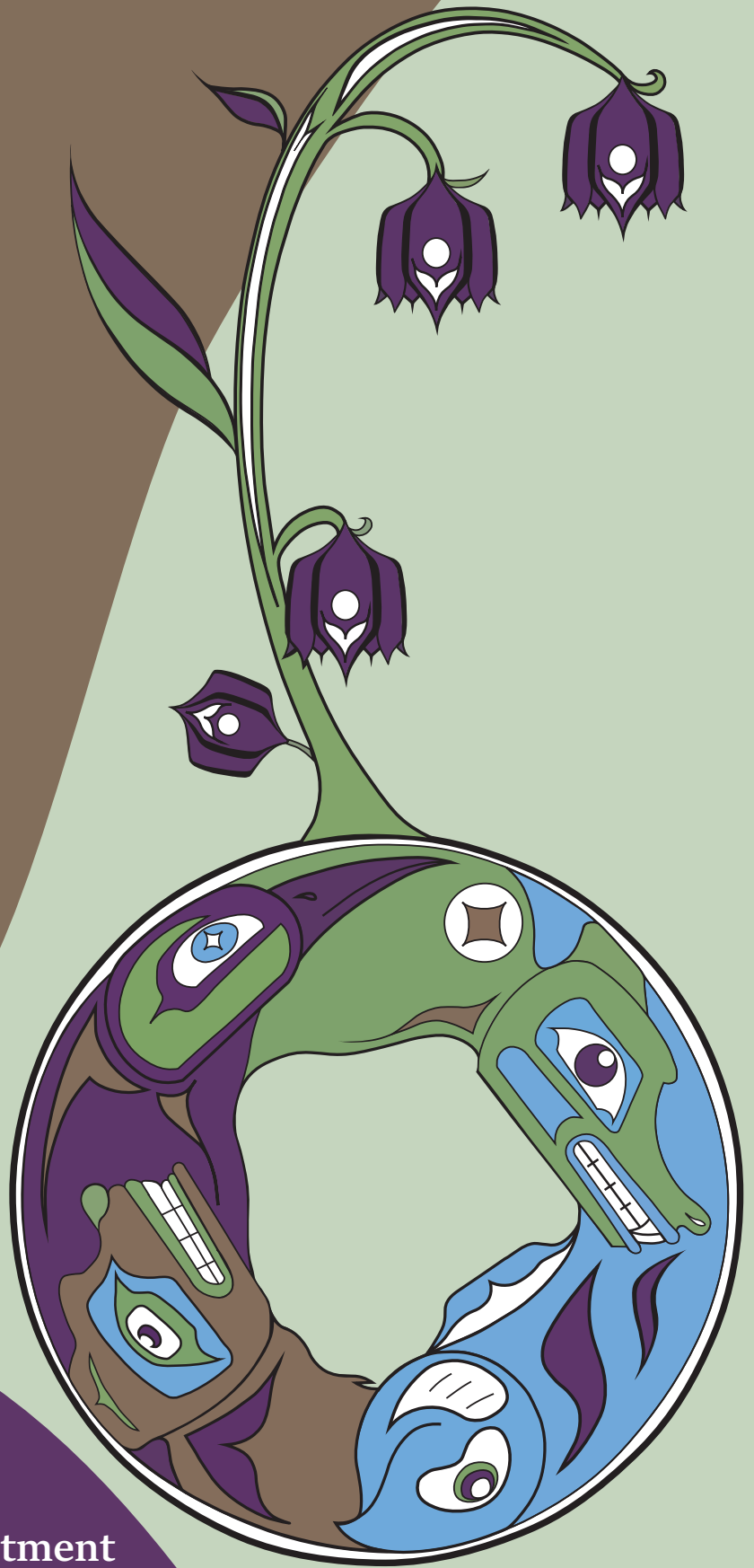


The Spirit of Alliances: Support and Wellness Framework



Indigenous Education Department
Greater Victoria School District

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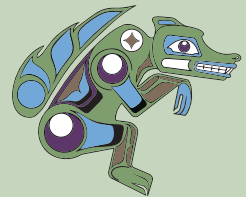
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Introduction

The Spirit of Alliances: Support and Wellness Framework (2022) was created by The Indigenous Education Department of the Greater Victoria School District in consultation with Indigenous Community advisory groups. This framework provides the structure for a culturally responsive service delivery model that will allow all staff to support the holistic needs of Indigenous students and families within our school district, across all grade levels from Early Learning to Grade 12.

The Spirit of Alliances: Support and Wellness Framework provides a structure for staff to utilize common language and practice across the district. It is a locally developed and culturally relevant model for providing holistic support to students. Indigenous models of social emotional learning pre-date colonization. They are wholistic in design and are beneficial to all students. This framework weaves Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being into public education and specifically supports the well-being of students with Indigenous ancestry.

The Spirit of Alliances: Support and Wellness Framework includes aspects of existing Indigenous models that are holistic and relational: The Medicine Wheel, which highlights four aspects of the whole person (Physical, Emotional, Spiritual and Mental); The Circle of Courage, which reminds us that developing students need opportunities to be Generous, Independent, Courageous and Connected. The original Spirit of Alliances document combines the mainstream model of Integral Theory and the four original goals in the SD61's Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. Integral Theory suggests that all human knowledge and experience emerges within four vital quadrants that are influenced by internal and external factors and, individual and collective interests. The four animals representing these quadrants in the Spirit of Alliances model are the Bear, Wolf, Raven, and Salmon. This model is holistic as all parts make up the whole and acknowledges the influence of both Indigenous culture and mainstream structural issues, like colonialism, in the lives of our students and families.



The Spirit of Alliances: Support and Wellness Framework Logo

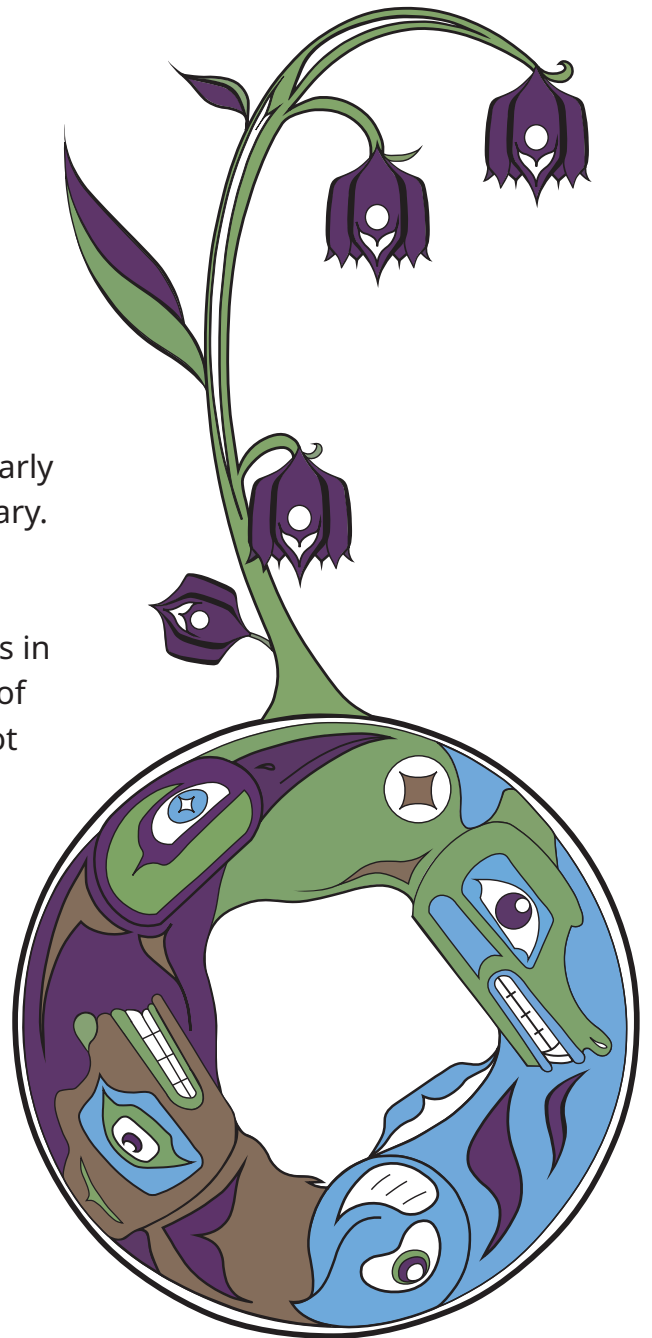
The Spirit of Alliances Support and Wellness framework and logo was created with the inclusion of IED staff and representatives from the Four Houses and Elders Advisory Council. The logo represents a plant that is Indigenous to Lekwungen Territory, ***'The Chocolate Lily'***.

The plant's root ball holds the teachings of our district's last Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (2017), The Spirit of Alliances, which was developed by representatives from the local and urban Indigenous Community, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders.

The Chocolate Lily image in this logo has a bud and three flowers to represent the developmental levels found within SD61: Early Learning, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary.

The Chocolate Lily has traditionally been a root vegetable for Indigenous communities in Lekwungen territory and is a good source of carbohydrates. It is also known as Rice Root because the roots have oblong tubers that resemble very small potatoes. It has pretty flowers, but has an unpleasant aroma that smells like carrion, which attracts flies, and in turn, allows for extensive pollination of other plants. The Chocolate Lily plant serves as a metaphor for a model of wellness that is local, is connected to the land, has a root ball that nurtures growth, and bears fruit in stages.

We acknowledge the logo artist, Jessica Joseph, from the Songhees Nation.



Community Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the input of community members who participated in a series of consultation groups which included representatives from local Indigenous-serving agencies; The Elder's Advisory Council of SD61; representatives from the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations; and the former Aboriginal Nations Education Advisory Council for their past work in the creation of the original *Spirit of Alliances* model.

We also acknowledge that the original artwork for the Spirit of Alliances Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement was done by Kwakwaka'wak'w artist, Jamin Zuroski.

Həyšxʷqə/ Thank you,

Dr. Shelly Niemi
Nehiyaw—Métis Iskwew
Director of Indigenous Education
Greater Victoria School District No. 61

Guiding Principles

- **Relevant:** Indigenous approaches to wellness are culturally appropriate and holistic, for students with Indigenous ancestry. The term 'well-being' describes the social, emotional, spiritual, cultural, physical, and mental wellbeing of a person.
- **Relational:** Indigenous approaches to wellness involve connection to self, family, community and land. The development of this document included input from an Indigenous community advisory, Indigenous staff in our school district, and Indigenous student voices. Relationality is a key principle of Indigenous Worldviews.
- **Reciprocal:** This framework was supported by grant money from the Ministry of Education, the Greater Victoria School District, First Nations Health Authority and will be available for use in all schools at all grade levels in the Greater Victoria School District. Indigenous Ways of Knowing supports the well-being of all students and all our relations.
- **Respect:** This framework is a strength-based approach to student wellness. It recognizes that students come into our classrooms with the strength of their individuality, their families, communities, and cultures. Indigenous Worldviews are inherently respectful to all relations: human and non-human.
- **Responsibility:** This framework challenges the reader to understand that Cultural Safety is a protective factor in the lives of Indigenous students. The impact of colonialism in the lives of Indigenous students, families and communities has a direct correlation on the holistic well-being of Indigenous students. This framework provides Indigenous perspectives to wellness for our school district.
- **Distinction based approach:** There is no single homogenous culture or group among the Indigenous population of Canada. Our student population is comprised of students from the local Nations, Esquimalt and Songhees; other South Coast Nations, students from the three Island Nations; Nations from BC and across Canada; Métis and Inuit Students. We know that the indigenous student population in our district may currently live in urban settings but may have come from rural and remote settings and may move between these ways of living. There is a spectrum of understanding about ancestry, and we meet students wherever they present on the spectrum.

BEAR—Belonging/Engagement and Location

The Bear's gift to the learning process is self-awareness. This means being able to make meaning out of life, be creative, and act with intention. When the Bear's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to weave them into their learning experiences, the students' abilities to develop internal skills are enhanced. A principle of the Bear's gift of internal learning is the exploration of one's identity, which provides the foundation for students to make meaning of their place in family, school, and community. Students, with a strong sense of self-awareness, are able to make space for creativity in life, which enables them to act with intention. In order to experience this, learners need to be in a place where they are nurtured, valued, and feel a strong sense of belonging.

The Spirit of Alliances: Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2015, SD61



Indigenous students are supported when they see their culture in curriculum, in teaching practices and in the delivery of support services. Students identified with Indigenous ancestry walk in two worlds: their Indigenous identities and the mainstream culture of Canadian Society. They also have a spectrum of identities that could be an emerging understanding of their Indigeneity to an immersive experience of traditional cultural teachings. This quadrant of support honours their identity, wherever it lies on the spectrum.

The Bear Quadrant can be realized by some of the following:

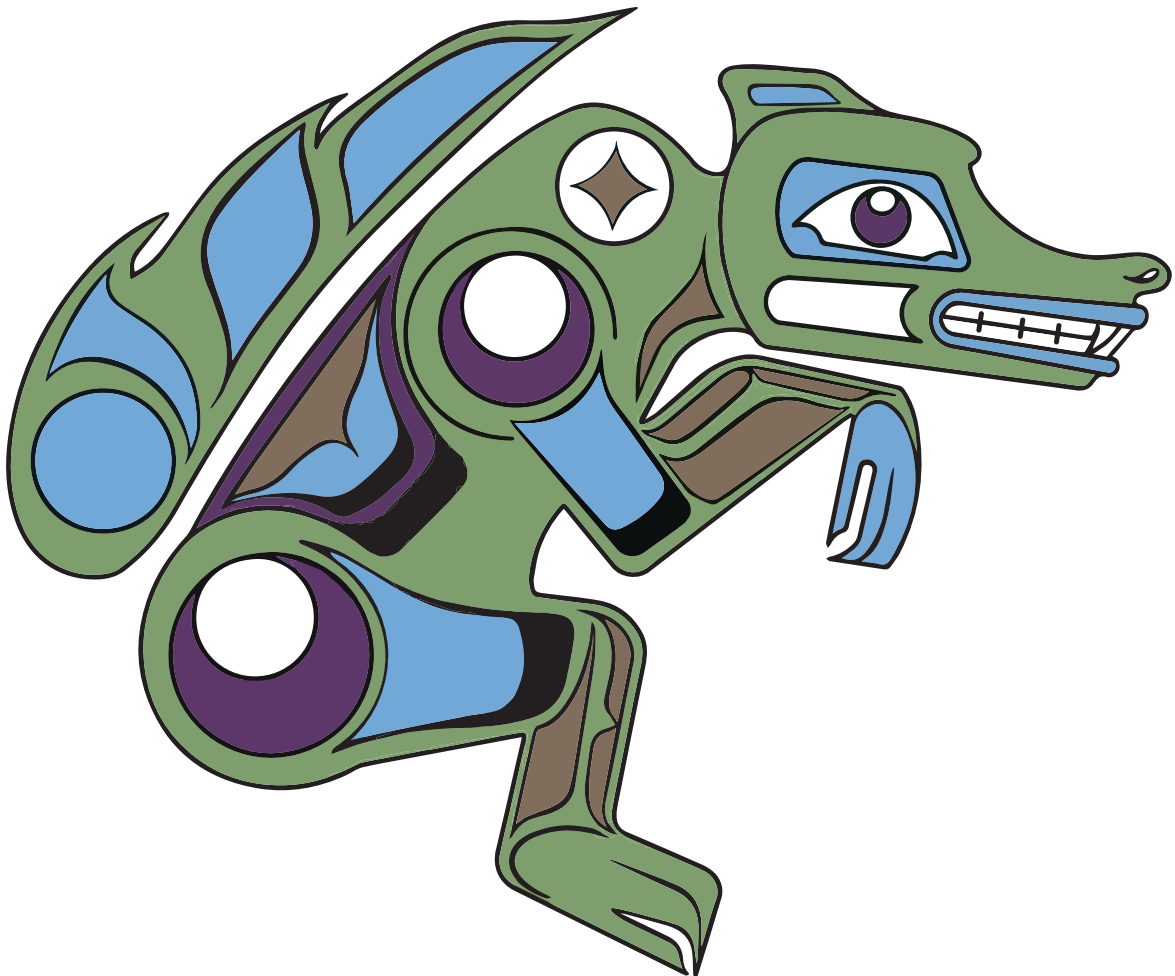
- Identify IED Space in School/Post Schedule of IED Staff Availability
- Provide opportunities to develop self-awareness and emotional intelligence
- Monitor and Support Student Attendance and Engagement
- Support Student Exploration of Cultural and Individual Identity
- Support Connection to Land and/or Ceremony—Family, Community, Cultural
- Understand Support Systems/ People for Indigenous Students Within Schools
- Be Aware of Programs/People that Support Indigenous Students in Community
- Support Opportunities for Traditional Food Gathering, Preserving, and Sharing
- Support Students to Integrate their Cultural Identity into School Work
- Understand Gender Diversity and Post Information for Students in IED Space



WOLF—Generosity/Social and Emotional Support

The Wolf's gift to the learning process is relational. The Wolf thrives where communication, respect and reciprocity are valued, modeled, and taught. When the Wolf's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to weave them into their learning experiences, their abilities to develop interpersonal skills are enhanced. When students have strong interpersonal skills, they are able to communicate clearly and respectfully when speaking with others and when advocating for themselves. A principle of the Wolf's gift to learning involves knowing one's history, generational roles, and responsibilities. Learners with this knowledge understand the interconnectedness of all aspects of life. In order to experience this, learners need to be blanketed by support from home, school, and community.

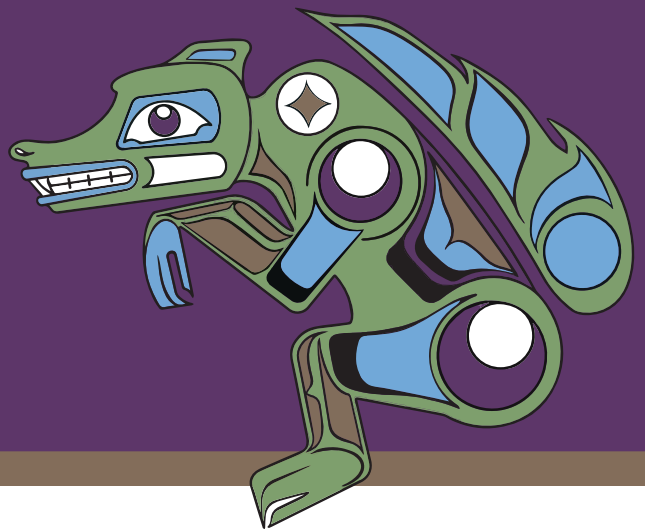
The Spirit of Alliances: Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2015, SD61



The wolf quadrant represents the people who surround the student in their families, communities, friend groups and schools. Students make friends across the grades and build those connections over time. Identifying their own needs requires an increased ability to communicate those needs and relationships with others. Students feel supported when the school staff connect with them for learning, leadership, cultural, community, artistic and athletic opportunities. Students who are surrounded by supportive people feel connected and cared for by their pack.

The Wolf Quadrant can be realized by some of the following:

- Bridge Relationships for Students Within Schools and Community
- Support Connections Between Family, School, and Community
- Protect Students by Upholding the School Code of Conduct/Anti-Racism/ Bullying
- Enact Campus Cousins Program for new Students and for Student Leadership
- Identify Student Academic and Social Emotional Supports in School & Community
- Understand Developmental Stage of Life for students in your school level
- Transition Planning for Students Entering and Leaving your School
- Identify Availability and Support Scholarship and Band Funding Applications
- Grade Level Student Meetings that May Include Guests (VNFC, Foundry)
- Advocate for Student Participation in Cultural Events outside of School
- Connect Students with Education and Career Fairs/Recruiters (post-secondary)
- Seek out Disconnected Students and Advocate for their Return
- Specific Supports for Children and Youth in Care (CYIC)/Identify Case Manager



RAVEN—Courage/Learning and Academic Support

The Raven's gift to the learning process is cleverness and imagination. The Raven weaves together old, new, and emerging knowledge to create a basket of skills, opportunities and potentials. When the Raven's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to integrate them into their learning experiences, they have more opportunity to develop their inherent talents and capabilities. A key principle of the Raven's gift to the learning process is recognizing that storytelling, art, memory, and culture are woven throughout learning.

The Spirit of Alliances: Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2015, SD61



Schools have traditionally focused on the academic strength of a student. This quadrant supports rational intelligence that values culturally appropriate curriculum, teaching methods, and Indigenous Worldviews. Supporting the individual creativity of students will strengthen connection to the learning environment. Cleverness, creativity, and emotional intelligence all hold equal value.

The Raven Quadrant can be realized by the following:

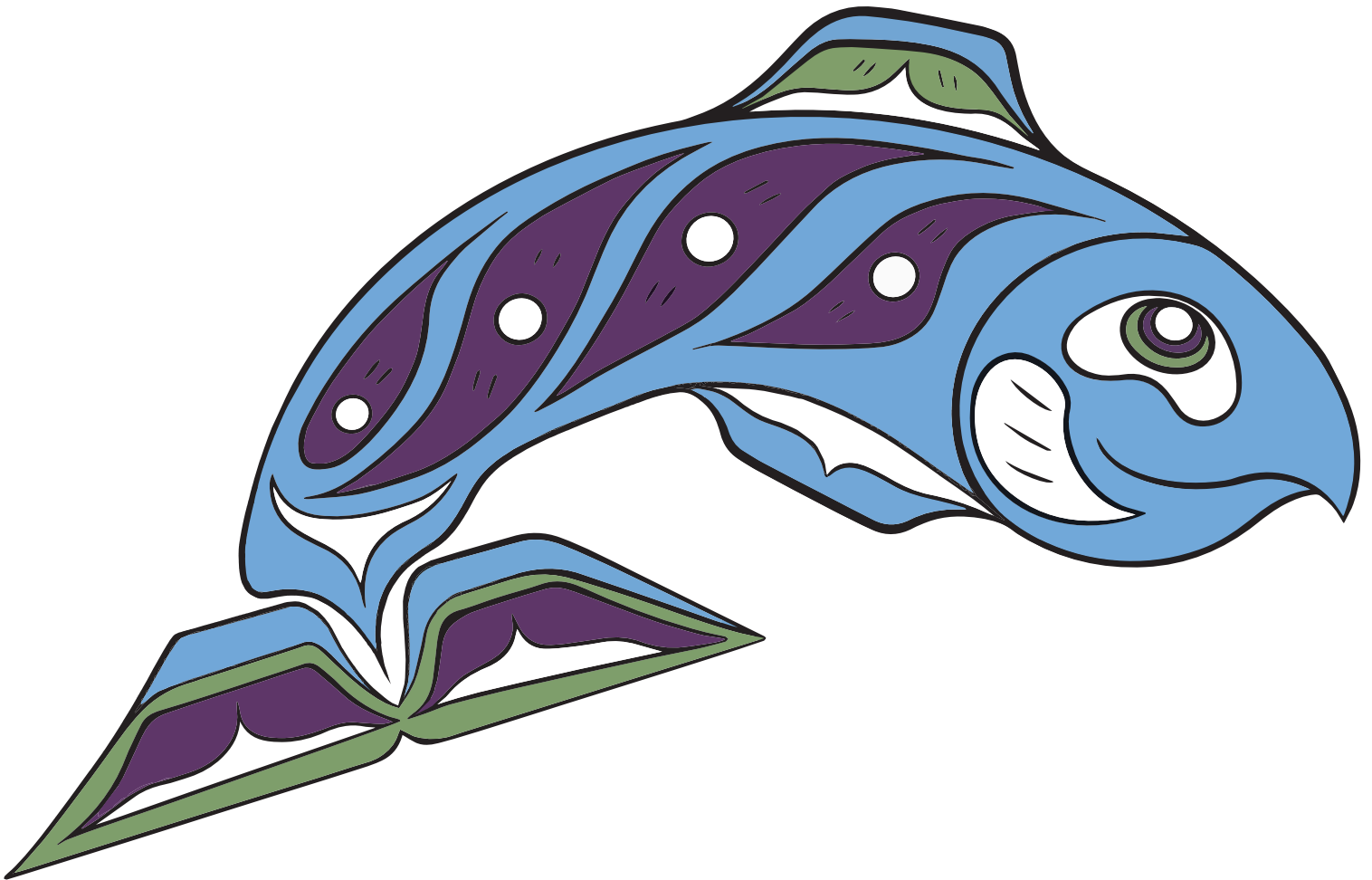
- Identify Student Academic Strengths and Challenges
- Academic Supports within the Classroom, School, Home, and Community
- Support Individual Interests: Academics, Athletics, Trades, Fine Arts, Cultural
- Collaborate to Monitor Report Cards, Reading and Literacy Levels
- Graduation Planning: Grad Checks/ Dogwood/Adult Dogwood/Evergreen
- Respond to Requests for IED Programming in Schools and Classrooms
- Support the inclusion of Indigenous Worldviews in classroom, professional development and curriculum
- Highlight Individual Student Gifts and Special Knowledge
- Support Students to Access Scholarship Opportunities
- Attend School Based Team Meetings and Advocate for Student
- Assist Students to Connect to Culturally Relevant Volunteer Opportunities
- Connect Students to Culturally Relevant Youth Programming (GOV)
- Facilitate Post-Secondary Information Sessions in Schools and Community
- Inform Family of IED Recognition Ceremony and IED Events



SALMON—Independence/Transitions and Connection

The Salmon's gift to the learning process is navigation. The Salmon moves through the environment and other systems, adapting to and participating in change. Aboriginal students inhabit multiple worlds and thus need to be able to navigate multiple systems and influences. When the Salmon's gifts are accessible to students and they are able to integrate them into their learning experiences, they have more opportunity to develop their imaginations, decision making skills, and courage. A key principle of the Salmon's gift is that learning supports the well-being of self, family, community, land and Spirits. In order to experience this, learners need to develop and use critical thinking skills, adaptability, persistence, and resilience to create tides of change.

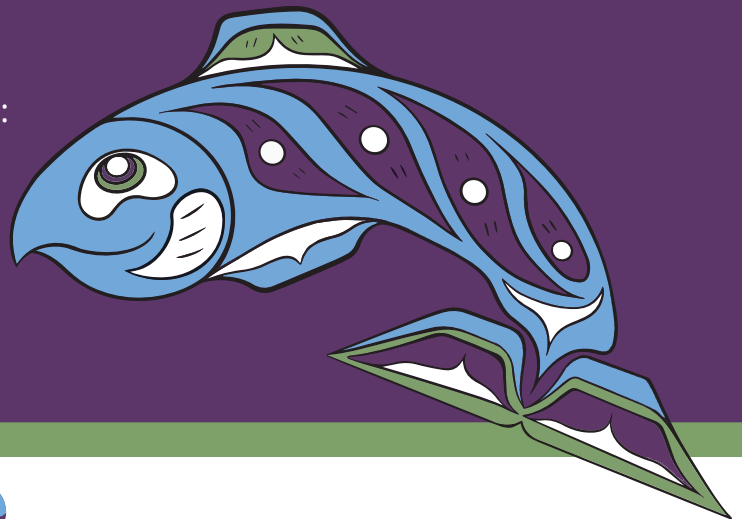
The Spirit of Alliances: Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement 2015, SD61



The Salmon quadrant is about navigation. Students move from home to school, from classroom to hallways and from social life back to home. They are navigating social relationships, developmental stages of life, and often the transition of walking in two worlds, culturally. This quadrant also acknowledges that students navigate their way into school and then out of public education and on to work or higher education.

The Salmon Quadrant can be realized by some of the following:

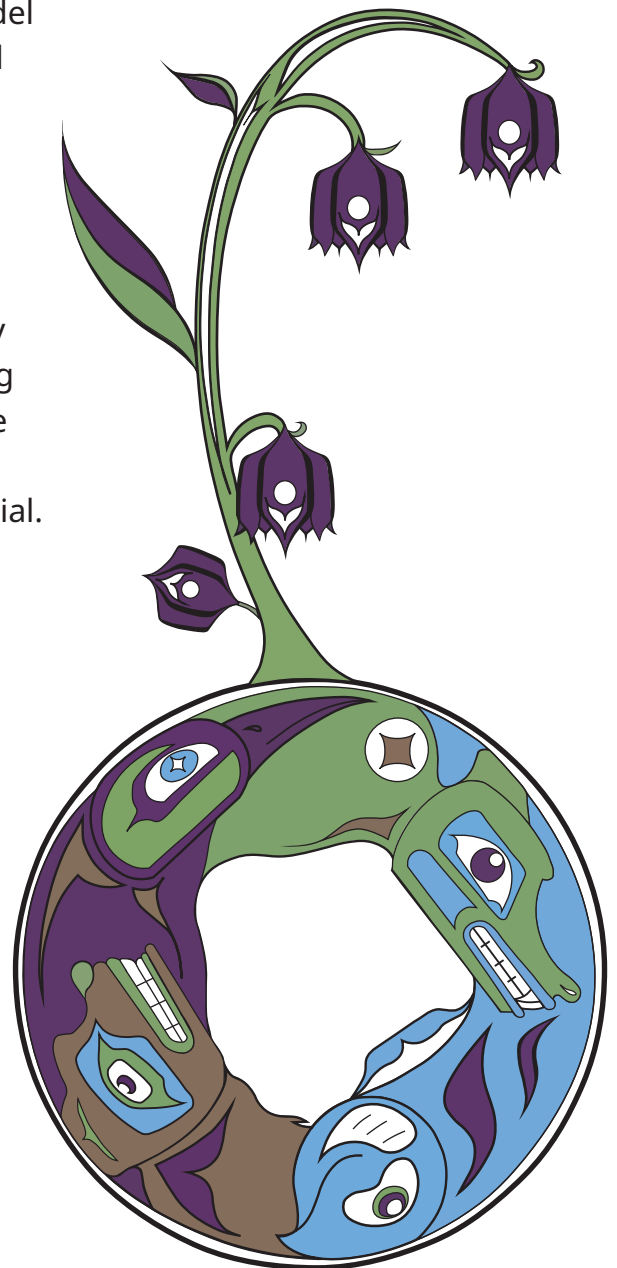
- School Tours for all New Students/ Support for Transitions from Middle School
- Help to Navigate the Public Education System for Students and Families
- IED Space Posts Guidelines for Students and Staff Grounded Within the 5 R's
- Post and communicate your Office Location, Hours, and Availability
- Support Students to Access School Supplies, Bus Passes, Food Security
- Grade Level Meetings/Lunches for Information Sharing and Connections
- Support Family Connection to School: Welcome Dinners/Seasonal Tea
- Field Trips to Career and Post-Secondary Opportunities for Students
- Campus Cousins: Student Peer Connections and Leadership Program
- Advocate for Student Movement within School System
- Supports for Land Based Learning Opportunities
- Advocate and Support for IED Programming in School
- Planning for Life After Graduation/ School Completion
- Acknowledge that students move between two worlds



Conclusion

The Spirit of Alliances: Support and Wellness Framework was developed by the Indigenous Education Department with input from the local Indigenous community. It was developed to coordinate a culturally responsive and holistic plan for supporting students with Indigenous ancestry and make space for Indigenous worldviews in schools. The framework incorporates an existing model, *The Spirit of Alliances*, with a new visual in a logo that includes a plant that is Indigenous and significant to the local Lekwungen Territory. *The Spirit of Alliances* is a model that was developed by SD61 for their 2017 Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. The model uses four animals to represent an indigenized integral theory model which recognizes the internal/external and collective/individual influences that impact our lives.

The Spirit of Alliances: Support and Wellness Framework provides a strategy for a culturally responsive and wholistic model for supporting Indigenous students in our school system. We recognize that Indigenous communities have used wellness strategies since time immemorial. While there are multiple nations across the country, some commonalities exist such as drumming and singing, using sacred medicines, creating art, and wise counsel. Specific wellness practices are based on the relationship to the land and the gifts of the territory. The attached document highlights some culturally specific wellness practices from Indigenous communities across the country. This serves as a reminder to the reader that Indigenous wellness is not new, it is why Indigenous people continue to exist despite the onslaught of colonial oppression and dispossession. We honour this spirit of wellness.



Indigenous Holistic Wellness

Indigenous wellness methods have been practiced since time immemorial. Western styles of addressing wellness such as: medical, psychotherapy, pharmaceutical medications, and support group counseling are part of a broader approach to wellness for Indigenous peoples. The following are examples of approaches to wellness that are practiced in different Indigenous communities. It is important to acknowledge them and recognize when students and families are utilizing these methods, they are using traditional practices that are effective, culturally relevant, and appropriate.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Smudging | 18. Storytelling |
| 2. Prayer | 19. Culture-based Art |
| 3. Sweat Lodge Ceremony | 20. Sacred Places |
| 4. Talking or Sharing Circles | 21. Use of Indigenous Language |
| 5. Nature Walks | 22. Cultural Dances/Pow Wow |
| 6. Meaning of Prayer | 23. Receiving help from a Traditional Healer/Elder |
| 7. Use of Drum/Pipe/Shaker/Rattle/
Pipe Ceremony | 24. Giveaway Ceremony |
| 8. Sacred Medicines | 25. Drum Making/Shaker or Rattle Making |
| 9. Use of Natural Foods/Traditional Foods | 26. Naming Ceremony |
| 10. Ceremony Preparation | 27. Blanketing/ Welcoming Ceremony |
| 11. Cultural Songs | 28. Dream Interpretation |
| 12. Fishing/Hunting | 29. Land Based Cultural Camp/Land Based Teachings |
| 13. Spiritual Teachings | 30. Fasting |
| 14. Water as Healing/ Water Bath | 31. Ghost/Memorial Feast/ Burning |
| 15. Use of Sacred Medicines | 32. Berry Fasting/ Rite of Passage Ceremony |
| 16. Growing Sacred Medicines/
Gardening/Harvesting | 33. Brushing Off Ceremony |
| 17. Community Cultural Activities | |

Native Wellness Assessment (Self-Report Form) www.thunderbirdpf.org



Indigenous Education Department

Greater Victoria School District

ied.sd61.bc.ca