

NANAIMO

Innovation Academy



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New Nature-Based Elementary School Opening in September

Nanaimo Innovation Academy is thrilled to announce the opening of its new elementary school for the 2022-2023 school year. Our non-profit, nature-based independent school will provide 32 spaces for families from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Children will benefit from small classroom sizes and hands on learning, with at least half the day or more spent outdoors exploring community ecosystems with a certified Forest Educator and BC Certified Teacher.

"This truly is a unique opportunity for children in Nanaimo" says Keely Freeman, Founder and Executive Director of NIA. "Our school is designed for children to get muddy and play outside in nature every day, where teachers love to learn alongside their students, and where the education is inspired by a child's interests and passions." Freeman says "we opened our elementary school application on May 1st and the class is already over half full. We continue to review applications on a rolling basis until the class fills and then we will start a waitlist. We already have interest from families for future years."

Nanaimo Innovation Academy received approval in April from the independent school branch of the Minister of Education. Currently there are four other independent schools in Nanaimo, three of which provide elementary school programming. As many new families have moved over from the Lower Mainland and other parts of Canada, with more to follow, they are used to a wide variety of educational options. Having another option for families will only benefit the community's growth.

"Nanaimo Innovation Academy plays an important role in providing quality child care services in the Nanaimo area and are continually building on the services and supports they provide to families in our community" says Doug Routley, MLA for Nanaimo-North Cowichan.

Jarret Krentzel is the founder of Han-in-Hand Nature Education in the Comox Valley and says *"this new school will directly impact the children's education by providing them all with space and time to not only learn the BC curriculum, but to also gain an appreciation and respect for our natural world."* Krentzel says, *"for this*



reason alone, a school of this "nature" is not only needed in Nanaimo, it's being requested! I applaud the staff of the Nanaimo Innovation Academy for listening to what the community has requested and creating a school that will deliver just that!"

The elementary school will have two classes of 16 students each, a K/1 class and a Grade 1/2/3 class, and will expand by another grade each year. NIA has a bus which allows the children to go on adventures each day exploring surrounding forests, beaches and other ecosystems throughout the community. At Nanaimo Innovation Academy, we do not believe in academic pressure in the early years, but rather a child-led, seasonally inspired education that aligns with the BC curriculum and Core Competencies.

For more information, please visit our website Nanaimoinnovation.org

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