



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

**ADMINISTRATION OFFICE**

Stephen McNiven, B.Ed., M.A., Superintendent of Schools  
Barbara Ross, C.P.A., C.G.A., Secretary Treasurer

P.O. Box 4100, 1550 Chapman Street, Merritt, B.C., V1K 1B8, Phone: (250) 378-5161, Fax: (250) 378-6263

December 6, 2021

Dear SD 58 parents, caregivers, students and staff:

We are reaching out to let you know that we are thinking of you as we continue to navigate the challenging situations caused by the flooding. Few of us have experienced a natural disaster of this scale before: in every community across our District, we are dealing with events that many of us have never imagined. Our hearts go out to every person and family in our District and throughout the province who have been impacted by the floods. We know many of you are faced with the prospect of rebuilding your homes and lives, and we want to let you know about the supports we have in place to help you. Our intention is to provide as much support as we can in the coming weeks and months as we begin the slow, but very much welcome, process of rebuilding and returning to learning.

To those who remain displaced from your homes and community, we can help you access necessities such as food and clothing, in whichever community you have been evacuated to. We are also supporting our students still in other communities, either by helping them to access in-person learning in the school district they are currently in, or through remote learning with us. We expect to begin a greater degree of remote learning this week across our District and will continue to work to get the needed technology out to students. Please reach out your school principal if you require educational support or advice on what will be best for your family.

To those who are returning to homes that have been significantly impacted, we are working with local authorities to ensure there are supports in place to meet your basic needs as you get back into your homes. We have worked to set up supports at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) in Merritt, where families can access a variety of resources such as food, water, and clothing. The Princeton Foodbank similarly has supports set up for families as well. It was very exciting to see students returning to classes at a few of our schools in Merritt this past week, and we look forward to seeing more students face-to-face and remotely in Merritt, Princeton, Coldwater and Douglas Lake in the coming week.

For those who are experiencing emotional impacts from the events of these last weeks, we have put a number of supports in place. As we return to learning, all staff are participating in a trauma-informed learning sessions facilitated by Safer Schools Together. This training is designed to equip staff with the knowledge and tools to help students feel safe and supported after a disaster of this scale and is also intended to support staff mental health. As students are returning to schools, teachers are meeting with our counseling team to ensure that they are prepared for the questions, concerns, and experiences that the students may have after the recent weeks in our communities.

We have also hired a mental health clinician to ensure any member of our school community—students, staff or teachers—who is struggling to cope with and manage their emotions through this experience has access to a trusted and compassionate professional who will help guide them through this time. This resource is available to families as well, and almost 100 families and staff have accessed this service so far.

The School District continues to work closely with the Aboriginal Advisory Council and individual First Nations communities to plan and implement support for learners and families. We appreciate Indigenous students and families may have unique needs and we have the resources to support you.

All this support is just a phone call or email away. You can call or email any of your teachers, your school-based principal, counselling team, First Nations Support workers or any of the team at the School Board Office. You can call Heather at the Board Office at **250-378-5161** if you are unsure where to find specific contact information. Specific contact information, as well as parent and teacher crisis response resources, can also be found on our website at [Home - SD58 Nicola-Similkameen](#).

And know that at any time you can email me, Jane Kempston, District Principal of Student Support Services, at [jkempton@365.sd58.bc.ca](mailto:jkempton@365.sd58.bc.ca).

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that ends in a small hook.

Jane Kempston  
District Principal of Student Support Services