

2022-2023 - Year 1

School Learning Plan

1. GENERAL SCHOOL STORY (TO BE UPDATED EACH YEAR)

šxʷwəqʷəθət Crosstown is a dynamic urban elementary school in the heart of Vancouver. It opened for Kindergarten to Grade Seven enrolment in September 2017 and now has 20 divisions and 460 students. We are the neighbourhood school for families living in parts of Yaletown, Chinatown, and the Downtown East Side. Our school population reflects this wonderful diversity of place. Welcoming brand-new immigrants to Canada, as well as Indigenous students whose families have lived on these lands since time immemorial, šxʷwəqʷəθət Crosstown is a very diverse community. There are over thirty different home languages spoken, with the most common being English, Spanish, Korean, Arabic, and Farsi. Forty-four percent of our students speak a home language other than English.

The šxʷwəqʷəθət Crosstown community is very proud of our həŋqəmiŋəŋ name, šxʷwəqʷəθət [shwa quwa set], which was gifted to us by the Musqueam Nation on March 9, 2020. Elder Larry Grant gifted the name and explained its meaning: “šxʷwəqʷəθət references a mode of transportation used by Musqueam people whereby they caught the tide as a shortcut from False Creek to Burrard Inlet. The meaning of this name is generally translated as ‘the place from which one can catch the tide.’” Since March 2020, we have been working to honour our name, learning about its meaning, spelling and pronunciation. This is an important part of our reconciliation work.

A key part of our school community are our parents and caregivers, including our active and supportive Parent Advisory Council (PAC). The šxʷwəqʷəθət Crosstown PAC provides fun events like dances, support for our wonderful Sun Run team and many school programs, and much more. Many of our parents and caregivers, including grandparents, foster parents, aunties, and older siblings, can often be seen on the playground, chatting with staff and other students before and after school.

We have valued community partnerships with Vancouver Society of Children’s Centres which runs before and after school care, as well as summer childcare on site. In addition, the Vancouver Firefighter Charities provide us with snacks throughout the year. The Vancouver School Board Community Schools Team provides a part time Youth and Family Worker to help support families and provides after school programming such as drama, yoga and science programs. The school itself is situated adjacent to Andy Livingstone Park, a City of Vancouver park, which serves as our playground.

Our unique location allows us access to many opportunities including ready access to the seawall around False Creek. Habitat Island is within walking distance, providing outdoor learning opportunities with a small stand of trees and shoreline environments. We also have easy access to Concord Pacific Park,

Chinatown, Hogan's Alley, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, and Science World. We have a valued community partnership with BC Place which allows us periodic access to their field as part of the Field of Dreams program.

The ƛxʷwəqʷəθət Crosstown students are very enthusiastic about opportunities offered to them. Our committed staff team volunteer to run a wide variety of sports teams including volleyball, basketball, soccer, badminton, track and field, and cross-country. Our teams are big! More than 90 students joined the track and field team, and more than 100 ran cross country this year. In addition, thanks to our parent volunteers, we also have a very special Sun Run team; with 103 registered members, two years in a row we won the prize for largest elementary team.

We have a well-established school wide positive behaviour support program (PBIS) which forms part of our Code of Conduct, and helps us explain expectations and solve problems when needed. We are the ƛxʷwəqʷəθət Crosstown CROWS – Caring, Responsible, Optimistic, Wise, and Safe. Staff give CROW cards to students 'doing the right thing' as a way to make these values visible. Our CROWS matrix, which sets out positive expectations, supports the social and emotional well-being of all students.

2. WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS? (SCANNING)

Our community of learners is very diverse - culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically. Our community includes families living in economically vulnerable circumstances, for whom we provide snacks, lunches, and some modest supports for out of school programming. We also know that some of our families live in economically privileged circumstances. Approximately half of our students speak a language other than English in the home; 34% of our students are considered English Language Learners. About 5% of our learners identify as Indigenous. About 9% of our learners have a d need that is recognized by the Ministry of Education. We know that our learners bring a wide range of skills, knowledge, and experiences to our community.

3. WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE LEARNERS? (SCANNING)

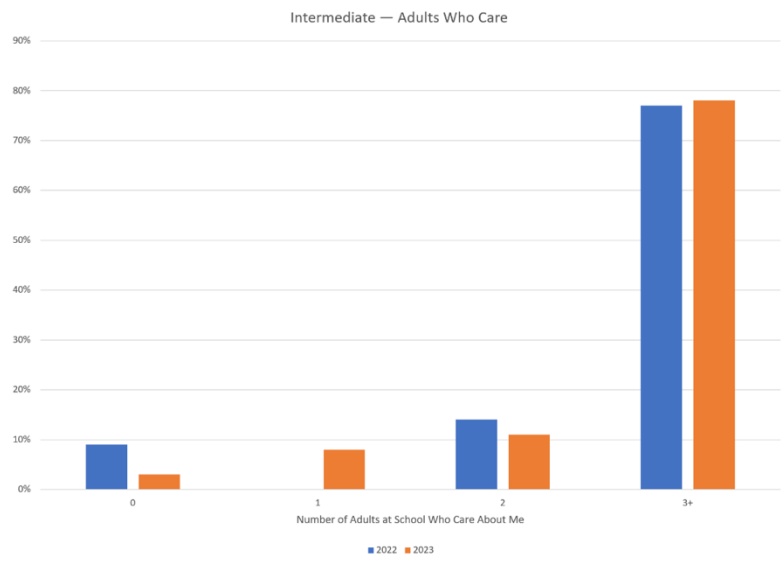
In the spring of 2021, our Grade Seven students completed the Middle Years Development Instrument. We used key parts of this report to think about the needs of our learners – in particular, self-esteem, the number of students who would talk to an adult at school, and connection to adults at school. The student responses indicated that belonging was an area we should be focusing on.

An important demographic for our community is the rapid changes that we see with our student population. We have grown from a community of four divisions in 2017 to a school of twenty divisions

We collected direct student voice, and qualitative and quantitative data by conducting brief interviews with a random sample of five students from each division, using questions modified from the Network of Inquiry and Indigenous Education questions. We asked: *Can you name adults at school who care about you? What are you learning? Why is it important? How is your learning going? What will you learn next? What are you proud of? Do you think adults at school listen to you?*

Comparative data from 2022 and 2023 for Primary and Intermediate students – the number of adults named who care about them:





Our scanning process and discussions, including looking at the MDI, student interviews and demographic information, led us to the Core Competencies as a way to focus on a ‘big idea.’ Given the rapid growth that our school community continues to experience, we chose to focus our efforts on increasing a sense of belonging. We know that many of our learners may be with us for a short time, may join us during the school year, may be learning a new culture and language. We want to focus our attention on enabling all our learners to make meaningful connections with adults, peers, and the greater school community.

4. WHAT IS THE FOCUS FOR OUR COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS BASED ON THE EVIDENCE? (FOCUSING)

We see our incredible diversity as an asset and a strength. Many of our students speak multiple languages, have varied life experiences, and deep knowledge of cultures and places. “Share your story,” is our student-friendly way to articulate our plan to increase belonging by focusing on the Core Competency of Positive Personal and Cultural Identity. This relates directly to the VSB Education Plan’s goal of improving student achievement, physical and mental well-being, and belonging. Encouraging students to “share your story” is rooted in the First Nations Principles of Learning, particularly the principle that learning requires exploration of one’s identity. Belonging is a guiding principle of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement: “Each Aboriginal learner and family must experience a sense of belonging and place within educational settings...”

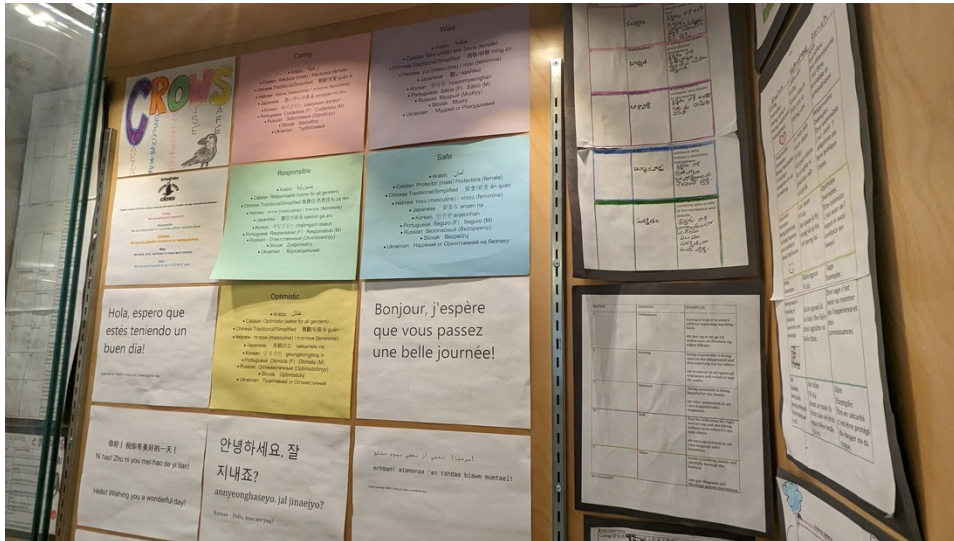
5. INQUIRY QUESTION (FOCUSING)

How can a focus on “Share Your Story” and the Core Competency of Positive Personal and Cultural Identity increase students’ sense of belonging to the ʂxʷwəq̓wəθət Crosstown community?

6. WHAT IS OUR PLAN? (PLANNING)

Our plan involves parents, students and staff, as we work to encourage students to share their stories, to explore and express their individual personal and cultural identities. Collective actions in the service of this goal include:

- Three Newcomer Welcome Teas were held for parents and caregivers, with language support in Farsi, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Arabic
- Our CROWS (Caring Responsible Optimistic Wise Safe) matrix was translated into many different languages, with the help of parents and students
- We have had weekly greetings in different home languages, presented by different students over the PA. A digital and print version of the “phrase of the week” are posted to Teams and around the school
- “Black History Matters” presentations given to all divisions, K to 7 by Presentation House Theatre
- “One Story for All” - a picture book about sharing stories, *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson was read by all classes on the same day. Two students created read-aloud videos of the story for the community – one in English and one in Spanish
- Belonging posters were put up throughout the school. These are large photos of students being caring, responsible, optimistic, wise, safe
- With the support of the Indigenous Education Department, two class sets of Indigenous drums were created (one set by staff and one set by a Grade Six/Seven class). A drum awakening ceremony with a bannock feast was held for the whole school
- Our ‘late slip,’ for students signing into the office, was changed to a “Welcome Slip” reading: *An halh skwalwen cht kwis tl'iknumiyap* (meaning: Our feelings are good that you arrived in Squamish)
- Our Division signs for lunch bins and inviting students into the school include the numbers in həŋqəmiŋəŋ
- A Chinese Lion Dance was performed and Chinese steamed vegetable *bao* (bun) treat was provided for the whole school
- Individual staff members have been choosing to “share their story” at staff meetings



Translated “Caring Responsible Optimistic Wise Safe” Display

For years two and three of our “Share Your Story” plan, we would like to continue with these initiatives and add some type of collective art display that individual students can add to whenever they arrive. We would like to have mini-posters created by each student sharing their story or their ‘superpower.’ We also plan to diversify our library collection to include books in home languages, which will relate directly to the Equity statement in the Education Plan: “having students see themselves and their communities in the curriculum.” Our Professional Development plans include connecting with local communities through the Hogan’s Alley Society and the Chinatown Storytelling Centre.

7. WHAT SUPPORTS WILL WE NEED? (PLANNING)

First and foremost, we will continue to use the expertise of our students and families as they share their linguistic skills and cultural knowledge with the community. We will be using library funding in the upcoming year to purchase books in home languages. This year we have been fortunate to be able to use provincial Student and Family Affordability Funds for several of our initiatives.

8. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE’RE ON TRACK? (CHECKING)

We will continue to gather student voice in the form of interviews in the spring. This provides both qualitative and quantitative data. We have baseline data from the spring of 2022 which we can use to

compare for all three years of this plan. We will also use the MDI results, particularly the section on Belonging. The Student Learning Survey also provides us with information about students' sense of self and connection to the community.

9. HOW WILL WE SHARE THIS INFORMATION? (CHECKING)

Information about our "Share your story" plan is shared at PAC meetings, weekly updates to families from the principal, and with students in all classes. There are displays within the school and announcements on the PA system.



District-wide Indigenous Focus (worldviews): To increase knowledge, acceptance, empathy, awareness and appreciation of Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions among all learners.

10. WHAT LEARNING HAVE WE DONE AT OUR SCHOOL TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE?

A large part of our reconciliation story involves our hən̓q̓əmiñəm name, šx̣wəq̣wəθt. This name was gifted to us in March 2020 by Elder Larry Grant from the Musqueam Nation. Its meaning, "the place from which one can catch the tide" is related to our geographical location near the shores of False Creek. Since receiving the name, we have been working to honour it by teaching all community members how to say it and what it means. From our office staff answering the phones, to the signage at the front of the building, to our Welcome to Kindergarten program, we are proud to use our name.

During the 2021-22 school year, we were fortunate to have all of our classes learn about cedar canoe building from skwxwu7mesh carver Mike Billy Sr. and his team at Canoe Cultures, located by False Creek. This was an experience that many students still talk about. Also in that year, we commissioned artists KC Hall and David Nelson to create a mural on the fourth floor featuring our CROWS motto. KC Hall is a member of the Heiltsuk Nation.

- Indigenous learning throughout the curriculum including art, math, science
- Numerous picture books in school library by Indigenous authors
- Celebrating National Indigenous Day with a week-long celebration of contemporary Indigenous music played on the PA system, including showing videos in classrooms

In addition, many classes regularly enact land-based learning, or learning in place by walking and learning around False Creek, Stanely Park, and other local areas.

It is important to note that the First Nations Principles of Learning form a large part of our reconciliation journey, as teachers and support workers try to embed the principles throughout the curriculum and the school day.

11. WHAT EVIDENCE OF UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS AND KNOWLEDGE HAVE BEEN FOSTERED WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY? PLEASE SHARE HOW IT IS EMBEDDED THROUGHOUT.

In the spring of 2022, we asked all students from Kindergarten to Grade Seven, three questions:

A) What have you **learned** about Indigenous cultures and traditions this year?

B) How do you think this learning **relates** to your own life?

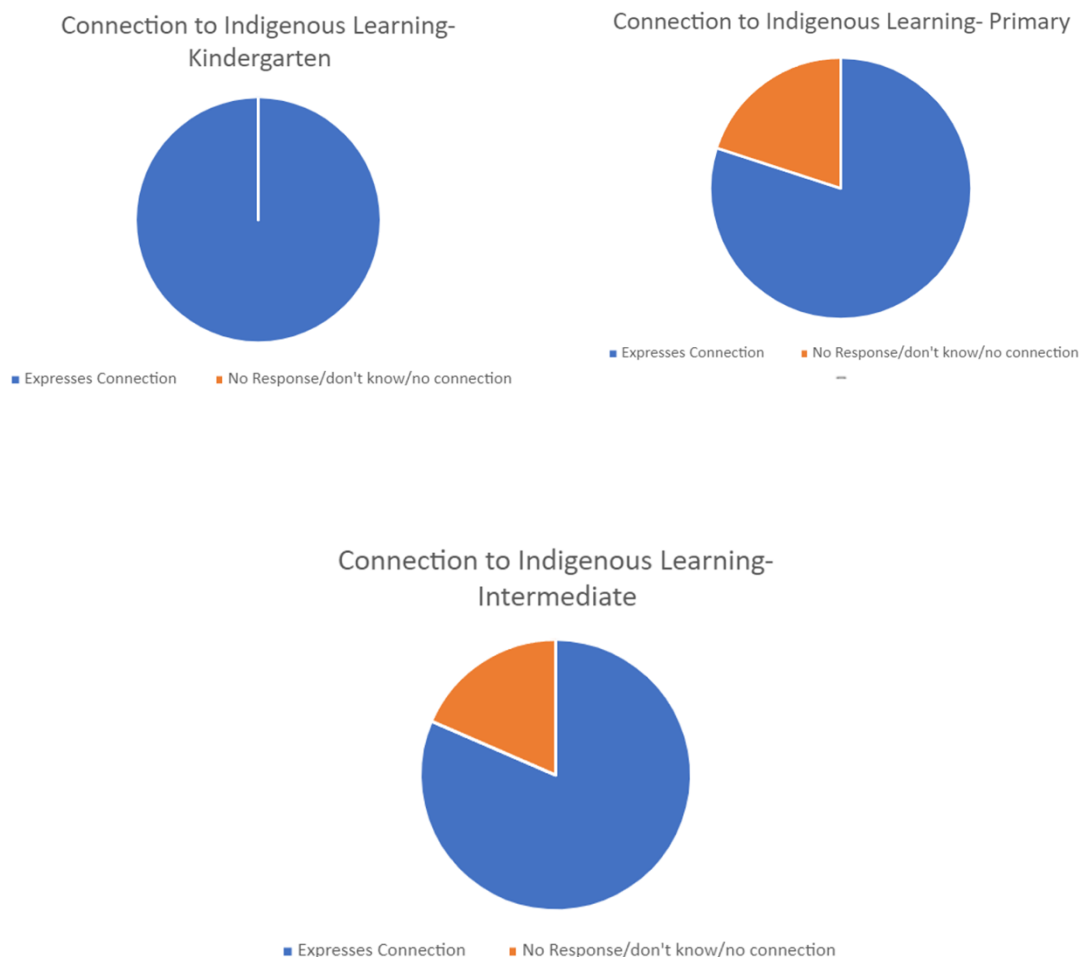
C) What do you **wonder** about First Nations cultures, traditions or histories?

Students were given the option to draw, write or have their words scribed. Staff looked at the results and discussed how to go forward with our teaching and learning. We noted that students talked about a range of topics they had learned about including Residential schools, canoes, colonialism, drumming, and art. Most students were able to make some connection to their own lives, including attending a school with an Indigenous name, living on Indigenous land, learning from families, or themselves being Indigenous. The 'wonders' were similarly varied and helped us think about where to go next.

In the spring of 2023, we refined our questions, most notably by including the contemporary context of Indigenous people being part of our local and school community. We asked all students:

- A) We have many different people and cultures as part of our community at šxʷwəqʷəθət Crosstown. We spend time learning about these cultures and learning about and from each other. It is particularly important to learn about Indigenous people and cultures. What do you **know** about Indigenous peoples and cultures (contributions, stories, history, traditions, language...)?
- B) We have many Indigenous people in our communities. They make many contributions to our city, our province and our country. How do you think learning about Indigenous people **connects** to your own life?
- C) What do you **wonder** about Indigenous people in our community, our country, or in the world?

This year, students had a much wider range of answers to the first and second questions – they told us about clam gardens, Robert Davidson, Indigenous people in the War of 1812, colonization, Inukshuks, plant medicine and many, many more topics, in addition to residential schools, art, and drumming. Although some students still report having no connection to this learning, many reported very meaningful connections, such as the land they live on, better understanding their new country, Indigenous people from other parts of the world, learning about nature, and speaking different languages (see graphs below).



Students' wonders are similarly varied, with some wanting to learn more about Indigenous languages, wondering about how Indigenous people arrived in these lands, how many Canadians are Indigenous, about the on-going effects of colonization, as well as about traditional knowledge and ways of being.

Staff gathered to look at and consider the student responses. We will continue to use student voice to plan the next steps of our Reconciliation journey.

12. HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE AND KNOWLEDGE?

Our future plans include continuing and enhancing our land-based learning opportunities. We also plan to connect with local Elders and knowledge keepers. We are hoping to be able to work with Elders from the Carnegie Centre on an Indigenous Gardening project in the coming year. The on-going commitment of staff and our parents who work alongside us, will continue to be a part of our reconciliation journey as we plan next steps together.