



## Our staff's "why"

Working at St. Joe's, in the beautiful Bulkley Valley, can be summed up in one word for me: "meaningful". It is inspiring to have colleagues whose high standards and dedication give students the tools to be successful in their learning and hopefully enable the next generation to make a positive impact on our community and beyond. It is like an extended family here at St. Joe's. This is obvious in one of our annual traditions where staff, students, and families come together to share a Thanksgiving meal. Like family, lifelong connections are made here; we laugh together, work out our problems together, support each other through good and bad, and thankfully pray together. Personally, I am so thankful for the opportunity to teach the students about the love of Jesus. This allows us to nurture the calling each student has for his or her life. Meaningful work is one of the most sought-after goals in life and I have found that here at St. Joe's.

~ long time staff member

St. Joseph's has been a part of my family since I first came here as a kindergarten student. My dream had always been to come back to this school to teach. Now here I am, and my children are now students here and part of this school family. At St. Joseph's we are a strong community that strives to maintain a high academic standard and instill Christian values into our students that will allow them to succeed in high school and beyond. We have high expectations for our students academically and socially and are committed to helping them attain these ideals. We also offer sports team opportunities, field trips, choir, music and French classes, and two hot lunches a week, among many other highlights in each classroom.

~ Cara Polanin

### Programs at our school:

#### Christmas Concert

We'd like to take a moment to reflect on our school's 2025 Christmas Concert; a long-standing tradition where the Grade 7 class puts on a play that includes all of the other classes performing a song within the play. 2025's concert did not disappoint! Directed by Mr. William Johnson, a former St. Joseph's student, who currently teaches music to all the kids. The hard work he, and his fellow teachers, put into this concert sure showed. Each class sang their hearts out accompanied by some actions, and the Grade 7 class performed with confidence and charm.

#### Sports

St. Joseph's School continues to strive to expose children to a variety of sports. This is the 19<sup>th</sup> year having Mr. Joe Toner coach all grade levels in basketball. The school looks forward to this every winter, as he comes in to teach them the fundamentals of basketball in a way the kids enjoy and look forward to. Not only have students developed strong skill sets but they get a taste of resilience and discipline.

\*\*If you or someone you know has a skill they could offer our school. Please contact us! We'd love to talk to you.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

We'd love for you to join us in some of the special events that have become cherished traditions here at St. Joseph's. Please mark your calendars:

**Carnival:** Friday May 8<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm

**Monthly School Masses** – Our older students go to Mass weekly, and once a month the whole school will attend. It's always a joyous occasion filled with music and worship, and we welcome you to join us whenever you can. Please call the school office for the date of the next all school Mass.



Christmas concert 2025

### Looking Ahead: Let's Stay Connected

St. Joseph's School is working to expand and strengthen our community by reconnecting with alumni and friends of the school. If you—or someone you know—attended St. Joseph's, we would love to be in touch. Please share our school contact information or connect directly with Nicki Twigge at 778-210-0063 or nicki.m.pederson@gmail.com so we can add you to our contact list.

By sharing your information, you will be included in a special alumni and friends newsletter published three times each school year (fall, winter, and spring). This newsletter shares school updates, celebrates student and alumni achievements, and highlights the ongoing impact of our school community.

Our goals are to stay connected with the people who have helped shape and support St. Joseph's over the years, strengthen relationships, foster school pride, and encourage continued involvement. We truly hope to hear from you.

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**PHONE:** 250-847-9414

**ADDRESS:** 4054 Broadway Avenue, Smithers, BC, V0J 2N0

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initial build: 1959

Thank you for being part of the St. Joseph's legacy. We are so proud of all that we've accomplished.

## Alumni Spotlight

This issue we are thrilled to spotlight alumna Kate Neithammer. She attended St. Joseph's School from 1988 to 1996, and along the way really cherished the friendships she made. One memory that stands out is Father Phil visiting classrooms to read stories, particularly the purple puzzle tree books. As a student, she says teachers might have described her as a "distractor." When she reflects on her elementary school experience, she remembers feeling cared for by the adults who supported both her learning and her wellbeing.

After St. Joseph's, Kate attended Chandler Park and then Smithers Secondary School. Even at a young age, she knew she wanted to become a doctor, although the path to that goal was not always direct or easy.

She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Alberta. During a break from university, she met Mrs. V and volunteered at the orphanage Mrs. V established in Ghana. After finishing her science degree, she returned to Smithers, working as a tree planter and other jobs to support her travels across Canada and abroad.

She was later accepted into medical school at the National University of Ireland Galway, where she studied for five years. During that time, she returned to Smithers to welcome her daughter, Finnley. After earning her medical degree, she moved back to Canada to complete her specialty training in family medicine, again returning to Smithers to have her son, Rafe. Once her training was complete, she and her family settled permanently in Smithers, where she now works as a family physician.

She believes the lessons she learned at St. Joseph's—helping others and treating people with kindness—have stayed with her and continue to guide her in her work. Kate recognizes that life brings obstacles that lead to a life that one may not have imagined. However, it does not mean you don't still achieve your dreams or reach your goals. Her path to becoming a doctor was by no means straightforward and yet everything that happened to her made her a better person and definitely a more understanding and compassionate doctor.

She remains connected to the school community through her own children, who attend(ed) St. Joseph's. And her advice to students today is to keep dreaming, enjoy the process, and stay curious. Learning does not look the same for everyone, and growth often happens both inside and outside the classroom.

~ Kate Neithammer



St  
Joseph's  
School



Grade 7 class of 1995



Grade 6/7 class of 2026

## Memory Lane: from the class of 1995

### What is one school memory you still cherish today?

- ~ Class parties at Jessica Stam's house ~ **Allan Stroet**
- ~ Library time and the scholastic book fairs that were put on in the 6/7 hallway. Also, Christmas concerts where the school came together, was such a neat experience. ~ **Jessica Stam**
- ~ a heavily punished, sneaky excursion to 7-11 during school lunch hour. ~ **Jason Duff**
- ~ meeting my life long best friend, Kathryn Sikkes, when I came to St. Joe's in grade 3. We are still so close today, and I couldn't imagine life without her. ~ **Nicole Plewis**
- ~ Father Phil reading 'The Hobbit' on Fridays ~ **Mitch Pederson**

### Who was one teacher that made an impact on you? Why?

- ~ Mr. Lankester. He always had stories of things. ~ **Allan Stroet**
- ~ Mr. Lankester had a huge impact on me as I grew into teenage-hood. His wisdom, stories, and the way he taught made me feel empowered and helped me see the world differently. ~ **Jessica Stam**
- ~ Madame Fortin was a soft hand guiding an utterly clueless student through a new language ~ **Jason Duff**
- ~ I adored Miss Forbrigger and Mrs. Moran and was so lucky to have them for TWO YEARS! They were so fun, caring and taught us so many lessons – not just about school, but about being good people. ~ **Nicole Plewis**
- ~ John Lancaster. His wisdom was always impressive to me, a combination of stern yet gracious. ~ **Mitch Pederson**

### What was your favourite school event or tradition?

- ~ Fun day of course! ~ **Allan Stroet**
- ~ Fun day was so good. I also have fond memories of gathering for assembly, singing songs together like "oh come oh come Emmanuel" in a round around the advent wreath. ~ **Jessica Stam**
- ~ Assembly's and Mass. For some it was a torture of waiting but I was more than willing to relax a little and take a break from math and history to listen to some stories. ~ **Jason Duff**
- ~ Fun Day. It was the highlight of the year to do those fun competitions. ~ **Nicole Plewis**
- ~ Hot Lunch. ~ **Mitch Pederson**

### What was your favourite hot lunch Friday meal?

- ~ Those mini pizzas that were scorching hot on top yet somehow cold on the bottom. ~ **Allan Stroet**
- ~ Ham and Cheese Kaiser buns! ~ **Jessica Stam**
- ~ Grilled Cheese, 100%. Sometimes at 3am, I make them as I remember them. Nostalgic for delicious simplicity and warm food. ~ **Jason Duff**
- ~ Hand down, the little mini pizzas. They just aren't the same anymore. ~ **Nicole Plewis**
- ~ Pizza. ~ **Mitch Pederson**

### What is one lesson you learned at the school that stuck with you?

- ~ Never leave a question blank. Guess even if you have no idea. (from Mr. Lankester) ~ **Allan Stroet**
- ~ Try a variety of things, even if at first you aren't good at them. I think all the options during those years helped me learn the benefit of trying new things, even if you're afraid. Different things like sports, music, public speaking/poetry, acting, travel, etc all helped make my elementary experience richer. ~ **Jessica Stam**
- ~ You can predict and guide the path your life takes through discipline, focused practice, and integrity of values. ~ **Jason Duff**
- ~ To be a kind person, and not just to your friends. ~ **Nicole Plewis**
- ~ Ms Dreidger teaching handwriting. ~ **Mitch Pederson**

### Use one word to describe St. Joseph's School.

- ~ Sooooo important ~ **Allan Stroet**
- ~ Nurturing ~ **Jessica Stam**
- ~ Persistent, as a transfer I immediately compared to other students, no one in the class let setbacks slow them down and they know effort was rewarded. ~ **Jason Duff**
- ~ Family, because that's what I found there – my lifelong best friend/sister and my husband. ~ **Nicole Plewis**
- ~ Friendly. ~ **Mitch Pederson**

