



NWTTA NEWS

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A School Year Like No Other

Matthew Miller, President

For veteran educators, the 2020-2021 school year has been like no other. For those members with new roles and are new to the profession, it has made for a challenging start. Each day we all navigate protocols and procedures and tackle what needs to be done. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has forced changes in all of our lives. The way we greet each other, how we shop, how our schools operate, and how we travel. The question around travel divided our membership just as much as it divided the public. Currently, as I am writing this message, the decisions of who is approved and how many have not yet been released. I do know more members wanted to travel than those who submitted their applications to meet the self-isolation requirements. For those who wanted to travel, my heart genuinely goes out to you.

The NWT Chief Public Health Officer's direction that a 14-day self-isolation period is required for people entering the Northwest Territories has made it largely impractical for members to travel outside of the territory during the holidays. This means the holidays for many will be different this year. Nothing will be able to replace your family and friends this Christmas, but I sincerely hope you will be able to find some comfort over the holidays. If you are with your family and friends, I hope you have the time to reflect and appreciate what a gift that truly is, especially this year.

On behalf of the Association, I hope you can find time to take care of yourself over the holidays. If it is possible, offer support to those around you who may be having a challenging time. I would encourage you to leave your schoolwork in the building and to focus on a hobby, relaxing, or connecting with family and friends, even if it must be virtually.

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Negotiations Update

Matthew Miller, President

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of last school year put a halt to our plans to complete negotiations of all three collective agreements which all expired last school year.

GNWT

We were able to complete Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) negotiations and arrive at an Agreement in Principle on June 17, which was ratified by the members on September 23, 2020. Voter turnout was 87.30% with the percentage of ballots cast to accept the new agreement at 85.46%.

Highlights of the GNWT agreement (retroactive to August 1, 2020):

- One year agreement
- 2.5% wage increase
- Northern Living Allowance (changes to methodology & allocation, increase of \$450 to the base used for calculations)
- Increases to Principal/Assistant Principal Allowance
- Experience Credit for Junior Kindergarten Teachers
- Maternity and Parental Leave - improvements to recognize changes to the federal Employment Insurance program.
- Domestic Violence Leave - newly created category of leave

As the GNWT agreement is only for one year, expiring July 31, 2021, a new GNWT negotiation team has been formed to begin the process of negotiating with the GNWT once again.

YCS

A one year agreement in principle was been reached with Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS) on November 4, 2020 after two rounds of negotiations, which was ratified on November 24. Voter turnout was 71.43% with the percentage of ballots cast to accept the new agreement at 97.33%.

Highlights of the agreement (retroactive to September 1, 2020):

- One year agreement
- 2.5% wage increase
- Housing allowance moved onto the pay grid, so is now pensionable service and subject to negotiated pay increases.
- Common Law Spouses language updated in relation to health and dental benefits.
- Family Violence Leave - newly created category of leave

YK1

The first round of negotiations with Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1) is taking place the week of November 30. Future rounds will be scheduled if necessary.

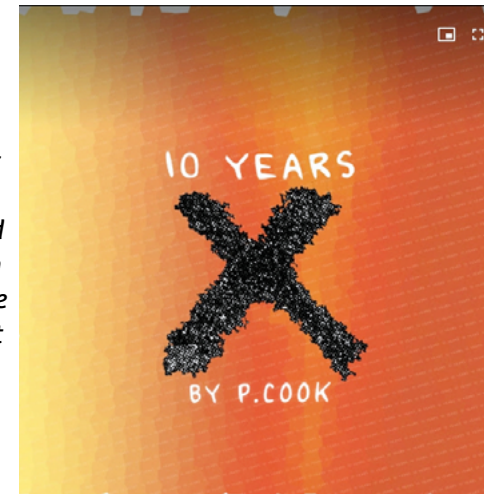


Catching Up Members' Life Events

Pierre Cook (École Boréale, CSFTNO region) released an EP album in August 2020! The EP is titled "10 Years".

*10 Years Ago...
We started something.
Something that could
potentially last forever. A
legacy of love, pain, fulfillment
and above all pure and utter
enjoyment. Music is all this and
more. It's a piece of this human
race's art that is undeniably the
secret to life. Come and enjoy it
with me. - P. Cook*

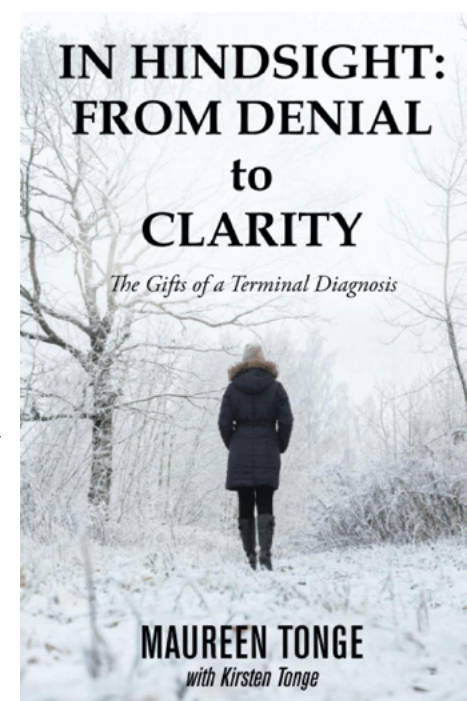
More information is available at pierrecook.ca and you can stream the EP on YouTube Music: shorturl.at/zFOY3 (click on the album cover above)



Maureen Tonge (École Sir John Franklin High School, YK1 region) has had a book posthumously (obituary on page 6 of this newsletter) published through Balboa Press. The book is titled "In Hindsight: From Denial to Clarity - The Gifts of a Terminal Diagnosis".

Diagnosed in late February 2019 with terminal brain cancer, Maureen was given as little as four months to live. Against the odds, her healing journey continued through weeks and then months of traditional and integrative healing practices. Never one to ask "Why me?", Maureen's journey is inspirational, gifting the reader with her irreverent sense of humour, humble insight, and wisdom gained through her healing. Her radiant courage and grace facing her diagnosis, prognosis, and self-healing contain life lessons for all. Ultimately, her positive attitude of gratitude, self-love, and self-forgiveness may be the biggest gifts this book will reveal.

The book can be ordered from The Yellowknife Book Cellar, Amazon.ca (click on book cover above) or Balboa Press (USD).



Northern Lights

Meet Reagan Jeffries from Whati (Tlicho region)



Q. Where did you grow up?
North Bay, Ontario

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

Since I was young, when anyone would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I always said a teacher. The idea that everyday would have different challenges and that I would not only get to teach but learn as well sounded rewarding.

Q. What do you teach?

I teach high school math and social studies.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

Building positive relationships with the students and pushing them to go beyond the limits they have placed on themselves. I also really enjoy learning from the students and getting to know their personal talents and interests.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I like to connect lessons to the students' own personal experiences. I also like there to be a variety of learning experiences during the class to keep students on their toes. Humour is also a way I try to engage students, sometimes successfully and sometimes not so much.

Inspired by my dad

My dad was a teacher and I grew up spending my weeknights and weekends in school gyms watching him coach high school athletics. Seeing how much time and dedication he gave to pushing students to be their best is something that continues to inspire me to be a better teacher.

Food First Food and Nutrition Education Programs

Tess Ondrack, Food First Coordinator

The Food First Foundation is a registered charity based in Yellowknife. Our mission is to support food and nutrition education programs in schools across the NWT, encouraging a healthy population of children and youth for future generations.

Twenty nine percent of NWT children live in food-insecure households; the second highest of any province/territory in Canada. Many of these children are going to school hungry and undernourished. Inadequate nourishment leads to poor concentration, classroom behavioural issues, higher absenteeism, low self-esteem, and reduced scholastic success. Healthy food provides the nutrients children need to be attentive and enthusiastic in school, increasing their ability to concentrate, learn, and develop into outstanding adults.

Food First provides funding to schools to feed their hungry students via breakfast, lunch, and snack programs. The support we are able to offer varies from year-to-year, and is meant to help fill gaps in funding that schools may have. Food First has also developed a cooking program called Taste Makers which complements the NWT curriculum and teaches students practical kitchen skills. There are student and teachers manuals which are available year round electronically, (send us an email if you would like it!), as well as a bit of funding for ingredients distributed at the start of



Student Making a Smoothie at Chief Sunrise Education Centre



Staff from Mezi Community School delivering food hampers

the school year. We also help schools to stock their kitchens with equipment, and have recently begun supporting school gardening programs with supplies and funding as well.

This past spring and summer, with school closures due to COVID-19, we were able to access a large amount of federal emergency funding for schools that were providing food hampers or grocery gift cards to vulnerable families in their communities. We distributed \$240,000 in funding and grocery gift cards.

Usually the majority of our funding is allocated in the fall of each school year; at which time all principals in the NWT receive an email from our Coordinator encouraging them to apply. The application process and reporting requirements are simple. We know how much time and energy teachers and administrators dedicate to their school food programs, and we strive to make things as easy and as flexible as possible.

This year we had 40 schools apply for funding which reflects the profound impact the pandemic has had on school food programming. Our funding will be stretched, but we continue to seek out COVID-19 relief grants to help cover the increased costs of running school food programs safely. The NWTTA Christmas donation will go towards these

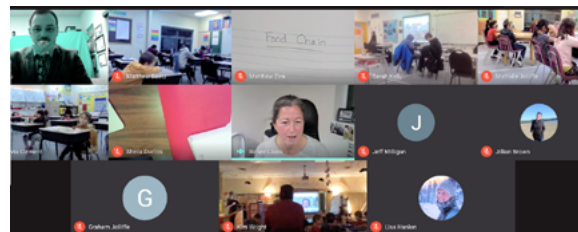
efforts this year.

For more information, please visit www.foodfirst.ca, or email our Coordinator, Tess, at coordinator@foodfirst.ca.

Video Morning Announcements

Michael Duclos, Principal, Mackenzie Mountain School

Here at Mackenzie Mountain School (MMS) in the time of COVID-19, we decided to start doing Video Morning Announcements to connect the entire school population every day. Upon the school year start-up, I wasn't entirely sure how this would go, but it seems to be REALLY well received by everyone. We start off each morning with all the classrooms joining in on a video chat. I play the National Anthem, wish happy birthday to any students or staff celebrating that day, give an update on school and community announcements, tell some of "Mr. D's Terrible JOKES of the Day", word of the day, Nutrition North Food Facts from Tori, Dene Kedé of the Day with Mrs. Grandjambe, and finish up with a short interview with someone from the school or wider community. The students absolutely love hearing success stories from around the north and how they too can pursue their dreams and attain their aspirations.



We've interviewed people from Northwright, ENR, SDEC, Northridge, Lands, Sahtu Search and Rescue, self-employed entrepreneurs, and even former MMS graduates who are living out their own dreams and working in various fields. I really want to show students that greatness is achieved through hard work and dedication and success means different things to different people. I want the students to know that going to university or college is just one path to success and that a trades focus or going into the workforce are other ways to become successful in life. Giving back to your community and contributing to this beautiful north that is shared with us is at the forefront of a capable and contributing citizen.

MMS would like to invite anyone from any community across the north to share their success story with our students. Please contact me to make arrangements. There are lots of days of school left this year and lots of empty slots that could be filled with you inspiring our students! Feel free to contact me at mduclos@sahtudec.ca!

Northern Lights

Meet

Ann Boreland
from Deline (Sahtu region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up partially in Jamaica and Canada (Toronto), with my beloved grandmother and other siblings, where I later chose two professions that I absolutely love and adore (Teaching and Social Work) where I realized that they coupled great together.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I am from a line of educators who believed that teaching is a noble profession. I also love to teach children and watch them grow from not knowing the unknown to having wide eyes of "wow I got it". However, my love for teaching comes from having my first teaching experience from one of my professors that stirred up my confidence to think that I would be great at teaching. However, when I finished university I was given the opportunity to be a professor teaching one of my loves, then it spiraled from there. I enjoy the teaching profession, that I look at not as a job but as a professional long life of learning and educating others in the process.

Q. What do you teach?

I now teach grade 3 and 4 even though I have a wealth of experience from teaching all the grades, but my favourite grades are 4, 5 and 8.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I mostly enjoy shaping little minds and mannerism, and to see the impact of how students learn and develop. I also enjoy the community of learners and the ability to share ideas with other professionals in the field, whether it's social workers, psychologists or other educators. The ability to integrate and blend (cross curricular) ideas and content is an area that really excites me.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I engage my students by practicing, and sharing my enthusiasm with them. I try to tap into the students' prior knowledge. I also learn about their interests and allowing room for mistakes as they navigate through the activities. I also design highly relevant learning activities to support the students' needs and interests.

Transforming Student Achievement

Teaching in the 21st century creates much opportunity to collaborate with my peers and in doing so, I can pass on information to my students at a faster, more efficient pace than my predecessors who were in the profession. I am glad I am on this wave and looking forward with anticipation to see how much we can achieve in transforming student achievement.



Maureen Ann Tonge
May 25, 1968 – Oct 5, 2020

“Forever a Teacher”

Maureen Tonge, 52, made her final transition on her healing journey at home on October 5, 2020, surrounded by her loving husband, her twin, and her parents. Her younger sisters, extended family, and friends supported her from afar. Born in Saint John and raised in Quispamsis, New Brunswick, Maureen called Yellowknife her second home since 1992 when she moved North to begin her teaching career. She spent her entire profession teaching Art, French, Yoga/Fitness, CALM, and other subjects at École Sir John Franklin High School where she gifted students and colleagues alike with her unending passion, joyful enthusiasm, and positive energy. Kundalini yoga became her calling over many years and she travelled to Toronto, India, Greece, and New Mexico following her dream and making lifelong friends from around the world. More recently, she was a founder “soul” of Collective Soul Space where she introduced many Yellowknifers to this calling.

She married her life partner, Robert Charpentier, on July 18, 2009 in “Maritime Kitchen Party” style and their two families have remained lovingly intertwined ever since. She is survived by “her rock” Robert, her adoring parents Raymond & Diane Tonge; beloved twinnie, Kirsten; and loving younger sisters, Jocelyn (Greg, Keltie & Seth) Smith; and Melanie (Sean, Gillian & Hilary) McClelland, her stepchildren, her sweet Tillie, as well as her extended family of many aunts, uncles, and cousins and the “Castor Clan” extended Charpentier family. She is predeceased by her precious stepson, “Lukey” Charpentier, her Alexander and Tonge grandparents, her Uncles Gren Alexander and Ken Golding, father-in-law, Nap Charpentier, brother-in-law, Richard Griebel, and her beloved Scooby.

The family would like to express their deepest appreciation to Maureen’s extensive network of friends within Yellowknife and around the world who have supported her healing journey over the almost 20 months since her diagnosis with glioblastoma multiforme (brain cancer). The volume of expressions of love has been overwhelming and so appreciated.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXTEND OUR GRATITUDE TO:

- Dr. Marlise Houwing, and the staff of Stanton Territorial Hospital for the exceptional and compassionate care provided to Maureen
- The palliative care providers from Yellowknife Health & Social Service Homecare who went above and beyond in their caregiving
- Dr. Jay Easaw and the staff of the Cross Cancer Institute for respectfully listening and appreciating Maureen’s desire for integrative treatment
- Dr. Shahin Moslehi, Juniper Health Clinic for providing the integrative treatment in Yellowknife and becoming a friend to Maureen in her journey
- Dr. Eric Bouchard, Fort Langley Integrative Health Centre for his assistance in providing integrative treatment recommendations and ongoing support to Maureen
- Jillian McKay, Light as a Feather, who gifted Maureen with energetic healing
- Cailey Mercredi, who was Maureen’s death doula, and provided great comfort through her journey
- Johanna Tiemessen, Nancy Malik and the rest of the “souls” at Collective Soul Space
- Natalie Sweet and Dr. Lisa Yang, Maureen’s lifelong besties who leapt in to help Maureen and her family during her healing journey
- Avery Cooper - Abe Thiel, Connie Lee, Zach Silva
- Sir John Franklin High School staff, past and present, for the meals and comforting gifts to Maureen and Robert’s home; Pam Schlosser and Dean MacInnis, Paul Bennett and Jacqueline Beland
- NWTTA staff: Denise, Matthew, David, Sara, Andre, Adrien
- Adrien and Carol Amirault
- Yellowknife Education District #1, Ed Lippert and staff
- Seana and Todd Stewart
- Meredith and Jeff Seabrook
- Debbie Meade
- LeeAnna Carson
- Wendy Malkin
- Linda Maljin and Tom Ashley
- Denis and Donna Alain
- Denise and Ray Halwas
- Lynn Taylor and Matthew Grogono
- Michelle Rees
- Ashley Sangris Chapple
- Cheyenne Fraser
- The Jung Family, James, Carolyn, Natalie, and Tommy – Tillie walkers extraordinaire
- Joanne Stassen, CBC North “Trailbreaker”
- Christine Gilliland who created the Go Fund Me fund to support the Tonge family’s efforts to gather from across the country; Jackie and George Gilliland who provided financial support for Ray and Diane Tonge’s travel to Yellowknife
- Quispamsis United Church who generously provided financial and emotional support to the Tonge family
- McKenna Funeral Home for assisting the family in navigating Maureen’s final journey
- Kathy Charpentier for her loving support of Maureen during her healing journey and final transition
- All of Robert’s friends (who also become Maureen’s dear friends) & family who provided him with support during Maureen’s journey and throughout the years

A Celebration of Life will be held at some point in the future. Donations in her memory may be made to The Maureen Tonge “Living Your Legacy” Fund through Yellowknife Community Foundation or the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada.

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THE BRAVE SOLDIERS

by Clarence Highfield
(?ehtseo Ayha School, Deline)

*Poppies are red because of
Soldiers’ blood. The Soldiers
fought in pride and courage and
we thank them for fighting for us.*

*There they lie in Flanders Fields
where a lot of Soldiers died,
people sad, lost loved ones cried,
but they all love the Soldiers for
their great bravery.*

*Now we have a day to remember
all the Soldiers who fought in
all Wars and on November 11,
at 11:00 we remember the brave
Soldiers who fought for us all.*



Poem submitted by Ann
Boreland, ?ehtseo Ayha
School (Sahtu region)

Northern Lights

Rencontrer
Kim Ivanko
de Hay River (région du CSFTNO)



Q. Où avez-vous grandi?

Je suis née à Montréal et j’ai vécu à Saint-Bruno pendant 8 ans. Puis, j’ai déménagé à Scarborough, une banlieue de Toronto jusqu’à ce que je retourne vivre à Montréal pour y compléter mon baccalauréat à l’Université McGill.

Q. Qu’est-ce qui vous a décidé à devenir enseignante?

Au secondaire, je ne voulais absolument pas devenir enseignante. Ce n’est qu’au cours de ma deuxième année d’université, où j’ai rencontré mon colocataire qui étudiait au programme du baccalauréat en éducation, que l’idée de devenir enseignante a commencé à fleurir. Ses devoirs et ses cours me semblaient beaucoup plus intéressants que mes cours de sciences politiques (j’aurais voulu être la première femme première ministre du Canada). J’ai occupé de nombreux « rôles d’enseignante » à l’adolescence comme instructeur de natation, monitrice de camp de hockey et tutrice. Il semblait donc naturel de changer de programme afin de rejoindre la faculté d’éducation. C’est l’une des meilleures décisions que j’ai prises dans ma vie.

Q. Qu’est-ce que vous enseignez?

J’enseigne actuellement l’anglais de la 5e à la 12e année et des cours de développement personnels de la 7e à la 9e année.

Q. Qu’aimez-vous le plus dans votre enseignement?

Mes élèves, tout simplement ! J’adore être présente pour les nouveautés dans la vie de mes élèves et leurs moments cocasses. J’adore les relations que j’ai pu développer tant à l’intérieur qu’à l’extérieur de la salle de classe. Et que dire des rires et des souvenirs partagés ! J’aime voir des élèves enthousiastes à l’idée d’apprendre, mais aussi de les voir faire du sport ainsi que de les voir grandir en tant qu’individu.

Q. Comment engagez-vous vos étudiants?

J’essaie de créer une variété d’activités pour impliquer les élèves, y compris le mouvement et les jeux. Aussi, je suscite leur intérêt par des activités interactives. Par exemple, pour une unité sur le thème des mystères pour le groupe de 5e et sixième année, un de mes élèves de 12e année s’est déguisé en mascotte de notre école, puis les autres l’ont « enlevé ». Nous avons invité la GRC locale à essayer de nous aider à trouver les auteurs de l’enlèvement. L’ensemble du personnel de l’école a été impliqué, car ils ont été interrogés en tant que suspects. C’était une superbe expérience ! Dans les classes du secondaire, j’utilise les médias populaires pour initier des discussions et en tirer des sujets pour les productions écrites qui intéressent les élèves.

Les étudiants ont enrichi ma vie

Enseigner aux mêmes élèves chaque année signifie que j’ai une panoplie de souvenirs que je partage avec eux. Cela me fait rire quand une situation ou un événement se produit en classe et que tous les élèves commencent à en parler ; c’est comme si nous partagions tous une même blague.

Je suis reconnaissante des formidables opportunités que l’enseignement m’offre. J’ai enseigné au Japon, à Cape Dorset et à Hay River. J’ai eu la chance d’enseigner à des étudiants incroyables qui ont enrichi ma vie et fait de moi une personne meilleure.



As part of the NWT Education Renewal Initiative, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is partnering with Paula Jurczak to provide educators a rich opportunity to review and discuss well-being, resources and promising practices to better understand the challenges educators face and children and youth may experience.

Northwest Territories Online Book Club

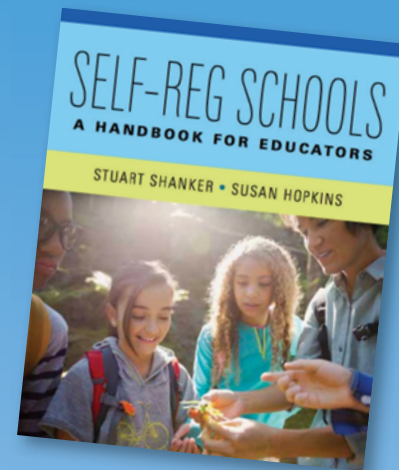
“Self-Reg Schools – A Handbook for Educators”

by Stuart Shanker and Susan Hopkins

Book Club starts November 26, 2020

LEARN ABOUT

- What is Self-Reg, Stress Responses
- 5 Domains, 5 Practices
- Energy Centered Teaching
- Practicing Self-Reg in Schools
- RADAR and Havens
- All means ALL, THRIVE



Each Month We Will:

Read 1-2 Chapters | Watch Videos | Discuss Focus Questions | Apply to School Setting

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Step 1: Register

Contact the Facilitator Paula Jurczak, with your name, school and region.

Email: srbcc@uniserve.com (Subject: NWT Book Club)

Register by midnight November 24 to join the first session.

Step 2: Set Up

Prepare to join using a home or school computer with an internet connection or telephone that can make 1-800 calls. Once you are registered, an email will be sent to you with a link to the GOTOMEETING webinar.

Note: If you use a school computer, you will need to “Download and Install Privileges” (Ask your IT person prior to starting).

Thursdays

Monthly via Interactive Webinar

2020

- November 26, Intro and Chapter 1
- December 14, Chapter 2 and 3

2021

- January 28, Chapter 4
- February 25, Chapter 5
- May 6, Chapter 6
- May 27, Chapter 7

Time

3:45 to 4:45 PM MST

To receive a copy of the book, email: maria_reid@gov.nt.ca with your contact information

Government of
Northwest Territories

Additional Qualification Courses for NWTTA Members

Adrien Amirault, Professional Development Coordinator

Those of you that may have studied or taught in Ontario are probably quite familiar with Additional Qualification (AQ) or Additional Basic Qualification (ABQ) courses. Additional Qualification courses are courses that are accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). Teachers can take these courses in order to upgrade and gain qualifications in a certain teaching division or subject area. Completed AQ courses will be posted to your Certificate of Qualification which is a document viewed by Ontario school boards for hiring purposes.

Some AQ courses are available from Universities in Ontario, while others are available from teacher unions, and others available from different school boards in Ontario. AQ course providers are approved by the Ontario College of Teachers.

In order to teach certain subject areas, or in order to improve your qualifications in a certain subject area AQ courses are taken by most teachers in Ontario post-graduation from a teaching program. Some students in education programs can take AQ courses before they graduate as long as they have the pre-requisite courses and have met the requirements to graduate.

Many teachers in the NWT from Ontario choose to use PD funds to complete AQ courses. They are great Professional Development opportunities, and many are available by distance. There are a few things to be aware of.

1. **In the GNWT bargaining unit Distance Credit Course Funding can be used to pay for AQ courses.** They must be offered at universities for credit. Some universities expressly state that credit is not available for AQ courses, while others do offer them for credit. Be sure that the institution you want to take the course from offers them for credit to use Distance Credit Course Funding.
2. **While AQ courses are useful, they may not actually give you the university credits you need to raise your license.** Be cautious about using AQ courses for this reason. Some universities allow a maximum number of AQ courses to be used towards a degree, while others do not allow any to be used in this way. If you want to raise your license, it is likely better to stay away from AQ courses for this purpose.
3. **AQ courses are a bargain.** If raising your license is not your objective, the wide range of courses available through the AQ program are practical and easy to access via distance. They are cheaper than regular university courses.
4. **They have ongoing start dates,** and you can access them at many times throughout the year.
5. **You must be certified with the Ontario College of Teachers** to be eligible to take AQ courses.

Northern Lights

Meet

Danielle Cuvelier
from Yellowknife (YCS region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

During my Child and Youth Study degree I had the opportunity to complete a work placement in an elementary school. This experience inspired me to continue my education further and apply to the Education Program. (Although my Mom would say that when I was growing up, I always said I'd be a teacher.)

Q. What do you teach?

I am currently in a new role as a Program Support Teacher at Ecole Saint Joseph School.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

The students. I love the beginning of a new school year and getting to know my students and their families. I also love teaching students to read.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I engage my students by getting to know them, using their interests and focusing on their strengths. Creating a community of learners where everyone feels safe and is valued goes a long way.

Learn from your Students

I am in a profession that allows me the opportunity to be a part of so many children's learning experiences. As much as I love to teach, I also love to learn. My students remind me each day the importance of acceptance, patience, perseverance, resilience, faith and to live in the moment. I am grateful to all of my students for the lessons they have taught me.

Working for Our Members A Glimpse of What We Do

David Murphy, Executive Director

To say we have been busy at Central Office is an understatement. There is a lot going on here. Since March we have been assisting members with many concerns that have come about directly or indirectly as a result COVID-19. Noticeably on the rise are Notice to Attend meetings where the employer is meeting with members to review a member's conduct that may or may not result in discipline, member resignations or members contacting us about resigning, members contacting us about travel and self-isolation, members contacting us for clarification on individual Strengthening Teaching Instructional Practices (STIP) versus collaborative STIP and the teachers' workday.

As well, members are contacting us for assistance with many other concerns, and when they do, we try to be very prompt in answering these concerns. A few of the concerns for which members have contacted us recently to seek assistance with include pay and benefits, certification and salary grid placement, maternity leave, retirement and pension, Professional Development (PD), grievances, over payments, disciplinary meetings, removal, substitute teacher pay and start and end times for teachers.

Instructional Day for Teachers

One item that continues to haunt the Association is that of the instructional day of teachers. We all know that teachers are expected to teach their students, plan for their classes, complete attendance, complete report cards, meet with parents during Parent Teacher Student meetings, complete student plans, attend Professional Development and STIP days, meet with school and district support staff and the list goes on.

Teachers also participate in activities not directly related to the curriculum but are often held to build positive relationships between parents, students and the community. These include Christmas concerts, cultural days, on-the-land activities, community feasts, open house nights, literacy night, before COVID-19 sports trips such as track and field, super soccer and spike it and attendance at lots of student activities held after the school day and on weekends at our schools.

As you can see, the role of a teacher is very diverse. To complete all tasks a teacher is required takes a lot

of time and cannot be completed during the school day while instructing students. Teachers do work after school when the students leave for the day, in the morning before students arrive, later in the night after family commitments are looked after and on many weekends and holidays. Teachers, as professionals, are best equipped to determine the times they work outside the instructional day.

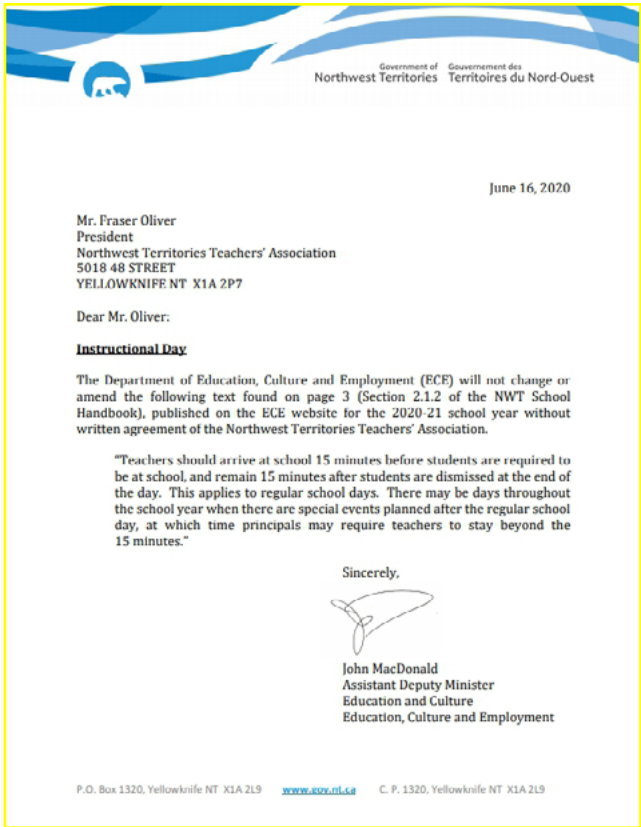
There have been times in the past where a principal, a superintendent or a Divisional Education Authority (DEA) chairperson has scheduled teachers to arrive at school and remain at school for a defined period of time up to a half hour in the morning and forty-five minutes to an hour after students leave for the day. The Association has for many years expressed the view that teachers as professionals do organize their time to be prepared for their students and complete all the work that does encompass. To that extent the NWTTA has for many years now proposed the guideline that teachers arrive at school at least 15 minutes before the instructional day begins for students and remain 15 minutes after the instructional day ends for students. What this means is that on days that teachers do not have, for example, scheduled professional meetings such as PD, parent meetings and school or district meetings, that their start time for the day be 15 minutes before the instructional time for students in the morning and end time for the day be 15 minutes after the instructional time for students.

The NWTTA has tried to have this language placed in the GNWT collective agreement but each time it is brought up it is received with resistance by the employer.

On January 8, 2004 the Minister of Education, in a Ministerial Directive - Start and End Times for Teachers, directed Divisional Education Councils and District Education Authorities, to refrain setting the hours of work for teachers. The Minister wrote *"There has been an informal understanding in the past that teachers should be at school 15 minutes before students are required to be at school and remain 15 minutes after students are dismissed at the end of the day. Apart from this understanding, there is no specifying of a teacher's work day in the collective agreement, nor should there be by Divisional Education Councils or District Education Authorities."* Occasionally since then there have been times where someone took it upon themselves to

require teachers to start and end their workday in excess of the 15 minutes in this directive. When that happened, we would refer them to the directive, and all would be good. Recently this 2004 Ministerial Directive was rescinded and, as a result, is no longer in effect. When the NWTTA became aware of this it tried again to have this addressed in the current round of collective bargaining with the GNWT. This time around, as before, the employer was not interested in referring to a teacher's hours of work in the collective agreement.

The Association was successful in obtaining a letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister, Education, Culture & Employment, stating "Teachers should arrive at school 15 minutes before students are required to be at school and remain 15 minutes after student are dismissed at the end of the day." As well, reference to the Length of the



Instructional Day has been placed in section 2.1.2 of the [NWT JK-12 School Handbook](#) published online.

While the Association believes this to be a step in the right direction, time will tell. Currently I am looking into a member's concern that at their school teachers have been requested to arrive each day 30 minutes before students arrive and remain 30 minutes after students are dismissed at the end of the day.

Remember, if you do encounter any bumps along the way please contact us and we will try our best to level them for you so your journey is more pleasant.

Northern Lights

Meet

Lynn Lalonde
from Yellowknife (YK1
region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Fort Smith, NWT and graduated from P.W. Kaeser High School in 1981.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

When I was in grade five I had the most wonderful teacher, Mr. Matt White. I knew he cared about me and I felt valued. I knew I wanted to give that gift to others and that's when I decided I would become a teacher.

Q. What do you teach?

I am currently teaching a grade 8 homeroom at École Sir John Franklin High School - Language Arts, Social Studies and Health.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I enjoy the creativity that comes with teaching. I am always learning. I love students' 'aha' moments. I love teaching students how to learn.

Q. How do you engage your students?

First of all, I live by my philosophy - "Students don't care what you know until they know that you care." Secondly, I make sure students understand why they are doing something and how it will benefit them in the future. And thirdly, I show them that what they are learning is relevant.

Teaching Since I was in Grade Eight

When I was in grade eight my dad found me two student desks and let me use the old, green shed in the back yard for my 'school'. My sister and cousin were in grade 3 so I went to the elementary school principal and he lent me teacher resources for my 'school'. Every day, after school, my two pupils would come to my play school for more lessons. I was the principal, the teacher, the gym teacher and I even gave them a recess! Their real teachers noticed an improvement in their learning. I was hooked! I have been teaching for over 30 years and I still love it!!

Radio Boréale

Une balado française à Hay River

Pierre Cook, enseignant, École Boréale

À l'École Boréale, les élèves de la 5e année et plus contribuent activement du contenu enregistré pour la radio! C'est vrai, en collaboration avec leur professeur de français et de technologie, Monsieur Pierre, les élèves ont créé des heures de contenu destiné aux plateformes de balado et aux ondes FM. De l'écriture créative aux entrevues journalistiques, les élèves de la petite école de langue française de Hay River contribuent au magazine hebdomadaire intitulé #Radio Boréale. Tout a commencé début septembre alors que l'année scolaire ne faisait que commencer. Les élèves s'habituèrent à leurs anciennes routines, combinées à de nouvelles bien sûr.

Revenons en arrière avant les vacances d'été, une période pendant laquelle les écoles étaient encore fermées et la communauté scolaire devait recourir à d'autres moyens afin de continuer la scolarité. Beaucoup d'entre nous ont expérimenté une approche de classe numérique dans laquelle les enseignants et les étudiants ont communiqué en utilisant de nouveaux moyens de communication numérique. Pour le cours de français de M. Pierre, cette séquence d'événements a jeté les bases de ce qui allait se passer ensuite.

Déjà initiés au monde de la visioconférence, de l'enregistrement audio et autres, les étudiants ont pu se lancer directement dans le projet de balado de M. Pierre. L'émission, Radio Boréale, et ses participants produisent régulièrement des épisodes de trente minutes depuis que les étudiants et Pierre ont commencé à travailler sur le projet. Chaque épisode contient une variété d'articles et de pièces issus des différentes catégories parmi lesquelles les élèves peuvent choisir. Par exemple, les étudiants peuvent choisir de faire partie de l'équipe marketing ou de devenir journaliste sportif ou d'être le directeur musical pendant une semaine pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns. Armés d'un Chromebook et d'une paire d'écouteurs avec microphone, les élèves

peuvent être vus en train d'écrire et d'enregistrer dans les coins de la classe. D'autres peuvent être vus dans l'atrium de l'école ou dans la bibliothèque avec un livre ou du papier à la main, enregistrant ce qui sera le prochain épisode de Radio Boréale.

Ayant déjà obtenu du temps d'antenne avec CKHR Hay Radio et Radio-Taïga à Yellowknife, l'équipe de production avance à plein régime et ne montre aucun signe de ralentissement. Les étudiants entendent leur travail et se sentent fiers et motivés, désireux de créer plus et d'améliorer davantage leur métier. De la composition de musique numérique aux œuvres théâtrales dramatiques, la balado marque certainement le milieu scolaire à l'École Boréale. Pour écouter la balado, visitez anchor.fm/radioboreale. Épisodes récents incluent un spécial Halloween, et un hommage à la journée du chandail orange et bien plus encore.



M. Pierre avec Sophia, élève de 8e année, suite à la publication de son article de presse pour la journée du chandail orange / Mr. Pierre with grade 8 student Sophia, following the publication of her news article for Orange Shirt Day



Les élèves utilisent SeeSaw sur leurs Chromebooks pour enregistrer leur travail, publier et partager leur contenu avec la classe / Students utilize SeeSaw on their Chromebooks to record their work, to publish and to share their content with the class

«Le projet est vraiment inclusif... Il permet à chaque élève de se faire entendre. Même s'ils ne veulent pas s'enregistrer, s'ils ne sont pas forcément à l'aise avec ça. Les étudiants ont toujours la possibilité d'écrire et de produire du contenu avec et pour leurs pairs.»

«Il faut environ une semaine pour rassembler suffisamment de contenu pour un épisode. Parfois un peu plus longtemps selon ce qui se passe en classe. Mais j'aime trouver un moyen d'impliquer autant de programmation scolaire que possible. Les éléments de la communauté sont également excellents et créent des liens précieux que nous n'établissons pas souvent en classe.»

Radio Boréale

A French Language Podcast in Hay River

Pierre Cook, teacher, École Boréale

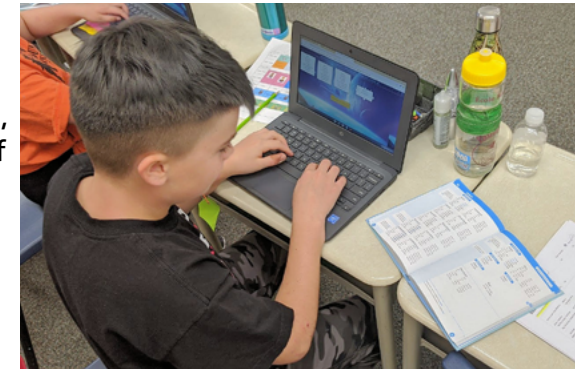
At École Boréale, students from grades 5 and up are actively contributing recorded material for the radio! That's right, in collaboration with their French and technology teacher, Mister Pierre, students have been laying down hours of content destined for podcast platforms and FM waves. From creative writing to journalistic interviews, students at the small French language school in Hay River are contributing to the weekly podcast magazine entitled #Radio Boréale. It all started in early September as the school year was just getting started. Students were getting used to their old routines, combined with some new ones of course.

Rewind to back before the summer break, a time during which schools were still shut and the school community had to resort to other means. A lot of us experienced a digital classroom approach in which teachers and students communicated using new means of digital communication. For Mr. Pierre's French class, this sequence of events laid down a good foundation for what was to happen next.

Already introduced to the world of video conferencing, audio recording and the likes, students were able to jump right into Mr. Pierre's podcast project. The program, Radio Boréale, and its participants have been steadily producing thirty-minute episodes since the students and Pierre started working on the project. Each episode contains a variety of content stemming from the different categories students can choose from. For example, students may choose to be part of the marketing team or become a sports journalist or be the musical director for a week to

name a few. Armed with a Chromebook and a pair of microphone headphones, students can be seen writing and recording in corners of the classroom. Others can be seen in the school atrium or library with book or paper in hand, recording what is to be the next episode of Radio Boréale.

Already having secured some air time with CKHR Hay Radio and Radio-Taïga in Yellowknife, the production team is pushing on at full steam and not showing any signs of slowing down. Students are hearing their work are feeling proud and motivated, eager to create more and better their craft. From composing digital music to dramatic theatrical works, the podcast is certainly making a mark on the school environment at École Boréale. To listen to the podcast visit anchor.fm/radioboreale. Recent episodes include a Halloween special and a tribute to Orange Shirt Day and much more.



Students work on a range of subjects from community news to academic endeavours. We even do French verb conjugation. / Les étudiants travaillent sur une gamme de sujets allant des nouvelles communautaires aux efforts académiques. Nous faisons même la conjugaison des verbes français.



Collaboration is the name of the game. Students work regularly together to piece together the different components of their article. / La collaboration est le nom du jeu. Les élèves travaillent régulièrement ensemble pour reconstituer les différentes composantes de leur article.

'The project is inclusive as it gets... It lets every student have a voice. Even if they don't want to record themselves talk, and they're not necessarily comfortable with that. Students still get a chance to write and produce content with and for their peers.'

'It takes about a week to gather enough content for one episode. Sometimes a little longer depending on what's going on in class. But I like to find a way to involve as much school programming as I can. Community stuff too is great and makes some valuable connections that we don't often make within the classroom.'



Town Hall with the Prime Minister of Canada to Celebrate 2020 World Teachers' Day

Gwen Young, CTF Advisory Committee - Status of Women/YK1 Regional President

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau created a virtual town hall to celebrate with Canadian teachers the 2020 World Teachers' Day on October 5. Prime Minister Trudeau invited teachers from across Canada to meet and have the opportunity to present pandemic experiences, ask him questions and engage in open dialogue.

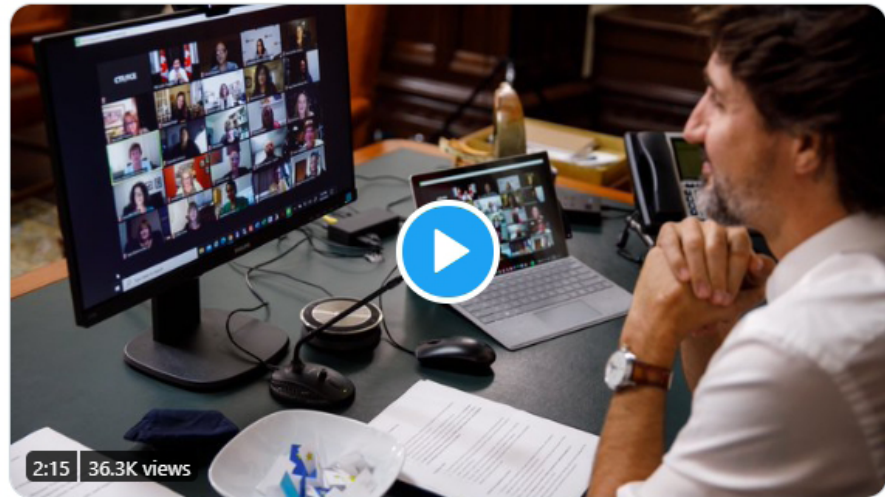
Education is a Provincial/Territorial jurisdiction, however, the Federal government announced up to 2 billion dollars for a safe return back to school during COVID. NWT Minister of Education R.J. Simpson announced that Education, Culture and Employment would be receiving 12.4 million dollars targeted for the hiring of teachers, janitors and supplies to support the continued needs surrounding the pandemic. During this town hall, the Prime Minister and the Federal Government were asked for the continued engagement by the Federal Government to ensure that the Provinces and Territories are using the funding adequately to keep teachers and students safe.

As part of the CTF Advisory Committee on the Status of Women, I was invited to participate in this town hall. Through this interaction with the Prime Minister, teachers were able to present the current classroom situations in the time of COVID. Teachers

highlighted the stress, the time commitment and high expectations being put on teachers to create in-class learning as well as supporting virtual learning. The Prime Minister was eager to hear what was working and what still needed to be supported.



Last week, I celebrated #WorldTeachersDay by logging on for a virtual town hall with @CTFFCE. As a former teacher, I was excited to hear from them - and I got to thank them for everything they're doing during these tough times. Take a look:



6:28 PM · Oct 16, 2020 · Twitter Media Studio

I was happy to hear teachers present and highlight the many needs including the additional infrastructure for technology that is needed to support the different forms of on line learning. I was encouraged by the Prime Minister's understanding of our concerns of mental health support for teachers and students. The Prime Minister reiterated the pledge of the Federal Government to continue supporting education and to push the Provinces and Territorial

governments to do better. I will be looking to see if this support for teachers and students continues.

As educators, we need to make sure to call for action and keep our governments accountable. They need to continue to invest more for the health, mental health and safety of our all teachers and students.

I would like to thank the President and staff of CTF for inviting me to be a part of this opportunity to represent Canadian teachers on World Teacher Day.

If you wish, you can view a 2:15 video from the meeting by clicking on the image above, or typing in this shortened link: <https://bit.ly/3jmKRW0>



Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre



The museum has lots to offer NWT schools

Edukits

We ship themed kits to schools containing lessons and props in a box ... for free!

Online Resources

Our website has virtual activities, audio, and exhibits – including the newly launched 'Big River Journey.'



School Programs

Available for a variety of grade levels at the museum in Yellowknife. Programs available in English and French.

For a full list of programs go to:

www.pwnhc.ca/education
or contact the PWNHC Education staff at pwnhc_education@gov.nt.ca

Northern Lights

Meet **Colin Pybus** from Inuvik (Beaufort-Delta region)



Q. Where did you grow up?
Walkerton, Ontario

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I took a co-op class in Grade 11 where we were working with elementary school children doing outdoor education and environmental science lessons. It was such a great experience and kicked off my passion for teaching

Q. What do you teach?

Typically I am the Grades 7-12 physical education teacher; currently I'm doing a variety of virtual high school electives.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I most enjoy the promotion of healthy living with my students. Knowing that my classes are helping to instill the belief that lifelong activity is important and that there is an activity for everyone to enjoy is something I think holds value across all future aspirations of students.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I try to engage my students through providing fun, enjoyable activities that appeal to all abilities. I think the physical education classroom has the unique ability to engage students in ways that other classes just can't. At some point in their lives, all our students loved to play, run, jump, and just have fun being active kids. Recreating that in a safe and inclusive way has always been my focus for engaging students in my classes.

Lifelong Activity is Important

From that Grade 11 class working with elementary school students, I knew I wanted to be in education. As an athlete, how to translate my love of sport and activity into a career, was a focus that led me to kinesiology and physical education. Believing that lifelong activity is important is so crucial for the long term health of everyone. Being in a position to teach those values, is an opportunity that I'm lucky and thankful to have.

NWTTA and Employer Human Resources

Sara McCrea, Assistant Executive Director

The Northwest Territories Teachers' Association is your Association. We are here to help you when you need assistance or advice. As an NWTTA member, you are part of one of the three (3) bargaining units and have a collective agreement specific to your bargaining unit. You may be an employee of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS), or Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1). Through your employer, you have access to their Human Resources (HR) Department. Their responsibilities typically revolve around recruitment, onboarding, payroll, administering employee benefits, learning and development, medical travel, and health and safety.

Your collective agreement covers articles regarding salary, allowances, various types of leaves, benefits, professional development, evaluations, teacher qualifications, and grievance and arbitration procedures, to name a few. You can find a copy of your collective agreement on our NWTTA website at <https://nwttan.ca/publications/collective-agreements>. When reviewing your collective agreement, you may find yourself needing clarification or interpretation of articles and clauses. At other times you might encounter a situation where you feel you need advice and support about something. If you need help at any time, please give us a call or send us an email. We are always pleased to assist you.

You may ask yourself: when and how should I contact Human Resources? If you are a **GNWT employee**, you will contact the HR Helpdesk, which is comprised of employees who act as the primary point of contact for all GNWT employees. They respond to HR questions via email and phone, offering solutions to problems or referring questions to employees within the GNWT who can best provide solutions. Contact by email is recommended to have a written record of your correspondence and a ticket number. Having a ticket number can also allow others to follow up on your behalf. If you feel it is appropriate, we suggest you copy (c.c.) a member of your Regional Executive or Central Office - Assistant Executive Director (Sara McCrea), Executive Director (David Murphy), and/or NWTTA President (Matthew Miller) in your initial email contact with the HR Helpdesk.

If you have an HR-related question or issue, your first step should be to check the *My HR* section on the GNWT website: <https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/node>. If you cannot find an answer on the site to resolve your issue, you should contact the HR Helpdesk.

The HR Helpdesk representatives can help with:

- Benefits-related questions including pension, dental, public service health care plan (PSHCP);

- Maternity leave, parental leave, other leave;
- Payroll questions: missed hours, T4 slips, payroll deductions, retroactive payments, recoveries;
- Problems with the Human Resource Information System (PeopleSoft): forgotten password, problems logging into the system, issues viewing certain screens in the system, leave codes, leave balances, time reporting problems.

When contacting HR Helpdesk by email, or if you leave a voice mail message, you should:

- Provide your name and employee ID number;
- If addressing an employee issue, provide their name and ID number;
- Include your daytime phone number;
- Outline the issue for which you require assistance.

Sometimes sending an email is more appropriate - a good rule of thumb is if your voice mail is longer than 30 seconds, an email may be more helpful.

If you have previously called or sent an email, let the people at the HR Helpdesk know. Once an email is logged or you call the first time, you should have a reference number and include it in your communication.

Below is the contact for HR Helpdesk:
Tel: 867-678-6625 Toll-Free: 1-866-475-8162

Email: HRHelpdesk@gov.nt.ca. The HR Helpdesk is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

If you are a YCS or YK1 employee, the process is more straightforward; you can contact the Human Resources representative directly for similar questions mentioned above. If you would like the NWTTA to assist in a follow-up or a concern, please copy (c.c.) a member of your Regional Executive or Central Office.

YCS employee

Amy Curran, Pay & Benefits Officer
Phone: 867-766-7403
Email: amy.curran@ycs.nt.ca

YK1 employee

Stacey Mahe, Human Resources Manager
Phone: 867-766-5058
Email: stacey.mahe@yk1.nt.ca

If you are having difficulty resolving concerns at any time, we encourage you to contact NWTTA directly, and we will do our best to assist you.



Staff and Students at **Chief Paul Niditchie School** in Tsiigehtchic (Beaufort-Delta region) were eagerly checking ice thickness, measuring the freezing rate of their calm body of water near the school before starting their under ice fishing unit and had a successful harvest! Thank you Brandon Andre & Nicolas Kopot for the photos.

Northern Lights

Meet

Michael Small

from Fort Smith (Fort Smith region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

Regent Park, Toronto

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

Growing up in a neighbourhood and household with very limited positive role models, my only goal was to find stable employment and live a more settled life. After a year of being a machine operator at a factory, I couldn't handle the mind-numbing monotony. I needed a change and somehow ended up teaching English in Korea, where I fell in love with the profession. The absolute unpredictability of the predictable is what is so incredibly interesting about teaching, everyday is different, everyday is a challenge and everyday is a new learning opportunity.

Q. What do you teach?

Grade 8 homeroom (ELA, SCI, HLTH, PE) as well as High School Yearbook, Forestry and Wilderness

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

Everything; the interactions with my students and colleagues, the opportunities for creativity, the daily challenges, the planning of engaging lessons, the delivery of those lessons, the successes, the failures, the extracurriculars, the endless possibilities.

Q. How do you engage your students?

For me it's all about making connections and building trust. I usually achieve this through a combination of humour, acknowledgment and food. I try to include as much hands-on experiential learning as possible. I remember to stop and take moments to reflect with them, have meaningful conversations, share anecdotes from each others experiences, find common ground, and check in with them individually as often as possible.

Knowledge Comes in Many Forms

During my first few months teaching in the north, I had a student and his father take me out to show me how they set nets under the ice. Growing up in the city, I had very little experience on the land. This student prepped my sled, attached and loaded my qammatik, fixed my sled when my belt broke, chiseled the holes, untangled and set his nets, made a fire to boil tea and led us home safely. This student was ten years old and he wanted to show me that although he was struggling to read in my class, he was still a very capable person and remind me that knowledge comes in many forms.



NWT Public Libraries Presents:

eResources – FREE to all NWT Public Library Cardholders!

There is something for everyone, including: music, crafting, e-books, audiobooks, movies, language, online magazines, reference, digital resources for JK-12 teachers, materials for residents with print disabilities, and much more.



For a full list of eResources visit
www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/libraries/library-eresources

Government of
Northwest Territories

Challenges to the Usual Professional Development Opportunities

Adrien Amirault, Professional Development Coordinator

The Central Professional Development Committee (CPDC) is a joint committee between the NWTTA and the GNWT. There are two representatives from each party on the committee. The CPDC is responsible for the provisions of Article 16 in the GNWT-NWTTA collective agreement. They meet at least twice annually (usually face-to-face), but they have been on Zoom this year, and occasionally for brief telephone conversations as items and concerns come up.

The CPDC met in October 2020 to review the PD fund as well as the professional development work that the fund supports. It became very apparent when reviewing both Central Funds (these funds support education leaves, the Education Leadership Program, Indigenous language teaching, and distance and summer credit courses) and Regional Funds (supporting attendance at conferences and workshops, school-based PD, Individual PD, and regional professional development) that there was a change in the usual way the funds were accessed.

Centrally the Educational Leadership Program was canceled this past summer, and only two leaves with allowances were approved for the present year. Regional funds are accessed to support travel. Travel has all but stopped since March of 2020. So, the CPDC looked to ways that PD funding could be better used while we are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was noted that Distance Credit courses were actually used more than expected last year. There was actually an uptake in courses in the spring. With this in mind the CPDC decided to support Distance Credit Courses by increasing the maximum funding to \$4000 from \$2500 per GNWT member. This will be for the remainder of this year, and the CPDC will review this decision for next year in the spring. Courses have to be for credit from approved universities. Further details can be found in the [CPDC Handbook](#).

The CPDC also noted that they could have supported three educational leaves this year, but only two were applied for. They have decided to allow the leave that remained to be carried over to next year, so there will be four Leaves with Allowances available for 2021-2022. [The deadline to apply is March 1, 2021](#). It should be noted that there is also funding to support an additional leave with allowances that supports study in Indigenous Language teaching. This is in addition to the four leaves that have been approved.

Education Leaves can be to get a Masters degree, a Bachelor of Education, or an Indigenous Language teaching certificate. They can be at any approved university, and must be for full time studies.

Northern Lights

Meet

Jessica MacKay
from Hay River (South Slave region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a small town in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. While quite simple (aside from the fancy Tim Hortons), New Waterford has a lot of great history -- such as the 8:30pm fire whistle that blows every single night!

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

My very cliché yet honest answer is I've always wanted to be a teacher. Even when I thought I was interested in something else I would find myself working part-time at a Day Care or a Summer Camp.

Q. What do you teach?

Up until this year I taught Grade 1. Last year I decided I would like to try an older grade and luckily a spot opened up. Now I teach Grade 4/5 and I actually have a lot of students from my first two years of teaching which is awesome!

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

The connection to students is what I enjoy most about teaching. You can feel how much they appreciate being heard even if they're telling you something simple like their favourite movie or game. After you make a good connection, they're willing to work more with you and they know that you genuinely care about whether or not they do well. I think that's really important.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I try to keep things relevant and relatable. I like when they can understand topics by using what they already know.

It Will Always Be Worth It

I really struggled at times as a young student. I still ended up doing everything I wanted with school and my career. I want my students to know that while it might be difficult at times, it will always be worth it.

Managing Stress and Anxiety During COVID-19

Rebecca Chen, Starling Minds Community Manager

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone's lives in many different ways. Over 90% of Starling Members indicate that they've experienced a lot more anxiety. With all the uncertainty on top of an already stressful role, changes in work routine and the migration to e-learning are just a few things causing teachers more stress.

Here are a few tips that you can use to manage some of the stress and anxiety you may feel right now:

Tip #1 Identifying and managing triggers

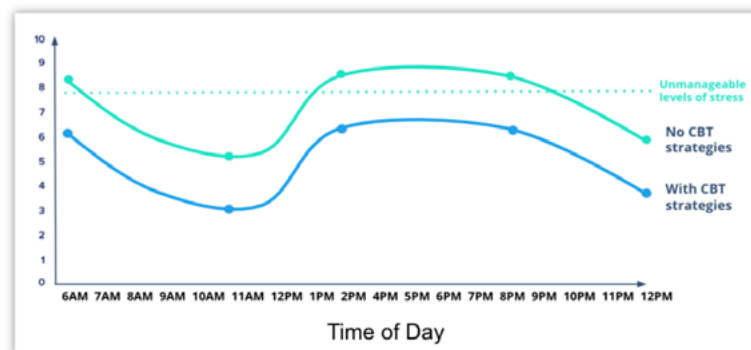
We all have triggers and it can be difficult to avoid them! Some of my triggers during COVID-19 are the news, seeing large groups of people, and grocery shopping. When I see these things, it often elicits feelings of stress, anxiety, worry, or unhappiness. It may result in a headache and I often feel overwhelmed.

The good news is that we can manage our moods; the first step is to understand what our triggers are so that we can find ways to relax and lower our stress levels quickly before we don't reach a point of no return. That brings me to tip #2.

Tip #2 Relax and Recharge in ways that work for you

What are some activities that help you relax and recharge? You likely have a variety, with some being more portable and easily accessible than others. Something that is always a good 5-10 second recharge is a simple neck and back stretch. I also like taking a series of deep breaths when I feel my thoughts begin to spiral. These simple things help me get through the task I am trying to accomplish. When I have more time, I like to take a walk, do some reading, or clean the house to refill my battery.

Since the pandemic, it may feel like our stress levels are high all day. When we track it on a graph, there will likely be peaks and waves depending on what part of your daily routine you find more stressful. By having a few go-to relaxation or recharge activities and doing it 3-5 times throughout the day can bring your stress down a notch.



At Starling, an important thing we always try to remember is that we shouldn't be so hard on ourselves and expect to bring our stress lines down to zero right away. Bringing things down a few notches is a win.

Tip #3 Thought Balancing

Our last strategy today is my personal favourite - thought balancing. It's so important for me to take a step back when things start spiraling in my mind and to manage my thoughts before I get to the point of no return. Thought balancing is a method that helps us take a negative thought causing us harm, looking at the facts for and against it, and then repackaging it all in a new balanced statement.

An example could be worrying about the possibility of catching COVID-19 and passing it on to another loved one. By acknowledging why we think we will contract the virus, we can then find an equal amount of objective facts to show that we are doing all we can to protect ourselves. This is a powerful tool that can help us manage our worries and anxiety.

Giving myself the chance to focus on the things I can control and recognize that I'm doing all I can to stay healthy has really helped improve my confidence, stress and anxiety levels, and I hope it'll help you too!

This week, I challenge you to do one of the following:

1. Find two relax and recharge strategies that works for you: one that you can use to relax in the moment, and one that you can use to recharge when you have more time
2. Identify one thing that triggers a negative mood and one thing that triggers a positive mood to increase your self-awareness
3. Identify one negative thought pattern that you have and come up with a more balanced thought to start changing your perspective

The last thing I want to leave you with is a reminder to acknowledge where your battery levels are at during this point in time and be kind to yourself when it comes to setting expectations. Since the start of the pandemic, our mental wellbeing has slid down the mental health continuum. Sometimes, it's not clear at first glance just how much we've been impacted, and so we set goals that mirror what we expect our performance levels to be at.

The disconnect between what we can do and what we would like to do can often make us question our abilities and make it unclear as to why we're struggling or failing to meet our expectations. Without reflection and course correction, we may slide down further overtime and end up in the very unhealthy end of the mental health continuum.

Meeting our expectations and accomplishing what we set out to do is a great mental boost, so it's important to keep the pandemic and all the changes it has brought in mind. Not being able to do as much as we used to is okay and it doesn't indicate failure; it just means we need to re-evaluate where we're at, and re-adjust our goals so that we can keep moving forward.



Tools and strategies

Want to practice these tools and apply them to your own thoughts and moods? Register or login to the Starling Minds platform to check out the templates and examples that we have for these hands-on tools.

Starling Community

Join the conversation in Starling's online Community; we are not alone during these challenging times and together, we can empower each other to find the support and encouragement we need.

Register or Login (you will need your NWTTA membership number):
<https://app.starlingminds.com/registration/nwt>

As a reminder, Starling Minds is a digital mental health therapy tool provided to you and your families free of charge by the NWT Teachers' Association. The platform is self-directed, available to you 24/7, anytime, and based on concepts from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). Available on-demand, Starling helps educators overcome barriers that prevent them from seeking mental health support due to cost, access, and stigma.

If you have any questions about the program or your account, please contact members@starlingminds.com.



From the Archives

What were our members talking about in the past? The article below is re-printed from a **November/December 1989** NWTTA newsletter, then titled "Communicate".

Back to school night

By Lorne Parker

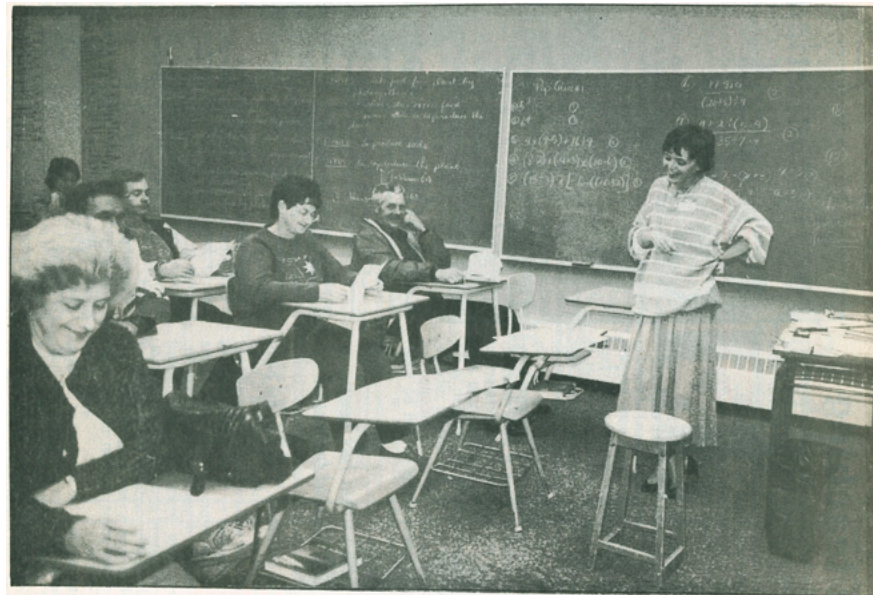
On September 20, 1989 over 250 parents took advantage of William McDonald Junior High School's invitation to go back to school. The parents had been invited to sit through a "shortened" version of their child's school day. Day 1 of our six day schedule was followed with classes beginning at 6:45 pm and ending at 8:30 pm.

The staff attempted to make the evening as informative as possible by employing various strategies ranging from the actual presentation of a typical lesson to a review of course content to be covered during the year. The parents were encouraged to actively participate in all classes attended although they proved to be totally different from their children in terms of energy and noise level.

The positive feedback received on the format presented was most overwhelming. Many parents expressed their appreciation to the teachers and the administration for the opportunity provided to view firsthand what their child is studying in school.

Those parents attending the open house were also encouraged to become actively involved in organizing a parents' school support group. Over thirty-four parents responded to a request for volunteers to help get the advisory committee off the ground. This solicitation was in direct response to the staff's belief that parents as primary stakeholders in their child's education, should be actively involved in supporting the school's programs.

The evening culminated with a brief address by Mr. Campbell, the principal. The encouragement and support shown by parents and staff alike indicated that William McDonald Junior High School can look forward to an interesting and rewarding year.



Communicate photo by S. Daly
Barb Cook, a Grade 8 teacher at William McDonald Jr. High, puts her class of parents to work.



Communicate photo by S. Daly
Lenore DeJong, a teacher at William McDonald Junior High School, keeps her class on task.

Northern Lights

Meet

Nancy

Noseworthy

from Fort Simpson (Dehcho region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Clarendville, a small town in Newfoundland.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

My mom used to tell me that I wanted to be a teacher from the time I could talk. I would set up my room as a classroom for my stuffed animals. She has a video (no sound of course) of me at my kindergarten graduation and you can see from my mouth I said "when I grow up I want to be a teacher."

Q. What do you teach?

I moved to the Dehcho about 23 years ago. I have been extremely fortunate to have had opportunities to be a classroom teacher, program support teacher, principal and I am currently the Regional Inclusive Schooling Consultant at the Dehcho Divisional Education Council.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

My true passion for teaching lies in the area of inclusion. I love to unlock the puzzle that enables a child to learn. This has given me so many heartwarming experiences over the years.

Q. How do you engage your students?

Teaching is about relationships. Once students know that you care about them, teach to their strengths, and provide meaningful learning experiences, it is easy to engage for learning.

A Rewarding Journey

This career as a teacher has been a rewarding journey. Every student I have taught has taught me a little bit more about myself as a teacher and ways to improve the learning experience. I know I was meant to be a teacher because it is not like a job. I am fortunate that I get to do something I love everyday and I get to do it in the amazing Dehcho!

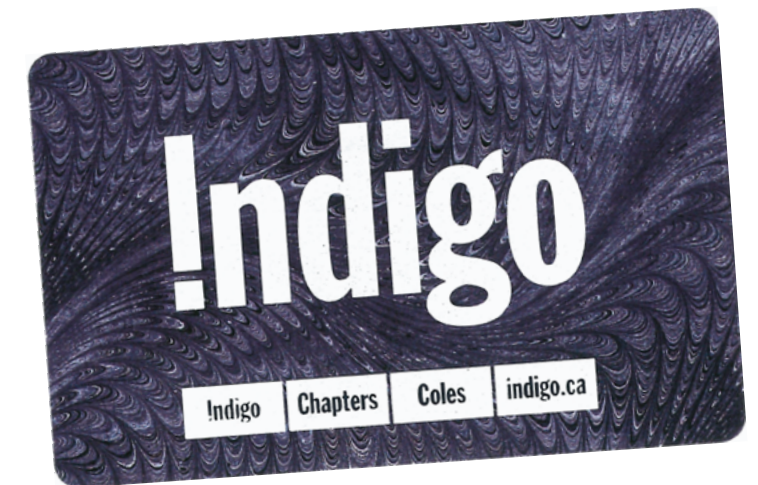
Newsletter Trivia

Send your answers to the trivia questions below to news@nwtta.nt.ca with subject *Trivia*.

Trivia answers are contained within this edition of the newsletter. Newsletter Trivia contests are open to active NWTTA members.

Deadline for entries: **February 1, 2021**

Win a \$50 Chapters-Indigo Gift Card!



1. What is the mission of Food First?
2. What is the title of the French language podcast in Hay River?
3. What is the shipping cost to receive an Edukit from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre at your school?
4. What are three tips from Starling Minds to help manage some of the stress and anxiety you may feel right now?

Colin Pybus from East Three Secondary School (Beaufort-Delta region) is the winner of the September 2020 Newsletter Trivia.

Cover: Cutting through the ice in Tsiigehtchic as part of **Chief Paul Niditchie School's** under ice fishing unit. Thank you Brandon Andre for the photo!

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*l-r Matthew Miller, NWTTA President &
Tess Ondrack, Food First Foundation Coordinator*

In lieu of sending Christmas cards, the NWTTA has made a donation to the Food First Foundation, a registered charity whose mission is to support food and nutrition education programs in schools across the Northwest Territories. Learn more about Food First on page four of this newsletter or on their website:

<http://foodfirst.ca>

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