

SCHOOL DISTRICT 63 (SAANICH)

EDUCATION DIRECTIONS COMMITTEE

**Report to the Board of April 22, 2026**

Committee Members:	Trustee Silzer, Chair Trustee Vandall Trustee VanWell
Staff Support:	Helena Takhar, Director of Instruction, Learning & Innovation Melanie Paas, Assistant Superintendent
Partner Representatives:	Ryan Ellis, SAA Leila Sinclair-Wise, SAA - regrets STA – regrets CUPE – Robyn Cameron COPACS – regrets
Other Attendees:	Chair Dunford, Trustee Elder, Peter Westhaver – Assistant Superintendent, Dave Eberwein – Superintendent

**Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

**A. PRESENTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

1. Student Voice – Indigenous Student Success – February 2026

Presentation by Helena Takhar & Melissa Austin highlighted strengths in Saanich and identified persistent achievement gaps for Indigenous learners, emphasizing the need to address systemic barriers, including the racism of low expectations. Students valued existing Indigenous supports (e.g., land acknowledgements, ceremonies, Indigenous educators, Elders, cultural spaces) but called for these to be consistent, sustained, and equitable across all schools. Students advocated for system-wide change, including embedded experiential and land-based learning, balanced Indigenous curriculum (historical and contemporary), and clearer education, reporting, and accountability to address racism, particularly online.

**B. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

No Items.

**C. ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

2028/29 Proposed School Calendar

**Motion:**

As per Board Policy 17 (Public Consultation), that the Board forward the 2028/29 Draft School Calendar for public consultation for the period of April 23, 2026 to May 21, 2026.

**D. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

No Items.

**E. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Data Sharing around Strategic Plan Goals – ongoing
- Student Voice Feedback – ongoing
- Benefits of International Student Program

# Student Voice: Indigenous Learner Success

February 2026



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# Core Challenges

## Achievement Gap

Data shows Indigenous students are not achieving at the same levels as non-Indigenous peers.

## Systemic Barriers

The "racism of low expectations" is a key contributing factor, shaping outcomes for students.

## Our Goal

Explore strategies to reduce barriers and meaningfully support Indigenous learner success.

# What Opportunities Currently Exist?



## Visible Indigenous Presence

- Land Acknowledgements
- Ceremonies
- Assemblies
- Visual Art
- Language Resources and Signage
- Cultural Events



## Trusted Cultural Supports

- Indigenous Educators
- Cultural Rooms
- Trusted Adults that provide:
  - safety
  - belonging
  - regulation



## Indigenous Focused Courses

- SENĆOŦEN
- English First People
- Contemporary Indigenous Studies
- Locally Developed Course - I , TOTEL , NEW , E TŦE Á , LENENEŦŦE
- BC First People



## Experiential & Relational Learning

- Elders In Residence
- Classroom Guests (Knowledge Keepers and Elders)
- Community-based experience and learning on the land
- Beading, drumming, Lahal, Community Dinners



## Growing Student Awareness

- WŦÁNEŦ People and Culture
- WŦÁNEŦ History and Teachings
- WŦÁNEŦ Territory
- Responsibility to learn on Indigenous Land



## Student Engagement

- High levels of student engagement, Indigenous Leadership
- Strong student insight and reflection
- Clear readiness to deepen learning and contribute to an inclusive, anti-racist school culture

\*\*\*Students see many meaningful initiatives but note that access, depth and consistency are uneven.

# Opportunities to Add

Students identified a wide range of ideas to deepen Indigenous learning across the district



Learning and Curriculum



Responding to Discrimination



Visibility and Community



Building a Culture of Support



# Learning and Curriculum

*Student emphasis:* Learning is deepest when it is relational, place-based, and lived.

- Embed Indigenous Ways of Knowing across all subject areas, not isolated in electives or humanities
- Expand experiential, land-based, and hands-on learning (arts, science, outdoor learning, food, sport)
- Sustain Elder and Knowledge Keeper involvement, including Elders-in-Residence models
- Balance learning so that it includes contemporary Indigenous life, culture, resilience, and innovation; not only historical trauma
- Increase access to SENĆOŦEN, modeled similarly to other language programs



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# Visibility and Community

*Student emphasis: Visibility should feel authentic and be ongoing.*

- Ensure that Indigenous learning is visible in daily school life, not only special days or assemblies
- Strengthen connections to local Nations, land, and territory in signage, curriculum, and communication
- Increase community-based activities (dinners, ceremonies, projects, gatherings) that build belonging for all students
- Ensure Indigenous perspectives are represented as living, contemporary, and diverse, not symbolic or repetitive
- Expand opportunities that include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, reinforcing shared responsibility





# Responding to Discrimination

*Student emphasis:* Racism is happening, especially online, and students need skills not just messaging.

- Provide explicit teaching on racism, microaggressions, bystander intervention, and online discrimination
- Offer clear guidance for students on what to say, what to do, and where to go when harm occurs
- Provide stronger, more consistent adult responses and follow-through when racism is reported
- Increase transparency around accountability, learning, and repair (not just “talking to” students)
- Ensure education addresses modern realities, including social media, online spaces, and digital harms



# Building a Culture of Support



*Student emphasis:* Supports exist but trust, accessibility, and cultural safety determine whether students use them.

- Expand and protect safe cultural spaces that are accessible, respected, and adequately resourced
- Increase Indigenous staffing and culturally responsive supports, including counsellors and liaisons
- Strengthen trauma-informed approaches, recognizing intergenerational trauma and lived experience
- Build trust over time through relational practice, consistency, and cultural humility
- Improve clarity and visibility of supports, especially in online environments

## Questions for District Leaders



*Student were asked: If you could interview school district leaders on Indigenous Learner Success, what would you ask?*

“

How are you making sure we keep learning about Indigenous peoples every year, in every school and program?

”

“

How are teachers and staff learning how to notice and stop microaggressions and support students who have experienced trauma?

”

“

What will adults do when racism happens to make sure it's taken seriously and dealt with right away?

”

“

How are you listening to Indigenous students, families, and communities and using what they say to make decisions?

”

“

How will we know if things are actually getting better for Indigenous students, and who is responsible for making that happen?

”

“

What are you doing to make sure students feel safe, supported, and brave enough to speak up when something isn't right?

”

# Moving Forward Together

Every student deserves to see themselves reflected in their education. By listening to Indigenous learners and acting on their ideas, we build a school community rooted in respect, belonging, and shared responsibility.



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To: Education Directions Committee

Prepared By: Melanie Paas  
Assistant Superintendent

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Subject: School Calendar 2028-2029

Date: March 11, 2026

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### Background / Rationale

As part of our ongoing collaboration with School Districts 61 and 62, we continue to project and review school calendars on a three-year cycle to support long-term planning for families, staff, and the broader community.

Representatives from School Districts 61, 62, and 63 met to explore alignment for the 2028–2029 school year, focusing on statutory holidays, winter and spring break, non-instructional days, and district closure periods. The draft calendar was shared with partner groups (STA, CUPE, SAA) for feedback and recommended adjustments.

The attached Draft 2028–2029 School Calendar is now prepared for review by the Education Directions Committee.

### Context

Under the School Calendar Regulation (*last amended September 5, 2025 by B.C. Reg. 146/2025P*), boards must submit the school calendar for the coming school year to the Ministry of Education no later than March 31 for the subsequent school year. Boards must also make proposed calendars publicly available one month before submission to the Minister. Since we are on a 3-year planning cycle, we have exceeded these timelines.

The 2028–2029 Draft Calendar is proposed to be released for public consultation from April 23, 2026 to May 21, 2026. This consultation window provides sufficient time for families and employees to offer feedback prior to the calendar returning to the Board for potential adjustments and formal adoption at the June 2026 Board meeting.

The proposed calendar meets the established expectations and obligations of the district, including:

- Alignment with the Saanich Teachers' Association Collective Agreement, which stipulates:
  - Spring Break begins on the third Monday in March (D.14.2.c) and Winter Break begins on the Monday previous to December 26th (D.14.2.b).
- Continuation of the district's one-week spring break plus one-week closure model originally adopted in 2013–14.
- Coordination with School Districts 61 and 62 to align key dates, particularly winter break, spring break, and closure periods.
- Ensuring a balanced distribution of non-instructional (professional development) days between semesters.

The attached draft calendar outlines proposed instructional days, vacation periods, statutory holidays, and district closure dates for the 2028–2029 school year.

### Recommendation

*As per Board Policy 17, that the Board forward the 2028/2029 Draft School Calendar for public consultation for the period of April 23, 2026 to May 21, 2026.*

Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Paas  
Assistant Superintendent

MP/skd

# SAANICH SCHOOL DISTRICT (63)

## DRAFT 2028/2029 CALENDAR

JULY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

AUGUST						
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27	28	29	30	31		

SEPTEMBER						
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OCTOBER						
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NOVEMBER						
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DECEMBER						
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31						

JANUARY						
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28	29	30	31			

FEBRUARY						
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25	26	27	28			

MARCH						
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

APRIL						
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29	30					

MAY						
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27	28	29	30	31		

JUNE						
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Instructional  
 Non-Instructional  
 Vacation Period  
 Closure  
 Statutory Holiday

## Saanich School District (63) School Calendar 2028-29

September 5, 2028	Schools Open
<b>September 22, 2028</b>	<b>Non-Instructional Day</b>
October 2, 2028 (for September 30)	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
October 9, 2028	Thanksgiving
<b>October 20, 2028</b>	<b>Non-Instructional Day</b>
November 13, 2028 (for November 11)	Remembrance Day
<b>November 20, 2028</b>	<b>Non-Instructional Day</b>
December 25, 2028 – January 5, 2029	Winter break
January 8, 2029	Schools reopen after winter break
<b>February 16, 2029</b>	<b>Non-Instructional Day</b>
February 19, 2029	Family Day
March 19-23, 2029	Spring break
March 26-29, 2029 and April 3, 2029	School closure
March 30, 2029	Good Friday
April 2, 2029	Easter Monday
<b>April 23, 2029</b>	<b>Non-Instructional Day</b>
<b>May 18, 2029</b>	<b>Non-Instructional Day</b>
May 21, 2029	Victoria Day
June 28, 2029	Last day of instruction
June 29, 2029	Administrative Day