



School Community Connections Supporting Neighbourhood Learning Centres

E-mail: lgps@ubcm.ca

Mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8

Fax: (250) 356-5119

2010 FINAL REPORT FORM

The final report and financial summary is due within 30 days of the completion of your project (as identified in the application form) and no later than July 1, 2011. Please type directly in this form or print and complete. Use additional space or pages wherever required. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Questions? Contact Local Government Program Services at lgps@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-5134

Project Information

Name of Project: 2010 School Community Connections - Supporting Neighbourhood Learning Centres

Primary Applicant: School District No. 5

Date of Report: June 30, 2011

Report made by: Rob Norum

Position: Secretary Treasurer

Phone: 250.417.2054

E-mail: rob.norum@sd5.bc.ca

1. FUNDING CATEGORY

- Consultation & Planning
- Minor Renovations
- Both

2. BRIEF SUMMARY OF COMPLETED PROJECT.

Please provide an overview of the completed project, including main accomplishments, best practices and lessons learned, etc.

In October 2010, School District 5 (SD5) contracted the Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL) to assist them in helping to move ahead the replacement of Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS) in the form of Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC).

MBSS was originally constructed in 1950 for a school population of approximately 600. Today the school population hovers at about 1,000. The school has significant deficiencies that have been highlighted by consultants, students, staff and SD5 for some time. Initiatives to replace

the school have been going on since the 1990s. Recent initiatives by Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), students, school administration and SD5 Board have not only highlighted deficiencies but involved the community in presenting its vision of what a replacement school might look like. MBSS has been identified as SD5's top replacement priority.

The Ministry of Education (MoE), in considering the replacement of schools, has indicated strongly that school districts should consider and incorporate the needs of their communities in the replacement process. These 'Neighbourhood Learning Centres' (NLCs) have the potential to not only serve the needs of students and their families but also become vital community hubs that serve some needs of the community at large.

In hiring CIEL SD5 hoped to move the NLC concept and replacement closer to reality. Because the concept is relatively new for MoE, no standard practices or guidelines exist on the practice of consulting with the community in creating an NLC.

In this context CIEL formulated a strategy towards building a strong successful NLC. Some of CIEL's outputs and outcomes have been as follows:

- Reviewing work that has gone on in the past including various community consultations, open houses, SD5's Project Identification Report, etc.
- Consolidating the results of various processes that have attempted to identify and articulate school and/ or community needs and desires (e.g., Cranbrook Connected, input gathered from community groups (2008-10),
- Gathering input from MBSS students and staff
- Creating a short documentary with MBSS leadership students that helps to articulate the benefits of a new MBSS and an NLC
- Researching best practices and experiences of other BC NLCs that are one to two years ahead of SD5 (e.g. background, development process, funding, governance and organizational structure, community consultation and engagement, general advice, etc.) (Section 3b.)
- Liaising with MoE officials to determine best resources for moving forward (e.g. sample lease agreements, etc.).
- Identifying and interviewing key stakeholders to determine best process to ensure NLC planning process ensures it is truly an NLC
- Synthesizing needs expressed in other processes with NLC Advisory Committee values, guiding principles and needs/wants for NLC
- Forming (identification of possible members, invitation, creation of terms of reference) a broad based community NLC Advisory Committee made up of individuals from key organizations (City, College of the Rockies, MLA, PAC, DPAC, students, teacher's union, social service organizations, RCMP, Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Columbia Basin Trust, Interior Health, etc.) to assist in moving the process forward (Section 2)
- Assisting in the formation of a committee of key stakeholders (City, SD5, MLA and Key City Theatre Society) to bring about a resolution of the Key City Theatre vis-à-vis MBSS replacement
- Determining NLC values and guiding principles synthesizing input from various processes and NLC AC input (Section 2e.)
- Determining NLC priority uses principles synthesizing input from various processes and NLC AC input (Sections 3f. and 3g.)

- Creating a SD5 NLC decision-making matrix based on research, expressed SD5 values and feedback from NLC AC that will help to determine priority uses/services (Section 4.2b.)
- Identifying key next steps and decisions for NLC process through a Mind Map (Section 4.1)
- Identifying questions for potential user groups (e.g. square footage required, resource requirements, etc.) (Section 4.2a.)

3. MEETING SCC GOALS & OBJECTIVES. Please describe how completed activities met the intended goals and objectives of your project goals and objectives of the 2010 SCC program.

Our goals and objectives at the beginning of this project were as follows:

- Encouraging the co-location of services for students, their families and the community at large within school facilities;
- Making greater utilization of available or new school facilities; and
- Encouraging collaborative, long-term facilities planning that takes into account the needs of the community as a whole.

By researching the development of NLCs and similar models in other jurisdictions, we provided examples that offer models and inspiration for novel forms of facility-sharing, space & use optimization, and integration of community services into the life of the school.

By establishing an Advisory Committee (AC) we promoted and raised awareness of the NLC concept amongst stakeholders broadly representative of the community, thereby ensuring support for the co-location of community services in schools.

In its several meetings as a committee, the AC laid the foundation for future collaborative planning which can proceed when the District gets Ministry approval to go ahead with the replacement of Mount Baker SS.

By soliciting, reviewing and synthesizing the input of various stakeholders, we developed a preliminary but unified vision for an NLC that addresses identified community needs.

Specifically, some of the other work that completed as part of this project included (please see attached final report for more information and photos):

- Reviewing work that has gone on in the past including various community consultations, open houses, SD5's Project Identification Report, etc.
- Consolidating the results of various processes that have attempted to identify and articulate school and/ or community needs and desires (e.g., Cranbrook Connected, input gathered from community groups (2008-10),
- Gathering input from MBSS students and staff
- Creating a short documentary with MBSS leadership students that helps to articulate the benefits of a new MBSS and an NLC
- Researching best practices and experiences of other BC NLCs that are one to two years ahead of SD5 (e.g. background, development process, funding, governance and organizational structure, community consultation and engagement, general advice, etc.)

(Section 3b.)

- Liaising with MoE officials to determine best resources for moving forward (e.g. sample lease agreements, etc.).
- Identifying and interviewing key stakeholders to determine best process to ensure NLC planning process ensures it is truly a NLC
- Synthesizing needs expressed in other processes with NLC Advisory Committee values, guiding principles and needs/wants for NLC
- Forming (identification of possible members, invitation, creation of terms of reference) a broad based community NLC Advisory Committee made up of individuals from key organizations (City, College of the Rockies, MLA, PAC, DPAC, students, teacher's union, social service organizations, RCMP, Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Columbia Basin Trust, Interior Health, etc.) to assist in moving the process forward (Section 2)
- Assisting in the formation of a committee of key stakeholders (City, SD5, MLA and Key City Theatre Society) to bring about a resolution of the Key City Theatre vis-à-vis MBSS replacement
- Determining NLC values and guiding principles synthesizing input from various processes and NLC AC input (Section 2e.)
- Determining NLC priority uses principles synthesizing input from various processes and NLC AC input (Sections 3f. and 3g.)
- Creating a SD5 NLC decision-making matrix based on research, expressed SD5 values and feedback from NLC AC that will help to determine priority uses/services (Section 4.2b.)
- Identifying key next steps and decisions for NLC process through a Mind Map (Section 4.1)
- Identifying questions for potential user groups (e.g. square footage required, resource requirements, etc.) (Section 4.2a.)

4. PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROJECT. Aside from the primary applicant and partnering agency, please list the community partners that were involved in your project.

Mount Baker SS – Neighbourhood Learning Centre Advisory Committee (AC)

Chris Johns, Chair, Mt. Baker Secondary School Building Replacement Committee

Trina Ayling, Trustee, SD5

Tom Walkley, Manager of Facilities, SD5

Rob Norum, Secretary-Treasurer, SD5

Mike Stolte, NLC Facilitator, CIEL

Jennie Barron, Researcher, CIEL

Bill Bennett, MLA

Jennifer Osmar, MLA Office

Aaron Hansen, parent & PAC member

Debbie Therrien, DPAC

Tammy Tait, T.M. Roberts PAC

Will Pearce, City of Cranbrook

Scott Manjak, City of Cranbrook

Bob Whetham, City of Cranbrook

Angus Davis, City of Cranbrook

Shelley Balfour, CFTA

Wendy Turner, CFTA

Debra Empson, Principal, MBSS

Emily Knudsgaard, Student, MBSS

John Miller, Student, MBSS

Melissa van Witgenstein, Student, MBSS

Wayne Stetski, United Way

Sandra Cave, Key City Theatre Society

Chris Tulloch, Key City Theatre

Nick Rubidge, COTR

Sandra Davis, Better Babies

Al Nutini, RCMP

Isabel Berkheim, Better Babies, Family & Community Services Committee

Caitlin Etherington, IHA

Codie Andrew, Ktunaxa National Council

Denise Walker, KKATC

Carrie Schafer, Columbia Basin Trust

Terry Anonson, Metis Nation B.C.

Sean Campbell, Chamber of Commerce

Dana Osiowy, Big Brothers Big Sisters

Gail Rousseau, SD5 Executive Assistant, Recording Secretary

Jean Skerik, SD5 Executive Assistant, Recording Secretary

5. IMPACT OF PROJECT ON YOUR BOARD OF EDUCATION OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Please list any policies, plans or other Board of Education or local government documents that were amended or developed as a result of the project.

A report received by our hired facilitator, Mike Stolte, of CIEL will be officially received by the Board at our September meeting.

In addition the formation of the MBSS Advisory Committee and subsequent Terms of Reference for that committee has resulted from this project.

Once SD5 receives approval for replacement of Mount Baker SS the Board anticipates the development of memorandums of understanding between partner groups as well as the development and/or amendment of policy around school usage, maintenance, financial obligations etc.

6. EXPLANATION OF HOW OUTCOMES WILL BE SUSTAINED (e.g. confirmation of additional funding, commitment by Board of Education and/or local government or other organizations, etc.)

These outcomes will be sustained as the MBSS Building Replacement Committee continues to share its progress and vision with the broader community through Open Houses and other public forums.

The MBSS Advisory Committee is also expected to continue to identify suitable NLC partners who, in collaboration with the District, actively seek to advance MoE approval for MBSS replacement with NLC designation.

7. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (*please use this space to add any additional comments*)

All MBSS NLC-related letters, reports, correspondence etc. can be accessed via the SD5 homepage under "Neighbourhood Learning Centre", at sd5.bc.ca.

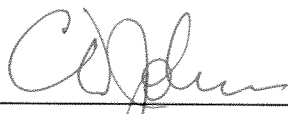
8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (*please attach*):**Required**

- Financial summary indicating how SCC funds were expended and confirming that SCC funds were spent on eligible items*

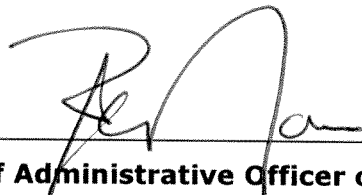
Optional

- Digital photos of the project*
 Media clippings
 Other reports or documents

9. SIGNATURES



Key Project Contact



Secretary
Treasurer

Chief Administrative Officer or Equivalent

Please e-mail the completed final report form as a Word or PDF document to Local Government Program Services at lgps@ubcm.ca. All attachments should also be e-mailed as Word, Excel or PDF files and digital photos should be e-mailed as JPEG files. Materials included in the final report may be used in SCC promotional materials.

2010 School Community Connections - Supporting Neighbourhood Learning Centres
Mount Baker Secondary School

28-Jun-11

Project 0.564

Revenue

BCSTA/UBCM School Community Connections Program	\$30,000.00
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Board Contribution	788.40
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Total Revenue	<u>\$30,788.40</u>
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Expenditures

Centre for Innovative Entrepreneurial Leadership 224 Houston St. Nelson BC V1L 5H2 250-352-9192	<u>\$30,788.40</u>
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Message

Fri, Apr 08, 2011 12:28 PM

From: Gail Rousseau

To: bill bennett jennifer.osmar@leg.bc.ca smanjak@cranbrook.ca
 wpearce@cranbrook.ca Al.NUTINI@rcmp-grc.gc.ca rubidge@cotr.bc.ca
 ron.popoff@interiorhealth.ca rob11gay@gmail.com wscbcomm@yahoo.ca
 wlundeberg@cbt.org ekidsfirst@telus.net mbates@rdek.bc.ca
 cranbgc@shawbiz.ca crankimbunitedway@shaw.ca Mark Paron
 Debbie Therrien j.miller.1994@hotmail.com wendy turner cindy gleb
 barry@dailytownsman.com dwhitehead@kktc.bc.ca Susan Krause
 cranbrookfamilyconnections@gmail.com

Cc: Bill Gook Chris Johns - ML Rob Norum Tom Walkley Debra Empson
 Trina Ayling

Subject: Neighbourhood Learning Centre Advisory Committee Meeting - April 20

Attachments: Advisory Committee Objectives TOR April 6 2011.doc 29K
 Agenda MBSS NLC Advisory Committee Meeting 1 April 2011.doc 26K

This email is sent to you on behalf of Chris Johns, Chair, Mt. Baker Secondary School Building Replacement Committee and Bill Gook, Superintendent of Schools:

"As you are probably aware, planning to eventually replace the aging Mount Baker Secondary School has been going on for some time. We would like to share our progress and get your input into some key areas of the proposed Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) concept.

You have been identified as a key stakeholder in the community and we are inviting you to participate on an Advisory Committee (AC) that will meet approximately 2-4 times over the next six to twelve months. The first meeting will be held at Mount Baker Secondary School from 2:00-4:00 pm on Wednesday, April 20th. Students will be conducting a tour of the school for interested Advisory Committee members beginning at 1:35 pm that afternoon (please meet at the Main Office at 1:30 should you wish to participate).

Our first Advisory Committee meeting will be chaired by Trustee Chris Johns and facilitated by consultant Mike Stolte.

Please find attached the agenda for the first meeting as well as the Advisory Committee Terms of Reference. We look forward to your participation in this exciting initiative.

Please RSVP to Gail Rousseau at gail.rousseau@sd5.bc.ca or 250-417-2052.

Thank you in advance.

Chris Johns

Bill Gook

Committee to look at possible futures of Key City Theatre

SUBMITTED

The Key City Theatre Society (KCTS) recently formed a steering committee to examine the future of Key City Theatre beyond the replacement of the Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS).

Along with Michele Bates, KCTS Board member and Steering Committee designate, the committee members include School District 5 Trustee Trina Ayling and City Councillor Bob Whetham but will expand to include members of the public once the initial legwork of the committee is completed.

According to Bates, Key City Theatre's heating, venting,

plumbing and electrical is integrated into the school's structure, which means the theatre can't function as a stand-alone facility once the school is replaced.

"At this point we're examining how the eventual replacement of Mount Baker will affect the theatre," explained Bates. "We're considering three options: renovating to a stand-alone building, rebuilding in tandem with a new Mount Baker or building at a different location altogether."

In order to make the best decision for the community, the KCTS Board feels that a comprehensive feasibility

study is necessary to examine these issues, which would not only help to examine and develop a building plan but also a future marketing plan.

In the meantime, a building evaluation study of the theatre was completed on the 15th of February. A final report is expected this month. According to Trustee Ayling the School Board recently approved this study as a necessary step in the eventual replacement of Mount Baker.

"The Key City Theatre Society wants to get out in front of any challenges that will become a reality when a new high school is built," said Ayling. "This initial building evaluation will provide information that the District needs as part of our Mount Baker replacement work. We recognize that this evaluation is only one piece



Left to right: Trina Ayling, Bob Whetham and Michelle Bates, members of the new Key City Theatre steering committee. Any plans to replace Mount Baker Secondary School will profoundly affect the theatre.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

of a larger feasibility report needed by the Society, but the Board appreciates that the Society is being proactive and we are supporting that effort where we can".

Councillor Whetham agreed. "While the City of Cranbrook and School District 5 originally partnered to provide the community with a theatre, neither party has the mandate to fund its renovation or replacement. What we can do, and what we are doing, is working col-

laboratively with the Key City Theatre Society to determine viable solutions to this challenge."


Whetham emphasized that the entire community will need to step up and demonstrate support for the future of the theatre.

"Ultimately, it will fall to our citizens in Cranbrook and throughout the region to assist the Society in raising capital to maintain our local theatre and regional performing arts facility."

According to Bates, the good news is that there is time to take action. "The School District came to us very early on with this challenge, and the KCTS Board has already met jointly with SD5 and the City to discuss the theatre's future. But we need to start planning now because a project this big doesn't happen overnight."

Key City Theatre is a regional performing arts, conference and cultural centre located within the heart of Cranbrook, and serving all of southeast BC. Their 2009/10 season boasted over 40,000 patrons and 150 presentations including 50 school productions and numerous other community functions, dance presentations and music recitals.


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Don Kasner
Owner

The **WASA LAKE LAND IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT** Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 27, 2011 at 7:00 pm at the Wasa Community Hall.

City of Kimberley
Request for Proposal:
Kimberley Public Library



Interior Health

The Townsman, Feb. 25, 2011

High school replacement moving forward

SALLY MACDONALD
sally@dailytownsman.com

Plans to replace Mount Baker Secondary School with a \$50 million complex are powering ahead. School District #5 board member Chris Johns made

a presentation to members of Cranbrook and District Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday, Feb. 23.

"Over a year ago we began trying to assess the interest in a centre that is more than just a school

with classrooms," said Johns.

Now, consultant Mike Stolte is ready to start approaching organizations that would be compatible with an educational facility to consider partnering in

the would-be community hub.

"Mike will be contacting organisations soon to see if they would be interested in formalizing a partnership," said Johns.

The biggest challenge

facing the committee is funding: the Ministry of Education has not yet guaranteed that it will pay for the project.

"We're in a queue and we don't know where in the queue we are," said Johns.

The ministry estimates that replacing the school would cost \$35 million, but research by the committee puts the price tag above \$50 million.

"One of the challenges we are facing is that the ministry is saying they will fund a building for 700 students. We see the school having 1,000 students enrolled in the very near future," said Johns.

Turning the school into a Neighbourhood Learning Centre with the school, Key City Theatre, and offices and centres for other community organisations would increase the funding available,

according to Johns.

"The ministry says that if we have other agencies involved, then we could be eligible for 15 percent additional space," he said.

Meanwhile, the 60-year-old school continues to age and the student population continues to outgrow it.

"People ask me when the centre will open, and I answer, 'September.' I'm just a little vague about the year," said Johns.



Published February 21, 2011
LOCAL NEWS

Chamber of Commerce week in Cranbrook

Sally MacDonald

sally@dailytownsman.com

It's Chamber of Commerce week in Cranbrook, and the community is buzzing with chamber news and events.

City council proclaimed the one-week recognition of the Cranbrook and District Chamber of Commerce from Feb. 21 to 25 and it caps off a busy month for the business representatives.

Last week, the monthly Chamber luncheon met in a packed ballroom at The Prestige to hear from B.C. Chamber representative Jon Garson.

The vice president of policy development explained to members that the B.C. Chamber is a way for local businesses to have their concerns heard by the provincial government.

"I am confident that we can call ourselves the voice of business in B.C.," said Garson. "We are your lobbyists in B.C."

The B.C. Chamber represents 130 chambers across the province, who in turn stand for 32,000 businesses.

"The strength of our organization is this network and if we can properly utilize it, our effectiveness and success will be even greater than it is now," he said.

Garson brought up a contentious issue for the Chamber: its stance on the HST. In 2009, the B.C. Chamber was one of the first organizations to come out in favour of the new harmonized tax.

"The reason we advocated on behalf of the HST is because the business community asked us to," said Garson. "Then the chambers faced pushback from their members."

The B.C. Chamber quickly realized the issue was more "nuanced" than it first appeared, said Garson. "We understand the issues and concerns. Our position is that the HST is good public policy but there are negative consequences."

Ultimately, it is only through input from the businesses it represents that the B.C. Chamber can advocate for change in Victoria, according to Garson.

"If we work together, we can emerge as a more vibrant community and province. It is good for your business and your community and you can take real pride in being part of an organization that delivers results."

He urged businesses to communicate with the local chamber on a regular basis.

"The message today is that I really encourage you to get involved with your chamber and let them know the issues for your business," said Garson.

To get the ball rolling, the Cranbrook and District Chamber of Commerce is holding an open house on Wednesday, Feb. 23 to mark Chamber of Commerce week.

From 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Chamber members and friends are invited to visit the Chamber office to learn about the Chamber's work in the community and hear about opportunities to be further involved.

What's more, the open house will include a special presentation by Mike Stolte, the facilitator of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre - the planned replacement for Mount Baker Secondary School that is a hot topic in the community at the moment. Stolte will speak at 5:45 p.m.

For more information, call the Chamber at 250-426-5914.

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Story URL: <http://www.dailytownsman.com/article/20110221/CRANBROOK0101/302219995/-1/cranbrook/chamber-of-commerce-week-in-cranbrook>



Published January 4, 2011
LOCAL NEWS

The year in education

School District #5 moves from strength to strength as a new year arrives Sally MacDonald
As the school bells ring today for the first time in 2011, school officials reflect on the first semester and look ahead to the second.

Recognition from the Education Minister in October was due praise for our educators, said Frank Lento, chair of the School District 5 board of trustees.

"The achievements of our students are a tribute and testament to what our staff does for our students," said Lento. "I am extremely proud of that and it was acknowledged by the minister."

Minister George Abbott publicly lauded Grade 4 students in School District 5 for being among the four most literate groups in the province.

"It revolves around extra attention, extra focus for students on areas that require mediation," said Minister Abbott at the time.

Lento foresees teachers will forge ahead in positive directions in 2011.

"It is amazing what our leadership and staff do," said Lento. "They are meeting the most intelligent needs of our students."

An initiative to replace the aging Mount Baker Secondary School reached phase two in November. The Replacement Committee hired Nelson consultant Mike Stolte to review its 90-page report on possibilities for a Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Cranbrook.

"Mike Stolte is doing research on other Neighbourhood Learning Centres across the country and he is familiarizing himself with the work we've done to date," said board trustee Trina Ayling.

"Consultation in Cranbrook could start as early as February."

First to be interviewed, said Ayling, will likely be students and staff of the high school. Once Stolte has completed a plan for the school, it will be submitted to the Ministry of Education.

"In 2011, hopefully the senior levels of government get their act together and we can move forward with the plan to replace Mount Baker," said Frank Lento. "Any announcement would be great."

2010 also saw the introduction of full-day kindergarten in School District 5. Two hundred children are enrolled in the program for this school year, and Lento said the program will be expanded in 2011.

"We will have full time kindergarten in all communities," confirmed Lento.

He added that none of these achievements would have been possible without the wise direction of Superintendent Bill Gook and Secretary-Treasurer Rob Norum.

"The fiscal responsibility of our treasurer and superintendent is significant," said Lento. "Even though the budget from the ministry is insufficient to meet the needs of our students, they have still been able to make it work."

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Story URL: <http://www.dailytownsman.com/article/20110104/CRANBROOK0101/301049981/-1/cranbrook/the-year-in-education>

Townsmen
Nov 26/2010

Here comes the Neighbourhood

Plan for Mount Baker Secondary School's replacement taking shape

BARRY COULTER.

barry@dailytownsman.com

All the consultation has been done. Now with Mike Stolte's help, the School District 5 Mount Baker Replacement Committee is going to boil that information down to an overall plan. When that process is complete, a plan for a new Neighbourhood of Learning should be ready to present to the government.

The Committee, with funding from the School Community Connections

(SCC), has engaged the services of Mike Stolte, of the Centre for Innovative & Entrepreneurial Leadership, to help take the process of replacing the aging high school to the next level.

"The big news is that we're going to be going into the second and final stage," said Trina Ayling, member of the Committee. "We're still working on the process. Mike is looking at all the work we've done to date, and he's looking at best practices and other communities

that have neighbourhood learning centres or things like that.

"Once he's done that ground work, we're going to be looking at ways to engage the community as a whole," Ayling said. "We're going to be going broader than just the 50 groups that (fellow committee member and School Board Trustee) Chris Johns and I met with.

See **NEW SCHOOL**, Page 5

New school project enters next phase

CONTINUED from page 1

"We also have to identify more completely those groups that may be able to bring something to the table — an in-kind partnership, or financial partnership — so we may be exploring something like that."

There is still plenty of work to be done on the project before the shovels for the Neighbourhood of Learning hit the ground —

not least of which is getting government approval for the project.

"We still need to get government approval," Ayling said. "But we've been providing them with everything that they need and then some. We've given them the building audit, the feasibility study, the project identification report. We've given them a formal application,

complete with timelines, we've given them information that was gleaned from the parent group — Mount Baker Vision Committee. We've given them every bit of information we've received.

The Committee compiled a 90 page report — about 45 pages of that were appendices, Ayling said, covering everything from the background history of Mount Baker, the replacement pro-

cess through government, as well as items on each of the different committees the committee met with, and an overview of the findings.

"For instance, there were many groups that said 'yes, we want to see the Key City Theatre maintained, we want to see a daycare, we'd like to see a community hub,'" Ayling said.

The report is available on the School District 5 website at www.sd5.bc.ca.

Townsmen
Nov. 24 / 2010

NEIGHBOURHOOD OF LEARNING

Consultant hired to move new school project forward

TOWNSMAN STAFF

The proposed Neighbourhood of Learning intended as a replacement for the aging Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook, is one step closer to becoming a reality.

In fact, according to the School District 5 Mount Baker Replacement Committee, the project is embarking on its second and final stage, with the hiring of a consultant to facilitate Phase II, the "Community Engagement Planning Process."

A Neighbourhood of Learning is a progressive approach to educational institutions, educational services and community resources together in a new high school building.

The funding to hire the consultant comes from a grant to School District 5 from School Community Connections (SCC), which is jointly managed by the Union of BC Municipalities and the BC School Trustees Association.

The Committee has engaged Mike Stolte, Executive Director of the Centre for Innovative & Entrepreneurial Leadership.

"We reviewed a number of potential candidates before deciding on Mike Stolte, said Johns.

"Mike has spent many years working in the field of community and economic development and is currently undertaking a similar community engagement process in SD8 with Wynndel Elementary School. At the moment he's researching best practices for this type of initiative in other ju-

risdictions and reviewing the work SD5 has done to date."

Over the past year and a half, School District 5 has completed a number of milestones required to replace the aging high school including a building audit,

feasibility study, project identification report (PIR), and formal application to the Ministry of Education for NLC designation. In addition Trustees Johns and Trina Ayling spent four months last spring on a Community Consultation Process in which they met one-on-one with over fifty community groups in Cranbrook including the Key City Theatre Society, Interior Health, College of the Rockies, City of Cranbrook and the Cranbrook Social Planning Committee.

"SD5 trustees have done a lot of work to move this process forward already. It will take some time for me to review," says Stolte. "Community engagement is always a very dynamic process and with much of the groundwork completed, I expect we'll be able to distil ideas down to key concepts and select specific programs and/or facilities that could be housed within a new Mount Baker."

Johns and Ayling also produced a 90 page foundational document, Phase One: Community Consultation Process, highlighting the recurring themes that community groups indicated they'd like to see in a Mount Baker Neighbourhood Learning Centre. The report is available to the public on the SD5 website at www.sd5.bc.ca.

"SD5 trustees have done a lot of work to move this process forward already. It will take some time for me to review."



Mike Stolte



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY

Media Release

November 15, 2010

SD5 Moves to Final Phase of its Mount Baker Replacement Initiative

Thanks to a grant received by School District 5 from *School Community Connections* (SCC), SD5 is embarking on the second and final stage of the Mount Baker Secondary/ *Neighbourhood Learning Centre* (NLC) school replacement, an initiative designed to bring educational services and community resources together in a new high school building to better support families and learners.

According to Trustee Chris Johns, chair of the SD5 MBSS Building Replacement Committee, the Committee applied for and received a grant jointly managed by the Union of BC Municipalities and the BC School Trustees Association, in order to hire a consultant to facilitate Phase II, the *Community Engagement Planning Process*.

“We reviewed a number of potential candidates before deciding on Mike Stolte, Executive Director of the Centre for Innovative & Entrepreneurial Leadership,” said Johns.

“Mike has spent many years working in the field of community and economic development and is currently undertaking a similar community engagement process in SD8 with Wynndel Elementary School.” said Johns. “At the moment he’s researching best practices for this type of initiative in other jurisdictions and reviewing the work SD5 has done to date.”

Over the past year and a half, SD5 has completed a number of milestones required to replace the aging high school including a building audit, feasibility study, project identification report (PIR), and formal application to the Ministry of Education for NLC designation. In addition Trustees Johns and Trina Ayling spent four months last spring on a *Community Consultation Process* in which they met one-on-one with over fifty community groups in Cranbrook including the

Key City Theatre Society, Interior Health, College of the Rockies, City of Cranbrook and the Cranbrook Social Planning Committee.

Johns and Ayling also produced a 90 page foundational document, *Phase One: Community Consultation Process*, highlighting the recurring themes that community groups indicated they'd like to see in a Mount Baker *Neighbourhood Learning Centre*. The report is available to the public on the SD5 website at www.sd5.bc.ca.

"SD5 trustees have done a lot of work to move this process forward already. It will take some time for me to review," says Stolte. "Community engagement is always a very dynamic process and with much of the groundwork completed, I expect we'll be able to distil ideas down to key concepts and select specific programs and/or facilities that could be housed within a new Mount Baker."

Contact:

Chris Johns, SD5 Mount Baker Replacement Committee	250-426-5338
Trina Ayling, SD5 Trustee Media/Communications Committee	250-489-1006

School District 5 gets \$30,000 SCC grant

School District 5 will make use of \$30,000 in School Community Connections (SCC) grants from the province, creating dynamic community space within schools.

"Cranbrook and School District 5 are going to be doing some really important work by going to the community to find out how we can better utilize the assets we already own," says Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett. "Schools are central to the community and we can easily make them hubs for people to gather with their friends and family."

With a \$30,000 grant, School District 5 will be partnering with Cranbrook to engage in a public con-

sultation process with more than 49 community groups to decide the best use for school facilities to maximize public use and to develop a plan to sustain the Key City Theatre.

The SCC program's goal is to encourage boards of education and local governments to work co-operatively with community partners to expand the use of schools and to find unique and innovative ways to include community use in their facilities and create places where people have better access to educational and community services and programs, according to a press release from the Province of British Columbia.

In the first round of the 2010 SCC program, school districts, in partnership with local governments, submitted up to three applications — totalling no more than \$30,000 — for grant funding. The SCC grants are jointly administered by the Province, Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA).

The province is also working to incorporate Neighbourhood Learning Centres in all new schools and major renovations; so far.

Neighbourhood Learning Centres respond to community interests and may include a wide

variety of programs and resources including child-care programs, sports programs, office space, health clinics, seniors' centres and family resource centres.

A Neighbourhood of Learning Centre is being actively promoted as a replacement for the aging Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook

Courtesy Sheldon Johnson



Courtesy Stewart Wilson

Before participating in The Terry Fox Run students and staff at Gordon Terrace held a special assembly featuring snapshots of Terry's life by students in Karen Bedell's Grade 3 class. In this tableau, Scout, Josh, Caden and Katelyn are caught in a pose, which depicts Terry Fox running behind his support van on his Marathon of Hope, and receiving donations for cancer research from members of the public. Lauren is the reader.



Published September 23, 2010
LETTERS

Neighbourhood Learning Centre

Baker School, you can view the full report *Phase I: Community Consultation Process* at www.sd5.bc.ca by following the [Neighbourhood Learning Centre](#) link.

The SD5 Mount Baker Building Committee would like to thank the many community groups who provided input into this consultation process. We hope that our Report honours your daily commitment, dedication and effort to build a stronger community.

Trustees Chris Johns and Trina Ayling consulted with over fifty (50) individual community organizations representing Aboriginal, Arts & Culture, Business, Community Service, Education, Government & Affiliated Agencies, and Support/Outreach groups. The majority of the discussions involved face-to-face interviews.

Phase I: Community Consultation Process was very much a 'blue sky' endeavour in the sense that our Committee did not want to predetermine any particular outcomes. We were interested first and foremost in what community groups themselves could envision for shared educational and community services in a new high school.

It should be emphasized that the Report is an unedited expression of neighbourhood needs by those who are working on the front lines in our community, and how those needs might be addressed alongside the already outstanding commitment of our MBSS administration, staff and parents.

We look forward to additional perspectives from other community groups, organizations and individuals during Phase Two: Community Engagement Planning Process. This final phase will include an in-depth examination of potential community, local government and business support for this important community initiative.

Finally, the MBSS Building Committee once again extends our sincere thanks to MLA Bill Bennett, Education Minister MacDairmid, and Mayor and Council of Cranbrook for their on-going support.

Trina Ayling and the SD5 Mount Baker Building Committee

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Story URL:

<http://www.dailytownsman.com/article/20100923/CRANBROOK0303/309239975/neighbourhood-learning-centre>

Correspondence/Features

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

As a follow-up to Monday's article by Gerry Warner, "Moving Towards a New Mount Baker School," you can view the full report Phase I: Community Consultation Process at sd5.bc.ca by following the Neighbourhood Learning Centre link.

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Trina Ayling and the SD5 Mount Baker Building Committee

Townsmen

Monday, September 20, 2010

Moving towards a new Mount Baker School

MBSS Building Committee seeks facilitator to take on Neighbourhood Learning Centre project

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Progress continues to move forward on the replacement of Mount Baker Senior Secondary School with a new Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) downtown. The next major step is hiring a facilitator for stage two of the process and the Mount Baker Building Committee will be meeting on Sept. 20 to draft a job posting for the position,

says Committee Chairman Chris Johns.

Interest in the Baker Replacement project is running so high that the committee has already been receiving inquiries about the facilitator's position,

Johns says.

"I guess it's the enthusiasm for the Neighbourhood Learning concept that's responsible (for the inquiries)," Johns said. "It seems to be spreading by word of mouth and that's what we

hoped would happen."

Johns, who chairs the Mount Baker Building Committee, says the committee's task now is to decide on the qualities it wants in a facilitator. "Someone with proven

experience in the field and the-demonstrated ability to bring people together from competing perspectives and do what's best for the school and the community."

See NLC, Page 3

NLC committee seeks project facilitator

From Page 1

The facilitator will hold meetings throughout the community and anyone who wants input into what kind of a school should replace Baker will have the opportunity, Johns says. Last summer, the committee heard input from close to 50 individuals and organizations in a series of meetings held by Johns and fellow trustee and Baker Building Committee

member Trina Ayling.

"That may sound like a lot but we're convinced there's a lot more input out there," Johns says.

It's hoped the facilitator will have his/her report completed by early 2011 and it will be in the hands of the board by the time of the spring break in March. Once the report is adopted by the Board it will be ready for presentation to Education Minister

Margaret MacDiarmid, Johns replaced as well.

"But we remain cautiously optimistic that our request (to replace Baker) will make it to the top of the pile and with all the support we've been getting from the local MLA we think we can make this happen."

No one knows for sure, but if everything falls into place as expected the earliest construction could begin on the Baker replacement project would be

replaced as well. "But we remain cautiously optimistic that our request (to replace Baker) will make it to the top of the pile and with all the support we've been getting from the local MLA we think we can make this happen."

No one knows for sure, but if everything falls into place as expected the earliest construction could begin on the Baker replacement project would be

the summer or fall of 2011. The cost of the project is likely to exceed \$50 million and it could be an important step in revitalizing downtown Cranbrook.

A Neighbourhood Learning Centre is a relatively new concept in education that sees schools containing a variety of community services as well as classrooms enabling schools and students to form stronger ties with the community.

Difficult choices ahead for SD5, says CDTA President

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

With a new school year beginning Tuesday, Cranbrook District Teachers Association (CDTA) President Wendy Turner had some kind words for how District 5 is being managed financially.

But this doesn't mean the District is without financial problems, Turner says.

"District 5 has a history of managing the funding it gets from government very carefully, conservatively and very well. That isn't the issue. The issue is the District trying to maintain past and present services with a funding allocation that does not keep up with inflation and the demands on it."

As a result, the District will be facing some difficult financial decisions in the 2010 - 2011 school year, Turner says. In the past, the District has tried to maintain all its programs and services without enough funds to properly do so, she says.

"In doing that, they've had to cut CUPE hours, including custodial (time) which keeps school buildings safe and clean. In the past, they've supplemented money for student services. They are no longer able to do that, meaning a reduction in service to students."

Turner says there have also been reductions in teacher/librarian hours, but the District has managed to keep its fine arts programs "alive and

trying to do more with less again. They're going to have to make some difficult choices."

Turner points to a recent BC Teachers Federation (BCTF) study on the workplace life of teachers that revealed teachers get most job satisfaction out of helping children to learn, seeing them grasp concepts, being a positive influence on children's lives and collaborating with colleagues and parents.

BCTF President Susan Lambert said the study demonstrates teachers' passion for their work. "Teachers find deep satisfaction working with students in school and also by contributing in our communities, coaching sports, directing choirs,

leading study tours taking courses and many other aspects of our profession and vocation of teaching.

"As this school year kicks off, we'll stay focused on the joy of learning even as we face the many challenges in our public schools," Turner says she feels the same even though disagreements are bound to arise over such issues as standardized testing, class size and support services.

Local teachers are looking forward to the beginning of all-day-kindergar-

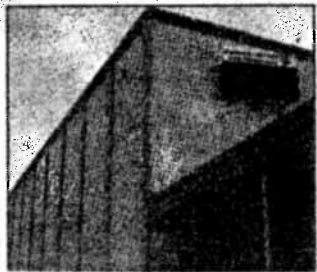
ten in the District and are hopeful of an announcement of a new "Neighbourhood of Learning Centre" to replace the aging Mount Baker Secondary School, she said.

"Trustee (Chris) Johns and Trustee (Trina) Ayling have done a tremendous amount of work getting us to phase two, which will be a further consultation leading towards a new high school which will be a Neighbourhood of Learning," Turner said.

Kootenay news on the Web!

Learning in the city

School District 5 received a grant for \$30,000 through School Community Connections. The money will help to support plans to replace Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook as a Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Phase two of the process will see a professional facilitator lead a series of community consultations this coming fall.



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Advertiser
July 2/10

Grant helps towards next step in new school

\$30,000 will go towards "Neighbourhood of Learning" exploratory study

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Progress continues in replacing Cranbrook's Mount Baker Secondary School with the latest step in the process being a \$30,000 grant to School District 5 to explore the possibility of replacing Baker with a Neighbourhood Learning Centre style school.

The money from the School Community Connections Program, administered by the Union of B.C. Municipalities and the B.C. School Trustees Association, will be used primarily to hire a professional facilitator to carry the process further and to build on the exploratory work already done by the Mount Baker Replacement Committee and other local educational officials. "Neighbourhood Learning Centres" have started to spring up in B.C. in recent years, emphasizing

ing partnerships with other groups and agencies in the community and taking a more holistic approach to education. The Neighbourhood School concept is strongly supported in Cranbrook with District 5 trustees, teachers, educational officials and local politicians lining up behind the effort to get a Neighbourhood Learning Centre to replace Baker.

District 5 Superintendent Bill Gook says he's glad the District has received the grant. "I think it's tremendous that we've received this money. It's really going to go to support our goal of getting a Neighbourhood Learning Centre and getting the entire district involved." But Gook cautioned that a Neighbourhood Learning Centre is not going to materialize in the city overnight. "It's based on need and there's

schools all over the province that need to be replaced. So we don't know when the (Education) Ministry will give us their nod but when they do, we want to be ready." Cranbrook Trustee Trina Ayling of the Board's Media Communications Committee says she and fellow Cranbrook Trustee Chris Johns are busy completing a report of their own on the consultations they've had with more than 50 stakeholder groups in the community.

"The Report will serve as a foundational document highlighting the recurring themes that community groups are telling us they would like to see in a Mount Baker Neighbourhood Learning Centre. It's very exciting and encouraging to see that there are overlapping ideas coming from such a diverse group of commu-

nity interests." Ayling said her and Johns' report will be ready in early July and will be posted on the Board's website for the community to see and made available to the facilitator when he or she is hired. "We need someone from outside the community that's a professional and who has done good work in this field."

Johns agreed, saying the work done locally to this point will help the facilitator in Phase 2 of the Baker replacement process. "I think everyone sees this initiative as an opportunity to build upon the social infrastructure in Cranbrook. In fact, I expect that the information we have gleaned could be useful to community groups in other contexts or even to other levels of government." Johns says Phase 1 of the project was a long haul,

nity as a whole. We see that as a benefit to our kids. That's what's really important to us and making sure that it's a green school, one that fits the environmental mandates."

Schools should be welcoming places for students, Empson says. "There should be lots of natural light and opportunities for kids to spend time together and spend time with members of the community."

Meanwhile Johns says the grant application process was a model for how different levels of government can work together to benefit Cranbrook.

"I would be remiss if I didn't once again thank our MLA Bill Bennett and Mayor Scott Manjak," said Johns. "When it comes to having a shared vision that supports our students and our community, we're firing on all cylinders."

but laid the necessary groundwork for the project to move forward. "Trustee Ayling and I spent four months doing one-on-one interviews with over fifty community groups in Cranbrook," says Johns. "It took a lot of time to achieve, but it was time well spent. Many of the people we met told us they appreciated that school trustees were making the effort to reach out and listen."

Baker Principal Debra Empson says she's also glad to see the District get the \$30,000 to determine what the community would like to see in its new school. As for what she'd like to see in a Neighbourhood Learning Centre, Empson was clear. "What we are looking for is the partnerships with the community so that we have more involvement between the students and the commu-

ity students and the commu-

Community consultation report on Baker replacement expected soon

Committee has applied for \$30,000 grant to assist in second phase of planning

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Planning for the replacement of Mt. Baker Secondary School is proceeding apace with the issuing of a phase one report on community consultation expected by late June or early July.

Some 50 community groups have been consulted so far on the new school which is to be developed as a neighbourhood of learning centre.

"This project has to reflect the community and the ideas for it have to come from the ground up," says Mount Baker Replacement Committee Chair Chris Johns

Johns, who's also a Cranbrook School Trustee, says the committee has applied for a \$30,000 grant from the School Community Connections Program, a funding body jointly managed by the Union of B.C. Municipalities and the B.C. School Trustees Association.

"We're expecting to hear something back before the end of the month," John says, adding if they get the grant part of the money will be used to hire a facilitator to conduct broad-based community forums on what the school should be.

Groups contacted so far include Interior Health, the College of the Rockies, the Cranbrook Social Planning Committee, the Key City Theatre Society and others. Cranbrook School Trustee Trina Ayling, who's also a member of the Mount Baker Replacement Committee, says the

groups met with so far are key stakeholders in the community.

"Obviously, each group has a keen

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This is a great initiative for the community and it's time to make it happen so we can have something sustainable for the next 40 or 50 years.

Chris Johns

interest in developing an educational and community hub in the heart of our city," says Ayling. "We are already seeing overlaps of ideas and themes, as well as potential partnerships that could be developed with School District 5."

It will be the facilitator's job to table a preliminary report summarizing the consultation that has taken place with the community groups and prepare a document that can be used as a basis for phase two of the planning process, says Johns.

"The second phase of our consultations will build on the stakeholder consultations, distill ideas down to key concepts then select specific programs and facilities that could be housed within a new high school," Johns says.

Ultimately the key factor in bringing the neighbourhood learning centre into reality will be monetary or in-kind partnerships formed with other levels of government as well as agencies and community groups, he says.

"We're very pleased to have received support in this application from both the City of Cranbrook and MLA Bill Bennett," says Johns. "We've applied for the grant under the "Consultation and Planning" funding category to assist us in the second phase of our planning process on the Neighbourhoods of Learning initiative. We expect this next phase of consultation to begin in the fall."

The earliest construction of the \$50 million project could be expected to begin would be the fall of 2011 and completion could take three years, says Johns. But in the meantime, everyone seems to be positive about a new neighbourhood of learning centre to replace Baker, he says.

"The committee's mood on this is positive and so is the mood in the community. This is a great initiative for the community and it's time to make it happen so we can have something sustainable for the next 40 or 50 years," says Johns.

Townsman

June 16/10

EDUCATION

Replacing Baker will take time

By GERRY WARNER

gerry@dailytownsman.com

Optimism is still building that Cranbrook's aging Mount Baker Secondary School will be replaced by a new Neighbourhood of Learning Centre, but it might take a while longer than some people think.

Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid toured the school last week and this can't help but be an important step towards Baker's replacement, says Kootenay East M.L.A. Bill Bennett.

"Yes, of course, we are closer," Bennett says. "The Minister was not only impressed with the principal and students who toured us around, she also noted parts of Baker are very old. She is now very much aware of the project and that's positive for us."

Bennett says he also had dinner with MacDiarmid and several School Board 5 trustees and this was "very positive."

"I still want to ensure this is a community-driven project, but I also want to recognize that the ultimate responsibility for the project is the Board. The trustees that I met with were gracious and enthusiastic about the project, so yes, for sure, we are closer."

Baker Principal Debra Empson was also enthusiastic about the Minister's visit. "I felt it was a very positive visit, and if nothing else she now really understands the challenges of our school. Our students that spoke to her and spent time with her were amazing so she was able to hear the student voice and I think that was really important."

See MBSS, Page 5

Townsman
April 12, 2010

The Daily Townsman

MBSS replacement

From Page 1

However, MacDiarmid made it clear that getting all-day kindergarten launched was still the government's number one priority and this could affect the timing of the Baker replacement capital project which is estimated to cost in the neighbourhood of \$50 million, Empson said.

"All-day kindergarten is a priority and we understand that but I'm really hopeful that in the next few years if we really dig in and do our work and are prepared with our neighbourhood of learning centre, I'm really optimistic."

Empson said she doesn't know where Baker sits on Victoria's capital priority list even though it's the number

one capital priority in District 5. "I know there are other schools with issues as well, but I'm not sure what those issues are so I'm not sure where we connect in that line."

Meanwhile, Bennett says it's full speed ahead as far as he's concerned.

"The school project has already moved up significantly with the efforts of Michelle Richmond and myself last year to have the school audited again by the Ministry. It's now quite high on the list and when there is capital money, I think we stand a good chance."

"It will take lots of work by lots of people including me. This is the number one project in my riding for me personally."

April 12/10

Education Minister visits schools

By Craig Lindsay
Online editor

BC's Minister of Education Margaret McDiarmid was in town recently visiting several area schools with Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett. Some of the schools McDiarmid visited included Mount Baker Secondary and Kootenay Orchards Elementary in Cranbrook, Jaffray Elementary/Secondary, Fernie's Isabella Dickens Elementary and Sparwood Secondary.

McDiarmid was impressed with her tour of the area. "I see fantastic education happening," she said. "The students at Mount Baker took me on a tour of the school. They were on fire. They were fantastic. They're really articulate young people telling me about their school. A real highlight for me is just seeing what a great group of students and teachers and educators we have throughout the province."

Talking to the media at Kootenay Orchards, McDiarmid was asked about the rebuilding of Mount Baker Second-



PHOTO BY CRAIG LINDSAY

Minister of Education Margaret McDiarmid and Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett shared a laugh with Kootenay Orchards Elementary students.

ary as a neighbourhood learning centre.

"What we're trying to do with our new schools and replacement schools is have neighbourhood learning centres," said McDiarmid. "The school is already the hub of the community for lots of people. The neighbourhood learning centres are having senior centres, daycares, health facilities, libraries, theatres, all kind of different facilities that add to the school. It's a better use of space and better environmentally."

McDiarmid said that Mount Baker is the top priority on the list for School District 5.

"I think the project is under \$50 million," she

said. "We're not announcing a new capital plan but of course there will be new capital for schools. We're having full day kindergarten this year and there is a capital plan for that."

McDiarmid would not comment on a new capital plan or if Mount Baker would be on the list.

"As soon as we know anything we will talk about it," said McDiarmid. "We will be investing in new space in the province. We're actually building new schools this year. We spent last year about \$447 million on new schools and expansions. It's always an ongoing investment."

Education Minister meets with SD5 trustees

Minister of Education Margaret MacDiarmid met with SD5 trustees Wednesday night after her tour of schools earlier in the day. Top of the agenda was Mount Baker school replacement and Neighbourhood Learning Centres.

SD5 Mount Baker Replacement Committee Chair, Chris Johns -who joined the Minister on her tour of Mount Baker- was encouraged that the Minister took time to visit the high school and seemed to have a good understanding of the District's efforts to pursue a Neighbourhood Learning Centre

at the school. "We're thrilled that Minister MacDiarmid was able to come to our District for a firsthand look at the high school. An in-person assessment from the Minister of Education obviously isn't something that happens everyday."

Trustee Dan Hall echoed this sentiment. "Kudos to our administration and MLA Bill Bennett who worked to make this happen," said Hall. "To have the Minister come out and have a look at our challenges firsthand is very much appreciated by our Board of Education."

Trustee Trina Ayling provided the Minister with a brief summary of what the District has done toward the Neighbourhood of Learning initiative, including a list of the almost forty community groups she and Trustee Johns have consulted with and a summary of some of the common themes that have surfaced during these meetings.

"I think that Mount Baker replacement is on the radar with the provincial government, and that's thanks to the efforts of our parents and the community groups that have stepped up to

join Trustees in trying to create something special in a new high school," said Ayling. "I think the Minister was impressed that it was Mount Baker students who toured them around the school and provided most of the presentations, communicating their vision of what a new high school might look like."

Trustee Johns agreed. "Trustee Ayling and I still have more work to do in discussions with community groups, but we're making steady progress, and it's good to know that the Minister and our MLA are behind us."

School District 5 trustee candidates



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Jan Gordon-Hooker



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Jack Walkley

Jan Gordon-Hooker and Jack Walkley are running for the position of School District 5 Trustee on April 24. The Kootenay News Advertiser, in an effort to promote awareness of the candidates and the issues, have provided each candidate with a number of questions or concern to area residents.

What is your background? Where do you live? What is your current and/or previous occupation(s)?

Gordon-Hooker:
I've lived in Cranbrook for over 30 years. My late husband, Dr. Paul Hooker, and I ran a medical clinic here for nearly twenty years.

I'm presently retired. I keep active as a Project Leader/Fundraiser for Communities in Bloom and a member/Treasurer of the East Kootenay Outdoor Club. I'm currently a tutor with the School District's One-to-One Literacy Program.

Walkley:

I was born, raised, and educated in Cranbrook and have lived my entire life here as did my parents and grandparents. I am married to Ildi, an Instructor at the College of the Rockies. We have two children, Jacob and Ben. I have many years of business experience. Our family operated business, Walkley's Cranbrook Meat Market, had been a part of Cranbrook's commu-

nity since 1908. My grandfather, father and I operated it before it was sold in 1994. A second family business, Sugar Bear Daycare, provided child care services in Cranbrook for 17 years. I was an employee with the city of Cranbrook for 28 years and retired in 2007. I served as a fire fighter with fourteen of those years as a Captain of Fire Prevention and Training Officer.

have the best possible education. In addition to regular committees I also served on a number of building committees for new schools. These included Kootenay Orchards Elementary School, Fernie Secondary School, and Parkland Middle School, as well as, the building of Key City Theatre. I believe in a sound education system and have always worked to ensure school taxes are used to meet the needs of the students. I am fair open minded, care about education, and I am willing to listen to your concerns. With my past record I feel I have the skill, experience, knowledge, and time to serve the families of School District 5.

What is the key challenge to providing a good education in the district?

Gordon-Hooker: What I've learned is that there probably won't be one key challenge but many! But I think finances will always be a challenge. There will always be more worthwhile initiatives than there is funding to support. The key is to maximize educational programming in a cost effective way. Neighbourhood Learning Centres are a good example of innovative thinking.

Walkley: The key challenge is to provide a good education given that funding from the Ministry is never enough for all of the services needed for our students. Through all this it is important to not lose sight of the students, what their

needs are, and how we will meet them. They are our most important resource and as trustees it is our responsibility to remember that when we make decisions within our school district.

What are your thoughts on the expansion/re-building of Mount Baker Secondary?

Gordon-Hooker: The first thing to understand is that the Mt. Baker building needs to be replaced. The school is at 44% of its optimal status according to the District's last building audit. It's time. The Neighbourhood Learning Centre "community school" concept isn't new, but it's a timely idea for Cranbrook. Whether that's a day-care, a senior's centre, a new theatre, art gallery, we should be looking at encouraging more "community" into all of our schools.

Walkley: Mount Baker Secondary has served the community well over the last 50 years. Schools have always been an important part of any community and by working together with the community we can continue to be the anchor for bringing people together to learn together and through that support the community as a whole. I think with some careful planning we can build a new school and re-build the old school for the Neighbourhood Learning Centre. The gym and Key City theatre are still structurally sound and would not need to have any work planned for them. By combining building and

remodelling the Ministry may be more likely to accept the proposal as cost could be less than an entirely new building.

What are other challenges the school district is facing?

Gordon-Hooker: Our school district faces challenges similar to most other districts, such as funding and more recently trying to have a smooth two-stage roll out of full-day kindergarten. I want to keep schools open and functioning in our neighbourhoods so that children and parents feel at home and children don't have to be bussed unnecessarily.

Walkley: In addition to limited funding our school district continues to face declining enrolment which is challenging for our funding is tied to the number of students we serve each year. Many school districts throughout the province are facing difficult decisions because of the large deficits they are carrying. School District 5 is in better shape than most and I think that is in part because of the decisions the past board made which was to be fiscally responsible while still trying to provide quality education. I think so far we have been able to do that. Regardless though I realize that there may be difficult decisions to be made down the road because the school district only receives so much and it is getting tighter and tighter each year to make it work.

Do you have any previous experience that could be helpful in becoming a trustee?

Gordon-Hooker: I've always taken a keen interest in literacy and trying to improve the lives of children in our community. I served as trustee on the Cranbrook Public Library Board for eight years. I was on the Management Committee of the Infant Development Program Society. I was both a Director with the Kootenay Chamber Orchestra for four years and an assistant teacher in the Musikgarten music program for children. I have a strong background in finance with an education in Business Administration and the Chartered General Accountant program, both of which helped in the twenty years I spent managing a business.

Walkley: I was trustee for our school district for nineteen years and served as Chairperson on all of the committees of the board. My longest term was as Finance Chair. Trustees, and the committees they serve on, carry a lot of responsibility in ensuring that the students in our district

Education Minister meets with Board

Chairman wants indication from Victoria soon on status of high school replacement

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Is Mount Baker Secondary School any closer to being replaced in the wake of Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid's visit to Cranbrook Wednesday? Depends on who you ask.

At least three trustees

seem to think so, but Board Chairman Frank Lento isn't so sure and Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett couldn't be reached for comment Thursday.

Three Cranbrook trustees - Trina Ayling, Chris Johns and Dan Hall - issued a release Wednesday expressing confidence the

case for a \$50 million Neighbourhood of Learning Centre to replace Baker has moved forward.

Johns, the Mount Baker Replacement Committee Chair, says he was encouraged the Minister took time to visit the high school and seemed to have a good understanding of the

District's efforts to pursue a Neighbourhood Learning Centre at the school.

"We're thrilled that Minister MacDiarmid was able to come to our District for a firsthand look at the high school. An in-person assessment from the Minister of Education obviously isn't something that

happens everyday."

Ayling, who provided MacDiarmid with a summary of what the District has done towards the Neighbourhood of Learning initiative, says she thinks progress is being made.

See MBSS, Page 4

MBSS replacement plans

From Page 1

"I think that Mount Baker replacement is on the radar with the provincial government, and that's thanks to the efforts of our parents and the community groups that have stepped up to join Trustees in trying to create something special in a new high school."

However Lento said Thursday it was still the number one priority with the Board even though he wasn't sure where it stood with Victoria. "I've talked to Bill (Bennett) about it. He could be a catalyst in the whole thing and I think he could play a significant role."

Trustee Hall expressed similar sentiments. "Kudos

to our administration and MLA Bill Bennett who worked to make this happen. To have the Minister come out and have a look at our challenges first-hand is very much appreciated by our Board of Education."

However, Lento said he'd like to get an indication from Victoria soon on where the government stands on Baker replacement. "I think what we have to do is see what the Ministry (of Education) wants and then keep the pressure on. I want to be specific with the Ministry. I think we've been too generic saying neighbourhoods of learning. I want them to be a little more specific and say look, what do you exactly want?"

Lento said he doesn't want to see the District left "dancing" for the next three or five years. That's why no one was able to get an answer out of MacDiarmid during her tour here on when the Baker replacement project might go ahead, he said.

"It was quite obvious she was in no position from the budget and the money she's got to make any announcement on any capital project."

But Johns said he remains optimistic. "Trustee Ayling and I still have more work to do in discussions with community groups, but we're making steady progress, and it's good to know that the Minister and our MLA are behind us."

Townsman
April 9/10

Townsmen
April 8, 2010

Minister of Education visits Cranbrook

By BARRY COULTER
barry@dailytownsman.com

The replacement for Mount Baker Secondary School, in the form of a new "Neighbourhood Learning Centre," is a number one capital priority in School District 5, and on Wednesday the number one topic of conversation for Margaret MacDiarmid.

The B.C. Minister of Education was in the East Kootenay on Wednesday, April 7, touring several schools in the district, including MBSS and Kootenay Orchards Elementary in Cranbrook, in the company of East Kootenay MLA Bill Bennett.

The students at MBSS took MacDiarmid on a tour of the school. "They were on fire," the minister said. "They are really articulate young people telling me about their school and what's going on. That's a real highlight for me, meeting great students and teachers and educators from across the province.

"I saw some beautiful plans, actually, that the students have come up with — their concepts of 'Neighbourhoods of Learning.' They've got all

kinds of ideas of what it could look like."

As well as touring schools in Jaffray, Fernie and Sparwood, MacDiarmid was to meet with the Board of Trustees on Wednesday night.

"I'm sure that (the proposed neighbourhood learning centre in Cranbrook) will be a topic of conversation that's a top priority, we understand that.

"We're not going to be making any announcements while we're here," MacDiarmid cautioned. "But the way we do that kind of development across the province is we look at all of the top priorities — we've got 60 school districts that we need to look at."

Not until the province brings out its new capital plan will any such announcement be made. MacDiarmid added she couldn't say when that would be.

"I think the project is under \$50 million — I think that's the pricetag (for the new Cranbrook school). And we currently are not announcing the capital plan. But of course there'll be new capital for schools.

See MACDIARMID, Page 4

1/2



Townsmen
Apr 28/10

MacDiarmid tours local schools

B.C. Minister of Education Margaret MacDiarmid, Mount Baker Secondary School Principal Debra Empeon and M.L.A. Bill Bennett. Kevin Whitehead photo

From Page 1
 "This is the top priority for the district, and when we have another capital plan to announce, then we'll have a better feeling for it. We have to look at things like the age of buildings, also the need for space for students. We have some districts — not this district — that are growing very rapidly and exploding out the space that exists."

"But of course there'll be new capital for schools."

Neighbourhood Learning Centres, as they're now dubbed, is the current philosophy as far as school development goes in B.C. "What we're trying to do now with all the replacement schools, new schools and even some additions or, is to have neighbourhood learning centres where we incorporate elements from the community," MacDiarmid said. "The school is already the hub of the community for lots of people, but the neighbourhood learning centres that are being developed now are having senior centres, daycares, health facilities, libraries, theatres — all kinds of different facilities that add to the school. The school will then be in use much more in the day, the evening and the weekend — you use the space better, it's

environmentally better. "A lot of thought has been put into it, and it is the way forward."

Enrolment in B.C. has been undergoing a decline since the early 1990s. But MacDiarmid says the demographics are slowly shifting, and that by 2013 or 2014, depending on the area, for most of the province there will start to be a slow increase in enrolments. With the advent of Full-Day Kindergarten, which is being phased in starting in September, and full-day education, play-based learning for four-year-olds, new or enhanced school space will be even more of a priority. The new programs will also ease the decline in enrolments.

"Certainly, having full-day Kindergarten and all-day learning for four-year-olds will expand the number of students we're educating," MacDiarmid said.

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2/2

Walkley announces bid for school board seat

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Former School District 5 Trustee Jack Walkley filed his election papers last week, making the election to replace the late Pat Casey a two-way race.

Walkley, who served 19 years on the Board, is running against Jan Gordon-Hooker, who announced her candidacy about two weeks ago. The election will be held April 24.

Born and raised in Cranbrook and a retired City fireman, Walkley says he brings a wealth of experience to the post, having served on several board committees. "I served on the finance committee for a long time and I like to think I was partly responsible for the good fiscal position the District is in now."

Walkley points out that the two neighbouring districts to District 5, are both struggling with deficits while District 5 is operating in the black. "The past boards are responsible for the good financial situation here which isn't the case in Kimberley and Nelson. Hard decisions needed to be made and we didn't avoid that."

The veteran trustee also served on the Board's Building Committee during the time that Kootenay Orchards Elementary School and the new Parkland Middle School were built as well as the Key City Theatre, which was a joint project with the City and the Province.

Walkley says he wholeheartedly supports the Mount Baker replacement project and is solidly behind the "neighbourhoods of learning" concept that is being mooted for Baker. If re-elected, he says he will work hard to make sure a Baker replacement school serves the whole community.

"If it's developed under the neighbourhood of learning concept, it will be more than just a school."

Walkley says he also supports all-day kindergarten now being implemented in the district. "It's a good thing for children, especially the ones that need extra help and I believe it will help them later with their learning."

Having served on several boards in the past, Walkley says he will make up his own mind

on board issues. "I'm coming in with an independent view of things. I'm able to listen to all points of view and able to make decisions for the district as a whole."

In terms of school closures, Walkley says he doesn't foresee any in the immediate future especially if the enrolment decline continues to level out. "Tough decisions were made in the past and I believe we avoided layoffs by doing that."

“

"The past boards are responsible for the good financial situation here which isn't the case in Kimberley and Nelson. Hard decisions needed to be made and we didn't avoid that."

As for the battle between teachers and school administrators over the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) testing program, Walkley said that issue will be settled on the provincial level between the teachers' union and the Education Ministry and not at the local board level.

Walkley says he's not against testing per se and tries to see both sides of the issue. "The teachers say the FSA tests are too stressful and take up too much time while the government spends \$50 million on them and says they want some accountability. I think a decision will have to be made somewhere in between."

The long-time trustee says his roots go deep in Cranbrook as a Mount Baker graduate in the 1960's as well as being a partner in two local day care operations and a meat store.

Townsman

March 29, 2010

Budget gets mixed reactions

Locals react to budget

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Even though Finance Minister Colin Hansen brought in a provincial budget with spending increases in health care and education, reaction has been mostly negative from East Kootenay stakeholders.

Cranbrook District Teachers Association President Wendy Turner said she fears the \$140 million increase to the education budget lowers the prospect of Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook being replaced anytime soon.

"Personally I have concerns whether that amount of money will be enough for a project as large as a neighbourhood of learning school to replace Mount Baker when you consider all the other educational spending priorities in the province," Turner said.

An Education Ministry operating grant increase of \$112 million resulted from public pressure and advocacy efforts, Turner said. Despite this, she said there are no increases for any other cost pressures such as pension contributions, MSP increases, transportation costs, BC Hydro rates, or costs associated with carbon neutrality.

From page 1

Turner said only half of the annual facilities grant has been restored and the association that represents school district secretary-treasurers in the province says the system needs at least \$300 million more in the 2010 - 2011 school year just to maintain the status quo.

"It's a very unfair spot to put teachers in when they say they're increasing funding but they download other costs and it's not really an increase at all."

But Cranbrook Chamber of Commerce Vice President Lana Kirk praised the budget for putting the province back on the road to fiscal responsibility. "I think it's important to have a balanced budget and even though there's a deficit in

the budget in these tough economic times it is moving us towards a balanced budget in three years."

The budget also gives indications of reducing government spending in non-vital areas and this will help stabilize the government's fiscal position as the province moves forward, she said.

East Kootenay District Labour Council President Jackie Spain said plans to cut almost 4,000 public service jobs in the province are going to hurt across the board. "I don't see very much in this budget for people living in the rural areas of the province."

Instead of laying government workers off, the budget should have brought in measures for job creation and when the Harmonized

Sales Tax (HST) begins in July, along with an increase in the carbon tax, things are only going to get worse for British Columbians, she said.

Ktunaxa Nation Council Chief Negotiator Kathryn Teneese said she was disappointed to see the Aboriginal Relations budget cut from \$67 million to \$37 million. "We're going to keep on working and doing what we can do but it's going to be impossible to do what we would like to do but we have to keep the process going."

One of the largest cuts in the province was the almost \$400 million taken out of the forestry budget. This is expected to result in more layoffs in the forest Ministry and more self-regulation in the industry.

But industry figures say they need to know more details about the cuts before they know the impact on them. Speaking from Quebec, Tembec Executive Vice President Dennis Rounsville said he hasn't seen a copy of the budget speech yet and is not in a position to comment.

Evan Kleindienst, Manager of Forestry Services for Interior Reforestation, said he's mostly in the dark on the budget too. "We've seen a little bit of cuts in our existing contracts . . . I know our clients have defi-

nately indicated to us that budgets are tight this year and they're going to be watching them pretty closely."

But Kleindienst said it's too early to say yet if the cuts to the forestry budget will have a big impact on firms like his and others.

Wildsight Executive Director John Bergenske said he's dismayed to hear about the cuts to the forestry budget as well as similar cuts to the Environment Ministry.

"Forestry has already taken a lot of hits over the years and it's unfortunate they're going to be taking more now. It's going to leave them at a low level of efficiency.

With the Ministry of Environment also being cut, it's going to be hard to provide the province with the kind of environmental stewardship it needs, Bergenske said.

"There won't be much enforcement or much oversight of any kind because they won't have the personnel to look after an important public resource."

However, Bergenske said he was glad to see the Live Smart BC program survive the cuts. The program, which encourages recycling and the use of wood damaged by the Pine Beetle, is a move in the right direction, he said.

Townsman
March 4/2010

Townsmen
Feb 17/2010

MBSS hosts Wild About the Arts

By BARRY COULTER
townsman@cyberlink.bc.ca

The full compendium of student art will be on display at a gala fundraising event at Mount Baker Secondary School next week.

"Wild About the Arts" is set for Wednesday, Feb. 24, at MBSS.

The event is raising funds, awareness and interest for an arts and cultural centre for youth, which will be part of the proposed Neighbourhood of Learning, a dynamic new community education and services facility, anchored by a new high school, which is intended to ultimately replace the old high school downtown.

MBSS Principal Debra Empson says that MBSS is committed to the proposed Neighbourhood of Learning, and that the arts centre is part of that vision. The fundraiser is the first step along that way.

But "Wild About The Arts," significantly, is meant to showcase to the community what youth are capable of in the arts, and how important their

contribution is to the cultural life of Cranbrook and area.

"Wild About the Arts" starts at 7 p.m., and the halls of the high school will be transformed into a series of galleries for the public to delight in. All aspects of student art education will be involved — from the food students, who will be creating and serving the canapés to the guests, through performances by the music and video students, showings of painting, wood-working, photography, metal work, and what bodes to be an intriguing display of "living art."

Empson says planning for the event got underway in September by MBSS staff, but the students have gotten heavily involved in the planning and volunteering process. The "Black Tie" nature of the evening is largely student generated, Empson said.

"The kids wanted it to be formal — they want to be taken seriously as contributors to this community."

See WILD, Page 3

Wild About the Arts

From page 1

Attendance is by donation. A silent auction will be held, and gala-goers will also be voting on the People's Choice Awards from amongst the artistic works on display.

Winners of the People's Choice Awards will be included in the upcoming Rotary Wine-tasting and Art Auction Feb. 26.

The proposed arts and cultural centre would be in partnership with the Cranbrook and District

Arts Council.

Empson says the Cranbrook Rotary Club is also committed to the vision.

The space would include gallery spaces (both both the Arts Council and the youth of the community), and space for workshops.

Work on building new MBSS continues

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Progress continues in the drive to replace Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook with the Mount Baker Replacement Committee outlining the progress made during a meeting last week.

It's now been a year since the School District 5 (SD5) Board of Education made replacing Baker its no.1 priority for the entire district and the committee feels it's getting closer to having Baker's replacement designated as a Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC).

In October 2009, the Board made a formal application to the Education Ministry to have Baker replaced with a NLC, a concept where school resources and community resources are linked together in the same facility.

SD5 Mount Baker Replacement Committee Chairman Chris Johns says he was encouraged to hear recent comments from Premier Campbell echoed in the government's Throne Speech that the NLC concept would be integrated into in all future school building projects. MLA

See NLC, Page 4

NLC wanted as new Mount Baker

From Page 1

Bill Bennett has also offered his support for a NLC designation for Mount Baker, he says.

"Given the government's recent comments about Neighbourhood Learning Centres, we're moving forward on the basis that we have the NLC designation," said Johns. "Of course, our next hurdle is getting a fixed timeline for when we can put shovels

in the ground. That will obviously be more of a challenge given the government's current financial problems."

However, Johns says the Board will continue to push forward with constructive planning efforts while waiting for funding approval. "We will still need some time to work with parents, teachers and community groups to distill 'the vision' down to something concrete that we can all agree upon.

Our goal now is to be 100% ready to go when we get the green light from the Ministry," says Johns.

Trustee Dan Hall believes that deciding what goes in a new high school will be a challenge in and of itself, pointing out that the Ministry of Education places strict guidelines on the size of new schools, right down to the square footage of individual classrooms, and limits how much space can be set aside for NLC usage.

"As much as we might

like to see a NLC vision that includes atriums or other innovative design features, the concept right now allows no more than 15% additional space," explained Hall. "It isn't a blue sky exercise where we can include anything we want."

Trustee Trina Ayling also points out that the future of the Key City Theatre, which is physically attached to the high school, needs to be determined before the present building comes down.

"The Key City Theatre is a jewel in our City and in the entire Kootenays," said Ayling. "It's not within our mandate to provide a home for a new performing arts facility, but I'm hopeful that SD5, the City, the Key City Theatre Society and our entire community can be proactive and start thinking about the future of the Theatre right now."

All school districts in B.C. have been encouraged to find innovative ways to design schools with community use in mind and create places where people have better access to educational and community services. NLCs respond to community interests and may include a wide variety of programs and resources including child-care programs, office space, health clinics, sports programs, seniors' centres and family resource centres.

Townsman
Feb 15, 2010

Throne speech sparks MBSS replacement talks

By Brian Coombs
Editor

With the recent Throne Speech declaration that the Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) concept was something

the government was in favour of, School District 5 trustees feel this is an avenue of approach for the replacement of Mount Baker Secondary School (MBSS).

"Given the government's recent comments about Neighbourhood Learning Centres, we're moving forward on the basis that we have the NLC designation," said SD5 Mount Baker Replacement Committee chairperson, Chris Johns. "Of course, our next hurdle is getting a fixed timeline for when we can put shovels in the ground. That will obviously be more of a challenge given the government's current financial problems."

He added that the committee has been speaking with as many groups in the area as they can so they can lobby the Ministry of Education more effectively. He said that the committee is finding out exactly what capital and human re-

sources local groups can bring to the table.

"We're hoping this will be a community-wide conversation," said Johns. "I'd love to see this be something for K through seniors."

Bill Gook, superintendent for SD5, said that the school replacement has been identified as a priority in the district's capital plan. He noted that Sparwood Secondary used to be the priority, until it was recently replaced at a cost of around \$20 million.

The Mount Baker Secondary School has been identified as having structural cracks on bearing walls and ceilings in the basement area, fire separations not provided between floor areas, old wiring and piping with asbestos remaining in the walls and a few other problems.

During the last year, the district has undertaken a building audit, completed a feasibility study with KMBR

Architect Planners and commissioned a project identification report for the Ministry of Education.

Gook explained that the concept behind a NLC is to have the building be more than just for grade school students and offer educational opportunities to the community at large.

Debra Empson, MBSS principal, said that the replacement plan would include building in the Mount Baker field.

"We shared the design charette with community agencies," said Empson

The new building would face the creek and use that natural beauty," said Empson.

She added that she would like to see the process move more quickly and said that should middle and elementary school parents tour the building, they would get on board with the replacement.

SD5 Trustee Dan Hall cautioned that a NLC designation for the school does not mean a radical amount of new educational facilities can be offered however.

"As much as we might like to see a NLC vision that includes atriums or other innovative design features, the concept right now allows no more than 15 per cent additional space," explained Hall. "It isn't a blue sky exercise where we can include anything we want."

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Currently, Revelstoke Elementary and Revelstoke Secondary are designated as NLCs and offer programs such as a performing arts centre and acrobatics program.



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5
S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

February 10th, 2010
Trustee Media Release

MBSS Replacement – One year later

It's been exactly one year since the SD5 Board of Education committed to having Mount Baker Senior Secondary School as the number one replacement priority for the entire District.

Over the past year SD5 has undertaken a Building Audit, completed a feasibility study with KMBR Architect Planners, and commissioned a Project Identification Report (PIR) for the Ministry of Education.

In October 2009 the Board also submitted a formal application to the Ministry of Education for the high school to be designated as a *Neighbourhood Learning Centre* (NLC), a concept where educational services and community resources are brought together under one roof to better support families and learners.

SD5 Mount Baker Replacement Committee chairperson, Chris Johns, was encouraged to hear recent comments from Premier Campbell echoed in the government's Throne Speech that the NLC concept would be integrated into in all future school building projects. He noted that MLA Bill Bennett has also offered his support for a designation for Mount Baker.

"Given the government's recent comments about *Neighbourhood Learning Centres*, we're moving forward on the basis that we have the NLC designation," said Johns. "Of course, our next hurdle is getting a fixed timeline for when we can put shovels in the ground. That will obviously be more of a challenge given the government's current financial problems. "

However, Johns says the Board will continue to push forward with constructive planning efforts while awaiting funding approval.

"We will still need some time to work with parents, teachers and community groups to distill 'the vision' down to something concrete that we can all agree upon. Our goal now is to be 100% ready to go when we get the green light from the Ministry."

Trustee Dan Hall believes that deciding what goes in a new high school will be a challenge in and of itself, pointing out that the Ministry of Education places strict guidelines on the size of new schools, right down to the square footage of individual classrooms, and limits how much space can be set aside for NLC usage.

“As much as some folks might like to see a NLC vision that includes things like atriums or other innovative design features, the concept right now allows no more than 15% additional *space*,” explained Hall. “It isn’t a blue sky exercise where we can include anything we want.”

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Contact:

Trustee Chris Johns, Chairperson, SD5 MBSS Replacement Committee
chris.johns@sd5.bc.ca

Trina Ayling, Chairperson, SD5 Trustee Media/Communications
trina.ayling@sd5.bc.ca

Townsmen
Feb 10/2010

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

3 Facts You Need to Know ...

With
MLA
Bill
Bennett



...About Neighbourhoods of Learning


1 What is a Neighbourhood of Learning? The provincial government has a vision for the future of education in British Columbia – one where schools and community organizations partner to create Neighbourhood Learning Centres – where educational services and community resources are brought together in one place. The vision can include early learning or child-care programs, space for non-profit organizations, health clinics, sports programs, trades training, family resource or seniors' centres.



2 Why do we need it? Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook is almost 60 years old and has already been identified by the provincial government for school replacement. But there's an opportunity to expand that vision - to create a hub of educational, cultural and recreational opportunities that will enhance the livability of our community and support the life-long learning goals of students and their families.

3 How do we do it? Creating a Neighbourhood of Learning only happens when our school district partners with community leaders, parents, community organizations, and the provincial government. As your MLA, I am committed to this vision for Cranbrook and I believe parents are also committed. I have been and will continue to collaborate with parents, community groups, and the school district to determine if we can turn Mount Baker Secondary School into a vibrant hub of life-long learning. Contact me if you'd like to be a part of this opportunity.




BRITISH COLUMBIA
Bill Bennett, M.L.A.
 (Kootenay East)
 Province of British Columbia

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE: 100c Cranbrook Street N. Cranbrook, B.C. V1C 3P9
 Phone: 250-417-6022
 Fax: 250-417-6026
 bill.bennett.mla@leg.bc.ca

Nearby Neighbourhoods

By GERRY WARNER

Two new neighborhood learning centre schools, similar to one being talked about to replace Mount Baker Senior Secondary School, will soon be open in Revelstoke.

Premier Gordon Campbell traveled to Revelstoke for the opening ceremonies and said neighborhood learning centre schools could be the wave of the future for education in British Columbia.

"Our vision for the future of education in British Columbia is one where educational services and community resources are brought together under one roof to better support families and learners," said the Premier.

"Neighbourhood Learning Centres are an innovative and creative way for school districts to partner with community organizations to offer a variety of services that benefit the entire community."

The provincial government had previously committed almost \$48 million to replace the existing Revelstoke Secondary school and to build a new elementary school.

See SCHOOL, Page 3



If Victoria was to approve replacement of Baker – a \$50 million decision at the minimum – and if the replacement school was designated a "Neighbourhoods of Learning" school it would mean that Cranbrook would get both a new high school and a facility that would also have designated space for educationally related community services in the building.

Baker Principal Debra Empson thinks it's a great idea. "This is fabulous news for us because we've been working very hard to put together a package on this."

Possible partners that could use the additional community space could include the IHA, the RCMP, the Community Connections Society of SE B.C., the East Kootenay Addiction Services Society, the College of the Rockies and others.

Epson would also like to see the new structure include a Youth Centre for the Arts, the Arts

School

From Page 1

The addition of space for Neighbourhood Learning Centres will bring the total to \$53 million.

The district plans to begin construction in the spring of 2010, with Revelstoke Elementary expected to open in the fall of 2011 and Revelstoke Secondary in early 2012.

All school districts are now being encouraged to move towards this inclusive approach to planning the use of new school space and including elements of Neighbourhood Learning Centres in all new and replacement schools.

A neighbourhood learning centre type concept is being proposed for downtown Cranbrook when Mount Baker is replaced in the not so far distant future. But discussions to replace the aging school are still in the preliminary stages.

Townsmen
Oct 23/09

CORRESPONDENCE

**Neighbourhood of
Learning; Rails to Trails**

Re: "MBSS has a glorious potential destiny" October 21, 2009

I wanted to acknowledge Minister Bennett's support for a Mount Baker Secondary School replacement utilizing the government's concept of combining educational and community services.

It's also important to recognize that this project has been --and continues to be-- encouraged by parents, teachers, and other partner groups in our community.

District staff and school trustees have worked diligently on this project over the past year, during which time we have completed a comprehensive Building Audit, undertaken preliminary architectural planning, and worked closely with the Mount Baker Parent Advisory Council.

But we're at a crossroads. We have sent a formal request to the Ministry of Education for approval to replace Mount Baker within the concept of "Neighbourhoods of Learning". Our community is telling us that this is what they want. We can't proceed much further down the planning road without a green light from government.

I'm encouraged to hear that our local MLA will use his influence in cabinet to help our community turn this vision into a reality. We look forward to working with him to provide our community with the most inclusive, innovative and versatile education delivery system available in B.C.

**Chris Johns, SD #5 Trustee
Chairperson of the Mt. Baker Secondary School
Building Replacement Committee.**

Neighbourhood of Learning essential for Cranbrook

Let us take a moment away from the hubbub surrounding the East Hill boundary extension to consider another major proposed development for Cranbrook, one that, in our opinion, may have even farther-reaching implications for the future of this city.

The "Neighbourhood of Learning" concept proposed by the School District to replace the old high school is almost revolutionary in its simplicity. More than just a new, top of the line educational centre for our children, the replacement for decrepit old MBSS would indeed be new downtown neighbourhood — one focused on the fundamental values of this community. The development would include capacity for community partnerships with, for instance, the IHA, the RCMP, Community Connections Society, the College of the Rockies, and many more. A youth centre for arts, day care services, counseling facilities, senior and family services — such services would make this development a ground zero for what makes Cranbrook great.

We advance the hypothesis here that there's nothing like quality schools to really attract new residents — families who want to establish permanent roots — to help Cranbrook grow. We also suggest that this "most inclusive, innovative and versatile education delivery system available in B.C." (to quote School Board Trustee Chris Johns) would help spark a dynamic revitalization of downtown Cranbrook.

We're not being overly enthusiastic here. This project seems to be getting lost in the current noise. Several key factors are already in place, now we need action in Victoria. Lobby your MLA, the Premier and the Ministry of Education. This is important.

Barry Coulter

*Barry
Coulter*

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

MBSS has a glorious potential destiny

An entire "neighbourhood" could replace decrepit old school After all, it takes a village ...

By GERRY WARNER

"Neighbourhoods of Learning." It's a new educational concept and it could be coming to Cranbrook.

If it does come to the Key City, it will be to replace Mount Baker Senior

Secondary School, an aging 60-year-old facility that's close to the end of its lifespan and badly in need of replacement.

At its last meeting in Sparwood Oct. 13, Southeast Kootenay School District

Board 5 trustees voted in favour of asking Victoria to replace Baker with a Neighbourhoods of Learning structure that would be far more than just a conventional high school.

"Neighbourhoods of Learning is being

piloted in a number of districts across the province where schools are already scheduled for replacement or upgrade," says Board Chairman Frank Lento.

"The concept provides for an additional envelope of space at the new school for alternate or beneficial uses for the community."

If Victoria was to approve replacement of Baker — a \$50 million decision at the minimum

— and if the replacement was designated a "Neighbourhoods of Learning" school, it would mean that Cranbrook would get both a new high school and a facility that would also have designated space — an envelope of space to use Lento's

words — for educational-related community services in the building.

Baker Principal Debra Epson thinks it's a great idea. "This is fabulous news for us because we've been working very hard to put together a package on this."

Possible partners that could use the additional community space could include the IHA, the RCMP, the Community Connections Society of SE B.C., the East Kootenay Addiction Services Society, the College of the Rockies and others. Epson would also like to see the new structure include a Youth Centre for the Arts.

"The more kids interact

with adults in the community, the better it will be for both of them. We are very excited about this. It's exactly what we want."

Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett says he likes the concept too and will use his influence as a cabinet minister to help bring it about. "We have this opportunity because the Premier of the Province is so committed to this concept of Neighbourhoods of Learning."

However, Bennett says he also has a "caution" about the concept. "This concept only works when it's driven by the community and all the potential partners that would come together. There is a much better way to educate young people than the old traditional style ... You've got to think out of the box and it won't work unless you have the strong involvement of the community."

Mount Baker Replacement Committee chairperson Chris Johns believes that short term or piecemeal fixes are no longer appropriate for Baker. "With a school population of over 1,000 students and teaching staff, Mt. Baker is probably the single largest daily gathering place in the East Kootenay," Johns said.

"The recent building audit determined that the school is at 44 per cent of its optimal status. We've got problems like cracks in bearing walls, compromised timber support beams and an HVAC system which is no longer up to code. We can't roll the dice while these costly problems keep coming up."

Trustee Chris Ellis advised that the Committee has been working closely with the Mt. Baker Parent Advisory Council and

other community groups to determine what a new high school might look like and how services could be integrated within the Neighbourhoods of Learning concept.

"We need a new high school but we're open to the concept of building a new high school with community services such as child care programs, meeting rooms for non-profit organizations, and seniors or family resource centers," explained Ellis. "And I think we can also leverage some of our existing partnerships, such as our industry training cooperative with the College of the Rockies."

Trustee Trina Ayling pointed out that the government's Neighbourhoods of Learning concept isn't new. The province of Saskatchewan, has operated over 30 community schools for many years and there are other examples right across Canada that integrate schools with community services, including a recently closed school in Cranbrook.

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●Neighbourhood of Learning could be MBSS

Trustee Trina Ayling pointed out that the government's Neighbourhoods of Learning concept isn't new. The province of Saskatchewan has operated over 30 community schools for many years and there are other examples right across Canada that integrate schools with community services, including a recently closed school in Cranbrook.

"The integration of school and community services is obviously something I was talking about even before I was an elected school trustee," said Ayling. "Muriel Baxter had incorporated some of these concepts, and I am hopeful that with the Mt. Baker replacement we can revive some of those services, particularly daycare space for young mothers who want to attend school."

Trustee Dan Hall advises that the Committee still has a lot of work to do. "Our next steps involve working with those who presented letters of support to see if that support could translate into joint usage and/or funding agreements."

“

We've got problems like cracks in bearing walls, compromised timber support beams and an HVAC system which is no longer up to code. We can't roll the dice while these costly problems keep coming up.

Trustee Chris Johns

"We need a new high school but we're open to the concept of building a new high school with community services such as child care programs, meeting rooms for non-profit organizations, and seniors or family resource centers."

Trustee Chris Ellis

Eve of the election: Issues at hand, clarifications

As a Trustee representing School District 5 I was concerned when I read some of the inaccuracies contained in Ms. Richmond's "clarification on some points" letter to the editor regarding the replacement of Mount Baker.

While I respect the efforts of Ms. Richmond and Ms. Empson, I feel it's important that this process be further clarified.

While it's true that, under the previous board, Mount Baker was not designated as No. 1 for school replacement I can assure the public that Mr. Bennett was NOT a factor in the Board's decision to designate Mount Baker as the number one replacement priority.

The tour that Ms. Richmond refers to was set up by me in response to a letter Trustees received from Ms. Richmond outlining her concerns about the state of Mount Baker. Several trustees attended along with staff and PAC members. Ms. Richmond also invited Mr. Bennett and Trustees were glad to see him in attendance.

The audit process Ms. Richmond speaks of was initiated by District staff, not Mr. Bennett and is void of "political influence" of any kind. There is a process the District follows when it determines a school needs replacing and this process is being followed.

At our last meeting, the Board passed a motion to develop a Mount Baker Replacement Committee. We are currently working on the Terms of Reference for this committee and will be holding our first official meeting shortly.

I understand that Ms. Richmond is "new to the workings of politics" and can understand why she may feel that only MLAs whose government is in power can effectively lobby for their communities. Having some education and experience in politics myself, I can assure the public that's simply not the case.

As a Board, Trustees are professional decision makers who can work with whatever government is elected on May 12th. We can do this because our government also consists of professional decision makers who make reasoned decisions based on the information that is provided them, rather than on the political stripes of the local MLA.

Trustees and District Management have been very supportive of Ms. Richmond's efforts, providing board representation at her self-styled MBSS vision committee meetings and most recently the "Charrette" she hosted. We applaud the effort of Ms. Richmond and Ms. Empson and we look forward to continued collaboration with the community on the neighbourhoods of learning initiative.

Trina Ayling
Trustee, School District 5

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Clarification on some points

I am new to the workings of politics and I am disturbed by information that can be shared out of context to create a political picture. I wish to pass on the facts regarding the replacement of Mount Baker Secondary.

This initiative began well over a year and a half ago. My position on the SPC (development of the school growth plan) and the Mount Baker PAC has brought me into direct contact with these plans. Last spring it was the collective decision through the SPC to address school replacement as a PAC initiative. In September a letter of intent to the SD #5 District Management from Principal Debra Empson was followed up with a letter of behalf of PAC.

In the fall, before our municipal election, administration, teachers and myself, as PAC chair, approached SD#5 District Management to ask that Mount Baker be replaced. It is SD#5 (District Management and School Board trustees) that asks the Province for school replacement through designation as #1 on their capital budget report. Before this Mount Baker's replacement had not been chosen unanimously as the #1 project by SD#5.

We then approached our MLA Bill Bennett to pitch the idea of a community campus style of learning for our downtown core as well as school replacement. Mr. Bennett was attentive to our concerns for the vulnerable youth of our community and understood the vision of creating what is now being called a 'neighbourhood of learning' downtown hub for the benefit of our whole community.

When we met with Mr. Bennett he thanked us for bringing our concerns to him as he had never been approached by SD#5 on school replacement before. Since that time he has been a voice for this effort and has advocated in Victoria on our behalf. In January, at my request, Mr. Bennett attended a school tour along with some of our newly elected SD#5 Trustees. The following week Mr. Bennett arranged another tour with SD#5 District Management. We now have the benefit of the audit process being completed and there have been discussions with senior Ministry of Education officials as well as the Premier.

Mount Baker School's replacement would not be up for consideration if not for the leadership of Principal Empson and the efforts of Bill Bennett voicing our position in Victoria. I am thankful for the efforts of all those

involved with this project. Personally, I believe that in the East Kootenay it is important for our MLA to be in government rather than in opposition for us to have success in this endeavor. That is why it is so important to re-elect a strong government MLA on May 12th. We need Bill Bennett.

**Michelle Richmond
Cranbrook**

Towards the Neighbourhoods of Learning

A vision of the future of MBSS could transform Cranbrook

By BONNIE BRYAN
Townsman Staff

The Mount Baker Community Vision Committee is hosting a design charrette this weekend and members of the public are encouraged to attend and have their say in a potential project that would help shape Cranbrook.

The bid for the replacement of Mount Baker Secondary School has grown into something much bigger, Michelle Richmond, Chair of the Mount Baker Secondary School PAC, said.

The design charrette on April 25 and 26 will produce professional documentation to include with a School District No. 5 report being sent to the Ministry of Education for May 15th, 2009.

The committee and school district are asking for the Mount Baker School replacement and for it to be designated as a 'Neighbourhood of Learning' rural pilot project.

The 'Neighbourhoods of Learning' initiative will see education and community services brought together in a single hub.

Charrette seeks input on vision

From Page 1

Schools in Vancouver, Port Alberni, Powell River, Williams Lake, Oliver and Revelstoke have been chosen to be developed in this model.

Through this weekend's design charrette it will be determined what this idea would like in Cranbrook, and also what partnerships could be represented within the facility or in the immediate area, Richmond said.

Ross Blackwell of Focus Corporation will be facilitating the process and at the end of the session there will be a visual design of the downtown core 'Neighbourhood of Learning.'

Richmond said the idea for the 'Neighbourhood of Learning' for the Mount Baker school replacement

came from Principal Debra Empson.

"She just has such passion for our students and what she put together was partnerships that would help our students," she said. "She has been working on an Early Childhood Education connection with the College of the Rockies because what we found is that there are some critical needs within our community and one of them is day care spaces."

According to the provincial government news release from early April, possible community uses for 'Neighbourhood of Learning' model schools include early learning or child-care programs, space for non-profit organizations, health clinics, sports programs, family resource or seniors' centres, indus-

try training or branch libraries.

Richmond said many groups in the community have expressed an interest in the Mount Baker Community Vision Project and the early work done with that has been one of the reasons they will be able to apply to become a 'Neighbourhood of Learning' pilot project.

The committee took their idea to Bill Bennett, who then put Richmond in touch with Keith Miller, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education.

"The thing that was really encouraging to me is that Bill Bennett really understood it. In talking about what we wanted to develop, even outside school replacement, but a whole comprehensive centre of services, synergistic

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partners with other agencies in the community and how it would address our healthcare worker shortage and how it could address our ECE space needs and all those different things. He really got the vision of that and he has been behind it 100 per cent," Richmond said. "The most exciting thing for me, I didn't think I would ever have this

opportunity, Bill Bennett arranged Keith Miller to contact me to hear about what we were doing. I was so thankful that we'd done this work out in the community, gathering interested parties that would like to address the needs of our youth through these synergistic partnerships. A lot of that doesn't take any money, it's just about hav-

ing that common goal."

The design charrette will take place in the lunch room in Mount Baker on Saturday, April 25 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sunday, April 26 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Those intending to attend are required to RSVP by Thursday, April 23 to Michelle Richmond at 250-489-1224.

Making the vision of a community school become a reality

By Kerstin Renner

When people remember their high school years, they may think of time spent in classrooms, lunch hours on the school field or sports training and band practices. The memories that Mount Baker Secondary School principal Debra Empson, school staff and the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) want to build for their students are linked to the vision of a community hub, providing services and programs not only for the students, but also tying youth together with the greater community.

Empson, who is in her second year as principal, says the idea of a community school has been there since the beginning, even if she did not know exactly what that would look like. Her goal, Empson says, is to address community needs while helping students build their skill set in interesting, engaging and exciting ways.

At this time, there are already several programs where the school is partnering with other agencies in the community. One of them is the ca-

reer-oriented 'Wild about Hair' program where Mount Baker teamed up with the College of the Rockies through Brian Conrad to teach hair-dressing skills to students. Participants get credits for taking the vocational training both in school and at the college.

The Mount Baker drama department under the leadership of Rod Osiowy is working with the Community Living BC, R.E.A.L.M. and the Cranbrook Society for Community Living, giving youth with developmental disabilities a chance to express themselves. With staff and students from Mount Baker, the performers have developed the black light show 'Alice in Wonderland' a modern day version of the famous tale about a girl getting lost in another world. They will be presenting their work at the end of May.

The result of these successful partnerships, Empson says, is that staff are now seeking even more of these similar opportunities. The benefits, she believes, are great. "The more positive relationships our kids have, the better they get

along with the community at large."

One of the first things Empson did to physically remove the barriers between the community and the school, was to take down the chain link fence at the front end of the school. Instead, she replaced it with inviting picnic benches and a garden area.

To continue on the road to reaching its goal of integrating the school with the community and bringing out the potential in every student, Empson knows, the school has to expand not only its programs. "To continue this vision, we have outgrown the boundaries of this building."

"We did approach the school district's management in the fall to see what they thought about school replacement," points out Michelle Richmond, chair of the Mount Baker PAC. What the steering group found was that the school district was very supportive of their efforts and they had the same result when they approached East Kootenay MLA Bill Bennett to ask him to communicate with the provincial

Ministry of Education on their behalf.

In fact, Richmond says, they found out that the ministry has initiated a pilot project to create neighbourhoods of learning, a idea that is very similar to the approach Mount Baker is taking with the community schools. Since then, the district and MLA have been working diligently, Richmond states, to complete all the steps that are needed for the ministry to consider school replacement.

PAC representatives have had an opportunity to discuss their ideas for a new community school with ministry representatives. Debra Empson wants to see a campus-style school that could include rooms for joint career programs, a daycare centre and space for opportunities for lifelong learning.


"Despite not yet having a new building, the partnering in the programming is happening," Richmond says. She has seen from preliminary conversations that community agencies are committed to build up the partnerships with the school to ensure the community can grow in a positive way.

over →

To direct the process in a professional way, the steering group will be working with an urban planner over the next couple of weeks to develop a more detailed site plan. The format will be that of a design charrette where in a series of sessions with various stakeholders ideas will be formed into a plan for future development.

There will be five sessions, facilitated by Ross Blackwell with the Focus Corporation. The sessions are sponsored by the Columbia Basin Trust and Focus Corporation and start with events for Mount Baker staff and students this Thursday and Friday, April 23 and 24. The Aboriginal community will be involved Monday, April 27.

On Saturday, April 25, from 8 am to 5 pm and Sunday, April 26, from 8 am to 12 pm, if needed, members of potential community partners are asked to give their input. Interested groups are asked to contact Michelle Richmond at (250) 489-1224 to reserve a seat. Also on Saturday, from 6 to 8 pm, the public is invited to visit the design studio to view the preliminary results of the charrette.

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Published April 9, 2010
LOCAL NEWS

Education Minister meets with Board

By GERRY WARNER
gerry@dailytownsman.com

Is Mount Baker Secondary School any closer to being replaced in the wake of Education Minister Margaret MacDiarmid's visit to Cranbrook Wednesday? Depends on who you ask.

At least three trustees seem to think so, but Board Chairman Frank Lento isn't so sure and Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett couldn't be reached for comment Thursday.

Three Cranbrook trustees – Trina Ayling, Chris Johns and Dan Hall – issued a release Wednesday expressing confidence the case for a \$50 million Neighbourhood of Learning Centre to replace Baker has moved forward

Johns, the Mount Baker Replacement Committee Chair, says he was encouraged the Minister took time to visit the high school and seemed to have a good understanding of the District's efforts to pursue a Neighbourhood Learning Centre at the school.

“We're thrilled that Minister MacDiarmid was able to come to our District for a firsthand look at the high school. An in-person assessment from the Minister of Education obviously isn't something that happens everyday.”

Ayling, who provided MacDiarmid with a summary of what the District has done towards the Neighbourhood of Learning initiative, says she thinks progress is being made.

“I think that Mount Baker replacement is on the radar with the provincial government, and that's thanks to the efforts of our parents and the community groups that have stepped up to join Trustees in trying to create something special in a new high school.”

However Lento said Thursday it was still the number one priority with the Board even though he wasn't sure where it stood with Victoria. “I've talked to Bill (Bennett) about it. He could be a catalyst in the whole thing and I think he could play a significant role.”

Trustee Hall expressed similar sentiments. “Kudos to our administration and MLA Bill Bennett who worked to make this happen. To have the Minister come out and have a look at our challenges first-hand is very much appreciated by our Board of Education.”

However, Lento said he'd like to get an indication from Victoria soon on where the government stands on Baker replacement. “I think what we have to do is see what the Ministry (of Education) wants and then keep the pressure on. I want to be specific with the Ministry. I think we've been too generic saying neighbourhoods of learning. I want them to be a little more specific and say look, what do you exactly want?”

Lento said he doesn't want to see the District left "dancing" for the next three or five years. That's why no one was able to get an answer out of MacDiarmid during her tour here on when the Baker replacement project might go ahead, he said.

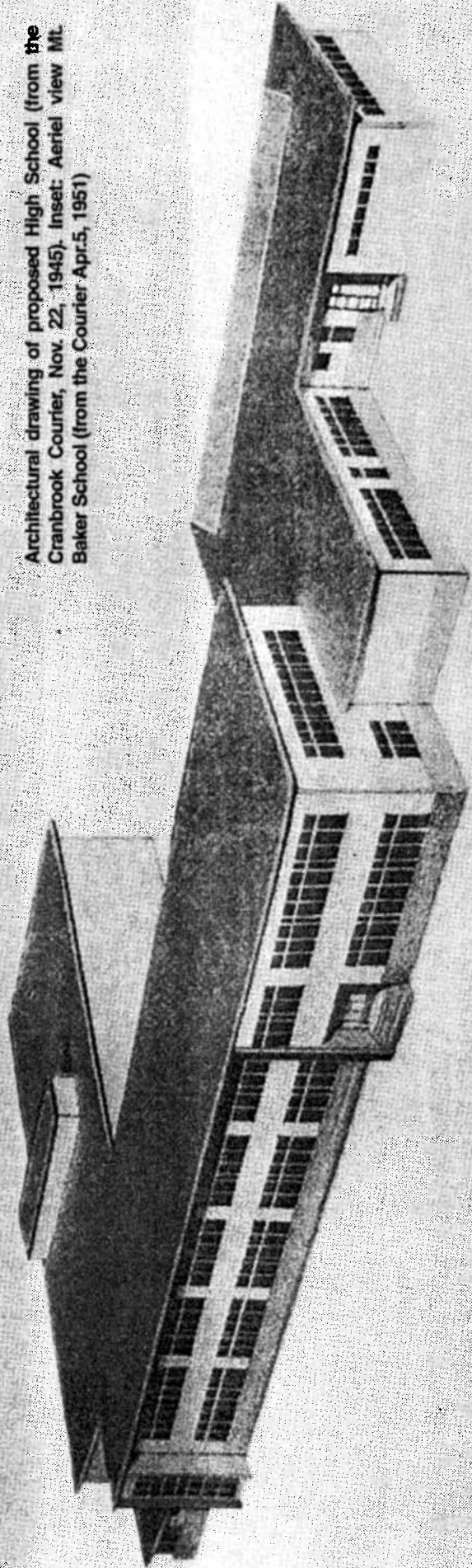
"It was quite obvious she was in no position from the budget and the money she's got to make any announcement on any capital project."

But Johns said he remains optimistic. "Trustee Ayling and I still have more work to do in discussions with community groups, but we're making steady progress, and it's good to know that the Minister and our MLA are behind us."

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Architectural drawing of proposed High School (from the Cranbrook Courier, Nov. 22, 1945). Inset: Aerial view ML Baker School (from the Courier Apr. 5, 1951)



Above is a photo of the architect's model of the new Junior-Senior High School building, giving a general view of the \$400,000 structure to be erected on the new site, the former ball ground. Last Thursday the voters assented to the borrowing of \$200,000 for this purpose.

The life and high times of Mount Baker



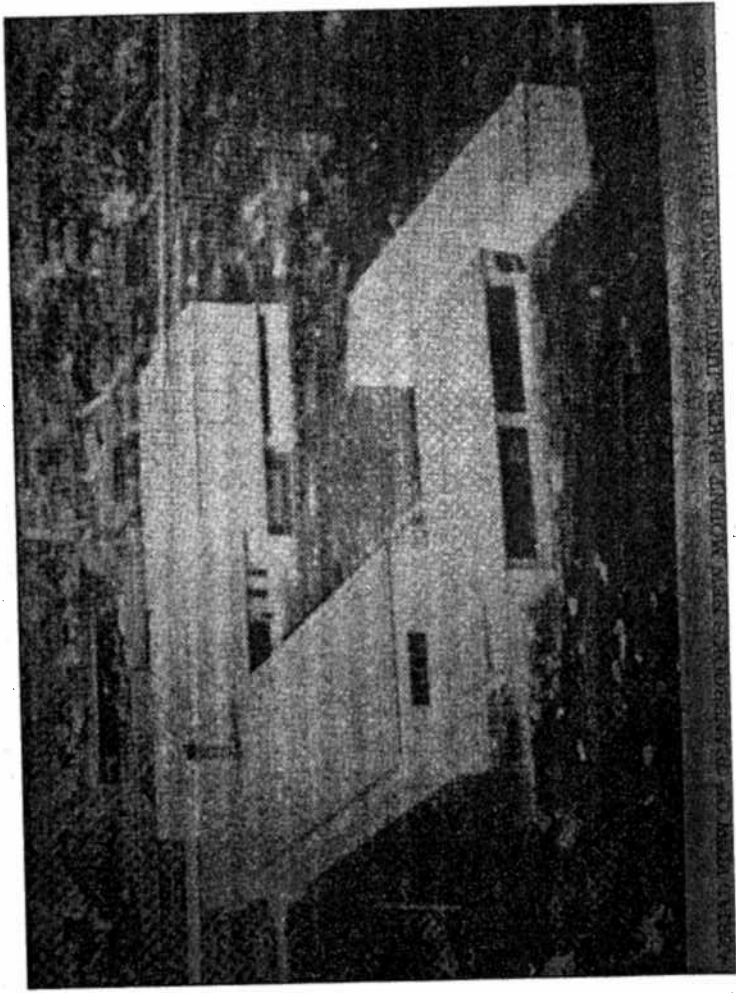
Janus

Cranbrook then and now

BY JIM CAMERON

Mt. Baker School opened fifty-eight years ago, nine years after initial recommendations and a further twenty-five years after the realization that Cranbrook needed a new high school.

In 1914, an edict from the Superintendent of Education ordered the separation of public (elementary) and high schools, which led the Cranbrook School Board to purchase the former Tenth Ave., St. Mary's Catholic School in Aug. 1918 for use as a high school. Within a few years, it became obvious that the building was not large enough to contain the growing school population and discussions began to find a solution. In the spring of 1927, the City of Cranbrook offered a choice by placing two bylaws before the ratepayers. The first called for the erection of a new ten-room high school and auditorium at a cost of \$70,000.00, while the other allowed for a five-



room addition to Tenth Ave. School at a cost of \$35,000.00. Voters vetoed both propositions by a wide margin. The School Board could see little alternative but to disallow out of town registrations and cancellation of Gr. 12 classes the following year. This created much debate and, in Dec. 1927, voters returned to the polls and agreed to the less costly school addition. Construction began shortly thereafter and Tenth Ave. became the Cranbrook High School for the next twenty-five years.

In 1945, due to an ever-increasing enrolment, the School Board began to explore locations for a new high school building. The old 'ball ground', a ten-acre field directly across from what is now the Baker St. Mall, was purchased as the site for the present day Mt. Baker School. In 1946, voters agreed to the construction of a new school. Unfortunately, by the time plans were finished three years later, the projected costs had increased dramatically and another vote was required to allow con-

struction to begin in 1950. Mrs. F. Miles, the first woman elected to the Cranbrook School Board in 1920, undertook the sod turning and Mt. Baker Junior-Senior High, offering classes from Gr. 7-13, officially opened on Apr. 6, 1951.

Due to cost factors, the building featured little in the way of exterior adornment save the tapestry brick outlining the main entrance. Many of the rooms have undergone changes in the ensuing years but the layout of the

original school is still easily discernible. In 1951, the main lobby featured green 'battleship' linoleum with walls finished in vertical, varnished, v-joint lumber. Washrooms, a cloakroom and a trophy case were also included. Along the left side of the main corridor was the office, a medical room, a drawing-graphic arts room and a general lavatory. To the right were six standard classrooms. The second floor section contained men and women's staff rooms, physics and chemistry labs (with photographic darkroom), a general science classroom, a music room and washrooms. The eastern single story extension held the sewing and food rooms and led to the Industrial Arts wing consisting of metal and woodworking shops and a drafting room. The present day band room was originally the Auditorium (with a seating capacity of 500) and the former gymnasium has now become part of the Key City Theatre. The present day drama workshop was originally a nicely appointed cafeteria. The central outside plaza, originally graveled for use as a parking lot, later became

an outdoor eating area. The basement contained electrical, ventilation and janitor rooms along with a coal fired boiler house featuring a special hoist to raise ashes to ground level for removal. The original design included a large number of windows along the southern exterior of the building, a concept that has proved impractical in more than one case in our city (witness Laurie School and the recent Cranbrook Hospital renovations) resulting, over the years, in the covering of much of the original glass.

Ever-increasing class sizes forced the school to employ a shift system of attendance prior to construction of a large addition in 1955-56. Since then there have been many smaller additions, including mobile classrooms, in an ongoing effort to keep up with enrolment. As efforts to bring the school up to modern day requirements become more and more difficult it would appear that the book is about to close on Mt. Baker High School. Perhaps replacement of the building will allow for a design that will bring a lasting sense of pride to the community fifty years hence.

The Townsman

March 6th, 2009

The Townsman
Feb. 27, 2009

Visioning Committee seeks a shining replacement for outdated decrepit Mount Baker School

By GERRY WARNER
Townsman Staff

Imagine it — Mount Baker Secondary School Campus in the heart of a revitalized downtown Cranbrook.

Sound far-fetched? The Mount Baker Secondary School Visioning Committee doesn't think so and they're already holding meetings and brainstorming with each other to make this seemingly far-fetched vision become a reality.

"It's a dream," says committee member Brian Conrad, a longtime Baker teacher who is now the regional transition coordinator at the College of the Rockies and represents COTR on the committee. "But it can become a reality," adds Baker Principal Debra Empson in a recent interview in her cramped principal's office in the 58 year old school.

Mount Baker is not only the biggest high school in the Kootenays, it's the oldest and it's showing its age.

MBSS committee sees future beyond industrial brick box

From Page 1

The middle section where the office and several classrooms are located now was opened in 1951, the first year legendary Social Credit Premier W.A.C. Bennett came to power. That's a long time ago. No such thing as a computer then. Nor a photocopier, DVD or a cellphone, let alone students with cell phones in class. In fact, few students in 1951 would even have had a TV set to watch at home. That's how old Baker is. The school has had 13 additions done to it since it opened its doors in 1951, and while the building is still considered safe, it's definitely showing its age, says Tom Walkley, manager of facilities for School District 5.

And considering the vintage of the ancient school, it's long past time for Baker to be replaced with a gleaming new facility that reflects the reality of today, which is far different than the 1950's, says Empson. "It has a bit of history. Just the fact that it was built in 1951 means it's hardly a modern educational facility anymore. It certainly doesn't meet the student needs of our era."

Conrad is a little more explicit. "It's an industrial brick box and what we're proposing is quite different." Like no more mercury in the classrooms. A school with an upscale eating facility so students don't have to eat on dusty hallway floors. "When I first came here and saw that, it was so embarrassing," says Empson. A school without outdated portables attached to the building and a school surrounded by green space instead of cheek by jowl with a busy downtown street.

Hence the birth of the Mount Baker Secondary School ad hoc visioning committee entrusted with the Herculean task of turning the proverbial sow's ear into a silk purse, although in Baker's case, it's pretty well a given that the school will be bulldozed and a new school rise in its place. At least that's the hope of the visioning committee, which consists of close to a dozen

people including Empson and Conrad as well as District 5 Board of Education Trustees Trina Ayling, Chris Johns and Dan Hall as well as representatives from the IHA, the provincial government, the Cranbrook Society for Community Living and Mayor Scott Manjak representing Cranbrook City Council.

"What we're looking at is a community campus style school that will allow all of us to work in an educational partnership with our kids and the community at large," says Empson. The community looms large in the Baker vision with plans to work in close partnership with a variety of community services such as day care, Early Childhood Educators, COTR, the RCMP community liaison team, Ktunaxa support and others.

There's even tentative plans to purchase property near the schools for a youth centre, an elders centre and other possible support services.

"The whole idea is that all of these partners become part of the school community and not separate from us and that together we can raise and educate our youth," says Empson.

Baker already has a transition program in partnership with COTR that sees local students attending both facilities so a stronger relationship between Baker and COTR is a natural, says Conrad. "The college wants to expand the partnership and sees value in a downtown, store-front campus where it can offer programs downtown."

Conrad says teaching and learning today is a lot more "hands-on" than it used to be and this is a good thing. "For students to become responsible members of the community, they need to interact with the community. The real world is not someplace 'out there.' The real world is here and students need to discover that."

The IHA is enthusiastic about the downtown campus model and is itching to proceed with the visioning process, says Empson. "They really want to start

Cont. 2



Mount Baker Secondary School. A change is overdue.

working with our kids and they want to be a big part of this." IHA professionals look forward to building a stronger relationship with the new school in working on issues like drugs, violence, nutrition and other health issues, she says.

With close to 1,000 Grade 10 to 12 students enrolled at Baker now, on any given weekday five per cent of Cranbrook's population is inside the ancient edifice, says Conrad. "That's why we don't want it replaced

with another brick box. Times have changed."

Replacement of Baker is now at the top of School District's priority list and all the trustees are on board including the ones in the Elk Valley and Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett has been a strong supporter from the start, says Conrad. A new campus-style Baker could do wonders for the downtown, says Empson.

"We're talking about having an educational, cultural and recreational cen-

tre in the heart of the city. That's really the vision and it could be a key to downtown revitalization," she says.

"Let's build a building the whole community can be proud of," says Conrad. "This is the largest school in the Kootenays and now that Crowe (J.L. Crowe Senior Secondary in Trail) has been replaced this is the biggest dinosaur left and if we build it right it could be a prototype for the whole province."

Undoubtedly, such a dream won't happen overnight but the process has begun and everyone on the visioning committee is excited about the future prospects of the Kootenay's largest school.

"This could really put Cranbrook on the map," says Conrad. "We don't teach in isolation from the community. We want to throw the doors open so education takes place both ways."

Feb 5/09

**The Daily Townsman
The Daily Bulletin**

Laurie girls use tourney to help out a friend

Townsman Sports

Members of the Laurie Tigers girls' basketball team are using their home tournament to help out a former teammate.

Two members of the club played on Team Kootenay at last year's B.C. Summer Games; not long after, Grand Fork's Molly Imrie was diagnosed with bone cancer, and has spent much of the school year at Vancouver battling the disease.

Laurie is hosting its tournament this weekend, and will be taking admission by donation and giving proceeds to the Imrie family to help offset their expenses.

The tournament, which features teams from the East Kootenay, and Grand Forks, gets underway Friday at 2 p.m. That game features Laurie against Sparwood.

Saturday's first game tips off at 8 a.m. and the last at 2 p.m.

MLA COLUMN

K-12 education

Let me make one thing clear: I like and respect teachers! I have a brother and sister-in law who are teachers. I was a substitute teacher during university and enrolled in McArthur Teachers College before choosing to work in the fishing lodge industry full time. My comments here are not critical of good teachers who are worth their weight in gold, but of their militant, partisan union.

The BCTF has been shovelling its member's money off the back of a truck for several weeks now, saying we don't care about children or education. They hope to influence the provincial election in May and frankly they seem to subscribe to the old saying that if you repeat a lie often enough, some people will believe it. So, with no disrespect to hard working teachers, here are some facts:

- B.C. has the highest budget ever [\$5.68 billion].

- K - 12 education budget has increased by nearly \$1.2 billion - 23 per cent.

- We've invested \$3.1 billion in renovations, maintenance and new schools.

- Our legislation states that the maximum class size for kindergarten is 22 students; for Grades 1-3 is 24 students; Grades 4-7 classes with more than 30 students require the consent of the teacher; and Grades 8-12 classes with more than 30 students require consulta-

tion with the teacher.

- All 60 school districts in B.C. have complied with class size legislation and government will continue to monitor class sizes throughout the province and work with parents, students, teach-



Bill
Bennett

ers and school districts to ensure balanced class size and composition.

- 95 per cent of B.C. classrooms have 30 or fewer students.

- 99 per cent of B.C. classrooms have 32 or fewer students.

- The number of classes in B.C. with more than 30 students has decreased by nearly 64 per cent.

- Enrolment has declined by about 50,000 students.

- Yes, some schools have closed because it makes more sense to spend education dollars on students in the classroom than on keeping half empty schools open.

- I helped get the Sparwood high school replaced and I will help get Mount Baker in Cranbrook replaced.

The system is not perfect and will always need improvement. We are making progress, but the continued partisan, biased propaganda of the BCTF does not help students.

*Bill Bennett is MLA for
East Kootenay*

MBSS

From Page 1

Speaking to reporters in front of the school, Sebastian said Mount Baker was opened when legendary Sacred W.A.C. Bennett was premier of the province and was now showing its age.

"If you look at some of the challenges like the roof, which seems to be on its last legs. There's health concerns

regarding lead and mercury. Clearly the environmental standards and the sustainability of a building built in 1951 aren't the same as the standards of the 21st century. This is one of the most important buildings in the Kootenays in terms of the number of people that are in it on a daily basis."

At the very least upgrades to Baker are needed now, but the real solution is replacement of the old school as soon as possible, Sebastian said. "Improvements are a

short-term measure. Replacement is what we should be working towards; not if it happens, but when it happens."

However, Bennett said he took steps in that direction last November when he met with school board members, the District 5 superintendent and the Baker Parents Advisory Committee (PAC).

"I've also tried to get it (Baker) moved up on the capital building list in Victoria and get it done sooner rather than later, and I'd say we've been making very good progress on that."

Bennett said the only reason Sebastian and his supporters were in front of Baker Monday was to try to create the impression that he wasn't doing anything about the condition of the school. "I'm all over it. And I've been all over it from the moment I was first asked about it."

The East Kootenay MLA said he went to bat for District 5 when it sought money from Victoria to build a new secondary school in Sparwood and is now attempting to do the same for Cranbrook.

"I can't promise how long this will take but I'll get it done the same way I've got every other thing done that I've been asked to do. The reason they held their little public display today (Monday) was purely to make politics and it's not constructive."

Sebastian said it was a question of government priorities. "There is a \$500 million cost overrun on the con-



Gerry Warner photo

NDP Candidate Troy Sebastian and supporters held a news conference in front of Mount Baker Senior Secondary School Monday to draw attention to the need to spend money to upgrade or replace the aging school. Meanwhile Kootenay East MLA Bill Bennett says he's already working on the issue. (L to R) Board Trustee Trina Ayling, Cranbrook District Teachers Association President Wendy Turner, Troy Sebastian and Columbia River-Revelstoke MLA John Macdonald.

vention centre in Vancouver. If Mount Baker cost \$25 million to replace, you could build 20 Mount Bakers across the province. It's a question of priorities with this government and clearly they're not getting it when it comes to education."

But Baker PAC chair Michelle Richmond said Bennett has been in contact with the PAC on the issue as late as last week in an attempt to get Baker moved up on the government's priority list for building new schools. "We're very appreciative of the work Bill has done, but you can't just wave a magic wand and get your school replaced."

Richmond said there are 50 schools in the province on the "critical list" for replace-

ment and Bennett is doing every thing he can to get Baker moved to the top of the list.

Columbia River-Revelstoke MLA Norm Macdonald, who also took part in the sidewalk demonstration, said Bennett as tourism minister has o.k.'d the spending of \$365 million for a retractable roof for B.C.

Place Stadium.

"In terms of priorities, the NDP would be putting its priorities towards public education ... In the past seven years, you've seen 177 schools closed, mainly in rural areas, and school districts forced to run reduced schedules so education has simply not been a priority for BC Liberals."

MBSS comes into the election mix

By GERRY WARNER
Townsman Staff

The future of Mount Baker Senior Secondary School quickly emerged this week as the first issue out of the gate in the Kootenay East provincial election race.

On Monday, only one day after holding his campaign kickoff, Kootenay East NDP candidate Troy Sebastian and several supporters braved 25 below zero temperatures to hold a "sidewalk press conference" in front of Baker Secondary to call for upgrading or replacement of the aging school.

No sooner had the NDP made its initial foray on the issue, then incumbent MLA Bill Bennett issued a statement saying he was "all over" the issue long before the NDP became involved.

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Sebastian launches campaign

NDP leader's ID stolen during car break-in, unable to make Cranbrook event

By GERRY WARNER
Townsman Staff

More than 100 loyal NDP supporters turned up for the party's Kootenay East campaign kickoff at the Heritage Inn Sunday, but a car break-in at Surrey Friday resulted in party leader Carole James being a no-show.

James was the scheduled keynote speaker for the event which officially launched Kootenay East NDP candidate Troy Sebastian into the race.

In a further bizarre twist to the incident, James lost all her identification in the smash and grab which saw her purse taken from her assistant's car while she was attending a party event in Surrey.

Without identification, security regulations prevented James from flying, which was why she was unable to make her Cranbrook engagement.

Former NDP MLA and cabinet minister Corky Evans, substituted for James at the last moment and in his inimitable style blamed the whole incident on former U.S. President George Bush.

See NDP, Page 4

NDP launch EK campaign

From Page 1

"It was because of a jerk named Bush that we have these kind of security regulations now," said Evans to a roar of laughter from the packed crowd. Evans then went on to attack the record of the Liberal government in Victoria, which brought more approval from the crowd.

The former NDP cabinet minister said the financial mess over building the Olympic Village in Vancouver could have been avoided if the government financed the project itself instead of borrowing from a New York hedge fund.

"Instead of building it ourselves, we borrowed from some millionaires' club in New York and now we have to backstop their mistake. There was a time when we used to do projects like this on our own. Now we're in a jam because every single person in British Columbia wants the Olympics to succeed but they don't want to see Vancouver go broke."

In a later interview, Sebastian also seized on the Olympic Village fiasco, saying the millions being diverted to bail out the Olympics could be better spent on the province's

schools and hospitals including the aging Mount Baker Secondary School in Cranbrook.

"The cost of that could be easily recovered from all the Olympic overruns, particularly the convention centre which is 500 million over budget. That could build at least a dozen, if not more, Mount Bakers throughout the province."

The money could also be used to improve health care in the province, especially for seniors, Sebastian said. "We also have an acute crisis in seniors' care, particularly in Sparwood. The community there is trying to get the level of care restored to the 2001 level. If they want to run on that record, I'll be glad to debate them any day of the week."

Sebastian said he plans to run a positive campaign emphasizing change. He said he's also willing to acknowledge NDP government mistakes in the past.

"But we're now talking in the 2009 context where this government has strayed away from its New Era promise of transparency and accountability. If they are so transparent and accountable, why won't they tell us the true cost of



Gerry Warner photo

Columbia River-Revelstoke MLA Norm Macdonald speaks at the campaign kick-off for East Kootenay NDP candidate Troy Sebastian (at podium).

the Olympics?"

Sebastian said his campaign will focus on health care issues, including wait list times and seniors' health. "Seniors' health care issues are very dear to me and I don't believe they've been adequately addressed, especially the farther you get out of Cranbrook."

Asked about the Liberals drawing a bigger crowd at their campaign kickoff, Sebastian said he wasn't

concerned. "Bill has been in government for eight years so 400 people divided by eight years is about 50 people-a-year, I suppose and I got 100 people here after being leader for only two months."

"So I think it's a good sign of momentum for us. To be honest, it's still a bit early. There's more than 100 days left in the campaign and I think this is a fantastic start."

Sebastian said the NDP

would never have the financial resources the Liberals do with their corporate supporters, but will counter the Liberals' advantage by mobilizing more volunteers.

"The way we win is through people power, lots of volunteers giving their time. That's how we will win this riding."

West Kootenay NDP MLA Katrine Conroy also addressed the meeting and accused the Liberals of

abandoning rural B.C. as well as seniors. "These are the people that built this province and they are being abandoned by Gordon Campbell in Victoria. We don't need four more years of this."

Columbia River-Revelstoke MLA Norm Macdonald told the meeting the race now is a dead heat and the party that works the hardest will be the party that wins the provincial election May 12.

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CRAIG LINDSAY

Kootenay News Reporter

Frank Lento from Fernie was elected as Chairperson of the Board of Education for School District 5 at the inaugural meeting held in Cranbrook last week. Lento has served the school district for 41 years as a teacher and administrator and, most recently, was the driving force behind the project to build three new playgrounds in the Elk Valley.

Trustees representing the City of Cranbrook and Area C are Trina Ayling, Pat Casey, Chris Ellis, Dan Hall and Chris Johns. Bev Bellina is from Sparwood; Shaun Damstrom, Electoral Area B (South Country); and Corey Miltenberger, District of Elkford. Ayling, Hall and Johns are first time board members while the others are returning.

Superintendent Bill Gook ves the mix of people on the board is very positive. "It's great. It's a nice mix of people with a wide variety of backgrounds," Gook said, "All are focused on making School District 5 one of the best school districts in the province."

"They will focus on each individual student so that he or she can be successful in a safe and caring environment," Gook added.

New trustee Trina Ayling thought the inaugural meeting went well and liked the choice of Frank Lento for Board Chair. "Frank really cares about kids," Ayling said, "I really liked his comment about us working towards being the 'best school board in B.C.' I'm really looking forward to working with the board to make that happen."

One of the ideas the board has is to hold a retreat to dis-

cuss the board's vision for the next three years. "We want to bring up ideas for the direction the board wants to go," Ayling said. "We want to ensure excellence for education for all children."

Ayling believes that getting a new Mount Baker building is important though she is hesitant to state goals without doing more research. The superintendent released his Annual Report on Student Achievement at the meeting, which was approved by the trustees and will be sent to the Ministry of Education.

"We want to ensure excellence for education for all children."

Trina Ayling, SD 5 Trustee

Areas of on-going strength mentioned in the report was the Secondary School Completion rate, which in 2007-08 was 84 per cent. This kept SD5 within the top 10 per cent of the province. The Secondary School Completion rate for Aboriginal learners was 61 per cent. Although the number is down from 72 per cent of a year ago - it is still higher than the 52 per cent from 2004-05.

Improving areas include 98 per cent of Grade 6 students moving on to Grade 7, as well as 92 per cent of Grade 9's moving on to Grade 10.

Challenging areas for the district include: 10 per cent of Grade 10 students and 23 per cent of Grade 11's did not re-

turn to school; Although results from the District Writing Assessment indicate continued satisfactory performance the district believes that many students are minimally meeting expectations; The Secondary School Completion Rate (84 per cent) has not improved significantly during the past five years. The superintendent feels that the district can and needs to increase the number of students graduating Grade 12.

Gook sees several challenges for the new board with the most pressing issue being the need to replace aging buildings, including Mount Baker Secondary School.

Another major issue is the success of students. "Although we rank in the top five in B.C. in completion rates of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students," Gook said, "we'd like to see all students graduate."

Challenges for new SD 5 trustees!

