sessions with language teacher Melanie Victor. Students practised asking each other their names and explored questions about likes and dislikes, putting their learning into action by forming full Halq'eméylem sentences.



Syexw Cho:leqw Adventure Park

Students had a fantastic day at Syexw Cho:leqw Adventure Park. They were happy to brave the rain and enjoy the park together — a wonderful outing that brought the group closer and provided some well-deserved fun and fresh air.



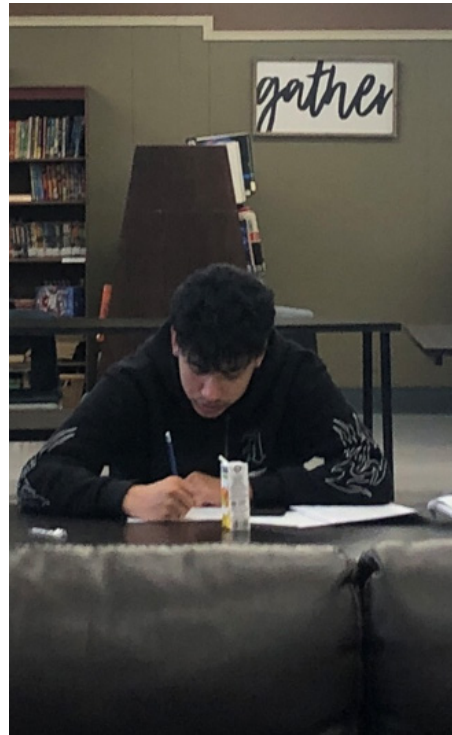
Agassiz Train Station Museum

ACE students visited the Agassiz Train Station Museum, where they got a demonstration of an old-school typewriter — connecting local history with curiosity and discovery.



Academic Achievement

Grade 10 student Carter Charlie concentrated on completing his Grade 10 year at ACE — a proud milestone that reflects the dedication and resilience that defines the ACE community.



Year-End Gathering at Green Point

ACE students gathered at Green Point in Harrison to celebrate the 2025–26 school year. With sunshine, a walk by the water, and collected floating feathers, the day was a beautiful send-off. Students enjoyed a picnic feast catered by Wild Forager Catering of Agassiz.



Graduation

ACE graduates made their families and school community incredibly proud this June. Selena Julian, Bella William, Dezaray Collins, Evan Terry-Silbernagel, and Rowen Charlie all celebrated their graduation with style, support, and community pride.





School Highlights:

Boston Bar Elementary & Secondary

School Closure — Fire in the Mill Yard

In April, Boston Bar Elementary and Secondary faced an unexpected school closure after a fire broke out in the nearby mill yard. Staff and ISWs responded with care to ensure all students and families were supported through the disruption.



“Walk Alongside Us” Tea

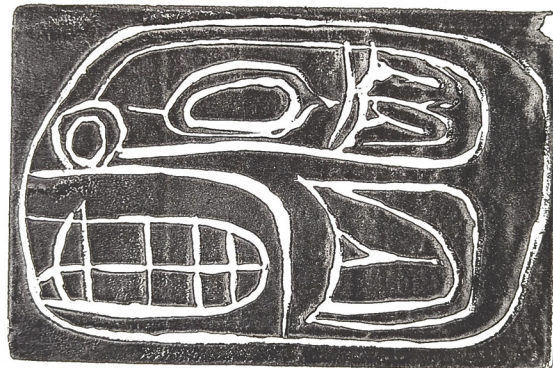
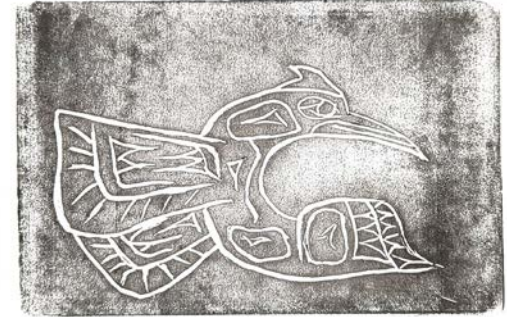
Boston Bar Elementary and Secondary hosted its very first “Walk Alongside Us” Tea in May — a beautiful event honouring all the women who support students at Boston Bar Elementary and Secondary (BBESS). Mothers, grandmothers, aunties, and community members were welcomed into a warmly decorated space filled with tea, treats, and connection. Each guest received a lovingly prepared gift box, and strawberry plants in handmade macramé hangers were given as tokens of gratitude.

One mother shared that she never gets time to just sit with other women — and that is exactly what this gathering was hoping to offer. Certificates and flowers were presented to honoured guests outdoors in the sunshine. A day of warmth, belonging, and community care.



Senior Art Class

Students in the senior art class at Boston Bar created stunning Indigenous-inspired print-making works under the guidance of their teacher, Colin Watchorn. Students sketched a design, transferred it onto a rubber pad, carved it, then pressed it onto paper — producing striking prints in the Northwest Coast tradition: bold faces, totem-style figures, an eagle in flight, and intricate ceremonial designs.





School Highlights: **Coquihalla Elementary**

Coast Salish Shapes

A Grade 1 teacher went above and beyond, cutting out all the felt orca shapes herself so students could assemble them using traditional Coast Salish design elements — black orca bodies, red ovoid shapes, and white accent pieces — on the classroom floor in a circle.



ISW School Visit

As part of rotating school visits, ISW Susie Johnny gave a tour of Coquihalla Elementary and explained the rich array of cultural resources she keeps in her room — drums, dreamcatchers, beadwork, weaving samples, moccasins, and Northwest Coast artwork, all used regularly to bring Indigenous culture into student learning.



Grade 2 Mini Bannock Making

ISWs Caitlin Demmitt and Kristie Peters visited Grade 2 classes to teach students how to make mini bannock — a hands-on session full of the warmth and community spirit that comes with cooking and sharing food together.



Grade 4 Paddle Necklaces

Teri Gonzales worked with Grade 4 students to sand down mini wooden paddles that students used to create their own necklaces — connecting students to the significance of the paddle in Coast Salish culture.



Collaborative Salmon Artwork

A stunning collaborative salmon display filled the hallways of Coquihalla Elementary, created by students across multiple classes. Dozens of colourful hand-drawn and painted salmon swam across a blue and green paper river — a vibrant celebration of the salmon's cultural importance to the Stó:lō people.



Farewell to Principal Becker

The Coquihalla Elementary community paused to celebrate and honour Bruce Becker as he retired as Principal — recognizing his years of dedicated support for Indigenous programming.



National Indigenous Peoples Day Celebrations

Coquihalla Elementary marked National Indigenous Peoples Day with a rich day of cultural activities. Donovan John instructed Grade 6 students on the basics of Slahal, an Elder shared local Indigenous stories, and Halq'eméylem language teacher Tanya Zilinski worked with Grades 2/3 on a special performance.





School Highlights:

Harrison Hot Springs Elementary

Lakers Drum Group

The Lakers Drum Group continued their cultural journey through the spring term, bringing their growing confidence and skill to spring events and cultural gatherings across the district.

Stó:lō Seasons of the Moon — Spring Season

Students continued their learning on the Stó:lō Seasons of the Moon lunar calendar as spring brought new seasonal teachings. Connecting language, land, and culture, students explored what this season means for the Stó:lō people and the natural world around them.

Halq'eméylem Language

Language continued to be woven into everyday school life at Harrison Hot Springs Elementary throughout the spring term, reflecting the district's commitment to Halq'eméylem revitalization.

Indigenous Day Celebration

Harrison Hot Springs Elementary marked Indigenous Day with a full day of culture in action — ISWs from across the district led students through Slahal, powwow dancing, stick games, and a scavenger hunt all morning. The afternoon brought the Sasquatch Dancers from Sts'ailes, who shared traditional songs and dancing to close out a memorable celebration.





School Highlights: **Kent Elementary**

Cedar Workshops

ISW Lisa Berry led Mrs. Lawson's class through a rich workshop series centred on cedar — one of the most sacred and versatile materials in Coast Salish culture.

Part 1 – History & Harvesting

Students explored the cultural and historical significance of cedar, learned about the harvesting process, and created take-home booklets. Cedar artifacts — masks, baskets, and bentwood pieces — were examined as students discovered the many ways cedar has served Coast Salish peoples for generations.

Part 2 – Weaving

Students wove cedar mat patterns using interlaced strips, proudly completing panels labelled *Slhqw'á:y* (Cedar Bark Mat) in *Halq'eméylem* — a hands-on connection to the deep tradition of cedar weaving in Coast Salish culture.



School Highlights: Kent Elementary, cont.

Bentwood Box Project

Lisa Berry and Mrs. Sherman launched a Bentwood Box project with the Grade 3/4 class. Students designed panels with Coast Salish-inspired imagery — sea creatures, birds, and ceremonial figures — to be painted and assembled into classroom displays.



Girls Singing Group

Students in Grades 4–6 practised the Stó:lō Women's Song through the spring, joined by ISWs Caitlin Demmitt and Kristie Peters from Spirit of Hope Secondary for several sessions. The group also made rattles and spent meaningful time together discussing when and where they would perform.

On National Indigenous Peoples Day, 13 students stepped forward to perform the song at the school assembly — a profoundly moving moment for the entire school community.



School Highlights: Kent Elementary, cont.

Elders' Tea

Kent Elementary's Indigenous Portable became a gathering space for a special Elders' Tea organized by AESS. Open to students from 12:00–12:30 during outdoor playtime, a Grade 1 class joined along with students from Grades 2/3 and 5/6 once classes returned indoors. The gathering featured drumming alongside Elders and Knowledge Keepers, cedar boughs and purple flower centrepieces, and shared tea and snacks in a warm intergenerational space.



National Indigenous Peoples Day Assembly

Kent's Indigenous Day assembly concluded with a performance by the Sasquatch Dancers. Lisa Berry invited all Indigenous Grade 6 students forward to receive a special gift in honour of their time at Kent Elementary.



Cultural Arts & Language

Spring at Kent brought continued opportunities for birch bark basketry, Métis dot art, and Halq'éméylem language — all part of the school's commitment to making culture a living, breathing part of every student's day.





School Highlights: **Silver Creek Elementary**

Grade 7 Campout

Silver Creek Elementary's Grade 7 students headed out to the land for an overnight campout on Yale First Nation territory. Presenter Dominic Hope shared about fishing and the nation's partnership with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), then cooked two Chinook Salmon over an open fire. Adults helped hang the fish on maple sticks with cedar strips holding them upright — a 2-hour process on a rainy day like this one. Two Yale First Nation (YFN) students joined as YFN ambassadors, ensuring that visiting students learned alongside those whose homeland they were on.



5K Run

After eight weeks of training through the Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council (ISPARC), Silver Creek students laced up for the school's 5K run in matching black "nyim kw'es xwomxəlemtsel" ("run strong") t-shirts and race bibs. The training program built not just fitness but also camaraderie, and it showed on race day — students crossed the start line ready and confident. With the school's striking Indigenous mural and the peaks of the Fraser Canyon as backdrop, it was a day of community spirit, cultural pride, and healthy challenge.



School Highlights: Silver Creek Elementary, cont.



Good Medicine Concert

Halq'éméylem language teacher Tanya Zilinski brought two Silver Creek classes into a special concert with her bilingual band, Good Medicine. Students had been learning the songs since January, making the live performance a meaningful culmination of months of musical and language learning.



Youth Entrepreneurship Showcase (YES)

Silver Creek students developed full business plans, created products, gathered customer feedback, managed start-up budgets, and calculated final profits — real-world skills built through an authentic, hands-on experience.

School Highlights: Silver Creek Elementary, cont.

Honour Your Health Challenge

ISW Alicia Pete promoted the Honour Your Health Challenge — an 8-week ISPARC-funded program in which students grew stinging nettle from seed, explored Indigenous plants and their uses, and were introduced to healthy choices including fruit-infused water and salmon.



District Track Meet & Career Fair

Silver Creek students competed at the district track meet in Agassiz and participated in the District Career Fair, connecting with community members and exploring pathways for their futures.





School Highlights:

Shxwelís Te Ts'qó'í:ls | Spirit of Hope Secondary

New Indigenous Mural

Spirit of Hope Secondary unveiled a stunning new Indigenous mural designed and painted by Josh Conrad of Chowéthel (Chawathil First Nation). For Conrad, who grew up in Hope and attended Hope Secondary, it was a full-circle moment — returning to leave something lasting on the walls of his alma mater.

The mural features traditional Coast Salish artwork, local animals, and Salish weaving patterns, with Stámiya (Hope Mountain) at its centre. Every geometric shape carries meaning: diamonds for love and eternity; zigzags for water and mountains; squares for family and community; and the checkered pattern for togetherness. At least three stories are woven in — one about Stámiya, one about transformation from man to bear, and one about salmon and fishing.

Principal Wade Peary called it a teaching wall, not just decoration. ISW Caitlin Demmitt noted the cedar tree is especially meaningful, connecting to the school's own name — as Ts'qó'í:ls references a bare tree shaped by the wind rising from the river.



MMIW Day

Spirit of Hope Secondary students joined the district-wide MMIW Day recognition, creating red dress displays and holding space for reflection and awareness. The ceremony honoured Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people with dignity and cultural care.

Girls Singing Group

The Spirit of Hope girls singing group continued practising the Stó:lō Women's Song through the spring term, with Knowledge Keepers visiting classes and the group sharing the song at school events and cultural gatherings across the district.



Grad Blanketing Ceremony

Spirit of Hope Secondary celebrated its graduates with a blanketing ceremony — one of the most meaningful cultural milestones in a student's journey. Graduates were honoured and wrapped in blankets by community members, Elders, and ISWs as they stepped into their futures.



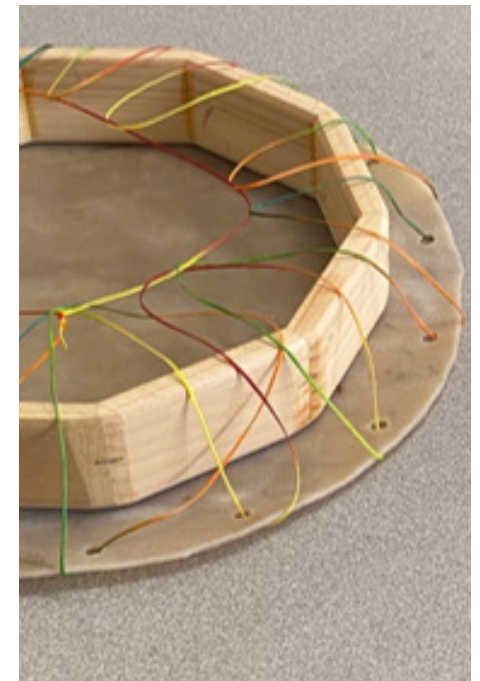


School Highlights: **Two Rivers Education Centre**

Drum Making with Darren Charlie

In April, students at TREC (Twin Rivers Education Centre) came together for a meaningful cultural experience: building their own drums under the guidance of Darren Charlie. With 23 Indigenous students at TREC this term — supported by ISW Brandon Provencher — the drum-making workshop offered a powerful opportunity to connect with cultural tradition through hands-on craft.

Students worked step by step through the process of lacing a hide drum — threading colourful sinew through the wooden frames in the intricate crossing pattern that gives the drum both its tension and its voice. Darren Charlie guided students through each stage, sitting alongside them at the table, passing on teachings that go far deeper than technique.





By Casey Yee – Cascade Falls Park at Flickr

Looking Ahead

As the 2025–26 school year comes to a close, we look back with immense gratitude and look forward with excitement. This year marked many firsts for Indigenous education in SD78 — including the launch of this newsletter, a new Local Education Agreement with Seabird Island Band, increased per-student funding, a new ISW Team Lead position, and a third Language Teacher.

The next newsletter will cover the Fall 2026 term. If your school or program has stories, events, or photos to share, please reach out to the Indigenous Education Department. Every story matters.

Kw'as hó:y

(Thank you)



School District 78 (Fraser-Cascade)

Indigenous Education Department
650 Kawkawa Lake Rd.
Hope, BC V0X 1L4

604-869-2411 ext. 108

SD78 acknowledges that we live, learn, and work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Stó:lō people.