

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 Sacho Ooza

January is always a meaningful time in our district as we return from the winter break with renewed energy and deep focus on our shared priorities. This month marks the midpoint of our annual strategic workplan, and much of our attention has been directed toward assessing progress, reviewing evidence of learning, and preparing for the next phase of our Strategic Plan refresh.

Over the past several weeks, our team has been supporting the Board by gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the substantial feedback collected through both in-person engagement and online participation. This includes the voices of staff, families, community partners, and—most importantly—students. Ensuring that student voice meaningfully informs our long-term direction continues to be a central commitment in Nechako Lakes School District, and I am grateful to schools for creating thoughtful, age-appropriate opportunities for learners to share what helps them feel successful, connected, and hopeful about their futures.

As part of this mid-year check-in, this month's report includes more detailed updates in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Our educators across the district continue to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to strengthening foundational skills. In literacy, targeted early learning support, structured literacy training, coaching for primary classrooms, and community literacy initiatives are helping students apply phonics knowledge, develop confidence in reading real texts, and build a lifelong relationship with language. The work being done to differentiate instruction, model effective practice, and provide teachers with access to meaningful, research-aligned materials is already showing positive impact in classrooms.

In numeracy, classrooms are increasingly rich with opportunities for students to think creatively, collaborate, take risks, and see themselves as capable mathematicians. From problem-solving tasks to hands-on explorations, our learners are developing mathematical habits of mind that extend well beyond the worksheet. The examples shared by schools this month illustrate the depth of curiosity and confidence that emerges when students are encouraged to reason, communicate, and persevere with real-world challenges. Across the district, January has also brought a renewed sense of connection and community. Whether through cultural learning experiences, partnerships with local organizations, cross-country ski programs, or career-focused initiatives, our schools continue to offer opportunities that enrich learning and reflect the strengths of our communities.

Thank you to our staff, families, Rightsholders, and partners who continue to support this important work. As we move into the second half of the school year, I remain deeply grateful for the dedication, collaboration, and care that define Nechako Lakes. Together, we are creating learning environments where every student is seen, supported, and inspired to thrive.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita McClinton

(she/her)
Superintendent

LDSS learners and staff
enjoying a delicious feast and
holiday joy in the week leading
up to Winter Break.



Numeracy in Nechako Lakes

STUDENT SUCCESS & WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

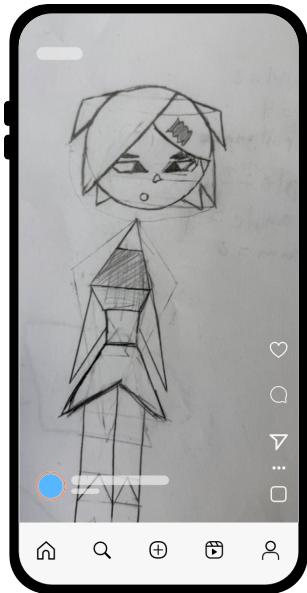


BEYOND THE WORKSHEET

Learners continue to build foundational knowledge, nurture mathematical habits of mind and develop mathematical competencies through a range of learning experiences, tasks and problems. Key markers of thriving communities include taking risks and learning from mistakes, thinking creatively and critically as well as valuing the process of learning and collaborating.



DH Gr 6/7 students find cooperative ways to successfully play together.



WKE Gr 7 learners create self-portraits using geometric shapes.



WLM Gr 3 learners reason about the number of Cheerios in one box.

Classrooms rich in mathematics provide all learners with mathematical experiences to help them see themselves as mathematicians with interesting and important ideas of their own.

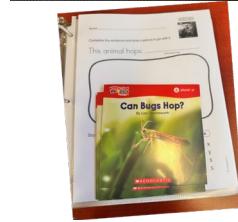
Literacy Support

Nov 2025-Jan 2026
in Nechako Lakes

Working with and for learners and their
educators -Teachers, LSW's, LOP's
(with a sprinkling of community literacy)



Supporting primary teachers & LSW's to help students apply phonics knowledge to reading real books and improve spelling.



- Purchase & organize books & lessons (or use books schools already own)
- Organize 'making words' materials after determining students' developmental levels
- Model differentiated structures and lessons in the classroom
- Support with follow up visits, emails and video calls with teachers

Community Literacy



Project Illustrator

Approximately 50 SD91 high school art students from across the district mentored with renowned Canadian illustrator Scott Henderson. The purpose was to help youth see that their futures could involve professional work with their art through illustrating.

A Literacy & Careers Collaboration



Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 1: Honour Diversity

Language Learning at Mapes Elementary

This fall, Mapes Elementary enthusiastically took on the challenge of learning a new language. In our work towards ensuring that **all** students feel welcome and can participate meaningfully in our community of learners, students and staff have been busy learning American Sign Language. This has been an all-hands-on-deck effort with students and staff in each of our classes practicing and sharing what they know. We are continually adding to the ASL vocabulary cards that identify places, actions, and items around our school. Students are also learning new words through modelling, guided practice, stories, and song.

Our district Deaf and Hard of Hearing teacher, Paul Woolnough, has been a great support and often comes by the school to interpret during ASL story time. We have also consulted with and accessed a variety of resources recommended by the Provincial Outreach Programs for Deaf & Hard of Hearing and Students with Deaf-blindness to guide our work. Teaching and support staff have gone above and beyond in their commitment to learning and have been the drivers behind much of our growth. We still have a lot of work to do, but we are excited about how far we've come and where we're headed.



Hereditary Chief Anthony Tom Visit at Lakes District Secondary School

Students and staff enjoyed a visit from Hereditary Chief Anthony Tom from Lake Babine Nation. Storytelling, traditional drumming, singing, and dancing were enjoyed by all during this youth-Elder cultural connection and relationship building.





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](http://www.sd91.bc.ca/Students & Families/Share the Love 2026)**

Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 2: Engage our Workforce

Engaging Our Workforce: Moving Forward Together at GPES

As we return from the winter break, Grassy Plains Elementary School is grateful for the dedicated staff who show up every day for our students and for one another.

There isn't one specific initiative driving this work. Instead, it's the strength of our school community and the many caring people who keep things moving forward. With ongoing staffing challenges, staff have worn many hats, stayed flexible, and stepped in where needed to ensure our school runs smoothly. While we hope to have staffing positions filled soon, we are deeply thankful for their continued commitment.

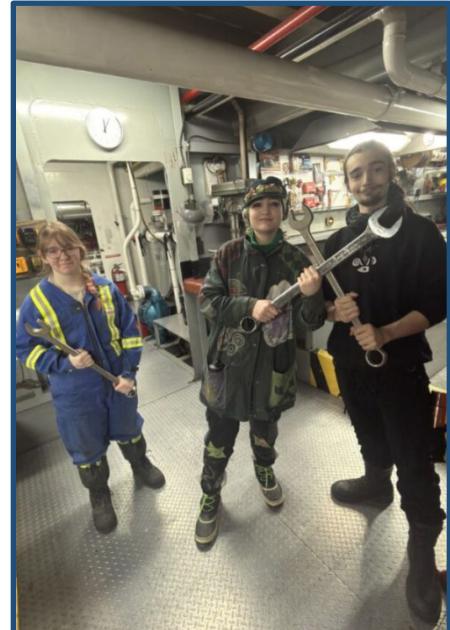
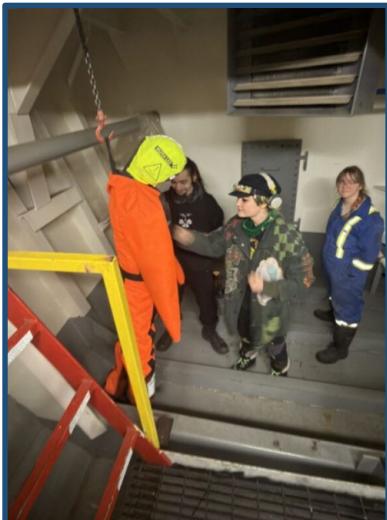
Most importantly, this work matters because of what students see and learn. Watching adults collaborate, support each other, and stay focused teaches students lessons about empathy, responsibility, and resilience. GPES staff model the values we hope to instill in learners, creating a school culture rooted in care, cooperation, and perseverance.



Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 3: Create Student Success

Project Marine

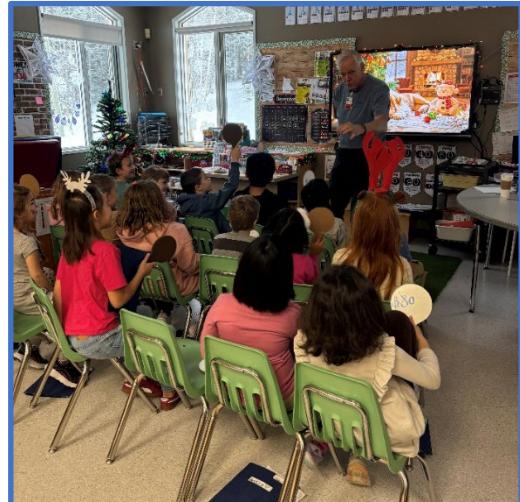
Developed in partnership with Water Bridge Inland Ferries and delivered at the Francois Lake Ferry Crossing, the 2nd Annual Project Marine provided students direct and hands-on exposure to career opportunities in the Marine industry. Over the course of two days, participants from FSJSS, NVSS, FLESS and LDSS engaged in ferry operations that ranged from deck handling, vehicle management, engine room operations, fire fighting procedures, rescue boat drills to active vessel navigation. Necho Lake Career Programs strives to provide experiential learning opportunities that are real and relevant and would not be possible without the ongoing support from our many 'Partners in Education.'



Learning About the Economy in Grade 2/3

Mrs. Egan's Grade 2/3 class has been learning about the economy and how people make choices about money and resources. As part of this learning, students were excited to welcome Mr. Carl Larsen, SD 91 Facilities Manager, and Mrs. Becky Larsen, who led the class in an engaging lesson about how auctions work.

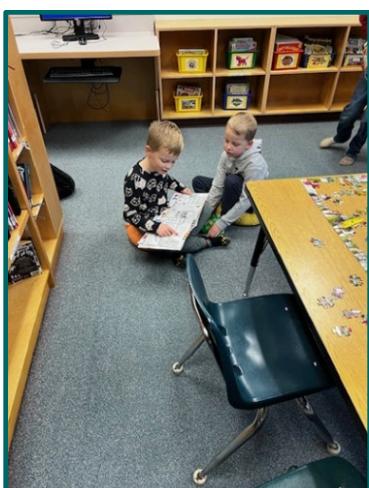
Through hands-on activities and discussion, students explored important concepts such as needs and wants, making choices, fairness, and decision-making. They practiced listening, thinking critically, and sharing their ideas while learning how goods and services are exchanged in a community.



Literacy Fun at Decker Lake Elementary



Buddy Reading! Older and younger learners have fun practicing their reading skills and building connections together.



DLES hosts Reading Club before school and during the noon hour break. Huskies love having a chance to read independently or with a friend!



Strategic Plan Updates: GOAL 4: Enhance Connections

Spirit North at Mouse Mountain



Mouse Mountain has been partnering with Spirit North since April 2025. Spirit North is a non-profit organization that connects Indigenous youth to sport, play, the outdoors, and the land. In the Spring and Fall of 2025, Spirit North worked with the students and staff of Mouse Mountain to learn biking and hiking skills on the land with the trail system on Mouse Mountain (Lhkw'etsilhcho). Throughout that time, Spirit North worked alongside the school and the PAC to get grant funding for a school set of cross-country skis. Through the incredible support from the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, Nechako-Kitimat Development Fund and the Mouse Mountain PAC, 83 sets of skis and boots arrived in December 2025! The students are so excited to be learning this new skill and persevering when it is hard. Self-empowering comments can be heard all over the school "I'm so good at this!", "I just keep getting up every time I fall", "I love skiing", and the best "Spirit North Day - YAY!"



The grant for the skis was close to \$25,000, and we are so incredibly grateful for all of the support and work that happened to make this happen for the learners here at Mouse Mountain. The facilitators that come every week are amazing!



"Those smiles and statements of perseverance are the moments we all live for in education." Roberta Toth

Ski S'Kool in Vanderhoof

On Thursday January 8th, Vanderhoof gr 3 learners (incl. Northside Christian School) had the privilege of starting Ski S'Kool at the Nechako Valley Sporting Association on Quail Road west of Vanderhoof. The volunteers, ranging from local retired teachers and professionals to a 24-year-old former athlete, all have their coaching certification and are passionate about skiing and youth development. They are dedicating their time to provide our learners with this experience. The first of four sessions went really well; learners caught on quickly and loved being on the trails (especially going up and down the hills!). Did you know that Ski S'Kool celebrates its 10-year anniversary this year? The volunteers wish to see representation from the School Board on the last day of sessions 2026 and yes, there will be cake! If this date doesn't work for you, please come out to the sessions on January 22nd, just to experience the beauty and excellence of this program. Contact Mary Burkholder for more information. ☺

Thank you again, SD91 and our school PACs, for supporting this incredible opportunity for our grade 3



learners!



WL McLeod Turkey Dinner



Our Turkey Dinner is sponsored by our PAC; cooked by our kitchen staff and PAC volunteers; organized and decorated by a staff group, and served by volunteers from CSFS and EBUS. It's a real team effort!



Northern Capitals Girls Hockey Team Visit EDS

Evelyn Dickson School was thrilled to welcome the Northern Capitals Hockey Team. Their visit provided a wonderful opportunity to inspire students—especially girls—to participate in sport, while promoting teamwork, leadership, confidence, and healthy, active living. The team read a hockey story, led fun activities and taught hockey skills, while sharing their experiences and encouraging students to set goals and try new things. It was an inspiring visit, and we are grateful to the Northern Capitals for helping create such a positive and memorable experience for our students.



Employee Recognition

I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our Early Learning staff and our itinerant staff—including our Inclusive Education support team, our District Literacy & Inquiry Support Teacher, and our District Numeracy Support Teacher. Your commitment to supporting learners, families, and school teams across Nchako Lakes makes a profound difference every day.

Thank you for the care, expertise, and steady dedication you bring to every classroom, every visit, and every conversation. Your work strengthens the foundation of learning across our district, and we are truly grateful for all that you do.

Find Us on Social Media!



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@SD91BC

You can also find us on Twitter!
@sd91bc

