

Jessie Duncan students and staff celebrate opening of new outdoor classroom

Jessie Duncan School's students and staff, and Penhold community members are celebrating the opening of their new outdoor classroom. The school hosted a celebration of the newly built space on Friday, October 13, 2023 with students, staff and a number of guests. Also, Indigenous Elder John Sinclair shared a blessing.

"This space can bring the students together so they develop a closer relationship and bond with each other, being in this tipi, being called 'our home'," said Indigenous Elder, John Sinclair. "I bless your home and to keep everybody that enters the home in a kind place."

"This is an amazing space for learning," said Kory Sholdice, Principal, Jessie Duncan School. "We are excited about the opportunities it will give us. We will learn more about Indigenous culture and teachings, and also about nature and science. We are also excited to have an outdoor learning environment. In a day and age of screen time and devices, having a special place like this is valuable. We have already seen how engaged our students are in the space and that's what we hoped would happen."

The new outdoor classroom includes a tipi designed by Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, Clare Butterfly. The tipi sits on a concrete slab donated by a local company. There is an Indigenous herb garden in the area, and additional landscaping done. Also, the school plans to add Indigenous art, and a class set of backpacks and tools to help students with their learning in the outdoor space.



School leaders with many project contributors including school council members, community leaders and organizations, Indigenous Elder John Sinclair, Chinook's Edge Board Vice Chair Sherry Cooper.

Justina Nygren, a Grade 3 student said, "I love that there are strawberries and raspberries in the garden."

"I got to help set [the tipi] up and every pole is used to set up, they all have names. I remember two of them: respect and kindness," said Kaydence Filipchuk, Grade 3 student.

"It teaches people about Indigenous stuff, and it also reminds me of my culture. I'm part Indigenous," said Ava Rutka, Grade 3 student.

Jessie Duncan School staff and school council worked together to fundraise more than \$15,000 towards the project through the school's spell-a-thon, Love Bug Boogie dance, and individual donations. Also, community organizations provided donations of cash, materials and labour.

Check out highlights from the opening ceremony: https://youtu.be/BP_QiNnvIBA



For instance, the concrete slab was completely donated. Also, the Town of Penhold helped to shape the earth before the slab went in. The value of the project is more than \$35,000. Donors will be recognized through a plaque placed in the garden.

“A sincere thank you to parents and community members and partners who invested their time and resources in this project,” said Sholdice.

“A lot of people put in a lot of hard work to see this project come to reality. We are thrilled with the result - a great learning environment for students! Thank you to everyone who helped in any way!”

Above: Elder John Sinclair with Jessie Duncan students.
Below: Chinook’s Edge Board Vice Chair Sherry Cooper brings greetings. Right, Vice Principal Susan Dillabough thanks Elder John Sinclair.



School Bus Safety week underway October 15-21, 2023

It’s School Bus Safety Week in Alberta from October 15 to 21, 2023. This year’s theme is: Stand Back from the Yellow and Black. To mark the week, schools can choose to have students participate in a poster contest:

<https://astac.ca/safety-week/>

Also, the division is currently conducting safety evacuation drills with students on every bus, so that in case of emergencies, students know how to respond. Nine of the division’s areas are complete and five more will be completed in the next week.

The division has 125 routes in total, and 120 drivers (91 Chinook’s Edge routes and 34 routes contracted to Prairie Bus Lines). Combined, division buses cover 16,464 kilometers per day. The division is grateful for the safety focus of all of its drivers as they drive that distance each day!



Left: Bus evacuation at Elnora School, where students learn to exit the bus from the back.

Right: Macey Kripps, a kindergarten student at Delburne School, successfully completes her first bus evacuation.



Chinook’s Edge teacher named “Shining Graduate”

Chinook’s Edge teacher Chelsea Wilson has been honoured as a “Shining Graduate” of the University of Lethbridge, after having just completed a Master of Education degree. Wilson teaches in Didsbury at Westglen School. Click [HERE](#) to read more. Congratulations Chelsea Wilson!