



# NWTTA NEWS

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## Immersing Yourself in the Community

Congratulations **Allie McDonald**, recipient of the 2019 Aboriginal Sports Circle NWTTA Award! Allie received her award on November 9, 2019 in Yellowknife.

Alexandra (Allie) McDonald moved to Fort Smith from Ottawa in 2013 when she was hired to teach Core French at Paul W. Kaeser High School. Allie is the oldest of five children and, as her mother reports, is a natural born leader. From a young age, she was heavily involved in sports and extracurricular activities, which helped to shape her into an engaged community member.

Allie received a degree in English Literature and French from Concordia University in Montreal. After graduating from Concordia in 2011, Allie spent four months in Gulu, Uganda working for non-profit organizations and teaching English. After returning to Canada, she knew that teaching was her calling and returned to school to complete her Bachelor of Education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario.

From the time that Allie arrived in Fort Smith, it was, and continues to be evident that she had a passion for sports. She has coached everything from outdoor/indoor soccer to volleyball to track. She has really done it all! She worked hard to reinvigorate basketball in Fort Smith by starting the Steve Nash basketball program in 2015

for children aged six to eleven. This helped spark interest in the now popular sport and has demonstrated the importance of grassroots programs in small communities.

Allie didn't stop at sports in the school, she immersed herself in the community and quickly became a key organizer for the Sweetgrass and Winter Camp programs for students. She worked hard to get involved and was able to build relationships with community members that go far beyond the walls of her classroom. She values the importance of being on the land and strives to be inclusive of what cultural teachings have to offer in and outside of the classroom.



*Photo credit: Angela Gzowski*

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How you can get involved with the NWTTA

Fraser Oliver, President



The 2019-2020 school year is a very important year for the NWTTA. We have territorial wide elections for Central Executive where a new President and new Central Executive will be elected to lead the membership until June 2022.

There are many ways NWTTA members can get involved in the Association. One of the most import roles members can perform to become involved in the NWTTA is to participate in regular member meetings. Each region holds regular member meetings, some like Fort Smith and the two Yellowknife regions, can hold a face-to-face meeting with all their members. The other six regions hold their member meetings by conference call, where LROs and members call in and the meeting is conducted over the phone. Members can also be involved by simply filling out any surveys they receive from Central Office. It is important for members to share their concerns or issues with other members and their regional executive. Members can put their names forward to sit on any of the NWTTA's Committees. An application notice to forward your name to Central Office will be sent out in March 2020.

The more our membership is engaged, involved and included the stronger the Association. As well, this is also a negotiation year, where the NWTTA will be negotiating a new collective agreement with the GNWT and with the two Yellowknife school boards.

February 18, 2020 is the NWTTA's election day for Central Executive positions. On this day, you the membership, will select a new President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and Member-at-Large. This is my 37th year of being a teacher in the NWT and 36th year of being involved in serving the membership of the NWTTA. I started like many teachers do by being the school's Local Receiving Officer (LRO) and then getting involved in the Regional Executive. Sixteen years ago I was elected to Central Executive and now only have 7 months left serving you as President of the NWTTA. To serve the membership has been an honour and extremely rewarding. I would like to encourage all members to put their names forward and get involved in their Regional Executive or to run for a Central Executive position. You can find details and deadlines of how to run in this newsletter or visit the NWTTA website.

The NWTTA has already begun to prepare for collective agreement negotiations. In mid-October, a workshop for all three negotiation teams was held in Yellowknife. In November, surveys were sent to the membership to allow for all members to provide feedback and to

share their concerns and issues with their negotiation team. The negotiation teams, working with the NWTTA Executive Staff, will now be completing the work of taking all the membership input and developing a negotiation package to present to the GNWT or to the Yellowknife school boards. This work will be completed in January 2020 and negotiations will begin sometime in February or March of 2020.

I would like to thank all members who took the time to complete the survey. Your voice and opinions are important to the NWTTA.

As President of the NWTTA I place a priority on listening to our membership and responding with openness, honesty and concern. I am committed to engage, involve and include our membership in decisions that will impact the NWTTA's future and its members.

Fraser



Northern Lights

Meet Christina Silzer from Yellowknife (YCS region)



**Q. Where did you grow up?**  
I grew up in Regina, Saskatchewan.

**Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?**  
After I earned my Diploma in Parks and Recreation Technology and a BSc in Geography, I had the wonderful opportunity to work as a park naturalist in Saskatchewan, on Vancouver Island and as a researcher with Parks Canada. Then, after working in a government position with Saskatchewan Environment, I realized how much I enjoyed and missed working directly in a teaching capacity so much so that I decided to go back to university to complete my BEd. I have been thrilled with my choice of teaching ever since and continually look forward to every exciting opportunity teaching provides me here in the north!

**Q. What do you teach?**  
I teach grade 8 to 10 science, Experiential Science 10, 20, 30, Biology 20 and 30, Northern Studies and Wildlife.

**Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?**  
I enjoy that every day has something different and new to learn whether it is something in a topic I am teaching about, something the students bring to my class that day or something I learn about myself in the classes I teach. I love how dynamic teaching can be!

**Q. How do you engage your students?**  
I think that having really creative provocations drive enthusiasm for learning. I love starting with "power questions" or new discoveries in science or topics in the news relating to something we are learning about is the best way to engage my students. I also believe that working with students in your class doesn't mean you have to stay in the classroom. I see students are often more engaged when you take them outside or out into their community.

**Involve the people in our communities**  
I truly believe that "it takes a village to raise a child" and that this is reflected in teaching whenever we can involve the people in and around our own communities. In Yellowknife, I try to work with local Elders and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation knowledge keepers, the Prince of Wales Natural History Centre, the NT Geological Service, the City of Yellowknife, experts with Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Public Health Services. These community resources enrich the learning for all our students.



# Call for Nominations Central Executive 2020-2022

*Are you interested in becoming a leader with the NWTTA? Here's your chance!*

NWTTA Central Executive consists of five positions, four of which (President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and Member-at-Large) are elected for two-year terms, and the fifth, a Regional Presidents' Representative who is selected by Regional Presidents. The term of office for the current Central Executive ends June 30, 2020.

Nominations open December 1 for the 2020-2022 four Central Executive positions listed above.  
**Deadline for nominations to be received at Central Office is January 15, 2020 at 5:00 pm.**

All nominations must be moved and seconded by two NWTTA members.

The [Central Executive Nomination Form](#) can be found in the Forms section of the NWTTA website ([nwtta.nt.ca](http://nwtta.nt.ca)).

To be eligible for nomination to the office of the President, a member must have previous NWTTA Central and Regional Executive experience. There is no previous Central or Regional experience requirement for the positions of Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and Member-at-Large.

Duties of Central Executive Officers:

The **President** shall:

- call meetings of Central Executive and Central Council
- preside over the above mentioned meetings
- be a member ex-officio of all committees
- represent the Association officially
- be legal custodian of the property of the Association, but shall not have the power to acquire or dispose of Association property
- serve as Canadian Teachers' Federation Director
- the President's duties and responsibilities are to be as directed by Central Executive in accordance with its Bylaws and Policies

The **Vice President** shall:

- assume the duties of the President in the event of a vacancy in that position or the President's

- inability to perform his/her duties, or in his/her absence
- assist the President by acting for him/her when requested
- assist other Executive Officers as directed by Central Executive
- perform other duties as specified by Central Executive

The **Secretary-Treasurer** shall:

- ensure that the minutes of meetings of Central Executive are recorded
- ensure that minutes are typed, circulated, filed promptly after each meeting of Central Executive
- ensure that the newsletter is published and oversee the financial aspect of a newsletter and other publications
- exercise general financial control and supervision over the Association
- present a financial report and proposed budget to Central Council at AMCC or such other time as may be designated by Central Council
- cause to have the books audited at the end of the fiscal year
- perform other duties as specified by Central Executive

The **Member-at-Large** shall:

- serve as the representative of all members in all regions
- perform other duties as specified by Central Executive

Have questions?

Email them to [membership@nwtta.nt.ca](mailto:membership@nwtta.nt.ca)

## Central Executive 2020-2022

Term: July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022

Nomination deadline: January 15, 2020

Campaign material deadline: January 20, 2020

Voting Day: February 18, 2020



Photo: Bill Braden

*Are you interested in learning more about leadership in NWT education?*

## 2020 NWT Education Leadership Program (ELP)

### Phase I - Inuvik, NT | July 1 - July 12, 2020

The Educational Leadership Program (ELP) is a principal certification process comprised of a ten day Phase I course and a ten day Phase II course, plus two school-based practicum projects. The ELP provides key education information, and an opportunity to develop a clear understanding of school leadership in an NWT context. It is mandatory for NWT principals and recommended for teachers who may assume important leadership roles within NWT schools.

For more information please contact:

Colleen Eckert - [colleen\\_eckert@gov.nt.ca](mailto:colleen_eckert@gov.nt.ca) ph. 867.767.9353, Ext. 71262  
Christina Steen - [christina\\_steen@gov.nt.ca](mailto:christina_steen@gov.nt.ca) ph. 867.767.9353, Ext. 71263

Funding is available for GNWT NWTTA members through the GNWT-NWTTA PD Fund.  
For more information please contact: [pd@nwtta.nt.ca](mailto:pd@nwtta.nt.ca) or ph. 867.873.5759

Yellowknife Catholic School and Yellowknife District No. 1 NWTTA members may contact their respective Superintendents to inquire about possible funding to attend the NWT Education Leadership Program.



ELP 2019  
Phase II  
Thebacha Camp  
25km from Fort  
Smith

photo courtesy of  
Alexandra Rosilius





# Working for Our Members

## A Glimpse of What We Do

David Murphy, Executive Director

Since September we have been very busy at Central Office assisting members with concerns that they have brought to our attention. There are a few issues we are working through with members that have continued on since last year. These include WSCC claims, long term disability claims, maternity leave benefits, medical travel, salary recovery as a result of being over paid, removal of a teacher's teaching certificate, teacher evaluations and grievances which are now going to arbitration.

So far this year we have been working on many concerns brought to our attention by members. These include resignations, notice to attend meetings where the employer believes members behaviour to be inappropriate for the teaching profession, salary grid placement, members feeling harassed, workload, social media attacks on teachers, wellness, parental leave, hiring practices, larger than usual class size, safety at school, timetables, prep time, pension, classroom behaviour and most recently we have been asked about the hours of work for teachers.

### A Teachers Hours of Work – 15 minutes before and after class

Several principals and teachers have contacted us to inquire as to the length of a teacher's work day. There is a misconception by some people that a teacher's workday is 7.5 hours as many other employees. In reality a teacher's daily hours of work are not defined. There is an expectation as per the Education Act, Section 45, that teachers are prepared for their classes, complete report cards, develop education plans, inform students and parents of the student's progress, behaviour and attendance of the student, provide assistance and support to the principal and other members of the school staff and at the discretion of the principal attend the meetings, activities and exercises held in connection with the school program.

Our collective agreements and the education act do not define a teacher's hours of work. While there is reference to the minimum number of instructional hours in a year and a maximum number of instructional hours in a day, there is no mention of a number of hours a teacher works during the day. A teacher's daily hours of work has traditionally been set by the student's instructional time when a student is expected to report to class in the morning and when a student leaves at the end of the day. We agree that a teacher starts and ends the instructional

day with students. There often has been disagreement between the NWTTA and employers as to the time teachers should arrive at school before classes begin and how long a teacher should remain at school after classes end.

There have been instances over the last twenty years or more where a principal or a Divisional Education Authority has requested teachers to arrive and remain at school for periods longer than the traditional 15 minutes. In these instances, the NWTTA entered into discussions with the employers and eventually the 15 minutes before and after class that teachers were to report for duty was restored. When the late Blake Lyons was the Executive Director of the NWTTA this was an issue he had to address as well. In a letter from Blake to Superintendents in 1998 he reminded them that teachers should not have to report to duty earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of morning classes and no later than 15 minutes after the last class of the day.

Having said that the NWTTA understands that there are exceptions to this position. Teachers are to be professionally responsible to ensure they are prepared to teach their classes every day. As a minimum, teachers are to be at work 15 minutes prior to students arriving and remain for 15 minutes after students are dismissed. This does not, however, include meetings, events and activities that support the school program. The Education Act states the "Every teacher shall, at the direction of the principal attend meetings, activities and exercises held in connection with school programs". So, for example, staff meetings and parent meetings held in the morning and afternoon before and after the 15 minutes, teachers would be expected to attend if directed by the principal. But on a day when there are no such meetings, teachers should be able to arrive 15 minutes before classes start in the morning and leave 15 minutes after classes end in the afternoon.

In 2004 the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, issued a Directive on the Start and End Times for Teachers directing Divisional Education Councils and District Education Authorities to refrain from setting hours of work for teachers. The Minister pointed out in this letter that "there had 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 as teacher's work day in the collective agreement, nor should there be by

Divisional Education Councils or District Education Authorities."

This directive seemed to work well for the employers, principals and teachers. In 2018 this directive was revoked as it was deemed there was no authority under the Act for the Minister to provide direction regarding the start or end times for teachers. The 2004 directive from the Minister came about as there was much confusion over the start and end times for teachers. This directive cleared up this confusion and difficulty and has been used as a guideline ever since.

When the we became aware this directive was revoked, we immediately met with the employer to seek an understanding that the 15 minutes before and after class would still be followed. We explained to the employer we had concerns that schools could have different start and end times for staff and that there should be consistency. We believed that the teacher work week is long enough and to have it suddenly extended would certainly be an issue. We did ask that the ministerial directive be followed and there was agreement with the employer until such time a new agreement on the start and end times for teachers was developed.

I have had two teachers contact me this week to inquire about the start and end times for teachers. While I am not aware of the guideline not being followed, we will continue to monitor to see if we need to take any corrective action like we have taken in the past. If you are experiencing any concerns with your school day start and end times, I would appreciate hearing from you.

# Northern Lights

## Meet

**Brendan Callas**  
from Yellowknife (YK1 region)



### Q. Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in Yellowknife.

### Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

There are a few reasons that I ended up as a teacher. The first reason was all of the amazing teachers I had while going through Mildred Hall School and Sir John Franklin High School as a student myself. I had such a positive school experience thanks to some funny, kind, and engaging teachers. The second reason was that I always enjoyed working with children, whether it was coaching basketball or working at summer camps. Initially, I wanted to be a phys ed teacher. I spent two years working as a substitute teacher and EA before leaving to do my Bachelor of Education degree at Nipissing University in North Bay, ON. I really enjoyed being in the classroom and particularly enjoyed the younger, primary grades.

### Q. What do you teach?

Until last year, I had taught grades 3, 4, 5, and kindergarten at Range Lake North School. I now teach the Birchbark Discovery Centre (BBDC), which is housed in Mildred Hall School in Yellowknife. The BBDC is in its second year as a pilot project. It is a multi-grade classroom with 18 students in grades 1-5. The program focuses on student-led, inquiry-based learning. Students choose what topics they want to learn about and all subjects are integrated within these interests. Another focus of the BBDC is outdoor, nature-based learning and connecting our experiences with the community and environment in which we live.

### Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I enjoy many different aspects of the job. I appreciate the professional community of teachers that I work with and the comradery that comes with it. I enjoy working with students every day that are full of curiosity and excitement. I also enjoy learning along with my students and seeing the unique ways in which they approach a question or a problem.

### Q. How do you engage your students?

I want to empower my students to be the best they can be. I try to do this by giving students lots of choice and opportunities to be creative. I also try to create a classroom community that is built on kindness, inclusivity, and where students feel comfortable to take risks. I want to make our learning as authentic and meaningful as possible. To achieve this, I bring in many guest experts and get out of the classroom on field trips with the students regularly.

### It's important to be able to laugh at yourself

The very first thing I taught a student in a classroom as a substitute teacher was how to incorrectly spell 'hamster' in a morning journal entry. Unfortunately, I grew up thinking it was pronounced 'hampster' with a "p". I tell that story to my students to remind them that, even as adults, we all make mistakes and it's important to be able to laugh at yourself!



# About Starling Minds and Mental Fitness

Studies show that while **1 in 5** Canadians experience mental health challenges every year, only 1 in 3 actually seek treatment. Although there is increasing attention focused on mental health and wellbeing, there is still a lot of stigma and misunderstandings attached to the topic.

**Mental fitness** is a concept that has only emerged in the past few years. It was developed to help people understand that just as we can improve our physical health by exercising, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep, we can proactively improve our mental health and our abilities to manage stress and anxiety by strengthening our minds.

## How does it work?

Learning techniques that improve your mental fitness can be broken down into three skills:

1. Recognizing the patterns that create difficult emotions and negative moods.
2. Integrating techniques to regulate overwhelming emotions and thoughts as and when they arise.
3. Resolving the patterns that detract from your well-being by building new ones.

Part of strengthening your **mental fitness** is discovering strategies that are most effective for you. Starling Minds is an online program designed to help teachers improve their mental health. The concepts are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which is a form of evidence-based treatment that helps people understand how their thoughts, behaviours, and physiology affect how they feel.

Want to improve your mental fitness? Register here: <https://app.starlingminds.com/registration/nwt>

In order to sign up, you will need your NWTTA Member ID number which you can find on your NWTTA Membership Card.

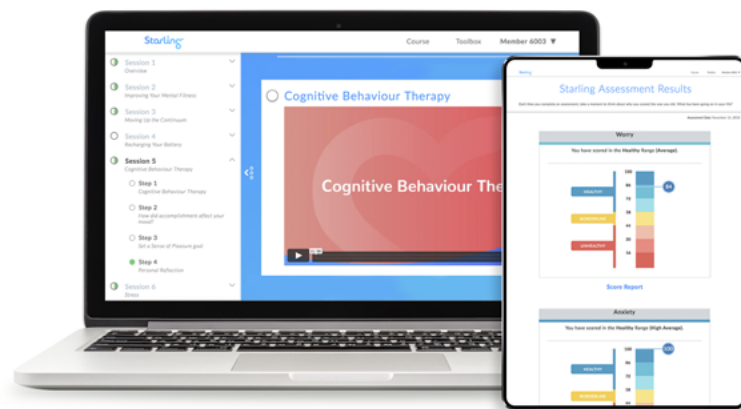
Already have an account? Log in here: <https://app.starlingminds.com>

Read more about mental fitness here: <https://www.starlingminds.com/resources/blogs/mental-fitness-explained-by-a-cbt-psychologist/>



The NWTTA, together with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment through NWT Education Renewal and Innovation are proud to support NWT educators and their family members with Starling Minds.

Starling is an online mental health and wellness toolkit that provides education and training to manage stress and prevent anxiety and depression. The Starling program was developed by Dr. Andrew Miki and is based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). Starling is Canadian, based out of Vancouver, is confidential and free for NWTTA members and their family members.



## Some comments from NWTTA members about their Starling Minds experiences:

*I am using the Starling program as a complement to other initiatives I have taken on to take care of myself. I need support when it comes to dealing with anxiety, depression, stress, and becoming more healthy again.*

—NWTTA Starling Member

*I'm a visual learner so I find the videos very helpful. I am enjoying the Starling program and am looking forward to using it more!*

—NWTTA Starling Member

*I like the concrete tools in Starling Minds, especially the strategic breathing and thought balancer!*

—NWTTA Starling Member



**Lucienne (Lucy) Pelletier**

January 3, 1951 - October 29, 2019

Lucy graduated from Teacher's College in New Brunswick with a Bachelor of Teaching Degree and subsequently was awarded a Bachelor of Education Degree from the University of New Brunswick.

She began her teaching career as a classroom teacher in Centerville, New Brunswick eventually moving to schools in Campobello Island and St. Stephen, New Brunswick.

In 1991 Lucy moved to Yellowknife and was employed by Yellowknife Education District No. 1 as a Classroom Assistant until her retirement in 2017.

While in Yellowknife Lucy taught piano for many years. Lucy was an avid supporter of arts and music.

Shortly after her retirement she moved to St. Stephen, New Brunswick to join her twin sister.

In her last few years in Yellowknife Lucy was diagnosed with cancer. This led to her death on October 29, 2019 passing quietly attended by her twin sister Gaby Pelletier.

She was predeceased by her parents Gerene and Roland Pelletier. Leaving behind her brother Rick Pelletier (Sheila), twin sister Gaby Pelletier and sister Francine Dennis (Kevin) as well as nieces, nephew, and six grandnieces.

Celebration of Life will be held in Yellowknife January 3, 2020, time and place to be announced later, Fredericton New Brunswick, November 9, 2019 at Patience Lane.

# Northern Lights

## Rencontrer

**Katrine Lavoie**  
de Hay River (région du CSFTNO)



### Q. Où avez-vous grandi?

Je suis née à Notre-Dame de Montauban, un petit village québécois dans la région de la Mauricie.

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

Pendant mes études, j'ai toujours été celle qui aidait mes confrères et consœurs de classe avec leurs devoirs. J'ai commencé mon parcours en administration, mais j'ai vite compris qu'il manquait ... les mathématiques! Encore à ce jour, la plus belle période de ma vie est mes cinq années à l'école secondaire. En mettant tout ça ensemble, l'enseignement était le meilleur choix pour moi.

### Q. Qu'est-ce que vous enseignez?

J'enseigne les mathématiques, les sciences, la chimie et la physique pour le cycle supérieur du secondaire. J'ai aussi une partie de tâche en tant qu'ESP pour le secondaire et, depuis deux ans, je suis la conseillère en orientation de mon école. Je suis bien occupée, mais j'adore la diversité de ma tâche.

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

Ce que je préfère, c'est le contact avec les jeunes. Leur spontanéité, leur énergie, leurs succès et leurs défis ont tout pour animer chacune de mes journées. Avec eux, je peux avoir de bonnes conversations et je sens que pour certains, je suis capable de faire une différence. Et finalement, rien n'égale le sentiment qui m'envahit lorsque des petites étoiles de compréhension s'allument dans les yeux de mes élèves.

### Q. Comment engagez-vous vos étudiants?

Afin de favoriser la réussite, je suis toujours disponible pour répondre aux questions de mes élèves. Parfois, je revois des notions avec des élèves sur l'heure du dîner ou après l'école. Sachant que je suis là pour eux, cela leur donne une bonne raison de vouloir s'engager et de mettre des efforts dans leur étude. À chaque année, je suis fière du nombre d'élèves qui participent aux périodes de récupération. Pour moi, c'est une manière de les garder engagés dans leur avenir.

### Les communautés nordiques sont où je me sens à ma place

Je dis toujours à mes élèves qu'il faut trouver un travail que l'on aime, mais qu'il est encore plus important de trouver où on aime le faire. J'ai travaillé dans différents milieux, mais les communautés nordiques sont où je me sens à ma place. La proximité avec les élèves, les familles et les membres de la communauté est ce qui enrichit l'éducation offerte aux élèves. C'est dans cette atmosphère de grande famille que je sens que je peux faire une différence. De plus, j'ai trouvé aux Territoires du Nord-Ouest le sentiment d'être à la maison.



# Are your students Canada's next upstanders?

**Being an upstander means  
defending human rights.**

Give students a chance to tell us how they're using their strengths to create change; they could be one of ten students who wins a trip to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights!

Use the Museum's free teacher-developed and tested resources with your students to encourage inquiry and action on rights-related issues.

Middle years students and teachers who use the resource and submit projects are eligible to win.

Take up the challenge in your classroom. We want to hear what upstanders are doing, so they can inspire other young Canadians to do the same.



Check out the **student-focused website**



Download the **teacher-developed** and tested **project-based learning unit plan**



Book a **virtual field trip** for your class, or **visit in person**



Enter the **Be Canada's Next Upstander challenge**



Learn more at [humanrights.ca/upstander](https://humanrights.ca/upstander)

CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS

Canada

## Beaufort-Delta Inservice & Social

Beaufort-Delta members gathered in Inuvik at the start of the year for inservice and social before heading off to start the school year.



## From the Archives

What were our members talking about in the past? In honour of past Executive Director Blake Lyons (obituary on page 14), below is a "Blake's Bark" article re-printed from an April 1986 NWTTA newsletter, then titled "Communicate".

### Rumours begin again

It is the time of the year when rumours are beginning about which members will be leaving this year. There are reports of a much greater turnover than we have experienced in the past three years. It seems a significant exodus may take place this summer.

You may recall four years ago the NWTTA began to place "stay in the North" articles in *Communicate*. We used a word of mouth campaign to convince members that their home and their future was in Canada's Arctic. There still is validity to this claim but it would certainly help if other interest groups would help us reinforce the message.

The recent experience we had at all three bargaining tables gave us the impression that the employers somewhat indifference as to whether the teachers they employ remained or left. The message wasn't the traditional "take it or leave it" but "take it or leave us". I will long remember the fact that GNWT elected executive unilaterally and semi-secretly gave themselves pay increases and then took the position that teachers should get no compensation increase over a two year period. This double standard approach to restraint was stretched to new limits of credibility with the first class airfare, etc. Their actions put into question not only the issue of restraint but the real interest of the government in providing funds for education in the NWT.

I was also disappointed with the less than sympathetic attitude displayed by both school boards. The general impression was that all three employers felt there were lots of unemployed teachers in Canada who could hardly wait to accept a teaching position in the NWT. It never seems to cross their minds that for every teacher in the NWT there are 100 teachers in southern Canada who don't want to teach in the NWT.

I feel better already. To all of you out there who are thinking of leaving the NWT because you are frustrated or hurt or disappointed or angry please take time out to do the following. Grab a few crayons, pens and some sheets of paper. Draw a picture of the person you dislike the most. Colour the picture any colour you like. Tape the picture to the wall. Now write a letter to that person, say dreadful things to them such as ... "you are dumber than a sackful of antlers," or any zinger that tends to catch your fancy. Finished? O.K. Here are the next steps in the exercise. Rip the picture and the letter into many small pieces. In the event you don't feel better after the exorcism, repeat the exercise until you are totally relieved or fast asleep.

The following day I would ask you to look at the calendar and count the number of days remaining before school ends. Now you are really feeling better.

If after all of this you are still thinking of leaving then all I can say is good bye, good luck and come back and see us sometime.

## Northern Lights

**Meet  
Amber Vance**  
from Fort Good Hope  
(Sahtu region)



**Q. Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in Napanee, Ontario.

**Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?**

I love kids. Ever since I was little I would practice teaching with my younger sisters and our stuffed animals. I had a lot of influential teachers who really helped to shape who I am today, I want to be able to do the same for my own students.

**Q. What do you teach?**

I have the pleasure of teaching both Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten.

**Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?**

My favourite part about teaching is watching students get excited about their own potential. When someone is able to write their name by themselves for the first time, when they build an airplane out of blocks while using a book to guide them, or when they learn to do up their own zippers!

**Q. How do you engage your students?**

Getting students excited about their learning is my number 1 goal. I really encourage students to become leaders in the classroom. I try to help them find their strengths and have them build relationships with their peers through these strengths.

**Helping students reach their goals**

When I was in elementary school I struggled academically. I loved school, I had big dreams and big ambitions but I felt like I wasn't smart enough. I had some amazing teacher and a very encouraging family that helped me find my own potential. I want to help students see that they are smart, capable and able to reach their goals too.



# NWT High School Pathways



Photo: Tessa Macintosh

## NWT High School Pathways

As the new NWT High School Pathways model is being developed and implemented, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is creating materials to help support educators and administrators. Stay tuned for updated material on ECE's website, new information and graphics that outline what the changes are and why they're happening, an implementation guide, and updated PowerSchool and CMAS processes.

The following new courses are being developed and are expected to be piloted and implemented in the coming school years.

Timeline	Under Development	Pilot	Implementation
2019-2020	<i>Career and Transition Planning 9 &amp; 10</i> <i>Digital Citizenship</i>		
2020-2021	<i>Career and Transition Planning 10 &amp; 20</i> <i>Healthy Relationships/Mental Health 10</i> <i>Financial Literacy 10, 20 &amp; 30</i> <i>Northern Studies 20</i>	<i>Career and Transition Planning 9</i> <i>Digital Citizenship</i>	
2021-2022	<i>Career and Transition Planning 20 &amp; 30</i> <i>Child and Adult Development 20</i> <i>Financial Literacy 20 &amp; 30</i> <i>Northern Studies 20</i>	<i>Career and Transition Planning 10</i> <i>Healthy Relationships/Mental Health 10</i> <i>Financial Literacy 10</i>	<i>Career and Transition Planning 9</i> <i>Digital Citizenship</i>
2022-2023	<i>Career and Transition Planning 30</i> <i>Financial Literacy 30</i>	<i>Career and Transition Planning 20</i> <i>Financial Literacy 20</i> <i>Child and Adult Development 20</i> <i>Northern Studies 20</i>	<i>Career and Transition Planning 10</i> <i>Healthy Relationships/Mental Health 10</i> <i>Financial Literacy 10</i>
2023-2024		<i>Career and Transition Planning 30</i> <i>Financial Literacy 30</i>	<i>Career and Transition Planning 20</i> <i>Financial Literacy 20</i> <i>Child and Adult Development 20</i> <i>Northern Studies 20</i>
2024-2025			<i>Career and Transition Planning 30</i> <i>Financial Literacy 30</i>

If you would like more information, please email [highschoolpathways@gov.nt.ca](mailto:highschoolpathways@gov.nt.ca).



# Jean Marie River Culture Camp

*Elissa Garrett, Principal, Louie Norwegian School (Dehcho region)*

On October 2 and 3, staff and students at Louie Norwegian School attended their annual fall culture camp. It was wonderful to gather with members of the community to share laughter and stories over delicious traditional food and other snacks. Community partnership and involvement make these opportunities possible by sharing resources, suggestions, and supplies. At Louie Norwegian School, we are lucky to be part of such a wonderful community with vibrant culture and a willingness to share knowledge and ideas.



# Northern Lights

**Meet**  
**Erin MacDonald**  
from Fort Smith (Fort Smith region)



**Q. Where did you grow up?**  
I have lived in Fort Smith my whole life, minus the years for university and traveling.

**Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?**  
How do you answer this question? There's so many people and opportunities in my life that I am grateful for; all have guided me into this profession. My parents have been teachers in the North since the 1970s and once my sister said her plan was to get her Education Degree, I decided to follow in her footsteps as well.

**Q. What do you teach?**  
I started my career as a junior high teacher, since then I think I have taught almost every subject and something in every grade. I am super proud of my 12 years teaching Junior High ELA. For the last four years I have been a full-time Foods Science teacher at Paul W. Kaeser High School, which I consider to be the greatest job in the world. I get to work with smaller groups of students in an environment that brings everyone joy.

**Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?**  
The students are what makes teaching worthwhile. I get the opportunity to teach students whose parents I graduated with; I get the chance to teach students whose parents I taught. When I walk around town I get to say "hi" to so many of our youth who will one day be leaders in the North. I get to see students grow up and find careers in the North; I am proud to be part of their education experience.

**Q. How do you engage your students?**  
I engage students by getting to know them. Learning their names, who they are, and where they're from is always a priority for me. I love the look on their faces when they learn I taught their cousin or sibling even though they are from a different community. By volunteering around town I am constantly building new relationships with my future students. Knowing their interests outside of school helps me build lessons tailored to them inside of school.

**If you can imagine it, it can happen**  
I have learned that if you can imagine it, it can happen through partnerships. Any time I have a vision, I have found our school and community to be super supportive. Ten years ago I wanted to revitalize the Sweetgrass Cultural trip and Parks Canada asked, *how can we help?* Four years ago I wanted to revitalize our Grade 9 Canoe Trip and On the Land Collaboration said, *we have funding*. Our local Bands along with ENR always welcome our ideas and are willing to lend their expertise to support our youth. These partnerships have taught me that anything is possible. I can't wait to start planning my next idea!



# Remembering Blake Lyons

Blake Lyons was Executive Director of the NWTTA from April 1980 to his retirement in 1999. Blake had significant impact on the NWTTA. He is missed.

## Blake Willard Lyons

February 6, 1941 -  
September 21, 2019

Blake Willard Lyons told his last joke September 21, 2019 in Salmon Arm, BC and was literally surrounded by his loving family.

When remembering Blake, people recall the deep and abiding love he shared with his wife of 52 years, Maureen. He met her at a frat house party, asked her to come upstairs with him to look at his etchings, and the rest is history. Their four children Pamela (Edd), Tess (Charles), Graeme and Mandy (Donny) have been blessed to witness that model of a great marriage. Grandchildren Nathan, Joel, Seb, Jasper, Sela, Carys, Alex and Daniel have been known to ask, "Yuk. Why do MoMo and Grandad always kiss?"

Born in Trail BC, Blake attended school - living in some place that apparently required him to walk five miles uphill to school and 5 more miles uphill back home. He graduated from Skeena High School in Terrace, and headed off to UBC. After meeting and marrying his dream bride Maureen, Blake moved the family to Edmonton and started working with the Alberta Civil Service Association, and later as a Labour Relations Consultant with the Alberta Hospital Association. In 1980, Blake packed up the wood paneled station wagon and took the family to Yellowknife, where he was Executive Director of the Northwest Territories Teachers

Association (NWTTA), a position he held until 1999. Blake and Maureen lived in Yellowknife for 35 years and were heavily involved in the community during that time: Blake played hockey with the Canarctic Dusters and the WIMPS (Weekend Improvement for Mediocre Players). He served with the NWT Mental Health Association (1983-87), was President of the NWT Seniors Society, was a director of the 1990 Arctic Winter Games and was, at that time, Yellowknife's longest serving city counsellor (1988-2006). Blake also served as a Board Member for Arctic Energy Alliance from 2000-2005. Blake received an Award of Honour from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) where he served on the Board of Directors, and served as president for the NWT Association of Municipalities. He was a Director of Denedeh Investments Inc. and the Northern Employee Benefits Services. Blake chaired the FCM Municipal/ Aboriginal Relations Committee. Blake volunteered with YK Daycare, YK Seniors' Society, NWT Seniors' Society and coached minor hockey. Yellowknife got to enjoy his impressive singing voice when he joined the 2000 Ptarmigan Ptheatrics production of The Music Man. He was also the Caribou Carnival Cop people loved to love.

Blake's Irish skin always needed a hat, and his "I'm a Tip Top Pop" and then his beloved Tilley travelled with him to Dubai, Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam, Singapore, China, the Philippines, the UK, Hawaii, Germany, France, Portugal, Italy,



Hong Kong, Slovenia, Holland... etc. Blake paired these hats with Edmonton Oilers or Wade Hamer Memorial jerseys and an endless selection of orange shirts that all missed at least one button. Blake travelled the world but was always most grateful that he had the opportunity to visit and serve communities across the Northwest Territories.

During those travels Blake picked up a lot of 'junque'. Despite Blake's love of holding garage sales, his family has no idea what to do with it. If you are in need of pins, keychains, spoons, computer carry cases and badges, please contact the family after an appropriate time has passed. This afternoon is fine.

As his wardrobe will attest, Blake

was not a slave to fashion, but he was old-fashioned. Doors were opened for ladies, he walked on the outside of the sidewalk, ladies were Miss and Mrs. He guarded confidences well, loved animals and walking outdoors, believed everyone had an interesting tale to share and always wanted to hear all sides of the story before giving an opinion.

Blake loved languages and tried to speak the local language in the many countries he visited. A classic that will always be remembered occurred in Croatia where he managed to cram four languages into one sentence, "Stoppen! Un Forche, garcon, por favor."

Blake loved a good joke, and will be remembered for his quick wit.

Following his death, there was a private cremation; following Blake's request his ashes are being kept in an empty peanut butter jar (Smooth).

The family asks that everyone raises a glass and tells a corny joke to someone who needs a smile. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the NWT SPCA. We thank the many people who took time to write or visit Blake over the past months. Special love to Blake's sister Sharon Lyons, Jon and Ghislaine Ardagh, Karen and Grant Pryznyk, buddy Bob Jeppesen and Eunice Burrill, Helen Worley, Wendy Winslow and Robert Patterson, Nathan and Colleen DeBock, Trevor Kasteel, Ed and Sarah de Walle and the too-numerous-to-name friends and family who poured love into Blake and our family.

We close with one of Blake's favourites:

"May the road rise up to meet you

May the wind always be at your back

May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields

And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand."

Blake ~ beloved husband, father and friend. We love you, we will miss you, we thank you for all you sacrificed and gave to us.

# Northern Lights

## Meet

### Vivian Harris

from Lutselk'e (South Slave region)



#### Q. Where did you grow up?

I was born and raised in a little community in Newfoundland and Labrador called Lethbridge.

#### Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

Even before I started school I wanted to be a teacher. I had a little student desk and chalkboard and I would set my toys up as my students and I would teach them. Initially I went in to Social Work at University but after two years I realized that my heart really was in teaching and made the switch. It helped that I had some amazing teachers throughout my life that helped foster my love of education.

#### Q. What do you teach?

Currently I'm the Principal at Lutsel K'e Dene School.

#### Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love getting to know the students and the relationships that are fostered through my time with them. That moment when a student grasps a concept that they may have found difficult is amazing. I learn something from each of the students and colleagues that I am fortunate to work with (past and present) and I wouldn't trade a single second for anything else.

#### Q. How do you engage your students?

The most important thing is to learn their interests, show them I care about them as individuals and want them to succeed. Every student should feel like they belong and know that they matter.

#### Students remember their teachers

When you're a teacher you aren't always sure if you make a difference in a student's life. You hope that you do but we rarely get that kind of feedback as educators. Then one day, out of the blue, a former student will reach out to you and remind you that you did have an impact. Just like we remember the teachers that made a difference in our lives, our students remember their teachers in that same way.



# Do you know your benefits?

Adrien Amirault, Assistant Executive Director

One of the frequent questions members often contact Central Office about is the benefits that they are entitled to. Benefits from our collective agreements are quite numerous but they are very specific. It is important to understand what you are (and are not) entitled to.

A key benefit is your health and dental coverage. Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS) teachers and Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1) members are covered by Manulife Insurance. Both employers have benefits booklets available. Though both are covered by Manulife the benefits are not the same for each bargaining group. It is important to understand your own benefits.

Here is a plan summary for YK1:

[https://nwttta.nt.ca/sites/default/files/manulife\\_booklet\\_-\\_nwttta\\_continuing.pdf](https://nwttta.nt.ca/sites/default/files/manulife_booklet_-_nwttta_continuing.pdf)

YCS teachers can read their summaries here:

[https://nwttta.nt.ca/sites/default/files/ycs\\_manulife\\_package.pdf](https://nwttta.nt.ca/sites/default/files/ycs_manulife_package.pdf)

In the GNWT bargaining group health benefits are provided by SunLife, and dental benefits by Green Shield. Again, there are specific benefits and restrictions unique to the GNWT plans. As always it is best to understand these as individuals. Summaries of

GNWT teacher health benefits are available here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/topics/benefit-plans/plans/health-care-plan.html>

GNWT Dental Plan summaries are available here:

[https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/green\\_shield\\_benefit\\_booklet\\_-\\_gnwt\\_employees.pdf](https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/green_shield_benefit_booklet_-_gnwt_employees.pdf)

Remember to check your collective agreement for other benefits unique to each bargaining group, benefits such as:

- Maternity and Parental Leave
- Medical travel
- Professional Development
- Northern Allowance/Housing Allowance
- Removal Benefits
- Sick, Special, and other leaves
- Early Resignation bonuses
- Various Allowances (travel, admin, language...)

Not all of our collective agreements have the same benefits, so it is always good to check your own agreement for clarification. As always, please call Central Office if we can be of assistance.

The NWTTA is a member of the [Canadian Teachers' Federation](#) (CTF), a national alliance of provincial and territorial member organizations that represent over 273,000 teachers across Canada.

At left is a photo taken at the CTF Board of Directors meeting November 19, 2020 in Ottawa.

CTF member organizations are: Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, British Columbia Teachers' Federation, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, New Brunswick Teachers' Federation, Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Nunavut Teachers' Association, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Ontario Teachers' Federation, Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Syndicat des enseignantes et enseignants du programme francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, The Alberta Teachers' Association, The Manitoba Teachers' Society, Yukon Teachers' Association

## CTF A National Alliance



# Chief Albert Wright School learns about Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve

Dean Bernard, Principal, Chief Albert Wright School (Sahtu region)

Chief Albert Wright School's (CAWS) Grade 7/8 Science class had a unique opportunity to put their learning into action with a partnership with **Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve** staff; **Johanna Robson** and **Sheena Parsons**. The Science 7 students spent class time with their teacher; **Alison Tomczynski**, developing their vocabulary and understanding of species, ecosystems, primary and secondary succession. Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve staff then came and took our students outside to see real life examples of these terms around the community of Tulita, in order to re-inforce student learning.



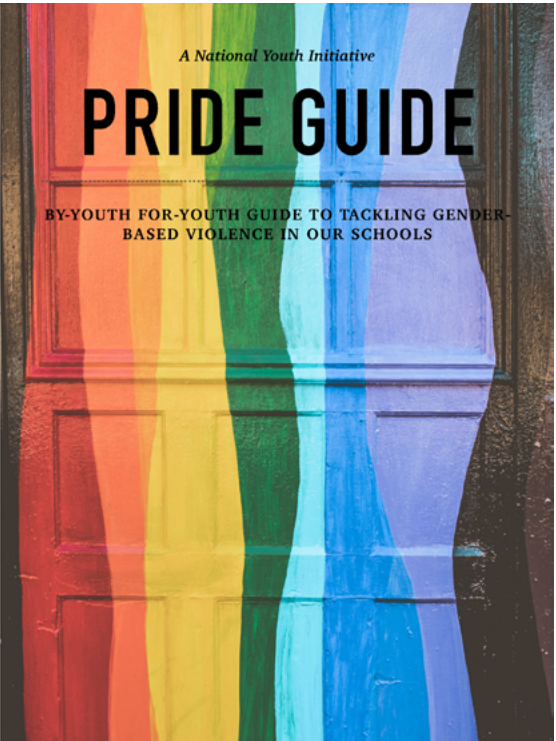
Sheena and Johanna gave CAWS students the opportunity to practice hard skills such as data collection and environmental monitoring. These are required skills within the scope of their Parks jobs and the students appreciated being able to tryout some practical skills. We at CAWS hope to see some of our students filling the positions with Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve one day in the future.

## Pride Guide By-Youth For-Youth

Kirstin Prescott, École Sir John Franklin High School (YK1 region)

In February and March 2019, students from École Sir John Franklin High School's Gender & Sexuality Squad (GSS) participated in video chats with 11 other schools from across Canada. In March, student representatives from each school travelled to Edmonton to create the Pride Guide. It is a by-youth for-youth guide to address gender-based violence in schools. This national document is finally complete, and is available to be shared far and wide! Send it to your teacher friends in other provinces. <https://nwttta.nt.ca/publications/newsletter>

It was such an honour to be chosen as one of only twelve schools from all across Canada to participate in this project. My students loved the weekly video chats with other schools. Travelling with the two boys from Sir John was amazing, and we had such a great time. It has taken our GSS a few years to get up and running, so to any schools out there who are trying, don't give up! The kids will come eventually. If anyone would like to contact me to discuss forming a gender and sexuality alliance in your own school, please do! [kirstin.prescott@yk1.nt.ca](mailto:kirstin.prescott@yk1.nt.ca)





# Status of Women Committee

Gwen Young, Chair, Status of Women Committee

The Status of Women Committee is mandated by Central Executive to promote Leadership for Women, negotiate on issues affecting female members and the development of a Women Symposium in conjunction with the 2021 Territorial Teachers' Conference.

## Negotiations

Each of the bargaining units are meeting to prepare for negotiations for 2020. The Status of Women Committee presented recommendations to the teams to outline key concerns by women members. They included:

- Parental/Maternity Leave
- Child Care Issues for members taking sick leave for children
- Hiring Practices
- Housing
- Violence in the Classroom
- PD Funds – leadership support for women
- Leave support for aging family members

As the bargaining teams plan for negotiations, the Committee will help with research and suggestions on the different recommendations.

## Leadership

In the NWT, women are entering into more leadership opportunities in education. More women are entering into Administration and PST positions to take on the leadership roles in their school communities.

The Committee will be exploring the creation of a program in partnership with ECE, for women to mentor and support each other in these leadership roles. The expertise of our current members will be of great value to those who have taken on new roles in our schools.

## NWTTA Women Symposium 2021

Creating the 2021 NWTTA Women's Symposium has begun! The Committee is in the early of stages of planning and attaining funding support. The symposium will give female members the opportunity to come together, discuss issues in education, and plan for change. The Canadian Teachers Federation, ECE, GNWT and community members will all be invited to sit at the table with our members and discuss issues facing them in education. Together, change will happen.

### 2019 – 2020

This school year is an exciting time at the NWTTA, as all three bargaining units enter into negotiations. The Status of Women Committee will work with the bargaining teams to ensure that the concerns of female members are being addressed. Plans for coming events such as the Women Symposium and NWT Territorial Teachers' Conference will help to move change forward and offer more to all members.

Thank you to the Committee members for their time and commitment. We will continue to work hard, as we support our negotiating teams, as they head to the bargaining table on behalf of all members.

### Committee members:

- Gwen Young – Chair, Central Executive Member
- Loralea Wark – YCS Region
- Wendy Tulk – Tlicho Region
- Coleen McDonald – retired YCS Region
- Val Gendron – Dehcho Region
- Lori Rutherford – South Slave Region
- Denise Broomfield – Dehcho Region
- Lisa Schachtschneider – BDEC Region
- Kim Walters – BDEC Region

# Northern Lights

Meet  
Kristen Morrison  
from Fort Simpson (Dehcho region)



### Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Sydney River located on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.

### Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I became a teacher because both of my parents were teachers. I remember them always speaking fondly of their students, and they were so proud to do their best to help them succeed and feel valued. I remember how passionate my mother was about working with students with special needs. I remember one of my father's co-worker mentioning how happy she was to work for him when he was Principal, because he would always ask, rather than tell, staff what to do.

### Q. What do you teach?

I currently teach grade 7, all subjects.

### Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

The thing I enjoy most about teaching is seeing students achieving in the classroom with a smile on their face. It is our job to make our classroom a comfortable place to be for all students. It is most rewarding when you see that students are happy while learning.

### Q. How do you engage your students?

To engage my students I talk to them and truly listen to their opinions. I learn an incredible amount from them daily. I prefer working with my students to figure out how each student performs best. I don't see myself as a boss and them as listeners. I believe a two-way communication system must be valued in order to truly have an engaging classroom.

### With responsibility comes satisfaction

Being a teacher, specifically in a small town, requires positive connections with the community. Fort Simpson has a population of 1200 people, and bears the slogan "It takes a community to raise a child." For the past fourteen years living in Fort Simpson I have tried to do my part to keep sport programs available for the youth, to honour the principles that this slogan was built upon. As an adult, you realize the most important thing about sports are the lessons you learn along the way. It is very important to me to give the youth a chance to build relationships and character through sport, which always permeates into their commitment in the classroom and throughout other areas of their lives. If I could make a wish for the North, it would be for more people to take the time to volunteer in their communities. Anyone looking to make a difference in their communities can contact their local rec centers, friendship centers, or schools. We can all do our part to help bring smiles to the faces of the youth in our communities.

# Newsletter Trivia

Send your answers to the trivia questions below to news@nwttanw.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 3, 2020



## Win a \$50 Starbucks Gift Card!

1. When is the nomination deadline for 2020-2022 Central Executive positions?
2. In what year was the 2004 Ministerial directive regarding Start and End Times for Teachers revoked?
3. Name two members of the Status of Women Committee.
4. Where is the Birchbark Discovery Centre (BBDC) housed?

Lora Sinclair from Joseph Burr Tyrrell School in Fort Smith (Fort Smith region) won the September 2019 Newsletter Trivia!

Newsletter Cover Photo: Louie Norwegian School (Dehcho region) Principal Elissa Garrett and teacher Geoff Cook overlooking Jean Marie River.



# 2018-2020 Central Executive

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### OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Thursday: 8:30 am – 5:00 pm

Friday: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

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Government of  
Northwest Territories

## Message for NWT Educators

from Minister R.J. Simpson

An educator is one of the most important people in a young person's life. They guide, teach, advise and play a key role in a student's academic, social and physical development. There is no doubt that student success can be attributed to the support and mentorship that teachers bring into their classrooms.

There is significant work ahead of us over the next four years, with a focus on improving student academic achievement and wellness. I hope to meet many of you as I familiarize myself with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and with the many key partners such as education bodies. As we focus on improving student outcomes, I know that the Department will be learning from all of you on how best to collaborate and put these practices in place for the greatest success.

No one can effect change on their own. I look forward to working with the NWTTA, community governments, education leaders and bodies and communities. Together we can create positive and stimulating learning environments for our children and youth and opportunities that further NWT educators' learning, wellness and professional development.

Have a wonderful and safe holiday season.



Honourable R.J. Simpson  
Minister of Education, Culture and  
Employment

