

General Gordon Newsletter – April 21, 2020.



This painting is a 1994 serigraph by Ojibway artist Roy Thomas (1949-2004). Born in Longlac, Ontario, Thomas was a founding member of the Woodland School of painting who drew his inspiration from ancient pictographs and legends his grandparents told him as a child. Thomas wrote: "This print shows a young person taking the place of leadership after finding enough faith in himself through watching those before him. All the figures in this print are leaders in the same boat, having a common goal (the circle) which they are heading for. Leadership begins with taking control of your own life. Leaders are people who win for themselves so that others can benefit. They earn their place by learning from others and serving the people; they take risks without fear of failing." The serigraph is from the collection of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (ARCHIVES No. 407199) Leadership © Louise Thomas, www.ahnisabae-art.com, louisethomas@ahnisabae-art.com.

Dear General Gordon Families,

During this challenging time, we have really been trying to honour the First Peoples Principles of Learning. Two principles particularly describe our current circumstances: "Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors." and "Learning involves patience and time." The painting we included shows the importance of learning from each other and sharing leadership.

We are in week 2 of online learning. We continue to appreciate all of your patience through this process of accessing technology, learning how the Microsoft team platform works, helping your children to access assignments and take part in online group meetings. Teachers have been working hard to also learn how to use the Microsoft Teams platform and to find the best way to support students during this time of social distancing and suspension of in-class learning. As the Admin we too are working hard to support the individual needs of our students. Our Support Workers are being assigned to assist students that need extra help at this time. This process happens through the classroom teacher. Our resource teachers will also be touching base and supporting students that they had previously been working with. If your child is needing some extra support, please do not hesitate to let your child's teacher know. If you are needing a laptop please email Heidi at haleungvsb.bc.ca and we can lend you one for the rest of the school year.

We know that this is a very difficult time for families. Having had 3 young children, I can imagine that trying to juggle all the demands of work, family and now helping with schoolwork provided online is really challenging. I think that you need to be kind to yourselves and understand that doing your best will look very differently during this time. One of our well-known educational experts, Andy Hargreaves, has shared some advice. He talks about the value of play: "Play, especially outdoor play in the garden or the driveway (if families have them), is always a vital part of learning — a way to develop the imagination, engage in conversation, build relationships with others or work through anxieties. During nature study, for example, my grandchildren have named natural objects as their friends — like sticky and buddy — cute, of course, but also a possible sign they are missing their friends. Many education systems in the past few years have tended to play down "play" in favor of more work, test preparation and downloading serious study to younger and younger age groups. Older kids have also been spending more and more time indoors on their smartphones in a world where even before the crisis, that was already too much. This is actually an opportunity to reverse the cycle for some kids at least — to let them make up their own activities with perhaps just a few materials thrown their way, like balls of

wool, or pebbles, or cardboard boxes, to get them started. Play can work for teenagers, too — singing online together, making up ridiculous skits, building things from junk around the house, and so on. More play, less work, might actually be a good direction to take in these unique circumstances.”



We recently had an online meeting with our PAC Co-Chairs, Victoria and Suzan. They have kindly offered financial support to our teachers who are looking for online resources to support student learning. Teachers are looking at purchasing online resources as well as accessing websites that offer students novels for book studies and read-alouds for younger students. We really do appreciate this support and wish to thank the PAC for offering this financial support.

As we progress along this journey, we have received news about student assessment and report cards. There will be a year-end report card that will be based on summative assessment including learning that was completed before the suspension of in-class learning and progress that has been demonstrated post Spring break as appropriate under the circumstances.

If your child or family needs extra support at this time, please don't hesitate to contact the PAC Co-Chairs, Victoria Bonn or Suzan Saykam or the school. You can send us an email directly: gordonpac@ymail.com; mbroadbent@vsb.bc.ca; drouledge@vsb.bc.ca or haleung@vsb.bc.ca We are here to help in whatever way is possible.

Stay healthy and safe,

Sincerely,

Marion, Deb and Heidi