



EMCS SOCIETY

# Annual General Meeting

2020 - 2021



# ABOUT

Community schools provide infrastructure for community services that would otherwise not have a local home. In the region of Sooke, this is especially important. Many families commute for work, services, and recreation programs, leaving few hours for engagement with their neighbours and community. Increasing the use of our public school facilities means that families can spend more time in their home community, building relationships and local connections. Their children become connected to the community because they are actively engaged within it.

The EMCS Society partners with students, parents, and the community to build a safe, supportive, and challenging learning environment.

We support this vision by coordinating local services in the following fields of service delivery:



# President's Report

What a year we have had! We have been working throughout the pandemic and keeping busy. A large part of our success has been due to board members who worked extremely hard to ensure the EMCS Society survived, and carried on during these challenging times.

Thanks to Anne, who kept the office and society running during this pandemic. Ashley, for trying new courses, assisting me on the computer (not an easy task!), and driving individuals for events. Dianne, Anne and Ashley, for keeping the budget and finances straight in a pandemic year – wow! Jeff and his team for getting the documentary, Tale of a Whale, towards completion.

Laura moved from her position at EMCS to Belmont and Mike is the new principal. Mike is just as passionate about the school and its staff and students.

Some of the highlights for me were that the Play and Learn camps went ahead, moving from half to full days on short notice. Also, new seats were installed in the community theatre.

The Society is moving through the pandemic and we are looking forward to a bright future.

*- Willy Burrows*

# EMCS Board Members

Willy  
Burrows

President



Kate Barton

Vice President



Susan Percival

Treasurer



This could be  
you!

Vacant Position,  
Secretary



Mike Bobbitt

Director



Loretta  
Deutscher

Director



We have been working hard to offer a range of activities to the children, youth and adults of the region of Sooke. We have become very proficient at setting up and attending virtual meetings, and sharing information via technology.

During the pandemic we have:

- Worked with the School District to ensure all Covid-19 Protocols were met.
- Researched and purchased insurance on behalf of the Society.
- Created new and maintained existing partnerships with Westcoast Adventure College, Sooke Sailing Association, the Amber Academy, Sooke Region Community Health Network, & Healthy Schools Healthy People.
- Play and Learn Camp was hosted ½ days – though challenging we made it work for the children and their families.
- Youth Engagement activities including online contests and Spring Break camp
- Laid off and re-hired staff as appropriate, due to the pandemic.
- Worked with the accountant to ensure government funding was applied for and received for the Office Assistant position.
- Hired a new Program Office Assistant in June 2021.
- Worked with the Literacy Coordinators to ensure programming could continue, all while adhering to PHO guidelines.
- Worked with the Garden Coordinator to ensure there was support for that role during that fiscal year and beyond.
- Hired a youth engagement coordinator, 3 mentors for the Play and Learn Camp and for the first time, a youth garden worker, supported through Canada Youth Summer Jobs.
- Researched, ordered, and ensured seats were purchased for the theatre; installation now complete.

We are looking forward to opening our doors once again to the community and want to express our gratitude to the board, our volunteers, and our staff for helping us navigate these unprecedented times.

*- Anne Bell & Ashley Green*

# Coordinator's Report

# MEET OUR TEAM



**Anne Bell**  
Community School  
Coordinator



**Ashley Green**  
Community School  
Coordinator



**Barb Dunn**  
Program Office  
Assistant

**Dianne Chiasson**  
*Accountant*

**Sarah Richer & Kate Barton**  
*Literacy Outreach Coordinator - Sooke*

**Mitra Evans**  
*Literacy Outreach Coordinator- Westshore*

**Denise Brown**  
*Project Leader – 1000x5 Westshore*

**Matthew Kemshaw**  
*Garden Coordinator*

**Sheila Lang**  
*Duty Host*

**Alison Hill, Marion Stupich & Rhys Pugh**  
*Play & Learn Camp Coordinators*

**Kyla Lovbakke,**  
*Play & Learn Youth Leader*

**Nadia Scott & Lindsay Drabbit**  
*Play & Learn Youth Camp Assistants*

**Hana Pauze**  
*Youth Engagement Leader*

**Sophia Abel-Heath**  
*Garden Assistant*



EMCS staff, students and community had a successful year in 2020/21 and we are off to a solid start this year with a **return to full day instruction** for all students. In June, we thanked Principal Laura Fulton for her strong leadership over the past three years and wished her well as she begins a new position as the Principal of Ecole Belmont Secondary. As I joined the school this September it has been a busy start to the year transitioning administration and connecting with the dedicated and supportive staff at EMCS. Having started my teaching career at EMCS 15 years ago, I am very happy to be back working in Sooke and feel fortunate to have the opportunity to return to EMCS as principal and work with my immediate community once again.

With a full year of educating students during a worldwide pandemic behind us, there have been many important lessons for all educators. While our school and District was able to pivot operations to the Octant Model last year, it became evident that many students require closer connections to staff and classrooms than this model offered. Although attendance and passing rates were strengthened, many students lost the daily check-in with staff and friends that adds to their **social emotional learning**. These lessons continue to shape how we reflect on delivering educational opportunities and remind us of the importance of social contact and the support networks that develop from relationships established in the building. That said, EMCS graduates collectively received or qualified for close to **\$400,000 in scholarships**, bursaries and awards towards post-secondary opportunities. This level of support for our grads truly reflects the strength of community connections that have been built over time and ensure our students get the best possible chance to forward their educational opportunities.

As other South Island secondary schools return to semester systems this year, EMCS staff, students and parents advocated for a **quarter system** in which students take two courses per day over a ten-week quarter. This model allows us to benefit from some of the things we have learned over the past year that help support students in their learning; including increased focus on fewer subjects at a time, as well as opportunities to combine school with transition into the work force and trades programs for our senior students. Layered over this model will be a **focus on mental health and wellness** for both staff and students as we continue to navigate the complexities of education during a pandemic. We will continue to monitor student success in relation to this new quarter system and are curious if it has a measurable impact on student engagement, wellness and learning as we progress through this year.

With students back in the building **full days and a jump in enrolment**, there have been many exciting activities underway this fall. The school wide walk in support of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was a great success and saw EMCS students join with Saseenos Elementary students in tying orange ribbons on the Saseenos fence in remembrance of those affected or lost to residential schools. The EMCS ECO Academy is running this fall for the first time and students have been hiking, cooking, gardening, camping and exploring in the natural environment. The Metal TASK program with Camosun college is operating this fall and has attracted students from across the district to join this great opportunity in welding, metal fabrication, pipe fitting and sheet metal. A return to school sports has been welcomed and our volleyball and cross-country teams are off to a fantastic start to the season. Our international student program is again providing opportunities for students to exchange cultures with students visiting from Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, Japan and China.

Strong connections with the EMCS Society office and the school continue to support unique opportunities for the community. From upgrades to the theatre seats, to the approaching release of the Tale of a Whale film and more youth-based programming opportunities, I value this strong community connection and the desire to see our youth excel.

# Principal's Message

# Youth Engagement



**Spring:** Utilizing the remaining funds from Island Health for Youth Engagement, we hosted a Spring Break Land & Sea Camp in partnership with the Westcoast Adventure College and Sooke Sailing Association. We offered a 5-day wilderness skills camp with the Westcoast Adventure College and 2 days of sailing with Sooke Sailing Association.

**Summer:** Hana Pauze, an EMCS grad, was hired as our Summer Program Coordinator - Youth Engagement. She was hired with assistance from the HRSDC Canada Summer Jobs initiative and our events were funded with a community grant from the District of Sooke. We thank Hana for her creativity this summer and wish her the best as she returns to university this fall.

## Events Hosted:

- Online photo contest with a theme of "Insight to the Island."
- Capture the Flag game hosted in John Phillips Memorial Park
- Improvisation Workshop instructed by the Amber Academy at Ed Macgregor Park
- "Trash is Treasure" Sooke Clean up





# Play and Learn Camp 2021

Now in its **11th year**, this summer program aims to provide a rich play-based learning environment for four weeks, immersing children in literacy and numeracy activities designed to foster their existing academic skills, and to improve their self-confidence and enjoyment in these subject areas. The COVID-19 pandemic created unique challenges for the Play and Learn Camp, but we were able to go back to full days and we registered **24 children**. We were able to maintain COVID-19 protocols ensuring safety, while targeting interventions and creating a fun and engaging environment for our campers.

This year, the program was funded by the EMCS Society, Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences, the Rotary Club of Sooke, Excellence in Literacy Foundation, Sooke Harbourside Lions, The Edith Lando Charitable Foundation, The Sooke Region Literacy Task Group, HRSDC - Canada Summer Jobs, and School District No. 62 (Sooke). These funders made it possible to offer the camp to families at no charge.

The goals of this camp were to:

1. To involve participants in literacy and numeracy activities that enhance their present levels of academic functioning, and avoid summer learning fall-off.
2. To involve participants in sport and recreation activities designed to enhance their present levels of physical literacy.
3. To develop self-confidence and enjoyment in all aspects of literacy and numeracy through play-based learning.

The children increased their skills in all areas. The average increase in Numeracy was 16%, Literacy 14% and Physical Literacy 23%.



# Garden Coordinator

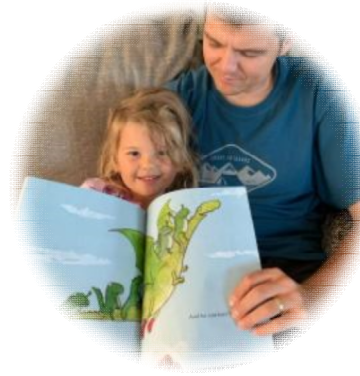
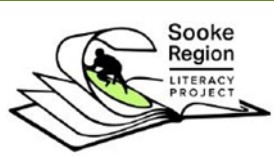
Throughout the 2020/21 school year Garden Coordinator, Matthew Kemshaw, worked **20 hours per week** with classes at Belmont, Westshore and EMCS, supporting garden care and engagement in biodiverse food gardens. He also supported the development of a garden at Royal Bay Secondary. Accomplishments in this year include:

- Facilitating over **500 students** in multi-visit, hands-on garden engagement;
- **Supporting 25 teachers** taking their class outside into school gardens multiple times, including: Foods, Sustainability, Science, Social Studies, Photography, Language Arts, Outdoor Education, Life Skills and PE;
- Hosting Fall **Pro D event** in partnership with LifeCycles, Farm to School BC and Island Health, which was **attended by over 65 educators**;
- As an employee of EMCS Society, designing and developing a **summer work experience** program. As work site supervisor, Matthew supported students in developing their hands-on skills while working at the Royal Bay and EMCS gardens throughout the summer;
- Supporting spring **garden programs** at Colwood and Wishart Elementary;
- Designing seed envelopes and packaging more than **900 seed packs** with school grown seeds, which were sold and distributed via schools and Buckerfield's Langford location;
- Producing more than 3 stuffed panel vans full of food, which was **used in school foods and culinary programs**;
- Securing **\$10,000 in grant funding** to support program expenses;
- Securing **SD62 support** for our program's continuation;
- Negotiating Memorandum of Understanding between LifeCycles, TOPSOIL, Royal Bay Secondary, EMCS Society and School District 62 to support a TOPSOIL micro-farm installation at Royal Bay Secondary.
- Engaging **7 community organizations** in supporting SD62 garden programming





# Literacy Outreach Sooke



**Book Bin Program:** The Book Bin program distributes approximately **7,500 books** to the community in a year. Currently, there are six bins, five are active: two at SEAPARC, two at the Sooke Family Resource Society (SFRS), and one at The Edward Milne Community School. The Port Renfrew and the T'Sou-ke Nation health centre book bins are not currently active. We continue to support the Sooke Rotary filling the "Little free libraries"™ and finding new "parents". Our thanks to the Rotary Club of Sooke for this partnership.

**Play and Learn Summer Camp:** The SRLP is providing seed money to support the Play and Learn Summer Camp. This summer program provides a rich play-based learning environment for four weeks, immersing students in literacy and numeracy, and physical activities designed to foster their existing skills, and to improve their self-confidence and enjoyment in these subject areas. This last year we **donated \$3,000**. We aim to continue this donation.

## Books for Breakfast program:

This preschool story time program has been on hiatus due to the Pandemic. This program was developed and implemented by the SRLP with funding support from Ready Set Learn from School District 62 (We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of BC through the Ministry of Education) and DECODA Literacy solutions. This program pivoted and became the online **StoryTime with Mayor Tait**. Members of the community were encouraged to interact with the program by drawing, being creative and posting images with the handle: #sookeliteracy2021. They then receive a free story book. Our thanks to Mayor Maja Tait's office for supporting our work.

**Literacy Promotion:** We have in the past submitted information about our programs and resources to the website [Southislandliteracy.com](http://Southislandliteracy.com) which is run exclusively in partnership with the other DECODA Literacy solution funded Literacy coordinators in communities on the South of Vancouver Island. This last year we launched our own Website: **Sookeliteracy.org**. This website is linked to the former website but provides a unique platform for us to develop programming, events and resources tailored to our community. There are still two social media contacts for the Sooke Region literacy project: a Facebook page and an Instagram account which are updated at least biweekly.

**Summer Literacy event:** In the Summer of 2021, the SRLP worked in conjunction with the Sooke Rotary club and provided **two free Fun Family Storytime events**. The events featured the Rotary club of Sooke's Robbie the Robot, a remote controlled car who read stories and interacted with the children for part of their story time. The LOC provided a range of books and entertained parents and children in song, physical activity and story reading. **Each family received a free Book** made possible by the Decoda Raise-A-Reader funds for 2021. The Rotary club gave healthy snacks, bubble bottles and their volunteers assisted with all PHO Pandemic protocols for outdoor events. The events took place on the back field at Saseenos school. An evaluation report on the events was produced by the LOC. Our thanks to Rotary Club of Sooke.

# Literacy Outreach Westshore

During the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 Westshore Literacy saw many changes take place. Due to the pandemic, Westshore Literacy moved programming online via zoom and other online platforms in order to accommodate the ever-changing needs of the community. Some of the online programming that we facilitated through this time frame included: **Online Book Clubs** for school aged children, **Online StoryTime** for preschoolers, **Online Info Sessions** for families with young children.

We also collected and distributed children's books and educational materials for families with young children in our community. Westshore Literacy serves as the **online hub** for literacy initiatives in the Westshore and surrounding communities by directing and referring families to the appropriate services available within their community. During this past year, we were able to direct and **assist over 500 families**.

Westshore Literacy continues to collaborate with GVAL (Greater Victoria Alliance for Literacy) and other community partners in order to bridge the gap between literacy services within the South Island region. Westshore Literacy cancelled our annual Family Learning Tour for both 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. In lieu of this, we offered **StoryWalks** for young children and **Hike and Write** activities for teens. Both events were held outdoors at various parks and trails throughout the community following social distancing guidelines. Going forward, we will continue to offer programming online and in person as COVID-19 guidelines permit and are looking forward to continuing our literacy support for families within the Westshore.





# 1000 x 5 - Westshore

1000x5 is based upon the belief that if a child hears 1000 books by the age of 5, he or she is much better prepared to enjoy and succeed in learning. Wide community participation raises the awareness of the importance of universal early literacy and then we do something about it.



To date our project has distributed 53,252 books to families in the Westshore area. We continue to be optimistic that our project will resume regular operations in the near future. Through purchases and donations during we were able to distribute reading materials to Goldstream Food Bank, some Strong Start centres in the Westshore area, and to "Little Libraries" in the Westshore and Sooke areas.

"Our biggest accomplishment this year has been negotiating to move our finances to EMCS Society."

- Denise Brown

**1000 x 5**  
**Recycling Children's Books**  
**for Early Literacy**



# Special Projects

Thanks to countless hours of dedicated volunteers and generous funding from an ever-growing list of donors, the **Tale of the Whale** documentary film project was nearly complete by June 2021.

The film and script were edited numerous times over the year. Local composer, Bruce Ruddell, was engaged to for film music. An additional \$6,750 of donations was acquired in 2020-2021 bringing total funding up to \$12,750.

## Volunteer Team:

Jeff Bateman, Phoebe Dunbar, Elizabeth Lange, Frank Antonsen, Loretta Deutscher, Ashley Green, Corey Vink

## Funding Generously Provided by:

SD 62, EMCS Society, Walmart, Sooke Rotary, Lower Vancouver Island Retired Teachers Association, Home Hardware, Tim Brock, Phoebe Dunbar, Judy Fries, RBC Bank, and the Kurdyak Family Foundation



## Work Remaining

- ☐ Host screening event
- ☐ Create reproductions
- ☐ Thank our volunteers profusely for their hard work and dedication!



