

## École Olds High School celebrates the return of diversity day

École Olds High School has returned to hosting a Diversity Day for students. The school has traditionally held the event once every three or four years, but due to the pandemic, the March 21, 2024 event was the first since 2019.

The purpose of the day was to increase understanding of people's perspectives and differences.

***"Now more than ever we need to embrace our differences," said Meaghan Reist, Principal of École Olds High School (ÉOHS). "It's easy to see the differences - physically, politically and spiritually - but beyond that is the commonality that we are all people. We each have a story to tell, and those stories are powerful. As we learn to understand each other, that gives us power as global citizens, but also as citizens of our local community. It creates a culture of peace."***

Reist said the school invests in Diversity Day because of its tremendously positive impact on students. ***"When students feel safe and accepted for who they are, they learn better and understand what it means to be a good citizen."***

Beverly Toews, an Academic Coach and Indigenous Education Liaison at ÉOHS, was the coordinator for

Diversity Day. She said the day is about challenging stereotypes and helping students find what they have in common.

***"We act as if stereotypes are true, but what is actually true is that stereotypes are often based on misinformation found in movies or in the news. When we get past these stereotypes, it's easy to see we have more in common than we previously thought, and we can become open to understanding and accepting other people," said Toews.***



Mary Tidlund, a Member of the Order of Canada, spoke to EOHS students at the school's diversity day. She is pictured above with her niece, Jana Kemmere, who is an EOHS teacher.



Toews shared one example of a student who attended a past Diversity Day who was reluctant to take in a session because of a stereotype. After the session the student commented to Toews that the presentation was impactful, and he felt the presenter was an incredible person.

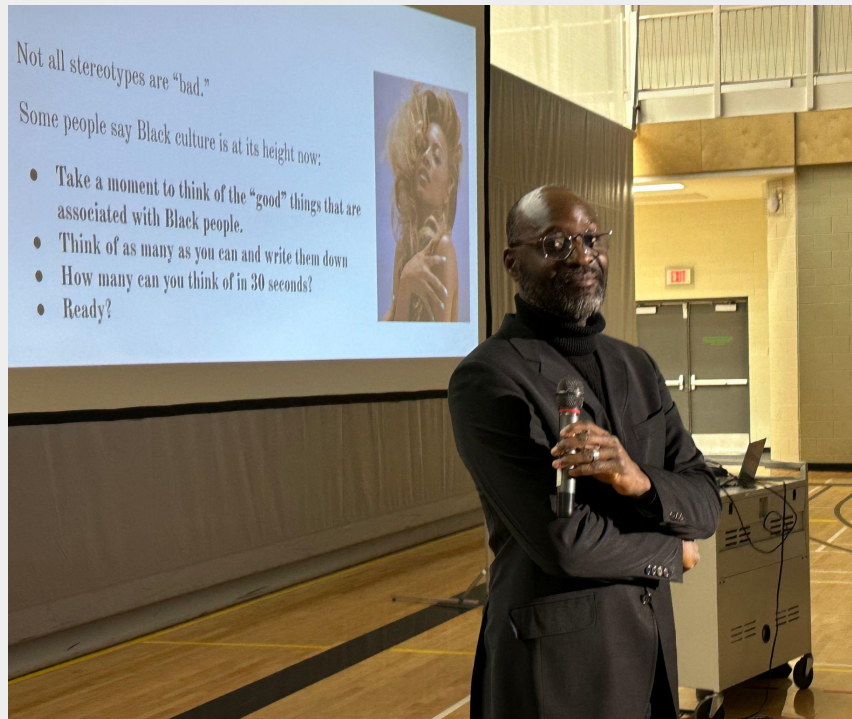
At the ÉOHS Diversity Day in 2024, students were able to attend three out of 15 available sessions.

The sessions included these topics:

- Emotional and intellectual intelligence, and why stereotypes are so powerful
- The experience of being a refugee
- The challenge of overcoming poor decisions
- The impact of stereotyping on an Indigenous person
- Indigenous culture - information about the land and traditional Indigenous medicines
- What is important in the Sikh culture, and what it is like to become Canadian
- What it is like to be mixed race, and to grow up as a hearing child of a deaf parent
- Traditions, celebrations and the reality of the Filipino culture
- Myths about, and realities for, people who experience homelessness
- Inclusion and diversity from the perspective of a biracial woman
- Creating safe and inclusive spaces
- What are the challenges and successes that come with having a developmental disability
- How natural disasters can impact individuals, families and communities
- Enjoying fashion trends in an environmentally sustainable way

Faith Webb, a Grade 10 ÉOHS student, said, ***“Diversity Day educates us on how there are differences in the world around us. It helps us understand more than what we think we know.”***

Anna Giesbrecht, a Grade 10 ÉOHS student, said, ***“This day helps all of us become better people, because we gain more understanding about people - about why they are the way they are, and why they do what they do.”***



The keynote speaker for Diversity Day was Bertrand Bickersteth, a former ÉOHS student, who is now a writer and educator who teaches Communications at Olds College of Agriculture & Technology. He also leads a support group for Black students at the college.





Ian Griffiths and Amy Braun perform a musical number at Diversity Day. Together they make up HALF/ASIAN and Amy the CODA.

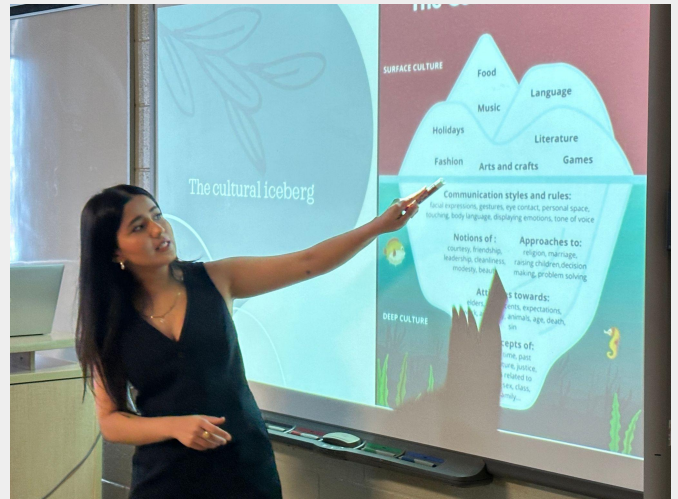
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In his presentation, Bickersteth spoke about the powerful impact of stereotypes. He shared personal experiences demonstrating how stereotypes are a challenge. He told students that while we often consider that history is factual, often ***“history emerges from discourse”***.

Amy Braun and Ian Griffiths introduced students to identity based art, through their performing group called HALF/ASIAN and Amy the CODA. Griffiths is mixed race, and Braun is the Child of a Deaf Adult (CODA), a graduate of ÉOHS, and a previous Diversity Day participant. Together they make synth-pop music with sign language. In their session they shared different, but parallel experiences of feeling different than others. Braun commented that she finds performing their music “is a tool for healing”. Braun, who uses sign language while she performs, said she has come to embrace both the deaf culture of her mother and her growing up years, along with her hearing side.

Mary Tidlund spoke to students, with her niece, Jana Kemmere - who is a teacher at ÉOHS. Tidlund is a biracial woman who became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2023, recognized for her “innovative leadership in the oil and gas industry, and for her transformational philanthropy in Canada and abroad”. Tidlund shared her journey of being abandoned at birth, becoming a foster child, being adopted, and eventually reconnecting with her birth parents. She told students how embracing diversity shaped her life and career.

***“It was really special to be here today with the students. My biological mother lived in Bowden my biological father attended Olds College, and I currently have family in Bowden and Olds, so this kind of brings me home. It was a joy to be here with my niece, Jana Kemmere,”*** said Mary Tidlund. ***“My message to the students was that there are so many different kinds of diversity... and to believe in each other and support each other. I challenged them to ask themselves what they can do to be inclusive. Someone doesn’t have to look like you or talk like you to matter and, it can enrich your life.”***



Harkirat Kaur spoke about her experience as an immigrant to Canada.

Harkirat Kaur is a Sikh immigrant to Canada who lives in Olds and works as project manager in oil and gas. Kaur emphasized the importance of having conversations that help people understand one another, and to break free of assumptions and stereotypes. ***“There are a lot of monologues in the world, but to build understanding, we need dialogues. We need to be curious. We tend to put each other in boxes, but when we become aware of the lens we are looking through, we see the rich layers that make up the people around us.”***

Kaur said she appreciates the power of an event like Diversity Day. ***“Being an immigrant, I can see how important it is for people to understand a variety of perspectives. We don’t know what we don’t know, but we can learn!”***





# Chinook's Edge School Division nominates McMan Central for Friends of Education Award...

## *in appreciation of work with families and students to increase mental health*

The Chinook's Edge School Board has nominated a community partner for the Friends of Education Award. The Board has submitted its nomination of McMan Youth, Family & Central Services Association (McMan Central) to the Alberta School Boards Association for consideration.

***“Student mental health is a priority and we specifically appreciate the family component of this pilot project, which McMan Central has taken on,” said Holly Bilton, Board Chair, Chinook's Edge School Division. “We are grateful for the valuable partnership with McMan Central and for the positive impact it is having on families, and especially for our students.”***

***“We are appreciative of the work McMan Central has done with families in Central Alberta,” said Marcie Perdue, Associate Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division. “We believed we could positively impact students by supporting their families, and this pilot - and the work of McMan Central specifically - is showing us that is true.”***

McMan Central is one of three partners, along with Chinook's Edge School Division and Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools, in a \$1.4 million [provincial mental health pilot](#) aimed at improving the social emotional well being of students.

The project aims to increase mental health resilience amongst students and families by developing a strong social emotional learning foundation, and facilitating transitions and access to, through and from community mental health supports and services.

**This project is unique in the province of Alberta**, in that it directly includes families in the effort to support student wellness.



McMan Central's role in the project is focused on reaching out to Chinook's Edge families to facilitate community mental health supports and services through three Family Enrichment workers. The family connection component of the mental health pilot project is unique, and one that is essential for achieving project goals.

Since the project started in January 2023, McMan Central has served more than 200 families, many of which are at a crisis level or have complex challenges surrounding child behavior, routines, positive discipline strategies and overall home management. Families who are referred to the program work with staff to create goals surrounding what families would like to see improve in their lives - many of these goals surround the emotional regulation of themselves and their children. Staff provide, model, and assist in implementation of positive parenting skills that focus on risk reduction and increase in resiliency of parents and children.

According to a McMan assessment:

- There was an 85% increase in parent skill in addressing mental health concerns compared to when families were first referred
- 82% of parents who engaged in services with McMan implemented strategies that were suggested to them



On McMan client surveys:

- 100% of families said McMan staff helped them achieve their goals
- 100% of families said services were provided in a timely and effective manner
- 100% of families expressed satisfaction with services provided by McMan

Also, because of McMan Central's work with students, Chinook's Edge has seen students who were chronic non-attenders coming back to school. These are students that have traditionally been difficult to reach and to engage in school.

***"We are so pleased to see students in this group becoming re-engaged at school," said Perdue, "and we are thankful for McMan Central's contribution to this significant achievement."***

***"McMan Central is both humbled and honored that Chinook's Edge School Division would nominate our organization for this award," said Dixie McLeod, Senior Practice Specialist, McMan Central. "Student mental health has been a significant challenge for years. The importance of this project is that it allows the team to look beyond student mental health to include family mental health. If the family can thrive, then the student can thrive too."***



***"This is a very unique project in the province of Alberta. Having a school division partner with a community non-profit like McMan Central, shows progressive and innovative leadership from a school division. This is a true collaboration. It involves trust and commitment to work together with the central focus being students and families," said McLeod.***

***"Ensuring students are ready to learn when they come to school is becoming an increasingly complex challenge," said Kurt Sacher, Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division.***

***"Through the Board's leadership, advocacy and support for Mental Health - and through our partnership with McMan Central in this pilot project - we are seeing a positive impact for students. We are proud of that, and we express our sincere thanks to everyone at McMan for the work they are doing."***

## Chinook's Edge staff member combines love of 3D printing with desire to help hospitalized children

A Chinook's Edge staff member is making a difference in the lives of hospitalized children. Myles Doupe, a member of the Chinook's Edge technology team, is donating toys he has created on his 3-D printer to the Red Deer Hospital Foundation. The foundation gives them to the hospital to share with children during their stay.

Myles Doupe heard about the need for toys from his wife, Shanna Doupe, who works for the Foundation. That was six months ago. Since then, he has donated

50 plastic toys that he printed on his personal 3D printer.

Shanna Doupe said, "When I mentioned the need for toys in the Emergency Department, Myles immediately jumped at the chance to help. He took his passion for 3D printing and said, 'How can I help someone?' When people jump in with both feet to help in whatever way they can, big or small, the world is a better place."



Myles Doupe said, "I'm passionate about 3D printing and if I can use it to make someone's stay in the emergency room a little more tolerable, it's win-win in my books."





# Two Chinook's Edge students advance to provincial Skills competition in May

Congratulations to the Chinook's Edge students who competed in regional [Skills Canada](#) competitions! Students entering regional events compete in 45 different trade and technology areas, demonstrating skills they have learned.

Travis Lorenz, an Ecole H.J. Cody student, won silver in construction at regionals, and Johan Eriksson, a Didsbury High School student, won bronze. Both advance to provincial competition in Edmonton on May 8 - 9, 2024.

Chinook's Edge welding students who participated in regionals:

- Brielle Underhill - Sundre High School
- Matthew Hodge - Didsbury High School
- Pacey Sparks - Bowden Grandview School
- Liam Churchill - Hugh Sutherland School
- Dawson Smith - Hugh Sutherland School
- Nathan Parker - Hugh Sutherland School
- Keagen McKay - Hugh Sutherland School

Chinook's Edge construction students who participated in regionals:

- Ryder Mierke - Didsbury High School
- Travis Lorenz - HJ Cody High School
- Johan Eriksson - Didsbury High School
- Kaede Thompson - HJ Cody High School



Two of the 3 students who qualified for provincial skills competition in construction are from Chinook's Edge: Travis Lorenz (center) and Johan Eriksson (right).

## École H.J. Cody hosts its first career fair and job expo



*"A huge thank you to community businesses and organizations who presented at the career fair," said Alex Lambert, Principal, École H.J. Cody High School.*

*"Our students appreciated the opportunity to ask questions and explore what they might want to do once they graduate from high school. This was an incredibly valuable opportunity for our students," said Lambert.*

On March 21, 2024 École H.J. Cody High School hosted its first ever career fair and job expo. Students attended during an assigned block of time during the day to provide them with time to talk to presenters.



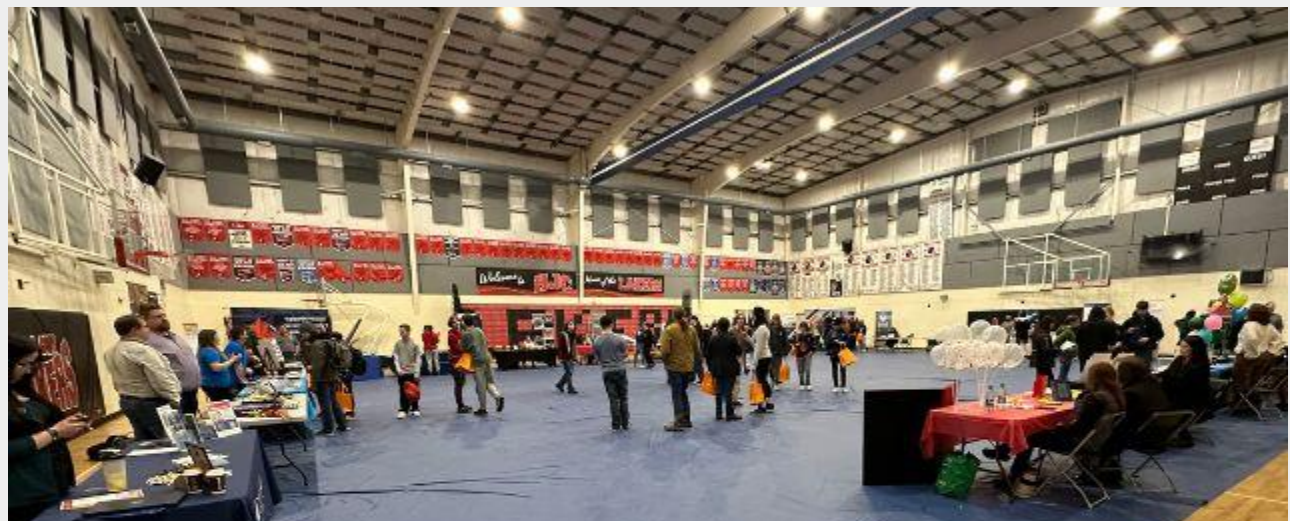




Careers: The Next Generation partnered with H.J. Cody on the project, advertising the event and working with local businesses and organizations who might want to participate.

***“We had some great feedback from students, as well as from presenters and teachers,” said Darla Bell, Off Campus Coordinator, H.J. Cody. “Presenters told us they appreciated how engaged the students were at their booths, and that they received excellent questions and had good conversations.”***

Bell said the school also hosts a career day, where presenters visit the school and speak with class groups. Bell said that is a positive event as well, although one of the advantages of the career fair is that it is easier for students to ask questions because they were in smaller groups.





# École H.J. Cody High School's 'Creative Gems' launches thrift store with clothes offered for free - as thank you



École H.J. Cody High School's Creative Gems program has successfully opened a thrift store for students at the school.

***“Our school and community has been incredibly supportive of our Creative Gems program and students,” said Holly Schultz, an Educational Assistant at H.J. Cody. “We wanted to do something that says thank you, and this is what we came up with.”***

## **Creative Gems creates opportunities for students to gain skill and build confidence**

Creative Gems runs as a small business within the school, providing real life marketing, and sales opportunities for life skills students. Often, work experience students support the projects underway, gaining credit and positive experiences. In the past, students - through Creative Gems - have sold wooden and other crafts that the students helped to make at a community Christmas market, they have run the concession at the school play, and they have sold cupcake bouquets for Mother's Day. The profits from the sales go towards trips for the students, and into supplies for future projects.

***“Creative Gems is so awesome because we do stuff,” said Patrick Carroll, an H.J. Cody student. “It makes me happy. I like to make crafts and help with the market.”***

***“These projects are so good for the students,” said Jamie Fisher, an Educational Assistant at H.J. Cody. “They learn practical skills they will use in their lives. Also, they gain social skills as they become more confident speaking with the public.”***

Maylee Cran is an H.J. Cody student that supports the Creative Gems as a work experience assignment. Cran said, ***“I like working with the kids. It's a good life experience. I feel that the kids at H.J. Cody are more inclusive than I thought.”***

Roy Allen is another work experience student from H.J. Cody who works with Creative Gems. ***“It taught me good life skills like learning patience and how to communicate,” said Allen. “It makes you feel a part of something, and it makes you proud to be a student at H.J. Cody.”***





## Creative Gems thrift store provides clothing for free

The thrift store project is the newest edition to the Creative Gems roster of activities. It opened last week and will this final week of March as well. Any student or staff can come to the thrift store, and the items are available for no cost.

***“Having everything offered for free reduces stigma,” said Fisher. “It’s kind of like our breakfast programs. You don’t have to qualify to participate. Just come, enjoy, and feel free to take something that makes you feel good.”***

Rudie Olson, a Grade 11 H.J. Cody student, said, ***“Having everything free definitely reduces stigma.”***

Emma Wallace, a Grade 10 H.J. Cody student, said, ***“You can’t not love free clothes.”*** Wallace is friends with one of the Creative Gems crew. When walking into the thrift store, Wallace gave her friend a high five. ***“Yeah, we’re good buddies. I like that this thrift store includes everyone.”***

Fisher and Schultz said the community support of the thrift store has been strong. ***“Our community paper was good to run an article, with a call out for donations, and that’s when donations really started to come in,”*** said Schultz.



Top left: Creative Gems students work on crafts to sell at markets

Top right (left to right): Holly Schultz, Hailey Schultz, Amanda Nightingale, Katie Muir and Tyler McMulloch



Left: At the Christmas market

Fisher recalled, ***“We said we were in need of donations and our community came out for us. We received piles and piles of clothing.”***

Schultz added that a Red Deer thrift store let the school take donations they didn’t have space for. Other businesses donated clothing and hangers. One business donated clothing racks. Schultz said, ***“Also, individuals gave a lot - for instance a Mom of one of our students donated several Lululemon items that she could have sold. The support from everyone has been incredible.”***

Fisher said, ***“Our community comes together here time and time again. It just happens, and that says a lot about this community.”***

***“Thank you Creative Gems staff and students for this beautiful gift to our school,”*** said Alex Lambert, Principal H.J. Cody. ***“Your contributions add so much to H.J. Cody! Also, thanks to our community for the way you’ve gotten behind this project. Your support is tangible and it matters!”***





# Penhold Elementary School's Makers Market ignites young entrepreneurial spirits



Penhold Elementary School has had a successful experience running its first ever Makers Market. Forty students chose to participate, selling items they had crafted at home at an evening market at the school hosted on the same night as parent teacher interviews.

*“For many months, our students have been asking to sell some of their made goods at recess and lunchtime, and we wanted to offer them the opportunity to showcase their craft,” said Lisa Baird, Principal, Penhold Elementary School.*

*“Witnessing our students turn their passions into products and their ideas into realities is truly inspiring!” said Baird. “This event not only celebrates their craftsmanship, but also their determination, innovation and hard work. I am incredibly proud of each and every one of our young entrepreneurs for their dedication and success.”*

Baird said she is also impressed that some of the students have donated the profits from their sales to the school's playground fundraiser. In the fall of 2025, a new school will open - Penhold Waskasoo Middle School - and fundraising is underway for a playground for the new school site.

## Skills and wisdom gained

Everly Reilly and Summer Conrad, Grade 4 students, partnered to make and sell jewelry and lip scrubs.

*“We like to make these for ourselves and we thought other people would like them too,” said Conrad.*

*“We are donating everything to our new playground,” said Reilly, “and after one night we have already have \$116!”*

By the end of the project, the pair had donated over \$200 to the playground, and one of the student's parents businesses matched the donation to the playground.

Another gain is the wisdom from the experience.

*“A lot of people coming at one time was challenging,” said Reilly.*





***“It was a long process to get everything ready,” said Conrad. “You have to put time into your necklaces and earrings or else they won’t turn out good and people will not want to buy them.”***

Jace Joseph, a Grade 4 student, made watercolor paintings for the market. ***“I learned how to make signs to advertise my product and how to get change and make a float,” said Joseph.***

Macy McRae, a Grade 6 student, made crochet plushies and accessories. ***“I wanted to participate in the market because I thought it would be cool to see the reactions of people to what I have made, and what others have made,” said McRae. “I learned that if people don’t know what you’re selling, they won’t buy your product.”***

Kate Boese, a Grade 5 student, also made crocheted products. ***“I learned more about what people would buy,” said Boese. “People liked plushies, so I would focus on that more next time.”***

### **Thanks to the community for support**

Baird said, ***“Thank you to parents for supporting their children with these projects, and for coming out to support the market. It was a wonderful experience for the students.”***

