

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,

On September 30, we recognized Truth and Reconciliation Day across Canada. Schools observed this important day on September 27 with ceremonies and special events dedicated to remembering the past and honouring the survivors of residential schools. I am grateful to the staff and community members who continue sharing knowledge and learning with children and adults in our schools. We live in an area that is rich in Indigenous culture, knowledge, and traditions, and I encourage everyone to connect with local Nations to build relationships as we build a future together for the next generation.

September went by quickly, and the schools are gearing up for their first "Talk about Learning Time" for 2024-25, where families can visit schools and classrooms to discuss their child's learning with teachers and principals. These face-to-face meetings are key to educational partnerships, but parents and caregivers can arrange school visits at any time of the year by calling their school's main office.

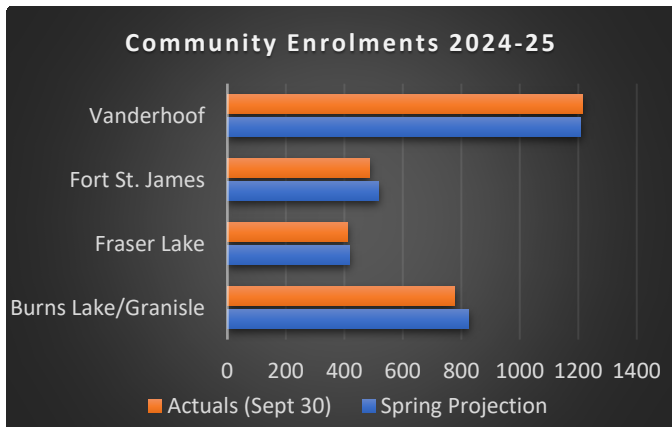
We also look forward to moving to the next steps with hiring a new superintendent. Interviews are scheduled for the end of October.

As always, working and learning beside many wonderful people in Nechako Lakes is my honour.

Mike Skinner
Interim Superintendent



Student Enrollment Across Communities



Enrollment data was submitted to the Ministry for funding purposes on September 27, 2024.

Brick-and-mortar enrollment across our five communities is 2,885 – down 73 students from last year. This decrease in enrollment was anticipated and was reflected in our budget forecast for this school year.

District staff continue to project declining student numbers at 2-3% per year in our standard schools for the foreseeable future.

With EBUS Academy students factored in, the District has 3,447 full-time equivalent (FTE) students enrolled this school year, which brings us to have 3 students more than predicted in our spring projections.

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 1: Honour Diversity

Truth and Reconciliation Day Highlights in Nechako Lakes

David Hoy Elementary School:

- Presentation by local knowledge keeper Lori Gauthier on the importance of braids to Indigenous peoples
- Classroom presentations by our Language and Culture teacher
- Artwork reflections (t-shirts and handprints)
- Classes worked together to decorate large wooden letters to spell out “Every Child Matters” – a message that is now on display in our gym
- School-wide assembly to recognize Orange Shirt Day



Decker Lake Elementary School

- Teachers presented lessons about residential schools in their classrooms
- Learners participated in an orange leaf project where everyone filled out the following sentence on their own leaf: Leaves are displayed on a bulletin board in the hallway
- Staff and children wore orange in remembrance of the children who never made it home
- The entire school community gathered in front of the school and took a picture with our beautiful Truth and Reconciliation flag

Evelyn Dickson Elementary School:

- Daily readings including Shi-shi-etko and Shin-Chi's canoe, Be a Good Ancestor, and Phyllis Webstad's book. These daily readings were followed by short lessons about residential schools
- Grade 1-2 students created pages for their own books of "Our Hearts fill with Happiness when...." – modelled after Monique Gray Smith's teachings
- Discussions and video viewings, and a collaborative poster project
- The Orange Shirt Story – read aloud and reflection time

Mapes Elementary School

- Read stories including Shi-Shi-Etko and selections from Fatty Legs.
- Watched CBC Kids Orange Shirt Day video with Phyllis Webstad. Made origami orange shirts.
- Age-appropriate discussions of what residential schools were and how important it is that all children can come to schools where they are cared for and treated well.

Sinkut View Elementary School:

- Survivors' flag on display in our main hallway as a focal point for all learners for weeks leading up to Orange Shirt Day
- Lessons about the symbols and "learnings" within the Survivors' flag
- Class discussions about how learners can promote Truth and Reconciliation learning in our schools and communities

SD91 Indigenous Education Learning Grants Program

SD91 educators and our First Nations Community partners have identified the need for the development of Indigenous-focused learning resources and units of learning that bring forward **local** Indigenous knowledges, world views, and perspectives. A main goal of this Learning Grants Program is to support and encourage SD91 educators to discover local First Nations history, innovation, resilience, and knowledges, and to integrate their learning into the content they teach, as well as into their pedagogy.

We invite groups of SD91 educators to apply for learning grants up to \$10,000 to support the development of local First Nations-focused learning resources and units of learning. It is hoped that, if appropriate, the learning resources created will be housed in our Indigenous Learning Resource Library (currently under development) and will become available for use by other educators.

[SD91 Indig. Ed. Learning Grants Program | SD91 Indigenous Educ \(sd91indigenouseducation.com\)](#)

Honouring Indigenous Education Programs



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Founded in 1974, the UBC Faculty of Education's Indigenous Teacher Education Program — formerly named the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) — has been instrumental in shaping Indigenous education and is committed to increasing the number of Indigenous educators provincially and nationally. By late fall 2024, NITEP will have proudly graduated 500 Indigenous educators, a milestone that underscores the program's enduring success in cultivating leaders who are equipped to inspire and uplift their communities and beyond.

NITEP facilitates access to credentialed teacher education for people of Indigenous ancestry by offering a significant portion of its curriculum through regional field centres across the British Columbia. Most teacher candidates begin the program at an off-campus site for their first two to three years before transitioning to a 12-month on-campus program. The program ensures that Indigenous cultures, values, knowledge and languages are vibrant and meaningful parts of the curriculum, successfully demonstrating how Indigenous culture can be integrated within a mainstream post-secondary institution and professional training program.

[Celebrating 50 Years of NITEP – Faculty of Education \(ubc.ca\)](#)

Dr. Dustin Louie – Director of NITEP

Dr. Dustin Louie is a First Nations scholar from Nee Tahi Buhn and Nadleh Whut'en of the Dakelh Nation of central British Columbia. He is a member of the Beaver Clan. He currently serves as the Director and an Associate Professor in UBC's Department of Educational Studies. As Director, Dr. Louie oversees program development, student services, funding, and the cultivation of Indigenous community relationships. His efforts create pathways for Indigenous students to become impactful educators within their communities and beyond. Dr. Louie is also a graduate of Lakes District Secondary in Burns Lake.

Currently there are over 30 students in the NITEP program, including a large cohort from Lake Babine Nation in Burns Lake. We are looking forward to having additional certified Indigenous teachers in our region in the next few years.

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 2: Engage our Workforce



6th Annual Indigenous Education Conference

SD91 was proud to host the annual staff conference on the September 20th District Planning day. This annual staff learning event is unique in BC and brings together all employees each year to learn and grow in our shared responsibility to Truth and Reconciliation. This year's theme was how everyone can be a "good ancestor" regardless. Working together and learning more about our past will help ensure a better tomorrow for our children and families.

Thanks again to the Indigenous Education department for all the planning and organization, our school staff for their dedication to learning & growing and the special guest presenters for sharing the knowledge, insights and wisdom.

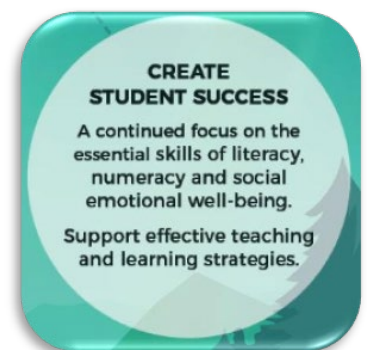
Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 3: Create Student Success

Framework for Student Enhancing Learning Report

As part of the continuous improvement cycle, the annual Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) Report has been submitted to the Ministry as a summary of data and learning strategies from the past school year. This planning cycle aligns with Ministry requirements and the Board Strategic Plan goals, and qualitative and quantitative information are part of the summary report.

At each Principal/Vice Principal meeting, school and district data is discussed and important planning work takes place. The FESL information forms a basis for this work.

This information is on our District website under the Board drop-down menu – [Strategic Plan \(sd91.bc.ca\)](https://sd91.bc.ca)



Mapes Elementary School – Learning in the Community



In late September, Mapes Elementary's primary classes enjoyed a beautiful fall day at the Solmonson farm – just down the road from the school! In addition to hosting the event and running the stations, the Solmonson family worked for many hours before and after the school's visit. Parents and caregivers also volunteered their time to make the day run smoothly.

Students learned about harvesting and preserving food from the garden, visited farm animals, roasted hot dogs, and even enjoyed a hayride back to the school. Each student had the chance to make their own jar of pickled carrots which will be stored in the root cellar over winter.

When asked about their favourite parts of the day, students spoke about trying new vegetables, feeding the horse, and washing carrots.

Fort St. James Secondary – Learning Outside the Classroom

Jaclyn Boyes is the teacher and has been developing the program for close to a decade. "We initially developed the course as just an Environmental Science and Physical Geography 11/12 course and over time it's evolved to become more outdoors," says Boyes. "We've really started to focus on our watershed. As you know, we're on Stuart Lake here. We've got the Stuart Sockeye which is one of the most significant runs and recognized by United Nations as being really valuable and important."

To dive deep into the studies of the watershed the program needed the boat, which was also built by students at SD91.

Craig Houghton is the Principal of Fort St. James Secondary School, and he hopes that through providing this experience more young people will go into fisheries based careers.

For the full video: [Fort St. James students take to the water in a unique environmental science course | CKPGToday.ca](#)

Thanks to Sam Bennison and the film crew for showcasing the school, staff, and students involved in real-life learning in the community.



Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 4: Enhance Connections



Grassy Plains Daycare Development

Renovations and construction began a few weeks ago at Grassy Plains School to develop a new daycare facility. This is the largest construction project for SD91 since a new school was built in Granisle nearly a decade ago.

This Ministry-funded facility was made possible in a collaborative partnership with Cheslatta Carrier Nation and, when finished in mid-2025, will include 36 new daycare spaces in total – broken into the following age groupings:

- 8 spaces for children under 36 months of age
- 16 spaces for children who are 30 months old to school age
- 12 spaces for school-aged children

Dual Credit Program Expansion

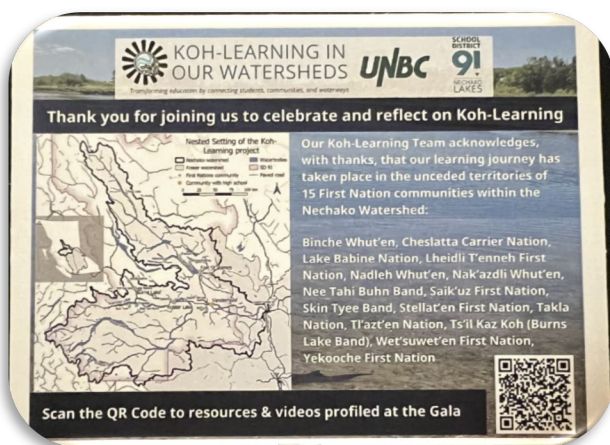
We are pleased to partner with the Ministry and SD57 on the Dual Credit Program Expansion.

Dual credit recognizes eligible post-secondary study for Grade 12 elective credit towards high school graduation. This aligns with the province's "StrongerBC: Future Ready Action Plan" goal, which is to make post-secondary education more affordable, accessible, and relevant to British Columbians.

Under this partnership, Nechako Lakes will work with regional school districts and UNBC and CNC to create more opportunities for students.



Koh Learning in our Watersheds Celebration



On October 4, Koh Learning hosted a final dinner celebration to honour and reflect on the collaborative partnership over the past decade. Through Koh Learning, hundreds of students, educators, First Nations and community members worked together on the land to improve the Nechako watershed through research and student learning.

After more than a decade, Koh Learning has come to an end, but the legacy and the learning will continue at the school level based on the partnership formed over the years. The impact of Koh has been nothing short of incredible – SD91 thanks all the staff, community partners and UNBC who have been involved!

Early Years Screening

On Thursday, October 10, families with three-to-six-year-old children attended on Early Years Screening event at the Fort St James Community Center.

This event provided a fun, family-oriented atmosphere to support children's transitions into school. Families took part in play-based activities while learning about early learning programs and services, their local elementary school, and their communities.



Employee Recognition

I would like to recognize all the staff who assisted in the search for Oaklynn in late September. Many people from far and wide logged hundreds of hours, and their efforts made a difference in helping find her safe.

A special thanks to EBUS teacher Chris Mushumanski for leading the search effort. His 27 years of experience at Nechako Valley Search and Rescue was front and center in the coordination of the hundreds of volunteers.



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