



October 2020

# Inspiring Success!

## TRUSTEE NEWSLETTER

## Welcome Back to School!



### Trustee Spotlight: Shawna Ofstie

**Term:** 1st

**Ward:** County West

**Contact:** [shawna.ofstie@blackgold.ca](mailto:shawna.ofstie@blackgold.ca)

#### What do you bring to the Board of Education table?

I, like many others, am passionate about communities, children and schools. I love to work as a team and support our school division. Relationships and communication is key to achieving goals and supporting our schools so I work hard to build good relationships with our board, our administration, our staff and our government.

We have learned as a board to "agree to disagree" on topics where our opinions differ but many times have been able to come up with a compromise as a group. As I learn more, my goal is to try to have as many government services and communities work together to support our schools effectively and efficiently in all areas.



*A pair of East Elementary students took part in this year's Orange Shirt Day to show solidarity with residential school survivors, and to declare that every child matters.*

Welcome Back! Opening the doors this September had a different feel to it than most years, with many new protocols in place.

While we are not working under ideal circumstances, the feedback we are hearing is that students and staff are happy to be back, and that things are going smoothly. In addition to our physical schools, our new Distance Learning School is up and running with 13 per cent of students from across the district accessing their education this way.

Thank-you for your patience, feedback, and encouragement as we develop this school in the midst of full operations. Your comments have been very supportive and helpful.

After six weeks back at school, there have been three reported cases of COVID-19 associated with Black Gold Schools. We can't express enough the pride we have for all BGSD staff in the resilience and tenacity they have shown to prepare for and operationalize school re-opening.

We are grateful for the huge role that our parents and guardians have played in supporting all our students with back to school. Now more than ever, we need our whole Black Gold family working together to keep our community transmission rates low and our grace and support for one another high. Thank you for your continued understanding and support.

The BGSD School Re-entry Plan continues to be a fluid document, and is being updated as needed. All COVID-19 and BGSD Re-entry related information can be found here: <https://www.blackgold.ca/about-bgsd/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>.

It's hard to believe given that we are just starting to catch our breath from the start of this school year, however we are about to get started with planning the school calendar for the 2021-2022 school year! We value your voice and want to hear your input and experiences to best support our planning. Stay tuned!

## Edwin Parr Award Nominee



New Sarepta Community High School teacher Benjamin Zylstra with his family.

Each year school divisions around Alberta have the opportunity to put forward one nominee for the Edwin Parr Award - an award recognizing exceptional first-year teachers. Black Gold School Division had three outstanding first-year teachers recommended for the nomination.

The 2019-2020 nominee from Black Gold was Benjamin Zylstra, an outstanding teacher from New Sarepta Community High School.

Ben was officially recognized by Black Gold at a small event held in his honour on August 27, 2020, with dinner and a toast from his former principal, Chris Stiles. After dinner, the ASBA Zone 2/3 virtual Awards Ceremony was live-streamed. Nominees from across our zone shared stories of their memorable first year; some were humorous while others truly showed the extent that many teachers go to in order to reach their students and engage them in learning.

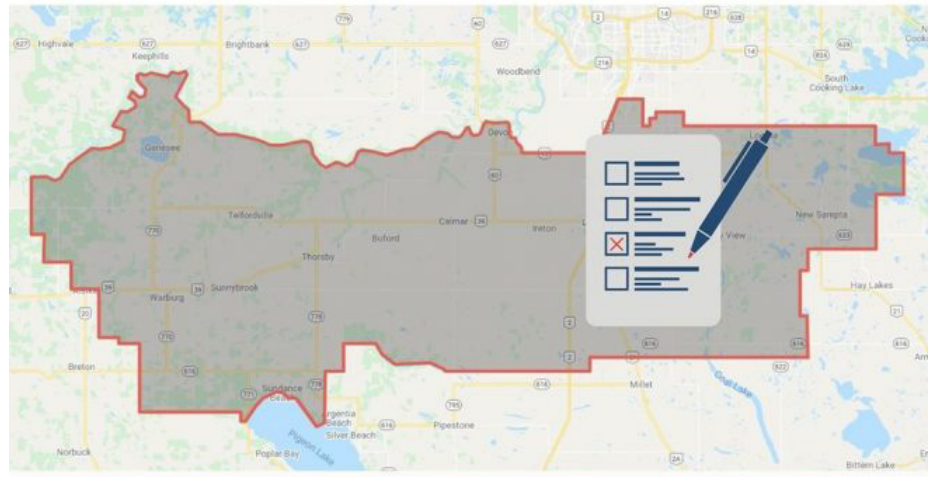
While Ben was not selected to go forward as a finalist, the Division is incredibly grateful for "Silly Zyly's" inspirational teaching and that he is part of the Black Gold family.

## Did you know?

You can reach out to your Board of Trustees directly with your questions, concerns or suggestions. Please find our member contact information at [www.blackgold.ca/about-bgsd/board](http://www.blackgold.ca/about-bgsd/board).

## Local Updates - County West

We want to hear from you



*The West End Review was put on pause as it entered into the qualitative consultation phase as a result of the limitations resulting from Covid-19.*

Welcome to the 2020-2021 School Year! Back to School looks very different this year but I am so impressed with how each school has made the best of our circumstances. My thanks and appreciation to each and every one of you for your role in making our re-entry smooth and safe.

### West End Review

As I'm sure you all remember, in order to ensure equitability and sustainability in delivering quality education to all students, Black Gold began the West End Schools Programming Review in 2019. Its purpose was to examine the current state and circumstances surrounding its delivery of elementary programming, transportation and staff deployment in our Calmar, Warburg and Thorsby Schools.

This review was put on pause as it entered into the qualitative consultation phase as a result of the limitations resulting from Covid-19. With the extra workload of re-entry complete, administration will be moving forward with the quantitative data review of the West End schools, leaving the full qualitative review on hold until times are more accommodating for gatherings and consultations. This will keep the process moving forward.

### Ward Review

In the June newsletter it was announced that our Ward Review is now complete. At the next election (October 2021) the new ward boundaries will come into effect. There are no changes to the County West boundaries and will continue to serve Warburg and Thorsby areas.

Significant changes include Covenant Christian School, which will become part of the Leduc Ward and have three Trustees. There will now be only one Trustee serving the Calmar/Devon Ward and two Trustees serving Beaumont/New Sarepta.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, which is a collaboration of updates division wide. The Board of Trustees is proud to share news and accomplishments via a quarterly newsletter and a news column in the Leduc Rep. I look forward to seeing some of you at upcoming school council meetings and our Council of School Communities later this month.

- Trustee Shawna Ofstie



## Welcome Back & Long Service Awards Ceremony



Board Chair Devonna Klaassen congratulates École J.E. Lapointe School teacher Shane Slade on receiving the 2020 Board of Trustees' Inspiring Success Award of Distinction.

On September 18, 2020, Black Gold School Division Board of Trustees celebrated the start of the new school year with staff at the annual Welcome Back & Long Service Awards Ceremony. Due to the ongoing health crisis, this year's ceremony was held virtually.

The event included the unveiling of the Division's 25th Anniversary logo, appreciation for retiring ATA and support staff members, recognition of current staff long service milestones, the presentation of two special awards - the Superintendent's Service Award of Excellence and the Board of Trustees Inspiring Success Award of Distinction, and wrapped up with a keynote address by famed international business speaker Michael Kerr.

This year's recipient of the Board of Trustees' Inspiring Success Award of Distinction is Shane Slade, an outstanding Grade 9 teacher at École J.E. Lapointe School in Beaumont. Shane was recognized for his leadership in making a significant and positive difference in public education, and for going above and beyond in supporting and encouraging students and staff at his school.

Calmar Elementary School Pre-Kindergarten Education Assistant Nancy Martin received the Superintendent's Service Award of Excellence.

She was recognized for her excellent work in the co-regulation of students with severe communication disorders, her passion and deep concern for the well-being of her young charges, and her many contributions to staff morale and spirit.

Congratulations to all the retirees, long service and special awards recipients. A big thank you to all those who helped organize this virtual event, and to everyone who tuned in to celebrate and recognize our dedicated staff.



Superintendent Bill Romanchuk with the 2020 Superintendent's Service Award of Excellence recipient Nancy Martin.

## COVID-19 Mental Health Supports

For those experiencing stress, anxiety or depression due to the COVID-19, remember you are not alone. Below are some important resources and phone numbers that can help to support you.

[More information for Albertans.](#)

### Toll Free Crisis Support:

- Text4Hope – Text COVID19HOPE to 393939 to subscribe
- Addiction Helpline 1-866-332-2322
- Family Violence – 310-1818
- Kids Help Phone – 1-800-668-6868
- Mental Health Help Line – 1-877-303-2642
- Edmonton & Area Crisis Line -- 780-482-HELP(4357) or toll free 1-800-232-7288
- Dial 211 (780-482-4636) for other information and resources

## Important Dates & Events

- **Oct 28, 2020** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 am)
- **Nov 25, 2020** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 am)
- **Dec 09, 2020** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 am)

## Resources

BGSD Board Agendas and Minutes:

<https://blackgold.civicweb.net/Portal/>

## Follow Us:

BGSD Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/BlackGoldSchoolDivision>

BGSD Twitter Page: <https://twitter.com/BlackGldSchools>

# Govt. of Canada Safe Return to Class Fund

Black Gold School Division is most appreciative of the Alberta Government's decision to allow school boards much-needed flexibility in allocating the recently announced federal funding to support COVID-19 related costs.

In total, the Province is distributing around \$282 million in two payments to local school authorities as a per-student grant. The first payment was made in September, and the second will be made later in the school year. Black Gold School Division's portion of the funding is approximately \$4.5 million.

In accordance with the federal government's funding guidelines, Black Gold School Division will allocate funds to address pandemic-related costs such as additional personal protective equipment and cleaning/disinfection supplies, anticipated costs for substitute teachers, and staffing and supports for the division's distance education program.

"We are facing significant costs related to the ongoing public health crisis, and this funding announcement, along with the afforded flexibility in spending, allows us to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and students, and provide a brand new level of service in distance learning," said Board Chair Devonna Klaassen. "We thank both orders of government for this much-needed funding, for without it we would have to draw on our already limited reserves."

## School Councils

While the way you meet and contribute to your school may be different this year - thank you to everyone participating in your school councils, and congratulations to those taking on leadership roles. We value your support and engagement, and look forward to meeting with all of you throughout this school year.

A reminder that the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) is a body that represents parents on school council to engage with the Ministry of Education. The ASCA Regular General Meeting was held virtually on October 17, 2020, from 10 a.m.-3p.m. Each ASCA member council was allowed one vote. BGSD purchases memberships for all our school councils. We encourage you to check out ASCA's online information and resources: <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/school-councils/webinars>.

## Program Unit Funding Advocacy

As we work our way through this first year under the new education funding framework, we are finding both strengths and challenges.

While we are appreciative of the Province's decision to provide school authorities with the flexibility to direct funding to support the specialized learning needs of students, we recognize that the revised Program Unit Funding (PUF) model is in its first year of implementation, and is in need of fine-tuning as it moves forward.

The Board of Trustees and Administration are advocating to Alberta Education, Alberta Health, and Alberta Children's Services regarding what we see as much-needed changes to the PUF model to mitigate serious unintended consequences that are causing the program to fail the vulnerable children it is designed to support.

While BGSD continues to meet the needs of children requiring supports, there have been considerable changes to our programming. We will continue to make this programming a priority; we know that early intervention works, as is evidenced by our ongoing success in this area.

## Audit Committee

The Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the appointment of three public members to our Audit Committee. The purpose of this committee is to assist the Board and Superintendent in fulfilling their oversight responsibilities for the financial reporting process, the system of internal control over financial reporting, the audit process, and monitoring the Division's compliance with laws and regulations pertaining to financial operations.

This year marks the first year in which public members are a part of the audit process for BGSD, and is in accordance with the *Education Act* update. The appointments for two-year terms with a minimum of two meetings per year.

## 2020 Celebration of the Arts

This event has been postponed due to the ongoing public health crisis; however, but there may be an opportunity for students to participate on a smaller scale at a 25th Anniversary celebration of Black Gold Schools. Details to follow.

Recently, we unveiled our official 25th Anniversary logo, to be used during the 2020-2021 school year. Check it out below...





Schools across the division engaged in various events and activities on September 30 to learn about and increase awareness about the impact of residential school in Canada. While Trustees were unable to participate in school events this year, we are committed to providing its students and staff with a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe and healthy learning and working environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Each student and staff member within the Division has the right to learn and work in schools that promote equity of opportunity, dignity, and respect.

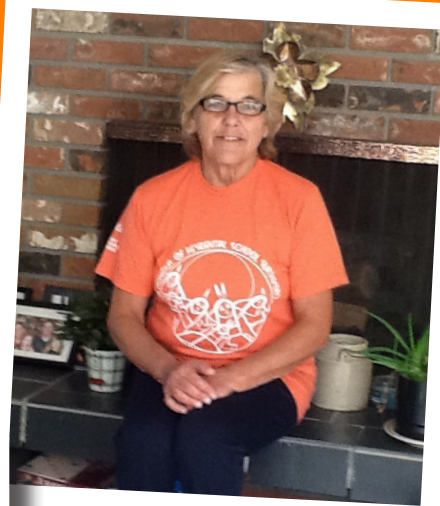
# ORANGE SHIRT DAY



"Today I wear an orange shirt to raise awareness in recognition of the traumatic impact of residential schools; each day I work to learn and grow as I walk along the path toward reconciliation." - Devonna Klaassen



"This day is a reminder that we all can make a difference in the lives of our children and students, helping them feel worthy of love, respect, and belonging." - Esther Eckert



"Public education is about diversity, where all children are accepted so they can learn to value democracy and learn to accept other's differences. Children of today are the future of tomorrow." - Barb Martinson



"Thank you for showing your support of Orange Shirt Day. Today, I proudly wore orange in the spirit of healing and reconciliation." - Robyn Steed

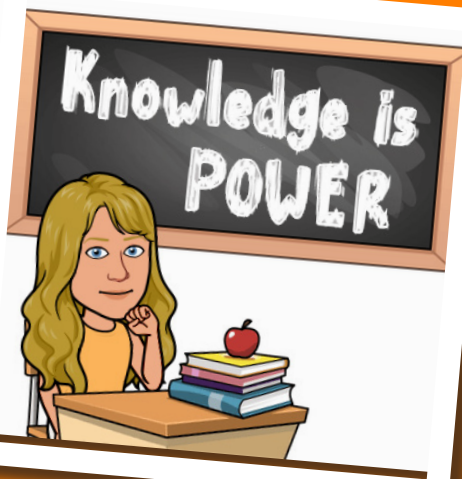


"Being a trustee, I've had the opportunity to learn more about the history of the Indigenous peoples in Canada. Today I wear my orange shirt proudly in the honour and memory of all the students who were sent to residential schools, the families affected by them, and the ongoing inter-generational trauma that this sad part of Canadian history has had on their culture." - Sarah O'Gorman

you matter.



We want to make sure all children know that they matter just as they are!" - Shawna Ofstie



To all our First Nation, Metis and Inuit everywhere... Thank you for sharing your Truth, your history, your Traditions and your Wisdom with us. Let's celebrate the beauty in our diversity and love each other as we are." - Rebecca Eilander