

Metchosin Muse – June 2021 Edition

Header: Navigating the School Year that Was

By Brian Geary

With nearly 50 years under our belt, you'd think we've dealt with every conceivable scenario. Well, just like everyone else, our nearly 200 students, dozens of faculty and staff and resident houseparent and other families, experienced a year that was unprecedented, challenging and inspiring.

August 2020

“Quarientation!” Quarantine + Orientation = Quarientation -- a word coined by clever wordsmiths to describe two weeks of off-campus quarantine and online orientation **every** student (including Canadians) had to kick off the 20-21 year.

New Head (and family!) Welcoming students (virtually, at first) was new Head Craig Davis who took up residence on campus with spouse Sarah and their three children. Craig brought qualifications and experience from posts in Asia, Vancouver and the U.K. to begin a new era at Pearson.

September 2020

In-person learning? On campus, yes! Late-arriving students were supported through online learning.

Signs, Protocols, Procedures Just when you get used to “Please Stand 3 Racoons Apart” signs, a pandemic procedure shifts. For the first time, everyone on campus faced health and directional signs, masking mandates, restrictions on leaving campus and grounds closed except for essential workers and deliveries.

Community interactions? Um, no. Community service jobs, local beach clean-ups, community lunches at Glenrosa, meet ups with seniors for friendly chats are all part of weaving together community and campus life in Metchosin. Not having these was a disappointing reality check!

October 2020

Lobbying While second-year international students had study visas that allowed entry to Canada, most first-year internationals did not, affecting Pearson and hundreds of public and independent schools and thousands of students from early grades to university. Together, schools and allies built the case for measured, safe entries and completed the rigorous work to become a [Designated Learning Institute](#) to reassure governments **and our neighbours** alike of a safe campus environment.

COVID-19 Working Group While our “WG” began work in February 2020, as students settled in to new learning and living routines, a number of students joined the Group to help “older” members better understand pandemic challenges specifically faced by youth on campus.

November 2020

[Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan](#) With gratitude and humility, and after hard work and consultation, Pearson adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan and committed to implementing actions across eight priority areas. With a campus located on the unceded territory of the Sc'ianew First Nation, students and alumni from Indigenous cultures around the world, thoughtful outreach to Indigenous organizations and communities on the Island and beyond, plus steps to incorporate SENĆOŦEN language across campus, reconciliation in many forms will set the tone here for years to come.

December 2020

[A Most Unusual Winter...Break](#) Is a break a break when you can't go anywhere, including back home, between terms? Yes, when you empower creative young people to plan, schedule and deliver a "lockdown" version of activities and events pretty much confined to campus. And let's not forget a big shout out to Houseparents, House Buddies and campus residents who made this possible!

January 2021

"GVU," virtual reunions, alumni-led/created events Can we agree we've had too much Zoom? Can we also agree platforms like this have done wonders to bring people together and power new and creative gatherings? No cognitive dissonance in understanding both are true! While online learning exhaustion was a reality in spring 2020, this school year saw more positive opportunities like our own Global Village Update (GVU) and scores of alumni-led or inspired global virtual reunions and gatherings.

February 2021

Mental Health and Wellness With short days and wet weeks, February is a challenging month, especially if you're not used to our rainy Pacific Northwest. It's no secret that maintaining good mental health and wellness has been a test for everyone this year, no more so than for students a long way from home and largely confined to campus. Thank you to everyone – peer supporters, our Health Centre, counsellors, Houseparents and anyone with an empathetic ear and time to listen.

Host Families? Yay! We love and respect our host family volunteers because they help ground our students in a welcoming family atmosphere. Host family interactions were necessarily very limited this year and were sorely missed. We hope to see much, much more of you soon!

Student Arrivals? Yup, our last 20-21 student finally arrived in February! Kudos to them for their UWC resilience!

March 2021

One World? Were you looking forward to getting dressed up and going downtown to our annual performance at the Mac as much as we were to crafting the show and expo? Well, pandemic measures on gatherings, singing and dancing together put paid to that for the second year in a row! Never-say-die; reconsidered, re-imagined and re-configured campus-only performances continued in smaller, COVID-compliant ways.

April 2021

["Student Agency"](#) It takes both deliberate commitment and opportunistic circumstance to ensure students have agency – a voice plus influence – in what happens at their school (and home). Head Craig Davis is an advocate for student agency and this was reflected in the creation of a College Assembly that invites student influence in campus decision-making. The parallel development of several cross-campus working groups on Reconciliation, COVID, with others to come, enhanced this.

May 2021

Exhale! Modified graduation and celebratory (Bay Jumps!) activities, campus clean-up day, goodbyes and navigating the wide variety of specific COVID testing and protocols demanded by transit and home countries to get back home!

What didn't change? You and your support for Pearson! Thank you to everyone in Metchosin and across the Westshore for trusting us that we could pull this off while keeping both campus and community neighbours safe!