



A.R. MacNeill Secondary School

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Principal: Ms. C. Sakata, Vice Principals: Mr. R. Laing and Mrs. L. Collins

Assistant Superintendent: Ms. W. Lim

Trustee: Mrs. Grace Tsang

PAC: Ms. Alice Wong

Parent Newsletter – October 2011

Message from the Principal

We are already one month into the new school year with students and staff quickly settling into the routines of school and their classrooms. Yes, this is the “October” newsletter and you did not miss September as one was not written. Essential messages in September were posted on the school web-site or sent out separately to you such as information regarding teacher job action and postponing of our grade 8 camp. This will be the last printed copy of the newsletter as all other newsletters will be posted on the school web-site. The web-site is being updated and re-done with a blog section added to provide an opportunity for parent response. We are becoming increasingly electronic as you will read in this newsletter. We hope parents will be better, and more efficiently informed about all the happenings at MacNeill Secondary.

As of the last day in September, A.R. MacNeill School is 926 students strong, supported by 71 staff (51 teachers and 20 support staff). We welcome all our grade 8 students and their families and new families who have moved to the MacNeill School community - all well underway to becoming POWERful Ravens. Included in this newsletter is information about POWER at MacNeill. This school year we also welcome many new staff: **Mr. R. Laing**, vice principal; **Mrs. J. Cantwell** and **Mrs. R. Gill**, counselors and **Ms. M. Mayer**, career advisor; teachers – **Ms. K. Bourgh**, **Mr. S. Cook**, **Mr. D. Low**, **Mr. M. McBurney**, **Ms. A. Tredwell**, **Mrs. C. Ward**, and **Mr. J. Yeung**; educational assistants – **Ms. A. Jesani** and **Mr. J. Walley**; and, keeping everyone safe during the lunch hour are **Ms. T. Abromaitis**, **Ms. L. Hatch** and **Ms. N. Orbasido**. Through various orientations and our recent professional development day, our new staff have learned about our routines and are already an integral part of the MacNeill staff supporting the learning of our students.

Home and school partnership does make a significant difference to student success in school and we value our relationship with parents. We look forward to working with you as together we continue to make A. R. MacNeill Secondary a great learning community for your child(ren).

SCHOOL FEES

A Student Account Summary Statement is included in this mail. The account summary includes current and past charges. Past charges may include text book, library fines and basic school fees still owing from previous years. All secondary schools in Richmond charge a basic fee totaling \$28.00. All other fees are “optional” and explained in the “notes” section of the invoice. Our grade 8 Camp, originally scheduled for September 28-30, was postponed until further notice. Grade 8 students will have deposits or full payment reimbursed with the option of having the amount deducted from the school fees owing, or reimbursed, by cheque. Note, after December 1, the cost of the school Annual will increase up to \$48.00. Your receipt of payment is attached to the invoice, so make sure you return the invoice with your cheque. Your attention to payment of the school fees as soon as possible will be much appreciated. Should you have any questions regarding the Account Summary, please speak with our business assistant, **Mrs. Trouw**.

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY - Monday, October 10, 2011 - ALL SCHOOLS CLOSED

MacNEILL PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

PAC MEETING - Wednesday, October 12, 2011 - 7:00 p.m. in the Library

The first meeting of the MacNeill PAC was an informal one held on September 20th. We spoke about school opening and the function of Parent Advisory Councils. This school year we are seeking involvement on the PAC executive and PAC committees as parents who were much involved in previous years have children who have graduated or who will be organizing grad 2012 activities and events. We would like very much to have co-chairs for executive positions and committee leaders, as parents currently holding positions will also be moving on next school year. **Ms. Alice Wong** is our PAC chair with **Mr. Sarosh Muncherji**, secretary and **Mrs. Tracy Sherlock**, treasurer. For all our positions we would like to have co-chairs. **Mr. Muncherji's** job situation is such that he will be out of town for most of the year and will have to step down. We will need a PAC

secretary immediately. We hope to have these positions filled as soon as possible, please contact **Ms. Sakata** if you can help or if you have any questions.

At our meeting on October 12, we will start by a presentation about POWER, the positive behavior support system, given by **Ms. Misfeldt** and **Ms. Beninger**. This will be followed by the business portion of the PAC meeting: PAC positions, the role of the School Planning Council and discussion of Gaming funds and its disbursement.

MACNEILL COLLABORATION TIME

The first of eight Collaboration Days at MacNeill was last Tuesday, September 27. All the staff met in small groups, discussed and began planning a range of instructional topics from Science curriculum and units, to teaching graphic novel in senior English, to working with picture communication symbols, to note a few collaboration topics. The goal in all these teacher collaborative discussions is effective instruction and stimulating and engaging all learners in the classroom. The regular school day started for our students at 9:45. Students who arrived earlier had a supervised study in the Lounge. Our next Collaboration Day is Tuesday, October 25. All CT days are noted on the calendar in the Student Agendas.

INTERIM REPORTS AND PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE FOR OCTOBER – POSTPONED OCTOBER 26 AND 27 – REGULAR DISMISSAL AT 2:59 P.M

It is noted on Student Agendas and your magnetic calendar that optional Interim reports will be sent home on October 20 and Parent-Teacher Conferences will be held on October 26 and 27. Due to the current Teacher Job Action, we will not be sending home Interim Reports with students and scheduled Parent-Teacher conferences will be postponed until further notice. Parents can be assured that instruction in the classroom is without interruption and teachers are maintaining records of student progress and achievement. Should you have any questions about your child's progress, do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher. As per usual, Grade 12 students requiring preliminary grade standing for post-secondary school applications are to see individual teachers for this.

As formal Parent-Teacher Conferences will not be held on **October 26 and 27**, they will be regular school days with **NO EARLY DISMISSAL** as noted on the calendars.

BIG CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL EXAMS

In August the Provincial government announced the cancellation of Grade 12 Optional Provincial Exams. Required Provincial Exams are now only: Science 10, English 10, Math 10, Social Studies 11 and English 12. These exam dates are set by the Ministry of Education and cannot be altered. As the exams can only be written upon completion of the course, MacNeill offers a June exam sitting only. The exam dates are published in the Handbook of Procedures: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/exams/handbook/1112/handbook_of_procedures.pdf#page=21 Please think ahead and book holiday plans accordingly.

CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

As a result of the cancellation of optional provincial examinations, the Provincial Scholarship Program has been revised. Graduation Program Examinations Scholarships will be awarded based on students' performance on the Graduation Program Exams. These revisions are intended to recognize students' academic excellence across the suite of graduation provincial exams.

For students graduating on or before August 31, 2011, Grade 12 optional exams are counted towards scholarship eligibility.

For students graduating on or after September 1, 2011, the following rules apply:

- Students must achieve at least a "B" (73% or above) final mark (provincial exam and school mark combined) in one of the Language Arts 12 (Communications 12, English 12, Francais langue premiere 12, or English 12 First Peoples).
- Students must achieve at least one "A" (86% or higher) and three "B"s (73% or higher) on four of their best provincial exams (can include the Language Arts 12 provincial exam).
- The examination rewrite rule will be relaxed for one year (September 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012) to allow students to rewrite a required exam to improve their scores.
- AP and most IB scores will no longer count towards scholarship.

Students who have met all scholarship requirements under the old rules but have not graduated prior to August 31, 2011 and do not qualify for scholarship under the new rules will be awarded a scholarship based on the work done prior to August 31, 2011.

Students may rewrite a provincial exam once within the 12-month period following the first attempt at the examination. The 12 months are inclusive (e.g., from the June examination session, one year through to the June examination session of the next year). To rewrite a provincial examination more than once, a student must retake the course.

****As a result of the new Provincial exam policies, the Ministry of Education will allow students one opportunity to re-write any Grade 10 or 11 Provincial Exam, in order to improve their standing for scholarship purposes. Any students interested in re-writing a Provincial exam must register with their counsellor PRIOR to December 1st. Exam re-writes will be offered at MacNeill at the end of January during the January exam sitting.**

GRAD 2012 – DRY GRAD PARENT MEETING

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

7:00 p.m. in the Library

The Dry Grad Parent meeting was well attended and three parents of grade 12 students have volunteered to co-chair the Committee. Ideas and plans are well underway. Thanks to parents **Lisa Jamieson, Joanne Bultitude** and **Rhonda Tolley** for volunteering to lead the organization of this very important event for our grads. Thanks also go out to **Maggie Avila** and **Carla Kalalo**, now parents of grade 12 grads, who helped out considerably with the Grad 2011 Dry Grad Committee last year. Dry Grad is a completely parent planned and organized event, so it is essential that the Dry Grad Parent Committee have parent involvement and support. With the collective experience of parents and with all the parents who will be involved this school year, the event promises to be a wonderful one for our grads.

SYNREVOICE

Throughout the year, we will be using an automated system called Synrevoice to communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s). If an email address is on file, Synrevoice will send emails to parent(s)/guardian(s); if no email address is on file, it will leave a message at the home telephone number. If you are not receiving emails and would prefer this method of communication, please contact the school office to pass along your email address.

Synrevoice will be used to inform parent(s)/guardian(s) of important dates, upcoming events, and general school news. Synrevoice will also be used to inform parent(s)/guardian(s) if a student has been absent from a class (see the section on attendance below for more detailed information). We hope this tool will be an effective way to maintain communication between school and home.

ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is vital to success in the classroom. Now that we are in October, student course schedules are set and all the students are used to our new timetable. We will now be starting to use Synrevoice to inform parents of student absences. Attendance is taken daily in every class. If a student is marked absent (unexcused), an email will be sent or a phone call will be made in order to inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of this absence.

It is very important that a parent/guardian call the early morning absence line if a student is going to be away from any class during the day. It is important to note that teachers take attendance at the start of a class; therefore, if a student is late to class, it is the student's responsibility to sign into the office so that they are not marked absent.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact the school or your child's counselor.

****NEW** MacNeill Ravens Blog --> macneillravens.blogspot.com**

In an effort to strengthen the partnership between school and home, **Mr. Laing** is in the process of creating a Blog (web log/journal) that will highlight many MacNeill events and the accomplishments of those in our school community. There are so many things that happen on a daily basis at MacNeill and we hope this blog will give you a greater understanding of your child's school experience. The blog will be updated frequently. Students/parents are encouraged to visit the blog on a regular basis and to read, learn, comment and share in our journey throughout the year.

TERRY FOX RUN A HUGE SUCCESS

On September 29 the entire school took part in the Terry Fox Run. Thanks to **Mr. Chatha** and the Athletic Leadership class who helped to organize the run and act as marshals on the course. Students were encouraged and cheered on as they completed the 3.2 km run/walk in the sunshine. Great spirit Ravens!

WE'RE OFF TO A POWERful START!

This is MacNeill's third year with our POWER Program. Students new to MacNeill will soon learn about POWER: **P**ositive Attitude – participate enthusiastically; **O**wnership – being accountable; **W**e not Me – being safe, empathetic and welcoming; **E**xcellence – strive to do our best; and **R**espect – caring for self, each other and our environment. We believe relationships and making connections to be the bases for developing a strong learning community. This coming year promises to be a successful one

as students, parents and staff continue their hard work and commitment to creating a caring, respectful and responsible place for learning.

We have seen much evidence of POWERful behaviour by our students this year. Our first POWER PEP Rally was an incredible display of school spirit and enthusiasm. Students looked amazing as they filled the gym and sat in their colour groupings wearing their colourful POWER t-shirts. Students are excellent representatives of our school when they attend Activity Day events at a variety of community locations. The Tower of POWER, from which POWER cards are drawn on a weekly basis to recognize POWERful individual behaviour, has been full every week since school started. It's going to be a POWERful year.

If you'd like to learn more about POWER please join us in the library at **our next PAC meeting, Wednesday, October 12**, for a brief presentation of POWER.

NEWS FROM HEALTH & SAFETY

Just a reminder to please let the school know of any **changes in contact information** and health concerns as the school year progresses. It's important to keep all information current.

The **First Responders Program** is again up and running this year. We have a small group of students who are on-call in the school for first aid treatment. This group of students also volunteers their time as first aid attendants at many community events in Richmond.

Student Drop Off & Pick Up: Please avoid stopping to drop off or pick up your children in front of the school. This creates a long back up of traffic in the driveway, and often onto No. 4 Rd., and prohibits our school buses from being able to drop off our students. Rather, use the driveway off of Granville Avenue. There is absolutely **NO PARKING** in front of the school. The parking lot area at MacNeill is extensive and we ask all drivers to use the parking lots for parking. We do have large buses that need to be able to drop off and pick up students and cannot be delayed as the buses have a schedule to keep. Please arrange to have your child meet you in the parking lot. We need to keep students safe and our driveways with traffic moving. Please drive carefully in and around the school and please use our parking lots for lengthy stops and parking. Thank you for your cooperation.

ACTIVITY DAYS

The purpose of Activity Days is to allow for grade wide extra-curricular field trips. The cost of transportation and activities for the year will be \$35.00 which, if not already paid for, can be paid for with the student fees.

MacNeill students have had the opportunity to participate in two of the three Activity Days planned this year. In the most recent Activity Day our grade 8 students went swimming and skating, grade 9 students went swimming and watched a movie, grade 10 students went skating and watched a movie, grade 11 students cycled or rollerbladed through Stanley Park, and grade 12 students went to a movie and lunched at the Old Spaghetti Factory.

Our third and final Activity Day of the year is on May 4th.

SOME IMPORTANT DATES TO NOTE:

Wednesday, October 5	Dry Grad Parent Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Library
Monday, October 10	Thanksgiving Day in Canada – No School
Wednesday, October 12	MacNeill PAC Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Library
Thursday, October 13	Grade 9 Immunization
Friday, October 21	Provincial Pro-D
Tuesday, October 25	Collaboration Day, 9:45 a.m. – School start time for students
Friday, October 28	Photo Retake Day
Wednesday, November 2	Grade 9 Take Our Kids To Work
Wednesday, November 9	MacNeill PAC Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Library
Thursday, November 10	MacNeill Remembrance Day Ceremony
Friday, November 11	Remembrance Day – No School