

# BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

NOVEMBER 2019

## TRUSTEES

Ron Schreiber, Chair  
Okotoks

Joanne Van Donzel, Vice Chair  
High River

Mark Chung  
Drumheller

John de Jong  
Brooks

Michelle Rude-Volk  
Oyen

Vijay Domingo  
Canmore

Harry Salm  
Strathmore

Andrea Keenan  
MD of Foothills

## SENIOR ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Scott Morrison  
Superintendent

Michael Kilcommons  
Associate Superintendent

Vincent Behm  
Associate Superintendent

Mariette Moss  
Associate Superintendent

Jerry Bagozzi  
Treasurer

Dawn Quinlan  
Director of Human Resources

Dave Lunn  
Director of Facilities

Rhonda Schachterle  
Director of Student Services

Cheryl Kuemper  
Director of Curriculum and  
Instruction

Lindsay Fagan  
Director of Catholic Education

## Board Approves 2018-2019 Audited Financial Statement

After listening to a detailed presentation about the 2018/2019 Audited Financial Statement from the external auditor and CTR's Corporate Services team, CTR's Audit Committee recommended it for Board approval. Trustee Mark Chung from Drumheller reported that a formal Auditor's Report was presented to the committee earlier in the week. In summary, the auditor's report indicated that divisional funds are managed well. The Board learned that the external auditors received excellent cooperation from CTR's staff and found nothing of material concern. The Board voted unanimously to approve the statement.

As per the new Education Act, CTR has added the first of two community representatives to its Audit Committee. They offered a warm welcome to Okotoks Town Councillor, Tanya Thorn. Mrs. Thorn brings a broad knowledge base about publicly funded entities. Mrs. Thorne offered a host of insights that assisted the Board in seeing their financial position through a different lens, and she made insightful recommendations about how CTR should communicate with its stakeholders about financial considerations. One thing that stood out to Mrs. Thorn was that approximately 80% of CTR's budget is devoted to salaries. The Audit Committee members were impressed with Mrs. Thorne's contributions.



Councillor Tanya Thorn

## Board Approves 2019-2020 Fall Budget

CTR's Audit Committee listened to a detailed presentation on the 2019/2020 fall budget, and recommended it for approval. Associate Superintendent, Michael Kilcommons, reviewed the 2019-2020 operating budget with all the trustees, who were pleased to learn that CTR has nearly achieved a balanced budget with a deficit of only \$500,000, which is less than a half a percent of total revenues. CTR's budget was influenced by the provincial budget announcement. In it, the government maintained education funding, but redistributed it to accommodate enrolment growth across the province, which meant less funding per student overall. CTR had a very significant deficit to overcome, and the Board was pleased to hear that administration managed to bring the deficit down from almost \$2 million to only \$500,000. They were also pleased to hear, there were no staff reductions after the provincial budget was released and CTR even chose to add several positions at the schools. Administration was able to come close to a balanced budget by reducing spending at Central Office, ensuring budget expenditure lines have no cushion built into them, and making small reductions to school's site based budgets in areas other than staffing. The Board congratulated Mr. Kilcommons, Mr. Bagozzi, and Mrs. Nickel on their work and voted unanimously to approve the budget.

The Board also indicated support for administration's plan to gather a focus group of principals to thoughtfully review the issues of school fees, with a mandate of ensuring the quality of the educational experience CTR offers is high, while the costs are low.

## Special Board Meeting Decision

The Board passed several motions at successive regular Board meetings over the past year that directed administration to continue working on the collaborative project with the Town of Okotoks to build a new facility for the Catholic Education Centre and St. Luke's Outreach Centre. In response to an unexpected deadline related to the project, the Board scheduled a special meeting to reaffirm their decision on the issue. The Board met on Monday, November 11<sup>th</sup> and, after evaluating CTR's overall financial position, passed the following motion: "that the Board of Trustees of Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate School Division formally commit to the collaborative building project with the Town of Okotoks with a budget not to exceed \$6 million". This project will eliminate approximately \$300,000 in annual lease expenses that will be directed to the schools. It will also create one of the few purpose-built Outreach schools in the province. The Board was pleased to see that the project enabled CTR to improve our financial position in terms of operating costs, while also meeting the needs of our students who have experienced great success in our unconventional outreach school setting.

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## Superintendents' Reports

**Associate Superintendent Michael Kilcommons** reflected on the fact that CTR did not get an announcement for a new school in Okotoks. He expressed disappointment, as the new facility would allow CTR to move all École Good Shepherd students, so the existing École Good Shepherd facility can be both downsized and modernized.

**Associate Superintendent Mariette Moss**, praised Shari Gustafson, Lindsay Fagan, and Cindy Nickerson, for their work in producing a new Grateful Advocates of Catholic Education (GrACE) video that highlights the value of Catholic education in CTR. The video is part of a provincial effort in support of GrACE. Please take a few minutes to view the video [here](#).

Faith Days plans are moving along nicely, and include guest speakers David Wells and Sarah Hunt. Both are world-renowned inspirational speakers.

On April 4, 2020, Christ The Redeemer Catholic Schools and Foothills School Division will again co-host a Young Authors' Conference at Holy Trinity Academy. This opportunity to showcase our students' writing talent has been very successful for years, and promotes the love of writing for all of our students.

**Associate Superintendent Vincent Behm**, shared plans regarding staff recruiting. Once again, Mr. Behm invited any staff considering retirement, resignation, or a leave to consider informing human resources sooner, rather than later. Staff members are only obligated to give notice at the end of May, but it is prudent for us to remind them that giving CTR advance notice both allows us more flexibility to fill vacancies and honours their colleagues by giving them a chance to contend for positions early. Mr. Behm also mentioned that the Human Resources Department continues to advertise and promote the extended support that we receive through Homewood Health, including free information and direction regarding retirement, financial planning, nutrition, and health.

Mr. Behm also expressed his thanks for a very successful Educational Assistants Focus Group that met recently. A lot of support and information is available to these valuable members of the CTR Catholic family. The vast majority have permanent positions, and they provide much needed support in the dimensions of academic, social, emotional, and physical care.

**Dr. Scott Morrison, Chief Superintendent**, also addressed CTR's response to the fall budget announcement. He said that it was challenging for CTR, but we planned well and weathered that storm. Dr. Morrison stated that in March 2020 the government will be using a new funding model when presenting the budget. Dr. Morrison shared a host of considerations regarding the next cycle of budget planning.

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## Board Approves Annual Education Plan

Superintendent, Dr. Scott Morrison, presented the [2018-2019 Annual Education Results Report and 2019-2022 Three Year Education Plan](#).

The Board learned that CTR Catholic outperformed the provincial average on 15 of the 16 measures of accountability. CTR Catholic earned the very highest rating possible, "very high", on 12 of the 16 measures, and the second highest rating, "high", on the remaining four measures. CTR Catholic earned its highest ratings in the past five years in the following areas: Program of Studies, Education Quality, Drop-Out Rate, Work Preparation, Citizenship, Parental Involvement, and School Improvement.

CTR Catholic is particularly proud that 95% of our stakeholders are satisfied with the quality of education, 95% feel the schools are safe and caring, and 92% feel our schools are staying the same or improving.

The satisfaction of students, parents, and staff as measured by annual faith surveys remains strong, with all results above 90%.

Trustees receive monthly updates on the Annual Education Plan and expressed strong support, approving the plan unanimously.

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## Alberta Education Choice in Education Survey

Alberta Education has sent out a survey regarding Choice in Education, to be completed by anyone in the province who wants to register an opinion. Prior to the meeting, most trustees took the opportunity to review the survey, and some sent in individual responses. At the meeting, the Board completed the survey during a working session. The Board submission supported choice in education, while affirming that the constitutional rights of Catholic schools should give Catholic education precedence over other educational choices. All Alberta citizens are encouraged to complete the provincial survey. Vijay Domingo, Trustee from Canmore, stated that the government supports choice in education, and our stakeholders can support our own cause by participating in the survey. The survey can be located here: <https://www.alberta.ca/choice-in-education-engagement.aspx>. The survey closes on December 6, 2019.

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## Ward Committee Reports

The communities of Strathmore and Canmore hosted Ward meetings since the last Board meeting. The minutes with more detail are attached to the Board Meeting agenda on our website. The meeting summary follows.

### Strathmore Ward:

This Ward includes Sacred Heart Academy and Holy Cross Collegiate.

**Faith:** The schools were appreciative of their priest's efforts to recognize Catholic Education Sunday.

**Learning:** The Committee recognizes the Faith Learning as excellent in schools, and the Ward reports from the principals speak to the depth and breadth of Sacred Heart Academy and Holy Cross Academy's faith focus.

**Safe and Caring:** There is a strong focus on *#Relationships in a Digital Age* at both Sacred Heart Academy and Holy Cross Academy. Sacred Heart Academy staff will be hosting Cheryl Kuemper to do a CLC on the subject and both schools hosted a speaker related to the topic.

**Stewardship:** Kindergarten enrollment is healthy. Strathmore has done an amazing job with maintaining enrollment, despite facilities that are a lot older than our public school counterparts.

### Canmore Ward:

This Ward includes Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy.

**Faith:** There are 30 students enrolled

in the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Communion. The group was so large it had to be split, and two teachers are leading.

**Learning:** Parents and students are very satisfied with advanced learning opportunities, particularly in areas such as science and robotics.

**Safe and Caring:** Implementation of the *#Relationships in a Digital Age* lesson sets is underway. The new user technology agreement has received strong support.

**Stewardship:** The School Council always finances the new year with funds raised the previous year, which is an effective and unique best practice. This year's budget is an amazing \$47,000.

## Board Standing Committees

**Grateful Advocates of Catholic Education (GrACE) CTR Committee:** Foothills Trustee Andrea Keenan reported on the GrACE CTR initiatives. The group recently presented to the Catholic Women's League (CWL) in Brooks, who donated \$100 to support presentations and workshops. The High River CWL has confirmed January 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m., and expect as many as 100 attendees. John de Jong, Trustee from Brooks, approached the Knights of Columbus in Brooks to offer yet another presentation. The group also presented an update last month at CTR's Council of Councils meeting.

**Faith Committee:** Foothills Trustee Andrea Keenan reminded the Board of the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Bishop's dinner on May 8, 2020. She was pleased to report on many activities in our schools, parishes, and communities. They include Adoration, Parish Priests being welcomed into our schools regularly, and a wildly successful Catholic Education Sunday in early November that saw great attendance and support for our mission. She was excited about work being done to present a new three year faith plan in the near future, and was happy to share that our schools have many Advent activities planned. For example, CTR's staff regularly volunteer at Feed the Hungry and the Mustard Seed.

**Audit Committee:** As reported earlier, Trustee Mark Chung from Drumheller presented on the Auditor's Report and indicated the Committee recommended Board approval. The Board passed it unanimously.

## Board Makes Transportation Offer

Christ the Redeemer (CTR) Catholic Schools is running its own buses in Oyen. Prior to this year, CTR's students were transported on Prairie Rose School Divisions' (PRSD) buses. The cost of running the CTR bus system in Oyen is significant, but it represents CTR Catholic's commitment to providing high quality Catholic education to that community. The board agreed to make a second offer to PRSD to resume shared transportation in 2020/2021. If accepted, PRSD will receive the basic busing grant from Alberta Education, a supplemental grant for transporting students from another school system from Alberta Education, and an additional \$50,000 from CTR Catholic. Board members unanimously endorsed making this offer, knowing that financial times are challenging and may get even more challenging in the future.

## Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA)

Brooks' Trustee, John de Jong, reported that the ACSTA Fall General meeting was highlighted by both business and faith. One highlight from the two days was consultant Bob Murray advising school boards to be proactive with government. Mr. Murray advised that when meeting, have a plan and present solutions. He advised that 'butting heads' with the government would not likely achieve positive results. Mr. de Jong was also pleased to report that the ACSTA approved a plan to support a provincial position for a Catholic Curriculum leader. Already strongly endorsed by the Council of Catholic Superintendents, the successful candidate will facilitate the development of curriculum resources for all religious studies courses.

## Vision of the Board

The truth of Christ and knowledge of God's creation will be experienced by and manifest in the students, staff, parents, and supporters of our Catholic School Community.



**Christ**   
**The Redeemer**  
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Joanne Van Donzel, Trustee for Town of High River and Area

## Trustees' Corner by Joanne Van Donzel

### Being Thankful

When the opportunity for Catholic education arose we could not have expected it to be as successful as it has become. Christ The Redeemer Catholic School Division supports more than 540 teachers and 300 support staff, in 7 communities across the province from Canmore to Oyen, serving about 10,000 students. Successes need to be celebrated. Since the High River Catholic schools were established in 1995, the community is celebrating 25 years of Catholic education with a Gala event on February 29, 2020. These results have not been achieved without a struggle. Whenever a community has expressed the desire to join Christ The Redeemer Catholic School Division the Board has asked the Holy Spirit to be inspired in its decisions, to be courageous and wise.

The Board always gives thanks for all the things that befall our division, in particular programming concerning the spiritual development of our students, through permeation of faith in all areas of school life. We have high hopes that the

spiritual support our students receive will help to address the mental health concerns, which have become more and more prominent in society and our schools. We are certainly aware of the depth and the breadth of the challenges that our teenagers and staff are facing. Therefore, we are thankful for mental health promotion programs and opportunities for our youth to be empowered and be involved as leaders, in Me to We, We Speak Up, and the Headstrong Summit.

The awareness programs, which point to mental health phenomena have been well promoted and I am very grateful to say that the programs and attitudes towards wellness are currently evolving and being implemented in the division.

I am thankful that the program #Relationships in a Digital Age is providing parents ways to focus on time spent in relationships, as quoted from the latest edi-

tion of its newsletter. Which states:

*"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. Ecclesiastes 3:1."*

Further quoting:

*"Time. It is something that we have, but often we want more. We make time for things that are important to us like family, friends, prayer, exercise, work, relaxing, sleep, hobbies, and the list goes on! Screen time can impact the amount of time spent on what we value. Where is our time spent? Can we find a better use for our time? How do we model this for children, teens, and young adults who are learning how to budget their time?"*

CTR Catholic is providing our students and parents with the tools that help to improve their wellbeing, through well researched information and programming for which I am truly grateful.

As such our Board attempts to contribute to the betterment of the world.

Remember that Trustee biographies are available on CTR's website at: <http://www.redeemer.ab.ca/Trustees.php>.

Thankful

## Next Board Meeting Date

The next Board meeting will take place on **Saturday, January 25, 2020**, at Sacred Heart Academy, 709A—2 Street, Strathmore, AB.

**For any information on items in this publication, please contact Michael Kilcommons, Associate Superintendent, at [mkilcommons@redeemer.ab.ca](mailto:mkilcommons@redeemer.ab.ca) or at 403-938-2659.**