

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation to be remembered in Chinook's Edge

On September 30, it's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and also Orange Shirt Day. Even though it falls on a Saturday, schools in Chinook's Edge School Division will plan activities so that students can learn, in age appropriate ways, about residential schools and the history of First Nations peoples in Canada.

"It's important in Chinook's Edge that we work to build understanding and take steps towards reconciliation. This work won't happen on a single day, but as a regular part of what we do in our schools," says Kurt Sacher, Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division.

Chinook's Edge offers "4 Seasons of Reconciliation" online learning opportunity for staff

As a part of the work of the division, and to build understanding of the history of Indigenous people in Canada, Chinook's Edge is launching a learning opportunity for teachers, administrators and support staff. The invitation is to participate in the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation, an online course created by the First Nations University of Canada.

"We are starting our journey of reconciliation from a place of shared learning," said Karyn Barber, Associate Superintendent of System Services. "Learning together allows us to come from a shared space of what we know and recognition of what we have yet to learn."

"This course is award winning and internationally recognized," said Carolynne Muncer, Indigenous Education Coordinator, "and it is written by Indigenous scholars, elders and leaders which is important because the materials have an authentic voice. In Chinook's Edge we have an approach of learning and growing together, and this course fits that approach nicely. Staff members can go into the course and affirm what they know, and it's a respectful way of helping people become aware of what they didn't know."



First Nations dancers and singers, an Elder, and Knowledge Keepers at a recent school flag ceremony

The course covers content including the impact of residential schools and the Indian Act, the importance of treaties, and what solutions might be possible with economic reconciliation, as well as positive stories of partnerships, hope, and Indigenous cultural revitalization. It is anticipated it will take participants up to five hours to complete the course.

The division offered the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation course to Indigenous Lead teachers, school and division administrators, and school board trustees as a part of a pilot with the materials several months ago. More than 50 individuals participated.



“We were thrilled to have more individuals interested in participating in the pilot than we had space,” said Karyn Barber, Associate Superintendent of System Services.

“The feedback was very positive and now we’re excited about the positive impact of this in our schools. We truly hope the content will be a springboard for conversations in classrooms, hallways, and division wide. Ultimately, we want this platform to create a foundation of knowledge about the history of Indigenous peoples, and a stronger understanding of Indigenous students,” said Barber.

Staff who are interested in participating can sign up using [this form](#). The division plans to offer the course to parents and any other adults who are connected with schools within a year.

Here’s a link to a video preview of the course: <https://vimeo.com/299774118/5a39fa9a8d>

The deadline for sign up for this session is October 5, 2023.

Chinook’s Edge welcomes Carolynne Muncer as Indigenous Education Coordinator



Chinook’s Edge is pleased to welcome Carolynne Muncer as the division’s Indigenous Education Coordinator. Muncer comes to the role following her retirement in June as Principal of Poplar Ridge School. Muncer looks forward to continuing her support of Indigenous learning for staff and students of Chinook’s Edge.

“Chinook’s Edge is excited to have Carolynne as Indigenous Education Coordinator. As a retired administrator from the Sylvan Lake area, she is well connected to Indigenous partners and division staff” said Karyn Barber, Associate Superintendent of System Services.

“Carolynne and Patrick Mitsuing, former Indigenous Education Coordinator, have a strong vision around supporting learning

and understanding for students and staff members across the division. Their continued partnership and connection is a gift to our jurisdiction.”

Barber said, “Carolynne is passionate about Indigenous Education and not only has past experience as Indigenous Coordinator with Chinook’s Edge but also teaches Indigenous Education courses at Red Deer Polytechnic. She is deeply invested in moving reconciliation forward in visible and tangible ways. Carolynne advocates for reconcili-action to benefit all students - Indigenous and non-Indigenous - creating a space for us to learn and grow together.”

Carolynne Muncer said, “I am excited to be in this role because education is really the place where we can make the biggest difference with reconciliation in Canada. I agree with former Senator Murray Sinclair (who served as chairman of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission) on that point.”

Muncer said that she grew up in a First Nations community in Northern Ontario. “I am grateful for learning about the Ojibwe culture, ways of being and ceremonies,” she said. “These experiences are a part of who I am today.”

“I believe it is critically important that we do our part as Canadians to better understand our shared history with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada and their rich culture and languages. I feel a deep obligation and responsibility to do my part to leave a legacy of reconciliation to my grandchildren,” said Muncer. “The work of reconciliation is about redressing and building relationships, ensuring all people in Canada move forward and prosper together.”

Muncer said, “It will be great to work with Indigenous leads, division staff, and Indigenous partners to continue to grow together. I am looking forward to watching schools find their confidence in doing this important work, and to see what comes next.”

Indigenous Leads gather for meaningful learning



Chinook's Edge School Division is working with Indigenous partners to create authentic learning opportunities for students. Each school has appointed an Indigenous Lead that is tasked with the role of bringing ideas about Indigenous learning to schools.

Indigenous Leads met on September 19th, hearing first from Keynote Speaker - Elder John Sinclair. Participants also heard from Patrick Mitsuing, who served as the Chinook's Edge Indigenous Education Coordinator prior to Carolynne Muncer. Patrick's wife, Marrisa Mitsuing and Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Clare Butterfly also spoke to attendees. Topics included: "the generational impact of residential schools on parenting", "contemporary educational challenges and successes", and "land based learning".

"Along with the rest of the nation, Chinook's Edge is on a journey; we're coming together around reconciliation," said Karyn Barber, Associate Superintendent of System Services.

"We're pleased to be working collaboratively with Indigenous Leads, and our partners, around the stories of Indigenous peoples in our area, and to create a path forward. Together we are coming from a place of supporting all of our students so they feel a sense of belonging in our schools," said Barber.

Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, Clare Butterfly attended the September 19 gathering. He said, "I appreciated the discussion about making connections with the Indigenous community, and the need to have genuine learning. I appreciate the opportunity to work together in Chinook's Edge to help Indigenous Leads know how to integrate Indigenous learning into the school system. That's our goal - to make Indigenous learning a part of what happens regularly in our schools."

Cole Heppell, an Indigenous Lead for Penhold Crossing School, said, "It was invigorating to see so many educators, knowledge keepers and elders all gather with such a clear passion for the betterment of our educational practices. From every corner of our division, the willingness and dedication to furthering Indigenous education within our schools. In particular, the stories and teachings shared by the Knowledge Keepers and Elder were incredibly moving. To hear first hand, Elder John Sinclair's story, the struggles he faced and overcame as an Indigenous man were truly inspirational."

Division Professional Learning day full of opportunities for staff and commitment to students



Professional Learning Day on September 22 saw a wide range of learning for staff in Chinook's Edge. For instance, Family School Wellness Workers learned more about how art can help students process emotions, Learning Commons staff (or librarians) learned how to repair books that are heavily used by students, and Kindergarten to Grade 8 teachers from the division's K to 12 schools gathered in Bowden to work in grade teams and consider curriculum resources in Math, English Language Arts and Physical Education & Wellness.



Another learning opportunity for staff that was underway on September 22 was in Olds, where all of the division's high school teachers gathered to learn more about and discuss assessment practices.



Karyn Barber, Associate Superintendent of System Services, said, "It is an honour to create space for teachers to come together, sharing expertise and best practice. Any time that over 200 professionals can gather, students across the division will benefit. September 22 was an opportunity to hear from current instructors around research based assessment strategies, connect as colleagues and take our learning back into the classroom."



Mike Garrow, Division Principal and former Ecole H.J. Cody High School Principal, said, "I think it's important as educators that we continue to learn, and revisit the latest research and best practices. Ultimately this helps us impact student learning with meaningful and accurate assessment practices."



Meaghan Reist, Ecole Olds High School Principal, said, "We have a professional obligation to one another as educators, but also a commitment to our students and future students in our division, to learn and create effective assessments rooted in solid pedagogy and practice."

Top left two pictures are from K-8 PD at Bowden Grandview, left middle picture from PD for librarians, 4th from top on the left are Family School Wellness Workers learning about using art with students, and bottom left and bottom right are from the PD for high school teachers about assessment.

