

INNOVATIVE INKLINGS

Comox Valley School District Newsletter for Innovation

November 20, 2015



Leadership

The Line-up—provincial leadership

Key Question

Going First

Digital Portfolios

Residential Schools

THE LINE-UP

Superintendent [Sherry Elwood](#) has been re-elected as the President of the [BC School Superintendents Association](#).

[Lake Trail Middle School](#) Principal, [Kevin Reimer](#), has been elected as the President of the [BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association](#).

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

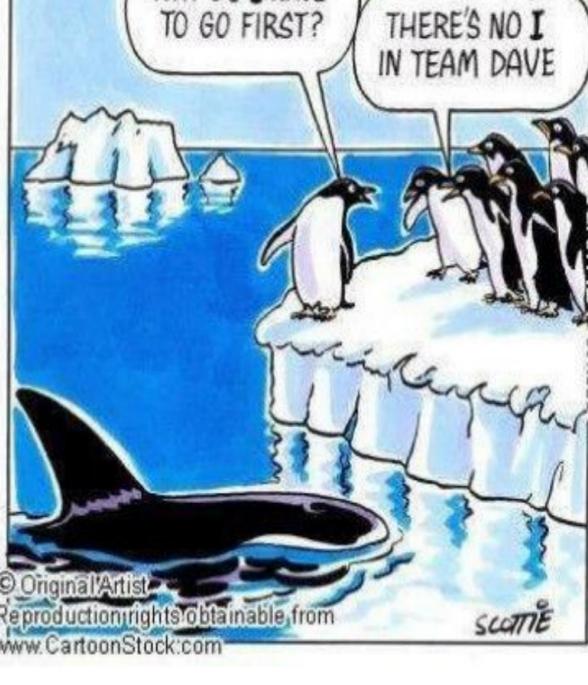
- John Quincy Adams

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

- John F. Kennedy

Key Question

What do we do differently to ensure 'resiliency' and 'openness to change' are made a part of our school/teaching?



Around the District

Innovative events and efforts from around our district

Provincial Leadership

Our school district is very fortunate to have no shortage of excellent leadership, and it is recognized beyond our borders. This past week, two of our teams were asked to present at the annual [fall conference](#) for the [BCSSA](#) (British Columbia School Superintendents Association). The teams were represented by several members each.

Digital Portfolios

[Kyle Timms](#) and [Kara Dawson](#) presented our journey thus far in our move towards digital portfolios. Our district has partnered with a local BC company called [Scholantis](#) to deliver portfolios on a Sharepoint platform, saved directly on an internal server.

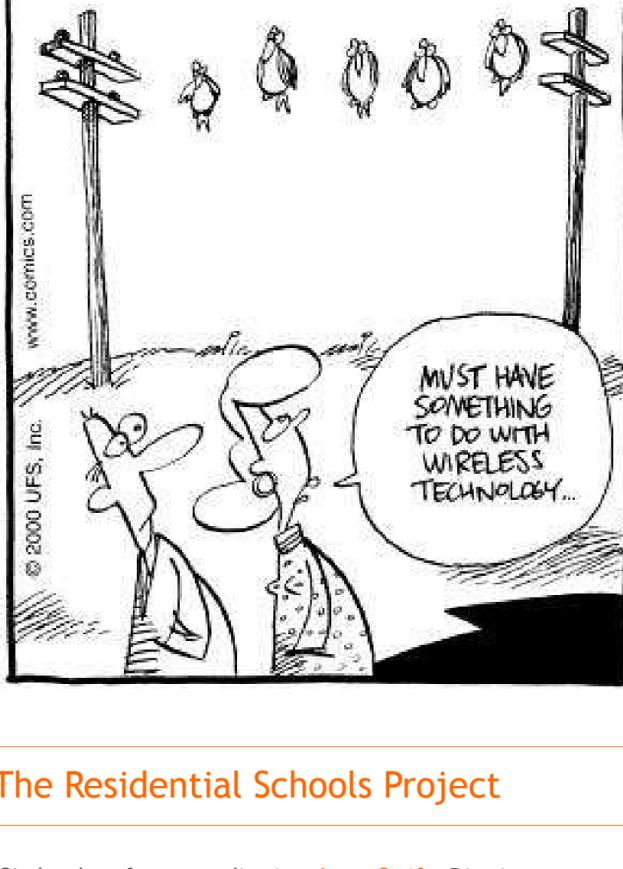
Kyle began with a timeline of the process of change that our district has gone through to get to the point where almost half of the elementary teachers are using digital portfolios and not formal report cards. It began with a culture of innovation and collaboration in the district and a strong commitment to assessment for learning. The reporting committee was tasked with simply finding a better way to communicate a student's learning journey. A small group of dedicated and innovative teachers led the way in this change and developed the foundations of communicating student learning and the guiding parameters.

Kara then went into detail about the My Site product that the district is currently using to create digital portfolios and the resources available to help teachers. All of these resources are created by teachers and shared online to everyone ([Learn71](#)). Kara showed how a classroom teacher can quickly collect and save authentic evidence and then share it digitally to encourage a 3-way conversation about the learning with the student and the parent. She showed examples of great portfolios created by our teachers and regularly mentioned the teachers that have helped lead this work.

Kyle finished with a look at how this form of online, ongoing, communicating of student learning fits with both the new curriculum and the principles of assessment that go with the new curriculum. At the end of the presentation Kyle asked three questions:

1. What should the new reporting order include?
2. Digital parents are coming soon, will paper reports meet their needs?
3. What are we going to do about it?

The packed room was excited and incredibly impressed with the work and instructional leadership that exists in our district.



The Residential Schools Project

Six leaders from our district—[Lynn Swift](#), District Aboriginal Curriculum Support Teacher; [Gail Martindale](#), District Aboriginal Curriculum Support Teacher; [Colleen Devlin](#), Grade 1 Teacher, Arden Elementary; [Sally Sheehan](#), Aboriginal Support Worker; [Denise Anderson](#), Grade 4/5 Teacher, Queneesh Elementary; and [Doug David](#), District Curriculum Support Teacher—presented their [engaging inquiry](#) project that invites learners to explore the Residential School experience with a lens of compassion.

Their initial inquiry question was "How can what we learn about Residential Schools help us to be more compassionate in our daily lives?"

The lesson series begins with front-loading common language around sympathy, empathy and compassion. Sympathy is defined as feelings of sorrow for someone else's misfortune. What is empathy? Empathy is to imagine yourself in someone else's shoes, defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Compassion can be defined as feelings of sorrow, concern and taking action for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. First co-constructing their thinking and defining these capacities, they then invite learners to look for evidence of compassion in video, photographs and story.

Next they have learners use their understanding of compassion to explore evidence of the Residential School experience. While viewing video clips, photographs, and other artefacts, participants are invited to ask questions, make connections, infer, think critically and communicate what they notice, think and wonder.

They include talking circles as part of the process, to build community, creating a safe environment for sharing and exploring our thinking.

The inquiry leads to exploring the questions "What is reconciliation?" and "How are reconciliation and compassion linked?"

Through dialogue and further exploration, they invite their learners to help define reconciliation:

- Reclaiming and revitalizing cultural practices and language
- Having a sense of optimism and hope for the future
- Recognizing that all Canadians have a role in reconciliation
- Having knowledge of shared past

This inquiry project was sparked by their shared participation in the decommision ceremony of St. Michael's Residential School in Alert Bay, BC last February, 2015.

From the time this powerful presentation began and well after it ended, participant's hearts and minds were fully engaged and committed in deeply committed ways.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and please direct any suggestions, questions, or inquiries to me directly: Gerald.Fussell@sd71.bc.ca