

Summer 2023

# Leaders & Learners

The official magazine of the Canadian  
Association of School System Administrators

Association canadienne des gestionnaires  
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**Summer 2023 PUBLISHED FOR:**  
**Canadian Association of School System Administrators / Association canadienne des gestionnaires de commissions scolaires**  
1123 Glenashton Drive  
Oakville, Ontario L6H 5M1  
Tel: 905-845-4254  
www.cassa-acgcs.ca

**PUBLISHED BY:**  
**Matrix Group Publishing Inc.**  
Return all undeliverable addresses to:  
309 Youville Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2H 2S9  
Toll-Free: (866) 999-1299  
Toll-Free Fax: (866) 244-2544  
www.matrixgroupinc.net  
Canada Post Mail Publications Agreement Number: 40609661

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## Together, we can create an educational environment that celebrates diversity and affirms the identities of all students.

In recent times, the news has been filled with stories of people protesting the rights and recognition of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals particularly in public school settings. Small groups of organized people are distributing misinformation and hateful literature outside public schools, disrupting board meetings, and even identifying certain staff members for vilification or threats of harm because of their gender identity or support for human rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, sexual health education, and inclusive schools. School boards have also had to hire security and take other measures to ensure that the business of education boards can be conducted in public without interruption and that staff and students attending the meetings are safe and supported.

As a system leader, I have experienced the vitriol, personal threats, protests, the handing out of pamphlets, and the co-opting of public question and comment period at public board meetings to promote lies and hateful statements. I have experienced this misguided outrage as a system leader in two different districts regarding our work supporting the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and staff.

This year it has centered on the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) 123 work that my current district has been engaged in for five years and a review of our Sexual Health Education Program. In June, our district became international news when two adults verbally questioned the gender of two grade four students at an elementary district track meet, and were belligerent to the point where it traumatized the students and staff present. The shot put event had to be moved across the field away from spectators and the perpetrators were escorted out. In response to these behaviours, we have tried to speak with the offenders, engaged legal means to attempt to stop defamation, reported trespassing and threats to the R.C.M.P., and had our principals prevent

distribution of pamphlets filled with hate and misinformation.

Sadly, our efforts have been to no avail. Similar experiences are occurring across the country including planned student absences and walkouts in opposition to activities supporting the celebration of Pride Month. Two Ministers of Education have provided statements reminding educators and boards of education of our legal responsibility to protect our student and staffs' human rights.

In B.C., Minister of Education and Child Care, Rachna Singh, opened Pride Month with a statement detailing how a failure to affirm and recognize students' gender identity is a violation of the B.C. Human Rights Code.

"All schools must comply with the Human Rights Code and demonstrate they are creating safe, welcoming and inclusive environments for our students and staff," wrote Singh, adding, "when students can see themselves reflected in the world around them through stories of same-gender parents or math problems that use 'they/them' pronouns in a school environment, it sends a strong message of acceptance."

At the core of public education lies the principle of equal access to education for all. Inclusion is not a mere catchphrase but a fundamental right that must be extended to all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. Creating an inclusive environment ensures that every student feels valued, respected, and supported throughout their educational journey. By acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of 2SLGBTQIA+ students, we foster a sense of belonging, empowering them to embrace their identities without fear of judgment or discrimination.

Education is one of the most powerful tools to counteract prejudice and stereotypes. Public schools play a transformative role in dismantling harmful biases and misconceptions



**Kevin Kaardal**  
CASSA/ACGCS President

surrounding the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Public schools empower students to challenge stereotypes, appreciate diversity, and promote a culture of acceptance and respect.

As system leaders we must stand together against this attack on the human rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and staff in public schools. We must support each other in finding solutions that return civility to our public discourse while meeting our moral responsibility to continue to prioritize the safety, well-being, and education of each student and staff member. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) published an opinion piece in the *Toronto Star*.<sup>1</sup> I encourage each of our provincial and territorial leadership organizations to follow CODE's example and speak against this current backlash by promoting inclusion, countering stereotypes, reducing bullying, and nurturing empathy. Together, we can create an educational environment that celebrates diversity and affirms the identities of all students. Let us seize this opportunity to educate, empower, and uplift 2SLGBTQIA+ students so that they thrive holistically in our complex world.

### Reference:

1. Elliott, Laura. "Educators facing unacceptable threats for supporting LGBTQ students, staff." *Toronto Star*. <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2023/06/06/educators-facing-unacceptable-threats-for-supporting-lgbtq-students-staff.html>.

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“Leaders demonstrate integrity and humility as they continually work to act selflessly in service of others. These qualities include an ongoing examination of one’s own leadership style and practices and an intentional commitment to lifelong learning and the support of the learning of others around you.” (BCSSA Spirit of Leadership – Leadership Competencies for System Leaders)

“System leaders play an essential role by putting in place supportive system practices and procedures for school leaders and providing system-wide leadership.” (Institute for Educational Leadership – Ontario Leadership Framework)

These two quotes from British Columbia and Ontario resonate with school system leaders and underscore the importance of system leadership in creating the conditions for student success.

The summer issue of *Leaders & Learners* includes examples of system leadership from leaders committed to student success and well-being throughout Canada, starting in Alberta and heading east to Newfoundland and Labrador. The issue also includes articles from the Women in Leadership committee within the

College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and one from CMC Leadership which offers a professional learning certification program for senior system leaders.

The article from Fort Vermillion School District (Alberta) explains how partnering with different sectors created dual credit opportunities for students. Another article will highlight how Canadian Rockies Public Schools and the Outdoor Learning Centre in Alberta strive to lead the country in experiential learning that empowers students to connect to their natural and cultural heritage. The article from Battle River (Alberta) provides an account of how differentiated professional learning helps to develop school and system leadership.

The article from Saskatchewan illustrates how a partnership between the Public and Catholic boards and local community organizations raised funds to support mental health resources and supports. The article from Francophone School District for Newfoundland and Labrador explores the vitality of community partnerships and how leadership withing francophone schools ensures the survival and growth of this official language.

You will also learn of the CASS Women in Leadership committee which



**Ken Bain**  
CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

was established to promote gender equity and increase the representation of women in leadership positions. The CMC Leadership article will shine a light on the role of senior leaders in strengthening the equity-focus instructional practices of their principals.

Thanks to all the authors for their day-to-day leadership contributions and for their contributions to this issue of *Leaders & Learners*. Have a great summer!

**Ken Bain**  
CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

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# Creating a Collegiate Model for the Future: Changing the High School Model in Alberta

By Michael McMann, Fort Vermilion School Division

**S**ustaining growth for industry in the Mackenzie Region of Alberta has, and always will be, a priority for the area's many stakeholders. To this end, there is a concerted effort on behalf of local government, education providers, and members of industry to lead the way to a better tomorrow. The Fort Vermilion School Division (FVSD) partnered with over 300 companies from different sectors to provide practical training, simulation training, and dual credit opportunities for students, creating a collegiate model for the future.

Six colleges, universities, and licensing agents will join the partnership with Northern Lakes College to provide dual credit career path options for all students in Grade 10 to 12 in the FVSD. FVSD believes that every child capable of achieving credits from post-secondary or a licensed agency will before graduation.

The following pathways have been developed and with the support of the Alberta Education will be fully deployed in the fall of 2024:

**Little Dream Homes Centre** – This career path will give students the opportunity to attain credentials towards design and drafting, pre-engineering, carpentry, electrician training, plumber gas fitter, and green energy. Journeyman instructors will guide students to build mini homes for sale publicly, and to provide the division with teacher housing. The goal of the homes is to achieve net zero energy status.

**Northbound Training Solutions Centre** – This career path allows students to gain experience in achieving a professional driver's license in Class 1, 2, 3, and 5; defensive driving; and driving under the influence education training. FVSD currently owns and operates a full driving school.

**Flying Goose Productions Centre** – This career path explores the arts. Students will be involved in a full movie production focusing on the North, and the amazing cultures that exist here, using their skills in drama, music, writing, producing, directing, computer graphics and promotion. With the release of the movie *Guitar Lessons*, FVSD believes it can produce small

budget films to develop skills with students and leverage the needs in the north.

**All Heart Care Centre** – This career path explores all dual credit options in health and social work. Students will be able to complete their health care aide certificate, unit clerk designation, and start licensed practical nurses or social work diploma programs.

**Roads, Logging, Safety (RLS) Centre** – This career path allows students to get practical and direct training in the logging and road construction industry. The students within collegiate will also receive training on live equipment.

**Innovation Centre** – This career path allows students access to industry in the fields of coding, engineering, environmental services, computer technician, and entrepreneurship.

**University Bound and Teacher (UBT) Education Centre** – This career path allows students to complete their early childhood certificate, educational assistant diploma, begin their Education Degree, or begin year one into a Bachelor of Science degree or Bachelor program.

**Keep it Moving (KIM) Centre** – This career path allows students to begin attainment in small engines mechanics, automotive technician, and heavy-duty mechanics.

**Hospitality Training (HIT) Centre** – This career path allows students to obtain credentials for work in the tourism and the hospitality industry. Students have been successful in completing Best Western University, as an example. This path will also explore the area of culinary arts.

**Wings Centre** – This career path allows students to obtain their private pilot's license or enter the field of aircraft maintenance engineer. Students currently have access to a certified simulator and are completing ground school. A partnership with the flight school is currently being developed.

**FTC Centre (Farm Tech)** – This career path will lead students into the agriculture industry. Students will be able to obtain degrees and certification in crop, animal husbandry, elevator operators, train conductors, fertilizer plants, and seed cleaning facilities.

**BIZ Centre (Human Resources)** – This career path is for students that want to earn



a degree in human resources. Students will be able to obtain all Microsoft credentialing at a university level, business administration diploma, insurance certification, appraisal certification, or real estate licensing in this career path. Students will also be able to obtain work experience in government administration offices such as: band administration, parole, courts, or paralegal.

The youths are our future. We're advocating and networking to create opportunities for students, so they can confidently begin their careers locally. In direct support of this initiative, FVSD partners with over 300 hundred companies from different sectors to provide practical on the job training. Combined with full simulation labs and augmented reality students receive the foundation before beginning the practical work.

FVSD has been approved for the collegiate model to exist in every high school giving every student the opportunity. This model will build capacity and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship and growth in the region. We are excited for the North. This could be a future scalable model for the province. ○

---

*Michael McMann is the current Superintendent for the Fort Vermilion School Division in northern Alberta.*

# Fostering Outdoor Ambassadorship and Land-Based Learning in the Canadian Rockies

By Debbie McKibbin and Christopher MacPhee, Canadian Rockies Public Schools



Canadian Rockies Public Schools Outdoor Learning Centre canoe trip. Photo courtesy of Nicole Prince.

Nestled in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, on the ancestral and traditional land of the Stoney Nakoda Bands, lies an educational centre unrivalled in North America where students are encouraged to step outside the classroom and embrace the call of the wild.

An extension of Canadian Rockies Public Schools (CRPS), the Outdoor Learning Centre (OLC) strives to lead the country in experiential education programs that empower students to connect to their natural and cultural heritage, encouraging youth to move beyond participation towards active outdoor ambassadorship. Here, students trade textbooks for outdoor gear to participate in year-round wilderness activities such as avalanche safety training, backcountry hiking trips and voyageur canoeing. They also engage in Indigenous land-based learning activities centred around the provincial curriculum.

The goal is to bring curricular outcomes to life by encouraging students to connect to nature, embrace the values of protected areas, and build the foundational knowledge to understand and respect the rich diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures. The OLC educators design learning tasks that use an interdisciplinary approach, making the learning relevant and connecting students to the world in which they live.

All students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 at CRPS have the opportunity to take part in OLC programming, starting with

land-based learning initiatives for children in Kindergarten to Grade 8. Leveraging and integrating multiple curricula such as science, social studies, language arts, and math. Working together as peers and learning from Elders outside of the traditional classroom emboldens the learning outcomes of the bison unit, allowing students to understand the importance of preserving Indigenous knowledge and its value today while examining the impact of the Indigenous relationship within the Canadian economy, the environment, and newcomers through a process of reconciliation.

For educators, these land-based learning opportunities have also served as a source of inspiration, allowing them to experience the benefits of using the natural world as a classroom. “That’s really what we want to see happen – to see our teachers become inspired and empowered to weave other learning opportunities into their teaching and gain confidence in taking their classrooms outside,” said OLC Coordinator Colleen Lee, one of two full time OLC teachers dedicated to collaborating with CRPS teachers to deliver curriculum-linked, land-based learning.

The message of land stewardship and learning from the land continues into the centre’s outdoor experience programming, offered to students in Grades 10 to 12. Open to all school divisions across Alberta, these single or multi-day immersion programs introduce students to the mountain landscape, teach them how to mitigate the hazards found in the wilderness environment, and the rewards of taking the time to truly connect to nature.

Through locally developed Winter Travel 15 and 25 courses, Grades 10 to 12 students learn winter travel and navigation skills, an understanding of winter ecosystems and leadership in a context of critical thinking, linking geography studies with a greater understanding of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region. Similarly, during the Water Experience 15 and 25 courses, students pair learnings of water ecosystems and watershed health with flatwater and moving water canoeing safety and navigation techniques. “Our board has been really focused on creating programming that we can deliver in the wilderness, connecting students

to nature using the curriculum provided to us. It’s a really special thing that we get to do,” said OLC Coordinator Peter Prescesky.

These programs also provide opportunities unrivalled in North American school districts. As of next year, every graduating high school student will have had the opportunity to take the Avalanche Canada Avalanche Skills Training Level 1 (AST1), making CRPS the only school district in North America to offer avalanche training to students for free. “We know that we’ve saved lives. So many of the kids that participated in our programming are in their twenties now. I’ve seen them out here in the mountains snowshoeing or backcountry skiing, and I like to think that some of the information we gave them helped them to make good, life-saving decisions,” explained Prescesky.

But one aspect of the OLC that goes unadvertised is the opportunity for students to build emotional resilience through the rewards of spending time in wild places. CRPS has long been committed to creating a better world through transformational education that celebrates nature, diversity and well-being – a vision embodied by the OLC’s programming. “Students need to gather as many tools in their wellness toolboxes as they can so when they enter adulthood, they have strategies for their emotional, mental, and physical health,” said Lee. “I’ve had students say ‘I really needed this’ during these trips. Students always describe themselves as under so much pressure. For many, getting into the wilderness with their peers and teachers is a healthy and positive thing.” ○

*Debbie McKibbin is the Deputy Superintendent of Canadian Rockies Public Schools. Christopher MacPhee is the Superintendent of Schools at Canadian Rockies Public Schools.*

## For more information:

Visit our OLC landing page for program information: <https://olc.crps.ca/>

View a video of our avalanche training skills program here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGbDKNJa7U8>

# Building A School System Through Differentiated Leadership Development

By Shan Jorgenson-Adam and Dr. Rita Marler, Battle River School Division

*“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.” – African Proverb*

**F**rom the moment we found this quotation, it resonated with us. We believe it epitomizes the work we have done in Battle River School Division.

Located in Central Alberta, Battle River School Division is home to 19 traditional schools and 10 Hutterite colony schools and has 42 school-based administrators.

This journey began eight years ago when we came together as a senior leadership team. We recognized that we needed to build connection and capacity amongst our schools and administrators and began to map out the work we believed needed to be done. Our leadership development work encompassed several strategies to break down barriers, build cohesiveness, and deepen leadership capabilities. After a few years of collective work within administration meetings, principal, assistant principal, and division leadership academies, we recognized the need to personalize the work with our school administrators to ensure that they were meeting the *Leadership Quality Standard (LQS)* in Alberta.<sup>1</sup>

Thus began our school review process in which division leadership teams worked closely with individual school-based administrators to examine the work they were doing in their schools and how we could provide constructive feedback to enhance their work and augment their instructional leadership skills. It was through these review rounds that we determined that collaborative yet differentiated professional learning would be the foundation to deepen leadership capacity in school leaders.

Research demonstrates a direct link between leadership and student learning at high levels.<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> We also believe that this differentiated model of professional learning reflects our strong commitment to being a school system vs a system of schools. In providing support to all schools in an intentional, differentiated approach, we were building capacity to work together to move our division forward in ensuring high quality instruction and optimum learning for all students.



Differentiation refers to a “systematic approach to planning curriculum and instruction for academically diverse learners.”<sup>4</sup> We applied this principle of differentiating professional learning for our administrators as a means of providing them with the feedback and support we believe would help them grow as instructional leaders. These supports offered a variety of learning opportunities: presentations at professional learning sessions, book studies, individual feedback, coaching, and mentorship. Individualized growth opportunities included in-person and/or in an online format, phone call check-ins, and email communications.

Our school review process involved a series of three to four visits per year where a dyad of division leaders met with school leaders in their buildings to discuss aspects of the leadership quality standard (LQS) competencies and review the evidence of their work. Each school leader was paired with one of the members of the division leadership dyad model to build and reflect upon their own leadership development. The division leadership team met prior to these visits to plan the focus for the review visit and to determine what would be acceptable evidence of meeting the competencies. After the school visits, the team met again to debrief and share commonalities and differences and to discuss next steps of support.

We have seen organizational growth within our division. Using an iterative/differentiated process, we were able to respond to the needs of our leaders in building their professional capacity. We started with baseline data, provided collaborative, differentiated professional learning to build capacity, created coherence, and

established professional networks. We regularly assessed progress and created differentiated supports provided based on the needs of leaders and their schools.

Through this model of differentiation, we have seen tremendous growth in the professional capacity of school and system leadership which has resulted in a division that is a model of system rather than a system of schools. There have been opportunities for best practices and innovative problem solving to be shared by school teams with their colleagues. Our school leaders have created professional networks beyond their own school team and are seeking opportunities to expand their learning.

This system and team approach to building professional capital is an evolving journey that has deepened the connections and collaboration amongst our school administrators. Through this work, our division has demonstrated that “to go far, you need to go with others.” ○

---

*Shan Jorgenson-Adam is the Deputy Superintendent, for Battle River School Division. Dr. Rita Marler is Superintendent of Schools for Battle River School Division. They would like to acknowledge the Battle River Leadership across the Division who have continued to put our students first during these challenging times.*

*Together they have formed JAM Educational Consulting focused on supporting school divisions with school/system culture, leadership development, and recruitment. Information regarding this work can be found at [www.jamconsulting.ca](http://www.jamconsulting.ca).*

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# Hitting a Home Run:

## A Partnership to Support Mental Wellness in Southern Saskatchewan

*Events hosted by River Street Promotions benefit the youth of Saskatchewan by raising money for mental wellness. Photos courtesy of Dustin Swanson.*



By Dustin Swanson and Amanda Olson, Prairie South School Division

**F**inding sustainable and practical ways to fund supports and initiatives that enhance wellness for students in schools is an ongoing challenge. However, in southern Saskatchewan, a public and Catholic school division have partnered with a local community organization and music promotion company, to ensure resources are available to support students in the region.

River Street Promotions is a non-profit group that hosts a large yearly concert at a historic baseball park in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to raise money for mental wellness in Southern Saskatchewan. This group, comprised of several community leaders, has helped raise more than \$135,000 in the last two years.

The concept to raise some money and support “essentially started with talking about our

own kids and the struggles that they were having, especially throughout COVID-19,” said James Murdock, one of the founding members of River Street Promotions. “We could see how it was changing them and affecting them. We all saw firsthand how it was changing our own children, so we thought, what can we do here to give some guidance and opportunities and how can we contribute as community members. We must realize that these children are going to be our future leaders and visionaries. Let’s try and help and allow them to navigate and get through some uncertain times.” River Street Promotions decided to partner and make funding donations to Prairie South School Division (PSSD) and Holy Trinity Catholic School Division that serve central southern Saskatchewan communities.

The funds support the school divisions focus on student Mental Health Wellness and are used to support both division-wide and individual

school initiatives. These initiatives build mental health wellness awareness, equip children and youth with mental health wellness strategies and tools, and provide students with opportunities to better their own mental health wellness and the mental health wellness of others.

PSSD is a large rural school division with a student population of 6,700 students across 39 different schools in south central Saskatchewan. Holy Trinity Catholic School Division serves a similar geographic area and has a student population of 2,368 across nine schools.

“The financial support River Street Promotions provides to the students in the school divisions is deeply appreciated,” says Amanda Olson, Superintendent of Learning for PSSD. “The events hosted by River Street Promotions raise awareness! They remind us that mental health wellness is just as important as physical wellness. They get people talking openly about mental health and this is helping

break down the stigma that can sometimes be associated with this topic.”

A few of our rural Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools brought together local community members to share tools and strategies using a learning fair format. During these fairs students engaged in interactive sessions on topics such as healthy relationships, personal learning styles, yoga, the benefits to our mental health when we engage in hobbies, physical activity and enjoying the outdoors, and the importance of physical health and fitness.

Many schools also elected to bring in guest presenters to share their expertise on various wellness topics ranging from resiliency to the impacts of social media on mental health. Speakers included Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe, Darren Lang, Hannah Berger, and Paul Davis.

Other schools in the divisions used funding to create wellness inspired spaces within their schools and school grounds. For example, one school created seasonal outdoor activity stations to promote being outdoors, physical activity, collaboration, and socialization.

The Director of Holy Trinity Catholic School Division, Ward Strueby, believes that mental health is important for students because it can have a significant impact on



The poster for Homestead, a concert hosted at the historic baseball stadium in Saskatchewan each September.

their academic performance, social relationships, and overall well-being. River Street Promotions has created a culture of understanding and support in each of our communities. Providing additional resources to our school division allows for school champions to develop events at their individual schools. Holy Trinity benefited from being part of a Mental Health Wellness Youth Conference with sessions on grief in the face of tragedy, self-talk, building a foundation for your mental health and ways to support individual

mental health. We look forward to building on this partnership in the years to come.

In April of 2022, River Street Promotions sponsored a high school student performance of several Nashville based artists who came to perform and share their personal stories of overcoming obstacles and persevering to achieve their dream of becoming a professional musician. Artists included Victoria Banks, Phil Barton, Jeff Cohen, Ty Hunter, and hosted by Joel Stewart.

Unique and creative partnerships are a great option to find supports for students. Both school division are deeply appreciative of the support River Street Promotions is providing to youth in southern Saskatchewan. To learn more about RSP visit [www.riverstreet-promotions.com](http://www.riverstreet-promotions.com). Tickets for Homestead 2023 are on sale now! If you are around the Moose Jaw area on September 9, 2023, feel free to email the primary author at [swanson.dustin@prairiesouth.ca](mailto:swanson.dustin@prairiesouth.ca) to be entered for a chance to win two free concert tickets. ○

*Dustin is Superintendent of School Operations for Prairie South School Division. Amanda is a Superintendent of Learning for Prairie South School Division.*

A banner for the CASSA Annual Conference in 2023. The background is a scenic view of a rocky coastline with blue water and purple flowers in the foreground. On the left, a dark blue box contains the text: 'Mark Your Calendars for CASSA's Annual Conference in 2023!', 'July 5-7, 2023', and 'Victoria, British Columbia'. Below this, a white box contains the text: 'The CASSA Annual Conference looks forward to seeing you in beautiful Victoria, British Columbia, in 2023! Re-connect school system leaders from across Canada to learn and share information on current topics in education. Save the date!'. On the right, a red box contains the CASSA-ACGS logo, which features a white maple leaf inside a white square, with the text 'Équité et excellence en éducation' and 'CASSA-ACGS' above it, and 'Equity and Excellence in Education' below it.

# Rethinking System Transformation



By Catherine McCullough, CMC Leadership

*The New Mindsets for Leading in Complexity learning series banner. Courtesy of Catherine McCullough.*

CMC Leadership's 2022/2023 eight-webinar virtual High Performance Leadership Program for senior education leaders across Canada featured international leadership experts. The program provided innovative approaches for ensuring equitable teaching and learning in districts and schools. Here is a sampling of key insights offered by five of these thought leaders and experts. Learn more about their research by accessing their publications.

Michael Canic, author of *Ruthless Consistency*, spoke about creating an environment that promotes, supports, and reinforces strategic change with a focus on equity. For him, the key to successfully implementing a strategic change initiative that creates a culture of continuous quality improvement consists of doing three things: creating the *right environment*, developing the *right focus*, and building the *right team*.

Shane Safir, co-author of *Street Data*, and Kevin Godden, Superintendent of Abbotsford District School Board, focused on "street data" and why educators need it now. Street data is a next-generation model for equity, pedagogy, and school transformation that refers to qualitative and experiential data that emerges at eye level and on lower frequencies when we train our brain to discern it. We need street data because it measures what matters most;

i.e., student agency. Agency is the idea that people have the capacity to act, craft and carry out plans, and make informed decisions based on a growing base of knowledge. Measuring student development consists of assessing four domains: *efficacy*, I can make a difference; *mastery*, I can build knowledge and demonstrate understanding; *belonging*, I can see myself in this environment and I am seen and loved; and *identity*, my ways of being, learning, and knowing are valued here.

Meredith Honig, co-author of *Supervising Principals for Instructional Leadership*, focused on central office transformation for equitable teaching and learning, and highlighted what central offices tend to do instead, i.e., tinkering versus transforming. Meredith drew from her research to build a deeper understanding of the research on central office transformation which points to five key drivers of educational equity in school systems – principal supervision, human resources, teaching and learning, executive leadership, and operations. She identified three main shifts that must happen for successful system transformation: eliminating, streamlining, and redesigning routine business processes; building an aligned process of recruitment, selection, onboarding, and induction; and partnering with principals to strategically staff teacher teams with explicit attention to supporting the success of teachers of colour.

Dr. Gregory Hutchings, author of *Getting into Good Trouble at School*, explained that

getting into good trouble at school means doing what we need to do to eliminate racial inequities in schools and school systems. Gregory identified six pillars that he believes will help us to do this equity work and become antiracist and how we can apply them to our day-to-day practice: knowing your history, committing to racial equity, eliminating de-facto segregation, differentiating discipline versus policing, engaging in strategic thinking and planning, and displaying courageous and bold leadership. Gregory also addressed issues related to critical race theory including its origins and misinformation about what it is that continues to have a negative impact on equity efforts.

Finally, Kevin Lamoureux, co-author of *Ensouling Our Schools*, explained why he believes that reconciliation is an opportunity that has been given to us in Canada by residential school survivors system so that we can be part of healing Canada. He offered a proactive model of approaching support for all students and families. He left participants with the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #62.2, which has yet to be fully implemented, calling for the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

Optional follow-up small group networking sessions were scheduled to give program participants the opportunity to build on session learnings and consider application



in their district contexts. Overall, the High-Performance Leadership Program provided senior education leaders across Canada with valuable insights and innovative approaches for strengthening equity-focused instructional leadership practices, promoting shared leadership, and building anti-racist schools and systems.

This year's series is entitled New Mindsets for Leading in Complexity. This series is a call to action for education leaders who want to stay ahead of the curve and be prepared for the future of education. Led by renowned experts in the field, the series features six dynamic workshops that will equip leaders with the latest tools, knowledge, and skills needed to thrive in a constantly changing world. From AI and data to humanistic conversations and disruption, each session delves into timely topics that are transforming the education landscape. Don't miss this opportunity to revolutionize your approach to education and create more equitable learning conditions for all students. Visit <https://cmcleadership.ca> to learn more. ○

*Catherine McCullough is the President and CEO of CMC Leadership, and is an internationally recognized educator, presenter, speaker, and facilitator.*

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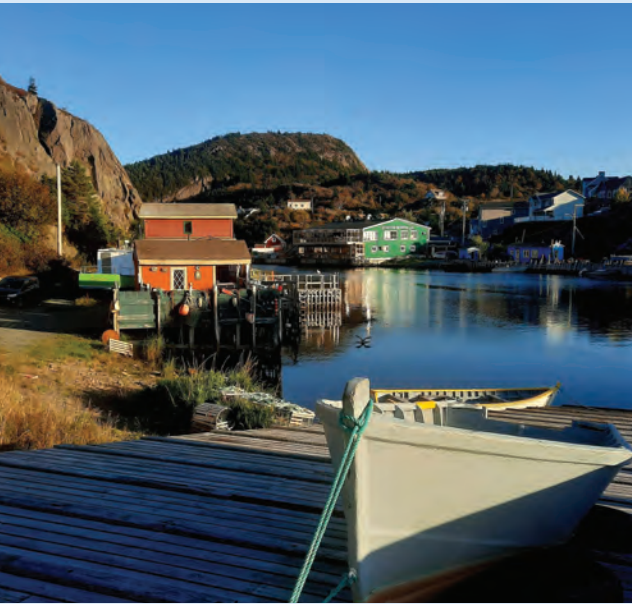
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# Vitality of Language and Community

By Selena Mell, Provincial Francophone School Division/Conseil scolaire francophone provincial



*Quidi Vidi neighbourhood in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, taken fall 2022.*



*Newfoundland coastline outside of St. John's, Newfoundland, taken fall 2022. Photos courtesy of Selena Mell.*

Outstretched from the easternmost region of Canada and from the mainland to the northwest, Newfoundland and Labrador offer more than pristine coastlines and woodlands or interaction with friendly locals. Beyond pea soup, toutons, cod tongues, or Jigg's dinner, the province's history reveals a rich French ancestry.

A French presence was first established in Newfoundland in the 16th century when a francophone colony was established at Plaisance now Placentia.<sup>1</sup> The population expanded throughout Newfoundland and Labrador with primary concentration in three distinct regions at the Port au Port Peninsula, St. John's and its surrounding areas, and Labrador. In 1987, marking its longstanding influence, the historical adoption and raising of an official flag prominently reflected the origins of French Newfoundlanders and Labradorians through a symbolic design which combined the flags of France and those of Acadian descent.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in 2004, the province proudly celebrated 500 years of French residence.

## Anchoring the francophone community

The first French language school in the province opened in La Grand'Terre in 1984.<sup>3</sup> Well before this time, preserving language and cultivating a strong sense of francophone identity remained the focus of the French minority. For almost 25 years, the provincial Francophone School District (CSFP) has provided educational opportunities for K-12 French First Language Education, where learners embark on historical, linguistic, and cultural learning experiences beyond classroom walls.

A unique element of Francophone schools is that they provide an inclusive environment, further extending to the community. The vitality of ongoing partnerships allows the schools to foster activities and initiatives which help anchor the francophone families and help ensure the survival and growth of this official language.

## Bridging francophone identity

**St John's** – Principals Kevin Hautcoeur from École des Grands-Vents and Nicole Champdoizeau from Rocher-du-Nord in St. John's, view their alliances as an integral part of student success. Many activities occur due to a partnership with the Francophone Community Association of St. John's (ACSJF). A PassepArt micro-grant provided access to a living museum showcasing Francophone,

Indigenous Peoples and Newfoundland heritage. This allowed the discovery of ancestral roots where students and volunteers developed costumes, determined staging, and finalized efforts together. Collaboration with the Cultural Network led to the hosting of the first provincial Francophone literary festival that included visiting francophone artists.

The Vice Versa micro-grant provided fitness room equipment for training and expanded into furnishing materials needed by the girls' volleyball team. This resulted in the team's ability to compete in its first provincial tournament and being selected as the provincial youth representatives for the Jeux de l'Acadie in New Brunswick.

**West Coast** – Principals Dominique Savoie from École Sainte-Anne (La Grand'Terre) and Josette Bourque from École Notre-Dame-du-Cap (Cap Saint-Georges) value their engagement with the francophone west coast regional organization (ARCO). Savoie asserts that this well-respected relationship has been forged for numerous years, while Bourque credits the group with enhancing students' cultural identity by offering a variety of activities and enhancing teaching by proposing projects that accompany programs of study.

ARCO's partnership helped bring École Sainte-Anne's mascot to life, which

they showcased in a promotional video demonstrating the creative process and interviewing the artist/school alumnus responsible for its design. Savoie sees the effort as one example of creating a sense of belonging to their French school. Bourque points to the groups' assistance in locating grants which finance school activities such as hydroponic gardening or providing joint opportunities with the neighbouring CSFP school.

**Labrador** – Principal Chloé Tinkler at *École l'ENVOLE* (Labrador City) believes that minority languages and their culture are strengthened through community partners. As the cornerstone of the Francophone community, Tinkler asserts that school leaders must actively pursue and maintain ancillary relationships with different organizations, noting a prominent partnership with the local Francophone Association (AFL). An example provided was the celebration marking the provincially recognized Francophone Day on May 30. Marking the 50th anniversary of the provincial francophone flag raising, the school hosted the event with the support of AFL, inviting the francophone community and regional leaders to the celebration, concert, and luncheon. Tinkler states that shared community goals increase a sense of belonging and enhance student cultural identity.

At *École Boréale* (Happy Valley-Goose Bay), Principal Nancy Boutin shared examples from the alliance with the Labrador Festival Creative. A local painter assisted the school in creating a mosaic linking students' painted canvas. The effort is directly related to the

Indigenous Peoples, paying homage to the dual heritage existing for some regional Francophone families. A secondary art focus through a local instructor provided learning in elements of theatre while working on a production of *The Wizard of Oz*; a production later shared with preschool and community children.

We recognize education as the pillar of any society. CSFP schools are proud to work alongside community groups grounded in efforts to reinforce and promote social, cultural, athletic, and artistic opportunities. The groups highlighted, as well as francophone media, youth organizations, advocacy groups and

our anglophone allies are valued as they help strengthen the visibility and enhance recognition of the francophone minority context. We know that together we are stronger. ○

*Selena Mell is the Director of Education & CEO for the Provincial Francophone School Division/ Conseil scolaire francophone provincial (CSFP) in Newfoundland and Labrador. She was a former School Superintendent in Manitoba, Director of Education in Germany and has held a variety of leadership and professional coaching roles in Canada, Chile, the UAE, Germany, and China.*



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# Christmas All Year ‘Round!

By Heather Bell-Williams, Milltown Elementary School

**W**hat started as support over the holidays for some children living in poverty became Christmas all year around in our rural community on the East coast of Canada! Partnerships, based in the three R’s – relationships, routines, and respectful responses to presenting needs – enabled our little school to develop academic and social/physical help at all three tiers for students.

Our Kindergarten to Grade 5 school struggled to meet the myriad of needs. Over time, we were able to develop and maintain engagement with multiple partners within the community. We initially had some local business partners provide free turkey dinner at Christmastime and we worked together as a staff to sponsor a couple families at Christmas. The Home and School Association worked to provide other holiday events and as word got out in the community were able to start with some tier 1 programs (available to all) that met basic needs throughout the school year. There was a breakfast program, snack program, and a clothing closet; all of which were funded/maintained by donations from the community and a small initial budget for breakfast food from the school district. The Home and School Association has now grown to a point where they provide every student with a new pair of pajamas at Christmas, and, as recently as last year, Bee Me Kidz has joined the team to provide quality, integrated social and emotional learning (SEL) and weekend family programming. As more people started to notice, we started to get more

donations and some media attention that helped grow these programs and enabled us to move into tier 2 programs.

Tier 2 programs started with a free after school program for 20 children. We understood the need for safe, secure after school activities and how these activities lead to a decline in risky behaviours, so we partnered with a local daycare and with some funding from the United Way we were able to support secure after school care. This led to a summer day camp program aimed at helping students with academic needs close the gap between their progress and their grade level peers. This program and the funding partners grew over time to include specialized classes for refugee students who were English language learners. We continued to grow tier 2 supports to include parenting support groups, family support programs (ie. FAST program) and a weekend food security program (food sent home in backpacks) with some families where there was need.

As we continued to provide tier 2 supports, students were making academic gains, but some needed even more academic support and our data demonstrated that some families needed one-on-one support to overcome barriers to attendance. Tier 3 supports included a full time family co-ordinator, who worked in the school, and had a small caseload of families who engaged in an incentive program to overcome barriers to school attendance.

Throughout all these interventions, which took place over a timeframe of 15 years, the principles of three R’s had to be maintained. Throughout our work, relationships had to stay central: relationships in the community, relationships with students, relationships between staff and families, and relationships between staff members.

Central to the relationships was communication. All stakeholders needed constant communication about needs, potential interventions, and how the interventions would impact our existing work. We had to constantly navigate ongoing space needs for new programs.

As we continued to expand, some essential routines were established in order to ensure that we both maintained relationships and responded appropriately as new needs arose. For example, weekly staff communication included updates on all programming, weekly meetings with admin team included discussions around community programming and monthly parent meetings included community program updates. In our haste to be responsive to needs, we had many wins, but we also had some moments that we’d do differently if the opportunity presented itself. This led to the need to be respectfully responsive. For example, one community partner was excited to continue to raise funds and made a video of our school community, while unknowingly angering residents whose homes appeared in the video. It was essential that we run our ideas through a filter of respect before moving forward.

What began as some holiday “feel good” supports for families has grown over time to become a solid system of multi-tiered support for students and families, purposely designed to meet academic and physical needs. ○

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*Heather Bell-Williams is a retired school principal who lives in New Brunswick, Canada. She has been in education since 1988 in a variety of roles.*



# Alberta's Women in Leadership

By Rhae-Ann Holoien, Buffalo Trail Public Schools, and Amber Darroch, CASS

In education in Alberta, the incidence of women serving in the role of Superintendent of Schools is disproportionate to the 74 per cent of teachers who are female (Alberta Teacher Retirement Fund, 2017). This appears to mirror the gender representation across the US as researched by the School Superintendents Association (AASA) in media sources like EdWeek and Forbes.<sup>1,2</sup> Overall membership in the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) has hovered around 50/50 men and women for the last seven years or so. At the time of writing this article, 20 of the 61 public school board superintendents are female, more than double the numbers in the past decade.

How might we respond when the Superintendent/CEO role has an inverse gender representation to the public education workforce? In early 2020, CASS created a committee called Women in Leadership (WiL) to mentor, inspire, celebrate, and increase the representation of female leaders in Alberta school authorities.

## CASS Women in Leadership Committee

The CASS WiL is composed of system leaders across the province, representing all six regional “zones,” Indigenous education, CASS life members, and the CASS Board of Directors. The CASS WiL Committee meets regularly to plan its annual roster of activities and events. They play a vital role in promoting gender equity and the committee’s mandate is to contribute and support CASS strategic goal two: “Leadership Capacity is built and supported.”

According to its Terms of Reference, outcomes of the CASS WiL committee will be achieved by:

- Providing inspirational and mentorship-based initiatives;
- Creating a collegial professional learning network for female system leaders to meet, learn from and support one another;
- Learning together with Indigenous women in education leadership positions; and
- Promoting awareness of gender equity research.

CASS’ Women in Leadership Committee was established to provide mentorship, inspiration, and celebration of female educational leaders in Alberta. Specific supports and services the committee has identified it will pursue are:

- Creating a network among women system leaders – a collegial environment for female educators to meet and support one another;
- Designing opportunities to hear and learn from highly respected female role models;
- Promoting initiatives that support women in system leadership roles, including current and aspiring chief superintendents and other educational system leaders;
- Communicating to and gathering input and feedback from zone colleagues and advocating for supports and services designed by CASS; and
- Providing input to the Board of Directors as required.



## Activities in the first three years

Spanning each of the last three years, the WiL committee has hosted a series of “Lean in Circles,” guided discussions of leadership studies, career pathways, opportunities, and barriers. These networks, open to all CASS members have provided entry points for system education leaders into the conversation. This year,



authors Martha Piper and Indira Samarasekera engaged with participants in a three-part series on their book *Nerve: Leadership lessons from two women who went first* (2021).<sup>3</sup>

The committee has delivered sessions at the CASS annual fall and spring professional learning conferences. The Spring 2022 conference included a panel discussion on how to become advocates and allies of women in leadership in education. A Women in Leadership Pre-Conference to Fall 2022 pulled threads of Brene Brown's *Dare to Lead* into a leadership session.

### Looking forward

A Women in Leadership Committee within a professional organization is able to serve multiple purposes, such as addressing barriers, promoting diversity and inclusion, providing a support network for women in their career development, and facilitating discussions of gender bias among all members. Such initiatives will help create a more inclusive and equitable culture that benefits the professional members of our education system at the regional, provincial, and national levels. For the WiL Committee, our hope is that we will create a more equitable and inclusive landscape within educational leadership in the province.

In the words of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception." The WiL Committee's efforts to increase the representation of female leaders in Alberta's school authorities align with Justice Ginsburg's call for gender equity in leadership positions. By creating mentorship and professional

learning opportunities for women in educational leadership, the committee is helping to dismantle systemic barriers that have prevented women from achieving their full potential. Justice Ginsburg's words remind us that true progress toward gender equality requires intentional efforts to dismantle structural inequality, and the Women in Leadership Committee is doing important work toward this goal. We must continue to support their efforts to ensure that women have an equal voice and opportunity to lead in our education system. ○

*Rhae-Ann Holoien is the Superintendent of Buffalo Trail Public Schools. Amber Darroch is a former Albertan associate superintendent, now loving every minute of retirement. Both are inaugural members of the CASS Women in Leadership committee.*

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