



COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

2025-2026

Chemainus Secondary School



Chemainus Secondary: Our Story

Our Community

Chemainus Secondary School is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, Chemainus Secondary School sits closest to the historic village of Shts’emines—now known as Chemainus—near Kulleet Bay, a site central to Stz’uminus life and culture. We honour our connections to the Stz’uminus, Penelakut, Halalt, Lyackson, Malahat, Cowichan (Quw’utsun), and Métis Nations, whose students and families are integral to our school community. With humility and gratitude, we walk alongside our Indigenous partners, guiding our xe’xe’ smun’eem—our sacred children—toward a future rooted in respect, understanding, and shared purpose.

Chemainus itself is a small, coastal town on Vancouver Island, internationally known for its outdoor murals that celebrate local history, culture, and resilience. Once a mill town, Chemainus has grown into a vibrant arts community with deep ties to the land and sea. Its location near and on Stz’uminus, Penelakut, Halalt, Lyackson Nations reflects the enduring connection to the surrounding Indigenous communities. In Chemainus, stories are remembered, relationships run deep, and the school remains a central part of community life.

Our School Community

Chemainus Secondary is a Grade 7–12 school with approximately 374 students, 41 staff, and three community liaisons for the 2025–26 school year. We operate as a “school within a school,” offering a Middle Years Program (Grades 7–8) and a Secondary Program (Grades 9–12). The Middle Years Program supports young adolescents through cohort-based learning, Teacher Advisory blocks, and exploratory electives. Our Grade 9–12 students follow a semester timetable, allowing them to meet graduation requirements while exploring diverse electives aligned with their interests and goals.

Our students come from Chemainus, Crofton, Saltair, Thetis Island, and Penelakut Island, with many commuting by bus, water taxi or BC Ferries. Approximately 22% of our students self-identify as Indigenous. Our school reflects a wide range of family structures, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural identities. Generations of families have graduated from Chemainus Secondary, and alumni frequently return to reconnect, reminisce, and celebrate their roots. We are proud of our strong community partnerships, including over \$56,000 in annual donations supporting our graduates. Visitors often comment on the warmth and kindness of our students. Our small size allows staff to build lasting relationships with students, fostering a deep sense of belonging. Through academics, clubs, athletics, Peer Tutoring, and Leadership, students contribute to a vibrant and inclusive school culture.

Our Learners

Our Strengths

Staff and students were asked, “What are our strengths as a school?” Their responses included:

- “Welcoming, friendly & fun place”
- “Safe place”
- “Respectful, kind, caring, helpful”
- “Empathic”
- “Variety of programs, class options”
- “Adults who care”

- “Variety of activities, teams”
- “Positivity”
- “Small school vibes”
- “Strong relationships student–staff”

These strengths reflect the heart of Chemainus Secondary: a place where students feel seen, supported, and encouraged to grow.

Our Stretches

Staff and students were also asked, “What are our stretches as a school?” They identified:

- “Literacy”
- “Numeracy”
- “Mental health”
- “Need to embrace Indigenous ways of knowing & learning among students and staff & families”
- “Inclusivity”
- “Communication”

These areas guide our ongoing efforts to improve student learning and well-being.

Review of 2024-2025 goals

1. Literacy

- Strategic Priority: Learning
- To improve literacy for all learners by building staff capacity at RTI Tier 1–3 levels across all curricular areas.

2. Numeracy

- Strategic Priority: Learning
- To improve numeracy for all learners by building staff capacity at RTI Tier 1–3 levels, with a greater emphasis on numeracy across the curriculum in Year Five of the school’s Literacy/Numeracy Plan.

3. Indigenous Education

- Strategic Priority: First Peoples Principles of Learning
- To promote and support better opportunities for Indigenous students, including cultural visibility, language integration, and stronger relationships with families and local Nations.

4. Mental Health & School Culture

- Strategic Priority: Culture of Care
- To implement the school’s Mental Health Literacy & Support Plan, aligned with the Ministry of Education’s Mental Health in Schools Strategy, and foster a whole-school approach to wellness.

Deep dive into current school goals

1. Literacy Focus

2. Numeracy Focus

But first, a brief history of our Literacy & Numeracy goals

In 2020–21, teaching staff identified that students across all grades were struggling with reading (decoding) and reading comprehension in various curricular areas. In response, a team attended the Keys to Literacy – Developing a School Literacy Plan session with Joan Sedita. This led to the formation of the NumLits Team—a voluntary working group of staff committed to improving literacy and numeracy through evidence-based strategies.

Our Learning Support Team (LST) and Grade 7–8 teachers conducted comprehensive literacy and numeracy screenings using tools such as:

- Literacy: San Diego Quick Assessment, CORE Phonics, Words Their Way, MAZE, Oral Reading Fluency (ORF), and District Learning Inventories
- Numeracy: IXL Diagnostics and District Math Screeners

These assessments provided baseline data for each learner. Based on the results, staff delivered targeted Tier 1–3 interventions in literacy during both semesters and numeracy in the second semester.

This school-wide, data-driven approach led to meaningful progress, particularly in comprehension and vocabulary, which remain key focus areas across all grades and subjects.

NumLits Team

The NumLits Team continues to meet regularly to deepen understanding of literacy and numeracy challenges and develop Tier 1–3 strategies across disciplines and grade levels.

In 2023–24, the team focused on numeracy, helping students build confidence through individual and small-group interventions.

The team also developed a five-year Literacy/Numeracy Plan, launched in 2021–22 and continuing through 2025–26, with annual revisions based on data and learning outcomes.

Collective Learnings from 2024-2025 around our Literacy and Numeracy goals

This year, the NumLits team successfully coordinated a series of whole-school literacy and numeracy thinking challenges, which were shared with staff during PLCs, Professional Development Days, and staff meetings. These initiatives fostered collaboration and built momentum around cross-curricular thinking tasks.

To support this work, the team applied for a learning grant to increase teacher collaboration time and aligned efforts with District initiatives, including the administration and recording of District Learning Inventories.

Data Infrastructure and Access

The NumLits team developed grade-level data spreadsheets that include:

- Screening data (strengths and stretches)
- District learning inventories
- Intervention records
- Instructional strategies
- Student-specific notes

This data now covers students entering grades 8–12 and is available as a resource for all teaching staff. This data supports Tier 1 RTI planning and informs Tier 2/3 interventions led by the Learning Assistance Resource Team (LART). The goal is to track student progress over time, share successful strategies, and foster a culture of data-informed practice.

What did the 2024-2025 data tell us?

- Numeracy: The Numeracy data tells us this this remains a stretch for the Grade 7 cohort, indicating a need for continued support and targeted instruction.
- Literacy: The Literacy data tells us that the interventions during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years have led to measurable growth. Comparing literacy assessments and tiers of support with the overall Grade 8 cohort shows clear signs of improvement.

Using this data, support teachers were able to implement targeted interventions, resulting in increased student success.

Literacy and Numeracy Evidence

Literacy

We celebrated our journey in literacy with our million word reading challenge. Students were recognized for their achievements, and our goals were displayed for all to see.



Numeracy

Students were given the task of designing the floor plan for the luncheon and needed to plan out seating by using accurate measurements of the tables. Students also needed to estimate the amount of hot chocolate needed, based on mixing ratios and number of students.



Looking Ahead: 2025–2026 Literacy and Numeracy Goals

For the upcoming school year, literacy and numeracy intervention will remain a priority for students in grades 7–10, with continued support for identified Grade 11 and 12 students requiring literacy assistance. We will maintain our evidence-based approach, using data from screening tools to determine the appropriate level of Tier 1–3 support.

Support will be delivered through collaboration between LA support staff and the NumLits team, ensuring a consistent and responsive approach to student learning needs. Staff will continue to model and share Tier 1 successes during monthly staff meetings, PLCs, and Pro-D days.

To strengthen our numeracy efforts, we've allocated eight additional blocks for targeted Tier 2–3 support for students most in need. Using data from District Learning Inventories, FSA results, graduation assessments, and grad rate trends, our Inclusive Learning Team has invited interested staff to meet monthly to deepen our understanding of literacy intervention.

These past collaborative sessions had led to the creation of a five-year school-wide literacy and numeracy plan, now entering its final year (Year Five) with a greater emphasis on numeracy across the curriculum. As we move forward, our focus remains on creating meaningful, engaging learning experiences while strengthening instructional and intervention practices in both literacy and numeracy.

Specific Numeracy and Literacy Action Items for 2025–2026 (detailed)

- Explore creative strategies for numeracy intervention, especially for students needing foundational skill development
- Continue collaboration with the District leaders to refine and utilize literacy and numeracy inventories to inform instruction and track progress
- Maintain regular staff sharing at meetings, PLCs, and Pro-D sessions to support instructional alignment
- Document processes, successes, and challenges to inform future planning and professional reflection

Fun Events to Support Action Items

- Traditional Feast (Indigenous-focused) – A cross-curricular learning experience rooted in Indigenous knowledge, incorporating storytelling, dance, and food
- Grade 7 & 8 Million Word Reading Challenge – A year-long initiative encouraging students to read one million words
- STEM Challenge – A hands-on problem-solving activity selected at the first PLC meeting of the year
- Elf on the Shelf Literacy/Numeracy Challenge – A festive, engaging way to integrate critical thinking and school spirit
- Fall Challenge – Building on the success of “Mass of Eyeballs” with a seasonal theme
- Winter Challenge – A themed thinking task tied to school events and core competencies
- Spring Challenge – Continuing the popular egg drop challenge to promote creativity and collaboration

3. CHSS Indigenous Education Goal

Our Collective Learnings from 2024–2025 around our Indigenous Education Goal

This year, members of the Indigenous Inclusion Team joined various Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support the integration of Indigenous perspectives across multiple focus areas, including literacy, numeracy, mental health, and school culture. While transitioning from a single team to multiple PLCs presented challenges—particularly when integrating into well-established groups—it also created valuable opportunities to broaden the reach and impact of Indigenous-informed practices throughout the school.

Indigenous Education Evidence

Several powerful and culturally significant events marked the school year:

- Orange Shirt Day Ceremony in September featured the display of local Nations' flags, setting a strong tone for inclusive remembrance and school-wide reflection.
- In November, an Indigenous Veteran was invited to speak at the Remembrance Day ceremony, offering a deeply meaningful and personal perspective.
- Drumming and singing sessions held in November and December were well attended and enthusiastically received by both students and staff.
- The Locally Developed Language & Culture exploratory program benefited from increased support and a clearer focus throughout the year.
- In May, students created a Red Dress Day display, which was further acknowledged in classrooms through individual teacher-led activities.
- Traditional flags from local Nations were permanently displayed within the school, affirming Indigenous presence and identity in shared spaces.
- A traditional feast and a performance by the Tzinquaw dancers provided students with opportunities to engage more deeply with cultural teachings.
- Although Métis programming was not offered at CHSS this year, it remains a priority for future planning.

Indigenous veterans

Remembrance Day at our school brings in the voices of Indigenous veterans with a presentation from Joe Thorne. The unique viewpoints and stories he had to share help enrich the perspective of our students.



Land Acknowledgement

Our land Acknowledgement is now displayed prominently in the school on a brand-new sign.



Learning Language

New placards have been put up around the school to help share local language with the students



Presentation of the flags

We had a ceremony to commemorate new flags for our surrounding nations. Students, staff, and district leadership all came together to commemorate the event



Looking Ahead: 2025–2026 Indigenous Education Goal

As we move into the 2025–2026 school year, Chemainus Secondary remains committed to supporting Indigenous student success and fostering a more inclusive school environment. Key goals include improving attendance for Indigenous students by identifying and addressing barriers, strengthening student–teacher relationships through one-on-one connections, and deepening cultural understanding across the school. Staff will continue to incorporate the First Peoples Principles of Learning into daily practice, not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation. We also aim to expand cultural visibility and language use throughout the school, while building stronger relationships with families and local Nations.

Specific Indigenous Education Action Items for 2025–2026 (detailed)

To support these goals, we will:

- Continue the development of Life Plans for Indigenous student.
- Increase personalized support through our Indigenous Support Teacher, Penelakut Liaison Worker, and Indigenous Support Worker (ISW).
- The Daily Bulletin will feature a weekly Hul'q'umi'num word or phrase with a QR code for pronunciation when possible.
- House team names will incorporate Hul'q'umi'num words for colours, and school signage will expand to include more Indigenous language and art.
- Staff will engage in professional development focused on trauma-informed practice and Indigenous pedagogy.
- We will also strengthen ties with Penelakut Island Elementary School through shared events and transition activities, and create more inclusive opportunities for families to participate in school life.

Fun Events to Support Action Items

A variety of engaging events will help bring these action items to life.

- We will host regular drumming and singing sessions with local dancers and drummers, and continue to celebrate key cultural days such as Orange Shirt Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Red Dress Day, the Moose Hide Campaign, and Big House Season.
- Territory flags will remain prominently displayed in the school.
- Students will have opportunities to earn credit for cultural and language learning through participation in events, land based learning, Hul'q'umi'num language study, and peer support roles at Penelakut Island Elementary.
- Our annual celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Day will continue to be a highlight of the school year.

4. Mental Health & School Culture

Chemainus Secondary School: Fostering a Culture of Belonging and Growth

Chemainus Secondary School is committed to nurturing a positive, inclusive, and welcoming culture. We strive to ensure that every member of our school community feels safe, valued, and connected. Through meaningful events, traditions, and activities, we promote a strong sense of belonging—creating an environment where educational and personal growth are not only possible, but inevitable.

Our collective learnings from 2024–2025 around Mental Health & School Culture

This past year, our team observed a growing need for additional spaces where students can relax, connect, and recharge during unstructured times such as lunch and after school. The high-top tables and benches have become popular gathering spots, offering a casual and welcoming atmosphere for students of all ages. Similarly, the North Cowichan Room has emerged as a vibrant hub for social interaction, with students enjoying pool, games, and conversation.

These spaces have contributed meaningfully to a more inclusive and connected school culture. By bringing the community into the school—through partnerships, guest presenters, and shared initiatives—we’ve strengthened the bond between students and their surroundings. Our coffee station continues to be a cherished place to “fill your cup,” whether with a warm drink or a meaningful conversation with office staff.

We’ve also expanded access to self-regulation spaces, which support emotional well-being. Recognizing the need for more of these spaces, particularly on the second floor, we are committed to ensuring all students have access when needed.

Throughout the year, we welcomed a variety of community teams, organizations, and guest presenters. These included school-wide presentations on mental health and wellness, such as the Get Real movement, Suicide Awareness and Education, the Odd Squad’s substance abuse presentation, and MADD’s drinking and driving prevention program. These initiatives were well received and aligned with our ongoing commitment to student well-being.

After reviewing data from our mental health survey, we noted limited family participation and that only one-third of our student population fully engaged. This insight has guided us to further shift our school culture toward kindness, inclusivity, and respect. Some of the initiatives we implemented include:

- Raising the Nation flags of Penelakut, Halalt, and Stz’uminus in our gymnasium
- Adding a Pride flag to reflect our commitment to diversity
- Addressing and correcting language within the school that was racist, crude, or offensive

These efforts reflect our dedication to creating a respectful and welcoming environment for all.

Evidence of Learning – School Culture and Mental Health

Volleyball culture

Our volleyball program has grown grassroots over the past few years and now our school can boast 4 full teams. Not only that, but our teams won our first ever banner for their achievements, hopefully many more to come!



Basketball

Basketball remains a strong sport for our school. We have multiple teams running and going out to competitions to represent us.



Rock Climbing

The enthusiasm of the rock climbing teams has grown over the last few years. Every week the students make the trek out of town to get their time on the wall



Return of the School dance

We had our first school dance in 8 years. The return was met with much excitement and high ticket sales. We followed up with our second dance in a year with our winter formal.



Dance class/club takes to the stage

Our dance program has gotten so popular that there is now a dance club running alongside it. Our recent dance show showed off all the talent we have.



School Beautification

Our school has been getting visual upgrades to the common areas this year. Brand new tables give places for people to work quietly during class, and a place to hang out with friends during lunch.



Cougar Tracks

Students who go above and beyond, and exemplify our values get the opportunity to be recognized through our cougar tracks. Students look forward to the end of every week, where winners are drawn and prizes are won!



House Colours

We take our colours seriously! We have three houses in our school that form the framework for a variety of challenges and activities. The houses compete against each other for points. These activities are tied to our other FESL goals, such as when we designed the layout for the winter luncheon, monthly numeracy challenges, spirit weeks and more.



Spirit Days

Our school spirit comes out strong on theme days and spirit weeks. Anything but a backpack, Family Feud and more, Costumes of every type!



Winter Feast

One of our favourite school traditions is the annual winter feast. The entire school comes together to celebrate the holidays in the gym for a big luncheon feast.



Activity Day

Every year the whole sets off on a big field trip. Every year offers different opportunities, from Science World to the Vancouver Aquarium and Mt. Washington, there are adventures to be had.



Drama Productions

With the Chemainus theatre so near, its no wonder that we get fired up about our own drama productions.



Looking Ahead: 2025–2026 Mental Health & School Culture Goal

Our mission is to foster a compassionate and inclusive school community where mental wellness is a shared priority. As a Professional Learning Community, we are committed to implementing meaningful, evidence-based strategies that support the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of both students and staff.

Through collaboration, education, and advocacy, we aim to reduce stigma, build resilience, and cultivate a culture of care—where every individual feels seen, supported, and empowered to thrive.

To ensure our efforts are impactful, we will continue to collect and analyze data from students, staff, and families. This feedback will guide our actions and help us tailor our approach to meet the evolving needs of our school community. Reflecting on this year’s mental health survey, we recognize the need for more concise and targeted responses. Our goal for the upcoming year is to increase engagement across all groups—students, staff, and guardians—by at least 80%.

We will align our initiatives with the Ministry of Education’s Mental Health in Schools Strategy Framework, using it as a foundation to guide the sustainability and long-term vision of our plan. Our aim is to strengthen a whole-school approach to mental health—embedding wellness into every aspect of the educational experience, including school culture, leadership, curriculum, and learning environments.

We are excited to continue welcoming mental health-focused organizations into our school. These partnerships will offer both virtual and in-person learning opportunities, enriching our shared commitment to wellness and inclusion.

Specific Mental Health & School Culture Action Items for 2025–2026 (detailed)

- Expand access to self-regulation spaces throughout the school so students can access support when needed
- Continue replenishing the coffee station for staff and itinerant team members to enjoy daily
- Ensure students have easy access to adult support during unstructured times to help navigate peer relationships and personal challenges
- Embed mental health awareness and goal setting into student profiles and core competency reflections
- Invite mental health-focused organizations to deliver engaging presentations and learning experiences
- Celebrate student success across academics, athletics, special events, and cherished school traditions

Summary

Our Goals for 2025-2026

Based on the identified needs within Chemainus Secondary School and in alignment with the District Strategic Plan, we will focus on the following four key goals for the 2025–2026 school year:

1. Strategic Priority: Learning

To improve literacy outcomes for all learners by building the capacity of all staff across RTI Tier 1–3 levels.

2. Strategic Priority: Learning

To improve numeracy outcomes for all learners by building the capacity of all staff across RTI Tier 1–3 levels.

3. Strategic Priority: First Peoples Principles of Learning

To promote and support better opportunities for our Indigenous student population, fostering cultural inclusion and community connection.

4. Strategic Priority: Culture of Care

To implement our Mental Health Literacy & Support Plan, increasing mental health awareness and building resilience among youth and staff.

We will do this by:

| Strategic Priority | Goal Focus | Action Step 1 | Action Step 2 | Action Step 3 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Learning | Literacy Tier 1 & 2 | Create a year-long PD plan using PLC time and staff meetings (by Oct 8 th) | Invite district learning team to collaborate | Continue administering screenings for grades 7–9 and new students (Fall 2025) |
| Learning | Literacy Tier 2 & 3 | Revise and routinely update shared student data tracking documents | Create flowcharts and intervention schedules for literacy supports | Develop a progress monitoring plan for each tiered level of support |
| Learning | Numeracy Tier 1 & 2 | Create a year-long PD plan using PLC time and staff meetings | Invite district learning team to collaborate | Continue administering screenings for grades 7–9 and new students |
| Learning | Numeracy Tier 2 & 3 | Revise and routinely update shared student data tracking documents | Create flowcharts and intervention schedules for numeracy supports | Develop a progress monitoring plan for each tiered level of support |
| First Peoples Principles of Learning | Indigenous Student Support | Host our first bone game tournament with SD79 and other schools | Include Hul’q’umi’num words/phrases in the Daily Scoop with QR codes | Invite Indigenous families to share meals and celebrate student success |
| Culture of Care | Mental Health Literacy & Support | Revise and routinely update our mental health surveys | Create more spaces for students to hang out during unstructured times | Ask for feedback and reflections from staff, students, and families |

Evidence of Learning

How will we know how we are doing?

To monitor the progress of our goals, Chemainus Secondary School will collect a range of qualitative and quantitative data. For literacy and numeracy, we will use learning inventories, photo documentation, and shared spreadsheets to inform instruction and intervention planning. For Indigenous education, we will analyze student survey data, graduation rates, and feedback from families, while also tracking participation in cultural events and language use. In support of mental wellness, we will monitor attendance, survey engagement, and feedback from the school community. Visual indicators such as refreshed student spaces and the graffiti wall will also reflect our commitment to a caring and inclusive environment. These data sources will guide our ongoing efforts and inform future planning.

| Strategic Priority | Goal Focus | Evidence of Learning |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Learning | Literacy | Excel spreadsheets based on learning inventories (Grades 7–9) Photo evidence of literacy tasks during structured and unstructured time Shared data used by classroom teachers, SBT, and LST for planning instruction and intervention |
| Learning | Numeracy | Excel spreadsheets based on numeracy inventories (Grades 7–9) Photo evidence of numeracy tasks during structured and unstructured time Shared data used by classroom teachers, SBT, and LST for planning instruction and intervention |
| First Peoples Principles of Learning | Indigenous Student Support | Student Learning Survey data and trends Increase in Indigenous graduation rates Stories, feedback, and suggestions shared by Indigenous families Participation in cultural events and language use in daily routines Red, Yellow, Green spreadsheet data - Areas of improvement in all areas. |
| Culture of Care | Mental Health Literacy & Support | Red, Yellow, Green spreadsheet data - Areas of improvement in attendance records More than 80% participation in mental health surveys Feedback from students, staff, and families Cleaner school grounds and refreshed graffiti wall Student-created goals for the next 5-year stage (2025–2030) |

Conclusion

Chemainus Secondary School is deeply rooted in the values of our small-town community—resilience, hard work, and connection. Our school is more than a place of learning; it is a living story shaped daily by students, staff, alumni, and community members. We recognize the limited extracurricular opportunities in our area and have responded by offering meaningful activities beyond traditional school hours, helping students make positive choices and grow into proud, contributing members of the community. The presence of alumni and elders—who return to reconnect, reflect, and relive their experiences—speaks to the lasting impact of our school. As a grade 7–12 institution, we have a unique opportunity to support students through six formative years. While we’ve made progress in bridging the gap between elementary and secondary education, we remain committed to removing barriers and fostering a unified, inclusive school culture that reflects the strength and spirit of our community.