

Greetings from the President

A Season of New Beginnings



Dr. Clint Moroziuk
CASSA/ACGCS President

Joy can be found in classrooms where students discover something new, in the dedication of staff who make a difference each day, and in communities working together on behalf of young people.

This year, I encourage each of us to intentionally seek out those moments of joy and to share them. Celebrate the people doing extraordinary things in ordinary ways. Listen to the stories of students and staff. Connect with colleagues across Canada and learn from one another.

As CASSA members, we are part of a remarkable community of leaders. May we continue to support one another, challenge one another, and lead with the optimism that our students and communities need.

I wish you and your teams a joyful, hopeful, and successful school year.

As a new school year begins across Canada, I want to extend my warmest greetings to the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) members and education colleagues from coast to coast to coast!

There is something uniquely hopeful about the beginning of a school year. Our schools once again fill with the energy of students and staff, new relationships begin to take shape, and communities come together around a shared belief in the promise of new learning. It is a season of new beginnings and an invitation for each of us to approach our work with a renewed sense of joy and hope.

As system leaders, we know that the work before us is not always easy. We lead in increasingly complex environments, navigating change, responding to the diverse needs of our communities, and making decisions that can have a lasting impact on students, staff, and families. Amidst that complexity, it can be easy to focus primarily on the challenges before us.

However, leadership also gives us the opportunity to notice and nurture what is good.

Joy can be found in classrooms where students discover something new, in the dedication of staff who make a difference each day, and in communities working together on behalf of young people. Hope is found in our belief that tomorrow can be better than today...and in our willingness to work together to make it so.



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**All websites and email addresses are
active. Click them to connect
immediately with various resources.*

Greetings from the Executive Director

The Excitement of a New School Year



Reg Klassen

CASSA/ACGCS New Executive Director

There is something special about the beginning of a new school year. The familiar rhythm of summer begins to change, new backpacks appear by the door, and there is a sense of anticipation in the air. This sense of expectancy was outlined by my grandchildren with their numerous items on their shopping lists that continued to multiply with each grandchild. The conversation was fun, but I did find myself happy I was not responsible for the shopping, organizing of school schedules, labelling belongings, planning lunches, adjusting

bedtimes, and finding a place for homework. Time leading up to and including the first few weeks of school can feel like a project all on its own for parents and caregivers.

Conversations with my grandchildren also took us to parts of a new year that were a bit uncertain. A new classroom, a new teacher, new classmates, and perhaps even a brand-new school can make the first day feel like the beginning of a great adventure. Our grandchildren were clearly a little nervous mixed with excitement. They wondered if they would like their teacher? Who will they sit with? Will they make new friends?

But amid the shopping, organizing, and preparing, it is worth pausing to

appreciate what this season represents. Every new notebook has blank pages waiting to be filled. Every new teacher brings the opportunity to learn something different. Every new classroom holds new experiences, challenges, and friendships.

As families prepare for another school year, we should celebrate the excitement that comes with a fresh start. Whether a child is walking into a familiar school or taking those first steps into an entirely new environment, the beginning of a school year is full of possibility.

So, here's to the backpacks packed, the shoes tied, the lunches prepared – and most importantly, to our children heading off to school ready to learn, grow, explore, and make wonderful new memories!

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Announcing the 2026 Recipient of the Nelson Excellence in Leadership Award

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

For nearly 25 years, the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) has presented an annual award showcasing the extraordinary efforts of Canadian school system leaders. Since 2024, this award has been known as the Nelson Excellence in Leadership Award.

The recipient of the 2026 Nelson Excellence in Leadership Award is a name that will be familiar to many CASSA members: former CASSA President (2014-2016) Dr. Cindy Finn. Warmest congratulations to Dr. Finn, the director general of the Lester B. Pearson School Board.

CASSA's leadership award is presented at our annual conference to a CASSA member who has exhibited exemplary leadership ability and enhanced school administration. This year, the award ceremony took place in Saskatoon on July 3. CASSA is grateful for the ongoing support of this award by Nelson Canada, Canada's leading K to 12 educational publisher.

From 2002 to 2023, this award was known as the EXL Award. Previous recipients of both awards up to 2025 are listed in the June 2026 issue of *Leaders & Learners*. A list of recipients is also posted in the Awards section of the CASSA website.

Dr. Finn will represent CASSA as the Canadian Superintendent of the Year at the 2027 National Conference on Education in Atlanta, Georgia, next February. We are

pleased to continue this long relationship with our American colleagues in the School Superintendents Association (ASA).

Here are profiles on each of the 2026 Nelson Award nominees.

DR. CINDY FINN



Association of Directors General of English School Boards of Quebec

Dr. Cindy Finn is the director general of the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB), a role she has held since 2019. The board is headquartered in Dorval on the Island of Montreal, and its schools and centres are located on the unceded ancestral territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) People of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

A highly respected school psychologist, academic, and systems leader, Dr. Finn has dedicated her career to advancing educational excellence, inclusive leadership, and student well-being. She has consistently brought together research, policy, and practice to strengthen educational systems and improve

outcomes for students locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally.

Dr. Finn has been an active member of CASSA since 2009 when she presented at the annual conference in Calgary. She went on to sit on CASSA's board of directors as a representative of the Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec (AAESQ), to contribute as a member of CASSA's Governance and Operations Committee, and to serve as CASSA president-elect, president, and past president.

Among her many accomplishments with the organization, Dr. Finn helped advance CASSA's commitment to school mental health by authoring a national discussion paper on system leadership in school mental health and by taking part in national conversations that brought together educational leaders from across Canada. She is a founding member of the Canadian School Mental Health Leadership Network, a joint initiative of CASSA and the Canadian School Boards Association.

Dr. Finn has also served on the board of governors for the American Association of School Administrators and as chair for the Leadership Committee for English Education in Quebec.

Prior to her current role with the LBPSB, she served as its director of student services for 14 years. Dr. Finn also worked in various schools as a psychologist and a member of the Family and School Support and Treatment Team.

She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from McGill University, and has been the recipient of several awards for her work in educational leadership and school mental health. She is a passionate advocate for student well-being, mental health, equity, diversity, dignity, and inclusion.

(A conversation with Dr. Finn as she began her role as CASSA president in 2014 was featured in Leaders & Learners, Volume 9, Issue 60, which is archived on the CASSA website.)

JODY WELLER



Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association

Jody Weller is the superintendent of education with the Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board (NPSC), based in North Bay, Ontario. The communities served by NPSC are situated in Robinson Huron Treaty territory on the traditional lands of the Anishinabek Nation, home to the peoples of Nipissing and Dokis First Nations.

Jody's vision, courage, humility, and commitment to Indigenous education have enriched the educational experiences of students and educators across Ontario. She is widely recognized as an innovative and inspirational educational leader. Throughout her career as a teacher, consultant, principal, and superintendent, she has worked to create meaningful, authentic, and culturally responsive learning experiences that promote Indigenous worldviews and support student achievement.

As superintendent of education and Indigenous education lead for NPSC, Jody has expanded Indigenous education opportunities for students and staff. She has led initiatives such as a provincially recognized Specialist High Skills Major in Indigenous Studies; partnerships supporting language, culture, land-based learning, and community engagement; and the establishment of Mkwā Dodem ("Bear Clan" in Anishinaabemowin), the Indigenous student council at one of NPSC's high

schools that promotes Indigenous culture, history, and language as well as reconciliation.

Jody is a member of Chapleau Cree First Nation and is the first Indigenous Member at Large on the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA) board of directors. She has helped to create professional learning and support opportunities for Indigenous Catholic educational leaders across Ontario.

Last May, Jody received the 2025 Nelson Excellence in Leadership Award from OCSOA at its annual general meeting and conference. At the same time, in collaboration with Elder George Couchie of Nipissing First Nation, she was gifted a buffalo hide drum. A buffalo, Elder George explained, is an animal "who runs toward the storm." This honour, presented to recognize her devotion to the field of Indigenous education, symbolized Jody's unwavering courage and determination to support the success of Indigenous students and to make sure Indigenous perspectives are woven throughout the fabric of all NPSC programming.

Jody has served as NPSC superintendent of education since 2017. Prior to this role, she was the superintendent of education for Superior North Catholic District School Board, headquartered in Terrace Bay, Ontario. She earned her Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education at Nipissing University, and her Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Administration at the University of New Brunswick.

DR. CLINT MOROZIUK



College of Alberta School Superintendents

Dr. Clint Moroziuk is the chief superintendent for Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools (GSACRD), which

serves Legal, Morinville, St. Albert, and communities in Sturgeon County, Alberta. GSACRD is situated on the original lands of the Cree, those of Treaty 6, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

He was appointed to this role in 2020 after serving as the district's assistant superintendent from 2018 to 2020. With over 30 years of leadership experience in K to 12 education, he is responsible for providing strategic leadership, governance support, and operational oversight to advance student success and organizational excellence.

Since becoming chief superintendent, Dr. Moroziuk has fostered a culture of clarity, collaboration, joy, and hope. At the same time, he has led efforts to strengthen academic achievement, student well-being, faith formation, and inclusion across GSACRD.

His accomplishments include leading a comprehensive board engagement process to inform division-wide capital and infrastructure planning, enhancing transparency, stewardship, and equitable access to quality learning environments. Dr. Moroziuk helped to implement and expand the Catholic Cogito Academy, which provides families with choice through a structured learning pathway focused on literacy, numeracy, and strong foundational skills. He also initiated the system-wide implementation of Collaborative Response, strengthening collaborative practice and improving support for every learner.

He currently serves as Past President of the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and is the President of CASSA.

He earned his Bachelor of Education from the University of Alberta, his Master of Arts in Education from the University of Phoenix, a Master of Religious Education from Newman Theological College, and a Doctor of Education from the University of Calgary. He recently collaborated on designing a course on Catholic education in Alberta, Canada, and the world for the Master of Education program at St. Mary's University in Calgary, where he is a sessional lecturer. Dr. Moroziuk is also a Chartered Professional in Human Resources.

Dr. Moroziuk grew up in Mundare, a small town about 70km east of Edmonton. He began his teaching career in rural Alberta before relocating to Sherwood Park with his family. He and his wife have two daughters.○

Michael Borgfjord

Presented With Distinguished Service Award



Michael Borgfjord, Superintendent.

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

We are pleased to share that the 2026 Distinguished

Service Award was presented to Michael Borgfjord at the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) national conference this July in Saskatoon. The Distinguished Service Award is intended to recognize any present or recent CASSA member who has demonstrated outstanding ability and leadership.

Michael is the superintendent for Black Gold School Division in central Alberta, a role he took on in June 2024. He has over two decades of senior system leadership experience, having served as superintendent for several school divisions in Alberta and Manitoba, including Pembina Hills School Division and the Seine River School Division.

As a superintendent, Michael has always kept the focus on student success and



(L to R): Mike Helm, Director General of New Frontiers School Board; Michael Borgfjord, Superintendent for Black Gold School Division; Jeff Hainbuch, Director of Educational Partnerships for LEARNstyle Ltd.; and Reg Klassen, Executive Director of CASSA; presenting the Distinguished Service award, sponsored by LEARNstyle Ltd.

improving life chances for each student. He has led significant improvements in student achievement, advancing inclusive education, and championing innovative early learning initiatives. His work has helped transform educational outcomes for students while fostering strong partnerships among educators, families, and communities.

His influence extends well beyond his own school divisions. He has served as the president of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), as the American Association of School Administrators western rep on the CASSA executive, and as the chair of the Alberta Rural Education Symposium. He has been a member of CASSA and its provincial affiliates for more than 15 years.

Michael has been a positive and collaborative contributor to provincial and national initiatives in student services, mental health, governance, and educational leadership. He is highly respected in his local jurisdiction as well as nationally and internationally. Michael is known for bringing people together, building consensus, and leading with integrity, courage, and compassion.

Michael received his Bachelor of Education and Master of Education in Educational Administration from the University of Manitoba.

Congratulations to Michael. His outstanding contributions to educational leadership and public education in Canada are most deserving of this national recognition. ○

Honourary Life Membership Presented to *Ben Grebinski*



Ben Grebinski.

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

It is with great pleasure that we announce Ben Grebinski has been awarded an Honourary Life Membership with the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA). Ben received this honour during CASSA's annual conference, held in Saskatoon this July.

Ben served as the executive director for the League of Educational Administrators, Directors & Superintendents (LEADS) from 2018 to 2026. LEADS is the professional and regulatory association for senior system administrators in Saskatchewan. He also co-represented LEADS on the CASSA board of directors and served on CASSA's planning committee.

Ben's career in Saskatchewan's Catholic and public school systems has included roles as classroom teacher, vice principal, principal, coach, superintendent, and director of education. He has also lectured at the University of Saskatchewan and the



(L to R): Mike Helm, Director General of New Frontiers School Board; Ben Grebinski; Colin Wood, CEO of Clarify-Ed; and Reg Klassen, Executive Director of CASSA; presenting the Honourary Life Membership, sponsored by Clarify-Ed.

University of Regina. Ben is the former director of education for the Prairie Valley School Division (PVSD) in the province's southeast, retiring in 2018.

He is widely recognized for his ability to lead complex organizational change. As director of education for PVSD, Ben successfully guided the integration of seven former school divisions into one unified system. His dedication to this work went well beyond system administration tasks, resulting in a school division culture focused on continuous improvement and making sure that every student was known and supported by name and by need. Under his leadership, PVSD saw impressive gains in student achievement, literacy outcomes, and graduation rates.

Beyond his work in school divisions, Ben has helped to shape educational leadership across Saskatchewan not only through

his work with LEADS but with his contributions to governance and policy development and his mentorship of future education leaders.

He has received a number of leadership, athletic, coaching, and officiating awards, including the University of Regina Crown Achievement for Professional Contributions. A pioneer in educational technology, Ben was recognized as Computing Canada's IT Executive of the Year. His innovative work has influenced educational practice nationally and internationally.

Ben is also a certified Public Sector Governor professional, Qualified Arbitrator, and Qualified Mediator.

Congratulations to Ben, a most distinguished educational leader whose career has left a lasting impact on public education in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and beyond. ○

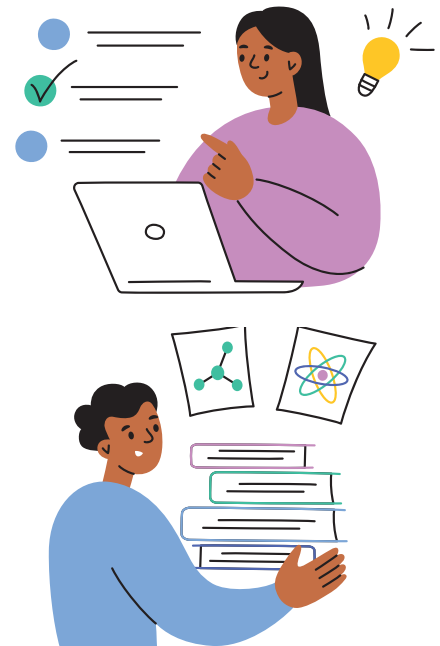
Leaders & Learners Wants to Hear From You!

We're looking for writers!

We would like to share stories about how your schools, districts, and community partners are supporting each student through programs, partnerships, and professional development pertaining to that theme. Articles may highlight new technologies, curricula, PD opportunities, outdoor learning lessons, Reconciliation, learning for new Canadians, recovery learning after the pandemic, etc.

The Winter 2026-2027 edition will be mailed to readers across Canada in January 2027.

- Proposals are due September 28, 2026
- Final deadline is November 9, 2026
- If your abstract is chosen, you will be given a word count to stick to.



Please submit article proposals to Jenna Collignon, editor, at jcollignon@matrixgroupinc.net and Reg Klassen, Executive Director, at reg_klassen@cassa-acgcs.ca.

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