

May 2018

the torch



Trustees Peter Kotyk, Jerry Sodomlak, Brianne Goertzen, Eva Prysizney, Colleen Carswell (board chair), and Rod Giesbrecht. (Inset, architect's rendering of the new gym.)

Miles Macdonell construction underway

The sod has officially been turned!

On March 21, River East Transcona marked the start of construction at a sod turning ceremony for the new gym and addition at Miles Macdonell Collegiate.

RETSO trustees were on hand to give greetings at the event, along with Cathy Cox—minister of sport, heritage and culture—and superintendent Kelly Barkman.

The project will include a new, 13,000-sq.-ft. gym addition, and the renovation of existing gym space into four state-of-the-art classrooms and a new art room.

"A new gymnasium at Miles Macdonell has been a board priority for several years, so I'd like to thank the provincial government for making the decision to move forward on this construction," said trustee Eva Prysizney. "I know the

students, staff and community will enjoy the benefits of this brand new facility for years to come, and I'm thankful to those involved at the division for making this project a reality. Your hard work and dedication are much appreciated."

This conversion will also include two large seminar rooms, a locker room, dance studio, fitness centre, and training room for the football team. The province contributed

\$6.8 million toward the project, which has a planned completion date of January 2019.

"This is a major milestone for our division and community," said trustee Brianne Goertzen. "The board worked extremely hard to secure the construction of this gym, and we're proud our vision is finally becoming a reality."



(left to right) Trustee John Toews, Claire Howell, trustee Jerry Sodomlak, Dale Eckert, Emma Kushner, Paisley Pearce, and trustee Eva Pryszney.

Inclusive education evolves, improves

Every February, students, parents and school staff members pack a large banquet room at the Victoria Inn to take part in a joyful celebration.

The Yes I Can! Awards are held by the Manitoba Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC), and RETSD trustees attend each year to offer their support.

Trustee Jerry Sodomlak noted

that while the event fetes student and staff achievements, it's also a reflection of great improvements within the educational system that have happened over the years.

"It's remarkable what strides our division, and Manitoba schools overall, have made over recent decades with education for students with special needs," says Mr. Sodomlak. "There's a wonderful spirit of inclusiveness

and it's apparent the students benefit tremendously from it."

It was only after Bill 16 was passed in 1965 that Manitoba Education hired two special education consultants to respond to requests from school boards for assistance. Then, in the 1970s, the board created an assistant superintendent position to oversee the division's growing needs for differently abled students. And in

1991, they saw to the hiring of a student services consultant.

In 2016, the board received an Outstanding Achievement Award from the MCEC for being champions in providing the programs and supports needed so all children and youth can achieve success at school.

At the most recent Yes I Can! Awards on February 22, trustees were on hand to congratulate several students from RETSD: Brandon Caron and Cassandra Dunn from Kildonan-East Collegiate; Dale Eckert from Murdoch MacKay Collegiate; and Certificate of Recognition recipients Emma Kushner from Miles Macdonell Collegiate, and Claire Howell and Paisley Pearce from Joseph Teres School.

"Growing up in the early 1960s as a child of someone with paraplegia, I've seen the changes that have occurred over the years," says trustee John Toews. "We still have work to do but we've come a long way. It's a pleasure to attend this event and especially to see the students acknowledged for the enormous efforts they make on a regular basis—they should be really proud."



On March 19–22, parents crowded into the gym at Bernie Wolfe Community School to enjoy the RETSD Tumbling Rally—a four-evening event where over 1,000 students from Grades 3–5 display the skills they have developed through their phys-ed classes and extracurricular gymnastics clubs. Trustee Peter Kotyk is pictured at the March 22 rally, where he gave greetings.



Curious about what a school trustee is and what their job entails? The board of trustees now has an animated video that gets to the heart of it! On March 15, they debuted this new video—What It Means to Be a Trustee—at the Manitoba School Boards Association annual convention. To see it, visit: <http://bit.ly/trusteevideo>

Student success: Kosi Hasani

Congratulations to Kosi Hasani, a Grade 12 student at Murdoch MacKay Collegiate, on receiving a 2018 Student Citizenship Award from the Manitoba School Boards Association at their annual convention on March 15.

The RETSD board of trustees, Murdoch MacKay principal John Muller, and Kosi's parents and brother were on hand to congratulate her as she received her award.

The board, along with all other urban-area divisions, nominates just one student for the award each year.

Kosi has been a student at Murdoch MacKay for four years and is one of their top graduating students. She's been on the honour roll every year, and was one of the school's youngest students on record to achieve a university credit at the age of 15 in Advanced Placement Psychology.



(left to right) Trustees John Toews, Eva Prysizney, and Jerry Sodomlak; Kosi Hasani; Murdoch MacKay principal John Muller; and trustees Brianne Goertzen, Colleen Carswell (board chair), and Peter Kotyk.

Kosi helped transform Murdoch MacKay's student government into a large, diverse, energetic group that provides social and charitable opportunities for the entire student body. And outside

of school, she volunteers at Park Manor Personal Care Home.

"These really are remarkable accomplishments," said board chair Colleen Carswell. "And what also stands out when you learn

more about Kosi is her amazing attitude, her inquisitive nature, and the drive she applies to everything she's involved in—she's an extraordinary young woman."



I Love to Read Month

February was I Love to Read Month and RETSD trustees were out and about at schools across the division, sharing their love of literature with early years students.

(clockwise from far left) Trustees Colleen Carswell (board chair), Peter Kotyk, Rod Giesbrecht, and Jerry Sodomlak.



The Program, Policy Review and Personnel Committee (left to right): Trustees John Toews, Eva Prysizney (committee chair), Brianne Goertzen, and Brian Olyniuk.

Keeping RETSD schools and students safe

More than ever now, because of stories that are in the news, students need to feel they're safe and cared for if they're going to reach their full potential. And in order for students to feel safe, policies need to be in place to help create that nurturing environment. The board of trustees creates and passes the policies that

help keep RETSD schools safe. Before any policy is put into place in the division, the board's Program, Policy Review and Personnel Committee provides recommendations to the board. "When safety policies are approved by the board, we ensure all of our schools have appropriate funding for any necessary

equipment and training," says trustee Eva Prysizney, who chairs the committee. "Special consideration is always granted to any policy that impacts the safety and security of our students." Protocols are also developed so each school has a plan with steps they're trained to follow in the event of, for example, a threat

inside (lockdown) or outside of the building (hold-and-secure). "The division has also worked with the Winnipeg Police Service to review and strengthen procedures," says Ms. Prysizney. "We're always looking for ways to grow and learn, and apply that to create safe and caring environments where students can thrive."



Trustee Jerry Sodomlak elected director

Congratulations to trustee Jerry Sodomlak on being elected Region 5 director for the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) provincial executive. Mr. Sodomlak was elected at the MSBA annual convention on

March 16. His colleagues came out in force to encourage and support him for the position. He will be able to use his strong leadership skills and commitment to education to represent Region 5 during his two-year term.

Manitoba school divisions that are members of the MSBA are grouped into six regions, and each year the boards that make up each region elect one or more directors. The provincial executive governs the association between conventions.

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For more information about the board of trustees, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca/yourretsd/BoardofTrustees