November 3, 2020

Dear Families of School District No. 58 Students:

We are so happy to have you back with us either face to face or online, and hope that your fall is moving forward positively and that you are all well. Last spring, we recognized that many families were finding times quite challenging financially and we worked with the Nicola Valley Foodbank to make sure that people were able to get some extra support if they needed it.

As winter arrives, we once again are thinking about those of us who may be living with food insecurity during what remains a very challenging time. We encourage anyone to reach out to access food support for yourselves, your children, and yes – they can even help with pets! The Foodbank feels very strongly that no one should be going hungry in our community. They have many foods available, including healthy fruits, vegetables, milk, frozen products, baby items and hygiene products.

It is an extremely simple and confidential process to get support, there is no paperwork involved and no financial information is required. As many people may be staying close to home, the foodbank has volunteer drivers that will bring a box of food to you each week or you can phone and arrange a pickup directly from the foodbank. If regular foodbank hours do not work for you, they will work around what you are comfortable with and find an alternate time for you. The contact information for the foodbank is phone number: **250-378-2282** and email: **foodbank@telus.net**. Derlanda, the Foodbank manager would be more than happy to help in any way possible.

A second local support in Merritt is ASK Wellness. Their team works with families who need support to keep or find safe and secure housing by providing damage deposit assistance, funding for emergency repairs, funding for security deposits, and rent subsidies. This financial support is not intended to be ongoing, but rather for situations that leave a family or individual in a position that potentially could make them homeless, lose access to food, and/or negatively impact their health. People looking for support from their Outreach Team can go into their office at **2196 Quilchena Avenue** or call **250-315-0098** to connect. ASK is another important support to know about during these challenging times, and they are hoping that anyone in need feels able to come in for support.

If you need support getting in contact with either agency, you can call your school principal, school counsellor, or First Nations Support Worker. You can also reach out to Jane Kempston, District Principal of Student Support Services at jkempston@365.sd58.bc.ca or Shelley Oppenheim-Lacerte, District Principal of Aboriginal Education at slacerte@365.sd58.bc.ca. We are here to help in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Jane Kempston

District Principal for Student Support Services