



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

May 18, 2018

School District 5 Making A “Rainbow Connection”

On May 28th, 2018 School District 5 (SD5) Southeast Kootenay will unveil Cranbrook’s first rainbow crosswalk as a symbol of School District 5’s support for diversity and commitment to inclusive communities that embrace every citizen. The crosswalk, which was enthusiastically supported by the Board of Education, marks the second rainbow crosswalk painted in the District.

According to Frank Lento, SD5 Board Chair, the District’s first rainbow crosswalk was initiated by a group of students and teachers at Fernie Secondary School. Following a presentation to Fernie City Council in the spring of 2017 in which they requested permission to paint the crosswalk on the City’s property adjoining the school, the group received whole-hearted support from both Fernie City Council and the SD5 Board of Education. The crosswalk was painted that summer.

“These crosswalks are a natural extension of the work SD5 has been doing for over a decade to further our goal of providing all students (and staff) with the safety, respect and acceptance to which they’re entitled”, says Lento. “Like the fabled rainbow in the story of Noah, this crosswalk symbolizes our promise to our students.”

School District 5 was one of the first Districts in BC to create a sexual orientation policy prohibiting any form of discrimination, intimidation or harassment against any person based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Originally approved by the Board of the day in May 2006, the policy has been revised over the years to better reflect the Board’s increased understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

In July 2016 the BC Human Rights Code was amended to include gender identity and expression as a prohibited ground of discrimination. By September 2016 the Minister of Education had announced that all boards of education and independent school authorities in BC were required to reference sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in district and school codes of conduct by year’s end.

While many Districts in BC were working on creating or revising their own SOGI policies following this announcement, the SD5 Board was once again leading the way forward, having had revised their policy to reflect SOGI three and a half years earlier, in May 2013.

Cranbrook Mayor and Council, Chair of the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK), MP Wayne Stetski and MLA Tom Shypitka, along with other community stakeholders have been invited to attend the unveiling of this symbolic crosswalk.

To view SD5 Policy 3.35, Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity, visit <http://www.sd5.bc.ca/Board/Policy%20Manual/Pages/Draft-Policy-Manual---Section-3.aspx>.

For information on the BC Ministry of Education's mandate for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) in schools, visit <https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-sogi-in-schools>.

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