



Inspiring Success!

TRUSTEE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2021



BGSD Trustees - Front Row (L-R): Shawna Ofstie, Devonna Klaassen (Chair), Sarah O'Gorman (former trustee); Back Row (L-R): Robyn Steed (Vice Chair), Esther Eckert, Rebecca Eilander, and Barb Martinson.

We did it, folks! We're at the end of an extraordinary school year! Congratulations to each and every one of you for the many accomplishments that have brought us here.

Along with welcoming summer, this month we celebrate diversity and inclusion, which are critical components of our healthy and vibrant school communities.

June is Graduation Month

On behalf of the Board - our congratulations and best wishes to all of the graduates in Black Gold, from Kindergarten grads through to High School. We're so proud of you!

While restrictions prevented us from attending many of your graduation ceremonies, we were there in spirit, cheering you on! We wanted to honour and recognize your strength and resilience over the past year, so we made a video - [check it out here](#).

June is Pride Month

It is a time to celebrate the forward strides toward acceptance and equality. We acknowledge the hardships the LGBTQ2+ community has and still endures, and focus on awareness and our commitment to continue to reduce stigma through education.

June is Indigenous History Month

We dedicate time to recognize the history, rich cultures, heritage, and achievements of Canada's Indigenous Peoples. Black Gold schools embrace the opportunity to celebrate the richness and diversity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, and their cultures, traditions, and languages.

As greater awareness and acknowledgement of the real history of Indigenous Peoples has come to light this past year, our celebrations have been tempered.

We are listening, learning, and reflecting. We sadly remember and mourn all the children who did not make it home; those found unmarked graves, and those who remain unknown and unfound.

We stand together with the families and individuals whose lives were forever changed. We know the legacy of the trauma inflicted by residential schools lives on. Black Gold will not forget; we are committed to moving forward on the path of truth and reconciliation.

Not just today, but throughout the school year, Black Gold School Division weaves Indigenous culture, language, and teachings into our programming to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of our Indigenous communities. We value diversity and are committed to fostering a sense of belonging by promoting equity of opportunity, dignity, and respect.

We invite you to broaden your understanding as well:

- [Celebrating Indigenous Peoples in Canada: Learning Guide](#)
- [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)
- [Canadian Museum of History: First Peoples of Canada](#)
- [University of Alberta: Indigenous Canada](#)
- [North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response: How to Become an Indigenous Ally](#)

- Your Board of Trustees

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Trustee Update

We have had a change to our Board structure: Vice-Chair Sarah O’Gorman (Leduc) moved out of province and was therefore unable to continue in her role. We wish the O’Gorman family the very best as they head out on their next adventure. Sarah’s leadership, stability, and data analysis lens will be missed.

With an election coming up this fall, the Board will finish off the last few months of this term as a team of six rather than seven. Trustee Robyn Steed (Beaumont) has been elected to step into the role of vice-chair for the remainder of the term.



Vice Chair Robyn Steed.

Strategic Plan Update

After many months of reflection and collaboration, the Division is pleased to release our Strategic Priorities under the categories of Success, Wellness, and Engagement/ Partnership.

The cumulative experience, vision, and input from the Board and senior administration, a school administrators is represented, as are the voices and reflections collected from our parents and community stakeholders. The final wording of our Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG) is near completion, and is likely to be released in the fall.

Based on all the in-depth feedback, we have set definitions for the Black Gold Core Values. All the discussions around core values and the future of Black Gold have given us tremendous insight.

We have defined our core values as follows:

Student-Centred Learning

At Black Gold, learning starts and focuses on the student. Though it doesn’t end there. Every member of the school division engages in active learning, with the purpose of creating the best experience for our students and staff and the healthiest school communities possible. We celebrate the light bulb moments with students and staff alike. We work hard and we have fun too.

Relationships

At Black Gold, we foster positive relationships based on mutual respect and trust. We make meaningful connections with each other that strengthen over time. We don’t give up on students or each other. We are proud of the relationships that we build in our schools and in the communities that we call home.

Safe, Supportive Environment

At Black Gold, we strive to create an inclusive environment that embraces diversity and is supportive and safe for all. We value the health and wellness of every member of our school community and commit ourselves to sustaining this welcoming and positive culture every day.

Passion

We love what we do. We inspire wonder and curiosity in our students to become engaged learners. We seek to light a spark in our students and in our colleagues to achieve their goals and dreams. We dedicate our time and creativity to help each other succeed along our journey through life. And we go the extra mile to create memorable moments.

Responsible Resource Management

At Black Gold, we honour and acknowledge that we are active and welcome members of a larger community. We do our best to ensure that students and staff have the tools they need to succeed. We manage our financial resources responsibly. We have developed a reputation for being innovative and for applying technology wisely to the process of learning. We value each person who chooses to work with us and commit to helping them to develop their skills and talents. We understand that time is a precious resource and we use it wisely.

A vivid description of the future of the Black Gold School Division has been captured in the following statement:

“By 2030, every member of the Black Gold community will be successful; academically, professionally and personally. We will support students and staff to chart their course for the future through academic achievement and the development of life skills.

We are known throughout Alberta and beyond for our effective use of the latest technology to enhance the learning environment for all. We strive to understand the whole person, and work to equip them with the social emotional/life skills needed to lead healthy, productive and fulfilling lives. Our research-informed approach to wellness helps us to support students and staff from where they are.

We are nimble and responsive. We foster a true sense of belonging. Our culture ensures that everyone who comes to Black Gold thrives, and leaves better equipped to meet the challenges of the future. We embrace and sustain the families and communities that surround us, and they in turn support and grow with us.”

Curriculum Update

Alberta Education intends for the draft K-6 Curriculum to be finalized and ready for implementation September 2022.

This spring, the Division provided an in-depth report, along with an indication that we would not participate in the curriculum pilot or validation process. At this time we have not received a response from the Ministry. We continue to call for transparency of all curriculum feedback provided.

The opportunity for the public to provide input on the draft K-6 Curriculum continues. Your feedback can be provided through the [Government of Alberta survey](#).

Child and Youth Wellbeing Review

The Ministry of Children’s Services is conducting a review to better understand the full scope of effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth. There is representation from Education on the Review Panel.

You are invited to share your feedback through an [online survey](#), available until July 31.

Board Evaluation

An intentional annual review is something we've been developing over the last few years. As per Board Policy, the Board of Trustees recently set aside time to complete our Annual Board Evaluation in order to review, reflect on, and validate our work.

Our evaluation process was split into three parts:

- Board Evaluation
- Team Conduct Review
- Individual self-evaluation

The Board Evaluation component was about reviewing the overall work we do as a Board, evaluating our effectiveness in the areas of:

- Accountability to the Government
- Role in the Community
- Political Advocacy
- Strategic Planning
- Superintendent/Board Relations
- Policy Development
- Fiduciary Role
- Board and Trustee Development
- Board and Division Governance

The Team Conduct Review focused more on our communication and expectations for, and of one another. We also had extensive conversations on the change in expectation of the trustee role from the beginning of our term until now, as a result of several changes.

The Individual Review provided trustees with opportunities for reflection on our individual contributions and effectiveness. After some analysis and discussion, we were able to identify what we felt were our areas of strength and our biggest opportunities for improvement. These growth opportunities will help to drive our Board Development Plan and influence professional development activities moving forward.

Reflecting on leader effectiveness and areas for growth is a well recognized best practice for professionals, boards and any organization that requires accountability. Our board has tried a few different tools and templates in the past years to measure where we are at, how far we've come and to help us plan for improvement and set goals.

It was reassuring to see that, for the most part, the trustees evaluated many areas

similarly. One area that most felt important is having a commitment to professional development. Other areas of strength recognized by Board members include a collaborative and respectful Board/Superintendent relationship; process/commitment to policy review and cohesiveness; and respect for each other's opinions.

Recognized areas for growth include being diligent about making time for formal and intentional reviews of our role as governors, and taking the time to be intentional and reflect/take away learnings when things do not go as planned.

The Board evaluation is meant as a transparent process to reflect on the previous year, demonstrates insightfulness and brings forth enlightening conversations. Holding each other accountable is an invaluable tool that will serve us well into the future.

Happy Summer!



To the Black Gold staff who are retiring, and to any members of our Black Gold family who are moving elsewhere, we wish you all the best as you pursue your next adventures!

To Black Gold students and staff returning in September; may you have a restful, relaxing and rejuvenating summer. We look forward to seeing you in the fall!

May you be safe; may you be happy; may you be healthy; may you live with ease.

Important Dates

- **August 25, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 1:00 p.m.)
- **September 20, 2021**, noon - deadline for Trustee nomination forms to be submitted
- **September 22, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **October 18, 2021** - Municipal / School Board Election Day
- **October 27, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)

Resources

Board Agendas and Minutes:

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

Board Member Profiles & Contacts:

<https://www.blackgold.ca/about-bgsd/board/board-member-profiles/>

Reach Out!

Your voice is important - we want to hear from you! You can reach out to your Board of Trustees directly with your questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Please know that all trustees represent the voice of the entire division, please always feel free to reach out to any trustee to address any concerns or feedback:

Devonna Klaassen, Chair

devonna.klaassen@blackgold.ca

Robyn Steed, Vice Chair

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Rebecca Eilander

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Esther Eckert

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Shawna Ofstie

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Barb Martinson

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2021 Trustee Election

A dark blue poster with a white hand holding a pencil on the left. The text "2021 TRUSTEE ELECTION" is in large, bold, yellow and white letters. Below it, "Nominations are open." is in white. Further down, "Nomination Day September 20" and "Election Day October 18" are in yellow and white. The Black Gold School Division logo is in the bottom right corner.

2021 TRUSTEE ELECTION

Nominations are open.

Nomination Day
September 20

Election Day
October 18

BLACK GOLD SCHOOL DIVISION
Our Students • Your Children • Our Future

Municipal elections are scheduled for October 18, 2021. Municipal elections include the election of school board trustees.

Are you a champion and advocate of K-12 education? Consider putting your name forward as a school trustee. Nomination will be accepted at Division Office until September 20, 2021 at 12:00 noon. For more information on the nomination process, visit www.blackgold.ca.

The current Board has developed a [Trustee Handbook](#) to help potential candidates better understand the intricate details of this role. Anyone interested is encouraged to read it in preparation for their candidacy.



Recently, Transportation Manager Sue Timmermans (centre) presented long-term school bus contractors Lynn and Leonard Ohlmann with a gift upon their well-deserved retirement. The Ohlmann's operated school buses for Black Gold for over 34 years and took care of students professionally and personally for many years. They have driven multi generations over this time, attended graduations, weddings and special events for their students they have transported. They will be missed.

Supports

If you find yourself struggling, the following support services and resources are available:

Community Resources – [211 Alberta](#)

[Local Distress Line](#) – 780-482-HELP (4357)

[Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line](#) – 1-866-925-4419

[Brite Line \(2SLGBTQIA+ support line\)](#) – 1-844-702-7483

[Family Violence – Find Supports](#) – 310-1818

[Health Link](#) – 811

[Kids Help Phone](#) – 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868

MyHealth.Alberta.ca: [List of Important Numbers](#)

[Physician & Family Support Program](#) – 1-877-767-4637

Remember, you are not alone. Please reach out: <https://sites.google.com/gshare.blackgold.ca/mental-health/>



Moved to do something to symbolically recognize the tragic loss of 215 Indigenous children at a former residential school in Kamloops, BC, Covenant Christian School students made 215 orange paper hands and laid them out around the outside of the tipi that stands in school's front foyer.