



Youth Climate Leadership Alliance

BC Ministry of Environment
Strategic division - Conservation Corps
c/o Capital Regional District
625 Fisgard St, Victoria BC V8W 2R6

April 20, 2009

RE: Hometown Heroes Reynolds Secondary Application

To Whom It May Concern,

I am delighted to write this letter to recommend Reynolds Secondary School for distinction as the Earth Day Canada Hometown Hero in 2009. It has been my pleasure to work with many of the staff and students at Reynolds for the past three years and watch them grow into the exceptionally capable, dedicated and influential local environmental leaders they have become.

In my current work as the Climate Action Facilitator for the Capital Regional District (CRD) with the BC Ministry of Environment's Youth Climate Leadership Alliance, I have surveyed and worked to support the environmental efforts of most of the K-12 and post-secondary environmental leaders throughout the region. In my former positions over the past 14 years with over a dozen other youth leadership, sustainability and social justice organizations, I have worked directly with over 4500 active and caring student environmental leaders, and dozens of inspiring sustainability educators. Reynolds unequivocally stands out and in front of the many school communities that I have worked with, despite the fact that many of them are the top leaders in their districts, regions and country.

I have been continually impressed by the diversity, quality and longevity of the many projects that Reynolds has taken on and expanded. As the former Coordinator of the youth-driven Sustainable High Schools Project (SHS) with the Sierra Club BC, I worked for three years to support high school students and their teachers, administrators, staff and parents to envision, assess and improve their school's level of ecological and social well-being. Reynolds continues to be a key leading school since the inception of this project, creating and modeling best practices for other schools across the province and country by piloting, evaluating and improving the project and its resources at every level. In particular, teacher Heather Coey has engaged her classes in the program and participated in the annual program revision and youth leadership camp and student leaders Emily Morin and Tessa Buttemer have followed and deepened the footsteps of Reynolds alumni Felicity Wilson and Anna Slater in directing the project through the SHS Youth Steering Committee. Reynolds has successfully convinced the Victoria School District to encourage all of their high schools to get involved in the project.

Together, they have led their school and the region in developing local sustainability courses and projects, teaching and mentoring student leadership, engaging and supporting their peers at the school and regional level, and working with administration to pilot truly innovative programs with district and region-wide potential.

For example, Heather is the creator and coordinator of Reynolds' unique and innovative Flexible Studies program, Leadership Class, Sustainability 11 course and constantly incorporates new initiatives such as the salmonid program into her courses. I look forward to working with Heather to expand the network she has created of twenty-five sustainability champion teachers in the district to include educators throughout the region in their community of practice.

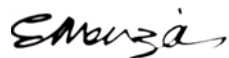
She supported student leaders who wanted to create a multi-stakeholder Sustainability Advisory Committee which decided to focus on waste diversion and improving the green spaces around the school. This "Green Group" has worked very effectively with school administration, custodial staff and district facilities managers along with the school board to implement a number of cutting edge sustainability projects. Reynolds formed a partnership with UVic's Environmental Studies program, Leadership Victoria, and Life Cycles Growing Schools program to rejuvenate and restore outside the school and the inner courtyard. They created a rain garden and began planting native species outside of the school, and continue to build their garden in the courtyard. They submitted a successful application for BC's Trees For Tomorrow funding to expand this project so that it extends the greenbelt formed by the CRD's Lochside Trail, and hosted the CRD's regional Trees For Tomorrow workshop, creating the opportunity and inspiration for many other groups to design greening projects and apply as well.

Reynolds has also shared the research, partners, process and results of their comprehensive waste diversion system which they have been piloting for their school district with the CRD, enabling us to suggest best practices to the five school districts in the region currently renegotiating their waste management contract to include composting and recycling at every K-12 school. I invited Emily Morin to our meeting to share Reynolds' successes, challenges and lessons learned while running their zero-waste recycling and composting system, monthly e-waste and soft plastics recycling depot and farmer's market for the surrounding community.

In conclusion, Reynolds' projects in sustainability education, school grounds greening, waste diversion, collaborative partnerships and leadership at the district level have set the bar for the province. Reynolds teachers and students have been called on time and again for their expertise and advice on regional sustainability strategies on behalf of the Victoria School District, Capital Regional District, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Environment, and other agencies. The Reynolds school community has managed to expand their curricular programs and extra-curricular projects while taking on this growing advisory and mentorship role.

I urge you to join me in recognizing the accomplishments and potential of this amazing community of environment leaders so that they can further inspire and motivate others across Canada.

Yours sincerely,



Emily Menzies
Climate Action Facilitator for the Capital Regional District