



BENCH ELEMENTARY

FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Dear Families,

Welcome to February! The students were very excited for our 'snow day' and we want to thank you for your speedy pick up the day the buses were cancelled. When the students returned back to school, they quickly went to work creating a toboggan run and building snow forts. It was really great to see all the ages coming together to play and make the best of the tiny hill. A big thank you to parents for sending the kids in all their warm snow gear. Be sure to check out the lost and found by the library if you are missing gloves, touques, etc.

We are incredibly proud of our choir for performing in the music festival on February 12th. Their dedication and hard work during rehearsals was truly commendable. Thank you to Mrs. McLean and the PAC for funding the bussing.

This month, students will engage in Part 2 of our Métis cultural lessons to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Indigenous heritage. These lessons provide a meaningful way for students to connect with the rich history, traditions, and contributions of the Métis people. We are grateful for this learning opportunity with Mrs. Corrine Chow.

Valentine's Day is a time to celebrate friendship and kindness. Classroom activities will take place prior to February 14th and teachers will share specific details about any planned activities or exchanges. We encourage everyone to spread joy and positivity throughout the school.

Parents of grade 4 & 7 students please take some time to complete the Parent Learning Survey that will help to drive our school goals next year. You can complete the survey at the following link www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sat_survey/access.htm

We kindly remind you that school starts promptly at **8:30 AM**, and this is when instruction begins. Arriving on time ensures your child can start the day smoothly, engage in learning right away, and not miss important instruction. Arriving **before 8:30 AM** also alleviates parking lot congestion!

Thank you for your support in fostering strong habits for success!

Huy ch q'u!

Sincerely,

Kyla Bridge & Steven Brooks

Bench Elementary School

1501 Cowichan Bay Road

Cowichan Bay, BC - V0R 1N2

(T) 250-743-5552

(F) 250-743-5807





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Dates to Remember

February 14, Friday - Pro-D Day (School Closed)
February 17, Monday - District Closure (School Closed)
February 21, Friday - Whole School Run (tentative)
February 26, Wednesday - 2hr. Early Dismissal
February 28, Friday - Robotics Challenge @ CVOLC
March 3, Monday - Class photo and whole school photo day
March 4, Tuesday - Bake Sale (\$2 per cookie)
March 17 to 28, Monday to Friday - Spring Break (School Closed)

Kindergarten Registration 2025-2026

Online registration forms are still open for families to register children born in 2020 for kindergarten.

Schools will accept registrations from families living within their catchment area, or for children whose older siblings have an approved out-of-catchment request and will be continuing to attend the school. Any family wishing to register their child in an out-of-catchment school may apply by submitting an out-of-catchment request form available online.



Early registration supports both district and school planning by helping to prepare funding models and class enrolment forms.

Frances Kelsey Registration Packages



Parents of grade 7 students should have received the registration packages for Frances Kelsey at the end of January.



Registration forms need to be returned here to Bench by February 27th. If your child will not be attending Frances Kelsey, please let the school know. Thank you!

Open Parachute Program

The Ministry of Education and Child Care, in partnership with adolescent clinical psychologist Dr. Hayley Watson from Open Parachute, will host three, free virtual sessions for parents, guardians and caregivers that will focus on practical skills you can teach your child and youth (ages 0-19) to prevent substance use and mental health needs.



These sessions will build on a previous presentation, which focused on practical conversation tools for speaking about substance use prevention with your children/youth. The previous session is not a pre-requisite for this session.

Session dates are: February 20, 6:00-7:30

February 25, 6:00-7:30

February 26, 6:00-7:30

To learn more visit <https://www.openparachute.ca>



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PAC - Fun Fair

Bench Elementary's Annual

FUN FAIR

is Wednesday, June 4!
5-8pm

FUN STORE!

GAMES! PRIZES! BOUNCY CASTLES!

WE ARE SEEKING:

- *2 Games Coordinators***
- *Volunteer Coordinator***

Join us to help make this the biggest and best fun fair yet!

COTTON CANDY!

FOOD TRUCKS!



We are seeking coordinators to help plan the FUN FAIR!

Overall it's not a lot of time as effort is spread out in the months / weeks leading up to the Fun Fair. You will have the support and guidance of veteran planners with lots of the work done in past years.

Games Coordinator (2 people)

- Gather supplies
- Organize games volunteer needs
- Coordinate completion of Goody bags, Mystery Bags, etc.
- Planning for Fun store (supplies, placement holders, signage)
- Coordination of Guessing Jar Game
- Lead Morning Volunteer crew for Set-up of Gym / Games / Activities
- Lead Clean up crew for games

Volunteer Coordinator

- Obtain list of all Volunteer positions
- Set up Sign Up Genius
- Liaise with Communication Coordinator as required
- Monitor sign-ups and send reminder emails
- Send instructions to all volunteers
- Set-up Volunteer check in station
- Trouble shoot & monitor volunteers / no shows

Interested?

Contact Liz: benchpactreasurer@gmail.com

JOIN THE FUN!



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PAC – Fundraiser



Thank you for taking part in our returning Bench Elementary PAC fundraiser through Mitchell's Soup.

For every order placed, Mitchell's will give back 35% to our school!

We have a wide range of mixes from soups, chilis, chowders and stews to rice dishes and dahl. We even have dessert! All offer healthy, hearty, easy-to-make options that your family will love! They also make excellent gifts at only **\$10.99 each**.

Here is the link to our online ordering portal where you can read about each mix and make your selections. Orders can be paid online via Paypal, debit cards or credit cards.
<https://raise.mitchellssoupco.com/benchelementarypac/benchelementarypac?a=17&as=k&at=1739395453227>.

Online catalogue: <https://www.mitchellssoupco.com/pages/fundraiser-product-catalogue>.

Your child will also bring home a paper order form so you can make your selections and pay **cash** or send an **e-transfer** to: benchpactreasurer@gmail.com. For EMT's, please include your name and 'soup' as the memo. All paper order forms can be returned to the PAC collection box outside the main office.

ORDERS DUE by Friday March 14th.

Pick-up at the school Gym Thursday, April 3rd, 2:00 – 3:30pm

Thank you so much for SOUPporting our PAC fundraiser, we hope you love your soups and mixes from Mitchell's.

PAC Take N' Bake Pizza Fundraiser closes on Monday, February 17th.

Order: <https://benchpac.hotlunches.net>

5 types to choose from, great for the freezer (spring break!!) plus Moos amazing coupon book!



Pizzas \$20 each
Coupon Book \$5 each

Pick up at Bench School Thursday, Feb. 27th





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Grade 7s - Burger and Beer Fundraiser

U'yiskweyul
(Good Day),

Re: Call for Contributions for Grade 7 Camp Thunderbird/ Year End Fundraiser Silent Auction

There is excitement in the air in the Grade 7 classrooms as we approach their year-end 2-night camp out at Camp Thunderbird. We are hosting a fun Sunday afternoon Burger and Beverage fundraiser at the Cowichan Bay Pub on March 2nd from 3-6 PM.

As a part of the fundraiser, we are going to be featuring a silent auction to help reduce the financial barriers of the students attending camp.

We write this letter to seek your participation as a donor for a silent auction item. Funds raised at the fundraiser will directly support reducing the cost of the students to attend this year end event. Join us and be a part of cultivating a learning environment that will inspire tomorrow's leaders.

If you can contribute to our event, we would request any items be available for pick up by Thursday, February 27th. We are looking forward to an exciting and successful event to support our Grade 7 "Class of 2025" and look forward to connecting with you!

If you would like to donate an item or service for silent auction, please text or email Tara or Angela.

To attend the fundraiser, please secure your ticket as seating is limited, by contacting:

Angela Jeet at angelamjeet@gmail.com or text at 778-737-8708

Silent Auction Items:

Tara Whittaker at
taramottle@hotmail.com or text 250-246-8094

Angela Jeet at
angelamjeet@gmail.com or text at 778-737-8708

Huy ch q'u (Thank you)
Bench Grade 7 students (and parents)







BENCH ELEMENTARY

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Use of Artificial Intelligence



Student Guidelines for Safe Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)




Protect Your Privacy


When at school, use AI tools that are approved by your school or trusted adults. Be aware of how your data is used. Do not enter personal details like full name, address, phone number, or school name into AI systems.

(CoPilot is currently district approved)

Understand AI Bias and Verify Responses

AI tools can sometimes give biased or inaccurate information. This happens because AI systems are trained on data, which may not always be fair, accurate or inclusive. Always verify information from other reliable sources - especially if it seems inaccurate.







AI is a Learning Companion

Use AI tools to support your learning - do not let these tools do the thinking for you. AI can help with research, provide suggestions, or check your work, however, your critical thinking and creativity are essential. Use of AI to cheat will restrict your learning.

Create Specific Prompts

A good AI question is clear, specific and provides enough detail to guide the AI in generating a response. If the response is not sufficient, ask follow-up questions to the AI to refine the output.






Ask for Help

If you're not sure how to use an AI tool or if you're worried about how it works, talk to a teacher or an adult you trust. They can guide you in using AI safely and responsibly.

Keep Learning About AI


AI is a powerful tool that is constantly evolving. Keep learning about how it works and stay informed on the latest developments so you can use it safely and effectively.



Grades 6-12



Student Guidelines for Safe Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)



Keep Your Information Safe

Only use AI tools that your teacher has approved.

Check AI Answers

AI answers can sometimes be biased or wrong - always check with your teacher.





AI Helps You Learn

AI is a useful tool, however, don't let AI do the work for you.

Ask Clear Questions

Use short, clear prompts.





Ask for Help

If you don't know how to use AI, ask your teacher or trusted adult.

Keep Learning About AI

Stay curious about AI and ask questions.



Grades K-5

Attached to this newsletter you will also find the Ministry's [All About Artificial Intelligence](#) information sheet for parents and caregivers.



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Homestay

Are you excited about the idea of welcoming a high school student from another part of the world into your home? Becoming a host family is a unique opportunity to share Canadian culture, form lifelong connections, and play a crucial role in a young person's educational journey in our community.

Our high school aged international students are eager to experience life in Canada. As a host, you'll provide a safe, supportive, and caring environment to help them thrive. Families of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply—and hosts receive support and an honorarium to ensure a successful experience for everyone involved!

BE MY
HOME
AWAY FROM
HOME



HOMESTAYS NEEDED FOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

If you are an active family interested in hosting an international student from Europe and around the world contact us!

Brenda 250-510-1436 / blanglois@sd79.bc.ca

We are actively recruiting host families for the upcoming fall semester! Now is the perfect time to apply and prepare to welcome a student into your home.

Join us in creating unforgettable memories and making a difference in a student's life!

Apply today and make a difference! For more information, contact blanglois@sd79.bc.ca or apply here: <https://www.studyincowichan.com/homestay-program/>

Designated Transit Bus Zones



Support Your Neighbours!

To ensure transit accessibility and public safety, school communities are reminded to not park or idle in designated transit bus zones. Transit bus zones are marked with red curb paint and are used to safely load and offload riders, often requiring the deployment of a ramp.

Thank you for supporting safe transit and safe schools.



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Community Information



Black History Month
February 1 – February 28

Valentine's Day
February 14



Family Day
February 17



Pink Shirt Day
February 26

Canadian Black History Month, celebrated every February, honours the contributions and achievements of Black Canadians throughout history. It is a time to recognize the resilience, culture, and leadership of Black communities while acknowledging the struggles they have faced. The month encourages learning about significant figures, such as Viola Desmond and Lincoln Alexander, and promotes conversations about equity, inclusion, and social justice in Canada.

On February 27th, Thursday, we will have a special guest from the Ivory Coast doing African cultural activities with our Bench students.



In 2007, Berwick, Nova Scotia, after a new student at their school was bullied for wearing a pink shirt, two grade 12 students bought 75 pink shirts and encouraged their classmates to wear pink. The next day they went to distribute the shirts and to their surprise the majority of students arrived wearing pink!

The movement continues to grow and now the last Wednesday each February is Canada's officially-recognized national Pink Shirt/anti-bullying day.




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Community Information

Kelsey Theatre Presents
Disney's Newsies the Musical
February 27, 28, March 1, 6, 7, 8 - 7pm Showtime
March 1 & 8 - 2pm Matinee



NEWSIES

QR Code

FKSS Theatre is located at 953 Shawnigan Lake-Mill Bay Rd.

Tickets available through SD79's SchoolCashOnline (SCAN QR CODE),
In Person at the FKSS office,
or at the theatre doors 1 hour before showtimes.

\$20 Adult - \$15 Students & Seniors

Disney's Newsies is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.
www.MTIShows.com
Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Jack Feldman, Book by Harvey Fierstein

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Disney's Newsies
the Musical
February 27, 28,
March 1, 6, 7, 8
7pm Showtime
March 1 & 8
2pm Matinee

\$20 Adult
\$15 Students/Seniors



QR Code

Art by Kate Steele

Disney's Newsies is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.
www.MTIShows.com
Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Jack Feldman, Book by Harvey Fierstein

Based on the real-life Newsboy Strike of 1899, this new Disney musical tells the story of Jack Kelly, a rebellious newsboy who dreams of a life as an artist away from the big city. After publishing giant Joseph Pulitzer raises newspaper prices at the newsboys' expense, Kelly and his fellow newsies take action. With help from the beautiful female reporter Katherine Plumber, all of New York City soon recognizes the power of "the little man."

Shows are Feb 27, 28, March 1, 6, 7, 8 at 7 pm in the theatre at Frances Kelsey.
There are also 2 matinees on March 1 and Mar 8 at 2 pm.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for students/seniors and can be found on schoolcash online.

<https://sd79.schoolcashionline.com/Fee/Index>



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Personal Electronics – iPhones/iPads

Please note that use of personal electronic devices are **NOT** permitted on school property unless supervised by a teacher. If your child does bring an electronic device to school, it **MUST** be kept in their backpack or with the teacher during school hours. Please remember that we cannot guarantee the security of these items. If an item is confiscated by an adult during school hours or is turned in at the office for any reason, it will generally be held until the end of the day and, sometimes, will only be returned to an adult (depending on the circumstances).

Visitors

A reminder that all adults visiting the school must enter through the main doors only and sign in. Thank you for your cooperation.

Student Clothing

Please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather each morning. Unless there are extreme weather conditions, Students will be outside every day during the 45 minute lunch break as well as an additional short break with their teachers at some point through the day.

Water Bottles

Our school has a limited supply of glasses for students to use, especially disposable ones. Families are encouraged to please send their child with a water bottle that they can refill from the fountain.

School Schedule

Supervision begins at 8:00 a.m.

8:30 a.m. Classes begin

11:00 a.m. – 11:47 a.m. Outside play

11:47 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Eating time

2:15 p.m. Dismissal

Supervision ends at 2:40 p.m.

