



**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF  
SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 58 (NICOLA-SIMILKAMEEN)**

**ADMINISTRATION OFFICE**

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November 26, 2021

Dear parents, caregivers, students and SD58 community and families:

We know every member of our school community is keen to hear an update about their school, and we will be providing those early next week. Today, we are pleased to be able to provide an overview of the work the School District has been doing to ensure an efficient return to learning.

**COMMUNITY UPDATES**

Please note, ESS continues to accept and register new claims for residents of Princeton, Tulameen, Merritt and other locations. Provincial, federal and ESS financial support is available as well as support from the Red Cross. Please find more information on the Red Cross registration and application process available [here](#).

**Princeton**

Residents of low-lying areas have begun to return home. Please be aware the majority of the flooded areas in the Town of Princeton remain on Evacuation Order. Canadian Forces continue to support the Town's deployment of sandbagging in preparation for upcoming potential severe weather systems.

Princeton has a Do Not Consume Notice for water and a Boil Water Notice in two areas of the town. We have been informed drilling is taking place under the Brown Bridge for the purpose of installing a new water pipe in order to provide greater water pressure and access, and crews will be working on coupling the new pipe with the old system with the goal of having it operational by the end of the day on Sunday. In addition, progress is being made on restoring the town's sewer system.

An accident today on Highway 3 near town has closed the highway, and it will not reopen until midnight tonight, at the earliest.

The latest updates from the Town of Princeton can be found [here](#).

**Merritt**

The City of Merritt is continuing with their phased return home approach outlined in their Return Home Plan. As of tomorrow (November 27) at noon, residents who live in Phase 2 areas will be able to return home, subject to final water testing results. A return home timeline for residents who live in Phase 3 areas has not yet been finalized.

Please be aware that all areas are on Evacuation Alert and residents will need to be prepared to leave on short notice. In addition, please note that there is still a Boil Water Notice in effect, and the municipality has asked residents to monitor their water use. Residents should bring food and supplies with them when returning—supplies within Merritt are currently limited and all residents must be self-sufficient. All information on the phases of the Return Home Plan can be found [here](#), and the latest updates from the City of Merritt can be found [here](#).

The School District and the Nicola Valley Food Bank have established a resource centre for families returning to the community. This resource centre replaces the donation centre that has previously been set up in Kamloops. The centre will be housed in the gym of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) at 4155 Belshaw Street. All residents are welcome to access supplies—including food, water and clothing—at the centre, which will be open daily from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. If you are unable to drive to NVIT, please reach out to your school principal who will be able to assist you in accessing resources. The resource centre will be open beginning tomorrow (November 27) and will continue to operate indefinitely.

For additional community resources and information that may be of help during this time, please see the list at the bottom of this letter.

## **SCHOOL UPDATES**

We are working closely with local, provincial and First Nations leadership as well as Interior Health to bring students back to school as quickly as possible. This work includes the close monitoring of severe weather warnings and the possible impacts this could have on our community, our return to learning schedule, the safety of school buildings and the School District's ability to deliver learning remotely and in-person. The School District continues to work with third-party consultants to help with developing and communicating plans for moving forward.

Together with our partners, including the Ministry of Education, we have formed the Nicola-Similkameen Education Recovery Table, a committee to coordinate the return to in-person and remote learning for our students. As you are all aware, the disaster that has unfolded in our community requires a complex and multi-faceted response that takes into consideration a wide variety of circumstances and factors. The health and safety of our students remains our first priority and no return to in-person learning will take place until we can guarantee that students will be able to participate safely.

The School District will provide updates next week with detailed information on a return to learning at each of our schools.

### **Princeton**

The School District is planning for a return to learning as soon as possible, subject to restored water quality and pressure, and assessments from Interior Health and the Town of Princeton. A return to in-person learning will also be dependent on the availability of sufficient ESS support to ensure the health and safety of our students and the varied needs of the town.

### **Merritt**

At this time, many challenges are impeding a return to in-person and remote learning in Merritt. Concerns to be considered include extensive flood damage to some of our school facilities and infrastructure, unstable water conditions and pressure, adequate access to ESS services and insufficient staffing levels. With this in mind, the School District is currently focused on opening neighbourhood schools that become available based on the City of Merritt's phased Return Home Plan. We will be securing space for children of essential workers and finding alternate learning spaces to provide equitable access to our students overall.

To assist our SD58 community members during this extremely stressful time, we have hired a mental health clinician to provide any support that is needed. Please contact Jane Kempston, district principal of student support services for SD58, at [jkempston@365.sd58.bc.ca](mailto:jkempston@365.sd58.bc.ca), for more information.

We want to remind our community that School District 58 is here for you. We believe in the strength of our students and families and are committed to helping each and every one of you overcome this challenge with the heart and community spirit typical of our School District.

Take care.

K<sup>w</sup>uk<sup>w</sup>scemx<sup>w</sup>, Limlǝmt, Maarsii and thank you,



Stephen McNiven  
Superintendent of Schools

***Resources:***

[Government of British Columbia — Disaster Financial Assistance \(DFA\)](#)

[Government of British Columbia — Evacuee Registration & Assistance \(ERA\)](#)

[Government of British Columbia — Mood and Anxiety: Getting Help](#)

[Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre — Parents & Caregivers](#)

[City of Merritt — Return Home Plan](#)

[City of Merritt — Latest News](#)

[Town of Princeton EOC – Latest News](#) (Facebook Page)

**Community Resource Centre**

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology  
4155 Belshaw Street  
Merritt