



NWTTA NEWS

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New Executive Director Adrien Amirault

Effective January 1, 2017, Adrien Amirault is now Executive Director of the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association. Congratulations, Adrien!

Adrien was hired as Assistant Executive Director in August 2012 for smooth succession planning as outgoing Executive Director Dave Roebuck approached his planned retirement in June 2017.

For the past four years, Dave and Adrien have worked alongside each other gradually transferring the Executive Director responsibilities to Adrien.

Prior to Adrien joining the NWTTA in 2012, he had 27 years of experience as an educator, 12 of which were in administration. In addition, he was an active member of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union (NSTU) in a number of roles including Vice President of Communications at the local level and provincial Insurance Trustee, supporting NSTU's 20,000 active and retired members with their health, insurance and wellness benefits.

Passion, commitment, strong work ethic, desire to serve and support members, and a proven track record of building relationships and teamwork are a few of Adrien's qualities.

Adrien and his wife Carol, a Registered Nurse currently teaching at Aurora College, fell in love with the North during a 2-year leave of absence from Nova Scotia in 2001 when he worked at Yellowknife Education District No. 1 (YK1) as a teacher and then school administrator. The Amiraults always knew they wanted to return to the North, and the NWTTA is the benefit of that return. Adrien and Carol have three children: one son, Jean-Luc in high school at YCS, another son, Marcel in university in Nova Scotia, and a daughter Andrée who is a teacher at YK1 in Dettah.

Read more from Adrien inside this newsletter.



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Increasing Teacher Wellness and Increasing Student Achievement

Fraser Oliver, President

Over the past decade, a few key expressions are being used more and more by our members: "Work-life balance", "Teacher Wellness", "Quality of Life Away From School", and "Quality Time with family". These expressions are being used more as the workload for teachers increases and it feels that nothing is being taken "off the pile".

In recent years the NWTTA and the GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment have conducted two workload studies to research the amount of time teachers are spending both in class teaching and completing their professional duties. These professional duties would include preparing lessons, marking and assessing student work, meeting parents and completing report cards just to name a few. When these two studies were completed they found that teachers in the NWT are working on average 52 hours per week. When compared to public servants in the GNWT who work on average 37.5 hours per week, teachers worked the equivalent of two extra days per week. (See chart on pages 14-15) This workload is not reasonable or healthy for our members!

I believe that we have taken a major step forward in helping to address the wellness/workload concerns our members are voicing. In our recently ratified collective agreements, the NWTTA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to Strength Teacher Instructional Practices. Implementing this pilot program could see up to 100 hours per year redirected away from instructional time and replaced with time for teachers to complete professional duties and collaborative meet during the traditional school day.

The main goal of this pilot program is to address two major concerns in education in the NWT:

1) **Increase Student Achievement** by establishing collaborative professional learning opportunities in each school.

2) **Increase Teacher Wellness** by establishing time during the work day for teachers to plan lessons, complete report cards, contact parents as well as many other duties that are often completed during evening or weekends.

Over the past few weeks, I have been meeting with NWTTA members, media and the public explaining the positive impact on education this initiative will have. I am confident that over the next few years we will have happier members and increases to student achievement will occur across the NWT.



Central Office Changes Continuity of Support

Adrien Amirault, Executive Director

I am writing this message to members in my early days as your new Executive Director. It is important to note that Dave Roebuck and I will continue to support members much like we have over the past four years. The biggest difference will be Dave's availability as he transitions to part time work over the next six months. But for the most part, you will get one of us on the phone when you need us.

Some of our in-office responsibilities have changed, and to go along with some increased travel requirements on my part, Dave will still be in the office to cover member concerns when I am away (an example of this is the need to attend Canadian Teacher Federation board of directors meetings).

It is the intention of the NWTTA to hire a replacement for my position to start in September 2017. Recruiting for the position to start in early spring.

We were successful in ratifying two collective agreements last year, and as many of you now know the Yellowknife Catholic Schools (YCS) membership rejected the agreement that was brought to them in December 2016. This is always a possible outcome in relation to a negotiation, and is never a bad thing when the membership votes one way or another. Over the last few weeks, members of YCS elected a new negotiating team, surveyed the membership, and made plans to get back to the table with the employer. In the meantime life goes on as normal as the previous contract continues to be in force until a new agreement can be reached. We wish the new negotiating team success in trying to reach an agreeable new collective agreement.

Finally there has been a great deal of progress in meetings regarding the MOU from the GNWT agreement regarding the Strengthening of Teacher Instructional Practice. I encourage all members to be aware of how it is affecting your specific school, and to note how your timetable may be different next year.

When you receive this newsletter we will be into February and looking forward to NWT Education Week, and celebrating the Thank You for Making a Difference campaign. We look forward to the Grand Finale to be celebrated in Lutselk'e this year. It is the first time we have done so in a small community, but a practice we hope to continue.

Northern Lights

Meet Lorne Guy from Inuvik (Beaufort-Delta region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

Fort Kent, Maine USA. It is a small town on the New Brunswick border.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

First and foremost, I enjoyed going to school as a youth and liked the schedule of the day. Bells made it easy for me to know where and when to be. I later developed a love for working with youth through coaching. My university basketball coach organized clinics for the local youth on Saturday mornings. I really enjoyed it. Teaching was a natural fit.

Q. What do you teach?

I handle the Vice Principal duties at East Three Secondary School. I currently coordinate both East 3 schools' Culture Based Education and On the Land Programming. I have also taught math, science, northern studies and computer courses.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I enjoy it when students grasp a difficult concept and apply the knowledge. I also like creating different and unique projects for students. If youth are given the resources and broad parameters to complete assessments, you can see their creativity blossom.

Q. How do you engage your students?

Any chance I get I like to combine curriculums. In math for instance, it is easy to incorporate a cooking lesson if you are teaching fractions. You can do a volume and area unit along with a carpentry project. The more students can see the practical side of learning, the more success they will have.

Meeting Many Fantastic Individuals

The teaching highs can be amazing and the lows can be a time of self reflection. I have been very fortunate to meet so many fantastic individuals along the way.....students, staff, parents, board personnel, community members, and coaches etc. They have all made my choice in profession very gratifying.



MENTAL ILLNESS AFFECTS THE ENTIRE FAMILY. STARLING IS HERE TO SUPPORT YOURS.

When a family member struggles with mental health issues, it affects all of your loved ones. As a member of the Northwest Teachers' Association, you can now support your immediate family members by referring them to the Starling program.

Referrals allow family members create their own personal account and access the entire Starling program for free, as a part of the NWT Education Renewal Initiative.

Starling is and will always be 100% confidential.

The Northwest Territories Teachers' Association together with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, through the NWT Education Renewal Initiative, are proud to support the Starling Program for NWT educators. Starling has a successful track record of giving teachers the tools they need to increase their productivity and resilience to stress.

Sign up at starlingminds.com to refer a family member.

Read our blog at starlingminds.com/blog

Follow us on  



Labour Relations Advice Resignation Deadlines

Dave Roebuck, Labour Relations Advisor

As mentioned by Adrien in his Executive Director's newsletter article, I will be working part-time as the Labour Relations Advisor. I will be working full days on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and a half-day on Thursdays. I will also fill in for Adrien when he is on duty travel for the Association. I will be retiring on June 15, 2017.

Members are reminded that if they are contemplating resigning their position at the end of the school year there are a number of very important steps to keep in mind

The Education Act states in Section 53 (2) "Notice of Termination of a teacher's contract of employment at the end of the school year shall be delivered by one party to the other, or sent by registered mail, at least sixty (60) days before the day set as the closing day of the school year in which the teacher is employed."

This means you count back to full calendar days from your last day of duty to see what the deadline is for sending in your resignation letter. For example, if your final day of duty is June 29, 2017 then your resignation is due on April 30, 2017.

If you miss your resignation deadline...

- **GNWT members:** Your resignation may be accepted with prejudice which means you would be denied your removal benefit...a costly penalty. But that is all it means, you do not get a black mark against your name or a smear on your career in your service in the NWT.
- **YK1 members:** You would not be eligible for removal benefits and if you resign before completion of two (2) years of employment, you would have to repay 50% of your relocation allowance into Yellowknife.
- **YCS members:** Completion of two (2) years of employment makes you eligible for the removal benefit. If a member leaves before two (2) years is completed, you would be required to repay your relocation allowance on a pro-rata basis.

So, if contemplating leaving at the end of this academic year, be mindful of the deadline for resignations.

And just so you don't feel this notice is all doom and gloom, the various employers have early resignation bonuses for members. This gives you a financial incentive to let the Employer know early for recruitment purposes. You may as well take the cash if you know you will be leaving!

Here are the various incentives:

GNWT:

- Please see Article 18
- 90 days notice results in a \$300 early resignation bonus
- 120 days notice results in a \$500 early resignation bonus
- term teachers are not entitled to the early resignation bonuses

YK1:

- Please see Article 10.04
- Notice given by February 15 results in a \$500 early resignation bonus
- Notice given by January 15 results in a \$1000 early resignation bonus
- you must have a continuing contract to access the early resignation bonuses

YCS:

- Policy for YCS
- Notice given by March 1 results in a \$500 early resignation bonus
- Notice given by April 1 results in a \$300 early resignation bonus
- term teachers are not entitled to an early resignation bonus

Please check your collective agreement article for further information. If you have any questions; please call the office for any help needed.

Status of Women Committee

On mental health through a gender lense

Francine Filion, Director of Communcations of the Canadian Teachers' Federation



The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) describes violence against women and children as a major mental health issue which affects all of society. It further adds that "the societal impact encompasses the need and care for victims at any time throughout their lives".

While not all mental health challenges can be linked to violence, people who have witnessed violence or have been targeted by violence are more apt to suffer from mental health challenges later. The Canadian Women's Foundation indicates that while both men and women experience violence, statistics show that women do experience higher rates. The Foundation also states that half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. These are our girls and young women.

Every day, teachers welcome students from all walks of life, including many who have been psychologically scarred by domestic or other forms of violence as well as others who are new to Canada after fleeing their war-torn countries, into their classrooms.

The Foundation also states that half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16. These are our girls and young women.

With Statistics Canada estimating a student population of 5,032,183 in our K-12 classes, imagine the millions of daily interactions between students, and between students and teachers that are peaceful and ... underreported in the media! While Canadian teachers will tell you our publicly funded public schools are relatively safe, they also believe we should pay attention to ensuring our schools are among the safest and most caring in the world.

One form of insidious violence that impacts children and youth is the all too often negative media portrayal of women and girls as sexual objects that incites violence, rape, and degradation. This depiction not only harms the way girls and young women see themselves but can also influence boys and young men in their relationships with women and girls. The cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada are appalling examples of racialized and sexualized violence that are now being addressed through a national inquiry.

A growing concern in schools is student violence against teachers. This concern was expressed at the recent Canadian Forum on Public Education held by CTF last July. Member organizations say an increasing number of their teacher members fear they will be the next victims of threats, intimidation, and violence at the hands of students.

Often times, students perpetrating these acts are victims of abuse themselves, trapped in the vicious cycle of violence. Clearly, these young people along with others require timely professional mental health support — support that is often elusive in schools, according to a 2011 CTF teacher survey (PDF, 1.3 MB).

In addition to not having professional support or training themselves in this field, teachers are working against a backdrop of austerity measures in education that has diminished their teaching resources, cut school budgets and staff positions, and increased their class sizes. The end result: less time for educators to devote to their students. This concern was raised by 95% of 8,000 teachers surveyed by CTF in 2014 who said they had felt stressed for not finding the time to meet the educational needs of their students.

All of these factors mentioned earlier take a toll on the mental well-being of teachers, and that can impact learning. A 2016 University of British Columbia study shows a possible link between teacher burnout and student stress levels. The question begs, which comes first: the chicken or the egg?

Domestic violence

Another issue that has devastating effects on the mental health of women and children is domestic violence (DV).

The 2014 National Survey on Domestic Violence at Work conducted by the University of Western Ontario in cooperation with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) showed one in three workers having experienced domestic violence, and for many the violence follows them to work.

Since the majority of teachers in Canada are women*, it stands to reason they too have been affected by domestic violence at some point in their lives. This is why CTF is supporting the CLC's development of the DV@Work initiative in terms of financial and human support.

On other fronts, the adoption of policy is also critical in moving forward. One of the resolutions adopted at the CTF Annual General Meeting in July 2016 was inspired by a CTF Member organization, the Yukon Teachers' Association, which is the first union in Canada to negotiate a special

leave for members who have been victims of domestic violence.

This victory has been praised widely by the labour movement and cited as an example to follow in collective bargaining. But our work is far from being over. What follows is a general overview of the topics of the resolutions (through a gender lens) that were adopted at the 2016 AGM:

- Support for the national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (follow-up to the 2014 CTF petition and news release);
- Call for a National Children and Youth Commissioner;
- Mental health strategies, services, treatments for children, youth and women based on scientific research, sensitive to race, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, etc.;
- Mental health treatments for women based on social determinants such as poverty, housing, stigma and past experiences of violence and not just on the biomedical model (focused on biological and genetic factors of mental health);
- Better workplace violence prevention and protection legislation for teachers;
- A national action plan to end violence against women;
- Protection of teachers against all forms of workplace violence including by students; and
- Mental health services, treatments and supports for all Canadians who require them, under provincial and territorial health insurance.

In closing, the CTF will continue its work in promoting safe and caring schools here in Canada and abroad. Just recently, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative cited CTF's "Teachers' Action for Girls" initiative in cooperation with the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) as an example of the critical role of teachers and their organizations as leaders in education change, including girls' education to ending school-related gender-based violence. We were honoured by this recognition and also congratulate UNATU for their leadership in this area.

While we can't change everything in one day, we can take steps today that can help to end the cycle of violence in society in the future. Every step counts.

*According to Statistics Canada, 84% of all elementary school and kindergarten teachers and 59% of all secondary school teachers in Canada are women.

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Northern Lights

Meet Nicole Denomy
from Fort Good Hope (Sahtu region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

London, Ontario.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I have always wanted to be a teacher and I feel very grateful about that. Teaching is so purposeful and allows you the opportunity to directly make an impact whether big or small every day. I find this to be even more true when teaching in a small community where educators wear many hats-nurturer, role model, parental figure, coach and so on.

Q. What do you teach?

I am currently teaching Grade 1 and 2 as well as Literacy intervention at Chief T'Seleheye School in Fort Good Hope.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love creating positive relationships with students both in the classroom and through extra-curricular, especially the students who are reluctant at first! It is so rewarding to make a connection with a student who is struggling, acting out or pushing people away. I like to make it a mission to find the one thing that will allow me to gain a respectful relationship with the student so that we can move forward positively toward their success.

Q. How do you engage your students?

When you are teaching elementary it is so important to have times when you laugh at yourself, sing, dance around let the students see the fun side of you! Sometimes I show up with oversized glasses, break out into dance or only respond to kids through song- they can't believe an adult is acting so silly!!

Classroom Engagement Through Extracurricular

Some of my happiest experiences have been teaching dance and drama after school. I have been able to watch students gain confidence and self-esteem, become leaders, and most importantly experience success and accomplishment! It has also allowed me earn more respect from the students who I have not personally taught, and has given me a forum to encourage better classroom attendance, performance and behaviors from my dancers if necessary. I have watched students who were struggling in school make huge turn-arounds because of dance, basketball, or other after school activities! In a small community extra-curriculars provide opportunities and exposure for students that could make all the difference for their futures!

Photo Contest

2017-2018 Membership Card Background Image

Have you taken a beautiful landscape photo in the Northwest Territories? Please enter the photo in our photo contest for the background image of next year's NWTTA Membership Card!

The Public Relations Committee will select their favourite three photos from those submitted, and present them behind the membership card information template as an online vote for all current members to choose what image will be used for the 2017-2018 membership card background.

The winning photographer will receive a \$100 prize as well as photo credit on the back of all

2017-2018 membership cards. Your image must be provided as a high quality graphic attachment via email to news@nwtta.nt.ca by entry deadline of **February 28, 2017**. Please include a description of where the photo was taken.

The online vote will take place in March with the winning photo announced in the April NWTTA newsletter.

The 2016-2017 Membership Card is shown at right to visualize the style

and template of information that will be in front of the background photo.

Preference will be given to non-aurora borealis photos to be visually different than this year.



Conference Corner

Upcoming Professional Development Conferences to Consider:



EdTech Team Summits featuring Google for Education

Fort Smith, NT
March 2-3, 2017
[Online newsletter: click here for registration form](#)
Printed newsletter: call Paul W. Kaeser High School at 867-872-4795



Awasis 2017 Aboriginal Education Conference Acceptance of Difference

Saskatoon, SK
April 26-28, 2017
<http://awasis.com>



Physical & Health Education Canada & Physical Education Special Interest Council 2017 National Conference Rock Solid Foundations...Energizing Futures

St. John's, NL
May 4-6, 2017
http://www.phecanada.ca/events/2017_national_conference

Catching Up

NWTTA Members' Life Events

Send your **Catching Up** life events for future newsletters to news@nwtta.nt.ca

Matthew Sharpe and Elaine Weng of Deninu School in Fort Resolution (South Slave region) welcomed their daughter, **Madeline Xi**, on November 9, 2016.



Anne Davies, NWTTA Past-President (1979-1980) is in touch to wish all her NWTTA colleagues the best for the New Year! She says,

"January is a great month to reflect on the past and plan forward. My ten years up north were some of the most exciting years of my career. The opportunities to grow as a professional were incredible. I vividly remember being welcomed into the NWTTA and encouraged to be involved from my very days of teaching. I became editor of Communicate, then Treasurer and then President of the NWTTA.

Being one of the youngest NWTTA Presidents and the first female was a real honour – one I didn't fully appreciate until I was older. One key memory is the purchase of the first NWTTA offices at 4912-47 Street. There was lots of opposition, but it just made financial sense.

My husband Stewart and I spent lots of weekends painting and renovating the old house to make it suitable for office space. Stewart Duncan and I met during a teachers curling bonspiel. And here we are forty years later enjoying life in

the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. We keep in touch with friends in the north both still in the north and those transplanted to the south.

These days I am still supporting educators but through my work in classroom assessment. I just finished another book with a colleague whose name many northerners will recognize – Sandra Herbst. It is titled, Grading, Reporting, and Professional Judgment in Elementary Classrooms. We also have a free members site you might find interesting – go to: www.connect2learning.com.

I'm sorry I won't be up for the conference in February 2018 – being surrounded by the dedicated educators to be found in the NWT is always a thrilling experience. I hope you all find the learning you need and enjoy the best educational community in the world."



Anne in the 1970's

Christmas 2016 Donation

Food First Foundation

During the Christmas 2016 season, in lieu of sending cards, the NWTTA made a \$500 donation to Food First Foundation.

Food First is a registered charity whose mission is to support nutrition education programs in schools with the goal of encouraging a healthy population of children and youth for future generations. In the 2016-17 school year, Food First programs were implemented in 30 schools across the NWT. Their flagship program called "Tastemakers", is a cooking program in which they provide student and teacher manuals and funding to run the program to any school that is interested in participating. They implemented new units to the program in 2016-17 to include materials about recycling, gardening and waste reduction.

The funding support received from the NWTTA will go directly to programs which will benefit schools, teachers and students across the NWT.



President Fraser Oliver and Jill Stephenson, Coordinator, Food First Foundation

Northern Lights

Meet Amy Baxendale from Gameti (Tlicho region)

Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Clarenville, Newfoundland.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I come from a family of teachers. My dad was a high school English teacher, my mom taught grade 3 for most of her life, and my brother is currently teaching high school English. It wasn't until my second year in university that I really decided teaching was what I wanted to do. I went into the elementary grades because I've always enjoyed working with children. While in the program, I developed a passion for education and decided to complete a Special Education Degree. During this, I started working with students of all ages and really enjoyed my experiences.

Q. What do you teach?

I am currently teaching a Kindergarten to Grade 2 class.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

My favourite part about teaching is connecting with the students. I like to learn about them-the things they like and the things they don't like. I think the most important thing is to make a connection with the kids so that they trust you and believe in what you are teaching them.

Q. How do you engage your students?

My students have a lot of energy. I engage them by using a lot of singing and games in the classroom. I've learned that getting excited can help engage the students and get them excited too. It is important to find a balance, so that the students can come down from that level of excitement and have quiet time to work as well.

I really can make a difference

Working with kids has taught me that I really can make a difference in their lives, no matter how small of a difference that may be. During my first year, there was a student who gave me a hard time at the beginning of the year. By the end of the year, however, he always wanted to help around the classroom and talk to me. I realized then that it is so important to bond with the students so that they want to come to school and spend time with you.



Ask Adrien

Adrien Amirault, Executive Director

If I teach in the NWT and have moved from a different jurisdiction can I transfer my pension to the NWT?

The answer to the above is a definite maybe!

There are a lot of factors that come into a scenario like pension transfer. Here are some of the key points that a member will have to look into.

1. Is there is an agreement to transfer into your new pension plan with your previous pension plan?
 - a. Usually this is set up between the pension plans. If the agreement does not exist, then you will not be able to transfer your previous service into your new plan. The pension plans' providers will have to be contacted to see which plans they have agreements with.
 - b. If there is an agreement (for instance there is an agreement to transfer between the superannuation plan that GNWT teachers have and the NEBS plan that YK1 teachers have) you need to contact both pension plans and follow their procedures to do the transfer.
2. If there is not an agreement then you usually need to go forward with two separate plans.
 - a. I will use myself as an example. I have some pensionable service with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, but am now part of the NEBS pension plan. These two plans do not have an agreement to transfer benefits between them. Because of this when I turn 60 I will draw a benefit from both plans.
3. There are some disadvantages from belonging to two pension plans.
 - a. Most pension plans have a magic number that is based on your age plus your experience. If you are in two plans it is very difficult to reach the magic number until later in life. I do not have enough experience in either plan to retire with an unreduced pension before age 60. If all my work experience was in one plan I could retire at age 55.
 - b. There is a claw back related to Canada Pension Plan payments in some plans. If you are in two plans the claw back may hit you twice.
4. Pension is a very important benefit to NWTTA members. If you have work experience in more than one jurisdiction in Canada, it is important to find out if your pensions can be combined. There is usually a benefit to have your entire pension in one plan.



PD Notes Education Leave 2017-18

Amanda Mallon, Professional Development Coordinator

GNWT NWTTA members are reminded that the deadline to apply for Education Leave With and Without Allowances for the 2017-2018 year is March 1 at 5pm.

Online newsletter:
Click here for information about the leaves
Click here for Application Form
Click here for Scoring Rubric

Printed newsletter: to receive the Application Form in MS Word format or for more information, contact Amanda Mallon at pd@nwtta.nt.ca, Phone: 867-873-5759

Education Leave Testimonial

Paula Guy, East Three Secondary School (E3SS) (Beaufort-Delta region) was granted Education Leave with Allowances in the 2014-2015 school year with a goal of completing a Masters of Education in Counselling from Acadia University in Wolfville, NS. Paula achieved her goal, graduated with her Masters in October 2015 and attended her convocation in May 2016.

A message from Paula:

"The Education Leave not only gave me additional skills to help students, it empowered me to re-engage in my own personal journey of wellness and self-discovery. The leave allowed me to re-charge my batteries and return to E3SS with a renewed spirit and enthusiams. I feel so fortunate for the support of the NWTTA and will be forever grateful for this professional learning experience."

In addition to my school counselling position at E3SS, I am an active member of two NWTTA Committees, the Status of Women and Wellness Committees. I enjoy collaborating with other members and consider my involvement as a way of saying thanks to the NWTTA for being so supportive of my professional development journey."



Northern Lights

Meet Kent Bratton from Jean Marie River (Dehcho region)

Q. Where did you grow up?

Sherwood Park, Alberta (Yee Haw!)

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I worked for three summers guiding youth on wilderness canoe trips in Manitoba, Ontario and Minnesota. My favourite thing about that job was the energy and excitement that young people bring to the table when they are discovering something new. I wanted a career where work felt like an adventure!

Q. What do you teach?

I am the principal and teacher of nine fantastic students ranging from junior kindergarten to grade nine.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

It's the small things that make this job great. Seeing the lightbulb turn on for in a student who has been struggling to understand a concept, or being bombarded by endless knock knock jokes.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I find when students have an audience for their work, they put in a greater effort. If students know that their work is going to be on display for the community or that a letter they are writing is actually going to be mailed to a real person, they become motivated and want to do their best work.

Learning about my students and watching them grow

I feel very lucky to have been given the opportunity to teach in Jean Marie River for the past 6 years. Teaching in a one-room schoolhouse is not an experience many Canadian teachers get to have anymore. One of the greatest aspects of being a teacher in a tiny school is that you get to teach the same students every year. I've been able to learn more about my students and watch them grow and mature with each passing year. I have had the opportunity to travel with my students to places across Canada that I love and in return, the students and their families have shared with me what it means to live in the Deh Cho.



Teaching Outside the Classroom Athletics

Morgan Fairweather, Chief T'Selehye School (Sahtu Region)

One of my main objectives as a teacher has always been to provide some of the experiences that helped shape my life in a positive manner onto the next generation. My expertise outside of the classroom centered around athletics, particularly basketball. Basketball, just like the classroom can be used to teach valuable lessons and give students the necessary skills to succeed in many areas throughout their life.

When I arrived at Fort Good Hope five years ago I had no idea what to expect. I was however surprised to see that a group of students ranging from grades 4-6 were really into basketball. They had a clear passion for the game but

needed some experience and direction. I couldn't have been more excited to begin working with these students.

I truly feel that basketball has changed the lives of some of our students. From the beginning, our athletes had to understand that they were student/athletes, and could not have one without the other. If they did not fulfill their duties as a student, ie. attending school and giving their best effort, then they would not have the opportunity to fulfill their duties as an athlete. Since then, our athletes' attendance has been remarkable.

Basketball has also taught our students about accountability, cooperation and teamwork. Accountability in that their actions such as missing a practice or school, will have

direct repercussions to their performance on the court. Cooperation and teamwork in that they are a team, and the performance and attitude of one member directly affects the entire team's performance. These are qualities that will serve them well moving forward especially when they enter the work force.

Some of my favourite qualities to emphasize with our team are perseverance, courage and determination. When I arrived in Fort Good Hope our team had never really entered in a large competition. Our athletes have developed the courage to take on a task no matter how daunting it may seem. They have learned to persevere through the tough times and now understand that their hard work will pay off in some way at the end. They have also learned to be determined in pursuit of their goal by not listening to the pessimists and attacking their goal with everything they have.

Perhaps the greatest quality these athletes have developed that I did not expect this early is leadership. The group of athletes I originally started with is now in grades 9-11. They have created such a large interest in basketball that I had to start a Junior Basketball program for grades 1-8. My Seniors as I call them, every Friday show up to Junior practice to help out and coach the younger athletes.



Fort Good Hope Junior Basketball Team in Tulita. Back-to-back Champs!



Fort Good Hope Senior Basketball Team receiving instruction at practice

enter. It didn't take long for this to translate into the classroom as our athletes noticed the parallels between them both. I can say along with our athletes' performance on the court, their grades have improved equally over the years.

As most people know, travelling with teams in the North is very expensive. We are very fortunate in Fort

Good Hope to have a school run recycling program. Under my supervision our student athletes volunteer their time to help run the program which ultimately pays for their trips to various tournaments. This program teaches fiscal responsibility and gets our athletes to competitions they may normally not have been able to attend.

I have always emphasized to our players that we are not only a team, but a family. We all have a responsibility to look out for each other whether it's on the court, in the classroom or out in the community. Through competition and hard work our athletes and myself have created strong relationships that will hopefully last a lifetime.

Many of the younger athletes are in complete awe of the older ones. The ripple effect throughout the school has been wonderful to watch.

From day one I have told our athletes that every time you step on the court to practice or play you want to leave better than you were before, and the only way you can achieve this is to give your absolute best. The first time we entered the Cager Basketball tournament in Yellowknife we had a mediocre finish. Since then we have improved our finish to the point where we are a legitimate threat to win every tournament we



Fort Good Hope Senior Basketball Team

Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices

NWT Teachers are overworked

In 2013 the NWTTA and Yukon Teachers' Association conducted a workload study which concluded that our members work on average 52 hours per week during the school year, which works out to approximately two extra days of work per week. Essentially, NWT teachers on average are working seven days per week during the school year. A 2015 Government of the NWT workload study arrived at the same average teacher workload result.

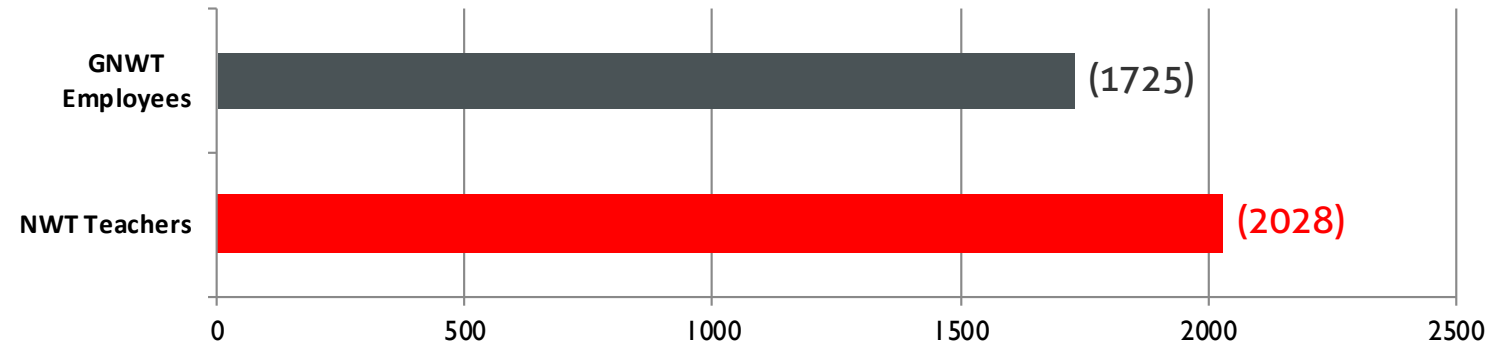
What are teachers doing outside of the school day?

Before and after school, teachers are often meeting with students who request additional time.

Evening and weekends, teachers are often **completing professional duties**, such as:

- lesson planning
- individual/modified education plans
- evaluation & assessment of students
- contacting & meeting with parents
- report card writing
- supervising extra-curricular activities

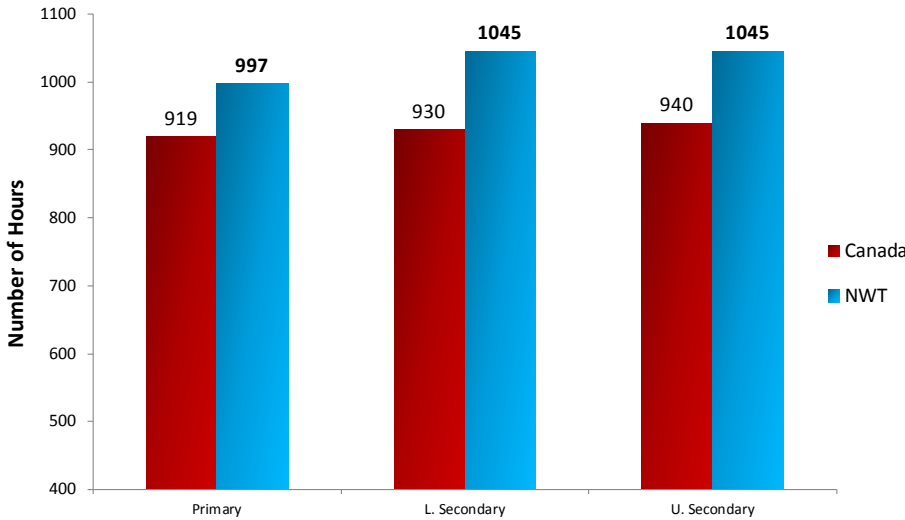
Annual Average Workload in Hours



NWT Teachers' average workload is **52** hours per week = **2028 hours/school year**
Average GNWT Employees workload is 37.5 hours per week = 1725 hours/year

How did we get here?

NWT and Nunavut have the highest number of instructional hours in Canada



Reducing Minimum Instructional Hours in the NWT

The Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices Memorandum of Understanding allows schools to redirect up to 100 hours of instructional time, as long as they have a minimum of 945 instructional hours for all grades starting in 2017-2018 for a three-year pilot. Currently the minimum number of instructional hours in the NWT varies between 997 for primary to 1045 for secondary.

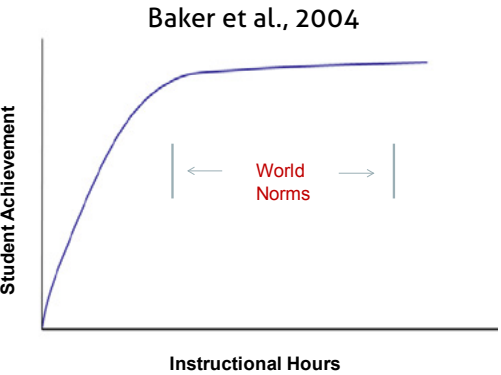
Participation in the Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices is voluntary. Each NWT school Principal, supported by Superintendents will decide how they might redirect up to 100 hours per school year as would best suit their needs towards improving student achievement and teacher wellness. 2017-2018 school calendar planning is underway.

The redirected time will be used as follows:

- **50%** for completion of **teacher selected professional duties**
- **50%** for **collaborative professional learning communities**

This graphic at right depicts as you increase instructional time, student achievement goes up, but there is a threshold where increasing instructional time does not further improve student achievement levels.

Canadian average and the NWT instructional times (upper left graph) fall within the World Norms area.



The **Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices** process will give teachers more time to prepare and plan lessons tailored to their students' varied needs which, studies show, will lead to improved student outcomes.

For many years, member surveys have reported being overworked with professional duties and administrative tasks being added to. Negotiations have included prep time in every package since **1999**.

2012
Alberta Teachers' Association Workload Study:
The New Work of Teaching: A Case Study of the Worklife of Calgary Public Teachers

2013
NWT & Yukon Teachers' Associations Workload Study:
Understanding Teacher Workloads: A Pan-Northern Teachers' Time Diary Study

2015
Government of the NWT Teacher Workload Study:
NWT Teacher Time and Workload Study

2016
NWT Teachers' Association & Government of the NWT sign Memorandum of Understanding: Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices

2017 & beyond
3-year (2017-2018 through 2019-2020) pilot implementing STIP MOU and changes to NWT Education Act

Northern Lights

Meet Christina Steen from Hay River (South Slave region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Watson, Saskatchewan.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

My first training was in Child and Youth Care, a job that I loved. I had the opportunity during one of my practicums to work in an alternative school and discovered that I really liked the energy of a school setting. In 2000, I decided to return to university and pursue my degree in Education.

Q. What do you teach?

I am the Principal at Chief Sunrise Education Centre on the K'atloodeche First Nation.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love that no day is the same and that I am constantly challenged and rewarded. I love working in the North, particularly in small schools, because we have the opportunity to do education a bit differently and to really get to know the students, their families and the community.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I believe that relationships are foundational. Kids need to feel safe, that they belong and that they are important. I also believe that the more you can move, touch and experience things first hand, the deeper your understanding and overall engagement in learning will be.

Moments when I love teaching the most

These are the moments when I love teaching the most... creative retelling of key events, respecting boundaries, and spelling all wrapped in to one humorous little anecdote.

Student: Mrs. Steen, we had a problem at recess that we couldn't solve.

Me: Oh? What happened?

Student: Well, you know the g-r-a-s-s word but without the g-r?

Me: Ummm, Yes.

Student: Someone said that!

NWTTA and Junior Kindergarten

Fraser Oliver, President

In mid-December 2016, I made a presentation to MLAs on the "Standing Committee on Social Programs". The following is a recap of my presentation:

"Over the past several months, NWTTA Assistant Executive Director Adrien Amirault and I have traveled to many schools in the NWT. Our goal was to meet our members and give them the opportunity to share their concerns or issues. Teacher wellness and Junior Kindergarten were on the top of everyone's list.

Teachers are concerned with the lack of funding for Junior Kindergarten and the impact it is going to have on all other grade levels. Will it lead to job cuts, will it lead to a reduction of programs for our students as well as reduced resources if it is not funded fully? The idea of funding 13 years of schooling (Kindergarten to grade 12) but expecting schools and boards to cover the cost of 14 years of schooling (Junior Kindergarten to grade 12) is not acceptable.

Recently, both the NWTTA GNWT and YK1 members ratified collective agreements that took major steps in reducing workload for teachers as well as increasing wellness for both students and staff. When these new initiatives take effect, they will have a significant positive impact into education over the next 20 years. These improvements will help in many areas, particularly in teacher retention. The longer teachers stay in small communities, the more connections/trust they have with students and families. This relationship or trust has a direct impact on student success.

With reduced funding to school boards, the NWTTA views this as having a negative impact on our new collective agreements, teacher workload may in fact go up, and teacher and student wellness may decrease.

The NWTTA supports the implementation of Junior Kindergarten for all schools at the start of the 2017-2018 school year, as long as it is fully funded and is not detrimental to any other present programs in our schools and does not lead to any teacher lay-offs."



"The Crazy Scientist" Michael Duclos, Principal at Mackenzie Mountain School in Norman Wells (Sahtu region) performs the Kindergarten Egg Drop during the school science fair in December 2016

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Northern Lights

Meet Pam Walsh from Fort Smith (Fort Smith region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Stellarton, Nova Scotia

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

I decided to become a teacher because of my grade 6 teacher, Miss Hale, who took extra time to make me feel very special and valued. As I worked through school, I often reflected about how great it would be to make such a difference in someone's life. That reflection encouraged me to pursue a career in teaching, and I have never looked back. I love the feeling of seeing that "aha" be revealed. I now see it as a co-learning experience; so wonderful to come to common understandings together.

Q. What do you teach?

I am currently a program coordinator focusing on supporting teachers and coaches to have a positive impact on student learning.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love the opportunity to explore the best way to engage learners and create that opportunity for new learning to come forward. Connecting to what you know, engaging in dialogue around new ideas, sharing your new insights. This is what it is all about.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I think the most effective way to engage learners is through dialogue. Creating a hook to draw the learner in, and then providing opportunity for learners to interact in a purposeful and meaningful way.

There is always a way to reach that learner

The best thing I love about teaching is that it is always changing, always new! You can create a lesson and try to deliver it the same way each time, but because you are always interacting with new learners, the learning changes. Being strategic regarding how to best support all learners makes the experience always fresh, always a challenge, and the pursuit of solving the problem in terms of reaching that learner makes teaching exciting and rewarding. Never give up, there is always a way to reach that learner.

NWT Schools Photo Mystery

Can you identify these six Northwest Territories schools?



Answers on page 23

Wellness Starling is available for NWTTA Administrators

Dr. Andrew Miki & The Starling Team

Think back to the time in your life when you decided to become an administrator. Did it feel like a natural extension of your teaching career? The most frequent reasons that I hear are an intrinsic desire to serve, lead, and increase one’s scope of influence. These reasons likely outweighed the significant increase in responsibility, commitment, and stress that are inherent to an administrator’s position. Back then, how could you have known that there would be so many “balls in the air” to manage, such as pressures from your board, unpredictable demands from so many parents, safety issues, staff politics, potential investigations, and students’ behaviours? It’s only by working as an administrator that you learn that the job can be so fulfilling yet, at the same time, be such an all-encompassing part of your life. You probably didn’t realize that you were at risk of developing a co-dependent relationship with your smartphone!



Starling started from the idea to create a mental health platform for educators and we began by tailoring a specific case study for teachers. Based on the feedback from our members we know that our teacher character resonates with the majority of our teacher users. When we started to work with administrators we realized that even though teachers and administrators share some stressors around the profession and work environment, both groups also have their own specific stressors.

We wanted to tailor the program to better meet the needs of administrators just like we did with teachers. We interviewed a dozen administrators and researched administrator-specific personality traits, stressors and behavioural patterns.

After working with administrators for a year, we learned that administrators are generally more resilient to stress than the average person. Like many conscientious professionals, their way of dealing with stress is to put their heads down and work through it. This works as long as the energy in their battery can outlast the stressors they face. However,

administrators are still human. You are not invincible or immune to the toll that stress can take over time.

We have had over 100 administrators join the Starling community in the past year and the results have been overwhelmingly positive. Over 70% of both our teacher and administrator members have found improvements in how they feel, their work/life balance, and their understanding of mental health.

We couldn’t be happier to announce that the Starling program for NWTTA administrators will be available on February 7, 2017.

Sign up at starlingminds.com to try it out. If you have any comments or feedback on the Starling program, please let us know by emailing to members@starlingminds.com.

Dr. Andrew Miki is a registered psychologist with over 10 years of experience treating teachers and administrators for anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. He is the founder and CEO of Starling Minds.

Starling is an online mental health and wellness tool that helps you assess, monitor and improve your mental wellbeing. It’s an interactive, web-based platform that teaches you about your mental functioning and gives you practical techniques for building stress resilience and boosting mental fitness. As a member of the Northwest Territories Teachers’ Association, it’s now available to you to use anywhere and anytime you want, for free. And it is and will always be 100% confidential.

The Northwest Territories Teachers’ Association together with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, through the NWT Education Renewal Initiative, are proud to support the Starling Program for NWT educators. Starling has a successful track record of giving educators the tools they need to increase their productivity and resilience to stress.



Collaborative Practice When and how?

Adrien Amirault, Executive Director

As we move towards the model of Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practice (STIP) as set out in the recent Memorandum of Understanding in the GNWT-NWTTA Collective Agreement, we are challenged to make good use of the 50% redirected time for Collaborative work. So what is it that makes collaborative planning successful?

Collaboration needs to be supported by the structure of the day (simply put, build time into the schedule), and by an understanding of what is meant by collaborative practice.

The STIP model will give the structure, in that it finds time, but understanding collaborative practice is the hard part.

Collaborative practice is not agreeing on the operation of the school (routines for tardiness, attendance, missed homework, discipline) even though this is important work. Rather it goes much deeper and encourages teachers to analyze their professional practice, and to work with other teachers to use this analysis to improve instruction. Good collaborative practice takes brave teachers, who are willing to expose what they do with colleagues in the hope that this will lead to improved teaching.

This is easy to say, but not easy to do. Developing strong collaborative teams takes effort. Teams must agree on norms in how they will function, must agree on measures to ensure students are learning, and must be informed by results. The work of collaborative teams must always be driven by student learning, and it is this learning (or absence of results) that drives the conversation of the team.

One example of a structure that is common in NWT schools is school-wide writes. When as a school you have a collection of writing from every student, a collaborative team might look for evidence of traits of writing that are not going well. If there is a common trait that is not strong across the writes (say ORGANIZATION), then the team needs to look at what they do to support ideas around organization in writing. This is where the bravery comes in, as it might mean admitting to yourself (and to colleagues) that you could be doing a better, or

different approach to teaching organization in your writing. It also means that if the results are not what you want, then you might need to change how you are instructing. Sometimes through the process of looking at data you might find that one teacher has had great success in teaching an aspect of writing. This is good news in a collaborative team, as that teacher becomes the model to learn from. So besides bravery, collaborative teams also need to have trust.

In the example above you are basing your ideas on evidence, and changing your teaching to see improvement in that evidence. When you do school wide writes again, you are going to look for improvement in organization the next time. It might not improve, and then it is back to the drawing board. If it does improve, find another target for improvement.

Effective collaborative practice is usually teacher lead, though school administration may direct the work of collaborative teams by asking/directing teams to focus on certain aspects of curriculum (e.g. numeracy). But the hard work of looking at what you do is the work of a teacher. There is an element of trust in collaborative teams as you need to admit when things are not going well. This sometimes is difficult when a supervisor is part of the team. The aspect of trust is important.

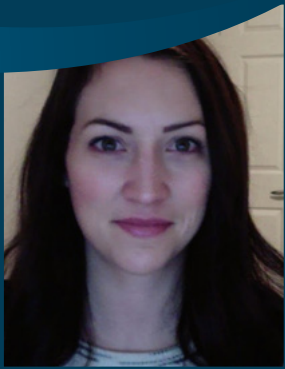
Research supports collaborative practice in schools as among the most effective practice to improve teaching. So grab a colleague, be brave, trust each other, and start a conversation.



Representatives of the NWTTA, ECE and the NWT Superintendents' Association worked collaboratively over many months to agree on how best to roll out the Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices MOU.

Northern Lights

Meet
Deanna Ehalt-Zawyrucha
from Yellowknife (YCS region)



Q. Where did you grow up?

I grew up on a farm near Annaheim, Saskatchewan.

Q. What made you decide to become a teacher?

In my first job as a dance instructor I quickly learned how much I enjoyed the creative aspect of choreography and design for dance recitals and working with youth. Our student council and team sports brought our school into our community. This sense of community was very rewarding for me. As a result, I decided that going into Arts Education was a good fit for me. As an Arts educator I am able to continue to pursue my interests in the Arts while collaborating with youth to involve the students in their community.

Q. What do you teach?

I teach grade 6/7 Learning Through the Arts program. Within this program I integrate the Arts (drama, dance, film, music, literature, visual art) into all subject areas.

Q. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

The relationships I form with my students is what I enjoy most about teaching. As you get to know your students, you are able to adapt to their individual personalities. By knowing their individual personalities and interests it's easier to create meaningful experiences.

Q. How do you engage your students?

I'm able to engage my students best when I construct projects that involve the arts, taking positive risks for exploration and understanding, and technology for presentation and communicating their understandings with one another.

Advice from a Failure

As a teacher I quickly learned that failure would be a huge part of my road to success. When I make a mistake I admit it and move forward. Through this I gain trust and respect from others. Failure has also made me improve my lessons from year to year. With improved lessons, I gain new skills and better results. Luckily, I'm not measured by how many times I've failed, but by what I have learned and chose to do with my gained knowledge. So, fail with pride and have no regrets. The minute you stop failing you stop reaching new successes in life.

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: March 8, 2017



Win a \$50 Tim Horton's Gift Card!

1. The main goal of the Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practices pilot program is to address two major concerns. What are those two concerns?
2. When is Madeline Xi's birthday?
3. GNWT members are entitled to reimbursement for Summer Credit Courses up to a maximum of how much?
4. When will the Starling program for Administrators be available?

Linsey Hope from the TCSA in Behchoko (Tlicho region) won the December 2016 Newsletter Trivia!

NWT Schools Photo Mystery Answers (page 20)

1. Mangilaluk, Tuktoyaktuk
2. Colville Lake (also on cover)
3. Kaw Tay Whee, Dettah
4. Chief Jimmy Bruneau, Behchoko
5. Deninu, Fort Resolution
6. Paul W. Kaeser, Fort Smith

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