

Indigenous Education Council Minutes

March 9, 2026

9:00 am – 12:00 pm PST

via: Teams

Special Meeting

The Indigenous Education Council will advise the school board in providing comprehensive and equitable education and support service to all Indigenous students and improve all Indigenous student outcomes.

Present: Jared Basil, Chair
Nerissa Joseph, Vice Chair, Splatsin
Kat Coleman, Principal, Yaqan Nukiy School
Nicole Courson, West Kootenay Metis Society
Marion Louie, Lower Similkameen Indian Band
Brenna Joseph, Splatsin
Julie Bremner, SD8 Board of Education Vice-Chair
Trish Smillie, SD8 Superintendent
Laury Carriere, SD8 Director of Aboriginal Education
Nona Lynn, SD8 Learning Innovator

Regrets: Janet Terbasket, Lower Similkameen Indian Band

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:13 a.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Territory

We acknowledge, respect and honour the First Nations in whose traditional territories the Kootenay Lake School District operates, and all Aboriginal peoples residing within the boundaries of School District 8.

3. Changes to Proposed Agenda

Addition: IEC Regional Gathering in the Fall. (6.C)

4. Adoption of Agenda

UPON a motion duly made and seconded it was **RESOLVED:**

THAT the agenda for the March 9, 2026 meeting **BE ADOPTED**, as circulated with one addition.

5. Adoption of Minutes

UPON a motion duly made and seconded it was **RESOLVED:**

THAT the minutes of the February 18, 2026 meeting be brought forward to the upcoming April 8, 2026 meeting for approval.

6. New Business

a. SD8 Aboriginal Education External Program Review

IEC voting member priorities for the SD8 Aboriginal Education program 2026-2027

Director Carriere provided an overview of the program review completed by Leona Prince and shared that the district would like feedback from the IEC to be provided.

The IEC reviewed the Program Review.

Comments that the allocation and distribution of resources should be as equitable as possible. A reminder that the geographic nature of SD8 is unique and will not change. The onus will be on bands to help to provide culture and language resources. A mechanism to review local culture and language resources will be important. We want to provide deep, meaningful learning around local cultures. Development of cultural safety education and training can be provided. It is important to have a focus on language and culture.

9:33 am – Vice-Chair Joseph joined the meeting.

Discussion around the difference between support roles and teaching roles and the two distinct roles of Indigenous Education Workers and Indigenous Education Teachers. Indigenous Education Workers provide cultural learning and focus on connection with families to build relationships, and teachers focus on education. Indigenous Education Workers are an important role in schools.

Above average graduation rates is excellent but focus needs to be put on other areas now while maintaining the academic strength- it is the work of all staff in schools. It is important for support workers to be Indigenous so that they have an Indigenous world view and build connections with families.

Discussion took place around the importance of non-Indigenous workers to be trained and exposed to Indigenous culture. All staff in SD8 are provided with local and cultural knowledge opportunities during Professional Development days. Discussion took place around district staff onboarding and that cultural safety is a part of this process. Suggestion that a dedicated staff member focusing on language and cultural learning in schools would be beneficial. Discussion that local First Nations need to be contacted to see if it is appropriate to have language taught in the district. There can be strict guidelines around language with some nations. There is a traditional language and knowledge sector in the nation. It is important to recognize differences and distinctions with respect to dialect and language.

Discussion around the importance of bands identifying cultural knowledge keepers, and that each area of the district should have Indigenous Support workers. It would be beneficial for the Aboriginal Education staff to come together to connect around culture and language.

Having structures in place to ensure consistency across the district is important. A system will add more clarity, and support the knowledge holders which would be a good bridge to more consistency. Developing structure, consistency, resources and capacity is important.

Discussion that the external program review provides a great starting point for program development. There seems to be an emphasis on structures that need to be put in place.



Discussion that there are opportunities to staff the program differently to meet all of the needs of the students.

Discussion that in general teachers are going above and beyond with students to have excellent educational opportunities.

Discussion that role clarity is important and looking at capacity and growing strengths for staff. Workload sustainability is important and job descriptions need to be reviewed. It is important to integrate the program consistently across the district. A review of resources and Knowledge Keepers will be beneficial as well as looking at programing opportunities.

Discussion that the IEC is about overseeing targeted funding and putting supports in place, as well as making recommendations to the district around changing systems.

Discussion that many of the recommendations in the review will be achievable and will be a beneficial shift for the district and will help to inform how the district is doing other things. All recommendations must consider legislation, collective agreements and confidentiality requirements. Language learning will be a positive focus area going forward. Positive comments about the recommendations that feel attainable and aligned to priorities. The review compliments the direction that we have been moving in. The report guiding our work is very beneficial and will be good to reflect back on.

Discussion took place around the importance of increasing time and presence in local First Nations communities. Building relationships with local First Nations will be beneficial. Nation-based professional learning is important.

Discussion that the IEC's presence in the district is beneficial. It would be good for staff to know the IEC as we become more established. Once we start engaging with community as an IEC and sharing priorities we will learn that there are additional resources to support the program. The IEC would like to be invited to the Indigenous Day of Learning and the upcoming Pow Wow. Community engagement with the IEC is important and planning for this has begun.

The IEC is invited to the Indigenous Day of Learning and some school visits can take place the following day.

Discussion around outreach to local communities to promote and advocate for hiring local people for potential job opportunities.

SD8 Program Review

UPON a motion duly made and seconded it was **RESOLVED:**

THAT the SD8 Aboriginal Education program Review was received as presented.

Superintendent Smillie shared that Board of Education Vice Chair Bremner brings information from the IEC to the Board through verbal update. Under the consent agenda all IEC minutes are included in the Board agenda package.

Chair Basil suggested a letter be drafted from the IEC informing the Board of Education of the Program Review.



b. IEC Aboriginal Education Report

IEC voting member feedback

Director Carriere provided an overview of the IEC Aboriginal Education Report.

Any report from the district regarding ABED that is included in the district Enhancing Student Learning report must be shared with the IEC prior to inclusion.

Structure and format of the ESL report come from the Ministry. Provincial data comes from the HAWD report.

Vice Chair Joseph noted that attendance needs to be addressed and kept at the forefront. Grad honouring should be reviewed for opportunity. Director Carriere will provide an update on graduation honouring at an upcoming meeting.

Parent feedback on attendance would be beneficial. Parents and attendance go hand in hand. Having connection with families can affect attendance positively. Director Carriere shared that attendance information is shared in weekly communication with families, and more work around attendance will be coming. Vice Chair Joseph shared that engagement with families and building relationships is key.

c. IEC Regional Gathering in the Fall.

Director Carriere asked if the IEC is interested in attending another Regional IEC Gathering and if Spirit Ridge is agreeable. The IEC is interested and happy to attend at Spirit Ridge.

7. **Old Business**

a. SD8 Indigenous Day of Learning

Director Carriere provided an overview of the planning for the upcoming April 13 Indigenous day of learning.

12:00 pm – Superintendent Smillie left the meeting.

Vice Chair Joseph shared gratefulness of the changes of the Indigenous Day of Learning based on IEC feedback. It was shared that some snacks should be provided at each ProD site. It was noted that all staff are invited for the Indigenous Day of Learning.

12:14 p.m. – Nicole Courson left the meeting.

8. Round Table – Self-Care for Spring Break.

A round table of sharing took place outlining what individuals will be doing for Spring Break.

9. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m.