

the torch



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Back row from left to right: Kelly Barkman (superintendent/CEO), Peter Kotyk, Rod Giesbrecht, John O'Grodnik (former trustee), John Toews, Brianne Goertzen, Michael West (vice-chair) and Vince Mariani (secretary-treasurer/CFO). Middle row: Eva Prysizney, Greg Proch (former trustee) and Colleen Carswell (chair). Front row: former trustees George Marshall, Vicki Lazaruk and Robert Fraser. Not present: Jerry Sodomlak and Brian Olynik.

Division recognizes trustees for years of service

Mary Andree, Robert Fraser and George Marshall, three long-serving school trustees, now have awards named in their honour in an effort to do more to recognize the commitment trustees make to serving the students, staff and community of River East Transcona School Division.

Until now, non-returning board members received an appropriate memento, and a resolution expressing sincere appreciation was entered into the record. Colleen Carswell, board chair, says

that practice is being expanded.

“Their service is part of the history of our school division and needs to be acknowledged in a more significant way. These three individuals served a combined total of 109 years as trustees. That’s quite an accomplishment and worthy of special recognition.”

Recently, a reception was held to honour all former RETSD trustees. Lori Chrol (four years), Greg Proch (eight years), John O’Grodnik (14 years) and Vicki Lazaruk (20 years)

were recognized for their service, as was Shirley Timm-Rudolph, who served three years until her death in 2014.

Longer serving trustees—those who served 25 years—will now receive a Long Service designation; for 30 years they will receive a Lifetime Achievement designation.

Lifetime Achievement comes with other honours as well. The school board’s awards, created in 2007 and presented at convocations, will now be named for them.

Beginning this June, deserving students will receive the Mary Andree Humanitarian Award, the Robert Fraser Leadership Award, and the George Marshall Citizenship Award. Mary Andree, who died in 2012, served three school divisions for over 40 years. Robert Fraser served for 37 years—25 in River East School Division and 12 in RETSD; while George Marshall served for 32 years—24 in Transcona-Springfield and eight in RETSD.

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Former trustees Robert Fraser and George Marshall.

“These individuals helped ensure our students got the best education possible. It’s good to know they’ll finally be honoured in a way that recognizes their hard work and dedication,” says Ms. Carswell.

Robert Fraser says the recognition they received at the reception and

the renaming of the awards is indeed an honour for George, Mary and himself. “It’s wonderful, but the most important thing about being a trustee was the pride we took in seeing students graduate and become skilled and responsible

citizens, and working with the tremendous board, administration and staff in our schools. We were treated with the highest respect and openness.”

These trustees will also be nominated for the Manitoba School Board Association’s Presidents’ Council Award, and

for those who don’t already have a street named after them, their name will be submitted to the city’s street name list for consideration by developers when naming new streets. Finally, their names will be considered for a school name when a new school is built in the division.



Former trustee Mary Andree.

Your trustees

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Colleen Carswell (chair)
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Peter Kotyk
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Ward 5

Michael West (vice-chair)
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(Left to right) Assistant superintendent Jason Drysdale, trustee Michael West, assistant superintendent Joan Trubyk, assistant superintendent Greg Daniels, trustee Eva Prysizney, Autumn Hunt, Alycia Hunt, trustee John Toews and superintendent Kelly Barkman.

Powwow unites community

The heartbeat of the River East Transcona community was in Kildonan-East Collegiate the evening of April 20.

Visitors flocked to the school

and the gym was filled with the pounding rhythm of several drum circles, as RETSD hosted the fifth divisional Powwow it’s held since its first in 2008.

RETSD Powwows are lively, inclusive events that attract drummers and colourfully dressed traditional dancers from across the province, as well as students and others from throughout the division. Guests and participants enjoy a feast of stew and bannock,

and each other’s company, before the dancing begins.

Powwows are a way for the division to celebrate Aboriginal culture, the community and another successful year of Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) programming. AAA integrates Aboriginal perspectives into learning for all students and aims to help Aboriginal students achieve the highest possible success at school.

“I see a lot of joy and pride at our Powwows, and so many people from the community turn out,” says RETSD board vice-chair Michael West. “We’re really fortunate to have the dedicated staff who organize events like these. We can all benefit from taking part.”



The students and staff on Juno Beach in Normandy, France.

Students mark centennial of Battle of Vimy Ridge

Thousands of Canadians travelled to France for the April 9th centennial of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, including a group from RETSD that prepared for the journey for years.

The group of 35 students and six staff members were from Miles Macdonell and Kildonan-East collegiates. This is the fourth time since 2007 that students from these two schools have travelled to Europe to honour Canadian soldiers who fell in battle

overseas, and prepared for the trip by doing in-depth research on individual soldiers.

While in Vimy, the students took part in a ceremony at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, along with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and then French president François Hollande.

“I had never seen that many people in one place before!” says

KEC student Larysa Shupenia. “Among all the crowds, the experience was still very personal.”

The group visited the Arras student learning exhibition, and First World War sites in Belgium and France such as Tyne Cot Cemetery, Menin Gate and Beaumont-Hamel. They also visited Second World War sites such as the Juno Beach Centre,

Pointe du Hoc and the Bény-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery.

“This trip had a beautiful sort of melancholy feel to it,” says Miles Mac student Nikita Savinkoff.

“Seeing the peaceful remnants of a terrible past helped me to truly understand the reality of war and the humanity of the men whose lives were taken. I’m immensely grateful to have been part of this event.”



(Left to right) Board vice-chair Michael West and trustee Jerry Sodomlak, Premier Brian Pallister, board chair Colleen Carswell, Education Minister Ian Wishart, trustee Eva Prysizney, and Sheldon Kennedy.

RETSD ensures Respect in School

It’s River East Transcona’s belief that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

With that core belief in mind, RETSD was the first division in the province to ensure all its

staff took part in the Respect in School training developed by the organization Respect Group Inc. The online training is designed for administrators, teachers and others who interact with students,

to help them understand and respond to incidents of bullying, abuse, harassment and neglect.

Because of RETSD’s early and strong commitment to the training, Premier Brian Pallister chose Bernie Wolfe Community School

to announce an enhanced Respect in School program for Manitoba schools, along with former NHL player Sheldon Kennedy, who co-founded the program. The training will now be implemented provincially.

“We’re proud to have taken a leadership role in introducing the Respect in School program and are very pleased to hear that the Manitoba government intends to make the program available to all school divisions in the province, at no extra cost,” says RETSD board chair Colleen Carswell. “Anytime you can create safe, respectful schools, you’re giving both students and staff a greater advantage to be successful, both personally and professionally.”



Volunteer spotlight

Sharon Terleski has volunteered in teacher Sharron Hoskin's Grade 1 class at Radisson School for five years and the compassion she shows to the students is an inspiration. The children really respond to her, due to how patient and kind she is with them. Their reading, writing and math skills (and confidence) grow with each session because of the work she puts in with them. And they all look forward to the cookies Mrs. T bakes for them Tuesdays and Thursdays. She is an important part of the Radisson community. For more about volunteering in RETSD, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca/Community/Volunteer

Busing your child in RETSD

As one school year ends, preparations for the next are just around the corner.

You and your children may soon be on the lookout for classroom essentials and making decisions about school programs. You may also be making arrangements for your children to be bused to school.

Students are eligible for busing if

they're in kindergarten to Grade 6 and live more than 1.6 km from their designated school. The Province of Manitoba set out this boundary and only provides funding to school divisions to transport students who fulfil those criteria.

However, in an effort to meet the needs of families in our division, River East Transcona offers fee-for-service busing if you live

within the 1.6 km boundary and there are seats available for your children. Simply contact the RETSD transportation department to make arrangements (see the link below for contact information).

For transportation FAQs, our policy with more detailed eligibility requirements, a Transportation Guide and further information, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca/ParentsandStudents/Transportation/

(Left to right) Congratulations to Jessica Chudy, Laura Morin, Darren Ilao and Ceana McKee, Grade 10 students from Kildonan-East Collegiate, who took part in the University of British Columbia's Michael Smith Challenge, a national science competition. They all fared very well and Darren was the provincial winner.



New initiative provides flexibility

In mid-March, the province replaced the previous government's Smaller Classes Initiative with the new Early Years Education Initiative.

Some welcomed the 20-student cap in kindergarten to Grade 3 classes required by the Smaller Classes Initiative. Former education minister Nancy Allan's reasoning was that smaller class sizes would "give students more one-on-one time with their teachers to help them excel, while allowing teachers more time to do what they do best."

While in theory the initiative had positives, in practice RETSD and other divisions faced the challenge of achieving this class-size cap without the special funding required to do so. This threatened to impact their ability to provide funding to much-needed programming for students and provide tools for teachers to do their jobs.

Fewer students in each classroom meant more classrooms and more teachers. To be in compliance, the division needed to hire 38 additional teachers over just a

few years, and funding was only provided to hire a few teachers each year. As well, there were concerns with classroom space requirements, which necessitated changes to the division's catchment areas and raised issues with Schools of Choice, busing and the overall budget.

"Smaller class sizes are important, but composition of a class is just as significant," says RETSD board chair Colleen Carswell. "Keeping that and other matters in mind, it's important we have the flexibility to target our funding in ways we believe will produce the best results for our students."

The new Early Years Education Initiative allows divisions to make use of funding in the ways that make the biggest impact in their schools, whether by maintaining smaller class sizes or investing in improvements for student achievement. It also includes a component to evaluate teaching methods and share best practices.

"We know how important it is to evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching methods in literacy and numeracy," says Ms. Carswell, "and we look forward to working with Manitoba Education and Training in that regard."