

We are grateful to live, work, and play on the unceded, ancestral territories of fourteen First Nations representing the Dakelh, Nedut'en and Wet'suwet'en peoples. We are working diligently towards creating equity for our learners through conscious Acts of Reconciliation.

Hadih/Hadi/Hadeeh and Welcome to Chuszul Ooza

The past weeks have been heavy for many across our district and beyond. The tragedy in Tumbler Ridge has deeply affected students, staff, families, and communities, reminding us how interconnected we are and how profoundly loss can ripple outward. I want to acknowledge the compassion, professionalism, and quiet strength demonstrated by our staff as they have supported one another and held space for students during an incredibly difficult time. Our focus has remained on care, connection, and ensuring that those who need support know they are not alone.

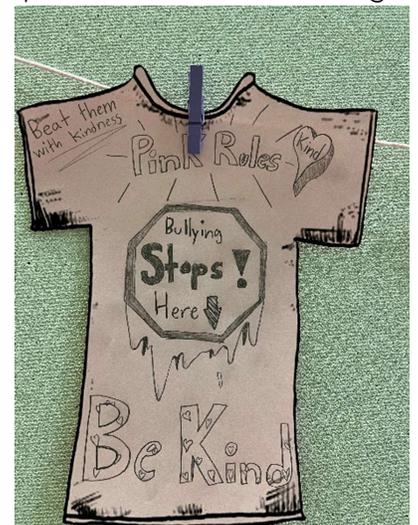
I am grateful for the calm, thoughtful leadership shown in our schools and for the close collaboration with community partners as we navigate this together. Moments like these underscore the importance of trauma-informed practices, trusting relationships, and the everyday acts of kindness that help create a sense of safety and belonging in our learning environments. As we move through this time, we also continue to reflect thoughtfully on our practices and processes to ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our schools as safe, supportive, and responsive as possible. Our safety and emergency planning procedures are up to date and will continue to be regularly reviewed, and we remain aligned with the direction of the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, whose work continues to inform and strengthen safe, caring school environments.



Alongside this, February has also been a time of steady and important work across the district. At the district level, significant effort has been focused on the annual amended budget and the early stages of staffing and budget conversations for the 2026-2027 school year. In parallel, our Strategic Plan Refresh continues to move forward, with engagement informing the process and draft language beginning to take shape. This marks a meaningful step toward clarifying our shared priorities and long-term direction.

This week, schools across the district will mark Pink Shirt Day and participate in Share the Love events, reinforcing our collective commitment to kindness,

inclusion, and standing up for one another. These moments serve as meaningful reminders that care and compassion are foundational to safe and welcoming school communities. I am pleased to be able to visit schools on Pink Shirt Day and to see firsthand the genuine ways students and staff demonstrate empathy, respect, and care for others.



As we move forward, I remain grateful for the collective efforts across the district to support well-being while continuing the important work of teaching and learning. Thank you to our staff, students, families, and Trustees for the care, grace, and humanity you bring to our schools—especially during challenging moments. These qualities continue to define our district and strengthen our communities. I hope each of you is able to enjoy Chuszul Ooza, the “time of the small snowflakes”.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita McClinton

(she/her)

Superintendent

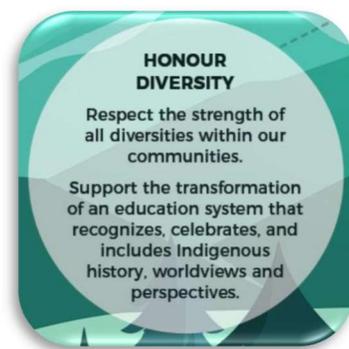
Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 1: Honour Diversity

Honouring Diversity in Nechako Lakes - Accessibility. A strategic plan progress update.

The district advanced compliance-aligned and practice-based accessibility work by mobilizing school-site accessibility assessments, engaging regional accessibility planning efforts, and distributing accessibility-related resources and learning opportunities.

Key accomplishments include:

- Moved forward school-site accessibility assessment completion across schools by directing the PVP group to complete the “school site accessibility tool” to demonstrate alignment with the BC Accessibility Act, with a clear submission deadline and follow-up collection of completed assessment material.
- Supported school-site assessment readiness through accessible assessment tool resources, including site-specific versions such as BESS School Site Accessibility Assessment Tool and FLESS School Site Accessibility Assessment Tool.
- Engaged in regional accessibility planning work by receiving and sharing information tied to Northern BC School Districts Accessibility Surveys, including participation deadlines for surveys intended to inform an updated accessibility plan.
- Distributed accessibility-related instructional resources and learning opportunities (example: Accessible Digital Books for 2026! 🇨🇦 ARC-BC Winter Newsletter, highlighting accessible formats/resources and professional learning options).
- Advanced inclusion & accessibility collaboration through direct site/teams-based engagement, reflected in scheduling and coordination for EDS Visit
- Inclusion & Accessibility to address learner access needs through the input of three departments (Inclusive Education, Human Resources, and Facilities) alongside the school staff.
- Aligned accessibility efforts with broader district equity and compliance work, including materials noting alignment with required reporting under the BC Accessibility Act (e.g., SD91 Employment Equity Annual Staff Survey Presentation).



Decker Lake Elementary School Prepares

to ...



The Grade 2/3 class at DLES created these unique paintings for *Share the Love Days* coming up on February 26th and 27th.





Share the Love 2026

A District-Wide Celebration

February 26 & 27, 2026

Keynote Speaker | LGBTQ+ Inclusion Excellence – Mischa Oak | LGBTQ+ Inclusion Keynotes & Training | Canada & Worldwide

We will be celebrating Share the Love Days on February 26 & 27, 2026 this year.

We are honoured to welcome British Columbian teacher Mischa Oak, who will be speaking to all classes in the morning at 9:15 am (Trustees are invited to join and will receive the meeting link), meet with high school clubs during the day, and will offer a learning session for school district staff, Trustees, and parents or caregivers after school on Thursday, February 26th at 3:30 pm.

Mischa presented to the PVP on January 14th and shared important research on how to best support learners in our communities. Some of our favourite teachings from Mischa included, "Bring people away from polarization and towards compassion," and, "SOGI is not teaching sex; it's teaching kindness. Kindness is always age-appropriate."

Here is a description of the talk Mischa will be giving to all our classes at 9:15am:

Joy in Difference

Being different and appreciating other people's differences is a joy, and it's important to celebrate and accept each other's differences across all ages. Instead of looking at others who are different from us as a problem, we can all look to each other for inspiration and for how to see the best in ourselves.

Everyone's identity is different. Some things we will have in common with others, and others we won't. Differences exist in how we look, our families, what we can and cannot do, the stories of how we came to be here, and where we will all go in life.

Our job in life is not to judge others, but to see the best in others. Everyone has dreams in life, and our job is to support people's dreams, be each other's cheerleaders, and not stand in their way. When you are a cheerleader for others, they will be cheerleaders for you too, and then we can all reach our full potential together and make the future of our dreams possible.

**Stay tuned for more information at: www.sd91.bc.ca/
Students & Families/Share the Love 2026**

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 2: Engage our Workforce

Compassionate Systems Awareness Training

On February 6th, eleven teachers attended professional development hosted in person at Muriel Mould Learning Centre in Burns Lake on Compassionate Systems Awareness. The session was co-facilitated by the Director of Inclusive Education, Karie Evans, district counsellor Todd Blattner and speech language pathologist Maddy Catford. Teachers were led through a series of exercises and tools designed to support trauma-informed work in classrooms, social-emotional learning of students, and engagement and retention of teachers in our system. A second event will be offered in a hybrid format on the May 8th pro-d day in person at W. L. McLeod Elementary School and on Teams for our eBus teachers. PVP are also invited to attend this next one as it won't conflict with the district PVP meeting.



In addition to this locally hosted training, four employees attended Compassionate Systems Foundations I, in an online model from February 9-12. This 4-day training takes a deeper dive into Compassionate Systems and the attendees included two PVP and two members of the BLNTU.

These learning opportunities are funded by the Mental Health Grant.

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 3: Create Student Success

BC Athletics U16 Athlete of the Year

Nechako Valley Secondary School student, Kavita Dhillon - grade 9, has been turning heads and gaining attention over the past few years but specifically,



during the past 15 months says her XC coach Brian Nemethy. Her running ability has brought her to the fore front of racing. Kavita participates in track and field, in the spring, cross country (XC) running in the fall and cross-country skiing in the winter. This high-end cardio machine is making a name for herself and putting NVSS on the map.



Accomplishments include: winning both the 1500m & 3000m at the High School Provincial T & F Championships in grade 8 which includes breaking the meet record in the 3000m; winning the North Central Zone XC championship in grade 8 and 9, placing 3rd at high school XC Provincial Championships last fall; placing 1st in the U16 Athletics Canada XC Nationals, and, now being named BC Athletics U16 female athlete of the year for Cross Country running. Kavita is passionate about her sports and is having fun illustrating what commitment and determination are all about.



GPES World Read Aloud Celebrations

Grassy Plains school joyfully celebrated *World Read Aloud Day* with a truly special event that transformed the gym into a cozy “bedtime story” space. With the help of leadership students, an inviting atmosphere was created using mats, soft white Christmas lights, and flashlights, setting the stage for a meaningful shared reading experience. Students explored the importance of reading aloud and the comfort and connection that comes from having stories read to us. Reading aloud supports language development, builds listening and comprehension skills, and fosters confidence and empathy among learners. Students were encouraged to take turns reading to one another, and it was heartwarming to see our Grade 1 students excitedly sharing their daily reading practice books with older students. In turn, the older students thoughtfully focused on using pause, tone, and expression to bring their stories to life and captivate their listeners. The gym was filled with engagement, connection, and a shared love of reading, an experience that inspired plans to make this meaningful celebration more than just a yearly event.

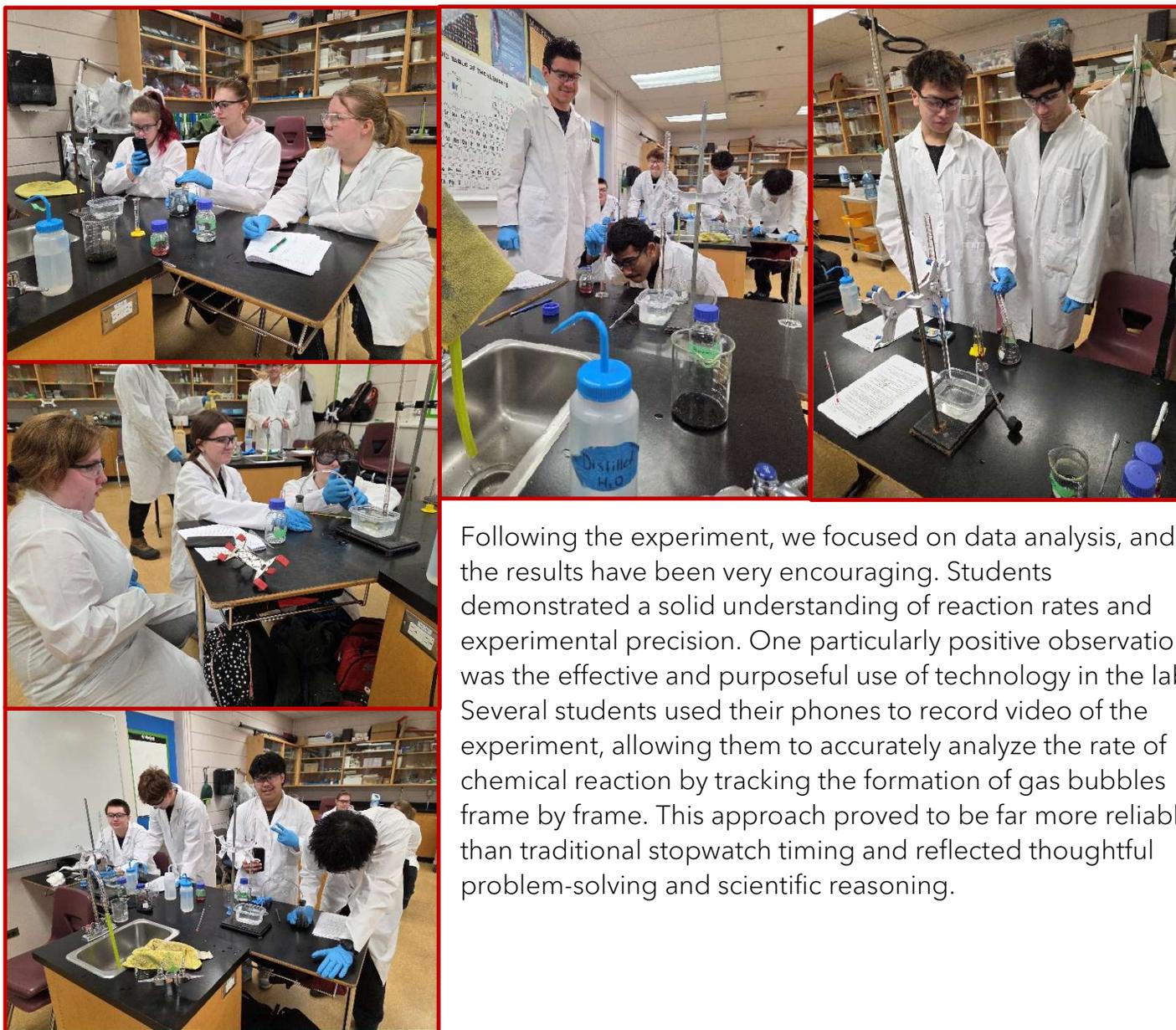


Chemistry Students at NVSS

Submitted by David Peterson, Chemistry 12 Teacher, NVSS

On February 5, my Chemistry 12 students completed their first major laboratory experiment of the course. The lab required careful coordination of multiple steps within a limited timeframe, and I was pleased with how well students managed the process while maintaining strong safety practices throughout.





Following the experiment, we focused on data analysis, and the results have been very encouraging. Students demonstrated a solid understanding of reaction rates and experimental precision. One particularly positive observation was the effective and purposeful use of technology in the lab. Several students used their phones to record video of the experiment, allowing them to accurately analyze the rate of chemical reaction by tracking the formation of gas bubbles frame by frame. This approach proved to be far more reliable than traditional stopwatch timing and reflected thoughtful problem-solving and scientific reasoning.

Increasing Student Belonging

Over the past several months, the district strengthened work that supports safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments by advancing mental health action planning and aligning student wellbeing actions with practical school-based steps that contribute to belonging.

Key accomplishments include:

- Advanced interagency/district mental health action planning through structured check-ins and planning sessions with Markin, Gail [CWBC], del Casal, Mari [CWBC], and Mark Gauthier, including a dedicated plan “check in” and a follow-up action-planning meeting explicitly intended to “complete the Action Plan for this year” and review remaining items.

- Maintained and used the district’s Mental Health Plan 23-26 as an organizing framework for belonging-related work—specifically the plan’s emphasis on creating “safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces,” elevating student voice (including making student voice “inclusive of all learners”), and strengthening coherent SEL planning.



- Connected district work to wider system learning and alignment via participation in broader mental health leadership networking (e.g., Provincial Mental Health Leadership Network Meeting on January 15, 2026).
- Shared/promoted staff learning opportunities and resources that support student wellbeing, including circulating professional learning/resource information related to mental health (e.g., the POPFASD Newsletter - Mental Health and FASD featuring an on-demand course and toolkit).
- Supported school planning conversations that reinforce belonging-adjacent practices (SEL coherence and trauma-informed approaches) through direct dialogue with school leaders about SEL resources and common language.

Global Play Day

DLES Huskies participated in Global Play Day on Wednesday, February 4th. Global Play Day was initiated to remind us that unstructured, unplanned play is not only fun, but an important part of every child’s development. Huskies enjoyed a day of choosing their own activities while building social skills, critical and creative thinking skills, and communication skills.



Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 4: Enhance Connections

Ski S’Kool Celebrates 10 Year Anniversary

This month, I was pleased to recognize and celebrate the continued success of Ski S’Kool, a long-standing community partnership that supports student physical literacy, mental well-being, and a lifelong connection to outdoor activity. The program reflects shared goals of promoting healthy, active lifestyles while building confidence, resilience, and a love of learning through meaningful outdoor experiences.



Ski S’Kool was established in 2016 through the dedication of Richard and Mary Burkholder, with early support from then-Superintendent Eugene Marks. Since that time, SD91 has proudly supported the program by covering transportation costs for Grade 3 students attending four weekly lessons at the Nechako Valley Sporting Association trails on Quail Road. School PACs have also played an important role by covering instructional costs, ensuring that families are not billed directly and that participation remains accessible and equitable.

The program is delivered in partnership with the Nechako Nordics, an entirely volunteer-run organization whose commitment is evident in every aspect of the experience. Funds contributed through the program are reinvested directly into equipment inventory, maintenance, and trail grooming, ensuring students have access to safe, well-prepared equipment and high-quality learning conditions. Instruction is intentionally structured to maximize time on the snow, with small group sizes, certified instructors, and a supporting adult from the school community who learns alongside students and provides encouragement.

Over the past decade, more than 1,000 students have participated in over 600 Ski S’Kool lessons. Teachers and coaches consistently share how students demonstrate remarkable growth over the four-week program, particularly those who may find classroom-based learning challenging but thrive in an outdoor, experiential setting. The program has also shown resilience and adaptability, successfully navigating weather-related challenges and disruptions during COVID through collaboration and flexibility.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to the many people who make Ski S’Kool possible: the volunteer groomers who prepare the trails each week, bus drivers, school PACs, school staff, parents, and the dedicated coaches who have volunteered their time over the years. This year’s coaching team included



Renate Price, Linnea Moutray, Norma Neufeld, Val Erickson, Pat Svenson, Richard Burkholder, and Mary Burkholder, building on the contributions of many volunteers in previous years.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the students, who arrive each week enthusiastic, well-prepared, and eager to learn with a growth mindset. Mark Gauthier and I were both pleased to be able to participate in the celebrations and to see firsthand the joy, confidence, and sense of accomplishment that Ski S'Kool brings to our learners (see group photo to right). This program continues to be a powerful example of how strong community partnerships enrich student learning and well-being across our district.



Hooray for 100's Day!

DLES celebrated the 100th Day of School on February 12th. Huskies enjoyed a day of activities centered around the number 100. Mrs. Watts' class collected over 100 items for the LINK, our local food bank. **HUSKIES** are 100 days more Honest, Unique, Successful, Kind, Inclusive, Encouraging and Supportive!



Thank You Maintenance Department!



DLES would like to thank the Burns Lake maintenance crew on behalf of all the west end schools for keeping our school grounds safe and our walkways cleared. The same is said for our maintenance crews across the district. We appreciate you!



Hockey Athletes Visit Sinkut View

One of the SVE parents brought a female hockey team Comets (from Vancouver) to Sinkut View Elementary for the afternoon. The athletes' ages were 14-17 years of age, and they all play hockey more or less full time while also going to school. While small groups of students got to go to the gym and play floor hockey with the athletes (one group at a time) the rest of the learners were in their classrooms doing regular learning with the support of the athletes. Connections were made and our learners thought the athletes were just the best! Thank you Morgan Volts for bringing these athletes to our school!



Employee Recognition

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our Transportation Department, including our bus drivers, mechanics, and all those who work behind the scenes to keep our buses safely on the road. Navigating challenging road and weather conditions across our district requires skill, vigilance, and a deep commitment to student safety, and our drivers consistently rise to that responsibility. Their focus on ensuring students arrive to and from school safely is evident in every route they travel. I am equally grateful to our mechanics and support staff whose expertise, care, and attention ensure our fleet is well maintained and reliable. The strong, positive working relationships our transportation team has built with local road maintenance crews across the district further support this important work. Together, these efforts play a vital role in keeping our students safe each day, and we are truly thankful for their dedication and teamwork.

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[@sd91bc](#)

