

You're moving where?



Photos and story by Heidi Grant

Where's that? ...

Why? ... Those are the questions we were asked when we decided to leave our jobs in the Vancouver/Victoria areas and move to Nechako Lakes.

The relocation was a lifestyle choice. What we found was a thriving Professional Learning Community, well-equipped schools, supportive working relationships, a healthy and affordable lifestyle, and more than a few moose.

Having spent most of our careers in Maple Ridge, Victoria, and Cowichan Valley it came as a surprise to some that we were moving to the hinterland. The reality is that at every opportunity we were exploring, camping, hiking, and fishing. Many of our adventures took us to Prince George and the Lakes District. It is a beautiful area when you like to do anything outside, and we did. Burns Lake offers a multitude of lakes in which you actually catch fish. There is a world class set of mountain bike trails outside of town at Kagar Lake. Omineca Cross Country Ski club is minutes away and offers night lit groomed trails. There is a women's hockey team (men's too) and a thriving choir. The Arts Council brings in an impressive array of performances throughout the year. Nearby Hudson Bay Mountain, in Smithers, is a destination downhill facility. Lakes, large and small, dot the area for hundreds of kilometers each way. Free campgrounds with free firewood on these beautiful lakes are everywhere. You can swim, fish, hunt, or paddle. The opportunities are endless as are the sunsets. This is what we came for, but we found much more.

Nechako Lakes School District encompasses the area from Burns Lake to Fort St. James to Vanderhoof. We have elementary schools, middle years programs, high

schools, K-12 schools, and alternate schools. Every classroom in our schools is equipped with a SmartBoard: stand alone and portable technology are put into the hands of learners. Every teacher in our district is part of a Professional Learning Community. We have embraced this concept; it is in policy. Teacher collaboration is a part of our culture and takes place during the school day. Leadership opportunities abound.

Our teachers share a vitality and a passion. I have the privilege of having second year teachers on my staff. They came out of teacher education programs and into full-time positions. They brought with them current pedagogy, enthusiasm, and energy. Each of our schools is staffed with teachers ranging from newly trained to the very experienced. People either come here for a few years and stay for life or they are born and raised and return here to work as soon as they are trained. I consider it a privilege to have been welcomed into this community.

The North is not for everyone; nor is rural living. To thrive here you must enjoy all four seasons and you must value knowing everyone and having everyone know you. If you are looking for a change, or know other educators who are, then I encourage you to consider the North. We are at

the leading edge of all that is happening in education *and we offer a healthy, balanced lifestyle.*

Heidi Grant is Principal, Grassy Plains Elementary Jr Secondary and is a member of the BCPVPA Board of Directors. She can be reached at hgrant@sd91.bc.ca

