



NEWS RELEASE

Rare Exhibit Tours Comox Valley Schools **Giving Students Unique Education on Reconciliation**

For immediate release

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COMOX VALLEY B.C. – Students in the Comox Valley are receiving an impactful lesson about reconciliation as part of the British Columbia renewed curriculum using a very unique exhibit.

The exhibit is known as the U'mista Display and teachers in School District 71 (SD71) are using it to tap into their students' knowledge of Canada's indigenous roots and history in order to make a connection with and build understanding about residential schools.

The goal of introducing the exhibit into the curriculum is to foster open dialogue and strengthen the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada and to move towards reconciliation by learning the truth.

The U'Mista Display is made up of two significant components that tells the story of reconciliation and the history of Residential Schools in Canada – the *Project of Heart Canoe* and *Speaking to Memory*.

The display arrived at School District 71 (SD71) in January on loan from the U'mista Cultural Center in Alert Bay and will circulate throughout our Comox Valley schools until Spring 2019.

Since arriving in the Valley, the display has been enhanced with teaching guides to assist educators in presenting the two exhibits and to give teachers the courage to approach the subject of Residential Schools with confidence and sensitivity.

Aboriginal Resource Teachers and Curriculum Support Teachers created a series of lessons in preparation for students and teachers visiting this display. These lessons were developed specific to various grade levels to provide age-appropriate educational materials about Residential Schools.

“These exhibits give us the bravery and the courage to talk about it and gives us more resources on the subject of reconciliation that we never had before,” explained Lynn Swift, District Aboriginal Curriculum Support Teacher.

“The teacher guide that we created will now travel with the exhibit as it moves from school district to school district, and teachers can take it as far as they want,” added Gail Martindale, Aboriginal Curriculum Support Teacher.

As Lelaina Jules, Aboriginal Curriculum Support Teacher, explains there is significant value in introducing this not only to Aboriginal Education students but to all SD71 classes.

“It is all about reconciliation and to learn this we must first learn the truth. Knowing our history builds understanding,” expressed Jules. “We have the opportunity to tell the story right here, right now but with a level of sensitivity and respect because many residential school survivors still live in our very own community.”

As the display travels throughout the district, each school is organizing a public viewing to allow families and the greater community the opportunity to see and appreciate the exhibit. The next public viewing is at Queneesh School, Wednesday 16 May from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The exhibits will be on display for the remaining school calendar year as follows:

SCHOOL	DATES
Queneesh Elementary	May 5 -18
Aspen Park Elementary	May 19 – June 1
Ecole Robb Road	June 2 – 15

Remaining schools will receive the display during the 2019/20 school year.

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For more details about each exhibit and what it represents, visit: Speaking to Memory at http://moa.ubc.ca/portfolio_page/speaking-to-memory/ and Project of Heart Canoe at <http://www.bctf.ca/HiddenHistory/eBook.pdf> (Pages 26-27 refers to the canoe.)

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