



NWTTA NEWS

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Always the First to Volunteer

Congratulations **Colin Pybus**, recipient of the 2020 Aboriginal Sports Circle NWTTA Award! Due to COVID-19 gathering restrictions not allowing the usual awards ceremony in Yellowknife, Colin received his award at a special ceremony with limited attendees in Inuvik on January 8, 2021 at the Midnight Sun Rec Complex.

During Colin's eight years in the NWT, his contributions to the students at East Three Secondary School, the communities of Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk where he's lived, as well as the Territory as a whole, have been numerous. Colin is always the first to volunteer for any school-based program.

Colin supports the local cultures and integrates traditional activities throughout his classes. From fun warm-up games, to one-foot high kicking, to snowshoeing and skiing, Colin utilizes the lessons of the Delta in his approach to teaching in his classroom. The positive

influence, care, and dedication that Colin brings to activity and healthy living promotion can be seen daily.

Colin also supports wellbeing, recreation and sport outside of the school community for the betterment of Inuvik and the bigger NWT community. In addition to Colin's involvement at school, he is also actively involved on multiple sport boards (Sport North, NWT Soccer and NWT Athletics).



You can watch a four-minute video of [Colin's award presentation at this link](https://shorturl.at/dDM79), shortened to shorturl.at/dDM79

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President's Update

Matthew Miller, President



As the year continues, it is hard to think of what could have been and how COVID-19 has continued to alter not only our professional lives but also our personal lives. I began writing my portion of the NWTTA Newsletter two weeks ago, making edits along the way. Now at the time of submission, the information I planned to share has changed or has already been distributed. Our methods of providing information means we can send large quantities of information in a short amount of time to all members. My goal is to provide you with all of the information you need but not tempt you to hit the unsubscribe button at the end of the mass email.

Plans to engage with members face-to-face to hear about your celebrations and concerns have turned into scheduling Zoom meetings to make that connection. I now have regular meetings on Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and even FaceTime. I do not see this going away, even when we find relief from COVID-19, as it allows for meetings to happen over great distances and to squeeze more meetings into a short period of time by removing the need to travel.

On the positive side, vaccinations have rolled out across the Northwest Territories. As vaccination teams arrived in small communities, teachers were included in receiving the Moderna vaccine for anyone 18+ years old. Those teaching in Inuvik were also able to receive the shot at that time. I continued to advocate for members to be prioritized in Hay River, Fort Smith and Yellowknife. I received a letter on February 15, 2021, from Dr. Kami Kandola, Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO), that this prioritization will occur. It seems like a small win with everything that has happened this year.

I have been proactive in contacting the CPHO, ECE, Superintendents, and MLAs, including Ministers and the Premier looking for answers. I am eager to provide members with more information as soon as it is available. The most frequent topic at the NWTTA Office is self-isolation and, even more specifically, the requirement to pay for self-isolation due to non-essential travel for those in small communities. We receive other questions such as: *Will being vaccinated change the current isolation requirements? What will school calendars look like? Will CPHO school plans still be in place?* At the time of writing this, I still do not have the answers. Maybe by the time you are reading this, those answers will be available.

We have been busy working on Human Resources issues, clarifying

language in the collective agreements, preparing for negotiations for all three bargaining groups, and the decades-old concerns around housing. Some of these items are easier to deal with than others, although they are taking longer to resolve than usual. Housing is not something that will be a quick fix. There was a positive response rate, with 372 members taking part in the NWTTA housing survey. The survey results will be used to bring your concerns to the Minister of Housing, Paulie Chinna. What makes housing challenging to address is the Public Service Act section 41(7)(a) & (b) prevents the NWTTA from negotiating housing into the collective agreement.

"No collective agreement shall deal directly or indirectly with (a) the rents payable by employees or any other conditions of tenure of premises let or leased to them by, or held by them under licence from the Government of the Northwest Territories; or (b) payments to or in respect of employees relating to owner-occupied premises or premises rented or leased from persons or bodies other than the Government of the Northwest Territories."

As Thank You for Making a Difference has now concluded, I personally want to say thank you to our support assistants, teachers, and administrators. You have continually gone above and beyond to ensure the education system is delivered at a high standard. I know this has come at a cost this year with additional stress and challenging your mental health and overall well-being. The general population rarely acknowledges the sacrifice educators make to support our students; fortunately, we are not in education for the praise.

I view teachers as self-motivators and individuals who set high expectations for themselves and others. Like many of you, there have been some days where it has been difficult for me to push forward. I want you to know you are not alone if you are feeling this way. It is okay not to be 100% all the time. There is an unrealistic expectation that you deliver at your best no matter what is happening in your life; what could be more stressful than that? It is acceptable to ask for help. I have taken calls this year from members who, in the end, just wanted someone who will listen. The NWTTA staff are a call away, and I hope your colleagues will be there to support you as well.

Northern Lights

Meet

Rayna Hayes
from Hay River (South Slave region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a small coastal town in New Brunswick called Bouctouche.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I knew that I wanted to become a teacher when I was very young because I always had such great experiences in school with my teachers and I thought they had the best job in the world for being able to do all the fun things that we got to do as students. My love for teaching grew as a teenager when I started coaching gymnastics and teaching fiddle and dance classes. After these experiences, I knew that I wanted to work with children and youth by becoming a teacher.

Q. What do you teach?

I teach Post-Intensive French 8-12 and Senior High Foods (CTS) at Diamond Jenness Secondary School (DJ).

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

My favorite part about teaching is connecting with the students.

Q. How do you engage your students?

In my French classes, I try to engage my students by connecting the content to their interests and incorporating conversational games and activities regularly into my lessons. In my Foods classes, I try my best to give my students the freedom to choose what they want to cook so that they are more motivated to learn and more likely to then transfer on their learned skills at home.

Witnessing Accomplishes Over the Years

When I began teaching at DJ, I was the first and only Post-Intensive French teacher at the school which allowed me to teach the same students over the course of their high school years. My first grade 8 class will be graduating this year and I feel very fortunate to have been able to build relationships with them and witness their accomplishments over the years.

Whole Lotta Drum - Christmas Performance Recorded in Parts, Edited Together in Studio

Stephen Richardson, Band Teacher, École St. Joseph School

it all together (like "Musical Lego") in our professional recording studio.

This year École St. Joseph School (ESJS) music students have shown great resilience dealing with all restrictions and safety measures surrounding COVID-19 as it related to music instruction.

Woodwind and Brass Band instruments and our Choir were also affected by those strict guidelines. As such it was decided very early in the year to cancel our Christmas Concert and any assemblies. Students explored percussion for four months and had really developed in this area leading up to Christmas.

In the final couple of weeks of school in December, we felt ESJS needed to band together in the Christmas Spirit and do something musical despite the canceled concerts.

Each class playing very small pieces or sections of a song arrangement I had percolating in my head. Even they did not know what song they were creating.

Following Chief Public Health Office guidelines, we filmed our students in which I recorded each class playing very small pieces or sections of a song arrangement I had percolating in my head. Even they did not know what song they were creating. I told them, as a Christmas surprise, I would put



So some classes played three notes of the song, some played one or two, some played part of a drum pattern while another class played the rest of the pattern... some tapped, or clapped, or stomped... Everyone added something. Then my studio recording partner (David Dowe) and I, through many editing hours, cobbled it all together and built it into this song arrangement and music video. We have been at the music business for a long time, but for both of us this made for one of the most interesting and fun recording projects we have ever done.

Last minute I realized I needed a very specific intro, so I had my son (Reyes) come in and record some snare and cajon parts. He has been drumming most of his life. A long-time photography friend allowed me to use a unique Christmas tree photo to match this year's tone.

ESJS students enjoyed drumming - all our djembe and cajon drums were sourced from our local music store (Fiddles & Stix Music Centre).

I hope you enjoy what the students made together as a school. (At the same time they were also filming a beautiful video—Go Team Roach!—for our phys-ed teacher Mr. Roach!) ESJS students always come through.

[Link to the ESJS 2020 Music video and mp3 audio file, shortened to:](#) shorturl.at/oGKP5

Thank You for making a difference!

Merci d'avoir fait une différence!

The *Thank You for Making a Difference* program is an organized opportunity for students to send messages of appreciation to their teachers. The program, in its 24th year in 2021 is funded by the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

For three weeks in January, students can send a message to their teachers online on the NWTTA website or on paper at their school. At the end of the campaign a school prize drawing is completed at each school to pick one winner where the teacher who was written about and the student who wrote about them win gift card prizes selected from a list of vendors. All messages written about the teachers are delivered to those teachers.

All active NWTTA members are then included in grand prize drawings where the winners receive a gift card from the vendor of their choice.

Scattered through this newsletter are photos of some of the school prize winners such as the one below.



Thank You
for making a difference!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Angik School** in Paulatuk (Beaufort-Delta region) student Ethan and teacher **Katie Fontaine!**

Merci
d'avoir fait une différence!

Northern Lights

Meet **Nushreen Ukkhoy** from Behchoko (Tlicho region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I was born in Mauritius and moved to Yellowknife, NT when I was 9 years old.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I always knew I wanted a career that would allow me to help children in one way or another. I was inspired to be a teacher by my grade 5 teacher Mrs. Shea. She was my first teacher in Canada and she devoted her time and effort to ensure that I felt safe and loved at school. She also spent hours after school to help me catch up on school work and to help me with my English. I wanted to give this gift back to other children. I want my students to know that I care for them, value them and I want to help them reach their full potential.

Q. What do you teach?

I teach grade 3/4 at Elizabeth Mackenzie Elementary School.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

The thing that I enjoy the most about teaching is getting to work with students and helping them grow. I enjoy getting to know them, learning from them as well as helping them learn. I absolutely love the look on their faces when they accomplish a new goal and the pride they feel when they realize that they've accomplished that goal on their own.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I engage my students by making their learning relevant. I find it easier and more motivating for students to learn content when I connect the topic/content to their everyday lives. I also incorporate different modalities when teaching in class to accommodate all the different learning styles and to provide students with multiple ways of understanding the content.

Keep Learning and Keep Growing

I've only been a teacher for a few years and in those years my students have taught me a lot about myself, they have challenged me to go out of my comfort zone and they have helped me become a better teacher. My students help me grow as a teacher as much as I help them grow as a learner. I cannot wait to work with more students and give each of them the love, care and support they need to become a successful learner.

Working for Our Members A Glimpse of What We Do

David Murphy, Executive Director

Since December we have been busy assisting members with many concerns. Noticeably on the rise are those concerns that may be directly or indirectly related to COVID-19. These include meetings members are asked to attend with the employers, increased sick leave, more resignations, members contacting us about travel and self-isolation, members contacting us for clarification on individual STIP versus collaborative STIP.

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. While I usually respond to email the same or the next day, I am finding lately that my response time has increased to a few days more in some circumstances. 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, PD, grievances, over payments, disciplinary meetings, removal, substitute teacher pay and start and end times for teachers.

Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practice (STIP)

One item that members are asking more about this year is STIP especially the difference between Individual STIP and Collaborative STIP. STIP came about as a result of collective bargaining for the 2016-2020 GNWT collective agreement. Upon completion of negotiations for the YCS and YK1 collective agreements STIP became a part of these agreements as well. The purpose of STIP was to assist teachers strengthen their instructional practices by providing teachers with more personal planning days and more collaborative planning days.

The individual planning days were to provide time for teachers to be free from students where they could complete report cards, do lesson planning, marking, review student support plans and many other related tasks teachers are compelled to do. These days are planned by the teacher and work during these days should not be assigned by the employer.

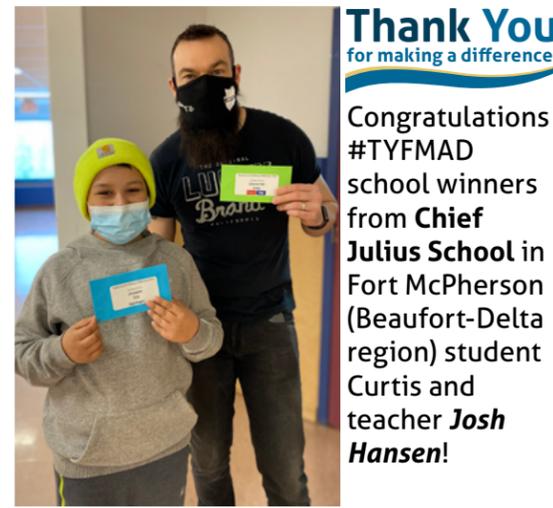
The collaborative days were set aside for teachers to be able to work with other teachers on a number of tasks focusing on school and district initiatives. These days are planned by the employer.

In order to allow for these days the NWT Education Act was amended to reduce the maximum number of instructional hours in a year from 1045 to 945. This provided educational bodies the ability to assign up to 100 hours of instruction time to STIP activities. The total STIP time that must be established may be less than 100 hours but may not be less than 52 hours. Initially 50% of the teachers in each GNWT school would vote to agree with these days.

It is important to note that these days were divided on the basis of 50% split for individual and 50% for collaborative.

Prior to collective bargaining for the 2020-2021 collective agreements RJ Simpson, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) made amendments to the Academic Year and School Attendance Regulations in December 2020 which in essence took STIP out of the collective agreements. The Minister developed a [Ministerial Directive](#) to outline the implementation of STIP. Superintendents and the Association were provided an opportunity to review the directive. The Association met with the Assistant Deputy Minister and the Director, Education Operations and Development, ECE, to review the directive and suggest changes that we believed strengthened the directive on behalf of all members. The directive was finalized in March 2020. Important points from the directive include 50% for personal planning and 50% for collaborative work, a full STIP day should be equivalent to the number of instructional hours in a regular school day, NWTTA members will not be required to formally report on use of individual STIP time and the total STIP time that must be established may not be less than 52 hours. The STIP directive was updated on February 10, 2021 and [can be found here](#).

Remember, if you have any concerns about STIP or 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.

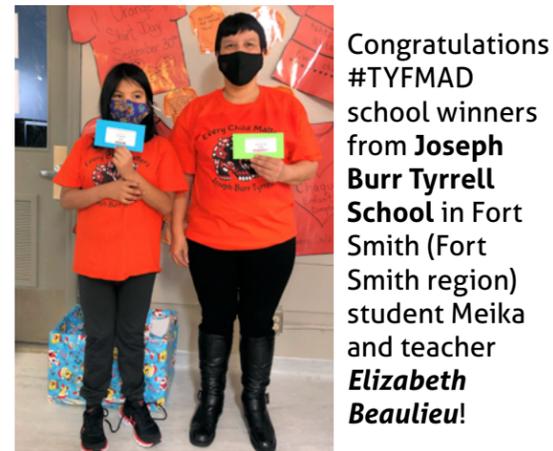


Thank You
for making a difference!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Chief Julius School** in Fort McPherson (Beaufort-Delta region) student Curtis and teacher **Josh Hansen!**



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Charles Tetcho School** in Sambaa K'e (Dehcho region) teacher **Jasna Finlay** and student Ts'ahlekea!



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Joseph Burr Tyrrell School** in Fort Smith (Fort Smith region) student Meika and teacher **Elizabeth Beaulieu!**



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **École William McDonald Middle School** in Yellowknife (YK1 region) teacher **Laura Bromley** and student Sadee!

Merci
d'avoir fait une différence!

Northern Lights

Meet **Shelley Watt**
from Fort Smith (Fort Smith region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I am a true East Coast gal who spent a large part of my career in Alberta. However, I was born and raised in Fredericton, NB. I went to St. Thomas University in Fredericton, NB, where I received my Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education Degrees.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

When I went to university, I had two loves, working with children and working with seniors. I was accepted into both programs - Education and Gerontology at the same time. Education won, and I accepted the Education program. I have no regrets; it was a rewarding career of teaching for 27 years in Alberta. The fondest years of my schooling were elementary, and I would attribute those experiences and teachers having a significant impact on my life path.

Q. What do you teach?

Over the course of my teaching career, I have taught everything from HeadStart programming, most of the elementary and Special Education grades in a high school setting. I currently am a part of the South Slave Divisional Education Council team as a Literacy/Program Coordinator.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I enjoyed most about teaching the students and how every day was a new day of learning and exploring. I loved watching their eyes and facial expressions as they were grasping something new. The questioning of why? How? and determination to find out more. Together we embraced the adventure of learning and growing.

Q. How do you engage your students?

To truly engage my students, it was important to get to know my students. Creating a community of trust, appreciation, and compassion in the classroom was vital. Active involvement in the daily plans and learning was hands-on and led with students understanding and having a clear purpose. They all were made to feel important and had a role and purpose in their learning journey.

Inspired by my Nana

Many inspirational educators surrounded my life, one being my Nana. She never was able to teach in a public school because they paid in those days with vegetables, and her father said they had enough on their farm. Maybe I wanted to fulfill her dream for her; she was very proud of my choice. It was a blessing to become a teacher, and I will remain a life long learner until the end!

TOP 5 CONCERNS

In October 2020, 13,750 teachers completed the CTF/FCE Teacher Mental Health Check-in survey. This is what teachers said:



LES 5 PLUS GRANDES INQUIÉTUDES

En octobre 2020, 13 750 enseignantes et enseignants ont répondu au Sondage éclair de la CTF/FCE sur la santé mentale du personnel enseignant. Voici un résumé de leurs réponses :

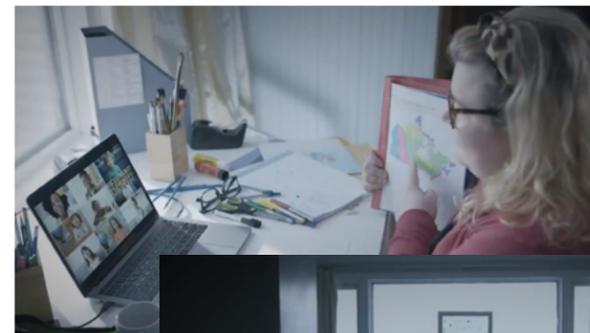


Teacher Mental Health and Well-Being

In October 2020, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) conducted a survey of teachers from across Canada on their mental health, which NWTTA members participated in. On the opposite page are English and French infographics of the survey results categorized into:

- Stress, Anxiety, Depression
- Workload and Work-Life Balance
- Mental and Emotional Exhaustion
- Physical Health
- Teacher Supports
- Recommendations

On January 28, 2021 as part of the #BellLetsTalk campaign which focuses on mental health, CTF released the [one-minute video at this link](#) (screen captures below) with the message "Teachers are not all right! Let's ensure that teachers struggling with mental health feel seen, accepted and supported."



Northern Lights

Rencontrer

Simon Markowski
de Yellowknife (région du CSFTNO)



Q. Où avez-vous grandi?
Chicoutimi, Québec. Une des plus belles régions de la province selon-moi.

Q. Qu'est-ce qui vous a décidé à devenir enseignant?

Durant mes études secondaires, je n'aimais pas beaucoup l'école. Toutefois, certains enseignant(e)s rendaient mes journées et mes périodes plus intéressantes et plus divertissantes. J'ai toujours aimé l'idée de devenir cet enseignant pour d'autres élèves comme moi qui ne sont pas toujours motivés par l'idée de passer la journée à l'école.

Q. Qu'est-ce que vous enseignez?

Un peu de tout, mais principalement les études sociales/nordiques au secondaire. J'occupe aussi le rôle non-officiel d'orienteur scolaire pour les élèves de 10e à 12e année.

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

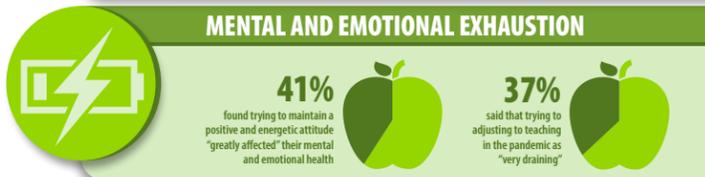
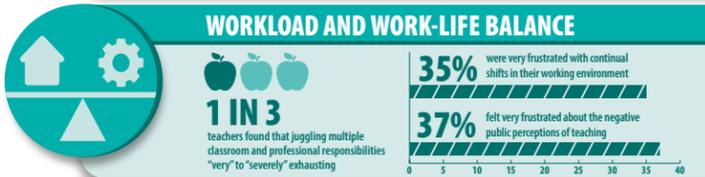
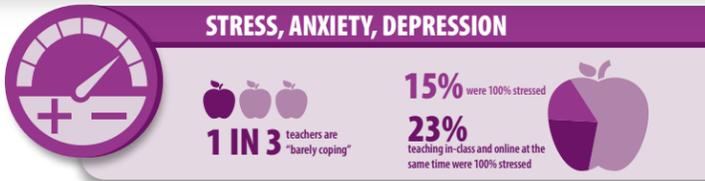
Voir les élèves en action lorsqu'ils travaillent sur des projets et des activités qui les motivent. Voir du matériel et des groupes de travail qui collaborent partout dans la classe. Bref, voir mes élèves engagé(e)s et en action.

Q. Comment engagez-vous vos étudiants?

J'essaie de les impliquer au maximum dans l'élaboration des projets et des activités en leur donnant beaucoup de liberté sur la tâche à accomplir. L'objectif à atteindre est généralement clairement établi, mais la façon de l'atteindre varie d'un élève à l'autre ou d'une équipe à l'autre.

Supporter les étudiants en fin de parcours

Depuis quelques années, je travaille en collaboration avec les élèves de 10e à 12e année afin de les guider vers la graduation et les aider à faire des choix éclairés pour leur vie post-secondaire. Cette partie de mon travail est très enrichissante car elle me permet de créer un lien différent que celui d'enseignant/élève avec ces jeunes adultes et leur famille.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase** funding and visibility for teacher and student mental health supports
- Develop** policies, procedures, and resources to support teachers' emotional and mental health
- Implement** CTF/FCE guidelines for a safe and sustainable return to publicly funded public schools
- Listen** to teachers' experiences, recognizing long-term mental health impacts for teachers and students
- Support** teachers now and in the long-term by making their mental health and well-being a priority

HOW TO ACCESS SUPPORT

Contact your CTF/FCE Member Organization to learn more about mental health and well-being supports and resources in your province and/or territory.

- Canadian Mental Health Association <https://bouncelback.cmha.ca/>
- Crisis Services Canada <https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/looking-for-local-resources-support/>
- Wellness Together Canada <http://ca.portal.gs/>

RECOMMANDATIONS

- Augmenter** le financement des services de soutien en santé mentale destinés au personnel enseignant et aux élèves, et les faire mieux connaître
- Élaborer** des politiques, des procédures et des ressources visant à soutenir la santé mentale et émotionnelle du personnel enseignant en temps de crise
- Faire appliquer** tous les protocoles de santé publique, y compris le port du masque, les mesures d'hygiène et de distanciation et la réduction de l'effectif des classes, et augmenter le personnel afin de faciliter leur application
- Écouter** les expériences des enseignantes et enseignants, et reconnaître les répercussions à long terme sur la santé mentale du personnel enseignant et des élèves
- Soutenir** les enseignantes et enseignants maintenant et à long terme en faisant que leur santé mentale et leur bien-être soient une priorité des différents ordres de gouvernement et de la société

Comment obtenir de l'aide

Communiquez avec votre organisation membre de la CTF/FCE pour connaître les ressources et les services de santé mentale et de bien-être offerts dans votre province ou territoire.

- Association canadienne pour la santé mentale <https://bouncelback.cmha.ca/fr/>
- Services de crises du Canada <https://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/fr/ressources-locales-et-soutien/>
- Espace mieux-être Canada <http://ca.portal.gs/>

What is “The Zone” and How Do You Achieve It

Rebecca Chen, Starling Minds Community Manager

Imagine this: You’ve been scribbling down ideas in a notebook for a mystery novel as ideas popped into your mind. You sit down at your desk. Today is the day to start stringing those thoughts together into something more coherent. As your hands hover above the keyboard and your fingers graze the keys, there is physical stillness. But your mind is far from still.

“Where do I start?”
“Are my ideas any good?”
“What should I make for dinner later?”
“Why can’t I think?!”

A moment later, a phrase forms. It’s not perfect, but it will do. All it takes is just a few more sentences, and suddenly, the words start to roll off your mind. Your fingers clack away at the keys as your characters develop and wander through the medieval world you create. Suddenly, the alarm you set rings and you realize you have many pages written down. It took a bit of time, but you made it into “The Zone”.

When was the last time you were in your zone, totally absorbed in the task at hand and distractions were nonexistent? What were you doing?

Hang onto these thoughts, we will revisit them later.

What is “The Zone” and why do we want to be in it?

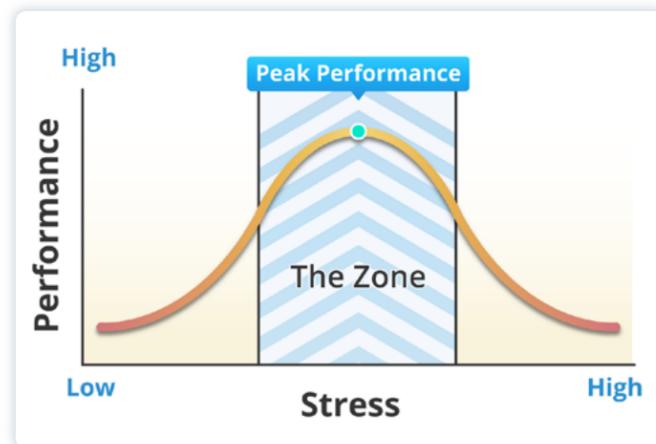
“The Zone” is a mental state where we can achieve our peak performance. Stress tends to cause a fight or flight response and increases the intensity of our emotions, which directly affects how we’re able to perform the task at hand. If we picture our ability to perform in relation to the level of stress we feel on a graph, we can see that we perform at our best when we’re in “The Zone”, which is the area around the peak of the curve.

While it would be great to be in the zone all the time, the reality is that our stress levels fluctuate.

In situations where our stress levels spike above our ability to manage it, our performance declines; we may become nervous or lose focus, which knocks us off our game. Alternatively, when our stress levels become too low, we may become bored and lose focus, resulting in careless mistakes.

Being in the zone by focusing our thoughts and managing our stress levels at any time is a valuable skill that can help us when the pressure is on. But prolonged levels of stress, like what we all experienced over the past year with COVID-19, can affect our ability to get into “The Zone”. Constant stress can drop our battery baseline level, which means that our energy and functioning levels are lower than normal, making it more difficult for us to get back into the zone. Making sure that our battery is charged often and as high as possible is extremely important.

Taking a break and recharging with things that give us energy and happiness will help increase our resilience to stress so that we can get back into the zone much easier and quicker. As our world opens up again and life slowly goes back to “normal”, take a moment to close your eyes, breathe, and picture what being in “The Zone” looks like for you. When was the last time you felt in the zone? Was it yesterday, last month, or last year? What sorts of things help you get into the zone?



What is Starling Minds?

Starling Minds is an online program designed to help us build the skills we need to improve our mental health and help you get into the Zone. The concepts are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which is a form of evidence-based treatment that helps us understand how our thoughts, behaviours, and physiology affect how we feel.

Please remember that the NWTTA and the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) provide you and your family members with a free mental therapy resource called Starling Minds™. Your answers and interactions are always anonymous. Learn and practice tools like emotional regulation, thought balancing, mood tracking, and goal setting.

How can I get started with the program?

Register at member.starlingminds.com with access code **NWTMEMBER**

Family members can register through the same page with access code **NWTFAMILY**

If you already have an account, login at member.starlingminds.com

Questions? Email Starling Support at members@starlingminds.com



How to get back into “The Zone” - on purpose

Work on curating a toolbox full of strategies that you can use to bring yourself back into the zone for the task at hand when the pressure is on.

Step 1: Recognize high pressure situations

The first thing to do is to take a step back and reflect on past situations where you faced increased pressure or intense emotions. What happened? Are there patterns or specific triggers? Do you experience any physical symptoms as a result of the stress?

Step 2: Find regulation techniques

Once you’ve identified a few situations, start brainstorming a few regulation techniques that can help reduce your fight or flight response. The techniques can be any change in behaviour or change in thought that help you stay in control and deal with things effectively. An example could be deep breathing exercises. It’s good to pick strategies that are more portable so you can draw on them in the moment. Having the ability to calm intense thoughts and emotions will help you think and react well to the situation at hand.

Step 3: Practice, practice, practice!

Similar to picking up any new skill or hobby, these regulation techniques are skills that take time and practice to improve. Start by practicing in low pressure situations to prepare yourself for high pressure situations. There are many tools and techniques that can help you figure out what the best way to get into the zone for YOU is.

Need some help getting into “The Zone”? Check out the Starling Minds platform to explore some regulation techniques and find strategies that help you get back into your zone.

Promising Practices for Respectful and Harassment Free School Communities

Sara McCrea, Assistant Executive Director

Teachers and other education staff are exposed to a variety of work stressors, including workload demands, students with problem behaviours, conflicting demands from peers, supervisors, students or parents and guardians. Conflicts and disagreements within the school community can and do exist and together members of the school community share the responsibility of creating and maintaining a positive learning and workplace environment. NWTTA member surveys, incident reports and phone calls from members show that members from all regions have experienced some form of disrespectful communication and/or harassment from a person in the school community.

Harassment is defined as: Unwanted conduct that can be reasonably considered to have the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity and can reasonably be considered to result in creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Harassment is an ongoing course of mean-spirited treatment which is known to be, or would be expected to be, unwelcome by a person or group. Harassment can include behaviours such as bullying, intimidation, humiliation, offensive jokes, and racial slurs or comments. It can also be unwanted physical contact from patting to pinching or punching, as well as showing sexually explicit images.

Members of the school communities include: students, teachers, principals, school staff, parents and families, Elders, education leaders, community leaders, volunteers, and community members.

The NWT Teachers' Association (NWTTA), NWT Superintendents Association (NWTSA) and Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) collaborated to develop guidelines to respond and take actions when these situations occur, which are found in [Promising Practices for Respectful and Harassment Free School Communities](#) on the ECE website. Furthermore, the following territorial legislation and policies are in place to support and protect the rights of members of the school community: NWT Human Rights Act, NWT Education Act, Safety Act and Regulations, GNWT Harassment

Free and Respectful Workplace Policy and NWT Territorial School Code of Conduct. Many education bodies also have their own specific policies and procedures.

Harassment and disrespectful conduct can be devastating on a teacher's wellness and career, and if supports are not in place to assist the teacher during these times often the teacher will end up leaving the school and community. The NWTTA, NWTSA and ECE are committed to working together to support and counsel teachers who have been targets of harassment, as well as, ensure work environments that are respectful and free from harassment.

If you found yourself a victim of harassment please use the following strategies:

- Bring all concerns of disrespectful behaviour and/or harassment forward to school administration, as soon as possible.
- Ensure that the NWTTA is also aware by contacting the NWTTA Central Office of all concerns of disrespectful behaviour and or harassment, as soon as possible.
- Document all instances of the disrespectful behaviour or harassment, including date, time, location and people involved, as well as all future interactions with the individual.
- Make copies of all questionable messages, web postings, information and other related material and data, including URLs.
- Do not engage or respond to any emails, online posts or comments in a social media forum; group; page; or chat that are disrespectful or harassing.
- If you feel safe, try to meet with the person to find out more about the conflict and see if it can be rectified. Stay calm, speak about the facts, use 'I' statements, rather than 'you' statements and listen more than you speak.
- If you feel unsafe, do not attempt to meet with the person alone, instead seek assistance to resolve the issue from your supervisor and the NWTTA Central Office.

Thank You
for making a difference!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **N.J. Macpherson School** in Yellowknife (YK1 region) student **Finya** and teacher **Maureen Hans!**



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Alexis Arrowmaker School** in Wekweeti (Tlicho region) student **Riley** and teacher **Cecilia Judas!**



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Lutselk K'e Dene School** in Lutselk'e (South Slave region) student **Leland** and teacher **Frank Ishwerwood!**



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Helen Kalvak School** in Ulukhaktok (Beaufort-Delta region) student **Mistina** and teacher **Josephine Jones!**



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Weledeh Catholic School** in Yellowknife (YCS region) teacher **Sharon Barlott** and student **Taliyah!**



Merci
d'avoir fait une différence!

Northern Lights

Meet
Thea Campbell
from Yellowknife (YCS region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in North Sydney, on Cape Breton Island.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I didn't make the decision to become a teacher until my fourth year at St. Francis Xavier University. I thought that I fell into it as a career, but in looking back, I have taught bagpipes to kids and adults since I was 15, so a career in education seemed to be a natural fit for me. Of course, the challenges of teaching music privately and in summer camps are very different from those presented to a classroom teacher, but the goal is always the same: to help the student reach their potential in any way I can.

Q. What do you teach?

I teach all of the high school social studies courses, and grade 9 English.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

Of course, the kids! Teaching can be so challenging, and even though I have been in the classroom for over 20 years, there are always new programs and strategies to implement, and COVID-19 has certainly pushed us in directions we never knew we could go. Also, I work as part of a staff that allows me to look forward to my job, and I know that if I need support or just someone to bounce ideas off, that it is available to me. The staff at École St. Patrick High School is like no other group of people I have ever worked with; their dedication to the betterment of students is outstanding.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I like to think that my sense of humour engages students, but maybe I'm the only one that finds me funny! As we know, educating in the 21st century is all about building relationships, and if we can do that, it makes the business of teaching and learning curriculum so much easier. It doesn't make it perfect, but it certainly can pave part of the way.

Understanding Perspectives Informs My Teaching

My first full-time teaching job was in a private school based on a religious doctrine that was not my own. It was the most valuable educational experience of my career, and one that I still think of often. To understand that there are different perspectives, and that people can see the same event very differently, was life changing for me. As a social studies teacher, I hope this informs my teaching every day.

Leading Literacy in the Dehcho

Pauline Gilmour, Dehcho Regional Literacy Coordinator

How do you address literacy rates in a region that is spread out over a large territory with remote schools in every corner? The Dehcho schools took on this task in the fall of 2020. Regional Literacy Coordinator, Pauline Gilmour, stated, "Our division wanted to enhance teacher capacity in every school to provide the best literacy programming for every student. Each school has designated a Literacy Lead teacher and we meet virtually for a Professional Learning Community every other week." The Associate Superintendent, Patrick Philips, and myself cannot be more pleased. Our literacy lead teachers are committed and dedicated professionals.

The task of the Literacy Lead Team is to ensure our literacy programming is of the highest quality. We began by reviewing our division-wide assessments and focused on improving the fidelity of our data collection. Teachers organized book rooms at every school. Most importantly, Literacy Lead teachers are completing extensive Literacy Intervention training and are currently supporting students as well as their colleagues in every Dehcho school.

With COVID, meeting in person for our Professional Learning Community was not an option. This forced us to be creative in finding ways to share our knowledge

and experiences and to learn together. We are all getting much more comfortable using technology to collaborate and support each other in our Professional Learning. It is exciting to see the results.



Terry Sapp's LLI students are so proud of their success as readers



Diana Gargan teaches the wisdom of the Elders through shared reading and shared writing

One of our Literacy Lead and Intervention teachers, Terry Sapp, who was born and raised in Fort Providence, recently graduated with a Bachelor of Education from the University of Victoria, and a certificate from the Languages Renewal Program. "Having this [Literacy Intervention training] ...I found it so rewarding. I really see a lot of progress. I see them so happy and enjoying reading. It has helped me as a parent, too. I have 3 students at the school here... 2 of them... I thought they were struggling and I was worried. Sitting here today, I don't think I need to be worried, because of all the things we are putting in place". Terry's colleague, Diana Gargan, also a Literacy Lead and intervention teacher at Deh Gáh school, says, "With

Literacy Intervention, I can see where the students need to improve... I find them to be very excited about reading."

The beginning of our literacy journey has been better than we could have imagined. Our team is looking forward to seeing the improvements in our students' literacy levels, because we know a solid foundation in literacy can provide our students with endless possibilities for their futures.

Catching Up Members' Life Events

Nikki (YK1 region) and Justin McCabe were happily married on November 19th, 2020. November 19th marked their 6th year together. They celebrated with a small ceremony in their Yellowknife home. All the best to the McCabes!



Thank You
for making a difference!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Deninu School** in Fort Resolution (South Slave region) student Leland and teacher **Gudrun Wellmann!**

Merci
d'avoir fait une différence!

Northern Lights

Meet

Sierra Daley
from Fort McPherson
(Beaufort-Delta region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Almonte, just outside of Ottawa, Ontario.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

One day in grade 8, my math teacher had my sister and I stay after school to pick up our math tests. I had a level 4+. My sister told my teacher and I that I shouldn't get a perfect mark because there's always something you can improve on. My math teacher changed my mark to a 4++ and said you can get perfect in math. After that day, I always wanted to be a math teacher.

Q. What do you teach?

I teach the Leveled Literacy Intervention program at Chief Julius School.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love teaching kids how to read and I also love teaching kids how to manage their strong emotions.

Q. How do you engage your students?

When I'm in the classroom, we do a lot of practicing to build up stamina and we celebrate little successes. I like to keep things busy and never stay on one thing for too long. Outside of the classroom, I'm very involved in my community. Getting to know the kids outside the classroom walls goes a long way with engagement in the classroom.

A Safe and Caring Place

When I first became a teacher, I thought every little thing in my classroom had to be perfect, from the cut out letters on my bulletin boards to my printing on the whiteboard. Over the years I've come to realize that those little things don't make or break a classroom and have little impact on student success. Now I know the best learning happens when a classroom has solid routines and structure, and is a safe and caring place for kids.

Professional Development Course Support

Adrien Amirault, Professional Development Coordinator

This is a reminder that all three bargaining groups have contractual benefits that allow for payment of university courses that members are interested in. Now more than ever universities are catering to online learning, which is very convenient for NWT teachers that are limited in their ability to travel. Here is a reminder of what is available to each bargaining group for course work.

YK1 has a fund that supports teachers to take courses. There is up to \$1500 for two courses (\$750/course) available through the school year, an additional amount of up to \$1500 for two courses (\$750/course) is available for summer studies. The details are available in the [YK1 PD Handbook](#) which is also available in the YK1 Member Area section of the NWTTA website. Note that courses have to be pre-approved, and there are specific deadlines for applications.

YCS has \$1600 available for university courses, and an additional \$1000 to support studies in religious education. YCS PD guidelines are found directly in the [collective agreement](#). Specifically, appendix A of the agreement has details about PD. Application for courses are made to the school-based PD committees. If the course is not a university course it must be pre-approved by the superintendent.

GNWT members have \$4000 through this school year for courses, and an additional \$2500 available for summer university courses. Note that the \$4000 is unique for this year, due to COVID-19 and that it may return to \$2500 next year. Applications for courses are made directly to the [PD Coordinator](#). Note that courses should be applied to before they begin using the [Distance Credit Course Form](#). For summer courses use the [Summer Credit Course Form](#). Usually, summer courses are for face-to-face studies, but if COVID restrictions at universities stay in place this summer, we will approve distance courses in the summer.

These benefits are amongst the most generous in the country, and we encourage members interested in continuing studies to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

As always, if you have questions about your Professional Development opportunities available, contact the NWTTA office for assistance.

Do you want to borrow library books, but don't have a Public Library in your community?

The Borrow by Mail Program is for YOU and it's FREE!

How does the Borrow by Mail Program work?

- Apply for your free NWT Public Library card through Public Library Services (PLS)
- Contact PLS and tell them what you want to borrow
- Receive your items in the mail for free!
- Use the free return shipping label to mail your items back to PLS
- Borrow more!

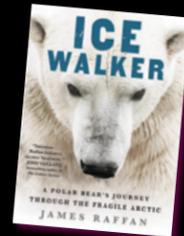
What items can I borrow? What can I access?

You can borrow

- Books
- DVD's
- Audio Books

You can access eResources

- Freegal
- TumbleBooks
- WorldBook Online
- Hoopla
- Flipster
- CELA
- NNELS
- Creativebug and more!



How do I find items?

Search the library online catalogue for the items you want www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/libraries/online-catalogue

You can also use the Library eResources for FREE www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/libraries/library-eresources

If you can't find what you are looking for, ask PLS for help

Contact NWT Public Library Services

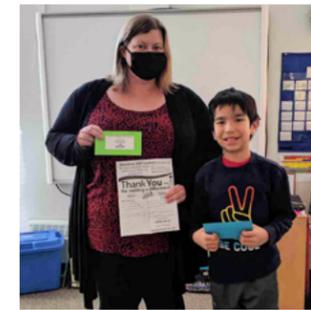
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Government of Northwest Territories

Thank You for making a difference!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Mildred Hall School** in Yellowknife (YK1 region) teacher **Elizabeth Brace** and student Rayden!



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Diamond Jenness Secondary School** in Hay River (South Slave region) student Ian and teacher **Philippe Goguen!**

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Chief T'Selehye School** in Fort Good Hope (Sahtu region) student Hendrick and teacher **Betty Barnaby!**



Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Chief Jimmy Bruneau School** in Behchoko (Tlcho region) teacher **Ashley Townsend** and student Halley!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **École St. Joseph School** in Yellowknife (YCS region) student Paul and teacher **Cory Taylor!**



Merci d'avoir fait une différence!

Northern Lights

Meet Rachell Simmons from Yellowknife (YK1 region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in a small mining community in Northwestern Ontario, halfway between Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie called Manitouwadge.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I think it was a natural extension of what I had been doing since I was in grade 7 though I never really thought much about making teaching a career at that juncture. I worked with and cared for children on both a voluntary basis and for employment until I graduated from high school. It wasn't until I was studying at the Université de Nice, in France, that I realized teaching was for me. I tutored a few university students and adults who lived in my apartment building in English and absolutely loved it. As a result of that positive experience, I decided to pursue an Education degree.

Q. What do you teach?

Presently, I am teaching grades 7 & 8 Post Intensive French and grade 1 - 8 Core French.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I enjoy seeing the pride and satisfaction displayed on my students' faces when they have completed a task - big or small, their ah-ha moments, and watching their learning growth from September to June.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I like to make learning meaningful for them by giving them choices and opportunities to share their story/interests. I show them that I care and will not give up on them until the meter stick moves forward.

Learning Alongside My Students

As an educator I have had so many opportunities to pursue some of my personal interests. One of the bonuses is that I don't have to wait for my free time on the weekend, winter or spring breaks to deepen my knowledge or strengthen my skills, I can practice throughout the year. Another bonus is that I, too, get to be the student, learning alongside or from my students. I become a living example, showing that one is never too old to learn.

Continuing to Grow the Gender & Sexuality Squad at Sir John Franklin High School

Kirstin Prescott (she/her pronouns),
YK1 Regional Vice-President and
GSS Staff Advisor, École Sir John
Franklin High School



How do you keep a club going during a pandemic, especially one like the Gender & Sexuality Squad (GSS) that is confidential by nature? Like in so many other areas of life recently, you adapt!

After schools closed in March 2020, the GSS held several meetings via Zoom. Sometimes it was a challenge for the students to find a private and quiet place to meet; one student sat in their family car for an hour while we chatted! In September, École Sir John Franklin High School (Sir John) students came back half days – either mornings or afternoons. We kept meeting using Zoom, and even had a few new members join us. In October/November, we were given permission to have meetings during lunch hour provided that masks were worn at all times and social distancing was maintained. This allowed morning and afternoon students to come together in person. Thankfully, we have been able to keep lunchtime meetings going every week.

As the GSS could not host large events in the school foyer as before, the Sir John newsletter became a more important communication tool for our group. Through the fall, I wrote pieces highlighting important events in the LGBTQ2S+ community, such

as National Coming Out Day and Transgender Day of Remembrance. For the February newsletter I wrote about the differences between the terms asexual and aromantic (not everyone wants a valentine!). I have made a series of posters advertising who we are and when we meet that are hung around the school, as well as “Consent Is” on Pride flags included in the foyer slide show.

The Gender & Sexuality Squad has an Instagram account, which I manage (follow us! @sjf_gss). Since schools closed, I have increased our presence and the number of posts and story shares on Instagram to stay connected with the students. To be clear – I had to learn to use Instagram in order to manage this for our group. It was a bit intimidating at first, but has been very useful because students can email me through this account.

For each method of communication, I have asked the students for their input on topics and content and on the timing of communications. It has evolved what we are presenting for public consumption, but it illustrates what is important to the students, and what they want the community at large to know about the LGBTQ2S+ community.

If you want to chat about starting or running a Gender and Sexuality Alliance in your school, email me at kirstin.prescott@yk1.nt.ca



LGBTQ2S+ Pride Flags and their meanings:



Northern Lights

Meet

Jillian Brown
from Norman Wells (Sahtu region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a town called Nanaimo on Vancouver Island in BC. Maybe you have had a Nanaimo Bar before.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

My mom was a teacher but she was never my teacher. I started my educational career working for Parks Canada sharing my knowledge of science and the natural environment with park visitors from all over the world. It wasn't until later in life that I moved to the traditional classroom setting. My first teaching position was a grade 3/4 class in Arctic Bay, Nunavut.

Q. What do you teach?

I'm a high school teacher and primarily teach science including Biology, Physics, and Chemistry. I also teach high school elective courses, for example this year I'm teaching World Geography 30 and just finished an Early Learning and Child Care course.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love working with a group of students that are engaged. Every day and class is different and teaching is never boring.

Q. How do you engage your students?

Engaging students is a daily goal. I try to make connections, draw on experiences and relate things to our community and current events. I often share stories and experiences from my past. If I can get a smile or even a laugh, I consider that to be a success.

Motivational Messages

Today with everything that is happening in the world I find myself drawn to quotes and motivational messages to keep me going. Here are a couple of teacher quotes that resonate with me. “Being a teacher is not what I do, it's who I am.” and “A great teacher never stops being a student”.

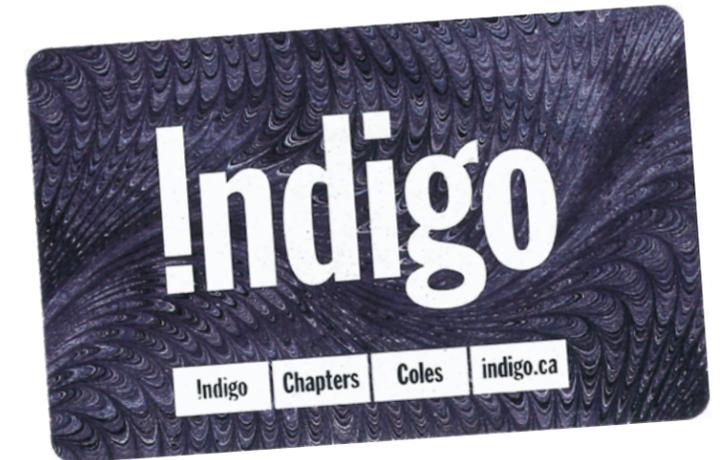
Newsletter Trivia

Send your answers to the trivia questions below to news@nwttta.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: **April 19, 2021**

Win a \$50 Chapters-Indigo Gift Card!



1. How many years has the *Thank You for Making a Difference* program run?
2. What is “The Zone”?
3. Who is included in *members of the school communities*?
4. Josephine Jones is a #TYFMAD school winner for what school?

Natalie Jedrzejko from East Three Elementary School (Beaufort-Delta region) is the winner of the December 2020 Newsletter Trivia.

Cover: Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **Mackenzie Mountain School** in Norman Wells (Sahtu region) student **Oakley** and teacher **Michelle Jolliffe!**



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Thank You for making a difference!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **East Three Elementary School** in Inuvik (Beaufort-Delta region) student Josiah and teacher **Maryssa Camacho!** Thank you LRO Christina Pierrot (right in photo) for coordinating the campaign at E3E!

Congratulations #TYFMAD school winners from **École Boréale** in Hay River (CSF region) student Bennett and teacher **Richard Letourneau!**

Merci
d'avoir fait une différence!

