

Walking Together in the warm land of the Cowichan Valley

Mill Bay Nature School

Q'w'ashintul newsletter



We acknowledge that for thousands of years the Malahat, Lake Cowichan, Quw'utsun, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, & Lyackson Peoples have walked gently on the unceded territories where we now live, work, learn, and play. We seek a new relationship with the first peoples here, one based in honour and respect, and we thank them for their hospitality.

Mid November 2019

REMEMBER WEDNESDAY IS A 12:15 DISMISSAL

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your many questions about teaching and learning at Mill Bay Nature School. I admire your proactive approach to your children's education, and appreciate the opportunity to think deeply myself and consider your questions through the lenses of: B.C.'s mandated curriculum (*the competencies and content children in our culture need to develop in order to provide them with a strong core for future problem solving and development - becoming agile learners*); Mill Bay's Field Guide or philosophy (*the aspects of the curriculum, growth, development, assessment, and communication that we will emphasize or pay particular attention to*); as well as our emerging pedagogy (*the way in which we think about, nurture, provoke and inspire the development and growth of each one of our children (and adults) through the curricular competencies and knowledge introduced and practiced in particular ways*).

Over all, I think it's important to know that an emerging vision for Mill Bay Nature School is that around eleven/twelve years of age, each child and their family will meet and discuss where they are in relation to the curriculum (core competencies, curricular competencies, and curricular content knowledge); explore the options available in the Cowichan Valley that best suit this particular child's unique strengths, interests, passions, and needs; and develop a plan to make this transition positive, successful, and as natural as possible. I imagine that our yearly spring MAPS reviews will support this process. Mill Bay Nature School will continue to be an option for children beyond twelve, if it's deemed the right place for a particular child. This structure/rhythm has yet to emerge, but from my experience with a middle years/high school program in Vernon (Vernon Community School - vernoncommunityschool.wordpress.com), I am familiar with hybrid programs that reach into the community and utilize community mentors to help teachers meet curricular expectations in rich, meaningful ways leading to graduation and post-secondary opportunities if desired. B.C. and other places in the world are moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to education, and considering innovative solutions for the diverse strengths, interests, passions, and needs found in all human communities. Universities, too are working to understand how to evaluate student core competencies that are so critical to human thriving, but, because they are difficult to measure, have been set aside for efficiency's sake. How can we create a more robust learner profile? (*For more information: The Nature of Learning (OECD): <http://www.oecd.org/education/cei/50300814.pdf>*)

Here are some answers to some frequently asked questions about learning and development at MBNS. *Please note that I consider this a beginning to an ongoing conversation of how to best communicate student learning to parents at Mill Bay Nature School.*

i. How will I learn more about my child's development and growth, as well as needs, at Mill Bay Nature School? *(This page will be added to the second addition of our Field Guide.)*

Communicating Student Learning



Our educators are moving with purpose from a model of reporting TO parents to communicating WITH parents on an ongoing basis. We are moving toward a new model that is personalized; growth based; descriptive of actual learning; providing stronger student voice; allowing deeper home school connection; is learner focused; makes learning visible; and is meaningful, varied and responsive.

Communicating Student Learning (L-9) document, SD 79

At Mill Bay Nature School, we imagine our work called teaching and learning as connected to the images of seeds, growth, decay, pruning, seasons, diversity, interconnectedness. This organic, ecological metaphor acknowledges that to promote growth and development in every learner, we must see the unique living being of each; considering the unique growing conditions needed - rooted in both nature and nurture. What are their personalities, gifts, limits, fears, insecurities, experiences, passions. What is her heart to become? What is the knowledge he needs to develop more fully? We acknowledge these answers emerge *over time*. **We embed this philosophy in the renewed B.C. curriculum that is competency-driven: the skills, strategies, and processes that students develop within each aspect of learning in order to engage in deep and life-long learning.** Like brain development (from inside to outside, from back to front), Mill Bay Nature School imagines the curriculum emanating as tree rings beginning with the core competencies (creative, critical & reflective thinking; personal & social development; communication) growing as we engage in challenging & playful curricular competencies through inquiry providing the students with a growing collection of big ideas inside to access for new learning at school and beyond. The environment (as outlined in our Field Guide) is inclusive and seeks to provide learning opportunities to stimulate the growth of *each* child - attentive to diverse ways of learning, diverse ways of knowing, and diverse ways of expressing or representing. As a result, it is expected that each child will grow and develop at different rates and in different ways over time. This report documents where they are presently on their learning journey. September will begin from this place - *mindful of development and growth over the summer.*

2. What forms will communication take ? (This page will be added to the second addition of our Field Guide.)

A Guide **Draft**

for documenting ongoing student learning at Mill Bay Nature School

Fresh Grade is the digital platform we are using to share this information.

It also provides an opportunity for parents to respond to the comments and/or to ask questions. We encourage you to take an active role in your child's education !

We received the technology required to use Fresh Grade early last week; you should be receiving Fresh Grade documentation now.

If not, please contact your child's Clan Leader.

(In the future, Fresh Grade communication should begin in early fall.)

Aspect of Competency Development	Quality of the Documentation	Frequency of Documentation (per child)
Documentation of Core Competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking Personal Social 	A. A piece of evidence of the learning (<i>photo, video, piece of work</i>) B. A short story putting the evidence in context C. Descriptive feedback (<i>using MBNS continuum</i>) (D. Student Voice <i>when possible</i>)	At least once a week (<i>Clan Teacher</i>) At least once a month/cycle end (<i>Playful Inquiry/Art & Applied Design/Learning Support Team</i>)
Documentation of Communication Competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking & Listening, Reading & Viewing Writing & Representing 	A. A piece of evidence of the learning (<i>photo, video, piece of work</i>) B. A short story putting the evidence in context C. Descriptive feedback (<i>using Performance Standards</i>) D. Next steps (E. Student Voice <i>when possible</i>)	At least once a month (<i>Clan Teacher</i>) Optional (<i>Playful Inquiry/Art & Applied Design/Learning Support Team</i>)
Documentation of Mathematical/ Numeracy Competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasoning & Analyzing Understanding & Solving Communicating & Reflecting 	A. A piece of evidence of the learning (<i>photo, video, piece of work</i>) B. A short story putting the evidence in context C. Descriptive feedback (<i>using Performance Standards</i>) D. Next steps (E. Student Voice <i>when possible</i>)	At least once a month (<i>Clan Teacher</i>) Optional (<i>Playful Inquiry/Art & Applied Design/Learning Support Team</i>)

February 2020

- We will also be writing a mid-year report (shortened version of our form from June 2019) and a summative year-end report. June 2020**



Celebrations & Gratitude from this past month



Forest School has been a highlight for the Clans that have visited. Thank you to the parent and grandparent volunteers who have accompanied us. Thank you to the PAC who purchased safety vests for the hike along Cobble Hill Road. Thank you to Anne & Karin for making this happen.



Our first ever (Grand) Parenting Circle was very nourishing and full of amazing thinking and curiosity. I am now more clear on the purpose of the Circles - and thanks to Amy C-B have some language around it: "With respect to and in keeping with traditions of Coast Salish peoples we wish to have a multi-generation gathering to pass on the wisdom of elders (parent to parent, grandparent to teacher, etc.) as we walk together in the service of our Xe' xe smuneem - our sacred children". The next gathering is Thursday, Dec. 12 from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm.



Town Hall is held every Wednesday morning in the gym. The children are learning how to pay attention and through paying attention display respect to others. They are also developing their understandings of democracy: how many different points of view there are; how to discipline yourself when you don't agree with others; how to ask questions when you're confused; and how to carefully decide how you are going to vote. This week we are voting on how to spend the money from the Move-A-Thon. It should be an energetic process!



Thank you to Phaedra for taking the lead on our Peace Ceremony on the Friday before Remembrance Day. The children displayed great respect and cooperation. We were delighted with their maturity and grace tackling such a huge subject.



Our Art/Maker Space is coming alive thanks to Myra's tireless effort, imagination and dogged determination. Thank you Myra. We are happy to continue to accept any kinds of crafty loose parts, paints, art materials, etc.



Just so you know, our superintendent Robyn Gray always appreciates letters of support/appreciation about the makings of Mill Bay Nature School. If you have a desire to share your child's learning and growth at MBNS, please take a moment to send Robyn a message - rgray@sd79.bc.ca

Until next time, Q'shintul (Walking Together), Kim



Have you seen our new t-shirts !!!!!
A huge thank you to the Murray and Gardiner families for this generous gift! Hoodies will be available for \$20 and nylon backpacks for \$10.

Information & Suggestions



- **Please remember** to call or email our secretary Tanya if your child will be late or absent - *before 8:30* - millbsecretary@sd79.bc.ca / 250-743-5504
- Are you on **Fresh Grade** yet? Have you received your e-invitation (check your junk mail)? If not, please contact Tanya and we will problem solve.
- **Parents and siblings are always welcome** to join us for morning 'soft-start' and circle - *particularly engaging are Monday and Friday whole school circles from 9:00-9:45 am.*
- **Please read the Field Guide** for clothing and footwear guidance - *label everything.* Thank you to the parents who are tending our Lost and Found ... believe it or not, the pile is being reduced all the time!



We continue to gratefully accept:

- **Gently used books** of all genres for our school library
- **Gently used** school supplies and craft/art supplies
- **New** crayola markers - thin & thick
- **New** crayola pencil crayons
- **New** watercolour paint sets
- **New** pencils (*preferably good quality - others are very difficult to sharpen*)
- **Sails** to provide cover over our outside circle (*continued collection*)
- **Yoga Mats** to protect wet bottoms during rainy circle days
- **Live Willow Shoots** for creating willow domes
- **Any objects** that can be used in our Forest, Ocean, Space, Earth or River Studios

Please remember to
send in your
permission forms for
the Cherry Point
Beach Trip on Friday

