

Fall 2023

the torch



From left to right: 'Before' photo of Donwood School's rear wall; 'After' photo showing additional windows and bright exterior; The library now boasts a 30 ft floor-to-ceiling glass wall.

Donwood Upgrades Completed

Over the past 18 months, Donwood School, an early years school built in 1971, has undergone a complete building envelope and mechanical upgrade. This much-needed renovation included new windows, upgraded insulation in walls, new roofing with improved insulation, and new masonry veneer. The mechanical systems upgrades included full replacement

of the school's heating, ventilation, cooling, and building automation systems, and an electrical service upgrade.

The renovation was a complex project involving an interdisciplinary team of division representatives, along with architectural, landscape architectural, structural, mechanical, and electrical consultants. Special thanks to

Andrew Lewthwaite from Public City Architecture for his hard work and commitment to this project.

Inside the school, colourful built-in window seats at some of the larger windows lend character to the brightly lit interiors. And 5 ft x 5 ft skylights were installed on the second floor in interior classrooms that, prior to the reno, had no access to natural light.

"The incredible part of this project is that the renovations and upgrades took place while maintaining the school in full operation during the school year," says trustee Susan Olynik. "The renovation teams worked in the evenings during school days and long days during the summers to get this project completed within a year and a half. Quite remarkable!" she adds.

RETSD Budget Planning & ThoughtExchange

For the last number of years, public education across Manitoba has experienced chronic underfunding, resulting in a strained and challenging budgeting process, particularly in RETSD. The Board of Trustees anticipates another extremely difficult budgeting process if funding does not significantly increase.

The Board of Trustees would like to increase community and stakeholder engagement and ensure we have the most relevant

information regarding the needs of our community. To help achieve this, the division will soon issue a ThoughtExchange survey asking you: When you think of our child(ren)'s education what are your top education spending priorities?

Parents will be sent an email that includes a link to the ThoughtExchange. The link is also available to all community members on the division website and can be accessed via QR code.

This is the second time RETSD has issued a ThoughtExchange to help guide the budgeting process, the first one having taken place in 2021–22.

"The Board of Trustees wants to solicit as much feedback as possible from our community as it relates to the upcoming budgeting process, especially as we embark on what could be another challenging year," says Brianne Goertzen, chair of the finance, facilities, transportation, and technology standing

committee. "We value and respect our educational stakeholders and this ThoughtExchange serves as one additional way we can hear from you," she adds.



Community Education Forum

The Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that RETSD will be holding a Community Education Forum on Saturday, November 18, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Bernie Wolfe School, 95 Bournais Dr. The theme of the forum is *Creating Student Success: What Does This Look Like to You?* This theme was selected based on the results of the Enhanced Engagement Survey sent to all

parents in spring 2023. The forum will include:

- A brief presentation about how the division currently supports student success.
- A panel comprised of students, a school principal, a parent, and a community business member.
- Time for discussion rounds at small table groups. These discussions will be prompted

by questions and the ideas generated will be recorded and later compiled into a final document.

“Our community has been asking for opportunities to share what is important to them, and we are excited to offer this forum as a way to do so,” says trustee Shannon Hiebert. “This event will be a great opportunity for board members to hear the thoughts of both

parents and students and, in turn, for parents and students to listen to what others have to say about creating student success,” she adds.

We are hoping to have all 42 schools represented by parents. School administrators will be reaching out with pre-registration information and more details. Visit retsd.ca to learn more.

Truth & Reconciliation in Action

Students and staff from across RETSD observed the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 29, one day prior to the official date. It is a sombre occasion for many, a hopeful one for others, and an opportunity for all to commemorate, honour, teach, and learn.

It was in the spirit of Wâhkôhtowin, a Cree word that is sometimes translated to “all my relatives,” that all students and staff across the school division honoured the tradition of Orange Shirt Day and the observance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Students engaged in activities such as gatherings, walks, readings, and conversation circles. They also took part in age-appropriate learning about

the challenges faced by Indigenous peoples due to colonialism, the legacy of residential schools, and systemic barriers.

This learning was not limited to schools. Senior administration, along with the divisional Indigenous Academic Achievement team, met in a circle with staff from three other locations—maintenance, transportation, and the RETSD Administration Offices—to lead learning about truth and reconciliation.

In RETSD, we believe it is our responsibility to provide learning about this part of Canadian history, so we can work together to make positive change now and in the future.



Jason Drysdale, assistant superintendent—educational services and planning, takes part in a smudge at the division's transportation department during National Day for Truth and Reconciliation learning on September 29.

Growing Numbers

School Attendance

Each year on September 29, school divisions send their attendance numbers for that day to the department of education to establish a yearly snapshot of enrolment numbers. Although the numbers are recorded that day, the process begins in January, as the division makes projections for budgetary reasons.

In January 2023, the division projected enrolment to be 17,691,

yet on September 29, the recorded attendance number was 18,276—585 more than anticipated.

Enrolment numbers are expected to increase steadily as the division welcomes new families. Since the beginning of August, 250 newcomers to Canada have registered within the division.

Transportation

With the rise in enrolment, the number of students being

transported to school by the division's transportation department has seen an increase also. In September 2022, there were a total of 3,962 riders on division buses daily, and that number grew to 4,039 in September 2023, an increase of 77. This is the first time in the division's history that transportation has exceeded more than 4,000 riders daily.

The number of individual bus routes has also increased to 309 in 2023,

up 17 from the previous year. And the division now has 83 buses and drivers, up from 81 in 2022.

“Our enrolment and transportation numbers are increasing as our division continues to respond to meet the needs in the RETSD community,” says trustee Keith Morrison. “We are excited to welcome newcomers to our division. And kudos to our entire division staff for their efforts as our division grows,” he adds.

Board Reconfiguration

RETSD congratulates Colleen Carswell, trustee for Ward 1, who was re-elected as board chair for the 2023–24 school year at the board's inaugural meeting on September 5, 2023. We also congratulate Susan Olynik, trustee for Ward 4, on being elected as board vice-chair.

The board will hold its regular meetings on the first and third Tuesday of the month, starting at 6:30 p.m., at the RETSD Administration Offices, 589 Roch St. All regular board meetings are live streamed via Microsoft

Teams and accessible to the public online. Meeting links are posted on the RETSD website prior to each board meeting. The public are also welcome to attend meetings in person.

The Board of Trustees has three standing committees that meet regularly to deliberate on matters within their area of responsibility. Their meetings give committee members and staff an opportunity to take a more in-depth look at the matters before them. They cannot make decisions or act independently of the board; they

must bring their recommendations to the whole board for consideration. Committee members and chairs are elected at the board's inaugural meeting held at the beginning of each new school year.

"Our standing committees give members a chance to dig in and learn more about the unique opportunities and challenges within each area. Trustees are committed and excited to be working together on these committees for the upcoming year," says board chair Colleen Carswell.

FINANCE, FACILITIES, TRANSPORTATION & TECHNOLOGY

Chair: Brianne Goertzen
Members: Brenda Bage; Sheri Irwin; Susan Olynik

PROGRAM, POLICY REVIEW & PERSONNEL

Chair: Shannon Hiebert
Members: Brenda Bage; Sheri Hanson; Keith Morrison

NEGOTIATIONS

Chair: Brianne Goertzen
Members: Sheri Hanson; Shannon Hiebert; Sheri Irwin

School Board Medallists & Schulich Leader Scholarship Recipients



Cody McDonald
Murdoch MacKay Collegiate
GOLD MEDALLIST



Kaylyn Daher
Collège Pierre-Elliott-Trudeau
SILVER MEDALLIST



Noah Selk
River East Collegiate
SILVER MEDALLIST



Cherry Nguyen
Collège Miles Macdonell Collegiate
SILVER MEDALLIST



Chloe Jessop
Transcona Collegiate
SILVER MEDALLIST



Simar Ubhi
Kildonan-East Collegiate
SILVER MEDALLIST

The Board of Trustees congratulates the 2023 School Board Medal recipients. Every year, the trustees bestow these awards on graduates who demonstrate academic excellence, leadership, and contributions to their school and community.

The board would also like to congratulate the three recipients of prestigious Schulich Leader Scholarships worth \$100,000 or more. The three Manitoba Grade 12

graduates who were awarded these scholarships all attended schools in RETSD!

Cody McDonald was nominated by Murdoch MacKay Collegiate, where he participated in many leadership opportunities both in and out of school with interests in language, culture, music, technology, sports, and charitable endeavours.

Simar Ubhi was nominated by Kildonan-East Collegiate. During

the pandemic, Simar taught himself how to code websites and gained experience by creating websites for non-profit agencies that could not afford to hire web developers.

Maxwell Nganyadi was nominated by Collège Miles Macdonell Collegiate, where he balanced a full International Baccalaureate timetable with extracurricular commitments, including tutoring, teaching himself differential equations, and dedicating himself to

helping others discover the power of coding.

The RETSD Board of Trustees would like to congratulate the graduating class of 2023. We wish you all the best in the next stage of your lives. We also appreciate and thank everyone in the school division who helped these graduates reach this important milestone.

Keeping Students Safe & Parents Informed

Did you know? RETSD uses a variety of procedures to keep students safe and parents informed. They help us safely respond to a situation, rather than simply react, and serve as precautionary measures for a number of scenarios—a medical emergency, a student in distress, a hazard in the community, an intruder, a coyote on school grounds, or a police operation taking place nearby.

Lockdown

Lockdowns are a response to

situations that arise inside the school and are activated by staff or police. Exterior and interior doors are locked. Parents are informed by Regroup and by a letter home.

Hold-and-Secure

Hold-and-secures are a response to situations that arise outside the school and are activated by the police. Exterior doors are locked. Parents are informed by Regroup and by a letter home.

Monitored Access

Monitored access is a response to

the presence of uninvited guests in the school and is activated by the principal. Exterior doors are locked with staff monitoring access in and out. Parents are informed at the discretion of the principal with a letter home.

Remain in School

Students are required to remain in the school when there is a potential hazard in the immediate area. Parents are informed at the discretion of the principal with a letter home.

Remain in Classroom

Students are required to remain in the classroom when there is a sensitive situation taking place in the school. Parents are informed at the discretion of the principal with a letter home.

These are just a handful of the many ways RETSD staff work to provide a safe and caring environment for students and our school communities.

25-Year & Retirement Recognition

Recently, the Board of Trustees gathered with employees who have worked in the division for 25 years to celebrate their dedication and present them with long service awards.

“We are delighted to recognize and celebrate these exceptional staff members who have worked in our division for 25 years. Your commitment to our students and our division is very much appreciated,” says trustee Sheri Irwin.

Many thanks to the contributors at the event—the photography and food were provided by students from Kildonan-East Collegiate and the music was provided by a harpist and flutist from River East Collegiate.



The Board of Trustees would also like to thank and congratulate all who retired from the

division in the last year. The commitment you showed over the years truly made a difference

to the students of our division.

Your River East Transcona School Division Trustees

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For more information about the Board of Trustees, visit: www.retsd.mb.ca > Your RETSD > Board of Trustees
Scroll down to *What it means to be a trustee* to watch an informative video