



ESQUIMALT HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER



EHS School Update

Happy 2026, Esquimalt High Alumni!

As we settle into the winter months and start a new year, there's a real sense of energy and momentum around the school. While students are busy in classrooms and with extra-curricular activities, our staff is already looking ahead, planning for 2026-2027.

January has been a full month. Students have been writing provincial literacy and numeracy assessments and wrapping up the final weeks of Semester 1. With new classes starting February 2, students are also choosing their courses for next year.



We're excited to be offering several new classes next year, including a dual credit English course for our Grade 12 Challenge students, Child Development and Caregiving, Genocide Studies, Fashion Industry, Media Arts, Environmental Leadership, and Art Metal Jewelry.

Outside of the classroom, things have been just as busy. Basketball season is well underway, and, weather permitting, ski trips will be happening.

Our annual *Fine Arts Fiasco* took place January 20 and 21, and our leadership students are already planning February events like Pink Shirt Day and Valentine's Day activities. There's also lots of excitement building for our Japan trip coming up in March.



A Selfie with Santa to celebrate the beginning of Winter Break

As we move through the year, we continue to work with staff to strengthen our school goals. We are developing a new Literacy goal to support student learning across the school, along with our two existing goals:

- Health, wellness, and connection for all
- Meaningful learning opportunities with purpose and dignity for all

With a focus on our priority learners, including Indigenous students, students with designations, and Children and Youth in Care, we're planning to introduce some high-impact literacy strategies school-wide starting next year.

Specific to our alumni group, I'm excited to continue to help with planning our first *Outstanding Alumni* reception this spring. It will be a fantastic opportunity to recognize and celebrate the incredible graduates who have come through Esquimalt High.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support our school through volunteering, donations, and staying connected. We truly appreciate it!

Warmly,
Sarah Garr, Principal

EHSAA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS FROM THE 2025 EHS GRAD CLASS



Three outstanding 2025 EHS grads were each recognized with a \$1000 EHSAA Scholarship at the November 2025 AGM. **Peyton Yip, Mateo Berkout** and **Ariana Lane** were all accompanied by or represented by their parents. All three are busy with gap year activities, as they prepare for their first year of post-secondary studies this coming fall. Robert Laidler presented the awards on behalf of the EHSAA. Citations for each winner (as follows) were written by EHS Scholarship Teacher Dana Bjornson.

Peyton Yip

Peyton's dedication to community service comes from her experiences as a visible minority. Having faced racial discrimination firsthand, she has made it her mission to advocate for equity and inclusion. She works tirelessly to highlight diversity, create safe spaces for students of colour, and empower minority voices—making her school and the wider Esquimalt community stronger, safer, and more welcoming for everyone.



Through her involvement, Peyton has seen the real impact of her efforts. From the work of the BIPOC Awareness Club in her school, to volunteering with the Greater Victoria Green Team to rehabilitate local parks and remove invasive species, she has experienced how action can lead to meaningful change. These experiences have guided her toward a future in law, where she hopes to continue creating positive change, whether as a lawyer, judge, or politician.

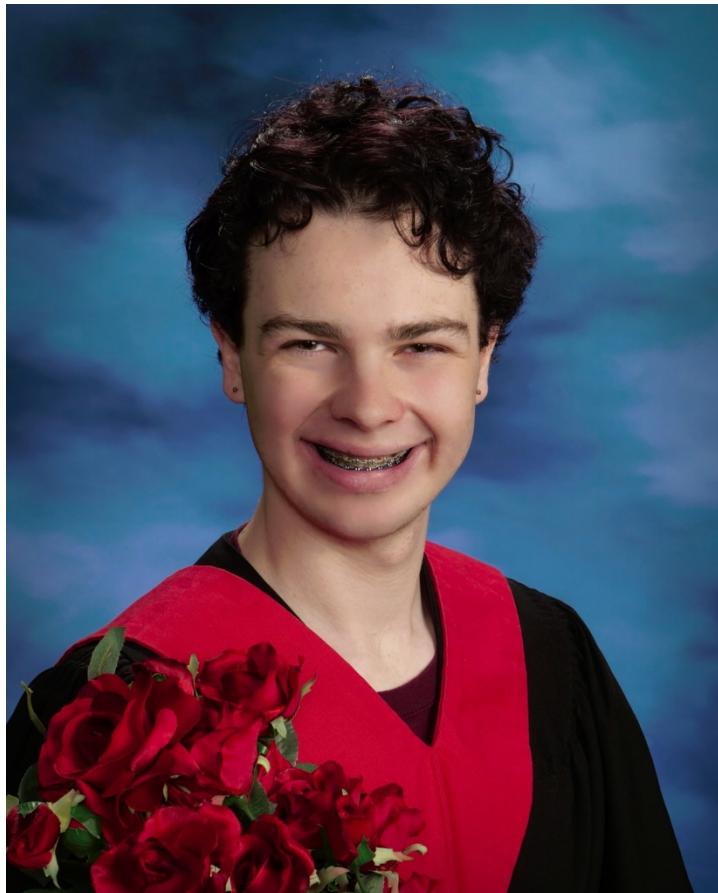
Among her proudest accomplishments, Peyton planned and hosted the School District 61 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Forum. The event invited students of colour and students with disabilities to share their perspectives, learn about local supports, and provide input on policies that affect them.

She also reflected on her experiences with the Loran Scholars Foundation, gaining insight into her growth as a community leader.

Next year, Peyton will attend the University of Victoria to study marine biology, participating in co-op programs and field schools to deepen her knowledge and experience. Beyond her degree, she hopes to pursue a career in law, continuing her dedication to making her community and the world a more inclusive, fair, and just place.

Mateo Berkhout

In grade nine, Mateo wasn't very involved in school and often felt unfulfilled. Everything changed when he switched schools. He began by joining band, choir, and leadership, and soon discovered a passion for saying "yes" to new experiences. He volunteered at parades and protests, explored new instruments, joined clubs, mentored younger students, and even helped create a school garden. Through these experiences, Mateo found not only joy but a deeper sense of purpose.



Through his involvement in school and community activities, Mateo has grown more confident, resilient, and open-minded. One of the most transformative experiences for him was participating in the Youth to Sea program, where he conducted a scientific study and petitioned the local government. This experience gave him the confidence to take further initiative, leading him and a group of friends to build a fully functional school garden.

Mateo is now excited to continue this journey. He will be studying ecology and environmental biology at Thompson Rivers University. Before starting, he plans to take a gap year gaining hands-on experience in organic farming in France through WWOOF and participating in conservation work in Romania with Angofa Wildlife Tours. His ultimate goal is to work with endangered and at-risk species, restoring ecosystems and helping nature thrive.

Mateo's story shows how curiosity, courage, and a willingness to step outside your comfort zone can transform not only your life but the lives of those around you. He hopes his journey inspires others to embrace challenges, pursue their passions, and believe that one person's actions can truly make a difference in the world.

Ariana Lane

Ariana is a proud 2025 Beedie Luminary, an award that recognizes not only her academic achievements but also the challenges she has overcome to get here. This recognition has given her the confidence to pursue her post-secondary goals and future ambitions.



She has also made a lasting impact in her school's Technical Theatre Program. Over several years, Ariana has developed skills in mentorship, teamwork, and design. This year, she was chosen to create the poster and logo for the school production and served as lead lighting designer, designing and programming shows for two years. Her dedication was recognized with the Senior Theatre Tech Award, and her teacher described her as "the most reliable student [she has] ever worked with."

Next year, Ariana will attend Camosun and the University of Victoria to study nursing, with the goal of becoming a nurse practitioner or doctor. Through theatre, tutoring, and leadership, she has learned to communicate, collaborate, and stay calm under pressure—skills she will carry into her future career.

With determination, talent, and the mentorship she has gained through the Beedie Luminary community, Ariana is ready to make a difference. She aims to

inspire, to lead, and to help others—showing that dedication and heart can truly change the world.



ONE MORE OUTSTANDING 2025 EHS GRAD SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Sofiia Yarish, like her classmate Ariana Lane (profiled above), won a prestigious Beedie Luminary SHINE Award, a scholarship that is worth a total of \$44,000 over four years. EHS is very proud of the two Beedie winners from the 2025 grad class.

Sofiia has a compelling story of her journey from her home country of Ukraine, to her graduation from EHS as a highly regarded, scholarship-winning, outstanding member of her community.



Sofiia was born in Ukraine, where she lived until the Russian invasion required her family to leave and move to Czechia for their safety. She was 14. Sofiia began grade 10 without understanding the language. In her scholarship application letter, she wrote that her greatest personal achievement was to finish that grade in the top three of her academically competitive class.

The family came to Victoria the following year, and Sofiia began grade 11 at EHS. She wrote, "I am a highly academically driven student with a huge passion for learning that never stops growing. This is why studying in my fourth language cannot be a barrier or prevent me from getting the top grades in all my classes. I am a hard worker who can balance working part-time, taking challenging academic courses, playing on a rugby team, and volunteering on the weekends."

Sofiia's volunteer work was very personal. She wrote, "Knowing how

hard it was for me to learn a new language and gain confidence to overcome the language barrier, I decided to find a program that would let me help someone else in the same situation. I joined the ENGin team - a nonprofit organization that connects English-speaking volunteers with students from Ukraine to help them achieve their goals in learning English. I was connected with a girl my age who was very passionate about her studies but could not achieve her full potential due to the fear of speaking in English. She was insecure about her accent, anxious about making mistakes, and confused about grammar. I prepared our weekly lessons, creating presentations, engaging her in conversations, coming up with creative exercises, and doing my best to make her confident in herself and her English. In six months, she was able to fulfill all her goals, but more importantly, we created a meaningful connection that led to a fantastic friendship."

This remarkable young woman is now attending UBC in Vancouver, where she is working on a Bachelor of Science degree. Sofiia plans to specialize in neuroscience.

EHS Reunion News

How can we help?

Hello Esquimalt High School alumni. Planning a reunion? We can guide you through the details on how to book school facilities for your event(s). We can also lend out items from our archive collection to provide a nostalgic theme for your get-together. In addition, we have compiled a list of reunion coordinators from various graduation years who can relate how they organized their reunions.

For help in organizing your reunion contact:

Robert Laidler, EHS Alumni Committee Reunion Facilitator, at
bobtheman50@gmail.com

Class of 1966 Plans a 60-year reunion

The EHS class of 1966 is celebrating their 60-year reunion!!!

A luncheon will take place on **Saturday, September 19, 2026** at the **Gorge Vale Golf Course**.

Contact **Dave Allen** at: davidwallen@shaw.ca for further details.

Class of 1976 Plans a 50-year reunion

The **SPIRIT OF 76** will be having its **50th Celebration on May 16th 2026**.

Location: Chief & Petty Officers Mess, CFB Esquimalt, 1575 Lyall St.

** A fun night of reuniting with classmates and enjoying drinks and appetizers from 6pm until 11pm.

** \$75 per person and there is lots of parking available.

** Contact for RSVP and payment: (E-Transfer) and will accommodate cash payments if requested

***No payments at the door.

Laura Lang (Coulter)

EMAIL - Class76Esq@gmail.com

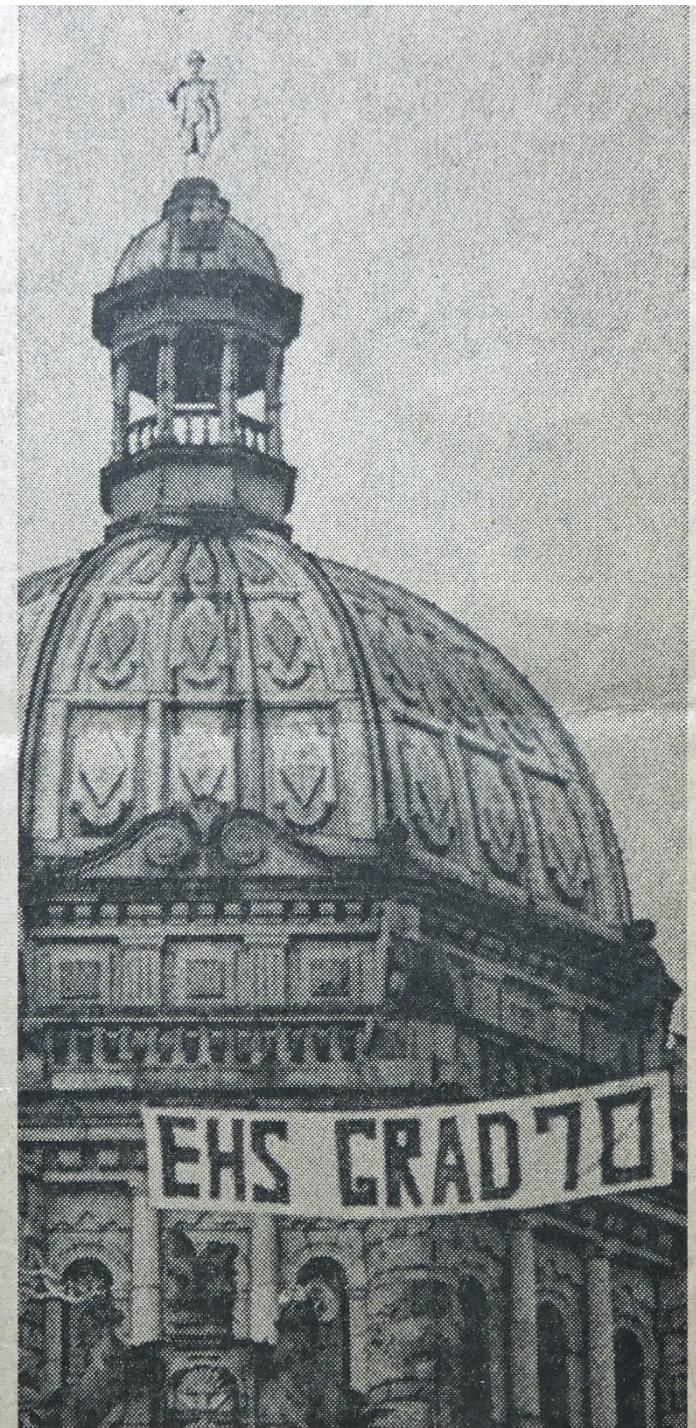
Links to connect:

Messenger: Spirit of '76

Facebook - Esquimalt High "Spirit of 76" 50th school reunion

Grads of 1976 Contact person: Dee Jenkins 819-360-2447





High-Class Hijinks

Friday's mystery was evident at daybreak at legislative buildings when early light showed Esquimalt high school grads had visited stately grounds during hours of darkness and left their calling card. Question still unanswered is how students reached balcony to string sign of graduating class of 1970.
—(Jeffrey Pinniger)

From the Archives –

Grads of 1970 make headlines

Thanks to 1970 Grad, Rick C. West, for sending these clippings.

It was a memorable grad for this creative graduating class.



"THERE WERE 99 BOTTLES on the wall . . ." sang Esquimalt Senior Secondary grads Thursday night as they gaily festooned the old alma mater in beer bottles and toilet paper as a whimsical farewell gesture. About 100 grads staged an overnight

sleep-in on the school's playing field as a final get-together before their graduation ceremony tonight. "It was all good clean fun," said principal Roy Temple. Nevertheless the guilty grads had to clean up the school grounds before the festivities.

EHS Outstanding Alumni Celebration

Esquimalt High School - Wed. May 13th – 7:00 pm

Members of the EHS Alumni Association executive invite you to attend the inaugural EHS Outstanding Alumni Celebration on the evening of Wed. May 13th at the high school, where eight accomplished EHS alumni will be honoured and celebrated.

We hope this will be the first of many such celebrations, likely taking place every three years or so. Luckily for the organizers, EHS has many outstanding alumni, so selecting names of alumni to honour in the future won't be difficult.

The evening will begin with a gathering at 7 pm in the cafeteria for appetizers and beverages, as prepared and served by the EHS Chef Training students. This informal reception will be an opportunity for those attending to meet the recipients.

At 8 pm, outstanding alumni and their guests and other attendants will make their way to the school's theatre, where each of the outstanding alumni will be honoured in turn.

Tickets will be \$25 each and are available through Eventbrite at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/esquimalt-high-school-outstanding-alumni-recognition-ceremony-tickets-1982255762346?>



EHS Musical Theatre students present Hadestown

Esquimalt High School Musical Theatre students, under the direction of Fine Arts Department Head Kaehlen Allison, are excited to perform the musical Hadestown this coming spring.

The Hadestown Broadway website offers the following description: "Hadestown intertwines two mythic tales - that of young dreamers Orpheus and Eurydice, and that of King Hades and his wife Persephone – as it invites you on a hell-raising journey to the underworld and back." This musical has won Tony and Grammy awards.



Performances are scheduled for **April 24, 25, 26, 30th, and May 1 and 2**.

Tickets will be available through the school's website or in person at the school. Mark your calendars now.

EHS Musical Theatre productions are always highly entertaining and you won't want to miss this one.

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2025

By Barry Scott

It was a beautiful sunny day and an extremely large crowd assembled at the Esquimalt Memorial Cenotaph and surrounding area to take part in the Remembrance Day ceremony this year. Once again, I was honoured, along with two school leadership students - Owen Olsson and Elizabeth Wald - to represent EHS at this wonderful event.



The ceremony began at 11:00 am with the arrival of the parade, comprising a military band, marching military personnel, cadets and various other organizations.

The RCN Base Commander then took the traditional salute, followed by the singing of O Canada.

This was followed by the playing of the Last Post.

National flag was then lowered to half-mast and a two- minute silence was observed.

Lament was played and the Act of Remembrance and Sermon finished off the program.

The hymn 'Oh God our help in ages Past' was played as the parade marched out.



The final program was the laying of wreaths.

Once our name was called, the students were handed our wreath and the three of us walked up to the Memorial and laid down the EHS wreath.

After a brief pause we returned to our place. Both students really enjoyed the program and truly gained the significance of LEST WE FORGET.

Thanks to Robert Laidler for the photos.

Elizabeth Wald, Barry Scott and Owen Olsson.





SHARING OUR STORIES OF SUCCESS



We were incredibly grateful to accept a \$10,000 donation today from the Esquimalt Hockey Society in support of our turf field project! This generosity will support our student athletes, including our Rugby Academy students, and our community. What an amazing gift!

This article and photo were from the Esquimalt Parent and Student Docker weekly newsletter.