

## Greetings from the President

One of the Canadian Association of School System Administrators' (CASSA) Belief Statements is: "CASSA has a responsibility to initiate and participate in dialogue on educational matters of national significance." Accordingly, I'm very proud that, for the first time ever, CASSA will truly be a national organization with representation from every province and territory in Canada. Our newest Directors include John Way on behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of School System Administrators (NLASSA), Kevin Garringer from the Saskatchewan League of Education Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents (LEADS), and Bill Cooper from the Nunavut Department of Education. We have also been informed that our new representative from Nova Scotia will be named shortly, which we look forward to!

I'm pleased to mention that I recently participated in a first-ever national education table videoconference with representatives of the Canadian School Boards Association, CTF, CAP, AFN, and RNDGE. We shared our respective organization's priorities and discussed potential areas of common interest and possible next steps. Equity and universal internet, the mental health crisis, and the teacher shortage were amongst the topics of mutual interest. Despite our separate mandates, it is clear that we share a common interest in providing a quality education for students, and I am excited about the possibility that any agreement and our collective influence might help to bring about positive change in these areas.



**Curtis Brown**  
CASSA/ACGCS President

As we emerge from the pandemic, we are all *Reimagining Education* in and for the future. What might we need to reinvigorate from the schools of the past? What have we learned from the pandemic and the social unrest that we need to further address? What do we need to put in place going forward to maximize learning and wellness, not only for each student but for a better world? The CASSA Leadership Conference planning committee is working hard to address this theme.

Please register and book your hotel now to ensure the best travel and accommodations for this year's CASSA Leadership Conference at The Algonquin Resort in St. Andrews By-The-Sea, New Brunswick, from July 6 to 8, 2022. Then keep coming back to the site for regular updates as details continue to be unveiled: <http://conference.cassa-acgcs.ca/index.html>.

Look forward to seeing you there!

**Curtis Brown**  
CASSA/ACGCS President



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*\*All websites and email addresses are active. Click them to connect immediately with various resources.*

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# Greetings from the Executive Director



**Ken Bain**

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

**T**he Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) continues to be recognized as an important voice on behalf of school system leaders throughout Canada and beyond. Recently, I was asked to represent CASSA in a webinar session, where Dr. Noah Sobe, Senior Project Officer UNESCO Future of Learning and Innovation, presented a “Report from the International Commission on the Futures of Education – Reimagining our Futures Together – A New Social Contract for Education.” Dr. Sobe introduced the overarching argument that:

- our world is at a turning point;
- we either continue on an unsustainable path or need to radically change our course;
- knowledge and learning are the basis for renewal and transformation; and
- we need a new social contract for education that can repair past injustices while transforming the future.

The report challenges readers to consider how to forge this new social contract by learning and unlearning and by “pressing

reset on why we learn, what we learn and how we learn.”

The report includes some high-level recommendations on:

- the planet and the environment;
- technology; and
- education as a public endeavour.

His presentation ended with a focus on the importance of renewing education: “To shape peaceful, just and sustainable futures, education must be transformed.” The report challenges all educators to answer the following questions: What do we do now that needs to be continued? What should we abandon? What needs to be creatively invented afresh?

CASSA appreciated of the opportunity to join leaders from across the globe in this important conversation. Those wishing to dig deeper into the report can find it here: <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/>.

## CASSA Leadership Conference 2022

The CASSA Board of Directors is excited about our CASSA Leadership Conference in which we will “reimagine education” with a strong focus on school system leaders from July 6 to 8, 2022 in beautiful St. Andrew’s By-The-Sea, New Brunswick.

The conference will be facilitated by Jordan Tinney, Superintendent, from Surrey, British Columbia, and will include four facilitated sessions and three themed breakout sessions.

The conference format will also be “reimagined” with minimal keynote addresses and no predetermined/prescheduled workshops. Attendees will be actively engaged in their own learning and participation in the sessions will enhance individual learning.

There will also be opportunities for social time with music, food, and beverages as we enjoy Maritime hospitality. Registration is currently open. Check out the conference website for registration and other updates as they become available (<http://conference.cassa-acgcs.ca>).

**Ken Bain**

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

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*The official announcement of the First Nation School Board and signing of interim committee agreement (Featured: Dana Tizya-Tramm, Chair of Chiefs Committee on Education and Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation Chief, and Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education).*



*Melanie Bennet, YFNED's Executive Director, Educator, and Member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation*

# A Historic Step Toward Reconciliation

## *The Yukon First Nation School Board*

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

**I**n a historic step toward reconciliation and returning more control of education to First Nations, Yukon now has a First Nations school board. This new board will oversee eight schools starting in the 2022/23 school year.

Until now, Yukon has only had one school board. La Commission scolaire

francophone du Yukon represents schools serving Yukon's French first-language students. Most other schools in Yukon are overseen by school councils led by the Schools and Student Services Branch of the Department of Education.

The process to reach this stage began nearly half a century ago. In 1973, Chiefs from 12 First Nations in Yukon presented the *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* report to

then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. In the report, the Chiefs stated their intent to reclaim their inherent right to control education for First Nations in Yukon. The creation of the Yukon First Nations School Board is the result of decades of reports, agreements, negotiations, and collaboration. Several developments in recent years are especially significant.

From 2016 to 2018, the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) and the Chiefs



*Melanie Bennet speaking at the FNSB Announcement.*

Committee on Education (CCOE) held visioning sessions throughout Yukon. First Nations community members, Chiefs and councils, and Yukon First Nation education directors attended the sessions. Participants urged the CCOE to dramatically shift the way it had been working so that substantial changes could be made to Yukon’s public school system.

The CCOE’s next step was to negotiate a framework agreement for First Nations education in 2018. A year later, they began working with the Government of Yukon to create the Yukon First Nation School Board under the Education Act. This was a momentous step in taking back the rightful authority

and control over education for Yukon First Nations and all Indigenous students.

In 2020, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) was launched following the dissolution of the CYFN’s Education Department. With this shift, Melanie Bennett, who was CYFN’s Senior Policy Analyst for Education, became the YFNED’s Executive Director. YFNED also hired all new staff, including 12 Yukon First Nation Education Advocates, a role that did not exist before. One of the YFNED’s roles is to advocate for more Yukon First Nations content and consideration of culture in schools. It also works to put pressure on the Government of Yukon to work with Yukon First Nations on all education matters.

“Historically, Yukon First Nations have not had a say on education for their children and that changes now,” says Melanie, a long-time educator, and a member of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation.

“Now we have an agreement that sets a framework, and it is a collaborative relationship, but First Nations have the lead role in it,” she says. “I have always advocated that the decolonization process can’t be done by the colonizer. It needs to be done by those who were colonized, which means that it needs to be led by First Nations. The framework of the agreement that we’ve signed allows for that.”

Melanie acknowledges the wisdom the Chiefs had in putting the YFNED in place before moving to create the new school board. “That was a very strategic move on

their part. They said we’ve never really had the organization to support the work that needs to happen for the Indigenous students, and now we do.”

By June 2021, the finalization of the Yukon First Nation School Board Framework Agreement was announced by the CCOE and the Government of Yukon. In addition to setting out the process for creating the Yukon First Nation School Board under the Education Act, it also put into writing the commitment to a high-quality and culturally appropriate education based on an Indigenous worldview.

Signatories to the agreement include 10 Yukon First Nations seeking to address longstanding concerns about unacceptable education outcomes for First Nations students. The 2009 Auditor General’s Report on Education, for example, offered an alarming assessment of First Nations learners in the territory. Ten years later, Melanie notes, the 2019 version of that report indicated the same failings but on a much grander scale.

An important detail of the agreement is the provision that any Yukon student can attend a school that is part of the Yukon First Nation School Board, Indigenous or not. This was a deliberate decision based on a commitment to true reconciliation.

“When the Chiefs decided to go down this path, they thought quite deeply about it,” Melanie explains. “We aren’t trying to build a system that’s just for First Nations students. They didn’t want that. The agreement

### Sidebar 1: Schools

In 2022/23, YFNSB will have authority to provide K-12 education to:

- Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, Old Crow
- Ross River School, Ross River
- St. Elias Community School, Haines Junction
- Johnson Elementary, Watson Lake
- Watson Lake Secondary, Watson Lake
- Nelnah Bessie John School, Beaver Creek
- Takhini Elementary School, Whitehorse
- Grey Mountain Primary, Whitehorse

A resolution for J.V. Clark School in Mayo to join the board did not pass.

itself, in working with the Yukon government and within the existing Education Act, ensures that it's a school board that is based in Indigenous pedagogies and philosophies, and it will be open to all students."

Schools in the Yukon First Nation School Board will follow BC's curriculum, the same as other schools in the territory. The school board will decide on teaching materials, resources, and approaches. To have a school join the board, residents of a school's attendance area as well as parents with a child attending the school, Indigenous or not, voted by submitting mail-in ballots and by in-person voting over several weeks in January 2022. A result of 50 per cent plus one in favour was required.

Official results were revealed on February 2, 2022. Eight Yukon school communities in seven attendance areas voted to be governed by the new school board. (See Sidebar 1 for a list of schools and locations.)

CCOE Chair and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm shared remarks at the time, noting the occasion as "the day a colonial government ceded responsibility of the administration of its schools to the first peoples of this land in a landmark agreement promising collaboration, inclusivity, and good governance—to improve the outcomes of all Yukon students."

Over the coming weeks and months, the YFNED, the Department of Education, and Elections Yukon will work together to make sure the new board is ready for the 2022/23 school year. This will include electing five trustees who along with an executive director will oversee school operations.

The school board will be responsible for:

- managing hiring, dismissal, and discipline of staff;
- reviewing, modifying, and approving the school plan;
- providing educational programs for students;
- setting up policies for operating schools;
- receiving and managing funds, including those from the Department of Education;
- assessing and evaluating schools every five years;
- creating and submitting reports to the Minister of Education; and
- arranging for testing and investigating student progress and instruction system.

A Ministerial Order establishing the new school board was signed on February 14, 2022, by Yukon Minister of Education

**Any time you have change, there are going to be people who are on board and people who are not on board. For me, it's about being respectful and acknowledging that there's going to be some learning and some change.**

Jeanie McLean, who is of Tahltan First Nation and Norwegian ancestry. The Minister and the CCOE Chair also signed a Letter of Agreement to set up an Interim Governance Committee. The five members of this committee bring a wide variety of expertise and experience in the Yukon education system to this role. (The committee includes Melanie Bennett; see Sidebar 2 for details on all committee members.) They will take on the work and responsibility of setting up the new board until trustee elections are held in November, 2022.

"We had our first all-day meeting on February 28," Melanie says of the committee. "We were discussing what the next steps are for the school board, and it was an absolute honour to be able to sit there and talk about our ways and what we saw as success for our children and what we wanted to bring to the table, and to not have to justify that. It was a pretty powerful feeling."

The first step of this next stage, she says, is building relationships with the eight schools. Each of them entered into the school board agreement through different processes. Some of them had full referendums where the vote was an absolute yes in their community, she says, while others entered into a petition process with not everybody voting yes.

"We need to acknowledge that and acknowledge that the communities have spoken, and they want this change. Any time you have change, there are going to be people who are on board and people who are not on board. For me, it's about being respectful and acknowledging that there's going to be some learning and some change."

Both the CCOE and the Interim Governance Committee want the new board to be based in Indigenous pedagogies and philosophies, she says, but they need to bring community partners along with them, whether they started out on side or not.

"At the core of it, it's for the benefit of our children," she says. "And it isn't just to

benefit the Indigenous students. It benefits all because we know when we address the most at-risk, the most marginalized, whatever we do to address that and support them will serve all."

She reflects on a recent conversation she had with an Elder. "Through the referendum process, we were saying we can bring two worldviews together and Indigenous worldview will be celebrated. But when I said that to him, he said, 'You need to stop saying that. You're not just bringing two worldviews together. You're building a new one.' And he was right." ○

### Sidebar 2: Interim Governance Committee Members

- *Dr. Alyce Johnson*: a lifelong educator, former principal of Klwane Lake School, and member of Klwane First Nation
- *Erin Pauls*: a member of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and currently their Director of Education, who is known for her leadership and commitment to building the foundation children need for their learning journey
- *Jocelyn Joe-Strack*: an Indigenous scientist, philosopher, entrepreneur, and member of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and currently the Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge with Yukon University
- *Mark Wedge*: a member of and former Chief for Carcross/Tagish First Nation who has held many leadership roles focused on education and economic and social development
- *Melanie Bennett*: a lifelong educator, member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, and current Executive Director of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate



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## Mark Your Calendars for CASSA's Annual Conference in 2022!



Photo by  
George Girnas  
on Unsplash

**July 6-8, 2022**

**St. Andrew's By-The-Sea, New Brunswick**

The CASSA Annual Conference is hoping to meet in-person in beautiful St. Andrews By-The-Sea in 2022. It is going to be an amazing way to re-connect school system leaders from across Canada to learn and share information on current topics in education. We hope you'll join us!

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*The theme for 2022 is  
reimagining education.*

*Make sure to save the date!*

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# CASSA Awards: Recognizing Outstanding Leadership

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**2022**  
update  
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Since 2002, the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) has recognized the extraordinary efforts of Canadian school system leaders through its EXL Award. Over the years, CASSA has also presented a number of Honourary Life Memberships and Distinguished Service Awards. Since its inception, the EXL Award has been supported by Xerox Canada. CASSA recognizes and is grateful for this 20-year partnership.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the cancellation of the 2020 CASSA conference, award recipients for both 2020 and 2021 were recognized during CASSA's 2021 virtual conference on July 7, 2021. The 2020 co-recipients of the award, also known as the Xerox Excellent in Educational Leadership Award, were Darrel Robertson (CASS) and Dr. Renee Closs (NWTSA). The 2021 recipient was Denise Andre (OCSOA). Short biographies of all three appeared in the June 2021 issue of the *Leaders and Learners* newsletter.

Also announced during the 2021 virtual conference were two Honourary Life Memberships: Barry Litun (CASS) and Michael Chechile (ADGESBQ). Short biographies of Barry and Michael ran in the September 2021 newsletter.

Plans are well underway for the presentation of the 2022 CASSA Awards. CASSA is pleased to share the update that recipients of the 2020 and 2021 awards will be honoured along with the 2022 recipient at our first in-person conference since 2019. The conference is scheduled for July 6 to 8, 2022, in St. Andrew's By-The-Sea, New Brunswick.

Do you know a leader whose work deserves to be recognized at the national level? Is a colleague in your school board or regional affiliate making significant contributions to the work of senior system administration and education in Canada? Consider putting their name forward for one of CASSA's three national awards. Nomination forms for each award can be found on the CASSA website.

Nomination packages are accepted between October 1, 2022, and May 16, 2023.

## Honourary Life Membership

This award recognizes excellence in education at the national level. It is intended to honour individuals who have contributed significantly to CASSA but may also be presented to those who have made a difference at the provincial affiliate level. The latter will only happen when those provincial affiliate contributions relate to and support CASSA and its national mandate.

## Distinguished Service Award

This award recognizes any present or recent CASSA member who has demonstrated outstanding ability and leadership. Please note this award is open to leaders at all stages of a career in senior system administration. It is not restricted to only those who are retired or nearing retirement (the CASSA Honourary Life Membership would normally be more appropriate for those individuals). These guidelines do not exclude those who are approaching retirement from receiving the Distinguished Service Award.

## EXL Award

This award recognizes the outstanding leadership of superintendents and directors of education from across Canada. CASSA members who have shown exemplary leadership ability and who have enhanced school administration are eligible to receive this award.

An EXL Award nominee will have brought honour to themselves, their colleagues, and their profession. They will have given exemplary service to their provincial, territorial, or national professional association. They will have made significant contributions to the field of education through their service, writings, or other activities. They serve as role models and teachers to others and have at least five years of membership in CASSA.

CASSA is committed to highlighting the work of extraordinary leaders in education for several reasons:

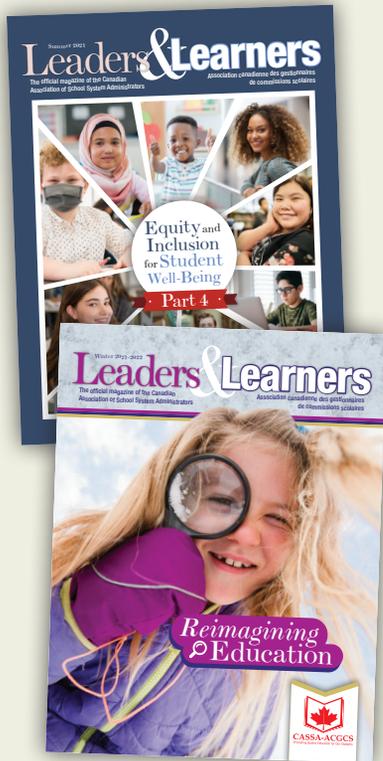
- It is important to acknowledge the dedication and enthusiasm of administrators who guide children's educational experiences. Recognition is a powerful instrument for building pride in accomplishment and continued determination to pursue excellence.
- System leaders who establish the character of a particular school system's programs through the important work with school boards, school leaders, teachers and caring parents help to determine the scope and quality of children's education experiences.
- Children's attitudes toward learning and their perceptions of themselves as lifelong learners are established in their school years. Effective leadership, mentoring and modeling determine whether the school jurisdiction effectively creates this environment.

The system leader who receives the EXL Award is also invited to attend the annual AASA conference in the United States as the Canadian Superintendent of the Year.

### Previous EXL Award recipients include:

- |                          |                   |                  |
|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| • Denise Andre           | • John Crocco     | • Geoff Williams |
| • Renee Closs            | • Brent Kaulback  | • Carol Gray     |
| • Darrel Robertson       | • Kim Jenkins     | • Ron Canuel     |
| • Shannon Barnett-Aikman | • Robert Mills    | • Edie Wilde     |
| • David Keohane          | • Linda Fabi      | • Ed Wittchen    |
| • Dr. John Malloy        | • Curtis Brown    | • Roy Seidler    |
| • Joan Carr              | • John Mackle     | • John Darroch   |
|                          | • Johanne Messner |                  |

*The recipient list is updated each year on the Awards section of the CASSA website.*

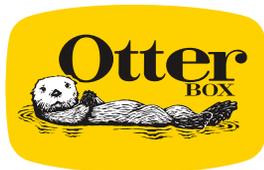


# WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO WRITE FOR US!

The CASSA Board is looking for authors interested in writing for the upcoming Winter 2022-23 issue of *Leaders & Learners* magazine. If you have an article idea that fits into a theme about leadership, please send an abstract to Jenna Collignon, editor of the magazine, at [jcollignon@matrixgroupinc.net](mailto:jcollignon@matrixgroupinc.net), and copy [ken\\_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca](mailto:ken_bain@cassa-acgcs.ca). We are looking for features and success stories from each region of Canada: Eastern Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Western Canada and Northern Canada.

- Abstracts are due **September 5, 2022**. Please include a 25 to 50-word description as well as contact information for the author(s).
- FINAL deadline for the Winter 2022-23 issue will be **November 4, 2022**.
- You will be notified if your abstract is chosen.
- Photos are also welcome! They must be high-resolution, 300DPI, and are subject to approval.

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