

# PEARSON COLLEGE



## Restarting at Pearson: Adaptation, Preparation, ‘Quarientation,’ Education

August 24, 2020

Well, what a half-year it’s been at [Pearson College UWC!](#)

Not to say that 2020 has been less challenging for everyone in Metchosin, or the rest of the world for that matter, but dealing with a pandemic for the first time in our nearly-50 year history has been, no pun intended, an intense experiential education.

As many in the district know, Pearson is unique: One of only 18 [United World Colleges](#) around the world, students selected -- based on merit and promise, not ability to pay -- from up to 160 countries and across Canada, and a non-profit, charitably-registered school with a community dedicated to supporting students seeking an education that encompasses service, outdoor experiences and the International Baccalaureate diploma program.

But whatever distinctiveness we believe we have, we are simply one of millions of organizations and billions of individuals whose lives were upended by COVID-19. In March, rapidly-closing borders and international travel restrictions meant our students had to quickly disperse to their homes and, in some cases, to the homes of friends and volunteers.

On our campus – then a virtual one because most faculty and staff decamped to their respective home offices (a core of permanent residents remained in their individual homes on campus) – we pivoted to full online teaching and learning. As we navigated the techniques and challenges of working with a worldwide online student community (e.g. record all classes and vary teacher office hours to serve all 24 time zones; don’t worry about flushing toilets, curious little siblings and, in at least one case, [howler monkeys](#) in the background), we celebrated the triumphs, mourned the temporary loss of in-person friendships and overcame obstacles.

In late May we had our first and, we hope our only, online graduation in the form of a Zoom-based traditional Pearson [village gathering](#) complete with (more traditional Pearson) mock jumps into Pedder Bay. Even before then, we knew public health measures meant all summer events ([Weddings! Parties! Reunions! MISSA! Anything!](#)) on campus would be cancelled.

And, oh yes! Along the way this summer we introduced a new President and Head of College, [Craig Davis](#), who we hope will have the opportunity to meet many of you in person in the near future. (We’re happy to say that Interim Head and Metchosin resident Ty Pile, whose background as a Rear Admiral in the Royal Canadian Navy helped guide us through the initial pandemic months, returns to his role as Vice-President, Operations and Administration.)

During the online term and throughout the summer, we planned for what we knew and what we don’t (yet) know about 2020-21. An in-house COVID-19 group coalesced, and we reached out to B.C. Public

Health, the federal immigration department, other UWC schools, the [ISABC](#) and others for guidance and knowledge-sharing.

While planning for several possible scenarios, evidence and experience suggested we could move forward on a fall restart albeit one without a full complement of students, a smaller staff onsite at any one time and only after extensive preparations to ensure health, wellness and personal protective measures (masks, face shields, distanced learning spaces, physical barriers, directional and directive signage, auto-on/off taps, auto-opening doors and so on) were in place and that *everything* was in full compliance with public health and government directives.

The latter included a mandatory 14-day off-campus “*Quarientation*” (quarantine + orientation = Quarientation) for all returning students, including Canadians, to help reassure everyone in Metchosin, Beecher Bay (Sc’ianew) First Nation and all surrounding communities, as well as our own campus residents and workers, that measures required to protect people were in place.

Make no mistake, this is a chaperoned, you-must-remain-in-your-room-for-14-days quarantine with meals delivered to the single-occupancy room doors and no in-person socializing or visitors allowed. A robust online orientation and community-building program is intended to keep everyone busy! After Labour Day when on-campus classes resume, all health protocols, as above, will be in place.

If you have been down Pearson College Drive lately, you will have noticed the prominent signage urging casual visitors (but not essential workers, service and delivery people subject to BCCDC and WorkSafe BC COVID-19 rules) from coming onto campus. This is part of our “bubble” strategy to minimize risk to both our campus and wider communities. While we look forward to welcoming neighbours for a through-hike or to stop at our docks, for the time being, we ask you not to come on campus.

Likewise, for the time being, you won’t be seeing Pearson students performing community service jobs. Similarly, while our students will still be in the great outdoors and on Pedder Bay (and Race Rocks Island, of course) no one will be venturing far off campus for the most part.

We’re always happy to talk to our neighbours. But for now, let’s chat virtually!  
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