

Merritt Bench Elementary

Parent Advisory Council

Minutes

6:30-7:30pm
September 15, 2026
Welcome back!

1. Call to order and welcome to new parents 6:35pm
Attendance: Bethany, Theresa, Amy (Voting) Daniella, Gordon (non-voting) (no Quorum)
2. What is PAC?
 - a. Positions and responsibilities - Discussions of whether to change the executive format, having one secretary/treasurer position or keep it separate. We could also lower number of executive and lower quorum
 - b. 2025-2026 - No Quorum, elections postponed
3. Review and approve [June minutes](#) and agenda
 - No Quorum, discussed some items
4. Treasurer's Report - [Chequing](#) & [Gaming](#)
 - No Quorum to approve report
5. Old Business:
 - a. Rotary park day: feedback
 - Everything was positive, kids liked the snow cones and the NVIT leaders, music and sports equipment was a positive addition.
 - b. Sensory pathway: feedback
 - Positive, staff will get orientated on it at the next staff meeting.
 - Kids seem to be using and noticing it as they go down the hallways - good addition
 - c. Next project: audio system for gym?
 - 2x Quotes, Long & McQuade at \$4,175.29
 - Do we go with a less expensive system? Would it get echoy or lose quality in the big space?
 - d. Additional items
6. New Business
 - a. Revised Code of Conduct
 - Needed a new one due to the last one being Unjointed and missing sections.

- Being able to move the Code of Conduct to a kid friendly version as well so the kids understand what it actually means.
- Bethany says that Use of 'Skimpy Top' seems like the not the best, it seems that Daniella has already removed this from the Dress Code
- b. Bench Open House Sept 22
 - 5-630, Hot Dogs & Water Bottles again - definitely having the suggestion box is a nice idea
 - Literacy Merritt wanted to do Come with Read Me on that night but we don't feel that's a good idea, it would take away from the open house feeling.
- c. BCCPAC membership
 - Approved to become member
- d. Spiritwear fundraiser
 - Zip Up Hoodie
 - Nicer Style
 - Hats?
 - Bethany, Amy, and Theresa will text and come up with a plan for what we want to offer
- e. Additional items
- 7. What is DPAC?
 - District PAC, has representatives from each PAC and takes things to a District Level. Amy has agreed to stay on as Rep
- 8. Trustee Report [from Gordon \(Attached\)](#)
 - Discussion arose in regards to homeschooling and declining numbers - do we know officially why these families are leaving and going to homeschool? Should this be an issue the district thinks about addressing?
- 9. [Principal's Report](#)
- 10. Adjournment & next meeting
 - Send out an email to see what days/times are best and set new meeting date

Merritt Bench Elementary PAC
June 2, 2026
Meeting held at Bench Elementary Library & via Teams

Present:

Daniella Bennie, Principal
Bethany Ryan, President
Bailee Allen, Vice President
Gordon Swan, Trustee
Amy Douthwright, Treasurer
Dana Grebinski, Fundraising
Kayla McNaney, Secretary
Teresa Van Caesele

Meeting called to order: 6:30pm

Approval of minutes

A. Motion to approve the minutes for May 5, 2026 made by Dana. Seconded by Bethany. All in favour.

Treasurers Report - attached in email

Checking

Opening balance:	\$ 10,022.01
Deposit interest:	\$ 18.53
Expenses (Valley Graze, Aim High):	\$ 2495.91
Outstanding Chqs (MBE – Bussing for Ski Trip):	\$ 1087.47
Outstanding Deposits (Spiritwear, VG, Beef Jerky, Neufelds):	\$ 5098.00
Reconciled Bank Balance:	<u>\$ 11,555.49</u>
Committed spending:	\$ 2900.00
Remaining available balance:	<u>\$ 8655.49</u>

Gaming

Opening Balance:	\$ 191.50
Ending Cash Balance:	<u>\$ 191.50</u>
Committed to Spend	\$ 711.20
Remaining available balance:	<u>\$ -519.70</u>

Motion to approve Treasurers Report for May and June made by Dana and seconded by Bethany. All in favour.

Funding Requests

Mr. Denton requests \$200 for bike rodeo (supplies/treats, marking paint, airhorn & refill, eggs, freezies, prizes).

Motion to approve \$200 for Bike Rodeo made by Amy. Seconded by Kayla. All in favour.

Mr. Denton requests \$180 for wildlife park (to offset some of the cost to parents).

Motion to approve \$180 for Wildlife Park made by Bailee. Seconded by Amy. All in favour.

Old Business

- A. Teacher Appreciation: Ms. Shackelly is retiring this year. Get a Valley Graze gift card for her to show appreciation. Bailee will pick up.

Motion to approve \$50 on Valley Graze gift card for Ms. Shackelly in honour of her retirement made by Bailee. Seconded by Kayla. All in favour.

- B. Staff Appreciation: Bethany to call in order to Valley Graze for a charcuterie board to show appreciation to the staff on June 26th.
- C. Fundraising update:
 - a. Fathers Day: Beef Jerky fundraiser raised \$474. Order has been received and Dana will sort through this week.
- D. Sensory Pathway: Amy emailed out digital trail of footprint pathway. Looks great.

New Business:

- A. Ideas for new projects to fundraise for
 - a. Audio system for gym (microphones and bluetooth), gym equipment (staff will come up with list), pipe and draping for Christmas concert.
 - i. Daniella will check with some of the other schools where they got their systems from. Will also reach out to Brandon re: their system and what will be done with it.
 - b. Will do suggestion box again next year for students.
- B. Rotary Park Day: PAC (Bethany and Gord) to go down and make snow cones for the kids. Either purchase syrup or make own using kool-aid packages. Plan for about 150 cones. Amy to let us know cost. Ice either needs to be pre-shredded or we will contact The City to ask if we can turn on the power to the band shed so we can power the machine.

Motion to approve up to \$100 to make snow cones for Rotary Park Day made by Bailee. Seconded by Kayla. All in favour.

DPAC

- A. N/A

Trustee Report – attached in email

- A. Final Board meeting for this school year is next Wednesday
- B. June 22 there a meeting hosted by John Chenoweth for new people interested in becoming a School Trustee
 - a. Chose John as he is not running for re-election
 - b. Thought it might be less intimidating not to have existing trustees who are running again at the information session.
 - i. Nomination packages available – August 4, 2026
Nomination period – September 1-11, 2026
Last day to withdraw without Ministry approval – September 18, 2026
Declaration of election by voting or acclamation – September 21, 2026
Required advance voting day – October 7, 2026
2nd advance voting day – TBA
General voting day – October 17, 2026 (preliminary results evening of election)
Last day to declare official election results – October 21, 2026
First day available to take oath if elected by acclamation – October 18, 2026; if elected by voting – October 27, 2026
New term begins – November 1, 2026
- C. June 3 is the Indigenous Grad ceremony. 83 students this year + - . I can remember when it was 12 students.
- D. MSS Grad is June 18
- E. Several events have been held to bring together the students & parents from Central and Collettsville.
 - a. Most pressing issue for students seems to be are we going to be HAWKS or LES CHATS SAUVAGES
- B. June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples' Day.
- C. Last day of school is June 25.
- D. Attended Harris Educational Law Conference.
- E. Attended two day online sessions on School Attendance Challenges (six hours each day of back to back sessions).

Principals Report: - attached in email

- A. May was busy with field trips and activity. After school program wrapped up.
- B. Talent show was great success. Thank you to Mrs. Otters for organizing.
- C. Mrs. Vandenbrink and Mr. Blooms class got to go to Harmon Lake for tree planting.
- D. Mr. Dentons class did project and designed their own taco trucks, followed by a taco fiesta.
- E. Students got to see a band performance by Panorama Ridge Senior Secondary School from Surrey.

- F. Update given at last DPAC re: Emergency Procedures. Police officer cruisers all have master keys for the schools.
- G. Lots of field trips and events coming up:
 - a. K/1 to Fire Hall June 3rd
 - b. District Track Meet June 4th
 - c. Merritt Speedway June 5th
 - d. K/1 to Bowling Alley
 - e. Eagle Bay is June 10-12th
 - f. Bike Rodeo June 18th
 - g. Denton/Jones Wildlife Park June 19th
 - h. Vandenbrink/Pineau Science Center/Swimming June 19th
 - i. Grade 7 Grad June 22nd
 - j. Primary Fun Day June 23
 - k. Whole School Rotary Park June 24th
 - l. Kindergarten Graduation June 25th

Next Meeting: September 15, 2026 at 6:30pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm

Merritt Bench PAC
Treasurers Report - Chequing
September 15, 2026

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[illegible]

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Amount</i>
7/2/2026	Deposit Interest	CAD17.92
8/5/2026	Spiritwear	CAD592.00
8/5/2026	Valley Graze	CAD2,600.00
8/5/2026	Neufelds	CAD596.00
	Total Income:	CAD3,805.92

Date	Chq#	Payable To	Description	Amount
6/14/2026	79	Amy	Beef Jerky	\$886.00
	80	Theresa	Thank you Cards	\$21.06
	81	MBE	Requests & Field Trips	\$1,569.63
	82	Valley Graze	Teacher Appreciation	\$200.00
	84	MBE	Bike Rodeo & Kinder Grad	\$263.04
			Total Expenses	CAD2,939.73

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Cheque #	Payable To	Amount
	Aim High Creations - Sensory Path	CAD560.00
Total Outstanding Cheques		CAD560.00

Cheque #	Payable From	Amount
	MBE - Beef Jerky	CAD1,360.00
Total Outstanding Deposits		CAD1,360.00

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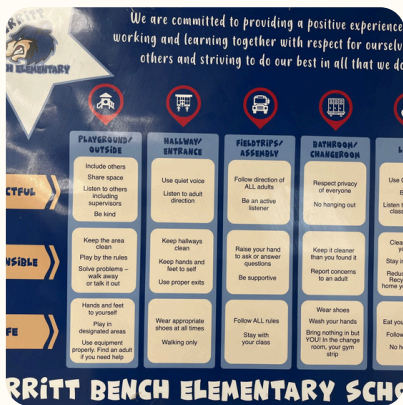
Date Committed	Description		Amount
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Total Committed				CAD0.00

Merritt Bench PAC				
Treasurers Report - Gaming				
September 15, 2026				
Beginning Balance (June 12, 2026)				CAD191.50
Income (Deposits)				
Date	Description			Amount
	Total Income:			CAD0.00
Expenses (Cheques Written & Cleared)				
Date	Chq#	Payable To	Description	Amount
			Total Expenses	CAD0.00
Ending Cash Balance (August 14, 2026)				CAD191.50
Outstanding Deposits (Haven't Cleared Bank)				
Cheque #	Payable To			Amount
Total Outstanding Deposits				CAD0.00
Reconciled Bank Balance				CAD191.50



Welcome Back



Principal's Update

School Start-Up - overall it's been nice to welcome students back and we are excited to have welcomed an additional 11 students from out of district and 12 Kindergarten Families. Our intermediate classes are large and quite full.

Revised Code of Conduct and Parent Handbook - I'll bring copies of both to the meeting.

Reviewing the Behaviour Matrix - September is for review - we have been reviewing the behaviour matrix in classes and as a school.

Terry Fox Run - September 18th, 2026

Open House - September 22nd, 2026
Hot dogs and Welcome back to school.

Welcome to New Staff -

Mrs. Krystin Tourand
Mrs. Madison Anderson
Mr. Paul Eves
Mrs. Jody John

Trustees Report - two weeks into the year

From Gordon Swan <gswan@sd58.bc.ca>

Date Mon 9/14/2026 7:38 PM

To Kristina <desmondkristinad@gmail.com>; stephjohnson@hotmail.ca <stephjohnson@hotmail.ca>; David Andersen <dandersen@365.sd58.bc.ca>; jhodson@hotmail.com <jhodson@hotmail.com>; qtjrookee@outlook.com <qtjrookee@outlook.com>; BenchPACgroup20252026 <benchpacgroup20252026@365.sd58.bc.ca>; Daniella Bennie <dbennie@365.sd58.bc.ca>

Thought I would start with a few highlights from the year that was before looking ahead to 2026/27

- YMCA qualified for \$10 a day subsidy for the Riverside Child Care Center creating additional access for parents.
- Maintained counselling ratios to ensure support for mental health
- Created two 1.0 FTE coaching positions to provide elbow-to-elbow support for K-7 teachers in literacy and numeracy.
- Dedicated 0.4 FTE to a coach to support our Indigenous Language program as well as teachers on Letters of Permission
- Installed Carbon Monoxide Monitors as well as AEDs in all schools (1 year ahead of the Provincial Deadline) Cost I believe was over \$68,000
- Invested \$50,000 for numeracy resources
- Invested \$300,00 for Leveled Literacy support for 2026-2027
- Numeracy Committee and Schools implemented the SNACC (numeracy assessment) for Grades 1-9.
- SCIDES is a school of choice for online learning, especially for students with diverse learning needs.
- Replacement program for aging maintenance fleet and equipment to maintain safe and caring learning environments
- Strategic Plan Working Committee developed the new Strategic Plan draft for 2026-2027. The working committee included the Board, Rightsholders, Senior Admin, Principals, Teachers, Support Staff and parents. Communication (better) is one of the three pillars.
- 79 Indigenous Graduates!
- 13 graduates from CLC with 10 Dogwoods and 3 Adult Dogwoods. This is unprecedented!

Looking ahead to 2026 / 27 so far we have:

- Invested another \$250,000 in literacy and numeracy resources and supports - \$150,000 for resources and \$100,000 to support an additional 0.6 FTE to support the implementation of the Levelled Literacy Intervention kits as well as an additional).2 FTE to support numeracy from Grade 8-12.
- \$300,000 to begin pipe replacement at Central (deferred maintenance)
- Increased the FTE for Counselling (0.2 FTE)
- Able to grandfather previously out of catchment students in Merritt
- Rebuild operating reserves to meet policy requirements of 2 to 4%
- Maintained two 1.0 FTE coaching positions to provide elbow-to-elbow support for K-12 teachers
- Maintained dedicated 0.4 FTE to a coach to support our Indigenous Language program as well as teachers on Letters of Permission
- Implementing New Strategic Plan for 2026-2030
- 27 CUPE appointments over the summer.
- 33 teaching appointments over the summer - 25 are temporary appointments. Everything from Summer School at SCIDES, Teacher Librarians, Art 9 to 12, Food studies 8 to 12, Counsellor, Literacy Coaches,

Student Support Teachers, Band, Math Grades 8 to 10, Wood 8 to 12, Metal 10 to 12, Pre-Calc Math 10 & 11, teachers for two hockey programs through SCIDES (Kelowna & Atomic Academy -Langley I think) to name just a few.

- Successful move into Ecole Merritt Central

What do our numbers look like: (this is a really, really early snapshot:

- Current enrollment 1736. Two off or projection of 1738. Remember our Projections was for 51 fewer students in K-12 Standard (bricks and mortar). Ministry projection was 1765 so our student population is declining faster than Ministry projections. There will be more detailed breakdown at Wednesday's Board meeting. Our numbers will not be finalized until the September 30th count.

Reports from schools was first week start of up went well.

On the Elections Trail

- Trustees in Princeton (3) acclaimed = no elections, one is new retiree to the community

There will be elections in the north end of the District

- 2 running for 1 position Merritt Rural
- 5 running for 3 positions in City of Merritt

Tuesday I will be at MSS at 6pm and then 6:30 over to Merritt Bench (so I might be late)

K^wuk^wscemx^w - Thank you,

Gordon Swan

Chair, Nicola Similkameen SD58
250 378 7937

We respectfully acknowledge the Nlaka'pamux-Thompson and Syilx-Okanagan Nation peoples on whose unceded lands we are grateful to live, work and play.

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