

MATTHEW YAP

Yellowknife Catholic Schools
2026 Trustee Candidate Profile



Biography:

I moved to Yellowknife in 2014. Since arriving, I have been committed to having a positive impact in my community. This is where I met my wife, Enika Fontanilla, a lifelong Yellowknifer. Together, we have built our family in this community, and our faith and involvement in St. Patrick's Co-Cathedral are an important part of our lives. Following my education degree, I began my career as a teacher, an experience that continues to shape my understanding of education and student success. I saw firsthand that strong schools start with great educators, supportive families, and a determination to help every student reach their potential. Today, I am a lawyer and GNWT director responsible for corporate governance, land rights and financial regulation. I am also a member of the national board overseeing Canada's financial markets that safeguard Canadians' investments. I have served in the Canadian Forces for over 20 years. Currently I am a Captain with the Canadian Rangers, where I have had the privilege of mentoring young people across the North. I am running because I believe that my diverse experiences can help YCS support students and educators, strengthen education, listen to families, and ensure our schools are responsibly governed.

Question 1: Why are you running for trustee?

I am running because I believe public service is about putting my skills and experience to work for others, and few responsibilities are more impactful and important than education. As a former teacher, I know that YCS decisions affect students and the educators who support them. I value schools where academic achievement is accompanied by faith, support, service and respect. YCS is a strong school system, with many experienced board members, dedicated educators and strong leadership. I am running because I believe I can make a meaningful contribution as a member of the team. I am not running because I bring the answers. I am running so that if I am elected, I can contribute legal, financial, and education experience to help shape the next generation of Northern leaders. I will work closely with fellow trustees to help ensure YCS remains a school system our community can be proud of.

Question 2: What is the biggest challenge facing Yellowknife Catholic Schools, and how would you address it?

The biggest challenge is ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed while meeting increasingly diverse and complex needs amid significant financial pressures. The answer starts in the classroom. Educators need the time, tools and support to do what they do best. Families need confidence their voices will be heard, and students need meaningful opportunities to Excel. YCS has faced difficult challenges in recent years resourcing our schools. I believe some new trustees can bring fresh perspectives, renewed energy and different experiences while building on the strengths of our school system. Funding will remain critical. Having spent more than a decade in GNWT management, I understand how government works and how to navigate public-sector processes effectively. As a trustee, I would bring that perspective to the Board, listen carefully, advocate persistently for YCS, and focus limited resources where they can make the greatest difference for students and families.

Question 3: How will you support both student success and Catholic education?

I see student success and Catholic education as complementary, not competing, priorities. Academic excellence remains central, equipping every student to pursue higher education, Red Seal trades, or employment. But education is about more than marks; schools are an important part of developing good community-minded citizens. Catholic education calls us to help young people develop character, compassion, resilience, responsibility and a commitment to serving others. I put these values into practice volunteering as the leader of the Yellowknife St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program; now starting a 2026 partnership with YCS to bring therapy dogs to support students facing personal challenges. As a trustee, I will leverage my education degree and classroom experience to promote student achievement, support educators, and advocate for evidence-based decisions while preserving the distinct faith-based identity of YCS. We must strive to graduate well-rounded young people prepared to contribute to their families, our community, and the North.

Question 4: What experience or perspective makes you the best candidate for the role?

I offer a unique combination of important skills for YCS. Having earned an education degree and taught in classrooms, I bring an understanding of the realities facing educators and students. Through my service with the Canadian Rangers and Junior Rangers, I have spent years mentoring young people and leading across Northern communities. Professionally, I bring a lawyer's perspective to Board decision-making, with experience interpreting legislation, assessing complex issues and governance responsibilities. My work in financial regulation has

taught me the importance of oversight, accountability and sound decisions with limited resources. After more than a decade in GNWT management, I understand how government operates and how to navigate it effectively. Qualifications alone do not make a good trustee. It requires sound judgment, collaboration and a willingness to listen, while keeping students at the heart of every decision. I hope to bring these perspectives to YCS. On October 19, I ask for your trust and vote for Matthew YAP.