



CASSA-ACGCS
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

Greetings from the President

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**All websites and email addresses are active.
Click them to connect immediately with
various resources.*

On January 24 and 25, the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) Board met for our annual planning session. In preparation for our conversation, we used Thoughtexchange to help gather and co-ordinate our thoughts, reflections and suggestions in response to, “What have we been doing well, and going forward what would you recommend we focus on?”

A main thought that emerged was a question pertaining to how well we (CASSA) inform our members across the country as to who we are, why we exist and what we do. Concern was expressed that, with ever shrinking budgets, we will continue to be challenged to prove the work of CASSA is relevant and worth the price of membership.

For board members who are more closely involved with the work of CASSA, these questions are easily answered. However, for members spread across the country, not as aware of CASSA’s work, it is more difficult to appreciate the value the organization provides.

As a board, we discussed many strategies, but the one we unanimously agreed on implementing immediately was to be more intentional in our messaging about our Purpose, Mission and Belief Statements. If our members easily recognize the focus of CASSA and its correlation with our work as system leaders across the country, then we will have created a context in which members see the significance of CASSA in their work.

As president, I have included our Purpose, Mission and Belief



Reg Klassen
CASSA/ACGCS President

Statements to help refocus all of us as to CASSA’s priorities:

- **Purpose:** CASSA is the Canadian organization of school system leaders that promotes and supports quality education for the success of each student.
- **Mission:** CASSA strengthens the capacity of school system leaders and influences the directions that impact education and student learning.
- **Beliefs:** The role of school system administrators is essential in ensuring success for each student. CASSA is a learning organization that promotes individual and collective learning for its members. CASSA has a responsibility to initiate and participate in dialogue on educational matters of national significance. It is essential to communicate and collaborate with educational and community partners to ensure excellence and equity in publicly funded education across Canada.

Reg Klassen
CASSA President



The CASSA Board met for its annual planning session in January.

Greetings from the Executive Director



Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

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ecently, the CASSA Board of Directors held its annual winter planning meetings in Toronto.

I am delighted to report that we had directors from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Northwest Territories, Quebec, New Brunswick, Regroupement national des directions générales de l'éducation (RNDGÉ) and Newfoundland and Labrador – an excellent coast to coast to coast representation!

The agenda included a Thoughtexchange activity in which board members reflected on how CASSA is doing currently plus added their thoughts on how the association can evolve and grow. The board also heard from Melanie Davis, CEO and president of Physical Health and Education (PHE) Canada, and Chris Markham, CEO and president of Ontario Physical Health Education Association (Ophea) with an update on the progress of the Canadian Alliance for Healthy School Communities (<https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/Page/83>). CASSA is a steward with the Alliance, and we are joined by other stewards, including the Canadian School Boards Association.

The board also engaged in a conversation with Chantal Beaulieu, executive director of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Finally, Catherine McCulloch from CMC Leadership updated the board with a presentation called *Strong Districts and their Leadership: Equity and Inclusion for Student Well-Being*, including recent research from Kenneth Leithwood.

It was an intense two days in which we looked inward and outward to fulfill our Purpose, Mission and Beliefs. Thanks to our corporate supporters for their

contributions to the success of our board meetings: Thoughtexchange (www.thoughtexchange.com), EF Educational Tours (www.eftours.com) and Nelson Canada (www.nelson.com).

Save the Date

Join us from July 2 to 4 in St. Andrews by-the-Sea, New Brunswick, when we will examine promising classroom, school and district approaches to equity and inclusion to support student mental health and well-being. Consider submitting a workshop proposal: https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/cms/lib/ON01929128/Centricity/Domain/8/2020_Call_for_Presentations.pdf.

See you there!

Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director



From left: Curtis Brown (President Elect), Ken Bain (Executive Director), Reg Klassen (President), Yvonne Careen (Northwest Territories) and Valérie Morand (RNDGÉ) at the CASSA Board's planning meeting in Toronto.

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Paul McFadyen (Yukon)

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Experiential Learning

at Whitehorse's Wood Street Centre

Offered in French, FACES 10 combines academic classwork with practical field study projects.

Since 1997, Yukon high school students have had the chance to take part in unique experiential learning programs at the Wood Street Centre in downtown Whitehorse. Wood Street Centre offers students high-level academic learning through classroom learning, lab experiments, field trips and outdoor projects, among other models.

Students from Grades 9 to 12 can gain the same number of credits toward graduation as they would at any other high school in Yukon. Many of the programs are available in either English or French. Programs currently offered include:

- ACES 10 (Achievement, Challenge, Environment and Stewardship);
- CHAOS 9-10 (Community: Heritage: Adventure: Outdoors: Skills);
- ES 11 (Experiential Science);
- FACES 10 (French Achievement, Challenge, Environment and Stewardship);
- MAD 9-12 (Music-Art-Drama);
- OPES 9 (Outdoor Pursuits and Experiential Science); and
- PASE 9 (Plein Air et Sciences Expérientielles).

Although the seven programs are all based out of the same physical location, each of them may be considered a school within a school model, as they have their own learning objectives and varying schedules. Detailed

descriptions of each of the programs are available at www.woodstreetcentre.ca.

Students at Wood Street Centre follow the British Columbia curriculum (as do all other students in Yukon schools), while learning through hands-on experiences and developing leadership skills. The curriculum has been adapted to include Yukon-specific content and to integrate Yukon First Nations languages, history, cultures and ways of knowing, doing and being into all subject areas and grade levels. As part of their curriculum learning, students at Wood Street Centre are expected to develop understandings of and make connections with First Nations in Yukon.

Programming at the centre is geared toward giving students a sense of belonging and offering opportunities to develop community relationships. As well, efforts are made to help students balance their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health.

Students from across Yukon can attend Wood Street Centre; applications are due in January or February for the coming school year, depending on the program. This includes students who do not live in Whitehorse, as they have the opportunity to stay at the Gadzoosada Student Residence or receive a boarding allowance for other accommodation options.

The Government of Yukon Department of Education administers public education services in the territory, including those offered at Wood

Street Centre. Yukon superintendent duties are currently divided between four people: Paul McFadyen (Area 1), Penny Prysnyuk (Area 2), and Kim Ramsay and Greg Storey (Area 3).

Darren Hays is the principal of Wood Street Centre. He recently took the time to respond to questions from *Leaders & Learners* about the school's unique programming. Here is the first part of that conversation. The second part will appear in our April 2020 issue.

When you meet other educators and administrators who have not heard of Wood Street Centre, how do you describe it to them?

I share that we are a community of amazing staff, students and families who choose to learn in an experiential format. We offer a variety of subject disciplines, such as language arts, social studies, physical education and science, using experiential learning approaches through outdoor education, performing arts and experiential science.

Each program strives to further develop student leaders in an engaging and dynamic approach that values and respects the program and school community.

How do you explain its experiential programming?

We do our learning in a meaningful way through activity that is above and beyond the

ACES 10 (Achievement, Challenge, Environment and Stewardship)

An integrated academic and outdoor semester that includes credits for Science 10, Social Studies 10, Physical Education 10 and Outdoor Pursuits 10. Ideal for students who like being outdoors, enjoy challenges, want to explore the beauty and history of Yukon and Alaska while snowshoeing, skiing, paddling, cycling and camping at historic and remote locations, and want to learn science and social studies in a hands-on way. Students will work together while developing leadership skills.

CHAOS 9-10 (Community: Heritage: Adventure: Outdoors: Skills)

An experiential program offered to Yukon students in Grades 9 and 10, developed in collaboration with the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit at the Yukon Department of Education. Students will learn through experience in an environment created for success and learning while developing leadership skills. They will develop an understanding of and make connections to Yukon First Nations knowledge, traditions, skills, values and beliefs. The program includes major expeditions, up to eight days long.

ES 11 (Experiential Science)

An academic program with a central science theme and that integrates biology, chemistry, geography, physical education, visual art and applied skills. It includes hands-on real-life learning experiences and other teaching and learning strategies to engage self-directed learning and critical thinking. Activities and lessons meet objectives for more than one course. Students will experience high-level academic learning through classroom time, lab experiments, field trips and outdoor projects. They will learn to scuba dive, sail, surf, rock climb and more, and they will take part in a major field trip to Vancouver Island and Southeast Alaska for three and a half weeks.

FACES 10 (French Achievement, Challenge, Environment and Stewardship)

An outdoor education program designed for French-speaking students in Grade 10. It is ideal for French immersion students but others may apply if they can speak French and are ready to live completely in French. The program consists of two academic classes, Sciences Naturelles 10

and Sciences Humaines 10, with Physical Education and Outdoor Education courses (Education Physique 10 and Plein-Air 10), integrating the subject areas as much as possible with planned field trips.

MAD 9-12 (Music-Art-Drama)

A program created to give students a solid foundation in creative dramatics, acting, stagecraft, music, dance and playwriting fundamentals. Students also earn their English and social studies credits and Grade 11 English First Peoples or 12 English, Grade 11 social studies, acting 11 or 12, and a choice between several fine arts and applied skills courses. The 9-10 class presents two or three shows for schools and the public in the fall, while the 11-12 class presents shows in the spring semester.

OPES 9 (Outdoor Pursuits and Experiential Science)

An integrated program of studies that gives students opportunities in exciting outdoor pursuits and enriches the regular science curriculum. The Physical Education course is complemented by a variety of outdoor activities focused on lifelong learning and active living. Social Studies will be delivered in the classroom as well as through field studies. The use of technology and fine arts medium will round out this full-semester integrated program.

PASE 9 (Plein Air et Sciences Expérientielles)

A program offered in French that combines academic classwork with practical field study projects, including wildlife population studies, water survey studies, hiking trips, sea kayak or canoe trips, river kayak sessions in a pool, ski trips, climbing activities and visits to a First Nations cultural camp. Education Physique 9 focuses on outdoor activities and sports. Sciences Naturelles 9 covers biology, chemistry, physics and astronomy, all enriched through its integration into outdoor activities and complemented with field studies. Plein Air et Environment focuses on outdoor skills and projects. Students will also be introduced to a variety of environmental skills, including stream studies, camping techniques and bird identification. Landscape drawing and other forms of art will be integrated into the course.

curriculum requirements. It is about learning who you are and what strengths you have, and it is about the journey to personal improvement. It goes beyond the nuts and bolts of an activity. We plan activities that position students to develop character and leadership skills and that create an inclusive community from all our learners.

What are some of the key advantages offered to students who take part in the Centre’s programming, compared to those who have access to only traditional teacher-at-the-front full-time classroom settings?

Students are often looking to be part of a new community that shares common interests (drama, outdoor pursuits, academics, First Nations ways of knowing and doing, and so on). Each group is a new community that invents itself, as there will not be a duplicate group of students in any other program.

Students appreciate a smaller class size (16 to 28 students, depending on the program) with one teacher for all subjects and activities through the semester. Having one program teacher reduces lost time transitioning between classes or adapting to each teacher’s style throughout the day. Students share that having a diverse range of programs to choose from allows them to focus on activities they enjoy or wish to be exposed to.

What kind of challenges might students face that they may not experience in a more traditional setting? How does staff support the students as they meet those challenges?

The aspects that may be seen as positive for Wood Street Centre may also be our challenge. Some students like being in a larger community where they can blend into the background. Wood Street Centre helps pull people into leadership roles, so it is challenging to hide. The staff must be sensitive to each student’s needs and allow the student time to grow into his or her new responsibilities and roles. Having the same teacher all day can be a challenge if there is not a positive connection or relationship.

Scheduling with trips and activities or changes due to weather means we must be willing to change or modify activities, often on short notice. As a staff member says, “There is no bad weather, just bad clothing choices.”

Students must apply to get into the program, which means each student must be



The experiential learning programs at the Wood Street Centre combine multiple disciplines and give students a hands-on approach to learning.


aware of the opportunity and plan ahead to meet deadlines. Each student must also be willing to take the risk of joining our school, which can be a hurdle for some. Our staff work with home schools to promote our programs and give a taste of the program during overnight activities, auditions and interviews. We encourage, support, encourage further and adapt supports or find new supports as each student requires.

The Yukon environment is a wonderful backdrop for all our activities. First Nations

peoples in Yukon have an understanding of our environment and knowledge that is important as we find ways to have our youth engage in traditional knowledge while applying modern technology. We have many community supports that assist our program delivery, and, in return, we work with our communities to promote experiential learning and encourage modern use of traditional culture practices.

One important item is that our student community has nearly a one hundred per

cent turnover each semester. There are many students who will attend multiple programs or participate in MAD over three to four years. Each semester is a new start, meaning we are challenged with creating our community values every five months. Like most aspects at Wood Street Centre, building a community so frequently is both a challenge and a benefit. Thankfully, staff are so passionate about their programs and what Wood Street Centre stands for that commitment is not a concern we face with staff. ○



Call for Presentations: 2020 CASSA Conference

It's time to put forward your leadership team's submission to present a breakout session at the 2020 CASSA Conference.

The call for presentations is open now and will close on March 20, 2020. If your submission is accepted, you will be notified by email by April 10.

This year's gathering is in St. Andrews by-the-Sea from July 2 to 4 and features the theme *Equity and Inclusion for Student Well-Being*. Preference will be given to sessions that address school and system practices that relate to the topic of equitable and inclusive schools and systems that support marginalized/racialized students and their well-being.

Breakout sessions take place on July 3 and 4. We offer 60-minute slots at this conference. We welcome individual presenters as well as team-led sessions. Sessions may be presented in either official language. Presenters must be available at the time and date on which CASSA assigns your session.

We require all presenters to pay conference registration fees and to have a registration badge. Your co-presenters need to be aware of this policy as well. Note that we do not offer presenter registration discounts. Suppliers presenting at the conference are expected to have a school system leader as a co-presenter.

Our conference breakout rooms will be equipped with a projector, screen, Wi-Fi and a head table for two. If your presentation requires any extra audiovisual equipment, such as speakers or flipcharts, please let us know. We will do our best to meet your needs. Unfortunately, we cannot provide hardcopy handouts of your presentation to those attending your session. You may, however, distribute your own materials during the session.

For more information, or to submit your proposal to present, visit the CASSA conference website at www.conference.cassa-acgcs.ca, and click on the 2020 Call for Presentations link on the home page.



CASSA-ACGCS
Promoting Quality Education for Our Students

CASSA Awards: Recognizing Outstanding Leadership



John Malloy (third from left), the 2017 EXL Award recipient, stands with his fellow nominees, CASSA leadership and Xerox representatives at the 2017 conference in Halifax.



Since its inception, the EXL Award has been supported by Xerox Canada. CASSA recognizes and is grateful for this longtime partnership.

Honourary Life Membership

The unique award recognizes excellence in education at the national level. It is normally meant to honour individuals who have contributed significantly to CASSA. Occasionally those who have made significant contributions at the provincial affiliate level will be considered for this distinction. This will only happen when those contributions relate to and support CASSA and its national mandate.

Distinguished Service Award

This award recognizes any present or recent CASSA member who has demonstrated outstanding ability and leadership. This award is open to leaders at all stages of their career. It is not meant to honour only those leaders who are retired or nearing retirement; the CASSA Honourary Life Membership would normally be more appropriate for those individuals. These guidelines, however, are not intended to exclude individuals approaching retirement from receiving the Distinguished Service Award.

The CASSA executive will decide which candidates are suited to receive the Honourary Life Membership and the Distinguished Service Award based on the information included in the nomination packages.

Nominate a Leader You Know!

If you know of a leader whose work deserves to be recognized at a national level, consider putting their name forward for one of these awards. Nomination forms for each award can be found on the CASSA website. Nomination packages are accepted between October 1 and May 16, and the awards are presented at the annual CASSA conference in July. ○

As stated in its Purpose, CASSA is the Canadian organization of school system leaders that promotes and supports quality education for the success of all students. The leaders who make up CASSA's membership represent an incredibly broad array of school systems in Canada. No matter the size or demographics of the systems, superintendents, directors-general and directors of education across the country strive for excellence as they support their senior administration teams, school staff and students.

CASSA recognizes the extraordinary efforts of school system leaders through its EXL Award, Honourary Life Membership and Distinguished Service Award.

EXL Award

The EXL Award recognizes the outstanding leadership of superintendents and directors of education from across Canada. CASSA members who have shown exemplary leadership ability and who have enhanced school administration are eligible to receive this award.

What sort of qualities should an EXL Award nominee have? They will have brought honour to themselves, their colleagues and their profession. They have given exemplary service to their provincial, territorial or national professional association. They have made significant contributions to the field of education through their services, writings or other activities. They serve as role models and teachers to others and have at least five years of membership in CASSA.

This national award has been presented each year since 2002. CASSA is committed to highlighting the work of extraordinary leaders in education for several reasons:

- It is important to acknowledge the dedication and enthusiasm of administrators who guide children's educational experiences. Recognition is a powerful instrument for building pride in accomplishment and continued determination to pursue excellence.
- System leaders who establish the character of a particular school system's programs through the important work with school boards, school leaders, teachers and caring parents help to determine the scope and quality of children's education experiences.
- Children's attitudes toward learning and their perceptions of themselves as lifelong learners are established in their school years. Effective leadership, mentoring and modeling determine whether the school jurisdiction effectively creates this environment.

Previous EXL Award winners include Shannon Barnett-Aikman, David Keohane, Dr. John Malloy, Joan Carr, John Crocco, Brent Kaulback, Kim Jenkins, Robert Mills, Linda Fabi, Curtis Brown, John Mackle, Johanne Messner, Geoff Williams, Carol Gray, Ron Canuel, Edie Wilde, Ed Wittchen, Roy Seidler and John Darroch.

Each year, the EXL Award nominees and the recipient are profiled in this *Leaders & Learners* newsletter. The system leader who receives the EXL Award is also invited to attend the annual AASA conference in the United States as the Canadian Superintendent of the Year.

Save the date!

**EQUITY
AND
INCLUSION**

FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING
ST. ANDREWS BY THE SEA, NB • JULY 2-4

**JOIN CASSA AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE FROM
JULY 2 TO 4, 2020, AT ST. ANDREWS BY-THE-SEA, N.B.**

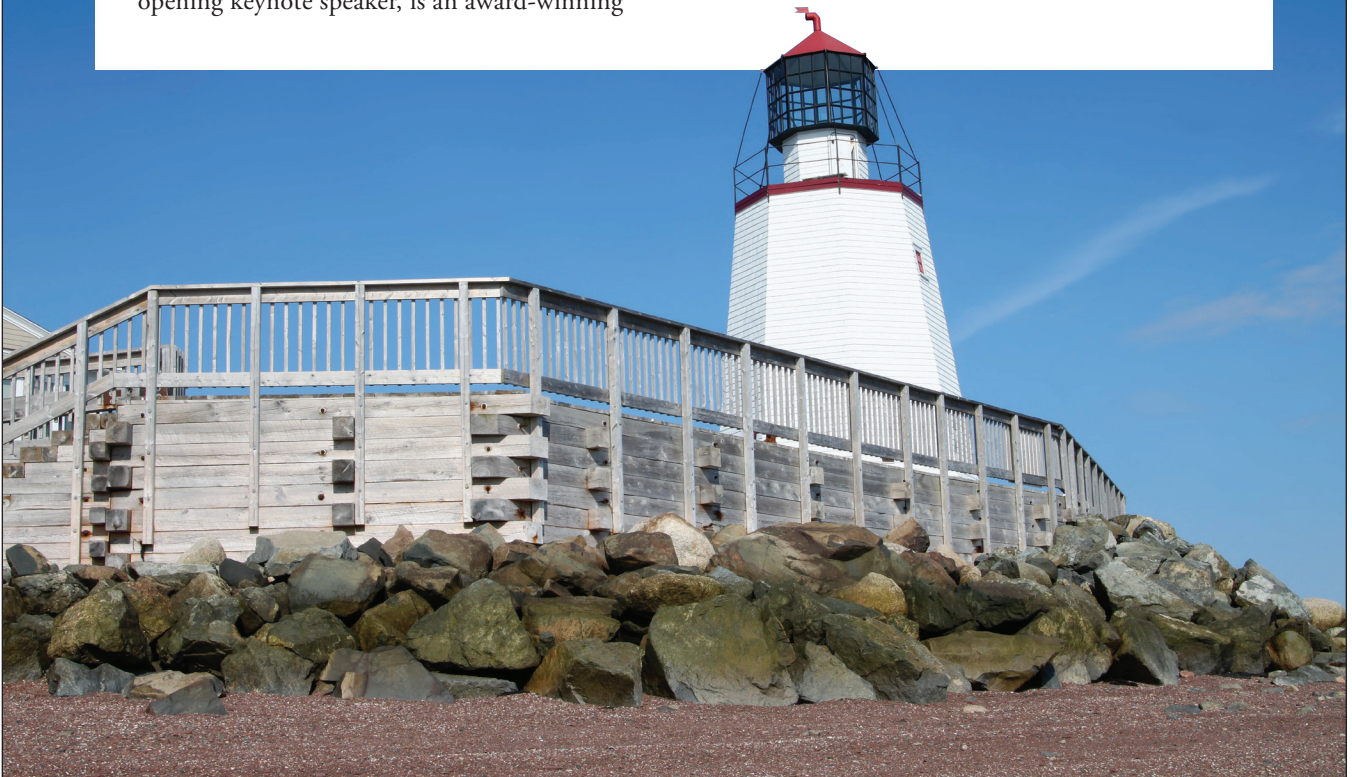
THEME: EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING

The CASSA Annual Conference draws school system leaders from across Canada to learn and share information on current topics in education. Delegates will have opportunities to hear from engaging speakers and breakout session leaders during the day, plus have the chance to explore St. Andrews by-the-Sea.

Kike Ojo-Thompson, the founder and principal consultant of Kojo Institute and the conference's opening keynote speaker, is an award-winning

expert in equity, inclusion and diversity. Sure to inspire, Kike specializes in developing, facilitating and implementing innovative solutions for creating equity at an institutional level.

More details, including speakers, will be posted to the conference website. Visit www.conference.cassa-acgcs.ca to learn more about the conference, to register to attend and to apply to be a presenter.

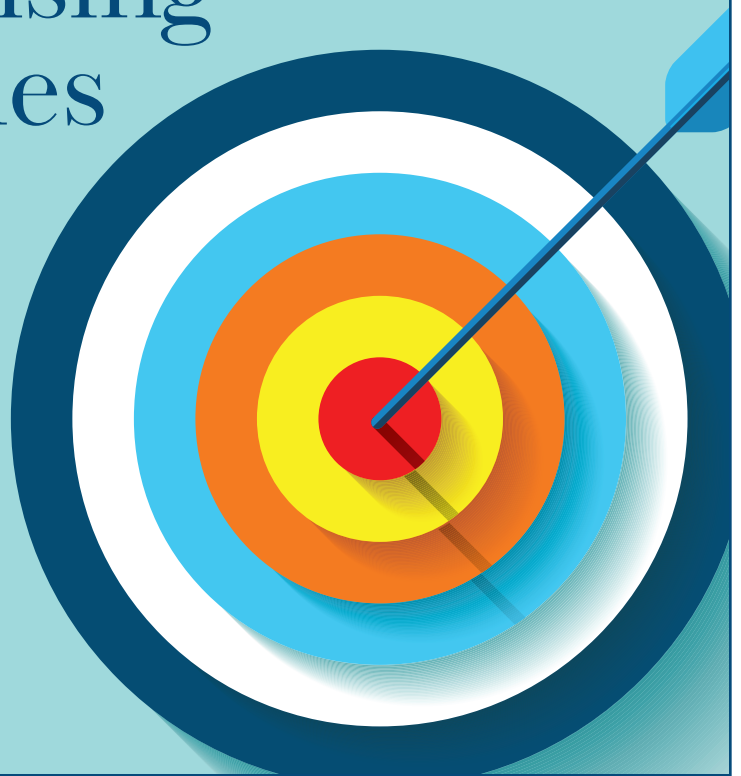


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Read past issues of this Newsletter and the *Leaders & Learners* magazine at <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca>.



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