

Handmade with love:

Didsbury Grade 3 students receive special gift from their teacher and her Mom



Grade 3 students in Ms. Snyder's class at Ross Ford Elementary School in Didsbury are leaving the school year with a gift that will wrap them in warm memories. Teacher Joelle Snyder's Mom, Elaine Snyder, has made a lap quilt for each of the 26 students in the class, and this is the fourth year she has done so.

"I want to tell you a story," began Joelle Snyder, as she introduced what was to come, to her students.

"There was a special woman who didn't know what to do with all of her time during COVID. That woman was a seamstress. She looked at all of the material she had in her closet and decided she was going to make lap quilts."

That year, explained Joelle Snyder to her class, the woman made 54 quilts.

"She was going to give them to a thrift store, but the woman's daughter didn't like that idea. She

said 'the quilts are beautiful. People won't know how much time you've put into them.' And then the woman began thinking of what else to do," continued Joelle Snyder, telling the story to her students.

"That's when an idea formed. The woman thought of some special people that might like her quilts. Do you know who those special people were?" she asked.

With the class abuzz, Joelle Snyder then explained that the students in her class that year each received a quilt made by her mother.

Since that year, Elaine Snyder has created 136 lap quilts for students in her daughter's class. Some are quilted and some are crocheted. Each has a label on it stating the quilt was made for them by Elaine. Each is wrapped in a decorated and specially labeled bag, personalized to each student and placed on their desk for them to open.



“I love making quilts. It’s my happy time. And when I’m making them, I think of the child that will receive it and hope and pray for them to have a good life,” said Elaine Snyder. ***“My daughter loves her students. It doesn’t matter what class or what year. She is a good teacher.”***

“I love doing this,” said Joelle Snyder. ***“It’s so special to be able to give each student something from me and my Mom, that they can take with them and keep.”***

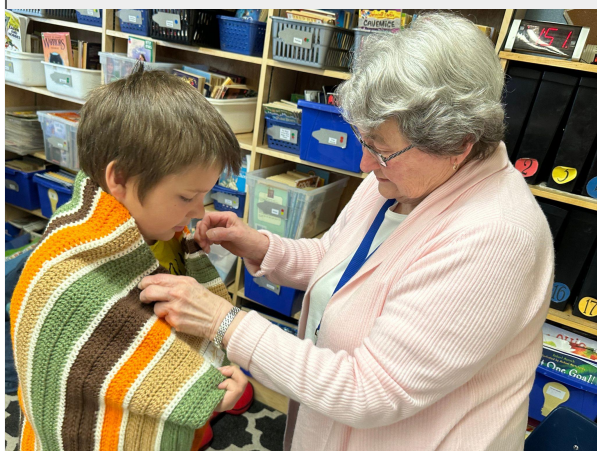
Joelle Snyder said in an earlier year one student was crying after receiving her blanket. She asked the student if perhaps she was disappointed in the colour, and the student told her, ***“I’ve just never had anything so beautiful.”*** Joelle Snyder said, ***“the students know this gift, just for them, is special.”***

Grade 3 student Presley Brander’s older sibling received a quilt in the past. ***“As soon as I saw Ms. Snyder’s Mom I knew what was happening today. But I didn’t say anything to ruin the surprise.”***

“I feel happy and thankful,” said Rodney Bergstrom, student. ***“I feel warm.”***

Elaine Snyder, who lives in Medicine Hat, has watched students receive their quilts through a video recording each year for the first three years. This year she was able to see it happen in person.

“I had a hard time not crying,” said Elaine Snyder. ***“It’s so lovely to see the students open the bags. And so many of them came to tell me thank you. I liked talking with the students. That they were so thankful meant a lot.”***





What Elaine Snyder didn't know when she arrived at the school, was that there was a surprise ahead. Her daughter had asked for students who had received quilts for the past four years to gather.

Some came from Ross Ford and some from neighboring Westglen School. Even some of their parents came to watch the students gather for a group photo, many of them wrapped in their quilts, with Elaine and Joelle Snyder standing in the middle of it all.

"I was nervous this morning about it all," said Joelle Snyder. "But it turned out great. It was awesome to have my Mom see all of her quilts with the students who received them."

"It was exciting and special," said Jaxon Brander, a Grade 5 student who received a blanket two years ago. "I liked that my friend and I got the same [quilt]. I was excited to see Ms. Snyder and her Mom today."

Top photo on this page: Students who have received a quilt from Joelle Snyder and her mother Elaine Snyder over the past four years, gathered to say thank you. This is the first time Elaine Snyder has seen - in person - what her gifts have meant to the students who received them.

Top photo on first page of story: Ms. Snyder's current Grade 3 class with the blankets they just received.

"When I first got my blanket it was pretty exciting," said Halley Baudistel, a Grade 6 student, who said she liked her quilt so much she hung it on her bedroom wall. "I like knowing Ms. Snyder's Mom made it. I was excited that I got to meet her today and see who made it. Also, seeing Ms. Snyder again is great. I miss her and wish she could be my teacher again."

Elaine Snyder isn't sure how long she will continue this tradition, but for now she is planning on at least one more year.

In the meantime, this year's students are leaving their school year with a special gift wrapped around their shoulders - and their hearts - and a long lasting reminder of a how much their teacher cares about them.



Didsbury High School band teacher, Kirk Wassmer, wins Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence

When Didsbury High School band teacher, Kirk Wassmer, is officially retired at the end of this week, he will leave the school year with a trio of awards that testify to his strength in music education, and most especially in building positive relationships with students.

Most recently Wassmer was selected as one of a handful of Alberta recipients of the 2024 [Prime Minister's Awards of Teaching Excellence](#), at the Certificate of Achievement level.

Earlier this year, Wassmer was named a recipient of Chinook's Edge School Division's Roy E. Cope Award which is given to a person who has made a significant contribution to the educational welfare of students. Wassmer was also recently named as this year's recipient of the I. Keith Mann / NAC Orchestra Outstanding Band Director Award.

Emily Gallant, a former Didsbury High School student, nominated Wassmer for the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence.

"Kirk's approach is student-centered and combines technical excellence with a deep appreciation for the artistic and collaborative aspects of music education." said Gallant.

"While the goal at the end of the day is to create incredible music, Mr. Wassmer is in tune with the needs of each band student and goes above and beyond to support them in their growth and understanding. He makes learning fun and engaging and makes meaning through the pieces selected, naturally deepening each student's passion for music," she said.

"Over his 23 years of teaching music at DHS, Kirk has raised the standard and expectation of what excellence in music education can look like, setting a new bar for quality and inspiring students to reach unprecedented heights in their musical pursuits," said Gallant.



"Students would agree that he is the kind of teacher who leads with passion and dedication, cultivating a culture of respect, enthusiasm and achievement," she said.

Wassmer said he is grateful to Gallant for the nomination, and to those who took the time to submit letters of support. ***"It is an honour to receive this recognition, and at this time it really feels to me like the culmination of a lot of years of teaching. It's a very special award at a very special time," said Wassmer.***

Gallant said in 2002 when Wassmer started as band director at Didsbury High School, there were 25 students enrolled in the band program. Currently more than half of the school population participates.





“Kirk teaches band full time, with no other subjects on his plate, which is almost unheard of in a small rural high school,” said Scott MacDonald, Principal of Didsbury High School. ***“While it is obvious that Kirk Wassmer is the core of a highly successful band program, it is less obvious what that means to a school,”*** he said.

MacDonald, in his letter of support for the award, spoke of Didsbury High School’s diploma exam scores which are well above provincial averages on a regular basis, and said, ***“This can be, in part, attributed to a band program that is so engaging and enjoyable that students want to stay in school in order to participate in it. The success they feel in band transfers to a greater willingness to try in other courses and stick it out in courses they may struggle with.”***



MacDonald also believes that there is a stronger positive school culture because there are so many students involved with the band program. MacDonald said this is shown by the high level of respect students show each other at school.

“There is no denying that Mr. Kirk Wassmer has exhibited excellence as a music director. The excellence he has exhibited in the band room has flooded out of that space to have a significant positive effect on Didsbury High School as a whole,” said MacDonald.

Wassmer said he loves teaching and appreciates the opportunity to have built relationships with so many students.

“It’s really the students that make my job fun. I have enjoyed getting to know them and being a part of their growth as musicians,” said Wassmer.



Chinook's Edge School Division introduces new land acknowledgment on National Indigenous Peoples Day



Chinook's Edge School Division was pleased to share a new land acknowledgment on National Indigenous Peoples Day - June 21, 2024. Also, schools have received pop-up banners with land acknowledgment statements on them to display in their schools.

“A land acknowledgment is a way that we can demonstrate our commitment, as a school division, to reconciliation,” said Karyn Barber, Associate Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division. “In the process of developing a Chinook's Edge statement, I have been touched by the heart and intent that is gone into the creation of a land acknowledgment specifically for us. We truly appreciate the support and participation of students, central office leaders, staff, school board trustees, and Indigenous partners in this work.”

A land acknowledgment is a statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous peoples who lived in an area prior to the arrival of settlers, and expresses support for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The new Chinook's Edge land acknowledgment comes after significant consultation and collaboration with stakeholders over the 2023-24 school year, to determine what words would meaningfully reflect the land and the peoples who have lived, worked, and learned in this area over centuries.

One of the initial opportunities for collaboration was with a group of staff members and Indigenous partners who visited two local historical sites to increase understanding. From there, multiple groups were consulted to provide input, and then feedback on the statement as it developed.

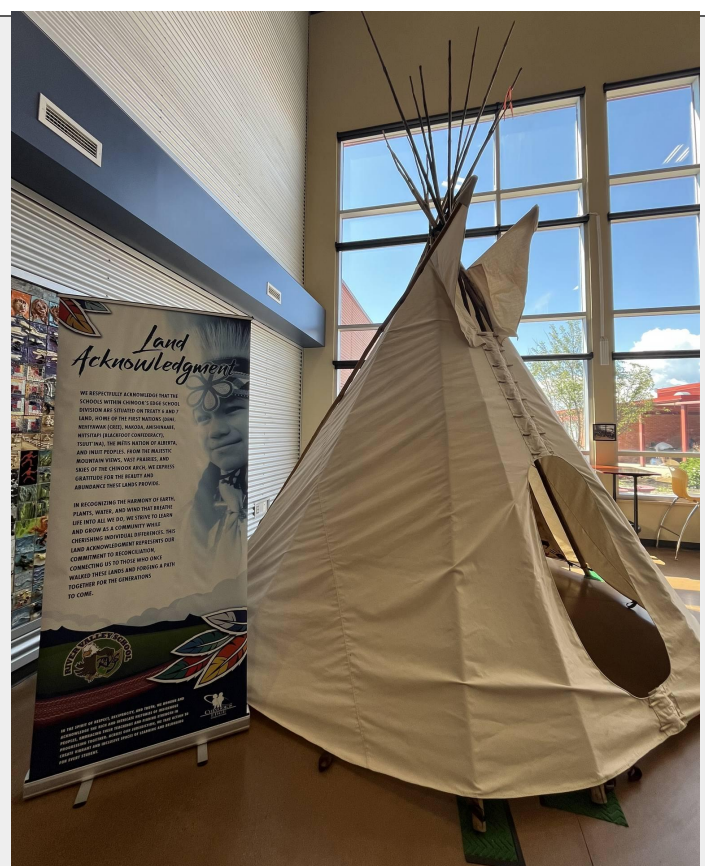


Land Acknowledgment

WE RESPECTFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE SCHOOLS WITHIN CHINOOK'S EDGE SCHOOL DIVISION ARE SITUATED ON TREATY 6 AND 7 LAND, HOME OF THE FIRST NATIONS (DENE, NEHIYAWAK (CREE), NAKODA, ANISHINAABE, NIITSITAPI (BLACKFOOT CONFEDERACY), TSUUT'INA), THE MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA, AND INUIT PEOPLES. FROM THE MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN VIEWS, VAST PRAIRIES, AND SKIES OF THE CHINOOK ARCH, WE EXPRESS GRATITUDE FOR THE BEAUTY AND ABUNDANCE THESE LANDS PROVIDE.

IN RECOGNIZING THE HARMONY OF EARTH, PLANTS, WATER, AND WIND THAT BREATHE LIFE INTO ALL WE DO, WE STRIVE TO LEARN AND GROW AS A COMMUNITY WHILE CHERISHING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES. THIS LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT REPRESENTS OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION, CONNECTING US TO THOSE WHO ONCE WALKED THESE LANDS AND FORGING A PATH TOGETHER FOR THE GENERATIONS TO COME.

IN THE SPIRIT OF RESPECT, RECIPROCITY, AND TRUTH, WE HONOUR AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE RICH AND INTRICATE HISTORIES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, EMBRACING THEIR TEACHINGS AND FINDING STRENGTH IN PROGRESSING TOGETHER. ACROSS OUR JURISDICTION, WE TAKE ACTION TO CREATE VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE SPACES OF LEARNING AND BELONGING FOR EVERY STUDENT.



River Valley School has set up their new land acknowledgement banner.

Barber said, "It was particularly special to involve the students and have their voice in this statement. When they described what they value and appreciate about the land, it was a powerful moment, and that voice is reflected in our new statement."

Chinook's Edge developed its new statement to be used at the division level and school level. Schools were also welcome to develop their own land acknowledgement statement, and about one third of the division's schools did that. Schools who developed their own statement had them placed on their pop-up banners.

"A special thank you to Clare Butterfly," said Barber. Butterfly is an Indigenous partners that worked on this project. "Clare's perspective and vision was so helpful," she said.

Barber said Butterfly was a key part of the visit to historical sites, and he worked to gain input from various Indigenous groups in the area.

"His perspective and willingness to work alongside us is valued," said Barber.



Chinook's Edge Indigenous partner, Clare Butterfly, receives "Friends of Diversity" Award



Karyn Barber, Associate Superintendent, Chinook's Edge School Division, said the division is pleased to hear that Clare has been recognized for his work.

"It is an honour to work alongside Clare with students in Chinook's Edge School Division. Clare is open, welcoming and compassionate, embodying the spirit of reconciliation," said Barber.

The award ceremony was held in Sylvan Lake at the end of April.

Clare Butterfly, a regular advisor, storyteller and wisdom-sharer in Chinook's Edge and its schools, has received a "Friends of Diversity" Award.

The award is given out by Diversity Magazine. Butterfly was nominated for the award by Sylvan Lake Mayor Megan Hanson. The award goes to those who "promote cultural diversity in their community and foster environments of cultural acceptance and recognition."

"I was very surprised to receive the nomination and subsequent award," said Butterfly. "I never really think about that aspect of the work I do. I just love teaching my community about my culture, so I was extremely humbled that the mayor considered me and wanted that work to be recognized."

"I am very passionate about paving those paths toward reconciliation. We have come a long way in the past 10 years when compared to the rest of Canada's history in terms of reconciliation, and I think we need to keep going with that momentum. I am honoured to be recognized for being just one tiny little piece of that reconciliation puzzle," said Butterfly.

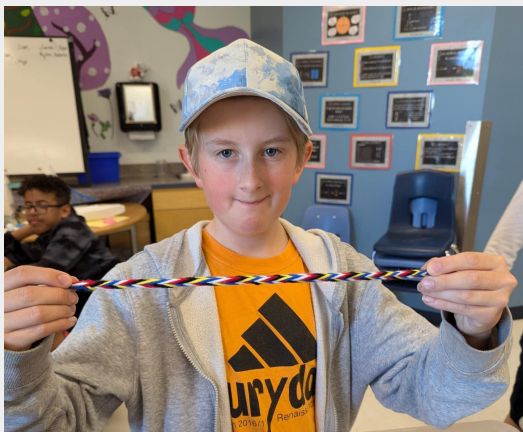


Chinook's Edge schools celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day

Schools throughout Chinook's Edge celebrated National Indigenous Peoples Day last week. Many cultural activities were underway such as First Nations and Metis dancing, braiding, Indigenous games and more. Also students learned more about Indigenous use of medicinal plants, tipis, and historic sites. Thanks to teachers who create opportunities for students to increase understanding.



Above: A Jessie Duncan School student and her jingle dress. Above right: John Wilson students round dance near their tipi. Below right and middle: River Valley School students learn Metis dancing. Below left: an Ecole Fox Run student learns Indigenous braiding.





Top: Penhold Elementary School students participate in a large round dance. Middle left: Ecole Steffie Woima Elementary students visit a historic site in Rocky Mountain House. Middle right: Poplar Ridge students enjoy Indigenous games. Below: Indigenous partner Clare Butterfly leads Innisfail Middle School students on a nature walk explaining about the use of medicinal plants by Indigenous people.





Top left: Jessie Duncan School students participate in a round dance.

Top right: a Reed Ranch student learns more about the medicine wheel.

Middle left: Ecole Olds Elementary School students learn about tipis with Indigenous partner, Clare Butterfly.

Middle right: Delburne School students complete Indigenous art.

Below left: Innisfail students participate and observe a game of lacrosse.



Alberta Education Minister visits Olds, and emphasizes the importance of career based learning



The partners of the Central Alberta Collegiate Institute (CACI) program were pleased to showcase career pathways learning underway in Central Alberta, at an event at Olds College of Agriculture and Technology held on June 20. They were also pleased to host Alberta Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis, who spoke about the importance of helping students have career based learning opportunities that lead directly into their career training.

“We were excited to celebrate the accomplishments of CACI, and to encourage the continued growth of career pathways learning for students,” said Jackie Taylor, CACI Executive Director. “This work is exciting because it makes a measurable difference for students.”

In her presentation, Taylor talked about the impact of early exposure to career learning. ***“Success looks like students who transition to post secondary training with confidence, and students who know what they want and with that, they become more engaged in their academic learning,” said Taylor. “Critical to that success is the support students have at the high school level to help them be successful in the post-secondary environment.”***

The gathering welcomed dozens of senior leaders from CACI partner organizations, as well as elected board members, staff members, representatives from Advanced Education and Alberta Education, and other K-12 school authorities and post-secondaries involved in career pathway programming for youth. Participants heard about the development of CACI and career learning opportunities, and then from a panel of five students who have experienced career learning.

Top: Superintendent Kurt Sacher talking with Alberta Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis

Middle: Chinook's Edge trustees at the event.

Bottom: Participants, including Chinook's Edge trustees tour Olds College facilities.

Participants also toured facilities on the Olds College campus, observing students in trades programming: welding, veterinary technician and heavy equipment mechanics.

Read the full CACI media release, [here](#).



Former Chinook's Edge Treasurer honoured with Award of Excellence

Retired Chinook's Edge Treasurer, Susan Roy, has been given the 2024 Award of Excellence from the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA). ASBOA gives one award each year, and named Roy with the honour early in June.

[ASBOA's Award of Excellence](#)

recognizes individual members for "their contributions of time, talent and commitment to the association. Individual members may be recognized for their leadership, commitment and contributions to the school business profession, to the membership of the Association and to the community. These are individuals who go above and beyond the day-to-day requirements of their position and their profession."

Roy said, ***"I'm honoured to be recognized for my contributions to the association. I believe ASBOA is an important part of the success of public education in Alberta. The more you contribute to the association, the more you and your school jurisdiction get out of it."***



Roy said she appreciated the opportunities for professional learning through ASBOA, and the chance to collectively have an impact on funding reviews, research projects, practice surveys, mentorship programs and provincial committees.

"Thank you to my colleagues at Chinook's Edge and ASBOA Zone 3 for nominating me," said Roy. "I would also like to thank my coworkers at Chinook's Edge for supporting my association work. I would also like to thank the Board and the Superintendent, Kurt Sacher, for believing in the work of ASBOA members, both in school divisions and with the association."

Superintendent Kurt Sacher said, ***"I am not at all surprised that Susan has been recognized by her peers at ASBOA. Susan was an excellent treasurer for Chinook's Edge for many years. She was as committed to helping the people in our division as she was to ensuring our financial needs were well taken care of."***

Roy also received the Roy E. Cope Award from Chinook's Edge in the spring of 2023, which is given annually to a person who, in the opinion of the Board, has made a contribution to the educational welfare of students.



Chinook's Edge employee, Laurence Ringuette, named Alberta's "French Professional of the Year"

A Chinook's Edge employee has been named "FSL/FI (French as a second language / French immersion) Professional of the Year" for Alberta, by the Canadian Parents for French - Alberta branch. Laurence Ringuette has served as a French language assistant in École Steffie Woima Elementary School, École Fox Run School, and École H.J. Cody School - all in Sylvan Lake.

"Laurence has been a valuable addition to our schools, and we are thrilled she was nominated and won this award," said Marie-Astrid Detharet, French Immersion Coordinator, Chinook's Edge School Division.

"I am so honoured and moved to have received this award," said Laurence Ringuette. ***"This award brings to a close my two years with an incredible team of teachers and students with whom I have developed a relationship that is most dear to me."***

"Laurence has been an absolute godsend this year. She is very dedicated and cares so much for the kids and for their learning," said Racquel Fielder, a teacher at École Fox Run School. Fielder said Ringuette is good at responding to the direction of teachers and also contributes good ideas of her own.

"Laurence also loves to share her language and culture with students. As we live in a small community in Central Alberta, students don't interact with many Francophones. Laurence shows them videos and pictures of her hometown, tells them stories of her life in Quebec, and shares the aspects of the language that they are lacking. I've noticed the French skills of my students skyrocket over the past few months as they listen to Laurence and use her expressions in their own speaking," said Fielder.

"Laurence is the greatest advocate for French Immersion in Central Alberta that I have ever met," said Fielder

As a language assistant, Ringuette worked in a classroom setting with teachers using games and activities to help students learn and improve their French or English speaking skills. Ringuette came to Chinook's Edge from Quebec, and was sponsored by the federal [Odyssey](#) program.



Ringuette is planning to receive post-secondary training in the fall. Chinook's Edge has applied to Odyssey for an opportunity to have another French language assistant placement.



Chinook's Edge Board Vice-Chair Sherry Cooper receives aviation award



Chinook's Edge Board Vice-Chair Sherry Cooper has received the "Education Award" from the [Northern Lights Aero Foundation](#).

Cooper is among eight recipients to be added, in 2024, to the Elsie Award Wall of Fame, which "honours the rich history of women in aviation and aerospace: business leaders, pilots, teachers, mentors and enthusiasts from the industry. The Wall of Fame recognizes individuals that have made great achievements or contributed significantly to the professional growth and development of women locally, within the province and in the country."

Cooper is the President of Sky Wings Aviation, is an aviation instructor, and according to the Northern Lights Aero Foundation has contributed to the success of the next generation of aviators. Cooper has accrued over 19,000 hours of flying time and as the former President of the Red Deer AirShow was one of the first women airshow air bosses.

New brand unveiled for 40 year old Jessie Duncan School

Jessie Duncan Elementary School in Penhold is celebrating its 40th birthday, with a new mission, motto, logo and mascots - all announced last week at an assembly.

The new brand elements were developed after stakeholder engagement with students, staff and parents. The new motto is:

Growing together, learning forever

The mission statement is: ***To ignite and nurture a passion for learning in a collaborative, supportive environment for all, empowering students to become critical thinkers, caring individuals and lifelong learners.***

Stakeholders selected a wolf to represent the school, based on the idea that a wolf embodies humility, according to Indigenous teachings, and always takes care of its pack members.

The wolf's footprint is in the logo, referencing the mark or legacy students leave with their peers and school. The old logo was a star, which is incorporated in the new logo and on the palms of the mascots. The new mascots are named Jessie and Duncan, after the first teacher in Penhold: Jessie Duncan.

