2026 • Issue 6

Leaders & Learners NEWSLETTER

The official newsletter of the Canadian Association of School System Administrators



Équité et excellence en éducation
CASSA-ACGCS
Equity and Excellence in Education

Inside this Issue

Greetings from the President, **Page 1**

Greetings from the Executive Director, **Page 2**

Going Forward Together: How the Only Inuit-led School Board in Quebec Embraced the Spirit of Sivumuattiit to Develop Its 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, Part Two, **Page 3**

Call for Abstracts, **Page 8**

Greetings from the President

Standing Together, Coast to Coast to Coast



Dr. Clint Moroziuk
CASSA/ACGCS President

As we enter the month of November, I find myself thinking about what it means to belong to something larger than our own schools and districts. This issue's feature on Kativik Ilisarniliriniq's *Sivumuattiit* strategic plan is a powerful reminder of that: a process built on listening, circles, and shared voice, reaching a vision that "moves students, schools, adult education centres, the community, and the region towards a brighter future."

This month also brings Remembrance Day. In commemoration of this day, our schools will pause to honour the sacrifices of those who served and continue to serve our country. These moments matter. I encourage every system leader to ensure this day is marked meaningfully in your schools, whether through assemblies, moments of silence, or conversations that help students connect history to the present. Our Legion partners across the country offer wonderful resources, and many of your schools likely already have strong traditions in place worth celebrating and sharing.

There is a thread that connects Remembrance Day to the *Sivumuattiit* story, and to the work of system leaders everywhere: the idea that we are stronger, wiser, and more resilient when we stand together. Whether it is a nation remembering those who served, or a school board rebuilding its strategic plan on a foundation of community voice, the lesson is the same. Solidarity is not just a sentiment; it is a practice, built through listening, humility, and showing up for one another.

As CASSA members, we represent diverse systems throughout Canada, but we share a commitment to the students and communities we serve, and a belief that we do better work when we do it together. I hope this issue inspires you, as it has me, to look for opportunities to connect with colleagues in other provinces and territories, to learn from approaches different from your own, and to carry that spirit of solidarity into your own leadership this month.

Thank you for all you do for the students in your care. I wish you a meaningful Remembrance Day, and a November filled with connection and purpose.

Greetings
from the Executive Director



Reg Klassen
CASSA/ACGCS New Executive Director

Introducing Ten Principles of Servant Leadership

In my last article I introduced Servant Leadership and shared I have attempted to implement this philosophy in my leadership positions, particularly in my positions as Superintendent. There are ten commonly recognized principles of Servant Leadership providing a framework that aligns deeply with the values of schools – growth, community, and human development. My experience has been that when applied intentionally, these principles help leaders create environments where individuals and organizations flourish. Here is a brief introduction to each.

The first principle, **listening**, invites leaders to slow down and hear the voices within their school community. In practice, this means creating space for teachers, students, and families to express needs and ideas without fear of dismissal. **Empathy** follows naturally; educational leaders must understand the lived experiences of others to build trust and meaningful relationships.

Healing plays a unique role in schools, where leaders often support individuals navigating stress, conflict, or change. By fostering emotional safety, leaders help their communities recover and grow. **Awareness**, both personal and organizational, ensures leaders remain grounded, reflective, and attuned to the culture they shape.

The principle of **persuasion** encourages influence through collaboration rather than authority. In education, this means guiding teams toward shared goals instead of relying on positional power. **Conceptualization** allows leaders to think beyond daily operations and imagine what their school could become, while **foresight** helps them anticipate challenges and make decisions that honor long-term well-being.

Through **stewardship**, leaders take responsibility for the people and mission entrusted to them. **Commitment to the growth of people** reinforces the belief that every individual – teacher, student, or staff member – deserves opportunities to develop. Finally, **building community** reminds leaders that schools thrive when relationships are strong, and everyone feels they belong.

Together, these principles form a roadmap for educational leaders who choose to serve first and lead with purpose. In subsequent articles I will attempt to explain each principle more fully and its application to leadership in education.

CASSA Board of Directors

President
Clint Moroziuk

Past President
Michael Helm

President Elect
Morris Hucal

CASS (Alberta)
David Keohane and Debbie McKibbin

LEADS (Saskatchewan)
Duane Hauk and Nigel McCarthy

MASS (Manitoba)
Barb Isaak, Shelley Amos, and Dan Ward

OSCOA (Ontario)
Tracy Barill and Lorrie Naar

NWTSA (Northwest Territories)
Renee Closs

ADGESBQ (Quebec)
Cindy Finn

AAESQ (Quebec)
Evelyne Alfonsi and David Chisholm

RNDGÉ
Andrée Newell

NBSSA (New Brunswick)
Pamela Wilson

NLASSA (Newfoundland and Labrador)
Kirk Smith

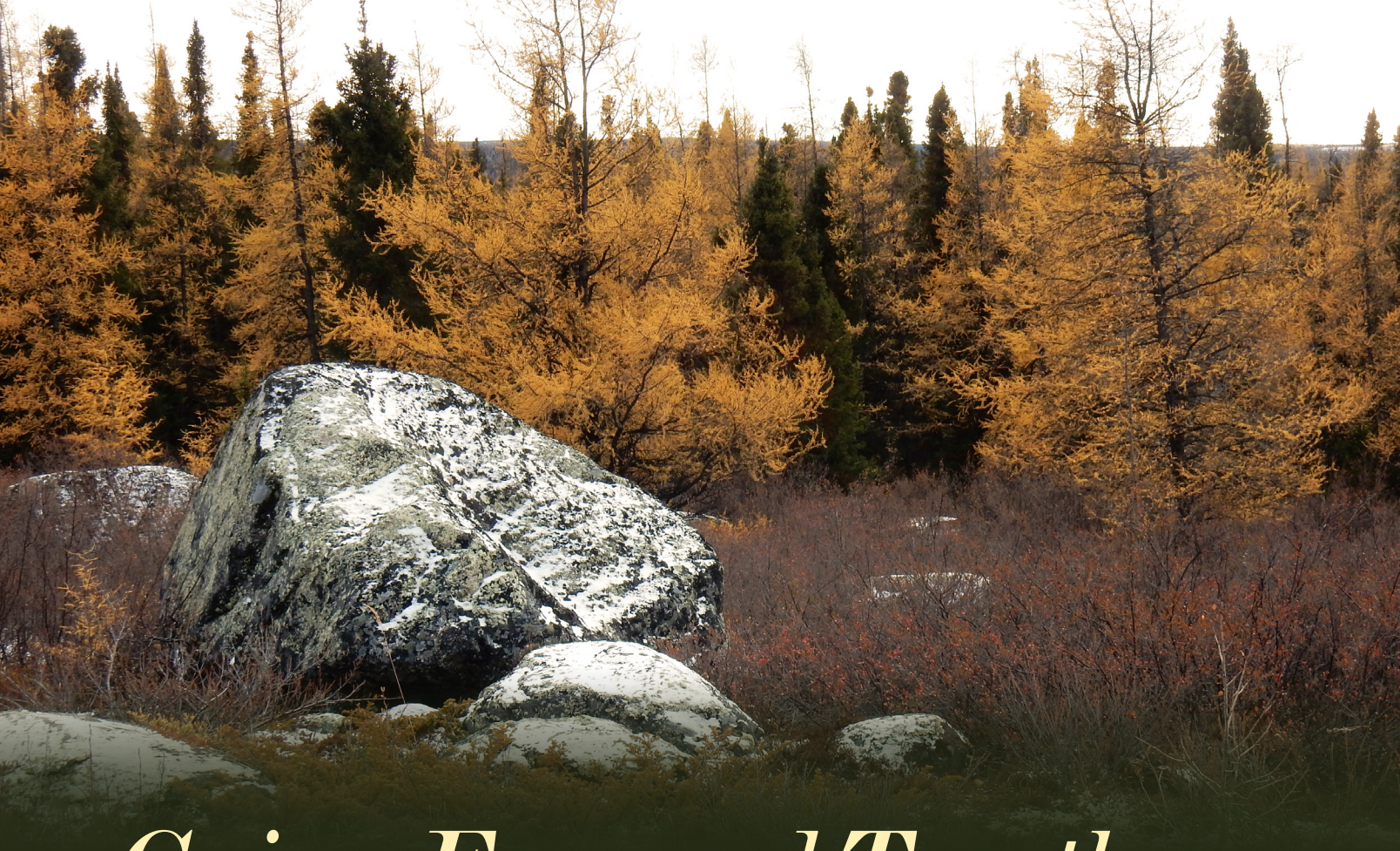
BCSSA (British Columbia)
Gino Bondi and Cheryl Lenardon

AASA Eastern Rep
Kirk Smith

AASA Western Rep
Kevin Garinger

PSAANS (Nova Scotia)
Tim Simony

Directors at Large
Tracy Beaulieu (Prince Edward Island)



Going Forward Together:

How the Only Inuit-led School Board in Quebec Embraced the Spirit of Sivumuattiit to Develop Its 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, Part Two

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

This is the second part of a two-part series. To read part one, please refer to the October 2026 issue (issue 5) of the* Leaders & Learners *newsletter.

In the second part of our series about Kativik Ilisarniliriniq developing its current five-year strategic plan for student success, we are sharing more of our conversation with Kaudjak Padlayat and Denis Daigle. Kaudjak and Denis co-led this innovative and deeply collaborative process, rooted in Inuit culture, to develop *Sivumuattiit: Going Forward Together, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.*

Kaudjak is the board's strategic coordinator and Denis serves as its director of administrative services. The two presented a well-received session at this year's Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) conference in Saskatoon that focused on their experiences facilitating consultations with students, staff, the board's Council of Commissioners, and community members.

As with the actual consultation sessions throughout 2024 and 2025, Kaudjak and Denis brought a dynamic and interactive



approach to their CASSA conference presentation. They kept PowerPoint slides to a minimum, created a circle set-up in the room, and got session participants involved in an interactive sharing activity right away. This engaging delivery style allowed them to model some of the methods they had used to gather more authentic responses during events and workshops throughout Nunavik and in Montreal.

Nearly 1,000 people took part in the Sivumuattiit consultation process. Participants included 233 students, 25 community members, and 375 school staff, many of whom were Nunavimmiut (Nunavik's Inuit). Beyond gathering data and determining priorities, the consultations also presented opportunities for connecting people across departments, schools, and communities. Some of the events meant family members living remotely from each other were able to reunite with one another, illustrating how education can and must be a community-centred experience.

The work was guided by a key question: How might Kativik Ilisarniliriniq courageously strengthen student success?

The process began with a Listening phase. Events and activities, including visual thinking workshops and other creative participatory exercises, were designed to reveal strengths, needs, hopes, opportunities, and challenges. Unique consultations were held for Nunavik school administrators and Montreal-based managers, staff from the Adult Education and Vocational Training department in Nunavik and Montreal, staff from Youth Sector Services, staff from three schools and one adult education centre, students from 13 schools, and parents from the communities of Kuujjuaq and Ivujivik.

The next phase, Visioning, took place over the winter of 2024-2025 and focused on developing a shared vision and clear priorities for student success and the success of their communities. Through their inclusive nature, these sessions created safe spaces for people to contribute their views and hopes, collaborate with and support peers, develop a sense of empowerment, and strengthen cultural awareness. Participants included managers from schools and backbone services, the Council of Commissioners, and staff from Youth Sector Services.

The Council of Commissioners, whose elected commissioners represent each of Nunavik's 14 communities, then collectively created a mission statement. They also validated four strategic priorities and actions to use as a foundation for the third phase, Action Planning. Staff from Montreal offices, including support staff, professionals, and managers, worked together on the strategic priorities, determining who would need to do what to achieve these actions. This work was informed by the belief that each person, no matter their role, contributes to student success and the strategic priorities and actions.

All of the efforts from the first three phases culminated in the fourth and final phase, Decision and Closing. The result, *Sivumuattiit: Going Forward Together*, is a strategic plan that is much more than a set of priorities, actions, or checklists. By thoughtfully and respectfully gathering the voices of Nunavik, Kativik Ilisarniliriniq has created a plan that reflects a shared commitment to student success, cultural pride, and community well-being, particularly for Nunavimmiut. It also helps lay a foundation toward one day developing the board's own education system based in Inuit knowledge, values, language, and culture.

This conversation with Kaudjak and Denis has been edited for clarity and length.

In considering what is important to support students, including adult learners, and the staff working with them, why was it critical to have the Inuit worldview as well as non-Inuit knowledge? Why was it important to have the Inuit worldview infused throughout the process to develop the strategic plan?

Denis Daigle: That is something that came up through the consultations, both the importance of the Inuit worldview and the importance of the non-Inuit worldview. The underlying philosophy behind everything we did was all about collaborative practices, collective intelligence, sharing, and listening to each other.

Everything that is in the strategic plan – the shared vision of student success, how we

Success means each student can say:

- I feel complete as a person and a proud member of my communities
- I am grounded in my language and cultural identity
- I take charge of my own learning and help my family and my communities

– from *Sivumuattiit: Going Forward Together*

Sivumuattiit is a shared vision that moves students, schools, adult education centres, the community, and the region towards a brighter future.

– from Sivumuattiit: Going Forward Together

should support student success, the strategic priorities, the actions, the vision, the signals of progress – that all came from the people as we were doing the consultations.

We did it in a circular way: We would do one consultation activity, that would provide us with information to work on with another group, and then we would come back to the first group. We kept building and building, circle after circle.

It's not me and Kaudjak saying, for example, that it's important for the school board to hire, train, and retain Inuit staff. It's because of the contributions from the people who were consulted that it rose up as being a priority.

Kaudjak Padlayat: This process didn't leave anybody out. We made sure that everyone was heard, no matter what language they spoke. Our main goal was to always think of our culture, our language, and our system. The important work of all the consulting, of all the meetings, of all the little workshops we held, it was always based on who we are as Inuit.



How have people have been responding to the strategic plan?

Denis: I'll give you a very concrete example. Kaudjak and I work on the same team and a new employee started with us two or three weeks ago. This is somebody who is totally unaware of everything that has been happening for the past two years – the one year of consultation, the one year of implementation that we've done. We were having a chat during break time and she brought it up. She said, "I took the time to go through the strategic plan, and I've never seen something so easy to relate to, that just makes sense." She was over the moon about it just by reading the document – it really spoke to her.

Kaudjak: The strategic plan also has a lot of visuals. Growing up, we didn't really have books to refer to. A lot of our learnings are through visuals and hands-on activities.



THREE GUIDING PILLARS OF SIMUMUATTIIT

NIKISUITTUQ: Our vision of student success and how everyone can support it

Everyone can support student success by:

- Celebrating all achievements, including non-academic, traditional, and community-centred goals,
- Working together,
- Making Inuit culture, language, and traditional ways a priority in all learning,
- Providing relevant, hands-on learning and social opportunities,
- Celebrating educational pathways that reflect different life journeys, learning needs, and goals,
- Making sure school is a safe and caring place, and
- Helping students develop long-term relationships with staff, especially Inuit.

SIVUMUT: Where we want to be by 2030 and how we will get there

Make Inuktitut and Inuit ways a priority by:

- Providing strong Inuktitut language programs and curriculum that support all,
- Providing curriculum and learning resources that reflect Inuit culture and self-determination, and
- Having staff understand the North, respect Inuit ways, and bring this to their work.

Work together with students in mind by:

- Helping each other understand,
- Collaborating, and
- Managing tension and conflict in healthy ways.

Make Kativik Ilisarniliriniq a great place to work and build a career by:

- Giving staff a chance to excel at their work and grow into new careers through professional training and accreditation programs,
- Supporting Inuit staff as they develop skills and confidence to step into key roles, and
- Offering a professional and safe work environment that shows respect for Inuit culture and each other.

Help students and communities see schools as welcoming places that will help them succeed by:

- Supporting student interests, needs, and life paths in ways that encourage them to come to school every day,
- Helping parents feel involved, welcomed, and able to heal from the past while supporting their children, and
- Having Elders, knowledge keepers, and organizations help develop curriculum and provide support to students outside of school.

The strategic priorities and actions that will get us there include:

- Working collaboratively,
- Making sure there is accountability,
- Empowering everybody's leadership,
- Growing relationships between schools, students, parents, and knowledge keepers,
- Improving long-term stability, and
- Strengthening Inuit language, culture, and leadership.

The signals that tell us we are making progress over the next five years include:

- More staff receiving support and using healthy collaboration methods,
- A strong interest in using data effectively to make decisions,
- Regular check-ins about roles and responsibilities that use the same methods and language,
- Staff and students sharing how they engage with learning,
- Regular internal discussions about what staff are trying and learning together to strengthen relationships between schools and parents,
- Other organizations and knowledge keepers understanding our vision of student success and being invited to be a part of it,
- Clear hiring strategies, processes, and supports developed in part by local administrators,
- More staff engaging in professional development activities and programs, and
- More Inuit staff offering mentorship and peer coaching, and being recognized for this work.

PINASUGUTITAARQAMIIT: How everyone can work together to move forward

Our strengths will help us move forward and they include:

- Care and compassion,
- Autonomy,
- Flexibility,
- Resourcefulness, and
- Inuit and non-Inuit know-how.

We can work together by:

- Being courageous and supportive of one another,
- Trying things out and learning from it, and
- Taking responsibility and remembering we are all part of the system.

So our strategic plan has that – it explains a lot in art. Everything is in simple words so we're all on the same page. It doesn't have to be complicated to come up with a working document.

You both presented this year in Saskatoon at the CASSA conference. How was that experience?

Kaudjak: It was an eye opener for me because we've never been in that kind of setting. In the end, we had great audiences who thought that our strategic plan was how it's supposed to be.

Can you expand on that? When they say that's how it should be, they may have been bringing some of their own experiences of working on board strategic plans. Did anyone have a specific thing about wanting to take this idea, this type of process, back to their board and apply it?

Denis: The positive feedback that we got is that people felt so engaged rapidly with the content due to how we delivered it. We used the same type of methods that we used during our consultations. It wasn't just showing up to the session with a PowerPoint presentation. We started with an activity with the participants sharing information about students and things like that. People were intrigued and appreciated participating in an activity that engages them instead of just sitting there looking at a PowerPoint.

There's something that happens, that engages people, when we use these different collaborative practices and activities. We saw that throughout our whole consultation and at the conference. It stirs up a passion and something magical happens.

From this CASSA conference event, perhaps there are opportunities for future networking and learning. What are you hoping people might take away for when they work on their next strategic plan, especially given the history of colonization in education in Canada and how there is rarely this kind of collaborative consultation or sharing of power during planning?

Denis: I'm not sure if this answers the question but I'm not Inuit. I'm from the province of Quebec and I was lucky enough to go work for Kativik

Ilisarniliriniq as a teacher straight out of university. That's where I met Kaudjak, actually. We started at the same time 25 years ago and throughout our careers, we've always come back to each other.

From my own very, I'll use the term "southern," view of administration and school boards, graduation rates, pedagogy, and all of that, I knew that if we wanted to achieve something with this plan, it was better to use Indigenous wisdom, which provides deeper results than talking about how you want graduation rates to increase from 86 per cent to 88 per cent over the next five years.

It's using Indigenous wisdom, history, connection, and all the great collaborative practices that Inuit have been using for hundreds of years: Sitting in a circle, sharing ideas, listening to each other. By using that, the real idea is to improve the system. It came out of the theories of system change instead of focusing on working on this process or that process, which is very administrative and dry, and nobody relates to it.



It was a journey to let go of my own preconceptions of what a strategic plan should be. As southerners we grow up with a lot of pressure for success, whereas our strategic plan for Kativik Ilisarniliriniq is based on the heart and on wisdom.

Kaudjak: We wanted a harmonized action plan that will support everyone. ○

Sivumuattiit, *the five-year strategic plan was released in June 2025. It can be found on the Kativik Ilisarniliriniq website under Media – Publications at www.kativik.qc.ca/medias/. To learn more about the consultation process, visit www.kativik.qc.ca/en/sivumuattiit-consultation-process/.*



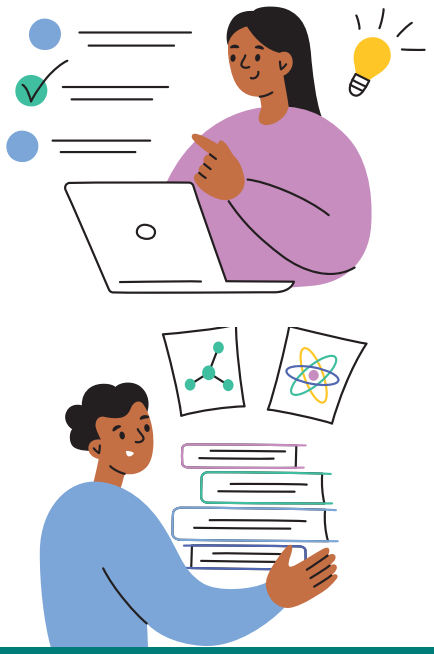
Leaders & Learners Wants to Hear From You!

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 Summer 2027 edition will be mailed to readers across Canada in July 2027.

- Proposals are due January 18, 2027
- Final deadline is in May 2027
- 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.

Advertise with *Leaders & Learners*!

Want to see your logo here in the newsletter?

We can make that happen! Contact **sales@matrixgroupinc.net** to learn more about advertising in the newsletter, and also in our bi-annual magazine, *Leaders & Learners*.

Newsletter supported by:

murdock® SINCE 1853

Équité et excellence en éducation
CASSA-ACGCS
Equity and Excellence in Education

Published for the Canadian Association of School System Administrators
1123 Glenashton Drive
Oakville, ON L6H 5M1
Tel: 204-868-5343
reg_klassen@cassa-acgcs.ca
www.cassa-acgcs.ca

Articles written by Tara Wittchen

Published by Matrix Group Publishing Inc.
204 - 83 Garry Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 4J9
Tel: 866-999-1299
editor@matrixgroupinc.net
www.matrixgroupinc.net