



Inspiring Success!

TRUSTEE NEWSLETTER

FALL 2021



Devonna Klaassen, Chair



Robyn Steed, Vice Chair



Esther Eckert



Rebecca Eilander



Barb Martinson



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After opening our doors last fall in a significantly different manner than previous years - and making it through the very long and rocky 2020-2021 school year, there were high hopes for this fall.

As we continue to navigate the uncharted waters of operating schools during a pandemic, there are many variables to consider and balance. First, the physical health and safety of students and staff. The overwhelming feedback from parents is the need to balance physical well-being with social emotional and mental wellness as well. And of course, providing quality education.

With each new obstacle that comes our way, we ask y'all to dig a little bit deeper, and a little bit deeper still.

The challenges are considerable, and we know that it can be frustrating as protocols and processes keep changing. We are adapting to the changing landscape; our processes are always determined by thoroughly weighing the variables above. We know our students learn best in school. We know that now more than ever, strong connections with others are essential. We know stress, isolation, and the lack of consistency has splintered learning.

This fall was supposed to look differently. We were supposed to focus on moving forward with COVID-19 recovery and addressing the learning gap. We were

supposed to focus on reconnecting and being together with each other again. What is amazing is that this is happening in our schools. Staff are reconnecting with one another, and with students. New relationships are being formed. Assessments are being completed, and learning strategies are in various stages of planning and implementation. This is all happening while we face this latest, and considerable, wave of the pandemic.

We, the Board, acknowledge that our staff have gone above and beyond and we appreciate the sacrifices they are making to provide our students with the support and education they need in a safe environment.



Above: Thorsby Elementary School custodians Nick Pawlick (left) and Joan Evenson were recognized, along with their counterparts across the Division, on Custodian Appreciation Day.

On October 3, we celebrated our custodians. Their attention to detail, constant cleaning and sanitizing are keeping our schools safe and clean. We truly believe that Black Gold has the shiniest floors and the cleanest spaces. We also notice and appreciate the connections our custodians make with students and staff. **Happy Custodian Appreciation Day!**

Where would the world be without teachers? **World Teacher Appreciation Day** was on October 5. We know that when our teachers chose to join their profession, they had no way of knowing what was in store for them with teaching during a pandemic. Teachers are a key part of our frontline team. We salute you, and respect the work you do everyday!



Above: Teachers from École Beau Meadow School, and from across all Black Gold Schools, were celebrated on World Teacher Appreciation Day for the amazing work they do to inspire success for students.

Honouring Truth & Reconciliation



While learning, reflection, understanding, and action are addressed throughout the year, the week of September 27 - October 1, 2021 was recognized throughout the Division as an opportunity to put additional emphasis on Indigenous Education.

The division observed September 29th as Orange Shirt Day by lowering flags to half mast and wearing orange in the spirit of reconciliation and hope. There were many inspiring examples of schools' acknowledgement that **Every Child Matters**.

The Black Gold Board of Trustees and Senior Administration gathered the morning of September 29th for our own intentional time of learning and reflection. Every child should feel safe in our schools and classrooms. We know there is more to be done for this to be true for all of our Indigenous students, and we are committed to this work. As leaders, we commit to our own growth, and to meaningful action to support healing.

Some action for moving forward include:

- Creating space for our staff to learn, reflect, and grow - both on Indigenous education as well as trauma-informed practice
- Continuing to get more informed (i.e. follow the guidance of the national Centre for Truth and Reconciliation / read books by Indigenous authors)
- Community relationship building
- Supporting integration of indigenous education, throughout the year
- Continuing to advocate for Indigenous education to be respectfully, accurately, and thoroughly represented into the curriculum

Schools and the Division Office were closed September 30 in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: a day to listen, learn, reflect, and commit to action. This was a powerful and emotional day of healing, as many came together in our communities to honour residential school survivors and their families, as well as those children who did not survive.

Reconciliation is about all of us. The path is continuous and we invite our school communities to take the time to reflect and commit to your own actions as we move forward on this journey together.

Find out more about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's [Calls to Action](#).

2017-2021 Board: Term Highlights

This will be the final Trustee Newsletter from the 2017-2021 Board of Trustees: Black Gold's first all female Board. On one hand, it is hard to believe that four years is already over. On the other hand ... wow did a lot ever happen in four years. Just some of the highlights include:

- Working through a change in government
- Began navigating a new funding model

- Nominated Kevin Cameron for the Friends of ASBA Award - and won!
- Hired a new Superintendent
- Developed a new working relationship with an almost completely new Senior Administrative team
- Opened two new schools
- Established two new standing committees: *Audit Committee* and the *Community Engagement & Advocacy Committee*
- Completed a ward reconfiguration
- Endured insurance rates more than doubling
- Reaffirmed our core values and refreshed our strategic plan
- Celebrated 25 years as a school division
- Were presented with two draft curriculums
- Honoured and celebrated countless awards and achievements
- Increased communication and transparency with the creation of a trustee newsletter, posting board meeting recordings, sharing advocacy letters publicly, and establishing a social media presence
- And here we are, still leading as we navigate a worldwide pandemic that has drastically changed the way we do business

Reflecting on these experiences, and many more, brought to light just how much learning has taken place. It has been a true honour to serve our students, families, and communities as the Board of Trustees. Thank-you for putting your trust in us.



Above: The Board of Trustees, along with current and former superintendents and special guest, took part in a time capsule burial ceremony on August 25 as part of the Division's 25th Anniversary celebrations.

Recognizing Excellence



Above (L-R): Vice Chair Robyn Steed, 2021 Inspiring Success Award winner BJ Butler, Board Chair Devonna Klaassen and École Secondaire Beaumont Composite High School Principal Chris Stiles.

The Board of Trustees has a proud tradition of recognizing individuals or groups within Black Gold who make notable, significant and positive contributions to the Division, and demonstrate outstanding leadership by “Inspiring Success” for students and staff.

Mrs. BJ Butler, a science teacher at École Secondaire Beaumont Composite High School (ESBCHS), is this year’s recipient of the Board’s Inspiring Success Award of Distinction.

“It is an honour to present, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, the 2021 Inspiring Success Award of Distinction to Mrs BJ Butler!” said Board Vice Chair Robyn Steed. “She is an amazing teacher who sets an equally high bar for both herself and her students, and goes to extraordinary lengths to ensure that no student is left behind. She works hard to create a welcoming and supportive classroom environment where her students believe that they can succeed, and you know what, they sure do!”

“If one were to list all the adjectives that accurately describe BJ Butler’s many exceptional qualities that have had a positive impact on ESBCHS and our school community, the list would run from Beaumont all the way to Warburg,” said ESBCHS Assistant Principal Catherine MacArthur, who co-nominated Mrs. Butler for the award. “She is kind, compassionate, empathetic, and selfless; she is a team player, a student advocate, a hard worker, an extraordinary leader,

an exemplary teacher and a positive role model for both staff and students.”

BJ’s dedication and enthusiasm as a classroom teacher is second to none. “Students genuinely love being in her class and young teachers seek her guidance as they cultivate and improve their skill set as teachers,” said MacArthur. “Over the years, her wit, wisdom and professional mentorship have helped these young teachers flourish within the classroom setting, which in turn has positively impacted the academic results at our school - yet another example of her positive contribution to the Division.”

As well, this year’s Superintendent’s Service Award of Excellence was presented to the 45-plus staff at the Student Services Department for continually demonstrating leadership both within the Division and throughout the province with their innovative practices in serving students with special needs.



Above: Director Niki Gill accepted the 2021 Superintendent’s Service Award of Excellence on behalf of the 45-plus staff at the Student Services.

Important Dates

- **October 18, 2021** - Municipal / School Board Election Day
- **October 27, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (live-streamed; open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **November 24, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)
- **December 8, 2021** - Regular Board Meeting (open session begins at 10:30 a.m.)

Note: All Board meetings are posted on our [YouTube](#) channel.

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:

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2021 Trustee Election



2021
TRUSTEE ELECTION

Election Day is Monday, October 18.

GET OUT AND VOTE!

Our children's future depends on a strong K-12 public education system.



On October 18, 2021, a new Board of Trustees will be elected for Black Gold School Division. A minimum of three new board members will be sworn in.

Black Gold School Division is governed by a Board of Trustees. There are seven (7) elected positions on the Black Gold School Division Board of Trustees:

- Ward 1 (including the Village of Warburg and Town of Thorsby) – One(1) Trustee
- Ward 2 (including the Town of Devon and the Town of Calmar) – One(1) Trustee
- Ward 3 (including the City of Leduc) – Three (3) Trustees
- Ward 4 (including the City of Beaumont and New Sarepta schools attendance area) – Two (2) Trustees

Visit the [2021 Candidate Profiles](#) webpage to find out more about those running for office.

What does a school board trustee do?

- School board trustees represent the voice of their entire community in the education system.
- They are advocates for Alberta's students and communities—assessing educational policies to support what's best for the development of the whole student
- Trustees are decision makers, from budget and programming decisions to strategic planning.
- They lead and shape our schools by crafting policies, managing finances, hiring superintendents, and making other key decisions.
- Trustees are expected to provide mental health and special needs supports, provide literacy and numeracy interventions, maintain aging buildings, to name just a few more areas of responsibility.
- Elected trustees consider the diverse needs of students, perspectives, and cultures in their communities.
- School board trustees listen to their communities and advocate on a variety of topics, including school re-entry plans, mental health supports, busing challenges and funding.

- Information provided by the Alberta School Boards Association

School Councils

Welcome and thank you to everyone participating in school councils, and hearty congratulations to those of you taking on leadership roles. We value the support, engagement and feedback from our school councils - and were so pleased with the input and connection we were still able to have, even with virtual meetings.

[Alberta School Councils' Association](#) memberships have been paid for all Black Gold School councils. We encourage you to access their resources - including the [School Council Resource Guide](#). If you have not attended a school council meeting - consider checking one out! This is a great way to support your child(ren)'s school. As trustees, we value the engagement, input, and perspective school councils provide as representatives of the school communities.

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
[MyHealthAlberta.ca: List of Important Numbers](#)
[Physician & Family Support Program](#) – 1-877-767-4637

Message from Board Chair Klaassen

After a long week, I was heading out with my son. We committed to just 5 sets (~1500 stairs). I usually do more, but if 5 sets got him to come with me - perfect! Plus when I run with my son, I really have to work!

When we finished, whether it was the adrenalin or the lack of oxygen, we decided to finish with a final sprint from halfway. We took off in a race; I had to push really hard to keep up with him! He hit the top about 6 steps ahead of me, then turned and cheered me on: "Mama - you're getting so fast, I really had to run hard to keep in front of you. You made me work harder!" This from the little man who made me work so much harder!

Once we caught our breath, we had an interesting conversation about how just by doing it together, we both worked so much harder. We did more than we thought we could do.

We're all running stairs right now. We have to. And we CAN do it. We CAN do hard things. Together. Together we can do it stronger if we all support and encourage one another. Don't give up hope! Let us stand together - as the Black Gold family - for our students, for each other, and for our communities!