

TOGETHER WE CLIMB

A Rocky Mountain School District Update

Together We Climb reflects the collective journey of the Rocky Mountain School District community as they work to support each learner in reaching their full potential, one step at a time.

Welcome to Fall in Rocky Mountain School District! October has brought some cooler temperatures and beautifully coloured landscapes to our communities, and the hustle and bustle of September's school start-up is beginning to subside. In conversations at schools, students are settling into classroom routines, building friendships, and in many cases, enjoying some of the extras like clubs, sports and other non-curricular activities.

As the calendar approached September 30th, schools around the district recognized the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, and students and staff reflected on the impacts of residential schools on Indigenous people across Canada. Thank you to our local Indigenous Education Council for their review of our schools' plans for 'Orange Shirt Day' and thoughtful suggestions for continued learning across our school district and communities at large.

*At September's Board of Education meeting, a new Student Attendance Policy was unanimously passed, demonstrating the importance placed on regular and ongoing student attendance in schools. **Regular attendance is one of the most important predictors of student success**, and when students attend consistently, they benefit from stronger relationships, deeper learning, and a greater sense of belonging. Research shows that students who miss even two days a month are at significantly higher risk of falling behind academically and disengaging from school over time. That's why our schools and district are working together to implement practices that supports daily attendance. By identifying barriers early and partnering with families, schools aim to ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive.*



Students at Martin Morigeau Elementary stamp their thumb prints on the school mural for Orange Shirt Day.

As we move further into the school year, we continue to focus on the priorities outlined in the Board of Education's Strategic Plan: student success, inclusion, capacity building, and stewardship. These priorities are reflected in the daily efforts of our teachers and support staff, and in the partnerships we nurture with families and communities. Together We Climb is one way we celebrate these efforts. Each month, we'll continue to share stories that highlight the great work happening across our district. Thank you to those who support this communication through the school year!

With gratitude,

Aaron Callaghan, Superintendent

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FEATURED STORIES FROM OUR SCHOOLS

Annually, Rocky Mountain schools develop and implement plans to support continuous growth and enhance student outcomes. These frameworks, called School Success Plans, are responsive to the needs at each school but do align with those strategic priorities identified by the school district.

CULTURAL LEARNING AT MARTIN MORIGEAU

Building on their successes with strengthening community connections, and with a focus on integrating Indigenous content and ways of knowing into their practice, staff at Martin Morigean Elementary recently engaged in Métis cultural learning. On September 22nd staff were supported by MacKenzie Henry, Métis Family Connections Navigator, as they hosted “Aansaamb aen kiskayhtaamaahk” or “Learning Together” sessions. Lessons provided a brief foundational overview of who the Métis are, introduced the Métis Core Values related to learning and examined the Aansaamb aen kiskayhtaamaahk cultural resources. Strategies to create culturally safe learning environments that support the well-being of all children were also intentionally discussed.

At the end of the day, staff members shared ideas and actions that they felt they could implement in support of Métis learners as identified in their School Success Plan, including: teaching a Michif word of the week; teaching the Métis Values and presenting “Louis the Buffalo” to the class that demonstrated the Métis value of the week; clearly displaying Métis cultural symbols within the school; sharing Métis stories with classes and allowing students interact with Métis tools such as the sash; and hosting a Winter Carnival that highlights Métis traditions, foods, and games.

With 52% of the learners at Martin Morigean Elementary identifying as having Métis ancestry, the staff recognize the importance of these learners seeing themselves reflected in their learning environment. Staff want students to be engaged and growing culturally, leading to both improved attendance and academic outcomes.



Staff at Martin Morigean Elementary collaborate on Métis resources to deepen their understanding of Indigenous content and Ways of Knowing in support of Indigenous learners at the school.



The Giving Tree: A Retelling of a Traditional Métis Story is richly steeped in Métis culture and emphasizes core values including strength, kindness, courage and patience.

IMPORTANT DATES

Monday October 13 – Thanksgiving (Schools Closed)
 Friday October 24 – Non-Instructional Day (No Classes)
 Monday October 27 – Open House, Rocky Mountain Childcare, Invermere
 Saturday November 8 – Indigenous Veterans’ Day
 Tuesday November 11 – Remembrance Day (Schools Closed)
 Wednesday November 12 – Board of Education Meeting, Edgewater



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY AT LADY GREY ELEMENTARY



Students at Lady Grey Elementary participate in whole school activities like Just Dance!

In an effort to strengthen the sense of community within the school, students at Lady Grey Elementary have had the opportunity to participate in Whole School Activities on Fridays this fall. Aligning with the school's Success Plan goal of creating a space where every child belongs, through their participation students learn alongside and build relationships with others who are not in their homeroom class.

Some of the activities so far this year have included Buddy Reading, which saw older students intentionally paired with younger students, and Numeracy Activities including dice and card games, Math Jeopardy and more. On another occasion teachers ran 'Open Doors', giving students the chance to join a variety of activities in any classroom like Just Dance, bracelet making, art projects and even an airplane building challenge.

EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH FRIENDLY COMPETITION AT GOLDEN SECONDARY

Golden Secondary School is buzzing with excitement as students cast their votes for their homeroom logos - a fun and creative competition that ties directly with the school's Success Plan goal of belonging.

Homerooms have worked hard to design a logo that represents their team's unique identity and spirit. From bold designs inspired by local mountains to creative symbols reflecting teamwork and pride, the submissions showcase the imagination and collaboration of GSS students.

The process has encouraged classmates to connect, brainstorm, and express what belonging means to them... not just through words, but through art and shared vision.

Principal Mike Archibald noted, "This project isn't just about choosing a logo - it's about helping students feel part of something bigger. When students feel connected to their peers and proud of their homeroom, the entire school community grows stronger."

Voting takes place this week, and the winning designs will be proudly displayed on classroom doors and featured in school events throughout the year.



Homeroom classes at Golden Secondary School are exploring their identity through conversation and art, creating their own class logos.

STRATEGIC PLAN IN ACTION

*In 2023 the Rocky Mountain School District Board of Education released its visionary Strategic Plan 2023-2027. Annually, the Operational Plan identifies those actionable commitments across the four overarching priorities areas: **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion; Success for Each Learner; Growing the Capacity of Self & Others; and Stewardship for the Future.***

TRUTH & RECONCILIATION WEEK: A DISTRICT-WIDE COMMITMENT TO EQUITY & LEARNING

During Truth and Reconciliation Week held between September 22-29, schools across the Rocky Mountain School District demonstrated a strong commitment to the district's strategic priority of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Students and staff at each school engaged in meaningful activities that honoured Indigenous history, culture, and resilience.

At Selkirk Secondary, students participated in the "Project of Heart" initiative and created their own publication, *The Journal*, which explored the significance of Truth and Reconciliation Week and highlighted the various activities students took part in throughout the week.



Nicholson Elementary students formed a heart-shaped memorial using orange rocks after reading Phyllis Webstad's stories. They also engaged in a school-wide reflection activity on the land.

At Windermere Elementary, students viewed March for Arch, discussed reconciliation, and took part in a full-school land acknowledgment followed by a field trip to Columbia Lake. An Orange Shirt Day assembly at J.A. Laird featured drumming, storytelling, and reflections on Indigenous excellence by Jenna Jasek.



Even children enrolled in district StrongStart programs took part. At Eileen Madson Primary and Martin Morigeau Elementary School, the programs hosted community art projects and story walks featuring 'With Our Orange Hearts', fostering early empathy and awareness.

Truth and Reconciliation Week was not only a time for reflection and recognition - it was a living example of the district's core values in action, showing how schools can be spaces of healing, learning, and transformation.

Top Photo: Selkirk Secondary School

Bottom Photo: J.A. Laird Elementary School



**ROCKY
MOUNTAIN**
International Student Program

Use the QR Code to learn more about becoming a homestay family. Special incentives extend until October 31, 2025.



THE SUMMIT SPOTLIGHT

*Each month, we shine a light on an individual or team whose contributions help elevate our collective journey. Whether celebrating impactful work or welcoming new faces to our district, this spotlight **recognizes** and **honours** those who strengthen our climb together, reflecting the spirit of collaboration and excellence that drives Rocky Mountain School District forward.*

JACINTA MARINA & TRISTIN CAMPBELL – INDIGENOUS EDUCATION SUPPORT WORKERS

In Rocky Mountain School District, Indigenous Education Support Workers play a vital role in connecting students with their culture, language, and community. Jacinta Marina and Tristin Campbell exemplify the district's theme for 2025-26, "Together We Climb," through their dedication to supporting students' learning and cultural growth.

Jacinta, who works at McKim Middle School, has Blackfoot ancestry with family ties to St. Mary's Residential School. She began her journey in the district as an Educational Assistant before joining McKim as an Indigenous Education Worker in 2015. Over the years, she has deepened her connection to her heritage by learning Blackfoot and Ktunaxa languages and attending traditional ceremonies. Jacinta's passion for sharing culture is evident in initiatives like the Project of Heart, which she started with grade 6 students in 2019, and through lunch clubs, she guides students in making regalia, understanding pow wow protocol, and even learning dance steps. All of these help students feel proud of their identity and roots.

Tristin, who works at J.A. Laird Elementary School, emphasizes the collaborative spirit behind the theme "Together We Climb." She highlights the critical support of local Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders, who share their wisdom with students and staff alike. Through their guidance, students learn ancestral languages, cultural practices, and the importance of living in harmony with the land. Tristin is especially passionate about Indigenous language programs, welcoming educators like Tisha Tardif and Jennifer Cope to teach Secwépemctsin and Michif. These programs inspire students of all ages to embrace their languages and traditions, strengthening their sense of community and belonging.

Both Jacinta and Tristin see their work as integral to student success and well-being. By fostering cultural pride, language learning, and connection to the land, they help students develop confidence, identity, and a deeper understanding of their heritage. Their work embodies the district's vision of "Limitless Potential," showing how support, mentorship, and cultural education can empower every learner to thrive.



Jacinta Marina, IESW at McKim Middle School, participates in a Pow Wow.



Tristin Campbell, IESW at J.A. Laird Elementary School, harvests tobacco with students at the school's garden.

ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE: A PROVINCIAL INITIATIVE

Highlighting initiatives, innovations and partnerships beyond our geographic boundaries that inspire and inform our journey in Rocky Mountain School District.

AED AND NALOXONE KITS IN SCHOOLS

Rocky Mountain School District is taking proactive steps to enhance health and safety across all of its 17 schools. In response to the **Support Services for Schools Ministerial Order** and recent communications from the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, all school districts in British Columbia are now mandated to implement administrative procedures or policies that ensure timely and effective responses to **unexpected health emergencies in schools**. As part of this provincial initiative, the school district is updating current district practices that ensure Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and Naloxone kits are available and accessible in every K-12 school.



AEDs and Naloxone will soon be available in all Rocky Mountain School District K-12 schools.

Unexpected health emergencies, including cardiac arrest or opioid poisoning, can occur without warning. Immediate access to life-saving tools like AEDs and Naloxone can significantly improve survival outcomes before emergency responders arrive. This initiative supports a safer learning environment and promotes confidence and well-being across our school communities.

Mandated Implementation Timeline

- **December 31, 2025:** AEDs and Naloxone kits will be accessible in all secondary schools.
- **September 8, 2026:** AEDs and Naloxone kits will be accessible in all elementary and middle schools.

Aligning with provincial expectations, the district practices include the fact that AEDs and Naloxone kits will be:

- Clearly marked with standardized signage for easy identification.
- Routinely inspected to ensure functionality and monitor expiry dates.
- Barrier-free and equitably accessible, accommodating diverse user needs.
- Presented in a non-stigmatizing manner.

The practice reflects our collective commitment to creating safe and responsive learning environments. By equipping schools with life-saving tools and clear procedures, both the province and district aim to improve emergency response outcomes and foster confidence among students, staff, and families.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BY THE NUMBERS

3571 students are enrolled in schools across Rocky Mountain School District - **1333** in Windermere Zone, **1268** in Kimberley Zone, **891** in Golden Zone and **79** Online. Additionally, **58** students are enrolled in our secondary schools as part of the Rocky Mountain International Student Program.



REGIONAL FOCUS ON OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Rocky Mountain School District is proud to be part of the Kootenay-Boundary Environmental Education Initiative (KBEE). This regional initiative unites 7 school districts in the Kootenay-Boundary region with the goal of better supporting students' understanding of their local environment and empowering thoughtful action through learning that is outdoor, experiential, place-based and place-conscious.

Evidence continues to show that there are many benefits to outdoor and place-based learning, including opportunities for authentic inquiry and increased engagement; development of communication, cooperation and creativity; supporting physical activity and health; and fostering environmental ethics and responsibility.



KBEE teachers across the southeast collaborate to provide meaningful, place-based learning opportunities for their students.

The KBEE is currently working on updates to resources, including an increased focus on particular benefits of Environmental Education that fit into the larger context of our district directions. Some themes have emerged and will be highlighted in the resource. These include:

- Indigenous Ways of Knowing
- First People's Principles of Learning;
- Health and Well-being;
- Assessment for Learning;
- Inclusion;
- Risk Management;
- Numeracy and Literacy;
- Climate Resilience.

It is hoped that the resources will encourage collaboration among teacher leaders, providing them with tools to showcase their practice and further build a culture of environmental responsibility, well-being and inclusion through engaging, experiential teaching and learning.

Other similar partnerships exist for Rocky Mountain School District including Classrooms to Communities (a BC Education Network), the Environmental Educators Provincial Specialist Association and the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network. The district also accesses resources and participates in initiatives coordinated by Take Me Outside as well as the Outdoor Learning School & Store. One example was the hugely successful Take Me Outside Event involving nearly 400 students from Kimberley last May.

Rocky Mountain School District's engagement in these regional initiatives and networks is well aligned with the District Strategic Plan priority areas and values. It reflects the district's commitment to ensuring every student has the opportunity to thrive, that we are attending to the health and well-being of the people in the organization, that we are building healthy school communities, and being true stewards for the future.

IN HONOUR OF INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES

Rocky Mountain School District is located on the traditional unceded territories of the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc Nations. We honour the cultures, languages, and First Nations people of these territories.

