

SCRAPBOOK

Sun and done!

Teachers share how they spent their summer. [See page 12.](#)

ATA NEWS

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News Publication of The Alberta Teachers' Association

Off Script
with ATA President Jason Schilling



It's time for a reset.
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Teacher Lucia Kruyer braves the Via Feratta in Banff, taking things one step at a time.

SUPPLIED



Track it!

Keeping track of your days worked makes cents.

Read the Q&A on [page 2.](#)



New year, more students

With student numbers increasing, can budgets and teacher numbers keep up?

See the Editorial on [page 2](#) and the story on [page 4.](#)

Simply the right thing to do

The ATA and its members offer a helping hand to NWT teachers.

See story on [page 6.](#)



For the love of dance

Dance festival run by teacher-volunteers honoured.

See story on [page 9.](#)

School boards must do their part to hire more teachers



EDITORIAL

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

For five years following the 2008 financial crisis, Alberta government finances entered a period of uncertainty. Despite oil prices fluctuating around \$80 per barrel, the government began running consistent deficits for the first time in 15 years. Interestingly, school populations were actually booming, as people continued to move to Alberta at a steady pace. Government financing for education was unpredictable, often including post-budget injections of funding in order to backstop schools after inadequate budget measures.

School boards were skittish. In the spring they would let staff members go, while acting quite slowly to rehire in the fall. Between 2009 and 2014, the student population grew by 7.7 per cent,

while the teaching population remained completely stagnant. Nearly 45,000 students were added to schools without any additional teachers being hired.

This pattern of uncertain funding combined with student population growth has repeated in the last four years. There was a blip of enrolment reduction during the pandemic, but the student population has recovered and since grown beyond previous numbers. Yet again, during this period we saw

the student population has increased by 24 per cent while the teaching population increased by only 10 per cent. You don't need advanced math to know that this has resulted in excessively large class sizes.

Alberta has by far the smallest teaching force relative to student population in the country – only three-quarters the size of the national average. We would need to hire 5,000 additional teachers to bring the relative

Total operational funding for next school year will be \$450 million more than last year, with all but three school divisions receiving an increase. The average increase is 7 per cent. School boards must now do their part and hire more teachers.

Now, I understand that teacher recruitment and retention issues are quickly reaching a crisis point. But all the more reason for school boards to focus on hiring. The two big hiring lags created untenable classroom conditions that have resulted in significantly increased workload and stress on teachers. This has meant more teachers on long-term leaves and more teachers choosing to retire or leave the profession early. Recruitment of more teachers into more positions is vital to combat the teacher retention issues.

With the funding increase now there, school boards just need to get the job done. ■

“Recruitment of more teachers ... is vital to combat the teacher retention issues.”

teacher hiring lag behind student population growth. From 2019 to 2023, student enrolment grew by 25,000 students while the teaching population actually declined by 575 teachers.

Taken together, these two periods of lag have had disastrous effects on classroom conditions. Since 2009/10,

teaching force back to where it was in Alberta in 2009.

The good news is that provincial funding for the school year ahead has been given the largest year-over year increase we have seen in years. The bad news is that school boards may still be skittish.

I welcome your comments. Contact me at jonathan.teghtmeyer@ata.ab.ca.

What's your experience? Track it!



Q & A

Dennis Theobald
ATA Executive Secretary

Question: I understand the way teaching experience is calculated changed in 2019. I have had a series of temporary contracts and am now on maternity leave. How does this affect me?

Answer: I want to thank my colleague Sharon Vognretz for providing an answer to a question that is very relevant as teachers start the next school year.

The process for calculating teaching experience, which affects a teacher's placement on the salary grid, changed substantially in the 2018–2020 collective agreement. Teachers still climbing the salary grid need to pay attention to the teaching experience being reported, particularly if any portion of their service includes partial years, part-time service or leaves of absence.

As teachers earn experience, their salary on the grid will increase until they reach a maximum of 9 or 10 years of experience. The tricky thing is that the definition of what constitutes a year of service has changed.

Prior to September 2019, the number of days required varied by school jurisdiction, with most requiring 125 days. Once a teacher accrued those days, their increment was awarded the following September or February (whichever came first). However,

the number of days worked between earning the increment and the date the increment took effect did not count toward future increments. Those days just disappeared.

This all changed in the 2018–2020 agreement. As of September 1, 2019, unused days no longer disappear; they remain available to be used in future years. Furthermore, teaching experience is now accrued in the same way in all school jurisdictions in Alberta.

Teachers now need 140 days to earn an increment. While this is more than before, by banking unused days for the future, this arrangement will greatly advantage those who take parental leaves, work part-time or have a series of shorter-term contracts. Teachers working full-year, full-time contracts are unaffected.

Teachers should keep track of all the days they work under contract in each school year to ensure they are paid an increment at the correct time. The easiest way to do this is to keep your own record. If you have a series of temporary or probationary contracts, at the end of each school year, ask each employer to provide you with a statement of your experience for that year, including days under contract and days working as a substitute teacher.

All days worked under a contract count. Days worked as a substitute teacher will count for that same employer if they are worked within the previous five years.

Here's an example of a teacher who worked full time for three years and then started a maternity/parental leave

in 2022/23, taking 18 months of leave and returning February 2024.

This is a significant change that will advantage teachers, especially women who lose service while taking parental leave and who constitute the majority of teachers on part-time contracts.

Don't assume your school board tracks these days—keep your own records and verify your grid placement every year.

If you have any questions, please contact Teacher Employment Services (TES) for assistance at tes@ata.ab.ca or 1-800-232-7208. ■

Questions for consideration in this column are welcome. Please address them to Dennis Theobald at dennis.theobald@ata.ab.ca.

School Year	Grid Step	Employment	Days Earned	Days Used for Increment	Days Banked or Used	Days Left in Bank
19/20	0	Full Time (FT)	200	140	+60	60
20/21	1	FT	200	140	+60	120
21/22	2	FT	200	140	+60	180
22/23	3	Paid Maternity Leave Sept-Oct, Unpaid Parental Leave Nov-June	40	40 plus 100 from bank	-100	80
23/24	4	Unpaid Parental Leave Sept-Jan, FT Feb-June	100	100 plus 40 from bank	-40	40
24/25	5	FT	200	140	60	100



Protect your mental health this back-to-school season



VIEWPOINTS

Megan Hunter
 Founder and Social Innovator,
 Peak + Prairie Co. Health Promotion

The fall always brings mixed feelings, and it has been a wild ride these past few start-of-school seasons since COVID-19 introduced itself. This year, however, I feel a shift toward our “new normal” more so than last year. It was easier to relax and recharge my batteries before the start of another fall.

For teachers, this time of year is filled with lesson plans, designing engaging spaces and bringing the “fresh start” magic to the classroom. This year, I have been reflecting on what back-to-school will feel like and have been searching for strategies for maintaining (or at the very least refilling) my energy and protecting my mental health.

You too?

Great! Sharing is caring, so here are some tips and resources I have found useful:

1. Get into HEARTcare planning.

Did you know the ATA partnered with the University of Calgary and the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) on a study exploring educator well-being in Alberta? The study started prior to the pandemic and continues to evolve, with the aim of supporting teachers to be well in their profession.

HEARTcare (heartcareeducators.ca) is a planning tool designed to help you connect with valuable systems, programs and resources to develop true support in being well during the school year. I did my Heartwork, did you?

2. Become comfortable with the psychological benefits from your provider.

Investigate what coverage for psychological support your plan offers, including psychological and counselling services and the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). Having had a bit of time before the year gets into full swing, I decided to look what EFAP has to offer. There was much to discover. The platform has resources, articles and helpful tools for all aspects of life. For example, as a new parent I found the tips on returning to the workplace after parental leave helpful.

3. Build a relationship with a mental health professional.

This year I want to build a solid foundation with a mental health professional while I am feeling good. I know I will be more likely to reach out for support from someone I trust and with whom I have a built relationship when life inevitably gets tough. If you're looking for a mental health professional, MyHealth Alberta is a great place to start.

4. Remember you are not alone.

It is easy to feel alone in the classroom. Keep ASEBP's It Takes a Village (wellness.asebp.ca) open in your browser. It is a space for all things related to teacher well-being in Alberta. Find links to podcasts, like Teacher Fan Club, and other resources connecting

you with colleagues and other professionals in Alberta's education sector. You will be surprised at how much the wider education community wants to help teachers and school staff feel their best.

5. Set up a great read.

Read for self-care. Between the public libraries across the province and the ATA library, you have so many great reads at your disposal!

I suggest *Teacher, Take Care: A Guide to Well-Being and Workplace Wellness for Educators*. Written for teachers and by teachers who know teaching can be both highly rewarding and overwhelming. Sometimes in the same 10 minutes! This book covers it all — from stress management to mental well-being — and asks you to explore what these concepts really mean for you and how they can become practices beyond a to-do list. Consider hosting a book club with your colleagues to really dig into what this book offers.

“Remember, what you do for yourself matters. Students thrive when their teachers and school staff are well — it is the foundation of a healthy school culture.”

Remember, what you do for yourself matters. Students thrive when their teachers and school staff are well — it is the foundation of a healthy school culture.

Your well-being needs to be incorporated into your plan for the school year. Yes, self-care will look different than it does in the summer and that is okay. However, making plans to take care of your mental health is part of the job. You are what makes the classroom run.

And hey, if you need a reminder of how awesome you are, reach out to me at hello@peakandprairieco.com. I got you. ■

Megan Hunter is the founder and social innovator at Peak + Prairie Co. Health Promotion, specializing in physical well-being and psychological health and safety consulting.

YOUR VIEWS

ON FACEBOOK

On sage advice to first year teachers

Khrysty DeVos

Look after yourself. You cannot do it all.

Melissa Joy

I always tell my students “tomorrow is a new day,” especially when today was a bad day. They know that means a fresh start. They understand there are consequences for their actions, but also that what happened today will not be held against them. When I had bad days, my kids would remind me that tomorrow is a new day. Giving each other, and yourself, grace is so important.

Missy Noël

One really important thing to do is to find a buddy. Someone who knows the passwords, the trick for the photocopier, where the poster paper is stored, how to get into the gym equipment room, and an open door when you need a shoulder to cry on.

Maj-Britt Bigotti

Don't put your lesson plans or textbook on a student's desk, especially on the first day. Some students are so nervous

they will throw up on their desk. Thirty-four years later and I still remember the student's name and the look on his face.

On Summer Conference opening speaker, Tareq Hadhad

Heather Quinn

As Canadians we often take our choices for granted. We sometimes forget that others look to Canada as a safe place to come for themselves and family, fleeing hardship, war, etc. Tareq's story is truly inspiring!

Carmen Glossop

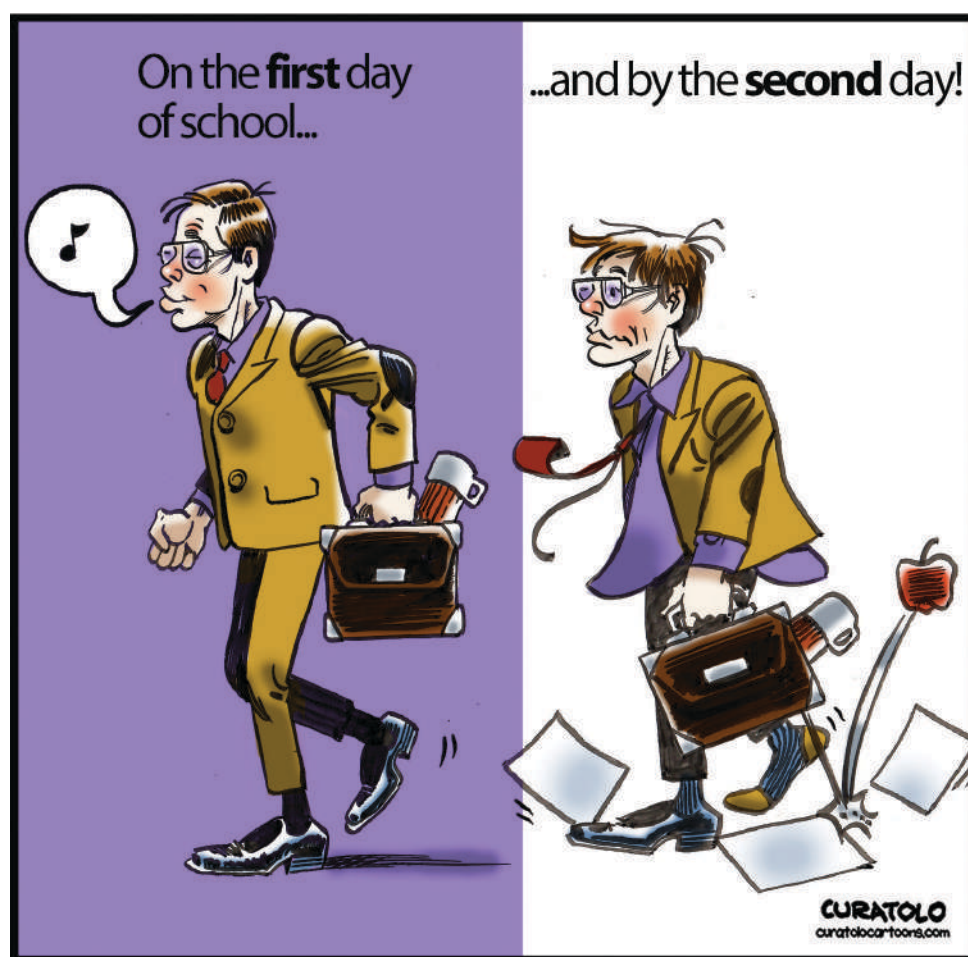
Thank you SO much for sharing your story with us. Friends, check out his movie “Peace by Chocolate.” It is his story, a very moving story. His family actually does make great chocolate.

POSTS

On Barbie and Taylor

Kelly Aleman

The insanely successful Barbie movie and Taylor Swift tour spell disaster for the establishment that would want women to stay quiet and well behaved. They will vote for progressive policies that empower women. Hallelujah.



FOR THE RECORD

“We're seeing tens of thousands of people move to the province and record numbers, we have to make sure that we're keeping pace.”

- Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides
 to the *Edmonton Journal*

ATA responds to premier's mandate letter

Kim Clement
ATA News Staff

Danielle Smith's vision for education includes more choice.

Parent choice was a main feature in her mandate letter to new education minister Demitris Nicolaides.

The letter calls for expanding parent and student options in the public, separate, francophone, charter, independent (private), early childhood and home education systems.

"Expanding parent and student options ... will ensure parents have a host of tailored options for their children's education that best suit the needs of their individual students," stated Smith.

The mandate letter also touches on addressing specialized learning needs, increasing mental health support and building more schools.

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) President Jason Schilling said the ATA is committed to working with the government on shared priorities, noting that supporting student learning is a common interest for both parties.

The optimism is tempered with caution, however, as another aspect of the mandate letter directed Nicolaides to explore the idea of shortening the education requirements of certificated teachers. In response, Schilling emphasized the importance of maintaining the integrity of the teaching profession, and cautioned against fast-track certification.

"Attracting and retaining qualified teachers is a continuous concern," Schilling said. "We anticipate many discussions with the province to explore potential resolutions."

With the mandate letter calling for career pathways for students, Schilling also noted that a well-rounded education that equips students with critical thinking skills and adaptability is more important than preparing students for specific workplaces.

"We are living in a rapidly changing world, and students must be prepared for a wide array of future career opportunities," Schilling stated. He pointed to the rapid emergence of artificial intelligence as an example of the ever-evolving job market.

Some of the other discussion points



Premier Danielle Smith

Schilling hopes to address in the coming years are class size and complexity and equitable access to education for all students.

"Historically, the success of our world-class public education system has been achieved through collaborative efforts between the government and the ATA," Schilling said. "I'm looking forward to continuing this work through open dialogue and shared expertise." ■

MANDATE LETTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Fund growth of "CAREERS" with public and separate school divisions for off-campus programs or paid internships.
- Invest \$20 million over four years in promoting career pathways, including the following:
 - Organize career fairs for high-demand sectors.
 - Establish an online career counseling website for students and parents.
 - Launch a high school targeted advertising campaign for high-demand careers.
 - Develop more teacher training for career and technology studies (CTS).
 - Create and promote career educational scholarships for Alberta's K-12 students in labour-shortage areas.
 - Fund additional mobile CTS and career and technology foundations labs.

New face in the associate executive secretary chair

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

The start of the school year sees a new but familiar face in one of the top jobs at the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). On September 1, Elissa Corsi will assume the associate executive secretary duties from retiring Joni Turville. Corsi will be working alongside Robert Mazzotta, who holds the other associate executive secretary position.

Corsi is excited about the challenges and opportunities her new role with the ATA presents.

"I know that the road ahead may not be straight and may not be easy," said Corsi, "but I am confident that the Association and the teachers across the province will ensure that public education in Alberta remains accessible for all, is well funded and provides the necessary supports for both students and teachers."

In 2002, Corsi began her teaching career with the Elk Island Public School Division at Ecole Elementaire Ardrossan Elementary School. Her keen interest in leadership led her to the roles of vice-principal, principal and then the second language coordinator at the division office.

In 2017 she joined the ATA as a staff officer in the Teacher Employment Services program area. A year later, she earned her doctor of education degree. While working at the ATA, Corsi was also an adjunct professor at the University of Alberta's (U of A) Campus Saint-Jean and led what was to become its Graduate Educational Leadership Certificate program. She is fluent in four languages and has presented both nationally and internationally in English and French.

During her tenure with the ATA, Corsi has been a member of several high-profile committees, including Political Engagement and Women in Leadership. After moving to the Association's

Government program area, she had the opportunity to act as associate coordinator of communications and led that department through the Stand for Education campaign.

"I am passionate about public education," said Corsi. "I envision a province where teachers are respected and ties within the Association and education subgroups are strengthened."

One of Corsi's proudest accomplishments is her work on a research project examining the topic of women at the intersections of gender in educational leadership. The study is nationally funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and is a partnership between the ATA, U of A and the College of Alberta School Superintendents.

Leadership in education has been a career-long passion for Corsi and she hopes to bring a unique perspective to her new position.

"For me, leadership is not just a title



Elissa Corsi, new associate executive secretary

or role," said Corsi. "It's a way of being, a way of inspiring and working with others towards a common goal. It's ensuring the Association remains the voice of teachers across this province." ■

New school year, new budget, more students

Chris Sikkenga
ATA News Staff

Earlier this year, the government made announcements that increased funding for schools in Alberta. While additional funds are welcome, some wonder if the boost will be enough to address the rising costs associated with a growing—and increasingly complex—student population.

In February, the Alberta government increased education funding by \$10 million "to combat pandemic-related learning disruptions." Then Budget 2023 announced a 5.2 per cent increase in funding for 2023-24 and an increase of more than \$1.8 billion in funding over the next three years, including the hiring of 3,000 more education staff; \$1.5 billion was allocated in 2023-24 for learning support funding for vulnerable students. This sounds like a lot of

funding, but what will these increases look like in the coming year?

The 2023-24 budgets for three large urban divisions signal that funds will be focused on addressing complex learning needs. The budget for Edmonton Catholic Schools emphasizes that the division will continue "to allocate significant additional funding beyond Alberta Education's Specialized Learning Grant to support the inclusive needs of our students," while Edmonton Public Schools' budget notes the need to use the Classroom Complexity Grant to supplement student supports. Meanwhile, the budget for the Calgary Board of Education states the division will use the Classroom Complexity Grant to provide added supports for English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs, hire more speech pathologists and support early intervention.

Whether the funds will be enough to address not only complex needs but also the rising student numbers

remains to be seen, especially given that how much funding—longstanding and recently announced—each school division is receiving this year is also impacted by the Weighted Moving Average (WMA) funding model.

The WMA formula takes the enrolment from the year before, an estimated current enrolment and the projected enrolment for next year to create an average that determines the division's funding. Introduced in 2020, this model has been touted as improving stability, but has been criticized for benefiting schools with declining enrolment and harming schools with growing enrolment.

"Our projected student count is 109,688, compared to our WMA funded enrolment of 106,207," shares Kim Smith with Edmonton Public Schools. Smith adds, though, that a supplemental enrolment growth grant is available, providing additional funding for the additional students.

Similarly referencing an additional funding grant "due to rapidly increasing enrolment," Joanne Anderson, media relations for the Calgary Board of Education, says, "The Weighted Moving Average brings predictability to school board funding."

While the spokesperson of Calgary Board of Education is optimistic about the WMA model, Edmonton Catholic Schools spokesperson Christine Meadows said the division doesn't believe the WMA model is creating the intended stability and predictability.

"For every 100 new students next school year, we only receive 50 per cent of normal funding," Meadows explains. "In the following school year, we would receive 80 per cent of normal funding. A new student is, therefore, not fully funded until their third year. What that means is that if you are not growing, it's not a big hit. But the more students you get, the less able you are to staff appropriately and meet their needs." ■

Chocolate makes happiness

Summer Conference delegates hear from Syrian refugee turned chocolatier

Jonathan Teghtmeyer
ATA News Editor-in-Chief

A Syrian refugee's sweet story of renewal, reinvention and resilience was the main course for the opening keynote at summer conference, with chocolate on the dessert menu.

The 380 teacher volunteers attending the ATA's 75th annual summer conference in Banff earlier this month were treated to the inspiring story of Peace by Chocolate CEO and founder Tareq Hadhad.

Hadhad told teachers that he wanted them to master the skills of storytelling, while sharing his story of his family's journey from Damascus, through Lebanon, to becoming one of the largest employers in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

"Being proud of our stories truly changes the world," said Hadhad.

Hadhad's story starts with his dad becoming the largest chocolate maker in the Damascus region, then takes a sharp turn when war breaks out in Syria.

After spending five days hiding out from certain death in his grandmother's basement, crowded together with 60 of his relatives, his family fled to Lebanon. His father, however, stayed behind until just minutes before their factory was leveled by shelling.

Eventually the family was accepted to Canada, where Hadhad embraced chocolate once again to rebuild their future.

"Chocolate makes happiness," he says. Hadhad told teachers that life is



Keynote speaker Tareq Hadhad recounts his story of resilience.

PHOTOS: JONATHAN TEGHTMEYER

all about perspective and what angle you look at things from. What we call miseries in this country are sometimes dreams for other people around the world.

Hadhad went on to discuss the value of schools and of public education, noting that education was not accessible to many children in Syria – in particular, quality education was only available to the elite and wealthy.

"No matter what your postal code

is, you have access to proper and professional education for your kids," he said about Canada's education system.

Hadhad's story has been documented in the book *Peace by Chocolate* and the Netflix movie of the same name.

Schilling opens conference

ATA president Jason Schilling also talked about the power of storytelling in his conference-opening speech. He encouraged teachers to share their own stories with family, neighbours, MLAs and community members.

"By telling our stories, we humanize our concerns beyond a headline or a post on social media," he said.

We need to celebrate our achievements, said Schilling, but we also need to have the courage to have the difficult conversations and engage in those discussions in a meaningful way. He said that the teachers assembled were the very leaders needed to do this.

"We all have the power to make a difference for public education because everyone in this room values free, quality, accessible, inclusive public education."

Schilling also provided an update on a number of ongoing and emerging issues facing the profession, pointing to classroom conditions, bargaining,

curriculum, teacher recruitment and retention, and teacher wellness as issues that will challenge the profession and the Association in the year ahead.

Schilling reported that he has spoken with the new minister of education already about these issues and that advancements on them will be best served by establishing a better relationship with government.

"I believe that despite our differences, both parties appear genuinely interested in resetting and re-establishing that relationship."

He also spoke about the need to mend relationships within the profession, pointing to the pandemic and the divisive vote on the last bargaining round's mediator's recommendations as points of tension.

"Moving past these tensions starts by genuinely listening to each other, seeking to understand and then collaborating to create solutions." ■

The ATA's 75th summer conference ran from August 14 to 18, 2023, at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Summer Conference is an annual training event for teachers who take on voluntary positions with ATA locals, specialist councils and teacher conventions.



President Schilling addresses Summer Conference delegates.



Delegates gather in Banff for a week of learning.



Enjoying some fun in the sun!

Off Script

with ATA President Jason Schilling



It's time to reset

Leading up to this May's provincial election, we spoke about the opportunities that an election represents — opportunities that will allow us to refocus on the needs of public education. However, we will never be able to capitalize on the new possibilities without focusing on the many relationships that intertwine with those possibilities.

For example, we have now seen the mandate letter from the premier to the new minister of education, Demetrios Nicolaides. I have referred to this letter as the good, the bad and the ugly, disagreeing with much of its content. Despite this, I welcome the opportunity to build a relationship with the new minister to begin to move the needle on the many issues we see in public education.

We will not always agree with the government's direction, but it is paramount that we are at the table with them, talking. This, I am glad to say, has already begun over the summer. We were the first to meet with the new minister and have several additional meetings lined up in the next few weeks with him and with ministry staff. Both parties appear genuinely interested in resetting and re-establishing that relationship.

Recently I have been reflecting about how relationships impact our profession, and I am also mindful that there are connections within our own membership that need attention.

Differences and diversity can build strength if we let them, and I believe that we need to come together, filter out the noise, mend divisions and focus squarely on the solutions that move us forward. This starts by genuinely listening to each other, seeking to understand and then collaborating to create solutions.

Renewed ties will help members see the importance of belonging and contributing to an Association that is 46,000 members strong. Each of us plays a vital role in that renewal — it simply cannot rest on the shoulders of one person, one local or staff. It rests on all of us.

Colleagues, as a new school year starts, I will say this to you all: you are inspiring. To me, to your colleagues and students, to your friends and family. You are the best part of someone's day and the reason people feel like they can make a difference. Have a great start to the new school year. ■

A helping hand for our colleagues

Alberta teachers offer assistance to evacuated teachers from NWT

Lindsay Yakimyshyn
ATA News Staff

Less than 48 hours. That is how much notice residents of Yellowknife had to evacuate the city as the wildfire approached.

With the entire population of Yellowknife, including up to 450 teachers and their families, ordered to evacuate by August 18, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) has been working with the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association (NWTTA) to provide support to teachers and their families who may be displaced.

In response to the evacuation order, the ATA quickly mounted an online form to help match evacuated NWTTA members, staff and their families with host families in Alberta. Within a few days of the call for support, approximately 150 Alberta teachers and ATA staff offered billets in Edmonton, Calgary and other communities in the province.

"When teachers in Alberta experienced similar situations, we saw an outpouring of support from others across the country," says Schilling, "It is important we be here now for our colleagues to mitigate the chaos and the stress."

In addition to facilitating billets, the ATA is opening its office doors to NWTTA staff. Plans are in place to

offer office space and infrastructure at Barnett House (Edmonton) and the Southern Alberta Regional Office (Calgary) to NWTTA staff to maintain operations. Barnett House will also be used, as needed, as gathering place for persons displaced.

"If we can help them in this moment of upheaval, we should," Schilling says, "It is simply the right thing to do."

To request assistance for an evacuee or to learn more about how to support our colleagues from Yellowknife, please visit the ATA's website (www.teachers.ab.ca). Need more information? Please e-mail your questions to emergency@ata.ab.ca.

Beginning teachers to gather in Edmonton and Calgary

ATA News Staff

A new school year means new teachers. To support Alberta's newest teachers, the Beginning Teachers Conference will be held in both Edmonton (September 22–23) and Calgary (October 13–14).

Each fall, teachers new to the profession gather to enhance their practice and prepare for the challenges that come in the first years of teaching. The event provides numerous opportunities for those attending to connect, not only with other beginning teachers but also with more experienced teachers, with local and provincial representatives, and with Association staff.

"It is our hope that these connections give beginning teachers the community they need to feel supported as they continue in the coming school year and in the future," says Nancy Luyckfassel, PD coordinator.

Both the Edmonton and Calgary iterations of the conference offer a variety of programming that will allow delegates to personalize their experience according to their own needs, interests and teaching assignments. New teachers leave with both practical tools and strategies to incorporate into their day-to-day practice, as well as an understanding of the professional association of which they are now a part.

"The conference provides delegates with an insight

into what the Association is," Luyckfassel adds, "What we do for our members and how we provide support to them throughout their career."

Who can attend?

Registration is open to teachers in their first two years of classroom teaching and to teachers new to teaching in Alberta.

Teachers interested in attending should consult with both their school principal and their ATA local before registering to learn more about such matters as substitute teacher coverage and reimbursement of expenses associated with attending the event. ■

Teachers in charter, federal and private schools must be associate members of the ATA to attend.

HOW CAN I REGISTER?

If you live in or north of Red Deer, register for the Edmonton conference at <https://reg.unityeventsolutions.com/se/ATABTC/ATT>.

If you live south of Red Deer, register for the Calgary conference at <https://reg.unityeventsolutions.com/se/2023BTCCALG/ATT>.



OTHER QUESTIONS?

Please contact Professional Development staff at pd@ata.ab.ca or 1-800-232-7208.



Beginning Teachers Conference 2022.

NANCY LUYCKFASSEL

Association awards fellowships and scholarships

ATA News Staff

Provincial Executive Council has announced the winners of the 2023 ATA fellowships and scholarships.

Doctoral Fellowship in Education

Each year, the Association awards two fellowships, valued at \$15,000 each, to ATA members who have been accepted into, or have already embarked upon, full-time study (as defined by the institution) in a doctoral program in education at a recognized public university. The fellowship program is intended to recognize academic excellence and to help defray the financial costs of university study.

The John Mazurek Memorial — Morgex Insurance Scholarship

The John Mazurek Memorial—Morgex Insurance Scholarship is sponsored by Morgex Insurance. It consists of \$2,500 to be used for an approved professional development course or part of an organized program of study in the field of business education and/or the use of computer technology in education from a recognized Canadian public institution.

MORE INFORMATION: For a list of Association grants, awards and scholarships that are available to subgroups and others, visit www.teachers.ab.ca > professional-development > Grants, Awards and Scholarships.



Doctoral Fellowship in Education
DAVID HURLEY

David Hurley is from Fort McMurray and serves as a vice-principal at École McTavish High School, where he is also the PEAK Academy Director for Fort McMurray Public Schools. Previously, he was a physical education teacher, an APPLE Schools facilitator, educational technology coordinator and a humanities teacher.

Hurley holds an M.Ed. (2022), a B.Ed. and B.P.E. (2012), and is eager to begin his doctoral journey. Hurley is interested in studying distributed leadership, teacher burnout and the effects of social media on student behaviour. Hurley is passionate about public education and currently serves on the School Leaders Issues and Concerns Committee.



Doctoral Fellowship in Education
JACQUELINE YU

Jacqueline Yu is a student services coordinator at The Centre for Learning@HOME, a school within Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools. As an educator, she finds inspiration in leading professional learning for the division's post-secondary counsellors, and collaborating with community organizations to foster opportunities for students to explore career transitions. She currently serves on her teacher welfare committee.

Under the expert supervision of professor Sharon Friesen, Jacqueline is a doctoral student in the field of learning sciences at the University of Calgary. Her proposed research is focused on designing teacher professional learning to enhance student engagement in online education settings.



The John Mazurek Memorial — Morgex Insurance Scholarship
MÉLANIE SAMSON-CORMIER

Mélanie Samson-Cormier is a teacher at École Gabrielle-Roy in Edmonton. She is a certified Level 2 Google Educator and has a master's degree in teaching, learning and assessment from the University of Ottawa. Before coming to Alberta in 2012, she taught in Newfoundland, where she started her career in 2005.

She is currently working on a second master's degree in educational technology from l'Université TÉLUQ and developing an online reading intervention called Graphofolie. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, running and art journaling. ■

Keeping an eye out for student vision issues

Alberta Association of Optometrists

The same student is acting out again, yet you've tried so many things to help them stay engaged with learning and productively interacting with the other students. It's a common problem that may have little to do with classroom engagement and more to do with the fact that the student can't see the front of the room or read the words written properly because of a vision issue.

Research shows that one in four school-aged children has a vision problem. As 80 per cent of learning is visual for a child, an eye exam is an important first step to finding a solution and supporting student learning.

Research also shows that many parents believe they would know if their child had a vision issue; however, these issues can be hard to spot, particularly if there is a problem in only one of

the eyes. Further, children are often unaware they have a vision issue, as they believe what they are seeing is normal. It's all they know.

For school-aged children, several different visual skills must work together so they can see and understand clearly:

- Clear vision, both at a distance and up close
- The ability to maintain focus accurately at any distance
- Good focusing flexibility to allow rapid change from one distance to another
- Binocular vision skills, including control of eye position, movement and tracking
- Peripheral vision and eye-hand coordination

If any of these visual skills is lacking or impaired, the student will need to work harder to achieve the same

level of learning as a student with unimpaired vision. Plus, schoolwork can place greater demands on a child's visual skills, bringing to light a vision problem that was not apparent before school. That's why watching for vision problem cues may help solve issues for the student. To identify vision issues, watch for the following:

- Headaches or irritability
- Avoiding near or distance work
- Covering or rubbing the eyes
- Tilting the head or unusual posture
- Using a finger to maintain their place while reading
- Losing their place while reading
- Omitting or confusing small words when reading
- Performing below their potential

Even if a student is not complaining about their vision or has passed a vision screening, you can't assume no issues

exist. More than 43 per cent of children who have a vision or eye health problem can pass a basic vision screening. Only a comprehensive eye exam can properly assess eye and visual health.

The earlier these eye exams take place, the more likely the vision issue can be corrected. In fact, there are some vision issues that, if left uncorrected, can result in permanent vision loss by age 10.

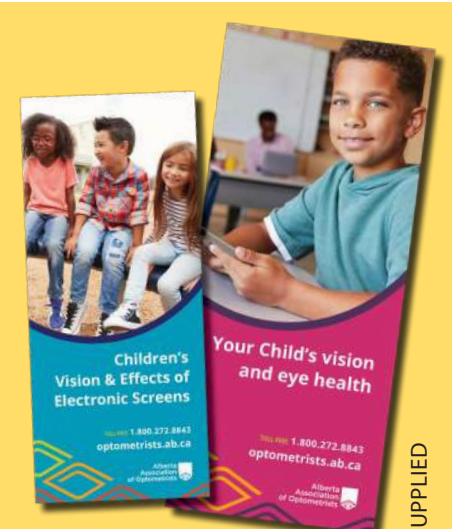
As a teaching professional, you are often on the front line of witnessing a student's frustration. As a possible support to parents, suggesting an eye exam with an optometrist as a first step is prudent. Alberta Health coverage is available for all children from birth to 19 years for an eye exam. The Alberta Association of Optometrists can also send you copies of brochures to support parents in taking the first steps to ensure their child has the vision and eye health they deserve. ■



SUPPLIED

Your Child's Vision and Eye Health and Children's Vision & Effects of Electronic Screens

Brochures are available for free. For copies, please email alberta.association@optometrists.ab.ca.



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Substitute Teachers' Conference

The Joy of Teaching

October 20(eve)–21, 2023

Register online at <https://bit.ly/2023-STC>
 Registration deadline—October 15, 2023



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The Alberta Teachers' Association | Alberta



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The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta

East Side Dance Festival celebrates 10th anniversary with award win



Student dancers showcase their work.

SUPPLIED

SUCCESS STORY

Kelsey McMahon-Stoker
East Side Dance Festival Society

Organized by teacher-volunteers, the East Side Dance Festival celebrated its tenth anniversary this year by hosting a three-day dance festival, awarding over \$100,000 in scholarships to Calgary Board of Education (CBE) and Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD) students, and winning the City of Calgary Community Achievement in the Arts Award.

The East Side Dance Festival Society was formed in 2013 by four Calgary high school teachers with the original goal of providing performance opportunities for marginalized youth. Now, 10 years later, the festival has grown to serve schools from across the city of Calgary (from both the CBE and CCSD) with 13

participating schools and 400 student participants in 2023.

The society provides a two-day teacher professional development conference, free after-school programs for schools where students do not have access to dance education, bursaries and scholarships for students, two days of workshops for participating schools, funding for participating schools to hire diverse artists and a three-day festival. Each year, the East Side Dance Festival showcases the incredible talent and passion of public-school teachers and their students.

Recognizing student excellence, for the 2023 festival, the Society collaborated with their community partners (Decidedly Jazz Danceworks, illFX Education, Pulse Dance Studios, Dance Code, The Masses, UV Soul, Soul Connexion, and Madhuban Performing Arts) to award over \$100,000 in scholarships to students. These scholarships allow students to

continue their dance training outside of their high-school dance programs and provide them with experience and mentorship within the professional dance industry in Calgary. Also facilitating students' pursuit of dance beyond high school is the society's new ESDF+ project, a collaboration with the University of Calgary that aims to introduce high school students to post-secondary opportunities in dance.

To top off their anniversary year, the society's teacher-volunteers were awarded the City of Calgary's Community Achievement in the Arts Award for 2023. The teacher volunteers are thrilled to receive this recognition.

"We've been on a real journey over the past ten years. Everyone involved in our organization, the teachers, our community partners and our students, have demonstrated incredible resilience, creativity, and dedication to keeping the East Side Dance Festival alive and well. We have so much to

celebrate and so much to look forward to," says Kelly Brownlee, co-chair of the Society.

Run by volunteer teachers from the CBE and CCSD, the East Side Dance Festival represents a unique collaboration of passionate teachers from different school boards, with 18 teachers from 14 schools participating during the 2022/23 season.

If you are a dance teacher in Alberta and are interested in participating in East Side Dance Festival programming, please reach out to Kelsey McMahon-Stoker (kkcmahon@cbe.ab.ca) or Kelly Brownlee (kelly.brownlee@cssd.ab.ca).

East Side Dance Festival Society

Website: eastsidedancefestival.ca

Instagram @eastsidedanceyyc



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The Fine Arts Council of the ATA Presents
Fall Conference 2023

CONNECTING THROUGH THE ARTS

Catered lunch with AGM!

U of A Edmonton North Campus
Saturday, October 21
9:00 AM - 3:15 PM

FAC-14 2023 08



Are you interested in facilitating Indigenous education workshops?

BECOME AN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION PD FACILITATOR!

The Alberta Teachers' Association is seeking outstanding classroom teachers representing all grade levels and subject areas from across the province. The three-year appointments for these assignments will begin in the 2023/24 school year.

The application process has two parts:

1. Provide a letter of interest, including the following:
 - Areas of interest and expertise in Indigenous education
 - Experience leading professional development
 - Reasons for applying
2. Provide a resumé outlining education, work experience, leadership experience, publications, presentations and volunteer experience.

Successful candidates are expected to deliver 7–10 workshops per year and are required to attend two training sessions per year. The Association covers release time and associated expenses and provides an honorarium for workshops delivered.

As a courtesy, please advise your superintendent and principal that you will be applying prior to doing so. All applicants must be active or associate members of the ATA, have at least five years of teaching experience and hold an Alberta teaching certificate.

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 18, 2023.

Send your letter of interest and resumé to Indigenous education, Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton AB, T5N 2R1 or e-mail information to walkingtogether@ata.ab.ca.

In making application to become a Indigenous Education PD facilitator for the Alberta Teachers' Association, you are voluntarily providing your personal information to the ATA. Visit the ATA website for more information.

The Alberta Teachers' Association

PD-WT-36 2023 07



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Have you received notice of a complaint from the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission?

Help is available to Association members but timelines are tight.

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professionaldiscipline@ata.ab.ca

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The Alberta Teachers' Association

DIGITAL NEWS



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Colleagues remember trailblazer Mary-Jo Williams

Mark Milne
ATA News Staff

The Alberta education community mourns the passing of Mary-Jo Williams, a trailblazer and advocate who left an indelible mark on the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the field of education. Williams, who passed away in July after a brief battle with cancer, was known for her ground-breaking

“She was a true mentor who suggested rather than directed and had a great ability to anticipate outcomes.”

achievements, unyielding dedication and commitment to Alberta's teachers.

Williams joined the Association in 1969 and holds the distinction of being the first permanent female staff officer to be hired, as well as the youngest.

Her work for the Association extended well beyond her role in the Professional Development program area, with her serving as an advocate for and a mentor to countless colleagues throughout the province. Through her broad spectrum of work for the Association, she quickly rose to prominence as a staff officer, and, in 1982, became the ATA's first female coordinator.

Her work opened doors for women in leadership positions within the organization and beyond. Colleagues remember her for her commanding presence, leading the way in a traditionally male-dominated field.

“She was a true mentor who suggested rather than directed and had a great ability to anticipate outcomes,” said Dean McMullen, a former staff officer with the ATA. “I am proud to have been a member of an outstanding team of PD

staff officers with Mary-Jo Williams as our leader”

Williams was known for the close working relationships she developed with the Department of Education and university officials. She excelled at representing the profession, taking policy to government and faculties of education and being successful in achieving member goals.

Amidst her many accomplishments and reflecting her passion for lifelong learning, Williams earned her PhD in education at the University of Alberta.

Williams also enjoyed many notable accomplishments prior to joining the ATA. She was a teacher for the Canadian military in France, Miss Edmonton Eskimo and Miss Grey Cup (1960), a violinist with the University Symphony Orchestra and, as rumour has it, one heck of a bridge player.

Even after her retirement in 1996, Williams remained a vibrant presence within the ATA community. She shared her insights, tirelessly kept up with ATA activities, and engaged with members' viewpoints by reading through the



Mary-Jo Williams during her tenure at the ATA

Annual Representative Assembly resolutions bulletin.

Her passing came as a shock to many who admired her strength. Her legacy lives on in the countless teachers she inspired and the barriers she dismantled. ■

ATA adopts human rights statement

PEC POINTS

Audrey Dutka
ATA News Staff

Highlights of the Provincial Executive Council meeting held June 15–16, 2023, Barnett House, Edmonton.

1. Adopted the following Human Rights Statement with respect to all Association meetings, events, activities and operations:

As an organization that promotes and is committed to respecting human rights and ensuring a safe, secure and healthy environment for all, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) works to ensure that all present at or participating in ATA programs and events are protected from violence and harassment.

All ATA members are therefore expected to promote and defend the fundamental human rights of everyone engaged in ATA programs, activities or other ATA work. ATA members are expected to treat one another with fairness, respect and dignity and to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, accountability, competence and integrity as representatives of the provincial Association as well as their respective locals and subgroups.

Furthermore, ATA members are obliged to act to prevent violence and harassment wherever possible and report to the appropriate person in authority any suspected breaches of this statement that come to their attention.

2. Authorized that the ATA Human Rights Statement be read aloud and/or distributed electronically and/or provided in print at the outset of all Association meetings, events and activities and that an appropriate person in authority to receive related complaints be identified.

3. Authorized the president of the ATA or their designate to warn, reprimand and/or remove from a

provincial meeting, event, activity or representative role any participant whom the president or designate reasonably believes to be in breach of the ATA Human Rights Statement.

4. Authorized the president of a local or subgroup of the ATA or their designate to warn, reprimand and/or remove from a meeting, event, activity or representative role any participant whom the local or subgroup president or their designate reasonably believes to be in breach of the ATA Human Rights Statement.

5. Authorized staff to develop for consideration of Provincial Executive Council any additions or amendments to administrative guidelines, bylaws and/or local and subgroup constitutions necessary to give force and effect to the ATA Human Rights Statement.

6. Approved that the Association will adopt, develop or acquire trauma-informed practice for Provincial Executive Council and all Association staff to use in response to a member disclosing that they have experienced some form of physical, sexual or verbal assault and provide annual training to ensure the practice can be expressed in the most engaging and supportive manner.

7. Appointed Dr Elissa Corsi to succeed Dr Joni Turville as Associate Executive Secretary.

8. Approved in principle moving forward four electoral ballots proposed by locals. The finalized ballots, along with a statement of PEC's position on each, will be prepared and distributed to locals before the end of September.

9. Approved the frame of reference for the Committee to Review Summer Conference.

10. Approved in principle that the Association host the CTF/FCE Women's Symposium in the spring of 2025.

11. Approved the guidelines and considerations for implementation of an ARA resolution that authorized the Association to cover the cost of substitute teachers for teachers who took leave to fight the Alberta wildfires

in May and June 2023, to a maximum of \$50,000 and upon application to the Association.

12. Authorized a section be added to the Local President Seminar to talk about engagement for Council of School Representatives.

13. Approved language be added to all local constitutions to the effect that one of the roles of the school representative is to support and facilitate communication for central and local bargaining.

14. Approved that all Central Table Bargaining Committee members be highlighted to ensure local members know and have confidence in who is bargaining on their behalf.

15. Authorized a more transparent or open communication style when reporting to members on bargaining, where appropriate.

16. Authorized creation of a “Bargaining 101 Education Program” to aid members and local leaders to better understand the bargaining processes and steps.

17. Authorized staff to conduct a review of the Alberta School Learning Commons Council and report back to Council on or before its June 2024 meeting.

18. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of one charge of unprofessional conduct for engaging in inappropriate online communications with a student. The hearing committee imposed the penalty of a letter of severe reprimand, a fine of \$1,500, a declaration that the teacher is ineligible for membership in the Association, and a recommendation to the minister of education to cancel the teacher's teaching certificate.

19. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of four charges of unprofessional conduct for communicating online with a person who acted as a decoy and pretended to be a 15-year-old person and with whom the teacher engaged in inappropriate sexual conversations; for sharing inappropriate images;

for attending outside of what the teacher believed to be the home of a 15-year old person for the purpose of engaging in sexual activities; and for inappropriately communicating online with an individual whom the teacher believed to be under the age of 18 years. The hearing committee ordered a letter of severe reprimand to encompass all four charges, a declaration that the teacher is ineligible for membership in the Association, and a recommendation to the minister of education to cancel the teacher's teaching certificate.

20. Received the report of a hearing committee that found a teacher guilty of eight charges of unprofessional conduct for providing biased and unsubstantiated information to students as the teacher departed the school; for presenting a report regarding the competence of another teacher without notifying that teacher; for presenting a report regarding the performance of the principal without notifying the principal; for behaving toward staff in a manner that was inappropriate, including aggressive interactions in the presence of students and through e-mail; for yelling at students in class for their actions or inability to respond appropriately; for having students kneel in front of the teacher as part of a lesson; for providing instruction to students while the property was closed to school division employees; and for orchestrating the closure of the school to the staff of the school division. The hearing committee imposed a penalty of a single letter of severe reprimand to encompass all eight charges, fines totalling \$12,500 for all charges, a declaration that the teacher is permanently and immediately ineligible for membership in the Association, and a recommendation to the minister of education that the teacher's teaching certificate be permanently canceled.

21. Approved field member committee and representation assignments for 2023/24.


22. Amended the frames of reference of the Teacher Education and Certification Committee and the Lethbridge Area Field Experiences Committee. ■

TALENT

August 29, 2023 | Volume 58, Number 1

SCRAPBOOK

Summer

Teachers made new memories in Alberta and beyond this summer.  See the ATA's Facebook page for many more photos.



Kathleen Stevens
Sur les traces de Terry Fox près de Thunder Bay, Ontario.



Lynné Vining
Time at the cabin on Cold Lake.



Gaganpreet Lucky
Paris, France.



Lori Wlos
Fishing Lake, Saskatchewan at my parents' cabin. Love these beautiful evenings!



Miya Abe
I went on a life-changing dream honeymoon to Japan.



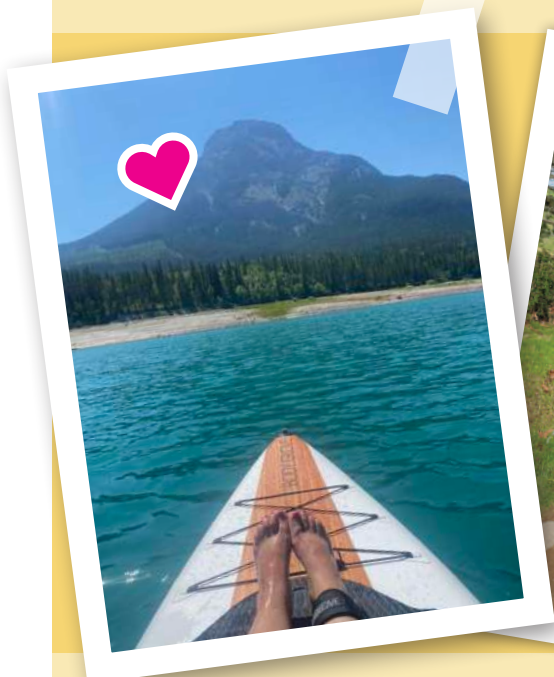
Jen Bartlett
My wife and I went to Seattle to see Madonna. Alas, no Madonna, but we had a great time!



Andy Olasker
Welcoming this little guy to the world.



Ron Zacharko
Climbing EEOR.



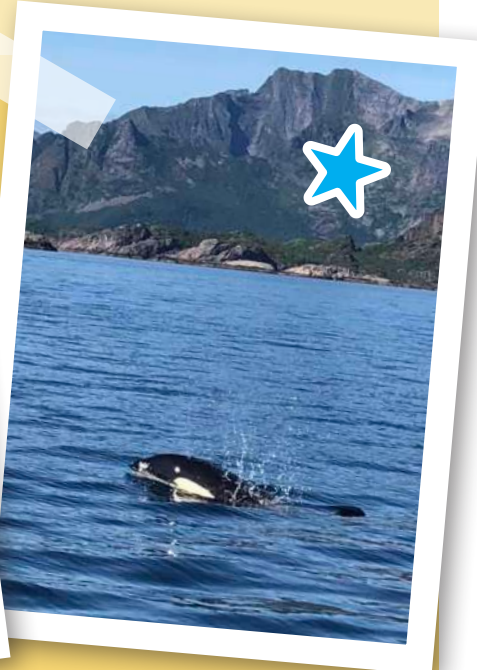
Kimberly Barber
Mountain adventures!



Coleen McNeil
Visiting Hobbiton!



Justin Holladay
Caving in the Crownsnest Pass.



Charla Jo Guillaume
Orcas in northern Norway. So grateful to be north of the Arctic Circle. Beautiful.