



PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA™

THE ADVOCATE



International 
STUDENTS
Day 
November 17, 2023



Welcome to the November 15, 2023 issue of *The Advocate*!

In this edition, you'll find a message from PSBAA President Dennis MacNeil, current information on the PSBAA upcoming events and speakers, a good news story from Grande Yellowhead Public School Division, programs, courses and bursaries, grant opportunities and our regular features. Enjoy!



The next edition of *The Advocate* will be published on November 30, 2023.

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INDIGENOUS CANADA ONLINE COURSE

Indigenous Canada is a 12-lesson Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) from the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta that explores the different histories and contemporary points of view of Indigenous Peoples living in Canada. From an Indigenous standpoint, this course explores complex experiences Indigenous Peoples face today from a historical and critical perspective, highlighting national and local Indigenous-settler relations.

Topics for the 12 lessons include the fur trade and other exchange relationships, land claims and environmental impacts, legal systems and rights, political conflicts and alliances, Indigenous political activism, and contemporary Indigenous life, art and its expressions.

[Click here for more information!](#)

PRESIDENTS' CORNER

Embracing Change and Preparing for the Future

Our 2023 Fall Conference and Annual General Meeting brought about some changes to our Board of Directors. We have a new First and Second Director who both come to us with unique perspectives and a long-standing history with the public school system in Alberta. After serving two years with us as First Director, Tasha Oatway-McLay from the Sturgeon School Division stepped down and we welcomed Patrick Grisonich from the Medicine Hat Public School Division. We also said good-bye to Lorraine Stewart from the Parkland School Division who served on our board for two years and we welcomed in Timothy O'Hara from the Fort McMurray Public School Division as our new Second Director.

After serving as Director for Edmonton Public Schools for two years, Marsha Nelson bid us farewell and we welcomed Jan Sawyer as the new Director for Edmonton Public Schools. I cannot thank our departing members enough for all their hard work and devotion to their roles, their passion and efforts will not be forgotten. I am honoured to extend a warm welcome to our new members and express my heartfelt gratitude for their unwavering dedication and commitment to the betterment of our public schools. I am eager and excited to work alongside both these individuals as I know they will have vital knowledge our board can use and perspectives that are essential to the continued growth of PSBAA.

While I was listening to our conference guest speaker Glenn Tecker discuss what successful leadership looks like, I was struck with a sense of pride and motivation. I truly believe our Board and our PSBAA members are on the right track to move public education in a positive direction, and to be the voice of support for students and teachers across the province. I can see the passion and devotion our members have, and I am confident in what's to come.

Together, as a united team, we hold the power to create lasting, positive impacts on the lives of students and their families. In these ever-evolving times, our roles as stewards of public education carries more weight now than ever before. We will no doubt face challenges, but by coming together as a collective force, we will be able to foster change. Optimism is the fuel that drives individuals to overcome obstacles, and gratitude is the foundation upon which we build a stronger, more inclusive, and more equitable public school system. It was clearly shown to me at this year's fall conference that we have an abundance of both. As Glenn Tecker pointed out, the potential we possess is boundless, and the impact we can make as a collective is immeasurable.

With new members joining our board and change upon us, I want to send out this friendly reminder that change is not something to be feared, but to be embraced. New ideas and fresh perspectives are the catalysts for progress. With the collaborative efforts of our diverse and passionate members, I am confident that we will rise to meet the needs of our school boards and our students province wide. I know we will work tirelessly to ensure that our public schools continue to be places of inspiration, innovation, and excellence.

Dennis MacNeil, PSBAA President



UPCOMING EVENTS

November PSBC Meeting

- November 17-18, 2023

We are looking forward to welcoming you back to the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, West Edmonton for the PSBC on November 17 and 18, 2023.

Our November PSBC is being held on Friday and Saturday to reduce the time between our meeting and the ASBA FGM. Registration kicks off at 8 a.m. on November 17 and the day will start with a presentation on the 'Assurance Framework' from Chrenan Borradaile, Executive Director of Policy & Planning - Alberta Education and Kindy Joseph, ADM, Program and System Support Alberta Government, followed by a discussion on 'Child and Youth well-being', with Kindy Joseph, Cynthia Dunnigan, ADM, from Child and Family Services, and Coreen Everington, ADM, from the Mental Health and Addiction Division on the topic.

During the afternoon, we will hear from Superintendent Chad Erickson of Red Deer Public Schools and Superintendent Tim De Ruyck of Wolf Creek Public Schools. Executive Director Jackie Taylor from Central Alberta Collegiate Institute will also join the conversation.

We will then shift our focus to discussing how to engage stakeholders when making difficult decisions and hear from Eric Cameron, Trustee, Aimee Henning, Trustee, and Shauna Boyce, Superintendent, from the Parkland School Division on this matter.

[CLICK HERE for more information or to Register!](#)

February 2024 PSBC

- February 8-9, 2024

[CLICK HERE for more information or to register!](#)

April 2024 PSBC

- April 11-12, 2024

[CLICK HERE for more information or to Register!](#)

2024 Spring General Assembly

- May 30 - June 1, 2024

[CLICK HERE for more information or to Register!](#)

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

We will post career opportunity ads on the PSBAA website and in *The Advocate* for members free of charge.

Check out the following current career opportunities on the [PSBAA website](#).

Email a PDF copy of your career ad to Troy Tait at:
communications@public-schools.ab.ca



PSBAA SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

Do you know someone who has made a special contribution to Public Education this year? Advanced business initiatives in your school division? Promoted or advanced Truth and Reconciliation? Or maybe has just been an all around great mentor or leader?

Then nominate your fellow colleague through the PSBAA website under [member resources](#) in the award nomination forms section.

**The Deadline for nominations is
Friday, March 31, 2024.**

GOOD NEWS STORY

System Health and Wellness Priority Get's Staff Focus in New Committee



Grande Yellowhead Public School Division's newest committee has convened for its first meeting. Top of the agenda: what are the indicators of a healthy system?

Representatives on the Health and Wellness Committee include staff from schools, central office, and a variety of departments. Committee co-chairs include GYPSD's Director of HR, Meghan Auriat, and Parkland Composite High School teacher, Sean Sommerfeld. Additionally, Trustee Jocelyn Pettitt (Edson) sits on the committee on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

The committee is deepening the work begun by the Board and the Division last year in response to awareness of the impacts of the pandemic on students' and staff mental health. As part of a governance review, the Board added the System Health and Wellness Priority in January 2023, in conjunction with a policy

review that included the addition of two important updates to the Board's policy on Health and Wellness which identified the right for staff to disconnect from work emails in their evenings and weekends, and the right for staff to not tolerate harassment or bullying while performing their work duties. As part of an awareness campaign, representatives from Human Resources visited every GYPSD school to ensure staff knew of the extensive supports available to them, and how to access them through the Division's website. During the Board's community engagement events, attendees received information on the Division's complete Pyramid of Supports for students - including the addition of Wellness Navigators within GYPSD's five high schools. In May, GYPSD began a partnership with EdCan through the Well at Work initiative and invited all GYPSD principals to consider how they are encouraging and supporting a healthy working and learning environment.

In its first working meeting, the committee engaged in a consensus-building activity to explore indicators of a healthy system and develop themes to look at more closely. Some of the initial themes, or categories, included collaborative culture, authentic communications, clarity of purpose and healthy boundaries, resiliency and flexibility, and ongoing feedback. The committee will meet four times in total during the 2023/24 school year.

ONE VISION ONE TEAM ONE GOAL

Do you have a good news story from your school jurisdiction that you would like to share with PSBAA member boards? Please let us know by emailing communications@public-schools.ab.ca.

PROGRAMS, COURSES AND BURSARIES

Explore – Second Language Program

Explore is an intensive language immersion program that provides opportunities for English-speaking students to study French, and for French-speaking students to study English.

The program has two categories one for ages 13-15 and the other for 16, 17, or 18+. For 13 to 15 year olds, three-week summer sessions are available. Some virtual Explore sessions are offered for those who are unable to participate in person. For participants 16 and older, Explore sessions are offered during the spring or summer, which last between 31 and 33 days.

The program contributes \$2,400 for each participant 13 to 15 years old and \$3,350 for each participant 16 years and older. This covers the costs of tuition, instructional materials, meals, and lodging.

[CLICK HERE for more details!](#)



Help raise awareness about youth mental health and well-being by bringing Kids Help Phone's nationally funded Counsellor in the Classroom program to your school!

The Counsellor in the Classroom program promotes the discussion of mental health and well-being among young people. The program is available from coast to coast for students in Grades 6 through 12 across Canada in both English and French. This is an opportunity for educators to promote help-seeking and provide students with more information about mental health and the support available to them.

The program is divided into two parts, firstly the classroom is provided activities which are led by the teacher and the second allows students the opportunity to learn and engage with a Kids Help Phone professional counsellor. In this virtual session, the counsellor will share information about Kids Help Phone's services and facilitate a discussion about why it can be difficult to reach out for help sometimes, as well as answer any questions that arise

[CLICK HERE for more details!](#)



The Impact of Social Media on Student Well-Being

Looking to understand how and why your students are using social media more than ever before? Want a better understanding of the impact on well-being that can be seen in the classroom?

Sonderly is offering a one and a half hour course from Dr. Alexandra Makos who provides a detailed history of social media, explains how the design of social media effects student well-being and gives concrete solutions to not only manage the use of social media in the classroom but also to use it in ways that will improve the well-being of students.

The course will help you better understand the role of social media in the lives of students and provide strategies to improve the impact of social media on well-being.

[CLICK HERE for more details!](#)

JobSafe, A Free Safety Program for Junior and Senior High Schools

Looking for more ways to educate and empower youth on safety prior to them entering the workforce?

SafeGen has a great program, JobSafe, that provides young workers with accredited safety education prior to entering the workforce. The job safety course has no cost and is available to all publicly funded junior and senior high schools throughout Alberta. The program is a great fit to be used as an effective Career and Technologies Studies (CTS) resource for both teachers and students.

[CLICK HERE for more details!](#)



Kids Help Phone's offers virtual councillor health services which are available 24/7 across Canada. This means that they are there for kids, teens and young adults from coast to coast when they need help or someone to talk to.

One of the **Kids Help Phone** services is the **Brighter Days Program**, which gently introduces Indigenous youth (ages 6 – 29) to their services and provides them with an opportunity to engage virtually with a **Kids**

Help Phone Indigenous Wellness Specialist in a culturally safe and fun conversation. After the introductory session, participating groups have the option of hosting additional sessions focused on wellness topics such as managing anxiety, self-care and more.

You can help by connecting Indigenous youth to well-being supports today through the link below and we look forward to having the Kids Help Phone speak at our Spring General Assembly this June.

[**CLICK HERE for more details!**](#)

GRANTS



SCHOLARSHIP FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Have you heard about the Alberta Blue Cross® Indigenous scholarship program? This year, there are a total of nine \$1,500 awards available—six for mature students and three for students who've recently completed high school and are entering their first year of post-secondary study. Our scholarships are based on community involvement, personal goals and financial need. As a community leader and connector, we wanted to share the details of this scholarship with you and your community directly.

For more information, [visit the Alberta Blue Cross website](#) or email: scholarships.indigenousstudents@ab.bluecross.ca



Program bolsters Canadian school music programs

MusiCounts, a charity associated with The Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences and The JUNO Awards, aims to make music education inclusive, sustainable, and accessible for youth across Canada.

Through the Band Aid Program, MusiCounts provides under-resourced schools with grants of up to \$15,000 worth of musical instruments, equipment, and resources.

Funds may be used to support any approach to music education and purchase any kind of musical instruments.

Schools can apply for support for an existing music program, or schools with no music program may apply to start a new music program.

The application deadline is 11:59 p.m. EST, December 5, 2023.

Visit the MusiCounts website at [MusiCounts: Band Aid Program](#) to download the program guidelines and access the online application as well as other helpful resources.



Strengthening the Relationship Between Students and Nature

Since 1992, Tree Canada has greened more than 720 schoolyards across the country. With the support of our sponsors, we've turned barren schoolyards into living outdoor classrooms, created arboretums for hands-on learning and helped reconnect students with the natural world.

Each year, Tree Canada helps schools, community groups, Indigenous communities and municipalities across Canada looking to plant trees or develop green infrastructure through creative projects.

This includes supporting planting projects as well as developing and implementing urban forest best management practices and innovative urban design solutions.

Our grants provide support for community greening, innovation and stewardship initiatives. Grant recipients receive funding and technical support to help start, upgrade, or achieve their greening goals.

Eligible projects receive \$3,500 in funding to cover the cost of purchasing and planting trees and shrubs, site preparation, tree maintenance, planting materials and developing education materials.

[**CLICK HERE for more details!**](#)



Fueling Futures

Enbridge's Fueling Futures grant is a community investment program that is guided by a core set of criteria. Enbridge considers donation and sponsorship opportunities in communities where Enbridge operates that meet the following criteria:

- Located primarily within a 20-kilometer (10-mile) radius of their pipeline right-of-way or near their operations.
- The request is of prime importance to the community.
- Beneficial to the greatest possible number of people.
- Significant to the long-term interests of the community.
- Supportive of one of their three core areas that they view as integral for a sustainable community: Safe Communities, Vibrant Communities, Sustainable Communities.

[**CLICK HERE for more details!**](#)

“WELL SAID!”

“IF YOU WRITE A PROBLEM DOWN CLEARLY AND SPECIFICALLY, YOU HAVE SOLVED HALF OF IT.”

~ KIDLIN LAW



PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS'
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STORY IDEA? FEEDBACK?

We welcome your story ideas and suggestions!

CONTACT US

Please email communications@public-schools.ab.ca.
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