

**SCHOOL:** syuwéñct Elementary

**YEAR:** 2024-25

**PRINCIPAL:** Trisha Armour



## OUR SCHOOL

At Syuwéñct Elementary, we are honored to learn, grow, and play on the traditional and unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw people. The name Syuwéñct, meaning "our history, our traditions," was gifted to our community by the Snuneymuxw First Nation. In 2022, our two-year journey toward Truth and Reconciliation culminated in officially renaming our school, a name that honors the deep heritage of the land on which our students learn and grow every day.

Located in the Diver's Lake area of Nanaimo, our school community thrives with the help of dedicated parent volunteers in the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), who are invaluable partners in creating a vibrant learning environment. Through our work with the Nanaimo Area Land Trust (NALT) and the City of Nanaimo, we actively contribute to the stewardship of the Northfield Marsh and surrounding natural spaces, helping our students develop a respect for nature and a sense of environmental responsibility.

Our school is home to 340 students from Kindergarten to Grade 7, with 20% identifying as Indigenous. We're fortunate to have a diverse community that includes a growing number of English language learners and families from a variety of cultural backgrounds. We strive to make sure each student feels safe, supported, and valued, providing snacks and lunches to those experiencing food insecurity and ensuring every student has the materials needed to succeed.

At Syuwéñct, we are working to build a community based on trust and risk-taking, encouraging our students to embrace their unique talents and take brave steps in their learning journey. Our dedicated teachers and staff are focused on strengthening literacy and numeracy skills at all grade levels while creating a caring, inclusive environment where every student can flourish.

## OUR SCHOOL GOALS

### Student Success

Increase literacy success rates for all students

We will enhance phonological awareness across all grades by using data to create targeted intervention groups tailored to the specific needs of each student. Using UFLI in the groups and in the primary classes to create consistency.

### Student and Employee Wellness

Increase the number of Students who feel welcome, safe and have a sense of belonging in their school

We will create diverse groups and clubs to foster a sense of belonging and connection for all students within the school community.

### Select a Board Goal

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## OUR CELEBRATION STORY

Last year, our students took significant steps toward our goal of embracing Indigenous ways of knowing and deepening their connection to the land. Staff and students worked in partnership with the Nanaimo Area Land Trust (NALT) to engage in lessons and actively care for the wetland, as well as with Nanaimo Food Share to grow, nurture, and plan for the long-term sustainability of our large garden. Guided by Indigenous perspectives on stewardship, they collaborated to care for the ecosystem surrounding the Northfield Marsh.

The project began with students removing invasive plants and replacing them with native species, learning about their cultural and ecological significance in the process. Understanding the importance of protecting this vital space, they partnered with NALT and the city to address issues such as garbage dumping along the trails. Students designed and distributed informative posters to raise community awareness, encouraging neighbours to take part in the marsh's care. Together with NALT and the city, students cleared garden waste from several sites, which they then replanted with native species. Many of these plants hold deep connections to Indigenous knowledge, sparking classroom investigations into their traditional uses, such as the cultural and ecological significance of cedar.

Students also expanded their learning by identifying other valued plants like camas and Nootka rose, regularly walking the land to observe seasonal changes and develop a sense of place. Their efforts culminated in building a kiosk at the trailhead through a collaborative effort. This kiosk serves as a hub for sharing information about the plants and animals in the marsh and showcasing the students' stewardship initiatives.

This project not only revitalized parts of the marsh but also deepened students' understanding of their roles as caretakers of the land, reflecting the principles of respect and responsibility rooted in Indigenous teachings. Their work improved the local environment and fostered a broader sense of connection, purpose, and community engagement.