

Greetings from the President



Kevin Kaardal
CASSA/ACGCS President

The beginning of a new school year is exciting. Staff have been preparing for the first weeks, ensuring the school year gets off to a positive start. I often make quick visits to schools on the

first day and take a moment to speak with students and staff. I always come away with a sense of hope and a renewed purpose. The work we do is important. We help children and youth explore their interests and passions while we work to help them meet their potential as human beings. We teach the competencies and foundational skills they require to succeed as citizens. It is complex work preparing our students to thrive in Canada's multicultural society, and further to prepare our learners for many opportunities to become global citizens who contribute to a better future for humanity.

System leaders strive to set conditions so that their school leaders can create caring school communities. This is accomplished in part by ensuring there are high expectations, that educators employ rigorous research-based pedagogy and intellectually demanding inquiry projects, and student agency and accountability. Public educators work hard to help their students succeed and stay engaged. Each district considers their local circumstances, the provincial curricula, their district's strategic directions and priorities, including vision and purpose statements, as they try to align their work to achieve the best outcomes possible. As leaders we all strive to address equity, and inclusivity and safe schools for all.

It is important that we build caring communities because schools are being asked to do so much more than in decades past. I recognize that we lead in a world of contextual complexities we must address if we are to succeed. We must walk with our Indigenous communities as we continue the journey of Truth and Reconciliation. We need to fight racism in all its forms and ensure more inclusive, equitable schools. Currently, we deal with differing views on how to live with an ongoing pandemic that is adding

to the mental health pressures felt by those we lead. As a result, we must support students and staff with their wellness.

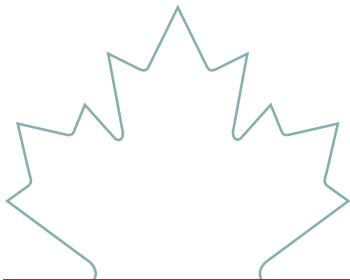
It is my belief that creating caring school communities is a foundational step to supporting these important and complex pieces of our work. If the people we serve and lead know that we truly care, they are more likely to trust us which leads to easier collaboration on complex issues. We need to lead walking side by side with our community. Each learner's success depends on it.

In our summer leadership conference, one plenary session focused on building capacity of our leaders. Part of the summary of this session captures our work as system leaders as we build a caring community of leaders:

A system is only as strong as the people within. In our organizations, in our schools, people need to be continually nurtured and supported. The support must not only be for them as individuals, but as leaders who work to influence, affirm and in turn, support all those with whom they work. Leaders support and empower groups and individuals. In their daily work, they model and inform both change leadership and change management. They are also dedicated to their own professional learning and are models of lifelong learning. The work of building capacity runs on a continuum, from nurturing yourself, to supporting teams, to influencing organizations and connecting with the community. (Tinney, CASSA 2022)

If we are wondering where to start the previous summary is a good place. I wish you a successful year as you lead with courage and patience creating safe and caring spaces where students can thrive.

Kevin Kaardal
CASSA/ACGCS President



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

Greetings from the Executive Director

Reflections on CASSA 2022 Leadership Conference



Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

In July, approximately 200 school system leaders gathered in St. Andrew's By-The-Sea for the first in-person conference in three years. We had previously surveyed the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) board of directors to better understand what type of experience members wanted. Three themes emerged:

1. A chance to engage with one another through opportunities to share and discuss matters of mutual interest;
2. A focus on choice and participation; and
3. A chance to socialize and network in a relaxed setting.

I want to express my appreciation to the members of our Conference Planning Team: **Claire Guy** (British Columbia), **Barb Isaak** (Manitoba), **Joy Badder** (Ontario), **Morris Hucal** (Ontario-OCSSA), and **Derek O'Brien** (New Brunswick). These five leaders met every two weeks for many months to ensure that CASSA offered a conference experience that

met member needs. We designed what I came to describe as "the unconference conference:" there was no keynote speaker and no breakout workshops lined up for this year's conference. Instead, we reached out to Jordan Tinney, retired Superintendent, Surrey Schools, Surrey, B.C. who facilitated the learning and conversations across the three days.

On July 6, we were welcomed to the traditional unceded lands of the Passamaquoddy by Chief Akagi. Jordan provided a brief overview of the format and context for the three days, and everyone got into the Maritime spirit with an entertaining kitchen party featuring homemade bread.

For both July 7 and 8, Jordan lead everyone through four facilitated sessions. The facilitated sessions began with a short presentation providing the language and background to the concepts chosen. The remaining time for each session was devoted to dialogue at tables where participants were provided guided questions to facilitate their sharing. Topics included Contextual Literacy, Adaptive Leadership, Compassionate Leadership, and Leadership for

Equity. Jordan also led attendees through six thematic sessions. CASSA offered the time and the space for attendees to share across provinces and territories. The themes were:

- Truth and Reconciliation;
- Student Voice;
- Building the Capacity of System Leaders;
- Mental Health and Well-Being;
- A Focus on Equity for all Learners; and,
- Racial Equity and Educational Justice.

If you wish to watch Jordan's presentations, please visit <https://www.cassa-acgcs.ca/Page/9>.

We hope to see you all next year! **SAVE THE DATE NOW: the CASSA 2023 Leadership Conference will be held from July 5-7, 2023, in Victoria, B.C!**

Ken Bain

CASSA/ACGCS Executive Director

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Faces in the Crowd:

Valérie Morand

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer



Valérie Morand, Executive Director, Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) & the Regroupement national des directions générales de l'éducation (RNDGE).

Valérie Morand is the Executive Director of both the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF) and the Regroupement national des directions générales de l'éducation (RNDGE).

FNCSF represents 28 French-language school boards in Canada outside the province of Quebec. RNDGE is a national network of 29 senior school system leaders. RNDGE can be thought of as a peer organization to CASSA for the French first language education network operating in minority settings outside of Quebec. Together, RNDGE and FNCSF represent nearly 173,000 students in more than 700 elementary and secondary schools in nine provinces and three territories.

Valérie's own education began in Quebec, where she received her elementary and



The 2019 RNDGE annual summer conference. Photos courtesy of Valérie Morand.

secondary education in French. She completed her post-secondary education in both French and English, starting with two years of Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP), the first level of compulsory higher education in Quebec, similar to vocational training. Her first year she studied the art and literature program at Bois-de-Boulogne. In her second, she focused on the cinema and translation program at Vanier College.

"It was a bold move for someone born and raised in French," she says, "but it allowed me to pursue my university studies in the same fashion."

She then studied literature and communication at the University of Quebec in Montreal, followed by the broadcast journalism program at the Toronto Metropolitan University (previously known as Ryerson Polytechnical Institute).



The 2019 RNDGE spring meeting.

“At the time, there were few post-secondary institutions offering training in journalism,” Valérie says. “The strong hands-on approach favoured by the program allowed me to land a part-time job over the weekends in Toronto at the local radio station of Radio-Canada as a reporter and a line-up editor/newsreader.”

Her first full-time job after university was at TFO, then known as La Chaîne, the francophone branch of Ontario’s public television network, where she worked as a television host for the children’s programming department. Over the course of two years, Valérie was able to tour Ontario’s French-language schools and meet hundreds of children and their teachers while producing segments for the science program she was hosting.

“It was an emotionally rich professional experience,” she recalls. For the next two decades, she worked in both official languages on and off the air as a radio reporter for CBC/Radio-Canada and Radio-Canada International.

“CBC allowed me to cover meaningful stories, raise awareness on issues not necessarily sexy in terms of ratings, and, most of all, to be right where the action was taking place. I took stock of this when I toured the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. I realized how I got to be a privileged rapporteur of some of the most significant cases that helped to shape the human rights landscape in this country. It was a gratifying feeling.”

Valérie’s ability to summarize and simplify complex information and then convey it clearly to different audiences made her an ideal fit as a communication manager for the FNCSF/RNDGE. Before she began working for the organization, no one had been overseeing communications. She saw the job as a stimulating challenge to brand the organization and to create effective and powerful

communication tools to support francophone school boards.

“It was a natural transition when I became executive director, continuing the work to position our organization and to make it even more effective in defending our members’ education rights and promoting French-language education with rights holders and immigrants.”

She sums up the history of French-language minority schools in three words: resistance, resilience, and growth. “The existence of French-language schools in Canada and the constitutional rights of francophones to have their children educated in French outside Quebec are the result of numerous milestones that have shaped Canada.”

Many gains have been made thanks to hard work by previous generations, she notes, but vigilance is needed to preserve, consolidate, and grow the Franco-Canadian education network. Over the last 30 years the national network of French-language schools has blossomed, yet there is much work still to be done to achieve substantive equality in education.

When asked about points of pride in her career, Valérie recalls as a professional milestone the decision by Statistics Canada to include five additional questions in the short-form census to better assess the number of Canadians who are entitled to send their children to a French-language school.

“The FNCSF worked hard with other francophone organizations to convince Statistics Canada to put the questions on the short-form questionnaire that goes to all Canadians rather than the long-form version that only goes to 25 per cent of the population. Canadians who speak minority languages have the right to send their children to school in that language but up until recently francophone school boards did not have hard data on the number of

francophones in their province, territories, or regions who could register their children in a French-language school.”

At the end of this November, the results of the 2021 census will provide this kind of information – a first in Canada. This means FNCSF and RNDGE members can now make solid pitches to their respective education ministries for building new schools or upgrading existing ones. Up to now, it has been common for francophone school boards to plan the construction of a school but then be forced to add several portables along the way before the official opening of the school because the number of children who would enroll had been underestimated.

Valérie describes her leadership style as inclusive and creative.

“I’m an analytical person so I tend to look thoroughly at an issue and assess the pros and cons before deciding. I see myself as the one who prompts discussions and exchanges, yet the outcomes of those meetings are fed by collective wisdom. As the old saying goes, ‘alone you go faster, together we go further.’”

She also sees creativity as key in problem solving, and it has always been a strong component of her personal and professional life. As the RNDGE representative on the CASSA board of directors since 2019, Valérie says she feels privileged to be able to share the reality of the French-language school network with colleagues from across the country.

“CASSA, as does the RNDGE, provides much-needed opportunities to senior school system leaders to exchange views and concerns related to education through networking and professional training. The pandemic highlighted the need to collectively share our respective education realities across the country as administrators. It allows CASSA members to develop a more comprehensive and inclusive view of our education system. Members are able to discuss and agree on what are the most pressing issues and advocate for changes to improve the system.”

Education is a way to lift people out of poverty, she says, and it is one of the most effective tools to level the playing field to reduce income and other visible and invisible barriers.

“The pandemic has been a wake-up call for many to strengthen our education system to prevent inequalities and make our society more just. It’s a demanding yet rewarding field to work in to make a difference and empower future generations.” ○

Faces in the Crowd:



Yvonne Careen

Yvonne Careen, Superintendent of the Commission scolaire francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (CSFTNO).

By Tara Wittchen, Contributing Writer

Yvonne Careen is the Superintendent of the Commission scolaire francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (CSFTNO). CSFTNO is the only school board in the territory that offers French first language education at all grade levels, from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12. Its 46 staff members serve approximately 243 students at two schools in Yellowknife and Hay River. She is also one of two Northwest Territories Superintendents' Association (NWTSA) affiliate representatives on the CASSA board of directors.

Yvonne's own education includes earning her Bachelor of Education and Master of Arts in Education, along with several certificates. She began her teaching career as a Grade 4 teacher at a middle school in Yellowknife in March 1989. She was the recipient of the 2017/2018 NWTSA Distinguished Service Award and the territorial recipient for CASSA's 2018 EXL

Award. In 2015, she was recognized as a Bâtitseur de la francophonie. That same year she received the Prix Jeanne-Dubé for her volunteer commitment to the francophone community of NWT. In 2014, she was named the NWT Official of the Year by the NWT Volleyball Association.

In 2019, Yvonne was named one of Canada's most influential French-Canadians (une des personnalités les plus influents de la francophonie Canadienne) by Francopresse. The honour recognizes her role as a champion for rebuilding and reopening École Allain St-Cyr. Yvonne and a team of school staff and parents worked for 15 years to achieve this dream for the francophone community of Yellowknife. Construction of high school spaces and a gymnasium at École Allain St-Cyr began after a lengthy court battle against the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Other initiatives that Yvonne has spearheaded include the development of a Ministerial Directive in 2016 and a regulation in 2020 on the admission of students to French first-language schools, an ongoing court challenge over admissions and the right to be heard and understood in the judicial system in French that will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada next spring, the development of a Student Exit Profile with a focus placed on

Nahanni River Canoe Trip at the base of Virginia Falls, from Summer 2022. Photos courtesy of Yvonne Careen.



developing critical thinking skills, and leading a cohesive school community team that has as its focus the success and well-being of each student.

Yvonne recently took the time to share more of her story with *Leaders & Learners*.

What inspired you to work in public education and in senior administration?

Several of my siblings are teachers, most of them retired. I tried another field of work and quickly realized that it wasn't fulfilling. As a teen, I had worked with young people every summer and I was told that I was a natural at it, so when the opportunity presented itself, I began my degree in education and have not looked back since.

My career evolved over the years as I always, as a teacher, took on leadership roles. I took extra certifications, such as leadership programs for teachers interested in becoming administrators. After several years as an assistant principal, coordinator, and principal, I was asked to consider a senior administrator position. I hesitated but finally agreed to apply for the position. That was more than eight years ago.

It's a question of determination, preparing for it by taking gradual steps toward that goal, and having that "fire in the belly" that feeds how you approach the work, your system colleagues, and the school community. My development also came from my volunteer activities as being a strong voice of the francophone community in Yellowknife and the Northwest Territories.

How would you describe your personal style of leadership?

Collegial. Taking a stand when a stand must be taken. Knowing that it's perfectly alright not to have all the answers. Being humble enough to seek forgiveness when I've infringed on the well-being of others.

What does leadership mean to you?

Leadership to me is synonymous with building or creating a system where each member is in the right place and working in their areas of expertise for the collective development and improvement of the school system. Leadership is to be the voice of your community.

How many years have you been involved with CASSA and its regional affiliate?

Four years, I believe.

How did you first become involved with CASSA and what made you want to work with the organization at the board level?

A colleague was very involved and asked that a second superintendent from the NWT participate in CASSA. He then became president, and I continued on and sat at the board level.

I have recently been elected president of the Regroupement national des directions générales en éducation for a two-year term. It's great to network with colleagues throughout Canada and to share our successes and challenges. The professional development opportunities are many and excellent.

What are you most looking forward to in your role on the CASSA board?

The ongoing networking opportunities as we pull out of COVID and to see how education evolves post-pandemic, positively, I'm sure.

Please tell our readers a little bit about personal history.

I'm originally from Saskatchewan, a small farming community named St. Denis east of Saskatoon. My spouse is a Newfoundlander. We've just celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. He and my two sons have supported me through thick and thin, and have challenged me to have more work-life balance.

I'm a reader, I knit, I kayak, I love walking and hiking. I just completed a 10-day canoe trip down the Nahanni River. It had been on my bucket list for several years. Now I can check it off and move on to the next adventure.

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

I'd like to thank every colleague that I've ever had the privilege to work with. From each of them, I've learned a lot and constructed who I wanted to become as a teacher and leader. That's what teaching is all about.

Thank you for taking part, Yvonne. ○

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