



April 27, 2025: Letter for families regarding Saturday's tragedy at Lapu Lapu Day celebration

Dear families,

Saturday's devastating incident at the Lapu Lapu celebrations in Vancouver are understandably upsetting for adults and children alike. It is often hard to know how to reassure our children when we ourselves are striving to process and make sense of these losses. Children may experience a wide range of emotions in response to what they hear or see; it is important to remember that they will look to the adults in their lives to help them feel safe and to make sense of the world. As a parent or caregiver, you may feel unprepared to help your child understand and process these events. We are reaching out to share with you some strategies and resources that will help guide your conversations with your child with the understanding that people are going to be impacted in a variety of ways, based on age and development as well as their own involvement and connection to this terrible tragedy.

Limit exposure to news stories on traditional and social media channels

Consider how you access news and how that may impact children nearby. Young children may not know how to make sense of the news they are seeing and can quickly become overwhelmed. Encourage your older child to rely on reputable news sources, and where possible limit their consumption and exposure to upsetting coverage.

It is important to have conversations, and model with your own behaviours, the additional traumatic impact for victims and families when upsetting images are re-circulated. We are respectfully suggesting that individuals do not watch, repost or share videos of the tragedy.

Acknowledge feelings

Our children and youth will look to us for cues on how to process this upsetting information. Acknowledging our own feelings gives children a model for how to express and process their strong emotions. It is normal to experience a range of emotions in response to such unsettling news.

It is important to note that the intensity of these feelings are going to be impacted by a family's personal connections to the event, their history of loss and trauma, and degree of exposure to the traumatic stimuli on social media.

Listen more than you speak

Listen to your child's concerns before offering any explanations. Give them an opportunity to voice their fears and ask age-appropriate open-ended questions. Ask what they may have heard and what that information means to them. You may uncover misconceptions and unfounded fears that need correcting. These questions will also help you understand if your child is coming from a place of curiosity, concern or fear, and will help you gain a sense of what your child may need from adults to feel safe and supported.

Some of the questions you can ask include the following:

- *Tell me what you have heard about this?*
- *Where did you first hear about this?*
- *How are you feeling?*
- *What questions do you have?*

Provide facts

Tell the truth but do it gently. Give your child facts as long as it is consistent with their stage of development - keep conversations age appropriate. Children need to know their concerns and questions are being taken seriously by the adults around them and that they can trust their adults to be truthful with them. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be afraid to say so.

Importance of Routine

Maintaining daily routines can provide a sense of stability and security for children and adults. It can also be important to give children permission to continue to find and celebrate hope in their daily world.

Encourage empathy and compassion

Remind your child there may be others in their daily lives who may be impacted by this tragedy. Talk with your child about how we need to treat others with extra compassion and empathy during times like these. Tragedies and times of sadness and grief can serve as meaningful moments to teach compassion, which can help children feel empowered as they find additional ways to be kind and caring.

As school district staff, we recognize that our students may require additional support. We will continue to prioritize the mental health and well-being of our students. Be mindful of any changes in your child's typical behavioural norms. If you feel your child needs additional support, please reach out to your school and/or access the community supports identified in the following resources.

Resources

- [BC Hospice Resources](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)
- [ERASE](#)
- [Healthlinkbc: Helping Children with Grief](#)
- [Kelty Mental Health](#)
- [Learning through Loss](#)
- [Foundry Virtual BC - Foundry BC App](#)

Sincerely,

Peter Klaver
Superintendent