

Community Collaborations and the Rural Reach!

SD8 school libraries in Kaslo and area D benefit from grassroots fundraising efforts.

A small group of conscientious Kaslo community members are working together to bring more awareness about diversity and inclusivity through education to their hometown and region. Grassroots organization SLIDE (*Support for Learning Inclusivity, Diversity and Empathy*) was created in June 2020, out of a momentum growing to speak up against racism and injustices.

The group sought opportunities to find positive ways to make an impact in their own rural community and has since raised over \$10,000 through community fundraising and grants. 100% of the monies raised have been used to purchase books for the local public and school libraries, and through partnerships with the BC Association of Community Response Network, SLIDE has been able to apply for additional grants.

SLIDE spokesperson Sarah Evans commented, “Initially, we reached out to the schools and public library and asked how best we could support them in our aim to raise awareness in our community?” Research has shown that exposure to diversity from early on can have an impact on how children learn to accept and develop empathy. “We decided that a way to do that was to increase the number of books that represent diverse characters from diverse authors, that are available to students from very early in their education.”

SD8 schools, J.V.Humphries Elementary-Secondary and Jewett Elementary, have both been fortunate to have added a significant number of new books to their school libraries this fall. Over 500 books have since been donated to the school and to the Kaslo Public library through this initiative.

SLIDE’s focus has been to find books that represent diverse characters and are written by diverse authors. Diversities represented in the books SLIDE purchases include racial, sexual, gender, ability, family, economic, citizenship/immigration status, age, and neurodiversity. They also have made it their priority to purchase books from local, independent bookstores, with the majority of books coming from Otter Books in Nelson.

The success of the initiative has generated another collaboration with the community’s Holiday Hamper program, organized through the North Kootenay Community Services Food Hub. SLIDE is seeking ongoing donations this month to be able to include a book for each child in the hampers. The recommended amount is \$18, and donations can be made directly through e-transfer to slidebookfundraiser@gmail.com.

J.V.Humphries’ students have a long history of fundraising themselves for the annual Holiday Hampers. This year marks the 30th year that students have set up a table in the downtown to collect donations. Last year they raised \$5000 for the community and this year’s organizing group, Student Parliament, hopes to beat that record. In

addition, J.V.Humphries' food class students have caught the spirit and will be making a variety of delicious pastries to add to the hampers alongside the books this holiday season!

For more information:

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