

OCTOBER
2026



Selkirk Montessori School E-Newsletter

From the Head of School, Erin Hayes

As we settle into the rhythm of another school year, it is wonderful to see both new and returning families becoming part of the daily life of our Selkirk community. A month into the school year, classrooms are finding their routines, friendships are forming and growing, and many of us are beginning to reconnect with familiar faces while getting to know new ones.

When our children are young, our lives can easily become governed by school schedules, activities, and family commitments. As a result, many of us have limited opportunities to nurture our own social connections. For some, the majority of their adult social interactions happen at work or while waiting for their children at practices, lessons, and events. Yet research continues to show the importance of community and relationships to our well-being. Recent studies have found that strong social connections are associated with better physical and mental health, greater resilience, and a stronger sense of belonging throughout life.

Having a sense of community beyond our immediate families helps build empathy, broadens our perspectives, and supports personal growth. In past generations, children often played freely in their neighbourhoods, and parents naturally connected through shared spaces and daily routines. Today, with busier schedules and more structured activities, we often need to be more intentional about building those connections.

One of the greatest strengths of a school community is the opportunity to connect with people from many different backgrounds and experiences. Through these relationships, we gain understanding, support, and a sense of being seen. After all, who can empathize more with the challenges and joys of parenting than someone whose child is experiencing a similar milestone, conflict, achievement, or meltdown?

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October:
🍁 Every leaf
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Message from Erin (cont'd)

These benefits extend to our children as well. When they see their families engaged in school life, they understand that their learning matters. They see that we value the people who support them each day, and that helps build trust and respect within the community. Strong relationships also make it easier to navigate challenges when they arise. When parents and students know one another as individuals, they are more likely to approach disagreements with compassion, curiosity, and a desire to find solutions together.

I am deeply grateful for the parent community that helps make Selkirk such a special place to learn, grow, and raise children. As fall activities, clubs, field studies, performances, and community events get underway, there are many opportunities to strengthen connections with one another. Our Selkirk Parents' Group plays a huge role in fostering community through welcoming meetings and a variety of fun-raising events that bring families together.

Whether you have been part of Selkirk for years or are experiencing your first fall with us, we hope you will find opportunities to participate and connect.

We also encourage families to make use of class email lists to organize occasional "pop-up playdates." Inviting classmates or grade groups to meet at a local park, playground, or beach for unstructured time together can be a wonderful way to build friendships and strengthen community. Whether one family attends or a dozen, meaningful connections and lasting memories are created.

As the school year gains momentum, I encourage all of us to continue investing in the relationships that make this community so special. The connections we build today enrich our children's experience and help create a school where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Here's to a wonderful year of learning, growth, and community.

Meet Our SEL Teacher: Bianca Brandt-Rousseau



Hello Selkirk Families,

My name is Bianca Brandt-Rousseau, and I am delighted to join the Selkirk Montessori community as the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) teacher on Thursdays and Fridays.

This fall, I have been visiting classrooms and facilitating Grace and Courtesy-inspired SEL experiences using Image Theatre, a creative approach that invites students to explore empathy, belonging, communication, and perspective-taking through movement, reflection, and storytelling. I am currently working with students in Cormorant, Seastar, and Kingfisher, and it has been wonderful to witness the thoughtfulness, creativity, and insight they bring to these activities.

I believe every child brings unique strengths, interests, ways of learning, and ways of being. As both an educator and counsellor, I am passionate about creating environments where neurodivergent learners, including students with Autism, ADHD, anxiety -and students with a wide range of sensory, social, emotional, and learning profiles- feel understood, valued, and empowered to flourish. My work focuses on fostering self-understanding, authentic connection, emotional literacy, and confidence, while honouring each child's individual developmental journey.

In addition to classroom lessons, I work with small groups or individual students who would benefit from extra support in areas such as friendship skills, communication, conflict resolution, perspective-taking, self-advocacy, and social problem-solving through role play and other experiential activities.

Beyond my work at Selkirk, I am the founder of Satori Tiger, where I support children, youth, and families around emotional well-being, parenting, relationships, neurodiversity, and life transitions. If you'd ever like to connect, whether you have questions about your child's social-emotional development, are curious about the SEL work happening in classrooms, or simply want to introduce yourself, I'd love to hear from you. Building strong partnerships between school and home is such an important part of supporting children, and I welcome opportunities to connect with families along the way.

I look forward to getting to know your children and contributing to the caring, inclusive, and compassionate community that makes Selkirk so special.

Sincerely yours,

Bianca Brandt-Rousseau, MACP, RCC, CCC

SEL Teacher, Selkirk Montessori

Founder, Satori Tiger



Grieving the Loss of a Pet

With autumn upon us, we are collectively witnessing the end of many life cycles in nature. The ground is now covered with fallen leaves, and soon, spawning salmon will begin their journey upstream, marking the final phase of their life cycle as well. Although these cycles unfold around us every year, their endings can be so quiet that we often barely notice them. The endings that tend to capture our attention most are those that are near and dear to us—life changes and losses that don't necessarily follow the seasons but unfold in their own time.

As adults, many of us have experienced grief in one form or another: the end of a relationship, the loss of a job, or the death of someone we love. For many children, one of their first experiences with grief is the loss of a beloved pet. In fact, approximately 63% of children experience the loss of a pet within their first seven years of life.

While painful and sad, the loss of a pet can also provide a natural opportunity to support your child as they begin to understand and navigate the grieving process. Whether you are saying goodbye to a family dog, cat, hamster, or another beloved companion, these small lives can hold an enormous place in our children's hearts—and in ours, too.

It can be tempting to minimize a pet's death or avoid making it a "big deal," especially when we want to protect our children from sadness. But giving children the space to grieve, cry, ask questions, and remember the special moments they shared with their pet can be a meaningful and healthy way to help them make sense of their loss.

Below are some helpful ways to support your child through the grieving process, adapted from [*The Gentle Counsellor*](#):

- **Use clear, simple language.** Don't be afraid to use the word *died*. Talking about death can feel uncomfortable, and that's completely normal. However, telling a child that a pet has "gone to sleep" can be confusing and may even create a fear that they—or someone they love—could die while sleeping. As parents, we're tired enough already, so let's not make bedtime any harder than it needs to be!

Counsellor's Corner

- **Validate and normalise their feelings.** A child may feel sad, angry, guilty, confused, or even relieved if their pet had been sick or in pain. All these feelings are normal. Giving children permission to experience and express their emotions helps them begin to understand grief and can build resilience for the losses they will inevitably encounter throughout their lives. It's also okay to let your children see your feelings. We can cry with them, talk about our own sadness, and share how much we miss the pet, too. We grieve together.
- **Give yourself permission to feel, too.** You might say something as simple as: *"Kids, I have something to tell you. [Pet's name] has died. This is really sad, and I'm sad too. I'm here to help you."* There may be lots of tears and cuddles. Take a breath. These feelings can be overwhelming, but they will pass. It's okay—and important—to sit with the sadness, including your own.
- **Remember that grief doesn't always look like tears.** Your child may not seem particularly affected at first, and that's okay, too. Depending on their age and stage of development, they may not fully understand the loss or may need days or even weeks to process what has happened. Be ready for feelings and questions to surface later, and let them know that they can always come back to you to talk.
- **Encourage questions, even when you don't have all the answers.** Children may wonder what happens after a pet dies, where their pet is, who is caring for them, or what happens to their body. These questions can lead to both practical and spiritual conversations. When our family experienced pet loss, my children asked about the process of caring for the body and cremation, which was what we chose, as well as bigger questions about what happens after death. We talked about different beliefs, including the idea of nothingness, pet heaven, and reincarnation.
- **Allow space for different beliefs.** It's okay for children to explore what they believe happens after death—and to change their minds as they grow. If your family or culture has particular religious, spiritual, or cultural beliefs and practices around death, this can be a meaningful opportunity to share them with your child and talk about the rituals that are important to your family.
- **Maintain routines where possible.** Predictability can provide a sense of stability and security when everything else feels uncertain. Try to maintain regular mealtimes, bedtimes, school routines, and familiar activities. At the same time, you know your child best, so be flexible when needed. Ask what they need from you and give them space to express how you can best support them.

For more helpful recommendations, including information about how children understand and experience pet loss at different ages, visit the *Gentle Counsellor's* [blog](#).

Warmly,
Carmelle Hermoso, M.Ed., RCC
School Counsellor

Remembering our Feathered Friend, Aero



For those of you who have been part of the Selkirk Montessori School community for some time, you may remember Aero, the school's beloved and friendly cockatiel. On October 1st, Aero passed away peacefully in his sleep. He was 18 years old.

Before joining the school, Aero belonged to Carmelle's dad, Tony. When Tony sadly passed away from cancer in 2013, Aero and four other cockatiels were cared for by Carmelle's mom, Emilie. Eventually, she made the difficult decision to rehome the birds. In 2017, Carmelle's cousin Jhoanna, who was an Orca teacher at the time, graciously offered to adopt Aero as a class pet.

Aero quickly became a much-loved member of the class. He was often heard serenading his own reflection during work periods and brought a gentle, playful presence to the classroom.

Counsellor's Corner



When Jhoanna eventually moved up to the Kingfisher Class, Aero came along and had no trouble making new friends there, too. During school breaks, he was fortunate to spend his holidays with various Selkirk families or with the seniors at St. Francis Manor by the Sea, thanks to teacher Angela's parents.

In his final months, Aero came to live with Carmelle and her family. She is grateful to have had the opportunity to care for him in his old age and to give him a comfortable, loving home before his passing. Aero will be remembered most for his love of paper bags, dishwashing gloves, and sneakers—three things that never failed to capture his attention!

Rest in peace, little guy. Thank you for shining your light and bringing so much joy to our community. You will be dearly missed by so many.

Selkirk Parent Group (SPG) Update

Leaves are falling. Days are shortening. But, the SPG is just warming up ...



The SPG held the first meeting of the school year on September 17. Thank you to all who stepped forward to fill vacant volunteer positions. Sarah Bolen is our new SPG Chair and Shanna Parkin our new Vice Chair. Don't fret if you missed the meeting. We have them every month, and you are always welcome to attend. Plus, volunteer opportunities pop up all year long.

Fall Social Shout-Out

A huge thank you to Teacher Noel who was our linchpin for the recent Fall Social. Those who attended enjoyed an evening of community, great food, and fun for all. Thank you to everyone who took part.

Happy Little Accidents

Turn rainy afternoons into family crafting fun with our McTavish Art Kits fundraiser. Each kit comes complete with all supplies, is locally made in North Saanich, and offers a 30% fundraising return to the SPG. Ordering will be open from October 7 to 21, with kits to be delivered to the school. Follow the link to order your kits today and get ready for a fun crafternoon!

Clean Slate / New Sheets

Enjoy your winter slumber in new bedding through our Clara Clark Bedding Fundraiser! The SPG is partnering with Clara Clark Bedding to offer sheets, duvet covers, and bamboo pillows and mattress protectors. This fundraiser is now open in our MunchaLunch platform (<https://munchalunch.com/login>) and will close October 31, with delivery before Christmas. Watch the Weeklies and posted fliers for more details.

Selkirk Parent Group (SPG) Update

Annual Hallowe'en Howler

Ghouls of all ages are welcome to attend this ghastly evening of howls and haunts. Beware the Kingfisher Class! They will surely raise your hackles with their spooky tricks and treats. If you are dying to volunteer, there will be opportunities for mummies and zombies. Come in your seasonal finery, if you dare ...



Key dates for October ...

Oct. 6: Apple orders and payments due

Oct. 9: Deadline to save on Spirit Wear orders – select “Pick Up at URSTORE” to save on delivery (orders shipped to the school) and be sure to use the 15% off code for all items on the site

Oct. 15: SPG meeting, 6pm, Kingfisher classroom

Oct. 20: Apple orders pick up at school

Oct. 21: McTavish Art Kits orders and payments due

Oct. 30: Pizza Day Oct. 30 (Friday): Hallowe'en Howler

Oct. 31: Clara Clark Bedding orders and payments due

Pizza Day

October 30, 2026

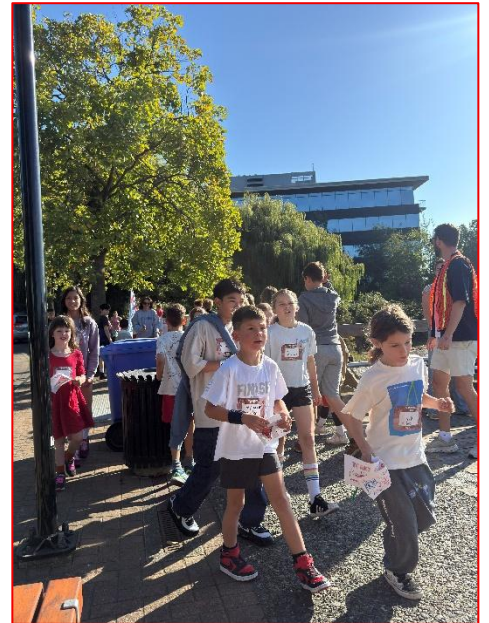


Assemblies and Observances

Terry Fox Run

Our school community came together for the annual Terry Fox Run, honouring Terry Fox and his incredible Marathon of Hope. Students and staff participated with enthusiasm and school spirit while supporting the important cause of cancer research.

A special thank-you to Doug for coordinating the event and helping make it a meaningful and successful day for our school community!



Assemblies and Observances



Truth and Reconciliation Day

Our school community came together to recognize **Truth and Reconciliation Day** by wearing orange shirts and taking time to reflect, learn, and honour the experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Thank you to everyone who participated and helped create a meaningful day of **learning, remembrance, and respect.**



Events & Activities



Cross Country Club

Our Cross Country Club has had a fantastic start! Students have been working hard, building their endurance and encouraging one another along the way. We are so proud of their determination, teamwork, and positive spirit. A **special thank you to Noel, our supporting staff, and our wonderful volunteers** for their time, encouragement, and dedication in helping make Cross Country such a positive and enjoyable experience for our students! 



Events & Activities



Seastar & Cormorant at Camp Barnard 🌲

Our Seastar and Cormorant students recently enjoyed an exciting outdoor experience at Camp Barnard! The trip gave students the opportunity to explore nature, participate in engaging activities, and spend quality time learning and growing together outside the classroom.

From teamwork and new challenges to simply enjoying the beautiful surroundings, it was a memorable experience filled with learning, laughter, and adventure. We are so proud of our students for embracing the experience with enthusiasm and curiosity!

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We can make a difference!

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Please make sure to bring home any belongings before Friday! Our Lost & Found is overflowing with clothing and unclaimed items, and everything left behind will be donated.

Dates to Remember

- * October 07-October 09 – Scholastic Book Fair
- * October 12–Thanksgiving Day
- * October 16 – Photo Day
- * October 19- October 22 – Child Hosted Visits
- * October – Board Meeting
- * October 23 – Non-Instructional Day (NID)
- * October 30 – Halloween Howler

Selkirk Montessori School is located on the traditional territories of the Lək'wəŋən people, today known as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. We extend our appreciation for the opportunity to live and learn on this territory.