


Yellowknife Catholic Separate School System 1952-2002



The 90's...Diamonds

 **Yellowknife Catholic Schools**
PARENT/TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Notice to parents of students attending St. Patrick Elementary School and St. Joseph School.

St. Patrick Elementary School
 Friday, November 29, 1991
 8:30 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Appointments are by phone only to school secretary, Mrs. Margot Audet at 873-5591.

St. Joseph School
 Thursday, November 28
 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
 and
 Friday, November 29
 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Appointments by phone only to school secretaries:
 Mrs. Marlene Hnatiw or
 Mrs. Susan Ozembloski at 920-2112.

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The 1990's had some of the best and some of the worst times for Yellowknifers as we gained a high profile to many other parts of the world. Some of the attention was brought on by negative events. Fortunately, more attention was generated by events that were extremely positive and they pushed the North and Yellowknife into the forefront of interest and attention for much of the rest of the world.

On the negative side, the Giant Mine strike, which started in May of 1994, shook Yellowknife and shocked the rest of the country when in September a deliberate explosion killed nine employees at the Royal Oak, (formerly Giant) mine.

Fortunately, though that was by far our worst hour, it wasn't our only significant one. In the midst of tragedy, extensive explorations gave every indication that the North held great quantities of diamonds with potential to provide us with unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. In 1992 alone, the diamond industry brought in over \$7 million to the economy of YK and the city was poised to enjoy the same kind of boom economy it had experienced fifty years earlier.

However, despite the optimism, parts of the economy faltered early in the decade. In 1991, the city's vacancy rate jumped from 1.2% to 7.6 % between April and October. Then, less than 12 months later, we lost some significant businesses when the IGA, MacLeod's and the Northern Store, (formerly The Bay), along with the old Miner's Mess in the Yellowknife Inn, all closed their doors. In addition, Con mine laid off 42 employees and Treminco, just north of Yellowknife, dismissed six more.

Decentralization of the GNWT slowed growth in YK ut the downturn didn't last and optimism for Yellowknife's future returned when

Then, just when it was needed the most, diamond mining opened wide our door to the rest of the world and from that point on, the north and Yellowknife would never be the same. BHP's Diamond mine was going to be built and would Yellowknife the diamond capital of North America. With BHP and Diavik Diamond Mines both became realities, and with still more mines proposed, Yellowknife was on the verge of another economic boom similar to the one experienced in the 50's.

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In 1992, the first Winter Cities forum brought us official representation and business people from the Yukon, Greenland, Alaska and Russia as the circumpolar world gathered in Yellowknife to discuss common concerns. One local firm, Ferguson, Simek and Clark went international to design and build a complete town in Irkutsk, Siberia.

Next, YK got an \$18 million dollar face-lift as the City Center complex got two new floors of offices and retail space. Franklin Avenue was expanded to four lanes to speed up the time it takes to move traffic through the city, and push button lights were installed on the main street to protect Yellowknifers during our mini “rush hours”.

YK airport experienced a 60% increase in air traffic between 1990 and '93, largely due to the diamond rush. The increase forced the restructuring of the facility in order to handle the congestion that resulted. Japanese tourists began to number in the thousands and the Fred Henne Park at Long Lake had a long waiting list for its 92-section campsite.

The Northern Frontier Regional Visitor's Center recorded almost 1,500 registered tourists between May and September. Yellowknife was on the move!! Even Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth visited us in 1994.

By the end of the nineties, over a thousand people were working directly in the diamond industry in the North. Based in Yellowknife and committed to development and employment in surrounding communities, diamonds seem to have ensured that “the little mining town on the shores of Great Slave Lake” has its future guaranteed for at least the next 25 years.

The nineties were extremely busy, (and very often stressful), times for the entire North and none the less so for people in Yellowknife's Catholic School System. However, much to everyone's credit, and only because of their dedication and faith during this time, the most significant successes and developments in our history were achieved

Again, Yellowknife's Catholic School System moved with the times and opportunities which surrounded it.

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The System not only prospered in the diamond studded nineties; it jumped confidently into a leadership role of education and community development.

Where the previous forty years had seen the Catholic school system grow in and with the rest of Yellowknife, the nineties was the time when we took a more prominent role of leadership and example in the community. By struggling with its challenges and opportunities, the school system as a whole produced some dramatic results.

From the beginning, the Catholic System has been blessed with gifted leaders and administrators and teachers. The men and women who were board members, administrators and teachers provided direction, strength, personality and an atmosphere in which educational growth and personal development would prosper.

Those involved in the Catholic education in the nineties took over a system that had been developed to the point where it could be counted on to make a huge impact on Yellowknife

education and community growth. Some reorganization was needed so that we could move into the twenty first century confident and prepared. Staff and administration had to work together to develop strategies and systems that would sustain a strong teaching/learning environment in the rapidly changing North. Computer technology had been established as a critical tool in schools and the System had to expand and enhance its ability to deal with this phenomenon. The Catholic School System had to work with government, business, community agencies, parents and students to get recommendations, suggestions, participation, and partnerships in planning and implementing a “new” Catholic School System.

The “new” system, which became a reality in the nineties, included a new High School, a new Elementary School, a new administration building and a new approach that was reflected in the physical design as well as the educational operation of the schools to better suit the needs of modern students. It provided a new look at education and refocused on the dignity of people and the need to recognize and value diversity. In that respect, St. Patrick

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Elementary School was renamed Weledeh School to emphasize the place and importance of the Aboriginal community in our system.

This *newness* in the Catholic System, this re-focus of making education a personal and a community responsibility, was directed and guided by Dr. Loretta Foley who became Superintendent in 1992. As with Mr. Norm Byrne and Father Francis Ebner, Dr. Foley had a vision of what the modern school is and with the help of the exceptional workers and educators was able to make a huge contribution to making it a reality in the 1990's.

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Seeing the light

Special needs money needed

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is under renewed attack for not providing enough for special-needs students.

According to Yellowknife Catholic Schools' student support consultant, Liz Baile, even fiscally- conservative Alberta is way ahead of the NWT in recognizing special-needs children.

"In Alberta, the ministry of Education recognizes the sophistication and the cost of educating a blind child," she said.

"In the NWT, special- needs children, whether they're blind, deaf or have learning difficulties, are really under-resourced in terms of tools to use."

Baile estimates the cost of educating a blind child as being about \$65,000 before the cost of transliterating text books into braille at a cost of \$2,000 each.

Currently, that money comes out of the budget for all the school's needs as there is no specific fund earmarked for special-needs students.

Most students cost the school system about \$7,000 per year, Baile said. As Baile makes her critique of GNWT special- needs funding, she is set to head to a conference Sept. 22-25 in Calgary, called Here's Looking At You Kid 2.

Also going to the international interdisciplinary conference on blind and visually-impaired children are Canadian National Institute of the Blind regional director Christina Vernon, six educators from Weledah school and three blind children with one parent each.

"I think the families (of blind children) feel very isolated here," said Vernon. "They don't have a lot of people to connect with or to network with and there's not a lot of support for them as parents of children who are blind."

She said the children who are blind have no idea how many other children are also blind, so the conference will give them more confidence through association with the other blind kids.

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Vernon said the cost to attend the conference would be about \$1,500 per person and community groups such as the Elks, the Lions and the Yellowknife Community Foundation have donated funds to the CNIB to help subsidize those who are going.

Baile said part of the focus at the conference will be teaching methods.

"We have to do a very different approach to get that child to understand how an apple grows or how to divide," she said.

"It's just a totally different way of approaching how to teach the concepts."

She said when blind children are young it is important to communicate verbally a lot and to get them to hone their skills of being able to describe things.

"You get them to use other senses such as their sense of touch. You also get them to really listen to sounds and people's voices."

Meet the new superintendent

Von Hagen new YK district 2 super

Kim Barraclough,

NNSL (Aug 16/99) - Kern Von Hagen is the new superintendent for the Catholic school system.

And he's no stranger to the field of education. He has been the principal of St. Patrick's high school for the last seven years and also taught for a year at St. Pat's prior to taking on role as principal.

"I was looking for a change, I wanted to make sure that there is a freshness about St. Patrick high school," said Von Hagen about his decision to take the administrative role.

"The danger of becoming too comfortable is that you become complacent," he said.

Life-long learning is one of the many important factors Von Hagen wants to stress to students and especially educators.

"We are all part of the learning process -- everyone is in a position to learn and that includes staff, especially staff.

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We can't just preach about life-long learning, we have to live it."

There are many management styles of his predecessor, Dr. Loretta Foley, that Von Hagen plans to carry on.

"I plan to be of service to others in the district and nurture and foster an environment of trust and of team and of relationship," said Von Hagen.

"I plan to continue to promote leadership at all levels. "There's many ways for people to contribute."

Glen Korstrom, Northern News Services (Sep 24/99) -

Teachers give contract high marks

Proposed agreement faces board ratification

Yellowknife's Catholic school teachers are witnessing a redemption.

The collective agreement teachers ratified last week by a 79 per cent margin includes raises and the restoration of benefits that had been frozen for the last two years of their current contract.

Pat Thomas, president of the NWT Teachers' Association responded to the vote by saying she was pleased the teachers would begin recovering the points lost three years ago.

"I hope this is the last time teachers will be asked to subsidize the education system by taking rollbacks, reductions and cuts," she said.

The proposed two-year agreement is set to take effect July 1 and highlights include a 2.75 per cent pay raise this year and a 2.25 per cent raise next year.

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The two, annual unpaid "Donny Days" have also been eliminated. Named after former premier Morin, the days represented unpaid leave and were designed to save money.

Under the agreement, the teachers also return to the experienced-based pay grid. This system -- which sees an approximate 4 per cent pay raise with each year of teaching and is typically capped at a maximum of 10 years -- has been frozen for the past two years.

While the proposed agreement still faces a vote by the seven-member Yellowknife Catholic Schools board and Annalise Van Ham said it will cost more money, she also said Monday no surprises are expected.

"I think the negotiations went well -- and we were pleased to come out with a memorandum of understanding," said Van Ham, the board's assistant superintendent of business affairs. "It will cost the board more money, but it honours our staff and it is a reasonable change."

Van Ham said in some ways the city's 82 Catholic teachers are benefiting from what's been described as a crisis in education because of country-wide fears of a teacher shortage.

"We have seen a lot fewer applications from the south for here compared to previous years -- so that does give an indication that the market is more competitive (to attract and retain teachers)," she said. "We're hoping the government appreciates that, because that's where our funding comes from and we have to make sure our funding is sustainable."

Van Ham said that while the board followed with interest the recent government budget debates on education, there were few surprises.

"I think we hear from the same perspectives a great deal, and often -- from the teachers, from the parents," she said. "We're quite aware of the issues, in particular of (the shortage of resources for) special needs -- and the fact that there's more of a challenge in the legislature to find more funding, but we're not banking on it."

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Daniel Mac Isaac, Northern News Services

Program on the edge

Four Plus program loses more than two-thirds of its funding

Dane Gibson, Northern News Services

Thanks to healthy funding, Weledeh Catholic School's Four Plus program has flourished.

But the program, which assists children with disabilities to integrate smoothly into the school system, recently found out it must do so with \$92,000 less in operating funds.

Program coordinator and student support counselor Liz Baile said the Department of Education decision promises to hobble Four Plus's robust growth.

"This program demonstrates vision, but currently I see no demonstrated support from the Department of Education to maintain it and keep it viable," Baile said.

"We're not going to give up. We're going to keep trying to provide this opportunity to young children."

Healthy Children's Initiative, a territorial government fund, awarded Four Plus a two year grant of \$134,000 in 1995.

In 1997/98, they gave \$137,000 to the growing program -- which currently has 50 pre-school aged children enrolled.

Four Plus submitted a proposal for 1999/2000 and were shocked to find they would receive a mere \$45,000.

"I know there's people committed to early childhood development in the Department of Education. What we're asking for is permanent funding to invest into children at an early age," Baile said.

"We thought there would be no way they could decrease our funding because they were familiar with the program and knew what we were accomplishing."

Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, Charles Dent, said one of the problems was that the Healthy Children's Initiative received more applications this year than in the past.

"The decision for less (Four Plus) funding was not because the program wasn't doing a good job."

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We know every dollar we put into early intervention programming represents an investment down the road," Dent said.

"But it would have taken twice the money we have for the fund to handle all the applications." He said they are working with their partners to find more money and are hopeful they'll be successful.

Parent Onalee Randell's son, Ky, is in Four Plus. She said he's learned to cooperate, share and interact with other children. She, along with many other parents, are dismayed by the decision.

"Four Plus has given Ky the opportunity to be excited about starting school instead of being fearful," Randell said. "My child won't suffer because he'll have gone through it, but I'd like to see it continue for the future benefit of all kids."

Cheryl Moses also has a son in the program. "I understand there's only so much money to go around but this program is of the highest calibre and it's working," Moses said.

"If they're going to pull the plug on something that works, then what's the point?"

The Gift of Giving

Local business gives Yellowknife schools free shopping spree Christmas came early for schools in Yellowknife this year.

As the students get ready to come back to school, G.W. Business Products in Yellowknife decided to let the city's schools have their pick of excess inventory on Monday.

The business, which has merged with Creative Paper and Office Supplies to become Creative Basics, had shut its doors and had excess inventory headed for the dump.

However, instead of doing that, Creative Basics' Bridgette Larocque decided to call every school and day care in Yellowknife on Monday to invite them to haul off as much of the school supplies as they could.

"We looked at the inventory, saw the amount of stuff we had and thought the schools and day cares could use it," said Larocque.

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She said the company felt it was better to donate the supplies to schools rather than send them to the dump. "To us, education is the future of our children and these were still quality supplies," said Larocque.

One of the first schools on the scene was Weledeh Catholic school. One of the vice-principals there, Dan Curtis, said when he got the call, he wasn't sure it was a free shopping trip. But after he arrived and realized it was, he loaded up on supplies.

He said the school probably took out 15 to 20 shopping carts full of supplies. He said the school picked up approximately \$5,000 in supplies during the shopping spree.

Curtis said the free supplies will help the school greatly. The supplies they got allows them to use their budget for other things. "It's a windfall that happens once in a lifetime," said Curtis of the free shopping trip. "Especially with the financial constraints that the education system is under."

The \$9.2 million question

Referendum to ask Catholic school ratepayers approval to borrow millions for Weledeh construction

Yellowknife Catholic schools is looking to borrow a little cash -- \$9.2 million to be exact.

And on Sept. 28 Catholic school ratepayers will be asked in a referendum to approve the school board borrowing \$9.2 million to build a replacement for Weledeh Catholic school.

The plan is to move the Weledeh students into the old St. Patrick High School, while the old Weledeh School is demolished and reconstructed. Once that construction is done, Weledeh and the new St. Patrick high school will be attached.

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Catholic school board assistant superintendent of business, Annalise Van Ham, said with some sections of Weledeh over 30 years old, something has to be done.

"Weledeh needs a solution," said Van Ham. "We need to do something about that building."

The board's assistant superintendent of instruction, Don Kindt, said Weledeh needs a whole new electrical and mechanical system and a ventilation system.

Also, the board wants a school that will have multi-purpose rooms and have zones for kindergarten, Grade 2, grades 3-5, and 6-8.

Originally the plan was to renovate Weledeh, however, when cost estimates for such work came in around the \$9 million mark, the board decided to build a new school for almost the same amount of money.

"There is no sense in spending that kind of money if the systems aren't effective in delivering today's education programs," said Van Ham.

The tough part for the school board now is getting the ratepayers to approve their borrowing. For those Catholic ratepayers worried about being left holding a \$9.2 million bag, Van Ham said that won't happen.

"This is not going to come out of their pockets," said Van Ham. "We simply need their approval to proceed."

Under the financing agreement, the territorial government has committed to make operating contributions to the board over the next 20 years. The board will use those contributions to pay off the debt over time.

Kindt said he also can reassure ratepayers the Weledeh project won't go over budget.

"This project will be on budget," said Kindt. "If it's over \$9.2 million it will be because some other partners have added money to the pot."

Darren Campbell, Northern News Services (Aug 28/98)

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In the 1989-90 school year, 931 full-time equivalent students were enrolled in the Catholic schools of Yellowknife. In the 1997/98 school year, that number had escalated to 1404 full time equivalent students.

"We've had a 56 per cent increase in students in the last six years," says Kindt, "But not a 56 per cent space increase."

There are other projects in the works which will provide more space for the students. Four portables have been added to the other Catholic high school, St. Joseph's. The building of a new elementary school will be started in the spring, and that is expected to be finished by the fall of 2000.

Reduced funding and more students also challenges the teachers.

"There is a greater diversity of students now than ever before," Kindt says. "Teachers have to be better trained. They have to be current in pedagogy and technology. Their job is much tougher these days."

The public school district has not experienced such a drastic increase in their number of students. In fact, over the last three years, their numbers have stayed stable, hovering around 2,250 full-time students.

The Nineties

They have grown somewhat in the past decade though -- in 1988, only 1933 full-time students enrolled with the public school board.

In reaction to the growing number of students, N.J Macpherson public school was built in 1988 and Range Lake North public school was built in 1993.

Ken Woodley, Superintendent of Education (District 1), states, "The growth in population has caused the system to grow. We've had a positive increase in numbers, which has allowed us to expand the offerings we can give to students."

He agrees with Kindt in that quality has not been compromised despite the challenges they have faced. "We are managing to hold our own quality, and the quantity of services we offer have not diminished."

Perhaps the increased number of students is actually helping the system, since schools receive per student funding. Indeed, Woodley says, "The more students we have, the better programs we can offer...it makes us cost efficient."

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Emma Levez, Northern News Services NNSL (Aug 19/98) -

Heading to class

Next week the most important resource we have will be fussing about with excitement, before loading up the knapsacks and heading out the door for their first day back at school.

While it is true every year is important when it comes to educating the young mind, events swirling on all round Yellowknife residents in 1998 make this a particularly important school year for our youth.

With division about to become fact and the continued development of a Northern diamond industry ongoing, a new generation of Yellowknifers is now in our schools. It will be up to them to harness these forces as a new North is created in the years ahead.

As for the rest of us -- parents, friends, teachers, relatives and neighbors -- it is our job to ensure our youth receive the best tools

possible in order that today's students can harness all that is possible.

Poised on the edge of opportunity, in Yellowknife the student population has skyrocketed in the last 10 years -- a 56 per cent increase in the number of students enrolled in Catholic schools in the last six years and a rise of enrolments in the public school system leaves educators scrambling for space as the new school year begins.

But with four new portables, and plans for a new elementary school next spring it seems that educators are optimistic as they, too, begin a new school year.

While it is easy to blame teachers or point fingers elsewhere when examining our education system, the success or failure of our schools is the responsibility of each and every one of us.

Friday, August 21, 1998

Paper to plastic

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Weledeh gets staff credit cards, Visa or Mastercard?

That's the question on the minds of Weledeh Catholic School staff now that they're part of a credit-card pilot project.

"What we're trying to do is streamline our administrative function and eliminate low-value invoices, purchase orders, petty cash, cheque requisitions and cheques," said Annalise Van Ham, assistant superintendent of business with the Yellowknife Catholic School Board.

"We spend a great deal of time on the smallest portion of our budget in the way we purchase the authorized supplies we need at the school."

Only employees who receive card authorization and have signed a cardholder agreement are allowed to make purchases.

A number of controls have been placed on the credit card with special codes.

One code specifies the merchandise categories authorized for the items the individual should have access to. Another specifies a transaction maximum as well as a credit limit. A home economic

teacher's limit, for example, may be \$80 per transaction with a maximum per month of \$300.

"There's enough controls in the credit cards now that we feel we're ready to pilot the project in one of our schools to see if that's going to eliminate some of the bulk of our paper handling," said Van Ham.

A tender has been completed that requested banks to submit procurement card proposals specifying reporting capabilities and costs. The board has yet to choose a bank.

The revolving fund at any given time for the district under the procurement card system is established at \$50,000.

"Most of the credit cards will have a very small limit. The exceptions might be the principal, which now has a limit that's higher than the average teacher for authority to buy supplies."

How many credit cards will be issued for each school remains to be seen.

"Other jurisdictions have certainly half of the total staff. If someone is a teacher they have budget line for their program and

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-- say its only \$300 -- well then their credit card will have a limit of \$300," said Van Ham.

Beyond the electronic monitoring of spending, staff who use a credit card will have to submit receipts to be signed by the administrator or principal of their school and authorize the purchases. The receipts will come to the central office and checked against the statement they receive from Visa or Mastercard.

If an unauthorized purchase is made or cannot be supported without a receipt the individual is responsible and under the cardholder agreement, will be subject to a payroll deduction.

Early dismissal gets passing grade

When first introduced two years ago, early dismissal at Yellowknife's Catholic schools was met with disapproval from some parents. But according to board superintendent, Loretta Foley, both teachers and students are enjoying the benefits.

"It is quite controversial to have early dismissal and it's very important for the public to know what wonderful things happen for our kids," said Foley.

"Our students -- not just our staff -- our students will reap the rewards of the staff being professionally on the cutting edge and our staff being prepared for new curricula."

On the first three Thursdays of every month, the two elementary Catholic schools allow students to go home early to give teachers a chance to get together and discuss issues affecting them.

There are any number of items teachers can discuss during their time off, such as new curriculum ideas and teaching resources.

The last Thursday of each month, early dismissals allow teachers to focus on district concerns often in the company of board officials.

Student architects

While praising early dismissal, Foley in the same breath described the success the board is also having in getting plans off the ground for Weledeh's retrofit.

Designers are currently looking at schematics while the board continues to gather finances, said Foley.

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To ensure students get the school they want, the board is allowing youngsters to have input into its design, much in the same way students helped with St. Patrick high school's construction.

Members of Weledeh's Destination Conservation met with engineering consultants recently at the school, asked questions and shared ideas.

Kevin Jarrett, energy management officer with Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development, along with Naseem Bashir, consulting engineer on the project, met with the group.

Students' main concern was ensuring the school is as environmentally sound and efficient as possible. That means energy efficient lights with low mercury content, timers on all lights and a clean-running heating system.

by **Jeff Colbourne Northern News Services** (Feb 06/98) -

Boss for the day

Grade six student runs school district Friday

Andrew Vaughan went from attending school to running it last Friday. The Grade 6 Ecole St. Joseph student found himself superintendent for the day after winning third place in an in-school contest in which all students' names were entered.

The second prize was a day serving as superintendent of schools; the first prize was a flight to the High Arctic. The greatest difficulty, he discovered almost immediately, was placating vocal special-interest groups.

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"All the teachers were asking for raises," he said prior to a lunch-hour meeting with Wildlife Minister Stephen Kakfwi and after a sit-down with Yellowknife Mayor Dave Lovell.

"And all the students were asking me to fire this teacher or that teacher."

Andrew, though, took a tough line against unrestrained spending and resisted demands to reduce the workforce during his day in power.

Superintendent Loretta Foley, who accompanied Andrew after ceding her role to him, said the contest was a way of showing students how much was done behind the scenes to keep the schools open.

"The hope is that they will see a little bit of what really happens when you are in charge of a school district," she said.

This is the second year that the Yellowknife Catholic school system has run the superintendent-for-a-day contest, she said, and the day is packed with business.

Besides meeting with civic and school officials, the two did a walk-through of local schools, dealt with school district business in a series of meetings and kept up with happenings back at the office by cell phone, which was Andrew's responsibility.

He said he had no idea how much educational business goes on behind the scenes that students on their way to school never see.

"I was surprised at how big it is," he said of the infrastructure.

Budget top school issue list

Board trustee hopefuls can expect plenty of budget questions as the October 20 election approaches.

Budget cuts as well as education quality are being cited as big concerns by members of the parent advisory committee. Last year, the public board slashed its budget by \$2.3 million to \$17.6 million.

Parents are looking for trustees with budget management skills as well as experience in computer and technology fields, Mildred Hall parent advisory committee member Pam Dunbar said.

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"I don't want people learning (how to manage a budget this big) on our system."

Taxation for Ingraham trail residents is also expected to be among the issues, Dunbar added. "Our parent advisory committee had started to pursue this. It will be interesting to hear what people say."

Yellowknife Education District No. 1 superintendent Ken Woodley has sent a letter to the deputy minister of education, Mark Cleveland, to clarify the Ingraham student-fee issue after meeting with Ingraham Trail MLAs.

But for Shannon Gullberg, chair of the Ecole St. Joseph school parent advisory committee, "the big issue, from a parent's perspective, is budget cutbacks."

If cutbacks are inevitable, parents want to have input, she said.

"Parents appreciate that these are times of decreased resources."

The issues are expected to be fleshed out after a community liaison committee meeting, which is to include all parent advisory committee members, scheduled for early October.

Yk No. 1 and Yellowknife Catholic Schools trustee elections are Oct. 20. Advance polls are Oct. 10.

So far, there's no race as the returning officer has only received one nomination for Yk1 and two nominations for separate school board trustee.

There are seven spots on each board.

Yk1 trustee Terry Brookes has been nominated.

For the separate board, current chairman Noel O'Sullivan and Father Basil Boudreau have been nominated.

Nomination deadline is Monday at 3 p.m.

by Doug Ashbury Northern News Services (Sep 12/97) - School

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There are also concerns that budget cutbacks are occurring while class sizes get bigger, she said.

Sir John Franklin high school PAC member Gail Morse said high school renovations are an issue.

"No question, it's necessary. It's been put on hold for a long time," she said. "I'd like to see school board trustees working closely with other board trustees, collaborating on programs," she added.

Pulling the plug

Some students left out of the electronic information loop

The Department of Education's electronic bulletin board was supposed to ensure all Northern students can exchange information even if they don't have direct access to the Internet.

But the "North of 60" network is no longer an option for everyone.

Only students in the Baffin, Beaufort-Delta, Kitikmeot, Deh Cho, and Dogrib regions remain plugged in because their

divisional education councils bought the necessary equipment to connect the central departmental computer.

The Sahtu and South Slave regions are currently without servers to access North of 60 but they are considering other options, the department's distance learning project officer, Pam Fawcett, said last week.

Students in Yellowknife Education District No. 1 and Yellowknife Catholic Schools have been without access since Sept. 2.

The Keewatin Divisional Education Council, meanwhile, is temporarily using the Yellowknife system to access North of 60.

North of 60 allowed students to send e-mail and exchange files with each other and the Department of Education even if there was no Internet service in their community. The department used to supply the needed computer equipment, which made brief connection to the Net to forward mail and files.

Now councils must buy the equipment themselves. Keewatin divisional education council superintendent Curtis Brown said such expectations were "fair."

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"As a communication tool for teachers and students, North of 60 was found to be a huge success, with over 1,100 active accounts," Fawcett said.

"Each Divisional Education Council has the power to decide if the North of 60 network is of value to its teachers and students," she said.

North of 60 runs on First-Class software, which was widely used before Internet access became commonplace.

In 1994, North of 60 was launched as a pilot project. The department bought the hardware and software and provided teachers and students with free accounts.

"The North of 60 pilot project is now complete," Fawcett said. "North of 60 works", she added. But school boards were informed last March or April the axe was coming.

Several hundred Yellowknife students had North of 60 accounts, Yellowknife Education District No. 1 superintendent Ken Woodley said.

Woodley said North of 60 administrator Jacquelyn Burles was spending several hours a day administering the bulletin board.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment did not have the money to keep track of funding, Yellowknife Education District No. 1 chairman Gary Black said.

Those with an Internet account can still access North of 60.

Learning in a second language

French immersion popular in Yellowknife

French Immersion in Yellowknife has been a great success since it started in 1980. Still as popular as it was then, the program, which is offered all the way to Grade 12, continues to grow today.

"French immersion is intended to help students develop a functional level of bilingualism," says Lilly Oldham, principal at

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William MacDonald School and supervisor of instruction (languages) for YK education district No. 1.

Oldham says that a second language will help in seeking post-secondary studies, finding employment, and even understanding Canada's French-speaking people.

To be recognized as a bilingual institution, a school must have French immersion students learning more than 50 per cent of their education in French.

Sir John Franklin School has become the newest school in Yellowknife to offer French immersion education, Oldham is happy to announce. Students there can even learn math, science and physics in French now, she said.

With high school level French immersion schooling now available, a student in the Yellowknife public education school system can go from Grade 4 to Grade 12, and in the Catholic education system from kindergarten to grade 12, and then get a

bilingual education certificate recognizing proficiency in Canada's two official languages.

There are about 235 French immersion students in Yk Education District No. 1. The Yellowknife's Catholic schools have about 270 students in French immersion.

Throughout Canada there is some debate on when is the best time to enter a child in bilingual education.

Some are now saying that it is better to start a child in kindergarten, but others maintain that it is better to make sure that a child has the basics in his or her own mother-tongue before they pursue another.

"Yellowknife is fortunate to have two French immersion programs, with two entry points," said Oldham. "For some children it is more effective to start in kindergarten, for some it is better to start in grade four.

She adds that you can't say if one program is better than the other. "It depends on the child's attitude, their interests and their aptitude for second language learning."

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No matter what the level of entry though, having two languages is obviously better than one.

by Ric Stryde Northern News Services (Aug 20/97)

Help for 'challenged' students

First-ever project expected to help kids "at risk"

A pilot project between Yellowknife Catholic schools and Stanton Regional Hospital promises early intervention for students with learning problems.

A first for Yellowknife, it will provide medical help for students with language development, behavioral and social

problems, said Liz Baile, the Catholic school board's special needs co-ordinator.

"It's for children who, for one reason or another, aren't learning," she said. "It's for kids who need professional assessment so they can learn."

Before the program got under way at the beginning of March, children with problems in the classroom were sent to the Glenrose facility in Edmonton.

Baile said moving the youths to Alberta distressed families and prevented them from taking the necessary steps to diagnose students' problems.

"It can be an intimidating process for a family that has never been down south before," she said.

Providing local medical attention through a team that includes a speech pathologist, child psychologist, behaviorist, occupational therapist, audiologist and a pediatrician, children can receive treatment faster and without the stress of moving.

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Baile started the program in conjunction with Dr. Nicole Chatel, a pediatrician at the hospital.

"I didn't want kids to fall through the cracks," said Baile.

"There have been many children who haven't been able to go to the Glenrose. This program came out of frustration with the current situation."

So, in November the two decided to collaborate and try to help seven students in the Catholic system.

"And the more we talked, we said we'd do it for seven other kids and in a real pilot project," she said.

The initiative stems from a new movement within the schools to look for outside help for classroom problems.

"We need more community outreach to help make the child more successful," she said.

While the \$8,000 program has so far been a success, Baile isn't sure the school board will be able to continue funding the project.

Still, she warned against underestimating the importance of a program that may be able to save the system money in the long run.

"If we continue with this endeavor, they will get the support they need to be successful in school, and there will be less stress on the families," she added.

by Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (Apr 04/97)

School's changing role *Educators refocus the three Rs*

Educators are turning more than ever to community groups to deal with classroom problems, saying they can't do it alone anymore. And Ken Woodley, superintendent of the public school

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board, said schools are re-evaluating their role in more ways than one.

Among the board's new tools is a future needs committee to identify the future of schools. "We're taking stock right now," Woodley said. "We've always been torn between what the legislated requirements are and what we see as needed in the schools."

Schools now place more attention on areas that include career placement and emotional health -- in short, a more holistic approach to the needs of students that can challenge educators.

Because of resource shortages, this approach involves getting outside agencies to help provide the services required of this new educational system.

"Because of time and money constraints, we have to be clear on our mandate," said Liz Baile, special needs co-coordinator for the Catholic school board.

"Education is a shared responsibility in the community," she said. But Baile said she doesn't feel that schools are trying to do too many things.

"Because of economics, people are re-evaluating their mandate ... how to be more efficient with their resources. But we have to build more collaboration."

Woodley said that the school has always been "a convenient grouping of students in one place" that has had some problems dealing with the individual needs of students.

"The school is not, and never should be a dumping ground," he said.

While schools have always struggled with problems in the classroom, educators are now taking a holistic approach to students' well-being and education.

"Educators can't do it alone -- we have to co-ordinate with different community groups even though our mandate is

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education and our approach is more holistic, we need outside services," said Baile.

"We have to do this because we have the reality of having the students onsite for eight hours a day."

Woodley said it's difficult for schools to do all of these things.

"The schools are not malls -- a mall has a variety of stores in which people shop for different needs," he said. "I don't think it's realistic to suggest that schools can address the problems of students."

Woodley said that schools are moving away from the philosophy that all students move in the same direction.

"I'm looking to the day when the school system will be large enough for all students to see that the system meets their needs --- and allows them to maximize their potential," he said.

But Baile warns that the process of moving in this direction isn't easy.

"There's always the question of finding funding," she said.

"To do this with such uncertainty can be quite frustrating. We can't keep letting families fall through the cracks. It's pretty incredible how students aren't getting service in this city."

by Jennifer Pritchett, Northern News Services (Apr 04/97) -

More kids, less money

Despite reductions in funding over the next two years, school boards in Yellowknife look optimistically to 1997.

"If the GNWT maintains its level of cuts, not much will change," said Ken Woodley, superintendent of the public school board. "When we did last year's budget, we took the cuts then."

While Woodley said the funding reductions have placed an additional strain on the system, the overall quality of education hasn't been affected.

"We haven't lowered our expectation level to the same level our funding has been reduced," he said. "Our operation is labor-

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intensive, so I guess it's people (teachers) that have been affected."

"The last area for this to be felt is among the students, so we take it ourselves," he added.

The Roman Catholic school board has had to deal with the same cuts. The board's student enrolment is increasing as the GNWT funding levels drop.

"We're trying not to turn people away," said Don Kindt, the district's supervisor of schools. "I hope when the GNWT looks at the whole situation, they'll take all factors into account."

Currently, there are 1,418 students in the district schools, more than 100 more than last year at this time.

Rising enrolment at Ecole St. Joseph and Weledeh school is increasing the need for more seats at St. Patrick high school.

"When the new high school was built, we gained 200 students right away," he said.

"Whenever a new facility is built, there's a lot of shopping that goes on."

In a time of severe belt-tightening at both school boards, there are an increasing number of joint projects between the two districts. A \$250,000 Department of Education initiative to provide technology training to teachers in both districts kicks off in the new year.

To be announced early in January, the project will train teachers in the application of technology, such as computers and internet use.

The two school boards are trying to align busing schedules to save money. They are working toward a common resource selection and service for a new western Canada math curriculum.

In addition, there will be common professional development sessions for both boards.

"Right now it makes sense for us to pick and choose areas where we can work together, and then to remain unique in other areas," said Kindt. *NNSL (JAN 03/97)*

Roles swapped in class

Student finds it wasn't a nerve-wracking experience

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Students at St. Pat's high school have got a taste of what it's like to be teachers. Three students instructed their teachers how to make World Wide Web pages on the Internet during a workshop held recently at the high school.

First-time instructor Andrew Tonner, a Grade 11 student, said it was learning experience for him as well, and he'd like to have the opportunity again.

"It was intimidating at first, but it wasn't at all as nerve-racking as I thought it was going to be," he said. "We liked showing other people about the Internet."

Tonner, along with Niall Fitzgerald, a Grade 11 student, and Jason Rasch, a returning Grade 12 student, conducted the workshop. The trio are also creating a web site for the school board.

Students at St. Pat's and Weledeh schools now have Internet access.

It's part of the Yellowknife Catholic School Board's efforts at providing Internet access for every student in its system. The instruction for the teachers is the first step in bringing the

Internet into the classroom. About 10 teachers took advantage of the course and more are expected to receive tips from the students in the future.

Meanwhile, school librarians Francine Dennis and Janice Sargent have designed a web site of their own.

"It will help promote the library outside the school," said Sargent. "It lets people know about our collection at the library," added Dennis.

Les Cameron, an art and science teacher at St. Pat's, said he will take what he learned from the session and teach his students how to use the Internet as a research tool.

A home page he designed is devoted to links on the Net that lead Net users to other Internet sites.

"It helps them put together a personal inventory of information," he said. "It will help them learn how to access information quicker."

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Cameron said he sees it as an important educational tool for the future. "I think people need to see some application for the web first."

by Mark Sproxtton Northern News Services (NOV 13/96)

Students drop in, not out

For the past two years, St. Pat's students have had somewhere to turn when they had trouble keeping up in class. When Norm Sargant had trouble with Social Studies 20, he knew where to go.

He turned to St. Patrick high school's drop-in centre. There, the Grade 11 student received the help he needed and he is now back on course to complete his French immersion bilingual certificate.

"I'm not in a hole any more," says Sargant. "It was a lot better than taking it in the classroom."

He's one of many St. Pat's students who have received help through the two-year-old support program.

The school's drop-in centre is the place to go for students struggling with courses, in need of a make-up exam, or simply a helping hand digesting subjects like math or social studies.

"It allows flexibility and a safety net," says Sister Nancy Wales, the program coordinator. Wales and assistant Julaine Hamer offer hard-pressed students a break and a chance to start over.

"Otherwise, they would have to do it with Distant Education or print modules," Hamer explains.

A key advantage to using the drop-in center, says Wales, is that the students get valuable one-on-one consultations, something that is not always easy to get in the classroom.

"The hope was for students to get that kind of smaller sense of community," says Wales. "That's hard to achieve in a rotating high school setting."

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Last semester, 60 students who needed to complete core courses from the year before did so thanks to help from the drop-in center.

To date, approximately three-quarters of them have completed or will complete the courses they need by the end of the year.

Another 176 students accessed the center on a drop-in basis, of which 141 wrote make up tests.

Grade 11 student Janina Raftery, who moved to Yellowknife from the Philippines last year, found that she would need to take Social Studies 10 if she were to graduate on schedule.

The only problem was that the class conflicted with her already full course load.

"I probably wouldn't have finished the course if I didn't have Sister Nancy pushing me along, because I find Social Studies a little bit complicated, especially since I'm new here," says Rafter.

She finished the course with an 85 per cent average.

Mike W. Bryant Northern News Services Yellowknife
(Feb06/02) -

Bad year at St. Pat's *Seniors' exams results down in math and sciences*

It was a give-and-take year for St. Patrick high school seniors and the final marks awarded them. While Grade 12 Catholic students taking level-30 courses outperformed Yellowknife District No.1 seniors for 2000-2001 in English and social studies, they were much weaker in science and math.

Standard of acceptance rates in chemistry and physics were particularly low. Only 70.6 and 67.9 per cent of students taking chemistry 30 and physics 30 respectively passed -- as much as 20 per cent lower than the passing rate at Sir John Franklin high school.

The numbers were also lower than the territorial averages of 79 and 75.3 per cent, respectively. The results for

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chemistry 30 are in stark contrast with the year before when 94.1 per cent of seniors passed the course.

The percentage of seniors achieving a standard of excellence (80 per cent or better) was also lower when compared with both Sir John and the territorial average.

Whereas 31.3 per cent of Sir John students reached a standard of excellence in physics 30, only 3.6 per cent of St. Pat's seniors received more than 80 per cent on their final mark.

For the most part and with the exception of math 30, final marks are a 50/50 mix of accumulated grades taken throughout the school year and diploma exams written in January and June.

Diploma exams written for math 30 only represented 20 per cent of the final grade due to changes in the curriculum last year.

Level-30 courses are the classes usually associated with entrance requirements for university.

Yellowknife Catholic Schools released the final mark results at a regular public board meeting Dec. 19.

Superintendent Kern von Hagen said recent turnovers in staff members teaching math and science were likely part of the problem this year.

Class size and curriculum changes were also cited as reasons for the drop in passing rates and the number of seniors achieving a standard of excellence.

"There a lot of variables that have contributed to these changes," von Hagen said. "Class size, staff turnover ... it's been reasonably stable, but it's (math and science) an area we have to be more patient in."

Mike W. Bryant Northern News Services (Dec 21/01) -

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Drivers beware

Roadside checks out in force, with a minty twist

As the festive season carries on, motorists better watch out. Yellowknife RCMP are conducting random holiday inspections on roads across the city.

As of last Monday, 1,035 vehicles had been stopped. Police laid only one impaired driving charge, along with three drug charges, six Motor Vehicle Act charges, and 38 warnings.

Sgt. Al McCambridge called the low number of charges "a positive number." He added that the Motor Vehicle Act charges run the gamut from failure to stop to driving without a valid licence.

While impaired drivers get the legal equivalent of a lump of coal, police are giving responsible motorists a candy cane festooned with a red ribbon.

The mint treats come courtesy of St. Patrick high school's Students Against Drinking and Driving.

"The students were out on Saturday night with the members, and we had a bunch of candy canes left over," said McCambridge.

SADD co-ordinator Michele Thoms said the candy is a way of saying thanks to Yellowknife motorists.

"The check stops are about prevention, not punishment," said Thoms.

Elyse Babyn, a Grade 11 student at St. Patrick, said she and her SADD colleagues handed out "seven or eight boxes" of candy canes Saturday night.

"It was really cold out, though," added Babyn, explaining the left-over treats.

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After a hiatus of a few years, students were eager to get reacquainted with the police.

"We haven't done them in a few years, and the kids were really interested in being out with the police again," said Thoms.

Kevin Wilson Northern News Services (Dec 21/01) -

Joining the working world *High school students get a taste of life on the job*

It was a day when school and careers came together as a learning experience for both parent and child alike.

The eighth annual Take our Kids to Work Day saw Grade 9 students from both high schools get a taste of the working world on Wednesday.

Some learned about the diamond industry with Diavik, while others moved into the public sector for the morning and afternoon.

Over at the GNWT Department of Public Works, a group of students learned what it was like to be an engineer. They did

a check of the building's heating and ventilation system, and got a primer course in mechanics and electronics.

"Being an electrician would be fun," said St. Patrick high school student Jackie Delorme.

"That little switchboard thing was cool. We had 10 little wires we would have to hook up to make the light work."

Sir John student Kevin Rattray's dad is the department's deputy minister -- Bruce Rattray. Like his father, Rattray is thinking about a career in engineering some day.

"Public Works showed us a lot of different branches (in engineering)," Rattray marveled. "There are so many."

Interestingly, Kevin's dad once considered becoming a veterinarian before going on to engineering.

"Some time later, after some aptitude tests when I was about your age, it was decided that I would be better off being an engineer," Bruce Rattray joked with the students. Over at Stanton Regional Hospital, Kevin

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Sosiak was learning from his dad about the facility's computer nerve centre. Jim Sosiak is the hospital's computer technician analyst.

It was Kevin's first visit to his father's place of employment. "It's kind of confusing -- all the different parts," wondered Kevin, amid blinking lights and other assorted doo-hickeys.

Nonetheless, Kevin hopes to have a job programming computer games one day. "Dad's job helps," Kevin mused.

"I guess he knows what I'm doing here now," said Jim Sosiak. "Staring at computer monitors all day."

Mike W. Bryant Northern News Services (Nov 09/01)

What do my parents do?

YK Grade 9s get a taste of real life

Parents and guardians of Yellowknife students were visited at their worksite by a curious mob on Wednesday.

About 160 Grade 9 students from Sir John Franklin and 100 from St. Patrick high schools took the day off to see what adults do on the job, thanks to the Take Our Kids to Work project.

Classrooms from across Canada participated in the project that is coordinated by The Learning Partnership, a national non-profit agency.

Kevin White is the clinical coordinator in Stanton Regional Hospital's operating room. He put a group of kids in scrubs and gave them an inside look at an operating room.

"We showed them how to take blood pressure readings, how to check oxygen levels and how to perform a basic surgical stitch," said White.

"It was fun taking the kids through because it allowed me to see the job through their eyes. It made me realize that sometimes, we take for granted what we do."

Sir John Franklin student Andrew Harbicht has a mother who works in surgical day care at the hospital. "Surgical day care is a place where people go to get ready for surgery and it's where they end up after the surgery," said Harbicht.

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"Today was pretty cool -- we saw all the gadgets and how they use everything so I learned a lot. Later, at home, I'll talk to my mom about all the stuff I saw."

Dane Gibson Northern News Services (Nov 05/99) -

For St. Patrick student Diana Craig, whose mother works as an operating room aid, being an observer at the hospital was an eye-opening experience.

"I used to always wonder what my mom did at work so now I have a pretty good idea," said Craig. "She helps patients in the OR and she assists her co-workers, so she's really important. I'm very proud of her."

Sir John Franklin teacher Lenore deJong helped co-ordinate her school's effort. In all, more than 100 local businesses allowed students to visit.

"I think it's important for the kids to get out in the real world and see what their parents do all day," said deJong.

"The exercise improves communication between the parent and the child and we hope makes them see how valuable an education is to their future."

Land learning *Students earn fishing award*

St. Patrick high school students Matthew Menacho, 18, and Nathan Pike, 16, have received filleting knives as gifts that go along with the honour of being the best junior fish management technicians. The two were honored at a ceremony this week after making a trip with seven other students in the school's wildlife leadership program to Blachford Lake Lodge Sept. 28-Oct. 1.

"I learned living off the land is quite difficult but it's fun, too," said Menacho.

"The elders who were talking to us knew what they were saying and I learned a lot from them."

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Menacho said part of the learning was the importance of paying the land and paying the water.

This tradition holds that if you are going to take something from the land, in the form of trapping or fishing, that it is important to give something back.

As a result the students were taught to throw tobacco, tea or sugar into the fire as a way of paying the land. To pay the water, students took a willow branch and threw it in the water after saying thank you.

"I used to live on the land when I was a kid -- on Willow Lake near Tulita," Menacho said.

"My grandpa and grandma used to teach me things about the land. Now I go trapping and hunting on my own every couple months. They just showed me the way."

Pike similarly has spent a lot of time on the land around Inuvik.

He said much of the work he remembers is clearing the brush and packing sawdust so it can be reused. The wildlife course is part of a program called career and technology studies. Students are

responsible for completing three credits, or modules, during the semester.

The trip to Blachford dealt specifically with angling, fishing and traditional methods of living off the land.

"We took a fish biologist, Lyndon Kivi, from Fisheries and Oceans Canada," said teacher Warren Cummins.

"He worked with the students, helping them identify fish species and habitat. He also did some water testing and environmental tests."

The group also went along with two Dettah elders, Therese and Modeste Sangris.

"They worked with the kids and showed them how to set nets," Cummins said. "The net they used was called a No. 5 gang. That means it has five different sizes of mesh within a 50-metre length."

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The net allowed the students to catch different sizes of fish. The program has been running for three years and cost the school about \$4,000 for the programming, meals and transportation.

The school has a timeshare agreement with Blachford Lake Lodge for the additional cost of lodging. Lodge owner Mike Freeland said some of the cost was defrayed by the students doing some work that Blachford Lake Lodge staff would have had to do otherwise.

Tasks included fixing and winterizing boat motors and doing some brush cutting.

Staff watched the kids to see who performed the most and was most enthusiastic about the program.

Glen Korstrom Northern News Services (Nov 03/99) -

Learning with latitude

Yellowknife student heading to national geography contest

Zoltan Kalnay, a 15-year-old student at St. Patrick high school in Yellowknife, is on his way to The Great Canadian Geography Challenge in Ottawa, this May.

Kalnay began his trek to the national finals by first winning the classroom competition in January, which led him to compete for the school title. After being declared the St. Pat's champion, Kalnay proceeded on to the territorial competition, open to all junior and senior high schools and held on March 27 at St. Pat's.

Kalnay's fellow competitor was Sarah Hannah, a Grade 8 student from Ecole St. Joseph in Yellowknife. Kalnay left victorious after a seven-five defeat over Hannah.

As the territorial champion, Kalnay receives an all-expenses-paid trip to Ottawa to compete in the national final, moderated by Alex Trebek of the television quiz show Jeopardy!

Participants from all areas of Canada will travel to Ottawa, and the number of challengers is decided by the representation by population method.

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"There will probably be about 24 competitors in all, and they usually ask the same questions to all of us," says Kalnay, who is attending for the third time. "They take the top 10 and then Alex Trebek asks the finalists the questions. It goes down to five people and then three people and then the winner."

Kalnay will be travelling with the Alberta co-ordinator for the challenge, and is staying at Carleton University.

"It will be neat to be at Carleton, since my dad was a student there," says Kalnay.

The NWT co-ordinator is Carole Forget, who is also a teacher at St. Pat's. "This is a great experience for the kids and I hope more schools will get involved in the future," says Forget. "I wanted to get involved to help encourage the students here to participate. It's great that Zoltan, who I know from school, is having the opportunity to travel to Ottawa and compete in this challenge."

Kalnay will have to answer world geography questions as well as read graphs.

If Kalnay wins the national challenge, he will receive a \$3,000 scholarship, a computer and a spot on the national team. He's already looking ahead to the first prize.

"I want the computer, so I can rebuild it and put cool stuff in it," he smiled.

Sarah Holland Northern News Services (May 14/99) -

Youth storm legislature *Yellowknife's voice heard at Youth Parliament*

It may come as a surprise to learn that Yellowknife youth are concerned with women's issues, arsenic contamination, employment and homelessness.

But those are just some of the serious subjects four area teens are raising at the first ever Youth Parliament being staged this week.

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"At school we did some assignments and current-events projects based on the Giant Mine arsenic clean-up -- and I decided to do my members statement and all my questions on that," said Jeff Babyn, a St. Patrick's High School freshman who represents Yellowknife Centre at the parliament.

Students from every riding in the territory gathered in the capital on Monday to spend the week getting to know parliamentary procedure, one another and the issues affecting the new NWT.

Unlike the real legislature, however, this youth assembly is well-represented by the NWT's female population -

12 of the 16 participants are girls and they're led by "Premier" Lana Nahanni of Fort Simpson.

But St. Pat's Andrea Tam, who represents Frame Lake North MLA Charles Dent, played down the female question.

"I think that because we're youth, we pretty much feel all equal," she said. "We all have our own ideas and feel equal in giving our own opinions."

Tam, 14, said Tuesday's session involved preparation for Thursday's assembly session as well as a simulated caucus meeting and debates -- aspects of the youth parliament that "MLA" Eddie Peart described as "fun."

"The best part of it is being up in the rooms, and it kind of sets the atmosphere that, yeah, you are important," he said. "I've been a page before and went to Ottawa with the cadets, and we listened to Question Period -- it gets kinda rough, but I like that atmosphere."

Peart said he'll direct questions on homelessness in Yellowknife to the parliament's minister of health and social services.

"I mention Yellowknife, but it affects the whole territory -- I mean there's homeless people probably in every city and town," he said. "That's unfortunate, but we have to deal with it."

The parliamentarians enjoyed a full slate of social and political events all week, which culminated in Thursday's assembly session.

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Babyn admitted Tuesday he was a little nervous about the prospect of standing up and delivering his statement before the entire assembly, but said he understood it was for a good cause.

"I'll also be learning about the issues the other constituencies are representing here," he said.

Daniel MacIsaac Northern News Services NNSL (May 21/99) -

Toasting teens

Students stage a celebration of youth

Youth achievement doesn't come without sweat, hard work -- and a few laughs.

So says Samera Hess, one of the organizers of the Yellowknife Youth Leadership Awards Banquet held Tuesday night at the Elk's Lodge hall.

"Every step has been frustrating to the point where you want to choke someone," she said. "But it's been so much fun, and we couldn't stop laughing even while we were decorating the hall."

One of the founding members, the Grade 12 St. Patrick high school student said the committee was formed last year when the city began considering implementing a curfew. Hess said students at both St. Pat's and Sir John Franklin high school began looking at working with the city and establishing a sort of YTV-awards night to recognize the contributions youth make to the community.

The 18-year-old said the city and local sponsors like the Yellowknife Elk's Lodge and First Air and Air Canada quickly embraced the idea.

"They're supporting us," she said. "We went to the city and a budget meeting and I guess the city and corporations realized

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youth are a valuable resource and knew their money wouldn't be wasted -- and we invite them along to see what we've been doing and update them, too."

Hess said anyone under the age of 19 could be nominated for Tuesday's awards -- which fell into some 15 categories, like drama and sport, as well as presentations by the high schools' Students Against Drunk Driving clubs. But she was quick to point out that the awards were only an indication of the hard work performed by all participants in the city.

"We don't look at it like there is one winner," she said. "Everyone who comes is a winner."

But among the more prestigious of the awards was Youth of the Year, a title taken by St. Pat's Angela Masongsong for her high-level involvement in a number of fields.

"I love being out there -- it's just about getting to know people and having fun," said the 18-year-old. "I just wanted to meet people when I started out in Grade 9 and the teachers saw that I liked getting involved, and they gave my name to Storefront (for Voluntary Agencies)."

"I helped build the youth program there and then started getting more involved with the community."

Sir John's Erin Nicholls backed up Masongsong. The Grade 10 student serves as secretary at the committee's weekly meetings and said the committee generates a real feeling of both fun and shared responsibility.

"It's great to celebrate everything that youth have done in the community," she said.

Nicholls said that with the exception of some sound problems earlier in the evening, the banquet went off with nary a hitch. Certainly the packed house appeared to agree.

Daniel MacIsaac Northern News Services NNSL (May 28/99) -

Pondering a tragedy *Students discuss Littleton carnage*

The recent carnage at Columbine high school in Littleton, Colorado, has St. Patrick high school students thinking.

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Some of the students do not agree with ideas the media has been tossing around lately, as to what influenced Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris to shoot up their high school with guns and explosives, killing 12 students, a teacher, and finally, themselves.

Media throughout North America have been suggesting it's the violent types of movies and music that students today are exposed to which may be influencing youth to act violently.

Jordan Murray, a student at St. Pat's, feels movies are not the root of the problem, but that rather "It's the culture that coincides with (the movies and the music). Ultimately, it's your own choice."

Fellow student Malcolm Walsh agrees with Murray.

"It depends what kind of screwed up people you hang around with - they're the bad influence."

Gerard Landry's Grade 12 English class has mixed opinions on the subject.

"Everybody watches the same stuff -- everyone has negative thoughts," said Janna Pich. Pich thinks that generally people don't

follow through on those thoughts except in extreme cases such as the incident in Colorado.

Many of the students seemed to think part of the problem was the upbringing of the students and perhaps also the fact that they were made fun of quite often at school.

Pam Jones thinks the teasing might have helped push the two boys over the edge.

"They put them down so bad," said Jones.

Student Jessica Patterson thinks perhaps school uniforms might cut down on the problems.

Patterson said that if students had to wear uniforms maybe some of the teasing about appearances would be cut down because all the students would look alike.

Overall, most of the students felt it was unlikely something such as the Colorado incident would happen in Yellowknife or furthermore, at St. Pat's.

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Patterson said there is a "super-slim chance of it happening here."

Kim Barraclough Northern News Services Apr 28/99) -

Parents take a break from cooking *Weledeh students independent in the kitchen*

Elementary students have been helping out more at home since they learned some valuable skills during a six- week program at Weledeh Catholic school.

Approximately 20 students from grades 3-6 have learned the finer points of cooking and grocery shopping after completing the Community Kitchen for Kids program. Although similar programs for adults have already been implemented in the North, the children's program was the first of its kind in the NWT, and is expected to catch on across the North.

The children chosen to participate in the program, which was funded jointly by the Health Canada and Environment Canada, were taped during their class for a video that will be distributed

across the North to any school or community interested in starting up the program. The recipes used by the children are being compiled in a manual that will accompany the video.

The students who participated in the program headed into the kitchen at Weledeh school once a week, after regular classes, to learn skills they would be expected to show their families at supper time when they went home that evening. The students first prepared the meal in the school kitchen, then went home to test their cooking abilities on their families.

"Any ingredients and groceries (needed for the recipe), the child would take home and have the parent help them prepare it," said Stephanie Prpick-Boss, an instructor for the program and teacher at the school. "Some of the parents did comment that their children made most of it. The meals were simple enough for younger ages to cook it at home."

During the six-week course, students were taught other things besides how to cook.

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"We learned to wash our hands before we cook and take off all our jewelry," said Monique Fournier, a student in the program.

Charlene Drygeese, who was familiar with the kitchen before taking the course, said it taught her how to make different meals.

"I learned to cook more things than just eggs and hotdogs," said Drygeese. Prpick-Boss said the course covered a variety of information that would be useful not only to the Weledeh students, but to students across the North.

"The focus was safety in the kitchen, cleanliness, table manners and buying groceries that are healthy and accessible -- using things that are already in the cupboard or accessible for (Northern) families. Some communities may not have access to (certain food) or it is too expensive."

The video for the program was taped by students from St. Patrick high school enrolled in the Video Links program.

"Video Links has been taping us periodically during class and has done interviews," said Prpick-Boss. "That's completed now and

they are just editing. We are hoping it will be done in two to three weeks."

Kirsten Larsen Northern News Services NNSL (Mar 05/99) -

Miss Teen Canada grows up

Nicole Gagnon reflects on the past and contemplates her future

Six months into her reign as the inaugural Miss Teen Canada International, Nicole Gagnon said that while her fellow Yellowknifers aren't particularly star-struck, she has earned their respect.

In her final semester at St. Patrick high school, the 17-year-old described her reign as majestic. She's just cut a demo CD, is negotiating a promotional spot with SAAN department store, is eyeing law schools and considering taking in a Kentucky Derby.

Yklife: So, how have the first five months been?

Gagnon: It's been fun and exciting and I've got to do lots of different things, like travelling.

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Yklife: Is the travelling part of your duties?

Gagnon: Yes, tourism is. The Grey Cup in Winnipeg was my first official duty, but since I've been back I've been working more with the NWT and Yellowknife.

There's supposed to be more, right? (she checks with her mother, Jeannie) I'll be going to the Miss Teen and pageants in Newfoundland and New Brunswick and will visit hospitals there.

Yklife: What schools did you visit in Winnipeg and what did you speak about?

Gagnon: Strathcona elementary and Isaac Newton junior high. I talked about the pageant and the Northwest Territories. They ask what we do, and everybody still expects that we live in igloos.

Yklife: Have you been well received as the Miss Teen Canada from the NWT?

Gagnon: I didn't really expect as many people to be as excited, because in Yellowknife everybody knew about it and it was no big deal, but in Winnipeg just the fact that I was from the NWT was amazing to everybody... I really liked the Miss Teen NWT title

(which she won in spring 1998 but had to give up after taking the Miss Teen Canada International title in August) because everyone just thinks the NWT is so neat. For me, it would be exotic to meet Miss Teen New Zealand.

Yklife: What's been the most interesting aspect of your reign so far?

Gagnon: Meeting all kinds of interesting and famous people. In Winnipeg I got to meet many important people like John Ingraham from the Ingraham Trail family -- I ate with them all the time.

Yklife: Has the experience changed you?

Gagnon: Lots of people are paying more attention to what I'm doing now than who I was before. But I'm not going to go around trying to impress people because I never got this title impressing anybody, I got this title based on who I was.

Yklife: Your mother has to chaperon you to many events. Do you feel you have to be careful of your image?

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Gagnon: I'll watch certain things I do and certain things I say, but like any normal teenager, things slip.

Yklife: And how have people reacted to you in general?

Gagnon: I'm getting more respect from adults, because they know that I know where I'm going in life. Though adults might think I'm all perfect and innocent, that's what they assume. But I'm just normal.

Yklife: Is it tough balancing your duties and school?

Gagnon: My mom does most of my work for me, because she pushes. I won't give everything because I don't understand the way to get everywhere, so she is more of my pusher-person. I want my singing career but I also want to be a lawyer, but I have no self-discipline so I don't know where it's going to go.

Yklife: What is it about law that attracts you?

Gagnon: I'm an arguer, and this is exciting... I know I could do it, it's just all those years of school.

Yklife: Will you be competing in more pageants in the meantime?

Gagnon: Well, the Miss Teen Canada International is more natural than most pageants, it's about who you are, it's not what you look like or how thin you are, and the organizers don't want to send me to a pageant where it's based on beauty. There was one, a Miss Teen International or Miss Teen World, but it was a beauty pageant. It had nothing to do with the goals of Miss Teen Canada International, and it would have been pointless for me to go -- if you win you don't go to hospitals or do any charity work, you're just a beauty queen. I still eat at McDonald's every day.

Yklife: How was the Mississauga pageant judged?

Gagnon: On fitness, scholastic, French, an interview, your portfolio of everything you'd done and public speaking.

Yklife: Will all pageants go in the direction that the Canadian one has?

Gagnon: I think it will take time, but it's going to happen, because all these current beauty queens are getting harassed and attacked.

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Yklife: Are you considering going on to compete in the senior Miss Canada International competition?

Gagnon: If you want to go onto the Miss Canada, you have to make up your mind to either do school or do the pageant. Because I'm under 19 there's a lot of things I can't take part in, but the Miss (Canada International) takes a lot of time. I'd love to do it again, it's fun, but it does take a lot of work.

Yklife: So what are the toughest parts of this title?

Gagnon: I'll be very honest: wearing the sash everywhere. It's not that I'm embarrassed, but when I was in Winnipeg a few girls were catty and made remarks. And you have to give up all your time, so instead of going out with your friends one night, you have to do something for the pageant, and that's tough.

Yklife: You sang a LeAnn Rimes song at the pageant, what are you singing on this CD?

Gagnon: Shania Twain, more Rimes, Reba McEntire and other new country songs. I always listened to it as I was growing up, but

my older brother, Jerry, really wants me to do pop or rock, and I'd like to eventually try that, but just for him.

Yklife: Do you sing any original music?

Gagnon: My uncle and his friends have written some songs, and I'm going to start with my own music and hopefully next year I'll get the grant (to record another disc).

Yklife: How have your sisters reacted to your success? Are they inspired?

Gagnon: My sister Beckie is 14 and a jock. She is not into this and thinks I'm too prissy. She plans on making it to the WNBA (the proposed Women's National Basketball Association). We're opposites, she's blonde, tall and has blue eyes and is shy, but I'll go up to anyone.

Yklife: So wasn't she at least jealous of your trip to the Grey Cup?

Gagnon: None of this bothers her, because she thinks that, in time, she's going to make it.

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Yklife: And what's next on your list of duties?

Gagnon: There's a Children's Wish Foundation dinner coming up, and the swearing in of Canadian citizens. I have to give an official speech, a federal speech, but Kim (Miss NWT Kim Rossignol) is coaching me.

Yklife: So you never get nervous making speeches?

Gagnon: No, but I think my mom does, because she's the one who has to worry about me screwing up.

Yklife: And what about the summer?

Gagnon: There's a new competition called the Teen Miss Canada 2000 pageant, and if I carry that title I might go to Kentucky to compete. It's more of a talent competition than a pageant because there're agents there, and you can get noticed and may have a chance to pursue a career.

Yklife: How has this experience changed you?

Gagnon: It opened my eyes to a lot of different kinds of people, and I think it's helped me a lot because I was like an average teen and might be catty toward someone...

but I'm not like that anymore. I'm more tolerant, but I'm also still me.

Yklife: What are you going to miss when your reign ends in August?

Gagnon: In the next few pageants, the girls are going to have a lot of things that I didn't because I'm starting it off, and they'll get to do more things, so in that way I'll miss it. But most of all I think I'm just going to miss meeting all the people and the travelling. I'm excited to see who's going to get it next year.

Daniel MacIsaac Northern News Services (Feb 08/99) -

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Connected to Mexico

N.J. McPherson helps Mexican orphans

Yellowknife's Heather LaFoy doesn't just talk about helping the less fortunate in the world -- she takes action.

At the age of 19, the St. Patrick high school graduate is currently in the midst of a year-long adventure in Mexico. She's volunteering at an orphanage in the tiny community of Amecuaca that serves as a home to 40 boys.

With this in mind, her mother, Nadia, a special needs assistant at N.J. Macpherson school, decided her daughter's location allowed her school a special opportunity for Christmas. With fund-raising and charity drives a tradition each year, it seemed the perfect time for the school to help out in a far off community with a Yellowknife connection.

A highly successful event was born. "We ended up with 17 boxes of great items," LaFoy says of the Christmas drive at N.J. Macpherson. "The whole school was involved."

The boxes, which include food, clothing, toys and cards and letters from N.J. students, will soon be sent on to Houston, Texas, courtesy of First Air and Air Canada. The cargo will then be sent directly to the orphanage. Heather LaFoy will be on the scene to report on reactions among the boys at the orphanage.

As a preview, Nadia LaFoy, who visited her daughter over the holidays, took 40 Hot Wheels cars and numerous McDonald's toys, as well as Christmas greetings from N.J. students with her on the trip.

"They were just amazed, particularly at the letters," she says of the reaction in Mexico.

It is now hoped a mail exchange between the two groups of youth will get under way.

Back in Yellowknife, N.J. students seem thrilled at the whole project.

"I thought I should bring something in because I felt like helping out," student Katy Nitah says.

Fellow student Michael McCormick agrees.

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"I've been to Mexico a couple of times and I know what it is like," he says. "I wanted to help out."

"I brought in food," another student, Catherine Graydon, says.

Arthur Milnes Northern News Services (Jan 13/99)

Crunch time for students

Important exams now on

More than 260 Grade 12 students from both local schools are in the midst of a crucial exam period.

Like their colleagues in Alberta, senior students from both Sir John Franklin and St. Patrick high schools are writing exams worth 50 per cent of their Grade 12 marks.

Universities and colleges see the marks as a crucial bell-wether for offers of admittance and possible scholarships for high school graduates going on to post-secondary studies next year.

"I haven't been out since New Year's Eve, I've been studying so much," St. Pat's Grade 12 student Jane McDermott said on Monday afternoon during a break from studying.

With plans to study drama next year at the University of British Columbia, University of Victoria or Queen's University in Ontario, the stakes are high for McDermott, who must write chemistry and math exams.

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"It keeps me up studying (and) I've been running on five hours sleep a night," she said.

Going into this week's exams, McDermott said she had her work cut out for her. Her internal course finals -- 76 per cent in chemistry and 84 per cent in math -- mean her work is cut out for her in achieving the necessary marks for scholarships in these competitive times.

"It puts more stress on me now (her departmental results) so that I can get a scholarship," she said.

Justine Farrow, 16, who is writing a math departmental exam, agrees.

"I'm feeling the pressure and I don't want to take the course again next year," she said.

Both students praise the efforts made by their teachers -- who also don't see the exams beforehand -- in order to prepare them for the big day.

"They're here all the time for us," Farrow said of her teachers.

The pair said teachers like chemistry's Craig MacKillop and math's Garth Brasseur have gone the extra mile in order to offer assistance -- both during school hours and in the evenings for group tutorial sessions -- to their students.

The exams -- the same standardized tests taken by Alberta's Grade 12 students -- are not marked in Yellowknife. They are sent to Alberta, meaning local students won't know how they did for a month or more.

Both Farrow and McDermott agree this should be speeded up.

"We've had a rough couple of weeks but it's all worth it in the end," McDermott said, surely summing up the feelings of a lot of young scholars around Yellowknife this week.

Arthur Milnes Northern News Services NNSL (Jan 27/99) -

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Board announces new superintendent

Von Hagen will take over

The Yellowknife Catholic school board chose the principal of St Patrick's high school as its new superintendent. Kern Von Hagen will take over as superintendent effective July 1, 1999. The board made the announcement Wednesday afternoon.

"It wasn't an easy choice to make," said board chair Noel O'Sullivan. "We had excellent candidates."

O'Sullivan said the board posted the job about six weeks ago when current superintendent Loretta Foley announced she would be retiring next June.

"This is a strange moment for me," Foley said. "Very emotional, very exciting."

During Foley's eight years as superintendent, the district has undergone several major changes. The current high school opened in 1995 and the board recently approved a proposal to replace Weledah Catholic school.

The \$9.2-million project includes construction of a new gymnasium which will be attached to the gymnasium at St Pat's.

"We made many changes in eight years, so to leave before this point would have been very unfair to everybody," Foley explained.

Von Hagen, who has been principal at St Pat's for the past six years, said he is looking forward to taking over as superintendent.

"The community can expect the same style of leadership and the way of operating will remain stable," Von Hagen commented.

"We are looking forward to a continued positive relationship with the community."

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Telethon coming together

Talent audition in force

St. Patrick high school foyer was a hopping place last Sunday afternoon as anyone and everyone with a talent strutted their stuff.

The reason? To help raise funds for Stanton Regional Hospital's Capital Equipment Campaign. Auditions were being held to find performers for the hospital's telethon scheduled to take place Nov. 29.

Several local, better-known talents will walk the boards without an audition. Entertainers such as Big Ethel, Tracy Riley, the Starlite Dancers, Tom Hudson and his band and the NWT Pipe Band already enjoy followings.

"We auditioned the people we didn't know..." explains Suzanne Lintell, talent chair for the telethon. "We didn't know what they were doing or what they were about."

Lintell and her crew watched or listened to about 25 pieces, ranging in genre from solo violin and guitar to singing and dancing.

"We didn't know what to expect," Lintell says. "But now I think it will make a great show, especially with the proper setting and costumes."

Sunday's stage was actually several lengths of masking tape, but on the 29th a real structure will be in place, as well as lights and cameras.

Volunteers are still needed and even if you aren't in the show there are many other ways to help this great cause.

The telethon will be broadcast across the Northwest Territories from St. Pat's, 1 to 8 p.m. on TVNC (channel 9) and Cat (channel 17).

Michele LeTourneau Northern News Services (Nov 13/98) -

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Into the working world *City students go to work for a day*

There was something a little different about workplaces across Yellowknife Wednesday.

Grade 9 students from both St. Patrick high school and Sir John Franklin went off to work with parents, friends and others as part of the second annual Take Our Kids to Work Day.

"I like the chair," student Michael Sibbald said after job-shadowing Mayor Dave Lovell at city hall.

The pair went off to tour city facilities and take part in other activities which are all part of Yellowknife's top political job.

Lovell said he thought the program was an excellent one for both students and adults alike.

At Air Tindi, parent Peter Arychuk said he enjoyed showing his son, Travis, just what it is that dad does every day after leaving the house.

"It's good to have him here so he can see what keeps food on the table," Peter said. "(It's a good chance) to give him a view of what goes on (at Air Tindi). It's not just flying airplanes. A lot happens before the engine actually starts."

Travis, who plans on beginning work on earning his own private flying license next year, said he had looked forward to joining dad at work.

"I just wanted to go up flying and see what he does," he said.

Back at City Hall, Mayor Lovell's administrative assistant, Rosalie Power, had two student helpers. Shannon Graf and Stephanie Johnson both took turns answering the mayor's phone and working on the computer Wednesday morning.

They both also worked at the NWT Legislature in the afternoon.

"It's heavy," Stephanie said after trying out the mayor's impressive chain of office.

Other participating offices included: the RCMP, Yellowknife, Royal Oak mine, PIDO Productions, Aurora College,

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Canadian Armed Forces, Ton of Fun, Stanton Hospital, Great Slave Helicopters, CBC, First Air, the NWT Supreme Court and others.

Across Canada, 400,000 students were expected to take part. It was organized nationally by the Toronto-based Learning Partnership, a non-profit organization.

Jonathon Dawe & Arthur Milnes Northern News Services (Nov 11/98)

A legend hits town

Gzowski visits students

When you ask an interesting special guest a question, expect a fascinating answer. Humanities students at St. Patrick's high school found this out Wednesday, when about 50 of them spent 90 minutes in conversation with famed Canadian journalist Peter Gzowski.

The former host of CBC Radio's Morningside -- whose voice is familiar to Canadians from Newfoundland to the Arctic Ocean --

has been in Yellowknife recently to help launch the Peter Gzowski Northern Writer-In-Residence Program.

Though he's spent a lifetime asking the questions, the students had some of their own for their famous guest.

"If you could interview anyone in history, who would it be?" was one Gzowski had to face. His answer?

"Bob Dylan, Jesus Christ, Joan of Arc, John A. Macdonald, Champlain, Stephen Leacock, Mark Twain, J.D. Salinger, Winston Churchill," he said. "Would I like to interview Hitler? I don't know... the personification of evil."

Another student asked Gzowski what animal he would choose to be if he had the choice.

"A race horse," the author said with a grin. "I'd only have to run six or seven times a year. I'd be fed. They'd take me to Florida when I get cold in the winter. When I graduated, they'd let me go to a farm and meet good looking mares for money."

On the serious side, he had the students enthralled as he told them stories of his life and varied career. This included his brushes

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with Canada's last eight prime ministers, a year spent travelling with the Edmonton Oilers, talks with various authors, and, above all, his passion for Canada and its citizens.

His advice? Remain curious.

Gzowski also described the upcoming division of the NWT as one of the most exciting events on the overall national agenda.

"I think division of these territories is one of the great stories in Canada right now and it is not being reported in the south," he said.

"The North is to the rest of Canada what Canada is to the United States. Remote, misunderstood, taken for granted and developments here simply don't make the statement they should in southern Canada."

Arthur Milnes Northern News Services (Oct 16/98) -

National Space Day

Students invited to enter contest to win trip to space launch

Students across the country are gearing up to enter a Canadian Space Agency contest to win a trip to Cape Canaveral for one week next summer.

The contest marks National Space Day, celebrated in more than 15,000 schools across the country today.

Held on the anniversary of the Canadian Space Agency's 10th anniversary, the event is said to be Canada's time to recognize its contributions to the global space program.

Natalie Roussel of the National Space Agency said the day calls attention to achievements such as the development of the landing legs of the Apollo Moon project (the first space craft to land on a lunar surface.)

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It also marks Canada's contribution to the International Space Station, known to be the largest scientific program ever.

Canadians also have an opportunity to join Canadian astronaut Marc Garneau in a virtual tour of the International Space Station, as well as visit a new Web site for youth today.

The deadline for contest applications is Jan. 10 and the winner will be chosen March 1 by the Canadian Space Agency.

"It's the Senior Student Contest Challenge that's open to 16- to 18-year-olds across Canada," she said. "It's an essay...to talk about Earth applications to science experiments carried out in space."

St. Patrick's high school science teacher Andrew Hodgkins said the idea is great for getting the students involved in science. "I can think of some students right now in my physics class who would really jump at that opportunity," he said.

Hodgkins said the contest could fit in well with the rest of the science curriculum planned for this year. "Science Olympics is

coming up and it's sort of along the same lines, challenging kids in a less-structured way," he said. "I think we would definitely push it this year."

Hodgkins hopes the school receives more information about the contest, so the students can get involved.

"Hopefully, we'll receive a package by mail giving us the guidelines of the contest," he said.

"The kids get so excited about space," he said, "and how physics relates to space."

Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (Oct 16/98) -

Getting the go ahead

Ratepayers give board the OK to borrow \$9.2 million to replace Weledeh

It's a go. Ratepayers of the Yellowknife Catholic School Board gave the go ahead on Monday for the board to borrow \$9.2 million to replace Weledeh Catholic school.

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The final results of the plebiscite were 286 voting yes and 64 voting no. With 2,110 ratepayers in the district, that translates into a 17 per cent voter turnout.

However, Catholic School Board Superintendent Loretta Foley wasn't letting the low turnout bother her.

"I'm on top of the world right now," said Foley. "What this means for the kids is a new school. It's a school that will last for 40 or 50 years and it will be built to prepare them for the 21st century."

The vote means the project will start up by late spring with the 300 students moving from the present Weledeh school to the southern portion of the building that used to house the old St. Patrick high school.

If all goes well, the new school should be complete by September of the year 2,000.

The project will be paid for through a financing agreement with the territorial government. The government has committed to make operating contributions to the board over the next 20 years. The board will use those contributions to pay off the debt. Both the

board and the government have consistently said ratepayers taxes will not increase because of the project.

Weledeh Principal John Murphy said he expected the ratepayers to vote in favor of borrowing the money. But he also said staff still worried about how the vote would turn out.

"It was a nagging worry. These are times of fiscal restraint. I was worried people may have not seen the need for it," said Murphy. "But I can assure you there is a need for it."

Murphy said some of the problems with the 30-year-old school include classrooms with faulty heating, windows that won't open and infrastructure that does not exist for setting up computers.

Kevin Glenn, who has a daughter in Grade 2 at the school, said he is happy the school will be rebuilt.

"I think it's great," said Glenn. "My daughter is a student and she has a lot of years ahead of her there."

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He said as a member of the school's parent advisory committee, he spends a lot of time at the school and he thinks it will be money well spent.

"Go in there in February when there is five per cent humidity," said Glenn. "Take a look at the water bottles the kids have to bring in because it is so dry in there."

Paula Parrell, who has a daughter in Grade 4 at Weledeh, was also pleased the project went through.

"You get the feeling it's an older building," said Parrell. "The rooms are really small. It could do with a facelift if nothing else."

Is a new school needed?

There are several problems with the approach the Yellowknife Catholic school board is taking in its bid to get \$9.2 million in financing to replace Weledeh Catholic school. Whether board

officials realize it or not, they are using phrases that are always associated with bad deals for taxpayers.

First is the argument that estimates for renovations to the existing structure almost total the cost of building a new school. This is quite remarkable considering there is a fully functioning building on site.

Renovations may be required but wood is wood and steel is steel and presumably the present structure meets all building codes. How much of the proposed renovations are essential for expansion and how much are on a wish list?

The second statement that the \$9.2 million is not going to come out of ratepayer's pockets raises another red flag. The territorial government may be committed to operating contributions for eternity but the size of that commitment is subject to political pressures and the promise is only as good as the next budget and subsequent budgets.

The third statement is the most famous of all: The project won't go over budget. There is always a risk of projects going over

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budget and it happens most often when people declare there is no chance of it happening.

Ratepayers should be asking some tough questions. How great is the need for expansion? Is a new school the best solution?

Is the city population likely to grow? Is the Catholic school board siphoning students away from the public school board with the glitter of state of art schools?

If so, could the same migration occur when the public school board starts building?

A public meeting is scheduled for Sept. 21 at St. Patrick high school. If ratepayers don't ask these important questions before the Sept. 28 plebiscite on borrowing \$9.2, no one will.

Strength through culture

Education Week is under way, with city schools celebrating strength through culture.

"When people learn, they do so within the context of their culture, heritage and language," says Education, Minister Charles Dent. St. Patrick high school will stretch the week out to all of April, with cafeteria food more versatile than ever.

"There will be different cultural foods for lunch," said principal Kern Von Hagen. "We've got 22 nationalities in this school, not including the indigenous peoples."

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Diverse world-beat music will play on the school's lunch time radio station. And April 3 through 19, a troupe of 17 St. Patrick students will head to Jamaica to teach reading skills, the elderly and get involved with orphanages, farms and health-care clinics.

Similar culturally-focused events will happen at St. Patrick with respect to food and music.

They have eight exchange students from Australia, Belgium, Norway, Peru, Denmark, Italy, Brazil, Colombia.

School-going heroes

Students recognized for their safety messages

The consensus seems to be that kids are more effective at getting messages across to their peers than are authority figures.

Those students who excelled at communicating the importance of safety to their friends and schoolmates were recognized through the Heroes Scholarship Program at the Yellowknife Fire Hall Wednesday afternoon.

Dozens of students received cheques and plaques for their persuasive posters, skits, videos and Web sites. "There's a lot of very talented people out there. We're very proud of the response we

got," said deputy fire chief Mike Lowing. "I'm amazed by what the kids did. There's really some powerful stuff."

A group of 16 Grade 9 students from St. Patrick high school made a 15-minute video featuring scenes illustrating the risks of drinking and driving, walking on thin ice, sliding down the banister, fooling around at heights and unprotected sex.

"They liked the video," Eddie Peart said of his peers' response. "They're a little jealous of the money we'd win."

The Students Against Drunk Driving from Sir John Franklin have put together a 40-minute skit that they will integrate with presentations by police and the fire department.

SADD is focusing on boat safety, wearing safety gear and driving sober. They'll reinforce their point with pamphlets, balloons and accompanying mascots from the high schools.

"We want to keep it fun and interesting," said Gwen Young, a teacher-adviser at Sir John. Young said the younger students look up to the older teens.

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Principal Anne-Mieke Cameron added, "It's powerful and it's really catching on."

It caught on without exception at Range Lake North school, where vice-principal Adam Bunin said he was "extremely pleased" with the high level of participation in the program.

Liz Baile, a student support consultant for Yellowknife Catholic Schools, said the inaugural event was "very worthwhile."

She also acknowledged the commitment and dedication on the part of coordinators Mike Lowing and Dennis MacAskill. Tim Hortons, RTL Robinson, Stanton Regional Hospital and BHP Diamonds sponsored the program.

"For the first year, I was really impressed with the results," she said. "Hopefully, we keep this momentum going."

by Derek Neary Northern News Services (Apr 03/98)

Is silence golden?

Catholic school board gets low turnout for public meeting prior of important Weledeh plebiscite

If there was any opposition to the Yellowknife Catholic School Board borrowing \$9.2 million to replace Weledeh Catholic school, you wouldn't have been able to tell from Monday's public meeting at St. Patrick High School.

A sparse crowd of nine people showed up for meeting. On Sept. 28 Catholic school ratepayers will be asked in a plebiscite to

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approve the school board borrowing \$9.2 million to replace Weledeh.

The purpose of the meeting was to answer questions from the public about the issue and explain why the school board is going this route.

But the head table, which included the Northwest Territories Education Minister Charles Dent and Finance Minister John Todd, got off easy on Monday. Not one question was asked during the brief 20 minute meeting.

Noel O'Sullivan, chairperson of the board, said the low turnout was disappointing, but said it also means the board has done a good job educating the ratepayers about the issue.

"If there were concerns (about borrowing \$9.2 million) I wish they had come here and stated them tonight," said O'Sullivan.

O'Sullivan was at similar meetings held on the weekend at St. Patrick's Parish. The board has been concerned that its 2,200 ratepayers realize their taxes won't go up if the plebiscite goes through.

But he said he hasn't gotten any questions from ratepayers concerned about their taxes increasing. The questions he did get on the weekend related to why a new school is needed and why a retrofit of the current school isn't good enough. "It's amazing how many people were not aware of the problems with the building," O'Sullivan said. "It is in dire need of a retrofit."

Under the financing agreement that has been arranged, the territorial government has committed to make operating contributions to the board over the next 20 years.

The board will use those contributions to pay off the debt.

Todd said he is confident the project won't add any costs to the Catholic board's ratepayers.

"There is absolutely no downside to the ratepayers on this side of the issue," said Todd. "The sooner we get at this the better. Yellowknife needs it. Let's get on with it and build it."

Darren Campbell Northern News Services (Sep 23/98)

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Student volunteer sets example

When the six days worth of Arctic Winter Games take place in March, volunteer Angela Masongsong will likely go unrecognized. But she is expecting to play an integral role in helping the Games proceed smoothly. Masongsong has been helping out since July when she put in full days at the Arctic Winter Games office on 50th Street.

"It was just something I was really interested in. I knew how big it was," she said, adding that it would be a good opportunity to acquire some general office skills.

It can be said that the commitment of the Grade 11 student at St. Patrick high school has influenced those around her -- her parents and some friends have now also applied to join the ranks of volunteers.

"They see how much time I spend here and now they're giving me their (application) slips," she said. Masongsong volunteers an hour and a half each day from Monday through Thursday.

"I like the atmosphere ... it's really relaxed. And I get to meet so many people," said Masongsong, who is a member of the Youth Volunteer Corps and has lent a hand with the Folk on the Rocks music festival. "There's so many things I've gained just by being here besides the skills, like new friends."

She does deliveries, inputs sports schedules and maintains the volunteer database.

"That's huge," said Deb Lougheed, sport manager.

"She's extremely reliable and dependable. She never questions anything. She just does whatever we need her to do. She

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recognizes that of all the jobs, one's just as important as the other. And she's always got that smile on her face."

That smile may be put to the test over the next month.

"It's obviously getting busier around here," Masongsong said.

"Those stacks (of paperwork) are really piling up."

by Derek Neary Northern News Services Feb 04/98) -

Women getting technical

Pilot project to put women in trades and technology

Women make up no more than five per cent of the total number of trades people in Canada but a new pilot project could build more interest in the field. Construction Technology for Women encourages young women in grades 10 and 11 to begin building futures in the construction technology and other non-traditional fields.

"It's cool," said Melisa Berry, a Grade 10 student at St. Patrick high school.

"It's good. I like it," said Erica Abel, another Grade 10 St. Pat's student.

Sir John Franklin high school's Grade 11 students Laura Harbicht and Marian Cox also share these sentiments.

The Women in Trades and Technology (WITT), now in its second week in Yellowknife, is one of nine projects in Canada. Students who participate get credit for the two-year project and at the end of the year they are placed in a paying summer job.

"WITT National network recognized there needed to be something done at the school level to encourage more young women into trades and technology," said Heather Hay, North of Sixty WITT spokesperson.

The project started last year in six other sites in Canada. Because it was running so well, the federal Department of Human Resources came up with some additional funding for new sites.

The project has attracted 300 women across Canada -- 24 of them registered in Yellowknife.

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"It will at least provide some young women experience using the tools and awareness of the different career options that are available to them. They also have a chance to learn in a supportive environment," said Hay.

The project is a partnership between industry, education and government.

Participants include the two high schools, both school boards, BHP Diamonds, the Status of Women Council of the NWT, Human Resources Development Canada and the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Rotary exchange helps diversity Brazilian sees snow for first time

NNSL (Feb 25/98) - When 17-year-old Edgard Oliveira was a small child he kept asking his parents if he could come to Canada.

Then, when the next-door neighbor in his Santo Andre, Brazil, apartment block told him of a Rotary Club exchange program, he jumped at the chance.

"The biggest change is the weather," he says. "It's the first time I've seen snow." Oliveira has already gone snowmobiling, which he compares to sea-dooing back home. Otherwise his routine sounds much the same.

"I played soccer in Brazil and here I do, too," he says of indoor soccer at St. Patrick High. "In Brazil I went swimming, but here I go to the pool."

Though he finished high school in Brazil, he is attending St. Patrick's largely to help with his English. "The people from school are nice and want to talk but the problem is my English is not fluent yet."

Ties to his Portuguese-speaking home are strengthened through the Internet as he e-mails parents and friends regularly from a computer in his room.

Oliveira will stay with his Canadian rotary-parents Lisa Alain and Lauchie MacDonald for three months. Then he shifts to three more sets of Rotary parents during his year-long Yellowknife stint.

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"We're really enjoying it," Alain said of housing their first foreign student. "He's a great kid, mature and has a good sense of humor."

The goal of the program is to help people worldwide learn about common Rotary activities and each other's communities.

In Yellowknife, the group holds dog derbies, lends a hand with the Bridges program to help St. Patrick students get job opportunities and training, and helps with St. John Ambulance activities and literacy or community living programs, among many other projects.

The club's activities are based on four question-oriented fundamentals: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it foster goodwill and better friendships? And is it beneficial to all concerned?

Oliveira is not a member of the Rotary Club yet, but says he will probably join when he is older. Once he leaves Yellowknife, he hopes to study business at university in Brazil and then possibly go into the business of selling cars.

by Jeff Colbourne Northern News Services (Feb 11/98) -

Bridging the gap

School and businesses partner to educate and train students

The novelty of the new St. Patrick high school is far from wearing off, three years after its construction. In fact, the state-of-the-art facility is getting the attention of more and more local businesses wanting to team up with the school.

"We have 15 or so partnerships and they're all targeted at enhancing programs or giving students new opportunities and bridging into the community," said Kern Von Hagen, principal at St. Pat's.

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The partnerships are the result of a program called Bridges.

Bridges is a coordinated effort between the school and community employers to further a student's personal development, career planning, occupational knowledge and skills as a worker for future training or education through experience opportunities.

"Schools can no longer afford to have all the wherewithal, equipment, resources, personnel to do all that kind of work," said Von Hagen.

"And in a community like Yellowknife you get very strong support. We find if we reach out most of the community business or industry or even government whether local or territorial they're only too willing to support, assist or help."

The more involvement there is to help the school reach its objectives, the more likely students are going to reach their goals and the more likely businesses are going to reach their outcomes, he added.

Partnerships with the school include the Yellowknife Guild of Arts and Crafts, the YWCA, which supports the school's day care, and NorthwesTel Cable, which helped set up the VideoLinks project.

Yellowknife's Emergency Broadcast System is located at St. Pat's to help students learn about shortwave radios.

Petersen and Auger, the city's Coca Cola distributor, has made donations to the school and provided basketball backboards, scoreboard and patio furniture for the foyer.

St. Pat's is making efforts now to bring further awareness to the school, if the partnerships are not enough.

A promotional package containing a school calendar and various paraphernalia describing the school has been released.

"This is our first conscious effort along with a Web site that we're putting out to publicly profile the school," said Von Hagen.

St. Pat's is going through a phase of more deep-rooted change, said Von Hagen.

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"We're trying to fine-tune and re-tool the things we feel are now working. We had a school review last year and we're working at trying to be better. We're also working at trying to be very balanced this year. Wellness of staff is a very crucial one."

by Jeff Colbourne Northern News Services (Feb 27/98)

South America or bust

Crossroads International candidate earns her own keep

Amanda Halldorson is getting ready for the adventure of her life.

The 19-year-old St. Patrick high school student heads off to Suriname in September as part of the Canadian Crossroads International overseas program. Suriname is located on the northern tip of South America, directly east of Guyana.

"It's a four-month placement in Suriname. I'll do some volunteer work, but I won't know until later on. Some don't know until they get there. I have no clue yet," says Halldorson whose last venture outside of Canada involved a sunny Mexican beach.

The overseas participants are given the opportunity to work and learn about community development, education, health care, agriculture or business in one of 20 different countries involved in the program.

"It's my first time actually travelling, especially alone, and I'm a little more nervous. Any female has that, there are so many horror stories you hear.

"I'm young, I don't have much experience in other countries and I have a spinal injury so I can't run away. I'm not put in situations where I'm threatened here. Those are going to be the learning experiences. I want that, the hard things," says Halldorson who has to raise \$2,500, about 20 per cent of the total cost of her trip.

The national office of Crossroads covers the other 80 per cent of the trip through fundraising at a federal level, provincial

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government donations and through Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funds.

Part of this money will provide Halldorson with a small allowance to live on while in South America.

In an effort to help Halldorson raise her portion, Crossroads Yellowknife stepped in and got her to help organize their annual dinner. All proceeds from the evening will go directly to Halldorson's trip.

Scheduled for this Saturday night at 6:30 p.m. at Northern United Place, the theme is a Taste of Africa, featuring a dinner, dance, slides and an African marketplace.

Upon returning to Canada in 1999, Halldorson will be expected to donate 200 hours of time to different community projects. "I'll get a real-life idea about other lifestyles, a real-life cultural experience that I can bring back to Canada and teach others about. People who can't travel need to know about this," says Halldorson.

Pearl Benyk is in charge of co-ordinating the food aspect of this year's event.

Benyk has been involved in Crossroads since 1988, when she was sponsored to travel to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean.

"In 10 years we've sent 20 people overseas from Yellowknife and hosted four people to Yellowknife," says Benyk, who has almost finished putting in her 200 hours.

"We work with a committee of about 12. There's a high participation rate in Yellowknife. It's quite nice."

by Kerry McCluskey Northern News Services Feb 25/98) -

Students get linked

St. Patrick high school students are about to hit the big time.

A new partnership between the school and Northwestel Cable called Video Links allows students to create their own television programming and learn the basics of the business.

Last night, St. Pat's students held a talent show called Artery -- Kwalitee Expose, parts of which will be inserted in a community

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television program, "SPHS Live," to be aired on Cable Access Television, Channel 17, later this year.

"Just looking at this is amazing," said Owen Chan, one of the student organizers at a dry run of the talent show Wednesday night while technical crews began to set up their equipment.

"To write it on paper is one thing and to see it actually working, it is totally different."

Chan, who is also one of the talent show's emcees, along with fellow student Jessica Simpson, said Video Links will allow students to produce a variety show with a format similar to that of Saturday Night Live or Mad TV.

"The partnership centres around joining our communications technology curriculum with NorthwesTel Cable's television production department," said Kern VonHagen, principal at St. Pat's.

"However, the students plan the productions, including concept development, story-boarding, writing, recording, directing, acting, editing and producing, so the benefits of this partnership reach into all facets of our curriculum."

Cathie Bolstad, customer service manager for NorthwesTel Cable, said they are excited about the partnership and what it means to community access television.

"This project involves youth in the community, expands the base of qualified volunteers for community television programming and ultimately this means we can feature more of our community and our youth on television in Yellowknife," she said.

Video Links will continue to do other programming with St. Pat's students at the school in addition to the SPHS Live program.

Students have to come up with a format for coverage of the Arctic Winter Games, including a mix of live sports action, commentary, interviews, athlete features and profiles and sports news.

Following the games, in June, students will produce a graduation project with such content as grad profiles, interviews, live action of grads, actual ceremonies, dance and dry grad.

by Jeff Colbourne Northern News Services Jan 16/98)

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Crane, who died at the age of 64 on Dec. 31, after a long illness, is being remembered by those who knew him as a man who put more into the community than he took out.

An avid boater, national-level badminton player and an accomplished darts player, Crane worked for many years for the territorial Department of Education and helped design several of Yellowknife's newer schools. He got practice at that task by renovating the family's roomy waterfront home off School Draw Avenue, which was a small prospector's shack to start with.

"He was a wonderful man, a good man, and he really lived life to the fullest," said his wife Theresa. "He was one of those people who accomplished what he set out to do."

She said her husband was not one to rest on his laurels and he did not make a show of the awards he had won over his life, like his many badminton trophies.

"He would always return the trophies so they could be used again," she recalled.

Crane was born in Britain in 1933 and served four years as a Russian interpreter with the Royal Air Force prior to moving to

Crane will be missed

If you lived in Yellowknife for any length of time, you probably knew Dennis Crane.

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the North in 1964. He taught industrial arts in Inuvik before going off to live in Australia for a time. He returned to work with the territorial government's education department in Fort Smith as a consultant, moving to Yellowknife in 1969 when the department did.

He sat as a trustee on both the public and Catholic school boards, only declining his seat on the Catholic board at the time of last year's election due to poor health.

He also taught Outward Bound courses, was involved with the organization of Sport North and several Arctic Winter Games and served as chairman of the Committee on Metric Change in Canadian Sport. Friends remember a man genuinely interested in people.

"If you were doing an extension to your house, Dennis was the kind of guy who would come over, give you a 100 different ideas and then help you draw the plans," said Don Kindt, a friend who worked with him at the Yellowknife Catholic school board.

Crane assisted in the renovations to several schools, including J.H. Sissons and St. Patrick's, but was known just as well for being an enthusiastic outdoorsman, sportsman and volunteer.

"He had probably the best boat on the lake," Kindt said.

"He loved to spend his summer on the East Arm (of Great Slave Lake), taking people back and forth and fishing. Everyone knew him and his boat and he helped out a lot of people who got in trouble on the lake."

Merlyn Williams, who lived next door to Crane, said he had difficulty finding the words to talk about his long-time friend and darts partner -- the two travelled to Medicine Hat, Alta., last year and did quite well in the Canadian senior mixed competition.

"He was a good neighbor and a good friend," he said. "He is going to be sadly missed."

"He literally loved people and he knew people from all walks of life," Kindt summed up.

Crane leaves his wife and an adult son. A memorial service and remembrance of his life is planned for Tuesday, Jan. 6, in the

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gymnasium of St. Patrick's high school. His ashes will be scattered on the waters of the East Arm of Great Slave Lake this summer.

By Ian Elliot Northern News Services (Jan 09/98)

North meets south

St. Pat's students to learn, work in Jamaica

In a rare learning opportunity, some St. Patrick High School students will travel to Jamaica in April to work alongside islanders for two weeks.

Through Jamaica Self Help of Canada, the Northerners will volunteer at various sites, such as a women's housing co-op and a rural agricultural co-op.

The trip will give students a glimpse of the island's culture and its poverty, and will foster global thinking.

"This is an active form of learning offering leadership skills. The students will have to show a lot of initiative," science teacher and

chaperon Andrew Hodgkins said. To help fund the April 3 to 19 trip, students have scheduled a trash and treasure sale Friday and a Jamaica night for Dec. 5.

"Though I can be self-motivated and I work well alone, I know the great strength that comes from being part of a group," Safiya Adam said.

"My expectations and hopes from this experience are that I will return a better person for having helped bridge the gap between north and south," Pamela Jones said.

Students will receive high school credits for their volunteer work.

Jamaica Self Help, started in 1981, supports nine Jamaican projects and has a yearly development budget of \$350,000 raised by donors and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In the last decade, over 20 groups have visited Jamaica through Jamaica Self Help.

by Doug Ashbury Northern News Services (Oct 08/97) -

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New face for police liaison

From court house to school house She sees the job as an investment into the future of her home.

"I feel this is an investment into my community -- this is my home," said RCMP Const. Gil Belsheim, who is the new school liaison officer beginning in September.

The mother of a five-year-old daughter and a grown stepson looks forward to her work in the school and considers it another way to give back to her community.

She's lived in the North since the early 80s, spending time in Sanikiluaq, Iqaluit, and most recently in Yellowknife.

She is a tireless volunteer at Koinonia private school in the city and works hard to make life better for her fellow Yellowknifers.

Belsheim, who just finished a three-year stint as the Mountie responsible for those being held in custody who attend court, will be replacing Pat Aultman.

Belsheim said her court experience will help her in the new position.

"I have seen young people come through the court system... it has helped some of them turn their lives around," she said.

"The added bonus in the schools is that not only do you work with people who are turning their lives around -- you're also working with people in a positive setting."

Keeping the positive aspects of the job in mind, Belsheim, however, knows that there are problems she will have to deal with. This, she said, is what she's in the schools for.

"I'm one of those people who constantly looks for solutions," she said. "Nothing is ever learned if you dodge or don't deal with problems as they come up. If you don't, they come back to haunt you."

One of the issues she would like to address this year is conflict resolution for young people. She is aware that it can be a difficult thing for them and would like to help them learn how to manage confrontations.

"Teach them how to deal with conflicts so we don't see it in the court system," she said.

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Like Aultman, Belsheim's office will be located at St. Patrick high school, but will only serve as a home base.

"It's not exclusively a St. Pat's position," she said. "It's to deal with all schools."

by Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (Aug 20/97) -

New math curriculum for school year

From program to paint to principals, Yellowknife schools open doors today for a new year

The biggest change for the 1997/98 school year is a new math curriculum, Ecole St. Joseph school principal Leah Von Hagen said.

Kindergarten to Grade 9 teachers across Yellowknife received professional development earlier this week on the new curriculum -- the Western Canada protocol.

It was developed to ensure curricula match resources across Western Canada and the territories, said Von Hagen. After its development, the curriculum was taken to publishers, who matched the materials they published to the new curriculum, she said.

The result was a success, she added. On equipment, Von Hagen said St. Joseph installed a new computer lab with 27 computers.

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William McDonald school also added a new computer lab with 32 new computers.

At William McDonald school, Lilly Oldham, former French co-ordinator at the board office, is the new principal.

The school also has a dozen new teachers and a new sprinkler system for the baseball field.

At Mildred Hall school, Marion Barnes, previously assistant principal at J.H. Sissons school, is now principal.

There's a new principal at N.J. Macpherson school -- Pam Petten, the school's former vice-principal. New vice-principal is Mike MacDonald from Range Lake North school.

Macpherson has added new playground equipment, new ceilings and redone the gym floor. Ecole Allain St. Cyr administrative secretary Carole St. Pierre said Eugene Leger, from New Brunswick, brings the French schools' teacher complement to six.

At Range Lake North, there's a new vice principal -- Adam Bunin from Mildred Hall school.

J.H. Sissons School principal Terry Bradley said Betty Vaughan has joined the school from Range Lake North School as assistant principal.

And around Sissons School, there's a new fence.

"We're looking forward to an exciting new year. It'll be busy as usual," Bradley said. Sissons has added a second Grade 5 French immersion class.

Anne-Mieke Cameron is the new principal at Sir John Franklin High School.

At St. Patrick high school, there's a new Internet room and computer lab with 25 new computers. The school has also added new wildlife and community programs.

St. Patrick's, like Yellowknife's other schools, is welcoming several educators new to the North.

Among them is Gilliam Dawe. In her second year of teaching, she joins the school from Newfoundland.

But her trip to the North was something she'd like to forget.

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She said a large well-known moving company she'd prefer not name lost three boxes of her belongings. Other items that made it were broken, she added.

"It created stress that need not have been," she said.

Despite the damage, she said she can't wait until she next talks with colleagues back home so she can tell them about the resources at St. Patrick.

"This is teacher heaven."

by Doug Ashbury Northern News Services (Aug 27/97) -

Weledeh retrofit a go

Catholic board plans for campus-style facility for three schools

The Catholic school board is going ahead with plans to retrofit Weledeh school after a \$6.3-million project was approved by the GNWT last week.

The three-phase, four-year construction project will use the existing Weledeh structure and the gymnasium of the old St. Pat's high school.

The rest of the old high school will be torn down and a new middle school for grades 6 to 8 will be constructed on the property between Weledeh and St. Patrick high school.

The initial phase includes the planning of the project and the transitional area for the middle school. The second phase will take care of retrofitting the existing structure. The third phase will see the remodeling of the old gym and the construction of a link from Weledeh to the gym.

"Our hope would be that we could gut as much as possible and start from inside the school," said Don Kindt, assistant superintendent of the Catholic board.

"Eventually the portables will be all gone and the board offices will all be gone."

The board has received \$360,000 for the planning stage of the project, which is expected to run until February 1998. This funding will be followed by \$2 million annually for three years. Kindt said that the board is looking at arranging the site as a campus instead of three distinct schools -- Weledeh, St. Pat's and the new middle school.

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With this change, the student capacity of the site will increase to 1,005 from the present enrolment of 880.

by Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (June 04/97) -

Catholic board saves money

Renegotiated loan means high savings for Catholic board

Yellowknife's Catholic school board has refinanced its loan for St. Patrick high school for a savings of \$700,000.

The proposal, approved at Wednesday's board meeting, will mean that its 18-year loan to pay off the million-dollar debenture to the GNWT for the high school will be reduced to 15 years.

In addition, the board renegotiated the rate at which it is paying back the loan from 10.7 per cent to 6.95 per cent. And payments now will be made monthly, not annually.

"It's these minor changes that make a significant difference," said Annalise Van Ham, who looks after the board's finances. "The biggest changes are the rate and the term reduction."

Van Ham said the changes will save the board roughly \$22,000 annually and \$700,000 over the entire loan term. And the money saved can be put to use in other areas.

"The annual saving alone can mean half a support position," she said. "And the last three years where payments would have been made will make a difference."

While the proposal is passed at the board level, the change is still subject to the GNWT's approval.

by Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (Apr 18/97)

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"The season's only started and we've already sold 150 tubes already this year," Leonardis says, adding, "we're repairing between 20 and 30 bikes a day."

A visit to the bike doctor

With orders pouring in from as far north as Arctic Bay, the guys at K & W Cycle are gearing up for another busy summer.

Ken Leonardis has co-managed the bike-repair business with Wilf Schidlowsky since 1988. The "W" in K & W taught industrial arts at St. Patrick's high school -- where Leonardis was a student -- and has been known as one of the city's finest bike doctors for the last quarter-century. Leonardis says he not only learned from Wilf "everything I know about bicycle repair," but has been able to help build the business into the full-time spring and summer business it's become.

Along with offering bicycle repair, the shop is also the city's only authorized dealer for Norco mountain bikes.

With an incredible stockpile of new parts, Leonardis says "it's getting harder and harder to use second-hand parts these days," due to the manufacturers always upgrading and changing them.

"We've gotten calls from Cambridge Bay, Hay River and as far north as Arctic Bay. We send a lot of parts out because it would cost too much in shipping for them to send the bikes to us," Schidlowsky says. "There's never been a bike we can't fix, even one's that have been run over."

As for the hardest job facing the pair, it would have to be concocting a new cable for Rico Tranifer ("Mr. Long Legs"), whose home-made creation could be seen entertaining plenty during many a Raven Mad Daze.

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"His cable was so long he was having trouble breaking so we made him up a 40-foot (12-metre) cable so his breaks would work," Schidlowsky says.

But repairing bikes isn't all they do. Both Schidlowsky and Leonardis will also be on hand this weekend to help out with the Bike Rodeo, an event run by the city's bylaw department to encourage bike safety for kids.

The duo is also running a bike-repair course expected to start next week through the city.

by Janet Smellie Northern News Services (May 30/97) -

Top marks

St. Patrick high school gets rave reviews

Students and teachers at St. Patrick high school are giving themselves a pat on the back after a review team gave the school a passing grade.

The operations review, done by internal and external teams, was the first-ever evaluation of the school in its three-year history.

Kern Von Hagen said the purpose of the review was to identify the areas that need improvement.

"We wanted to make sure it was a healthy exercise and a rigorous one to see what we had to do," he said.

The evaluation process began with an internal look at the school by educators and students that has been turned into a 300-page document.

The independent, external review, headed by education consultant M.S. Naidoo, consisted of nine volunteer educators from the NWT and Alberta and former students of St. Pat's. The role of the external review was, among other things, to validate the internal review through a three-day visit at the school Feb. 26 to 28.

While the major findings of the external review consisted of commendations and not recommendations, Von Hagen cautioned

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that the external team's visit to the school is merely a snippet into the goings-on of the school.

"That was just a snapshot," he said. "We tried to provide the album." He referred to the "school portfolio," which details student performance in courses, as well as student and parent surveys that revealed a high rate of satisfaction with what the facility offers.

For example, 100 per cent of the students at the school reported they are happy with what it provides for them.

Von Hagen also said that the new school itself is not the reason for the glowing report, maintaining that strong leadership should take the credit.

Naidoo agreed. "I think they would have done just as good in the old school," he said. "I would not make the building the issue -- it's leadership at all different levels."

While he couldn't grade the school on a scale of one to 10, Naidoo puts St. Patrick high school on the top of more than 60 schools he's visited in the NWT, Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan and Ontario.

Even so, Naidoo's report details more than 50 areas -- ranging from the general to the specific -- that the school could improve.

"It would be foolish for us to think that there's no reason to improve," said Loretta Foley, superintendent of the Catholic board. "The biggest room in any house is the room for improvement."

by Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (Apr 30/97)

Superior scholar

Former St. Pat's pupil receives prestigious award

Most people strive to do well, says Phil Gobeil. But few genuinely strive for excellence.

As the winner of the 1996 Governor General's Awards, Gobeil's drive to be the best is obvious. The 19-year-old St. Patrick high school graduate said what is most important about the award is that it recognizes students for their hard work.

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"It was a large effort on my part to do well and I think it's great that they take the time to recognize that," he said. "By doing this, they encourage people."

Despite Gobeil's desire to do his very best, he was still surprised to find out he is this year's recipient of the award for the highest departmental test score average.

"I was expecting the award to go to someone else," he said.

Gobeil is a first-year pre-med student at the University of Saskatchewan who loves to read.

His Grade 11 English teacher remembers how he used to soak up information for the sake of learning.

"He's not the typical student, caught up with getting high marks for the sake of getting high marks," said Gerard Landry.

"He read books that weren't on the reading list -- books that challenged traditional ideas and views."

Gobeil was one of the most interested, creative students he ever taught, said Landry.

"From a literary point of view, he had an internal appreciation of literature, and he was very creative. He would come out with answers you wouldn't expect -- ones that would make me think."

Gobeil said that the prestigious award he was presented with in December will likely open some doors for him in the future.

"I believe that it shows a dedication to a goal and to academics and for that, I believe it will open some doors for me."

by Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (Feb 21/97) -

Support for parents

Helena Bacchus and Karri Nolting met in Grade 10 at St. Patrick High School and have been friends ever since. Not only do they share the past but they each have sons with an attention deficit disorder. And they want to share their experiences and new information with other parents.

Kids with the disorder used to be called unruly. Every class had one. He was the class clown perhaps, the cut-up, the wiggler. He fought and wouldn't wait his turn.

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One minute he would be working on his math. The next minute he'd be day dreaming out the window even if the teacher nagged.

"Having a child with an attention deficit can be exhausting, frustrating and very upsetting for the parents as well as the child," said Baccus. When Brendon Baccus was three or four years old, he destroyed his room and set his sister's teddy bear on fire.

Children with attention deficit disorder are characterized by symptoms of inattention, impulsivity and sometimes hyperactivity, which starts before they are seven.

"One or more instructions at a time and he can't remember what he's supposed to do," said Nolting, mother of two boys, one with ADD.

These children comprise approximately three to five per cent of the school-age population with boys significantly outnumbering girls.

"No one knows what causes attention deficit, but it's not the parents," said Nolting.

"It's such a relief when your child is diagnosed. There is a real problem even if no one can see it and I'm not some awful parent," said Baccus.

Over the years ADD was associated with food allergies, fetal alcohol syndrome, lead toxicity, prenatal trauma or maturational delay. Recent studies show specific metabolic abnormality in the brain.

Parents struggle for answers usually until the child goes to school and that's where the problem comes to a head said Baccus.

Medications work to a degree and you have to raise kids with ADD differently Nolting said. "Most require strict routines. But some people think ADD is just an excuse for bad behaviour," she said.

Up to 70 per cent of ADD children will show symptoms in adulthood but they will be milder. It's been a tough go for these mothers. But they want to help others in the same boat.

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"Maybe some people don't have anyone to talk to, maybe they don't have a Karri in their life," said Baccus.

A group of about 10 parents have had two informal meeting but will meet formally mid-January and form a local chapter of Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders or CHADD.

The organization will offer support and information. Dr. Andrew Gee and Dr. Marie-Claude Lebeau are involved and teachers are enthusiastic.

For more information call any school.

NNSL (DEC 18/96) -

It's dry, it's SADD, but fun

Students working to fight against drunk driving

It may be one of the few things students at the two high schools agree on. St. Patrick and Sir John Franklin high schools are banding together in a head-on fight against drunk drivers. The co-operative effort is a first between the two schools.

The students are waging an awareness campaign to educate the public on drinking and driving. They are organizing poster drives to publicize their message and overnighters at the school to promote alcohol-free events.

"We want to show that you can have fun without drinking," says Angela Masongsong, a Grade 10 student at St. Pat's.

The students may even spend some time in court observing drunk-driving cases to make their point. "Just to sit there so that they can see us and know we are there," she says.

Gwen Young, a teacher at Sir John Franklin, will be assisting the students when they go into the feeder schools to talk about the issue.

"We want to do presentations with them to show them how not to take part in high-risk activities," she says.

The younger students will draw on bags that will be displayed at the liquor store during Christmas. "It's a way to get them involved," says Young.

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She says the youths are getting the message about drinking and driving. "Kids are starting to understand the issue," she says.

"They are starting to take care of each other."

She is, however, a little disappointed with the response from the community.

"I don't think they understand what we are trying to do," she says.

"I think that the younger generation is getting it, but the older generation isn't."

Masongsong agrees. "We are finding that more younger people are listening to us," she says. "We're starting to focus our events on older people."

by Jennifer Pritchett Northern News Services (NOV 06/96) -

It takes a whole community...

Education partners recognized for their work

Yellowknife Catholic schools recognized their many partners in education Wednesday night at the Dennis R. Crane Gymnasium.

Each partner in attendance was called forward to receive a certificate of appreciation for their contributions.

"We have 34 partnerships at the high school and we have multiple ones at the two other schools -- well over 100 partners within the whole district," said board superintendent Loretta Foley.

"As we said before, it takes a whole community to educate a child."

Weledeh Catholic school and Ecole St. Joseph began the certificate presentations recognizing a number of local businesses including Ronald McDonald Children's Charities who donated \$13,000 to St. Joseph for a special-needs computer and software.

Weledeh thanked more than a dozen school sponsors, including the Elks, Lions, RCMP and Crime Stoppers.

Crime Stoppers over the last two years has sponsored the Caught Real Program, which rewards students for good deeds at the school. The school receives an annual donation of \$500 for this program.

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The district went on to recognize its partners, which include Stanton Regional Hospital, the federal government and its contribution to the Weledeh toy library, the Yellowknife fire department Hero's Program and the city of Yellowknife for its capital contribution to the St. Patrick's gym.

"I think they're good professional corporate citizens. Once you become involved you get hooked. Once you see the benefit of your contribution whatever it is, whether it's RCMP, health and social services or McDonald's," said Foley.

"Once you see the results, there's nothing that succeeds. Success breeds success. It becomes like a spiral," said Foley.

St. Patrick stole some of the limelight Wednesday night when it received a plaque from the local branch of the Royal Bank for winning the 1998 Conference Board of Canada Partnership in Education Award this spring.

The school, which has more than 34 partnerships, also received two cheques totalling \$2,002 from school architect Pin-Matthews and

constructor Clark Builders to support educational efforts at the school.

"I'm overwhelmed and speechless. These kind of things (awards) rarely happen," said Von Hagen, who was quick to recognize the partners and offered them a St. Pat's T-shirt and certificate.

To wrap things up for the evening St. Pat's new pastor, Patrick Murphy, was given the chance to sum up the night.

"I see a great respect for people and boldness and imagination in dealing with the needs and possibility of each person," said Murphy.

Jeff Colbourne Northern News Services NNSL (Jun 19/98) -

A teacher's first day
Judy Whitford back in school -- as a teacher

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Judy Whitford admits she had a few butterflies in her stomach when she awoke at 6:30 a.m. Wednesday morning. And why shouldn't she have? After all, it was going to be her first day of school this year.

While the 24-year-old University of Lethbridge graduate has experienced a lot of "first day of schools," this one was different. As she walked up the drive and into Ecole St. Joseph -- a school she had attended while growing up in Yellowknife -- things were different.

She was the teacher.

"It feels very welcoming coming back home," she said while her 25 students worked away on a class project. "I was born and raised here and was in kindergarten the year it (Ecole St. Joseph) opened... The school's become a lot bigger."

"I was a little nervous but once I saw the kids coming in I was fine... Everyone's just bright-eyed and bushy-tailed."

Whitford, who has wanted to be a teacher since high school, has been busy since she found out last spring that Ecole St. Joseph would be the site of the dawn of her teaching career. For the last

three weeks, Whitford has been in her classroom -- sometimes until late in the evening -- preparing for Wednesday and the whole school year. And, she phoned as many of her student's parents as possible to introduce herself.

Now, there's a teacher.

"Hopefully I'll help them (and) maybe inspire them, like I was inspired, to achieve their goals," she said, adding it was her Grade 5 teacher -- the grade she herself is now teaching -- who first inspired her.

A visiting reporter asked Whitford's whole class just what they thought of their teacher's first day on the job.

Their answer? Good," 25 voices shouted out".

And then student Shantel Tymchatyn spoke up. "Ms. Whitford is a good teacher and you put that down," she ordered.

Consider it done.

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