



GRAD INNOVATIONS MAKE BETTER EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

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Kelowna, BC – Many of the innovations to the traditional secondary school graduation activities in the Central Okanagan will likely continue as pandemic restrictions are lifted, and potentially in coming years. Through consultations with graduates, their families, and Parent Advisory Councils over the past two years, school staff have refined innovations to honour the important milestone with more personalization and increased family participation.

"We really appreciate the staff and volunteers who have gone above and beyond to make celebrations special for the students who are graduating during a pandemic," said Kevin Kaardal, Superintendent of School/CEO. "Although it often means a lot of extracurricular work for staff, there is more focus on the individual who crosses the stage, more room for additional family members to celebrate the moment, and even better photos and memories."

With the lifting of provincial restrictions on gathering limits coming too late in the school year to change many of the plans that began last year, each secondary school will have a unique commencement ceremony that suits their community. Some of the smaller graduating classes can pivot to include a more traditional ceremony, while some of the larger classes will have smaller ceremonies that will be put together in a video presentation.

"We're excited to have our friends and family enjoying the ceremony comfortably within our selected times, so graduates can celebrate with their loved ones right after they cross the stage," says Callie Andersen, Valedictorian for the Rutland Senior Secondary Class of 2022. "I'm proud of our grad council who made our priorities clear, and thankful to all the school staff who work so hard to make the moment special for us."

"Our staff have worked with graduates over the past couple of years to identify the most important parts of the celebration for students," said Alan Lalonde, Assistant Superintendent. "Thanks to extensive consultation with graduates and parents, and the commitment of staff and volunteers, we've actually been able to improve the experience for many of our graduates by focusing more on their achievements as individuals."

Indigenous graduation celebrations will remain school-based this year with small groups of family and community members coming together to honour individual Indigenous graduates in a Traditional Blanket Ceremony.