**Press Release - DRAFT**

Nicola-Similkameen School District is pleased to welcome Louie Van Grootel as a new Vice Principal at Merritt Secondary School.

Louie brings more than 24 years of experience in education as a teacher, counsellor, and school leader. He is known for his calm, collaborative leadership and his strong commitment to student success, wellness, and inclusion.

With a background in counselling, Louie has worked closely with students, families, and community partners to remove barriers to learning. His leadership has included championing initiatives such as the PreVenture Program, supporting literacy and wellness priorities, and contributing to school-based planning in areas such as timetabling, staffing, and individualized student supports.

Louie is particularly passionate about working alongside Indigenous communities to strengthen educational opportunities and outcomes. His ongoing collaboration with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and Indigenous support staff reflects his commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and to fostering welcoming, culturally responsive learning environments.

Louie’s experience and student-centered approach make him a wonderful addition to our leadership at Merritt Secondary.

Please join us in welcoming Louie Van Grootel to the Nicola-Similkameen community.