

# THE ADVOCATE

May 29, 2024



## WHAT'S INSIDE!

- President's Corner
- Board Chair Messages
- Upcoming Events
- Good News Story
- Programs and Grants
- Articles of Potential Interest

In this edition of *The Advocate*, you'll find the President's message, two Board Chair messages, upcoming events for 2024, good news story, articles of potential interest, along with our regular features. Enjoy!

Next issue: June 28, 2024



## Placing Students Before Politics



**Dennis MacNeil**  
**PSBAA President**



One of the greatest challenges we face in fulfilling the duty of prioritizing students and their needs, is balancing the politics that come along with it and enter our educational system. While political discourse has its place in shaping policies and frameworks, it should never overshadow the core purpose of public education, which is to provide equitable and quality learning opportunities for all students. Our goal is to always protect, elevate, and promote public education.

When political agendas drive decision-making in education, the needs of students can at times take a backseat to ideological battles and partisan interests. This not only undermines the integrity of our schools, but also jeopardizes the future prospects of our youth. As trustees and superintendents of school boards, it is incumbent upon us to rise above political affiliations and prioritize the best interests of our students.

With everything, there are positives and negatives that come with this ideology. There are times of course where government actions can benefit public schools and their goals of putting children first. Most recently seen with the Alberta government announcing its partnership with CASA Mental Health and investing \$148 million to support the expansion of child and youth mental health services. This type of investment offers a range of supports for students and their families including professional in-school support, family support, and more. These benefits have a positive impact within the schools and could bring about positive results for both teachers and students.

De-politicizing public education is not about eliminating diversity of thought or stifling debate; rather, it is about creating an environment where evidence-based practices and student outcomes guide our actions. By helping create a culture of collaboration and consensus-building, we can ensure that every decision we make is grounded in what we believe is best for the children we serve. At the end of the day, I know PSBAA members always come to the table in the interest of students first.

With that being said, it is crucial to recognize the indispensable role that public schools play as the pillars of our communities across Alberta. Beyond imparting academic knowledge, our schools serve as a special place where fostering inclusivity and diversity can occur. They are places where students from diverse backgrounds come together to learn and grow together.

By placing students at the top of our priority list, we uphold the true essence of public education and honour the trust placed in us by parents, teachers, and the community as a whole. Our commitment to excellence in education transcends political affiliations and personal agendas. It is a shared endeavor that comes from the belief that every child deserves access to a high-quality education, regardless of their circumstances.

I believe the desire to ensure a strong public school system should unite Albertans not divide us. By doing so, we not only safeguard the integrity of our educational system but also pave the way for a brighter future for generations to come.





## Robin Guild Board Chair



Tansi, Edlánat'e, Greetings everyone:

At [Northland School Division](#) (NSD), we start by listening. Over the past few months, we've held community engagement sessions across all our schools. The feedback we've gathered is supporting priorities in the new education plan and helping us make learning and working at Northland better every day. It's through these conversations we understand what communities need and expect from us, ensuring Northland students receive an education that prepares them for future opportunities.

For years, NSD has woven First Nations and Métis knowledge into the curriculum. This approach helps students engage more deeply with their learning while better understanding their cultural and personal identities. For example, at J.F. Dion School in the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, students learned traditional skills like setting rabbit snares. Meanwhile, at Career Pathways School, students gained insights into the fur trade and survival techniques during a Winter Land Camp.

Our Career and Technology Studies (CTS) Days have opened doors to potential careers by providing practical learning experiences such as fashion design, cosmetology, real estate, engine operations, and wildlife procedures. These programs empower Northland students to see a future they can aspire to, blending traditional skills with modern career opportunities.

Northland School Division's dedication to weaving traditional wisdom with modern educational practices ensures every student finds relevance and pride in their learning journey. We are excited about the future as we continue to adapt and improve educational strategies based on community guidance.

### Choice in Alberta Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Public Schools

PSBAA hired educator and researcher Dr. Curtis Riep to do a deep dive into the topic of Choice in Alberta Education: Challenges and Opportunities for public schools. Curtis has publicly released the research findings in a thirty-page paper which can be found on our website. PSBAA has written a brief summary of the full paper that is also now available on the PSBAA website directly under Dr. Riep's paper.

[CLICK HERE to view this document](#)



Irene Gibbons  
Board Chair

HATS ON FOR  
MENTAL HEALTH

Be kind to your mind

## Sturgeon Public School Division

Sturgeon Public Schools is participating in the [Alberta Government Mental Health in Schools \(MHIN\) pilot project](#) that targets four schools; Gibbons School, Landing Trail School, Bon Accord Community School and Lilian Schick School, within the Towns of Gibbons and Bon Accord. Families, students and staff are focusing on mental health from a wellness perspective. Students actively engage in improving their mental well-being daily through practices like mindfulness, belly breathing, cooperative play and regulation activities, both independently and within their school community. Sturgeon Public Schools is honored to be one of the four pilot projects showcased by Alberta Education, which recognized our initiative with a video highlighting its creativity and positive impact on our youth and communities. Our goal is to develop a sustainable model of care that enables students in rural areas to access resources through a comprehensive approach involving schools and the surrounding communities.

Mental Health Coaches, known as Mindful Mentors, focus on promoting positive mental health while teaching skills to prevent mental health crises. They provide sessions during Professional Learning Days, Fall and Spring Break and Summer vacation. During these times, they connect with community supports through Family Community Support Services (FCSS) and community recreation coordinators to build relationships with partners, enhancing the sustainability of mental health supports post-pilot. These partnerships are crucial for advancing positive mental health in rural areas. Mindful Mentors link our communities with surrounding areas for further support, such as the Families First Society, Boys and Girls Clubs and other agencies that promote safety and mental health. Establishing these supports in our communities is essential for developing sustainable programs for families and youth.







## 2024 August PSBC in Grande Prairie

- August 7 - 9, 2024
- July 26 - Earlybird Registration Deadline
- July 12 - Hotel Room Block Deadline

**Join PSBAA in Grande Prairie!** This year the August PSBC meeting will take place at multiple different locations in and around the Grande Prairie area. On Wednesday August 7th after registration, you will get the chance to take part in a paleo presentation along with a self guided tour at the Currie Museum with a BBQ on the museum grounds to follow. Thursday is a full day of touring the area! Starting in Grimshaw then heading to Dunvegan and finishing up back in Grande Prairie with a tour of the hospital and Northwestern Polytechnic. Friday morning all members will be driven to a local school where the PSBC meeting will take place, once the meeting is adjourned, members will have

the opportunity to tour local schools, venues and various sights. More details to come! Registration is now open. ***Please note that if you plan on bringing a guest*** and they want to take part in the tours, activities, and meals, to check off the second box on the registration page. If your plus one is just wanting to join the Wednesday BBQ and Currie Museum tour, there is a third box for that specifically. Make sure to book your spot now and we will see you in August!

**We would like to acknowledge and thank Grande Prairie, Peace River and Peace Wapiti School Division's for their sponsorship and support!**

## CURRIE MUSEUM TOUR & BARBEQUE EXPERIENCE THE JOURNEY

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

**CLICK HERE!** for more information on the 2024 August PSBC!



## 2024 Fall Conference and AGM - Celebrating 35 Years! Lois Hole Dinner and Silent Auction! Plus the Mayfield Dinner Theatre!

### October 16-18

This fall, PSBAA is celebrating 35 years of protecting and promoting public education in Alberta. We are so proud of the work our members do and how far this organization has come. We are honored to announce that this years Lois Hole Dinner speaker is named one of the 100 Influential Edmontonians of the Century, Sandra B Woitas. We would like to celebrate this milestone at the 2024 Lois Hole Dinner by providing a silent auction with all proceeds going directly to the Lois Hole Hospital for Women. PSBAA is asking its members if they know of a company/organization that would like to donate items for this auction, or if members personally would like to contribute an item as well. If so, please contact [communications@public-schools.ab.ca](mailto:communications@public-schools.ab.ca) ASAP. We would like to start collection donations now with the deadline for items to be collected by October 1st, 2024!

## Registration is OPEN for 2024 Events! [For our Events Page CLICK HERE!](#)



### June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada

We would like to draw your attention to a free upcoming webinar on the topic of Indigenous community engagement.

Hosted by the Faculty of Native Studies and Chartered Professionals in Human Resources (CPHR Alberta), join in on June 13th to learn from faculty and alumni, Matthew Wildcat and Shalene Jobin, Brent Boisvert and Jenna (JJ) Broomfield. More information and registration details are here:

#### [Indigenous Community Engagement](#)

Also, if you (or others in your network) are looking for more learning topics from the Faculty of Native Studies, please visit their webpage to learn about and register for courses offered this summer!

[Click Here for more information!](#)





## Ingenious+ Recognizes Outstanding Young Alberta Innovators



This year's Ingenious+ regional winners from Alberta were celebrated during a ceremony at Government House in Edmonton with Her Honour, the Honourable Salma Lakhani, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, in April.



**Amtul Aleem (left) and Aishat Azeez (right); National Finalists of the third annual Ingenious+ Youth Innovation Challenge.**

On April 30th, regional winners of the [Ingenious+ youth innovation challenge](#) from across the province were celebrated for their impactful innovations by Her Honour, the Honourable Salma Lakhani, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, in Edmonton. Ingenious+ provides financial support, learning opportunities, and mentorship to youth aged 14 to 18 who are innovating for good. Powered by the Rideau Hall Foundation, this challenge celebrates a vast range of different types of innovation. Whether it's a product, service, process, or something making the world a better place, Ingenious+ uplifts individual

changemakers and team innovations on both regional and national scales. Now in its third year, Ingenious+ has highlighted more ground-breaking young innovators this year than ever before, including 82 regional winners, 8 national finalists, and 5 national winners from across Canada.

One of this year's national finalist teams is from Alberta: Aishat Azeez and Amtul Aleem, both sophomores with a shared passion for medicine. Aishat and Amtul organized guest lectures, workshops, and mentorship programs with the goal of creating a tight-knit community that fosters collaboration and provides valuable resources for aspiring medical professionals. In particular, their club addresses a critical issue of underrepresentation and limited opportunities for people of color within their community.

Along with these national finalists, 8 other innovative projects from Calgary, Edmonton, and Fort McMurray were named regional winners. From apps and artificial intelligence to assistive and predictive medical devices, Alberta's young innovators have made some truly remarkable contributions to Canada's sphere of innovation. The Ingenious+ program has provided \$140,000 in financial support across Canada in this year alone, with \$10,000 being awarded to young innovators from Alberta.

Meet all of this year's [national winners and finalists](#), and watch the national awards ceremony.

Submissions for the next Ingenious+ challenge will open in Fall 2024. [Subscribe to the Ingenious+ newsletter](#) to be notified.



Fondation  
Rideau Hall  
Foundation



## Food for Thought

### The Good and The Bad Apple

"Today in one of our classes I introduced the children to two apples (the children didn't know this, but before the class I had repeatedly dropped one of the apples on the floor, you couldn't tell, both apples looked perfect). We talked about the apples and the children described how both apples looked the same; both were red, were of similar size and looked juicy enough to eat.

I picked up the apple I'd dropped on the floor and started to tell the children how I disliked this apple, that I thought it was disgusting, it was a horrible colour and the stem was just too short. I told them that because I didn't like it, I didn't want them to like it either, so they should call it names too.

Some children looked at me like I was insane, but we passed the apple around the circle calling it names, 'you're a smelly apple', 'I don't even know why you exist', 'you've probably got worms in-side you' etc.

We really pulled this poor apple apart. I actually started to feel sorry for the little guy.

We then passed another apple around and started to say kind words to it, 'You're a lovely apple', 'Your skin is beautiful', 'What a beautiful colour you are' etc.

I then held up both apples, and again, we talked about the similarities and differences, there was no change, both apples still looked the same.

I then cut the apples open. The apple we'd been kind to was clear, fresh and juicy inside. The apple we'd said unkind words to was bruised and all mushy inside.

I think there was a lightbulb moment for the children immediately. They really got it, what we saw inside that apple, the bruises, the mush and the broken bits is what is happening inside every one of us when someone mistreats us with their words or actions.

When people are bullied, especially children, they feel horrible inside and sometimes don't show or tell others how they are feeling. If we hadn't have cut that apple open, we would never have known how much pain we had caused it.

I shared my own experience of suffering someone's unkind words last week. On the outside I looked OK, I was still smiling. But, on the inside someone had caused me a lot of pain with their words and I was hurting.

Unlike an apple, we have the ability to stop this from happening. We can teach children that it's not ok to say unkind things to each other and discuss how it makes others feel. We can teach our children to stand up for each other and to stop any form of bullying, just as one little girl did today when she refused to say unkind words to the apple.

More and more hurt and damage happens inside if nobody does anything to stop the bullying. Let's create a generation of kind, caring children.

The tongue has no bones, but is strong enough to break a heart. So be careful with your words."

**Words by: Mum in the Moment**

*Do you have a good news story from your school jurisdiction that you would like to share with PSBAA member boards? Please let us know by emailing:*

[communications@public-schools.ab.ca](mailto:communications@public-schools.ab.ca)





## Calling all young people, parents, caregivers, educators, youth workers and more!

***Are you looking for ways to support mental health and well-being in your community?***

You can download Kids Help Phone's mental health materials below to share information about youth issues and raise awareness of our free, confidential e-mental health services with the young people and adults in your network.

**[CLICK HERE for more Information!](#)**



## Alberta Blue Cross Build Together Grants

Alberta Blue Cross is offering five \$50,000 grants for their Built Together grant program that is designated for healthy living infrastructure projects across Alberta.

The Built Together grant program is designed to support infrastructure projects that you and your community are passionate about. Programs such as playgrounds, adult gyms, walking paths, outdoor rinks, skate parks and more are all eligible for the grants.

**[CLICK HERE for more details!](#)**



## Board Development Program Building Strong Teams & Effective Relationships

**June 12, 2024 - 1:30 - 3 p.m.**

***Join us for information, ideas and practical ways to ensure that the board is a strong team with good relationships within the organization.***

Join this highly interactive webinar where you and your fellow participants will deal with a specific board situation, address the root causes, and create solutions. It will provide additional, relevant information that will help you understand why these situations arise, how to deal with them, and ideas for addressing the root causes before they happen.

**[CLICK HERE for more Information!](#)**

## Board Development Program Committees and Meetings Webinar

**June 5, 2024 - 1:30 - 3 p.m.**

***Find out how the board can define committee structure, scope and reporting, and how engaging meetings can create the board's work plan.***

Non-profits have a lot to think about and a lot of work to do. Meetings are where the board gets together to figure out how to make its decisions about what work to do and how to do it. This will take you through the different components of the structure of a meeting and some suggestions on how to think about leadership before, during and after the meeting.

**[CLICK HERE for more Information!](#)**



## Alberta Alexander Rutherford Scholarship

***Application Deadline: Apply online when the official high school marks are available, and when the applicant is enrolled in full-time post-secondary studies.***

***This \$2,500 scholarship was named in honour of Alexander Rutherford, who had the distinction of being Alberta's first Premier and Minister of Education. He was known for his strong support of public education, particularly the University of Alberta and his active involvement in community affairs.***

To receive this scholarship, a candidate must also meet all of these eligibility criteria:

- be a Canadian Citizen, a Permanent Resident of Canada or Protected Person under
- Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, (Visa students are not eligible).
- be an Alberta resident, and to be considered an Alberta resident the following conditions must apply:
  - one parent or legal guardian must have maintained permanent residence in Canada for at least 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the applicant commencing a program of study;
  - applicant has maintained permanent residence in Alberta at least 12-months prior to commencing a program of study;
  - applicant is not eligible to receive a scholarship with respect to any grade unless the applicant or the applicant's parent(s)/legal guardian were a resident in Alberta throughout the whole of that grade.
- have completed high school on or after September 30, 1980.
- be enrolled in a full course load in a designated undergraduate post-secondary or an apprenticeship program of at least one semester in length.

**[CLICK HERE for more Information!](#)**

## Alberta Podium Alberta Grant

***Application Deadline: October 7, 2024***

***Provides funding to Alberta's high-performance athletes to help cover costs related to training, equipment and living expenses.***

Podium Alberta, also known as the Alberta High-Performance Athlete Assistance Program, supports Alberta's high performing athletes by:

- helping athletes continue their pursuit of athletic excellence at the highest levels of national and international competition
- encouraging athletes to stay in Alberta to live and train
- enabling athletes to successfully pursue excellence in sport while fulfilling their educational goals
- increasing athlete access to high-performance coaching and sports science practitioners
- enhancing training and competitive opportunities available to athletes

Since 2008, Podium Alberta has provided over 3,700 grants to 1,025 athletes, worth over \$13.9 million.

**[CLICK HERE for more Information!](#)**

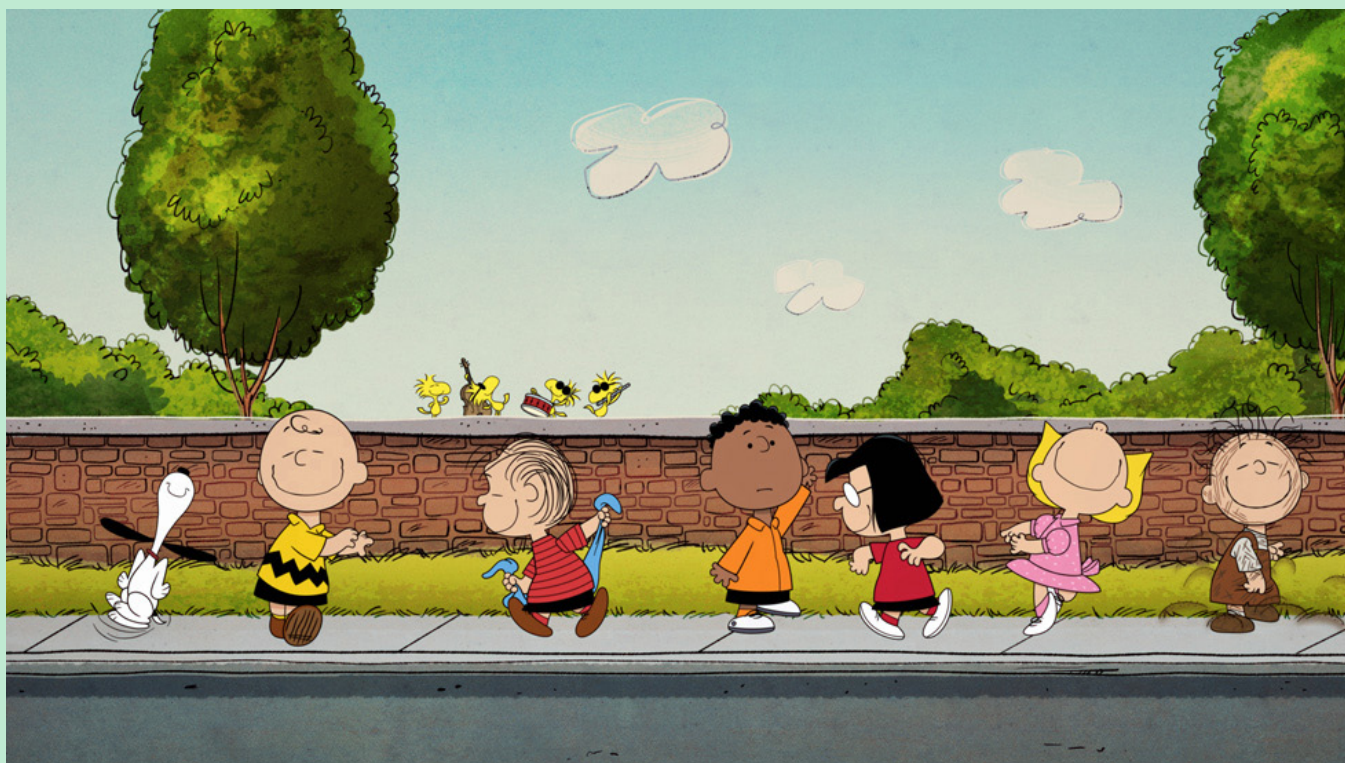


# ARTICLES OF POTENTIAL INTEREST

Click on the links below

- [More teachers for rural Alberta](#)
- [Record-breaking expansion of mental health services](#)
- [Albertans without high school diplomas can now register for new credential replacing GED](#)
- [Red Deer Public Schools face budget challenges](#)
- [Many Canadians opposed to classroom cellphone usage: poll](#)

## SUMMER IS COMING SOON!



### PSBAA RIDDLE

**This months Riddle: There is a boat full of people, but yet there is not a single person on board.?**

Every month PSBAA will add a new word puzzle to the Advocate. The first person who correctly answers the riddle and sends their answer to [communications@public-schools.ab.ca](mailto:communications@public-schools.ab.ca) will receive a PSBAA branded stainless steel water bottle (as shown), which is awarded exclusively to our prize winners! (Those who have won a prize in this contest during the past six months are not eligible.)

**Answer to last months riddle: A Parachute**