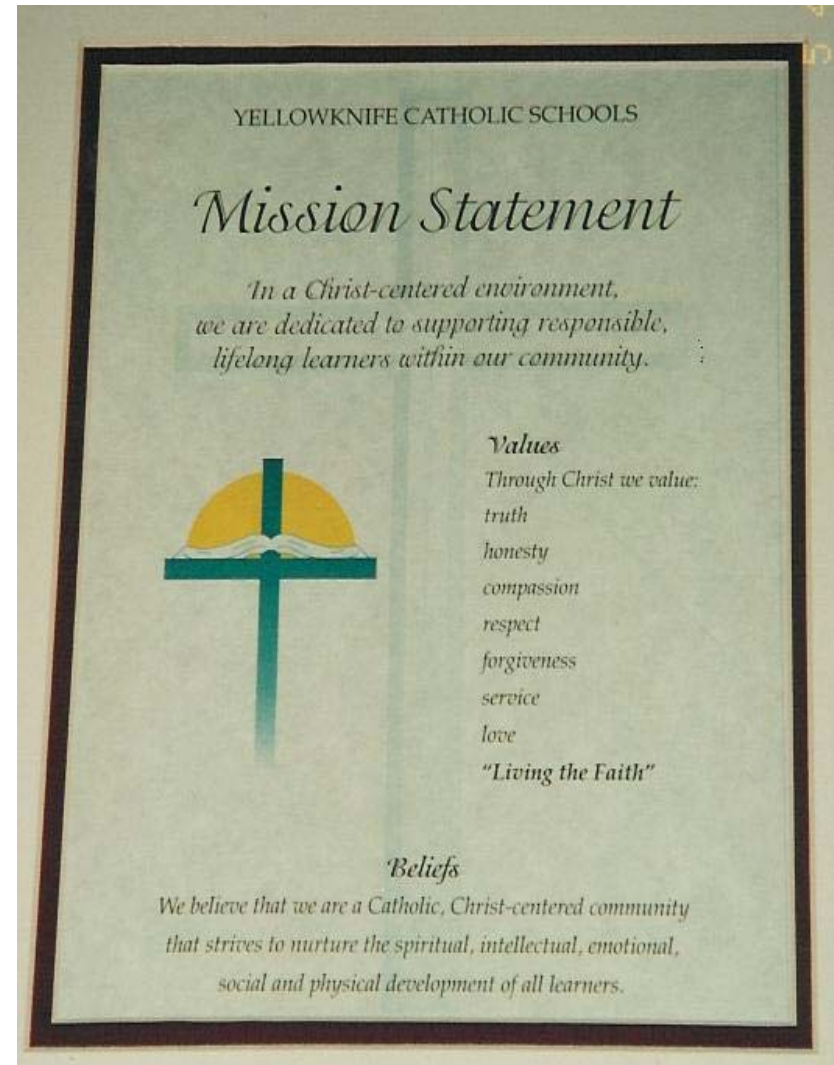


*Introduction*



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This book is an album about and dedicated to, the extended family of the individuals who have worked to make Yellowknife's Roman Catholic Separate System a success. . The snapshots, stories, anecdotes and articles will mean most to the St Pat's family members but all family friends are invited to browse, get to know us a little bit better and share in the fun, laughter accomplishments and pride we celebrate after fifty years of growth.

The story of the Yellowknife Catholic School System is the story of people, life, growth and faith. In the 50 years of existence, the Catholic School system has been anything but separate. It's been a lively, influential, nurturing, supportive part of the city of Yellowknife.

Starting with the two gentlemen who could be called the System's co-founders , Mr. Norman Byrne and Father Francis Ebner, our educational faith community has helped shape community leaders in business, government, been involved.

Throughout this document, we've gathered personal memories, newspaper articles, that highlight important event's from the early days on into 2002. Please look into our family, you might recall old friends or perhaps learn something new about us.

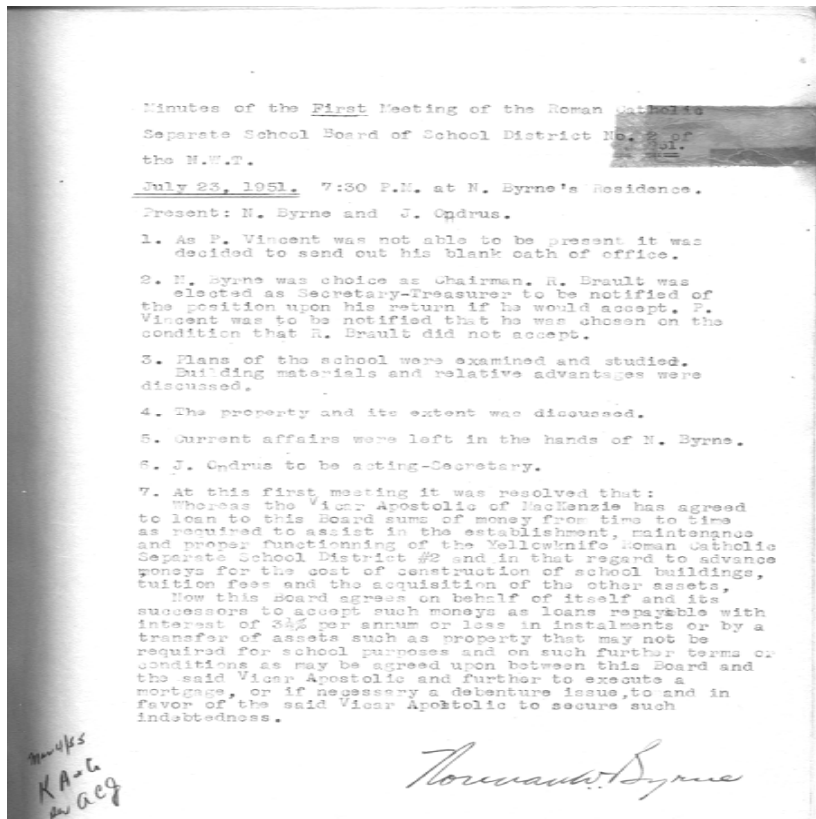
We've had many successes, some failures, and of course lost some family members through the years. But we go on in faith, friendship and confidence that what we do as educators and members of a faith community will continue to produce valuable results in the people we serve as well as in ourselves.

Please join is as we celebrate our pride, happiness and our family through the pages of this book of memories.



*"I myself am satisfied about you my brethren that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another."*

*St. Paul  
Romans 15:14*



*Introduction*

## Yellowknife Catholic School System

Yellowknife's Roman Catholic Separate School System was formed on July 11<sup>th</sup> 1951.

This fact would fit nicely into a Northern trivia game. However, the people and events in the life of the "Catholic Schools" are anything but trivial; many are very interesting, some are outstanding. The history of this strong educational community is one of individuals contributing to Yellowknife, the North, and in some cases, Canada. When we stop to consider where the Catholic School System is today and how we got here, we find individuals and events that are both unique and inspiring.

Education is always about people. It's about personal development and dreams; it's about progress and making things better. The Missionaries who first brought structured education to the North wanted a better life for all Northerners.

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The teachers and administrators of the Catholic School System have always wanted an environment that touches the mind and body, but also the spirit, of their students. The students who have lived in the Catholic System have wanted happiness and success for themselves and their friends. Individuals have had different degrees of success on all these levels; however one thing is certain: no one person could have created what the Catholic School System now is and what it represents. This is a community based on co-operation and individuals making personal sacrifices to help others.

It's easy to look at buildings or institutions and forget the people who made and live in them; we can forget that breath and blood came before stone and steel.

In these pages, we hope readers will meet or remember as well as appreciate some of the people who *were and are* Yellowknife's Catholic School System.

Yellowknife grew out of what the poet Robert Service called, "the muck called gold".

Going back to 1898, samples were collected in areas around the Yellowknife River, the North Shore of Great Slave and Yellowknife Bay. Then in 1934, C J Baker and Herb Dixon found , "The little speck of Yellowknife gold that started it all." In August of 1938 Con Mine poured the Northwest Territories' first gold brick.

In that year, Yellowknife became an incorporated village with its first school, which was under the direction of Miss Mildred Hall. Things were looking good for our isolated but bustling little settlement until World War II broke out in 1939 and development all but stopped until the war ended 6 years later. With the return of the men from "over there" interest in gold mining was re established. Yellowknife began to grow in earnest and by the 50's, the New Yellowknife was expanding and flourishing.



The town benefited from the input and influence of diverse cultures from across Canada and as far away as the United States, Europe and Asia.

The result was that Yellowknife and Yellowknifers began to set roots and become a flourishing and somewhat modern city. The label *Northern Frontier Town* was still attractive and romantic to southerners was becoming less and less accurate. We had productive mines, modern grocery stores and banks, drugstores, beauty shops and theatres. The modern 40-bed Red Cross Hospital provided quality medical services. Commerce, civility and comfort were expanding.

It was in this raw and energetic milieu that two men were to lay the foundations and framework of the Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Father Ebner and Mr. Norman Byrne were men of their times, with vision who could see not only what Yellowknife was but also what it would become.

They saw a place for a separate school system that would meet the needs of a significant portion of the local population. Civic minded and dedicated, these two somewhat typical Northerners can be seen as the message and the method that would create the City's second school district.

Yellowknifers in the 50's already belonged to a number of religious denominations including Anglican, Roman Catholic, United and Baptist. Children of all these faiths attended Yellowknife's Public School, and so many people saw that the idea of a new Roman Catholic school as adding to the strength and meeting another need of a town that would soon be host to ever growing diversities.

No matter what the beginning, the Separate School today is an important and vibrant part of the City of Yellowknife. The pages that follow are not meant to tell all the historical detail of its development.



Rather, through anecdotes and personal witness, they show something of the personal life and spirit that have become the driving force that keeps it going.

The story of personal dedication and perseverance has to begin with Mr. Norman Byrne and Father Francis Ebner.

Although Yellowknife was losing its frontier flavor in the 1950s it was still a community geographically remote from mainstream Canada, 700 air miles north of Edmonton.

Yellowknife was a child of the air age but was largely sustained by water transport. There was no all weather road link to the outside.

Yellowknife in the 1950s was a very cosmopolitan community. Nearly everyone came from somewhere else. The local photographer came from Germany, the President of the Handicraft Guild from Czechoslovakia.

Canadian born mingled with those from elsewhere in the world to create a vibrant community. One writer describing Yellowknife in the 1950s noted that, ~‘Yellowknife is a fascinating place, chiefly because of its people. Individuality and non-conformity have not vanished from the earth.’

The following pages show that the Catholic School System has also developed and taught with a spirit of individuality that has made it a unique family in the community of Yellowknife.