

# Checkmark

A report on the work of The Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division Vol. 13, No. 2



**Saskatchewan Rivers  
Public School Division**

*Excellence for Every Learner*

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## Message from the Board Chair

Several years ago, when plans were in place to celebrate PACI's centennial by way of a major school reunion, a number of former students wrote notes on the reunion website stating that their high school years were "the best years of their lives". Without commenting on the merits of that statement, one generally views a student's high school years as a somewhat carefree time, with the opportunity to socialize with friends, participate in school activities, and devote the required time to study and succeed in order to graduate. This is the norm for many students, but, unfortunately, not for all of them.

For a number of students, there are sometimes challenges and obstacles that make graduation a difficult goal to achieve. This issue of Checkmark highlights the efforts that some of this year's graduates have put forth in order to successfully complete their grade 12 education. I invite you to read the biographies of the featured students and I know you will be inspired by the stories they have to tell.

There are a variety of factors that exist in some students' lives that present challenges to their achieving academic success. Some students have to overcome a learning disability, some have to cope with less than ideal situations in their home life; others lack a supportive family environment, while some may be faced with language issues and others may face economic challenges as they attempt to complete their studies. The fact that they have faced a variety of challenges and have managed to succeed in reaching their goal is a testament to their dedication and resiliency.

The trustees of the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Board have dedicated many resources to assist students in achieving their academic and vocational goals. Our caring staff members provide the many supports required by our diverse student population to ensure they receive the best education possible.

I know I speak on behalf of my fellow trustees when I say how proud we are that our students are completing their secondary education in our Saskatchewan Rivers Public High Schools. We congratulate them on their success. It is our sincere wish that their educational experiences will allow them to enjoy a bright future and, hopefully, get to enjoy "the best years of their lives" as they go forward.



*Sincerely,  
Barry Hollick  
Board Chair*

## Board of Education

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## At Carlton “You Matter”

The most important part of Reeda Mae’s story is that despite every obstacle and challenge, she rose above everything with an inspiring calm and determination. When I first met Reeda in 2008, she was new to Canada. Her culture is Karen (pronounced Ker-in) and you may remember documentaries and news stories about her people when they were being persecuted in Burma. The specifics of what happened to Reeda and her family is her story to tell, but generally, the Burmese army had a mandate to ‘rid’ the country of ethnic minorities, especially the Karen. Students who are old enough to remember have told me stories of having to flee from their peaceful thatch-roof huts in the mountains when word spread that the army was coming. Often villages were burned and many didn’t survive. Those who fled faced days of unimaginable stress, walking through jungle, hoping not to be found by the army or step on a landmine. People were often walking with elderly or small children and many families were split up. The walk would have taken countless days until they reached Thailand and crossed the border to live in refugee camps.

Before coming to Canada, Reeda spent most of her life in a refugee camp from about 1998 to 2008. It wasn’t easy, but she and her Karen classmates also speak of incredible beauty - memories of swimming, climbing trees and eating numerous varieties of bananas, mangos and papayas. Of course, the Thai army and government did not recognize them

as citizens and while the children played, the parents worried about being harassed by the Thai guards, what they would eat and what their futures would bring.

When an opportunity arose to come to Canada, Reeda’s family took it. For her family and many others it meant leaving behind their home and loved ones, particularly elderly grandparents, but, of course, parents often make difficult decisions so their children will have a better future. I always marvel at how there is an assumption that coming to Canada after being in a refugee camp means the end of worries, a new beginning and an easier life. It’s true; it is a new beginning and in some ways life is easier, but the difficulties and often the disappointment and stress that follows those difficulties should not be underestimated. Imagine having such optimism, such images of a new country, only to land here and realize how hard every day life can be - to miss your home and feel dependent and lonely. To not speak the language means not

having access; to small things such as asking for assistance in a grocery store or larger things like succeeding in school, getting a job or explaining what is wrong to a doctor. You feel isolated because not only do you not know people, you don’t know the customs or social rules and you don’t have the words to make those first steps. You come from somewhere warm and suddenly have to deal with harsh winters when you have never seen snow. You don’t know the food or how to cook it properly. Your family has to pay back the flights from Thailand to the government of Canada, but finding work; especially well-paying work, is beyond challenging. You have to learn to drive and somehow get a car, when you have never lived in a place with cars or seen traffic lights.

Despite it all, and there are far more challenges than I can write about for this brief story, Reeda stayed positive. She remained grateful, put her head down and did what she had to do to support her family and build a future for herself. She came to school every day and studied English until she became fluent over time. She and other Karen people built a community of support and worked hard to make lives for themselves in a new country. Gradually, I watched Reeda grow from a nervous girl who spoke little English, to a confident, independent teenager who became a leader amongst other students who had stories like her own. Other students look

up to her and respect her for what she has accomplished. I sometimes wonder how I would have coped in her situation; whether I would be resilient and strong or become depressed, frustrated and give up. The hard work that goes into everything she has accomplished is more than most of us can imagine.

In the last year, she married and became pregnant with her first child while still in high school. For some, this would be a reason to quit. Reeda had some difficult days feeling emotionally and physically exhausted, but she did not quit. There were some who thought her new role as mother did not require a high school diploma, but she knew that she wanted options and was not ready to give up the path she had started on. She managed her time, figured it out and, as she always has, remained determined.

On June 25 Reeda Mae, the young girl who came here from a Thai refugee camp with a million odds stacked against her, will walk up on the stage and receive her high school diploma. It is incredible to imagine how far she’s come from where she started. In the audience will be her family, friends, husband and her beautiful baby boy, Scott. I hope the thunderous applause rings in her ears as she walks on the stage and fills her heart so that she feels every struggle, every minute of hard work was worth it. I hope it encourages her to keep moving forward and defying whatever odds try to stand in her way.



## PACI Graduates Bring Their Motto to Life “By Striving We Succeed”

Jocelyne Junker will be graduating on June 25, 2014 from Prince Albert Collegiate Institute, a feat that a few short years ago may have seemed impossible. In her early years in high school, Jocelyne had extremely poor attendance, attending less than 50% of her classes. The reason for her poor attendance was anxiety: “Throughout high school, I’ve really had a lot of problems with anxiety which triggered feelings that made me feel out of place. And even near graduation, I’ve never really got over those feelings. But the

staff and a lot of the students have been so accommodating and warm that I definitely think I would have dropped out at any other high school.” Jocelyne attributes the major success of her high school career as finding something that she is passionate about. “I’ve always liked art and enjoyed drawing, but it wasn’t until this school, or really even this year per se, until I realized I could pursue it as anything more than a hobby.” Jocelyne found a place to feel comfortable and to flourish in what she was interested in, due in part to being provided with a personal

art studio. Jocelyne states, “It’s a building and environment full of supportive teachers that push you to grow and better yourself as a student and a person.” Jocelyne has been accepted and plans to attend Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver, British Columbia.





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## PACI Graduates Bring Their Motto to Life “By Striving We Succeed”



Alex Henry will be graduating from Prince Albert Collegiate Institute on June 25, 2014. Alex is the epitome of hard work and determination. She set and achieved lofty goals throughout her high school career, from making the senior basketball team, to

helping a fellow classmate achieve a 5K run, to maintaining a 95% average in her grade 12 year. Alex never settled for “good enough.” Because of the high standards she had set for herself, she would find herself doing and redoing assignments after long hours of school, work, and driving back and forth to her family’s home 30 minutes outside of the city. Alex says she was able to be successful because her teachers have become her friends, and as her friends, they would “sit with me to help, talk

me through meltdowns, push me when I no longer wanted to keep trying, and encouraged me when I was moving in the right direction.” She has been awarded for her persistence and resilience with a \$9,000 scholarship. Alex plans to one day own a business which offers products and services for health and wellness that will enhance people’s lives: “I want to create a place that people from all across the country will add to their list of places to visit.”

## Wesmor Grads are Dressed for Success!



Graduation is a huge milestone for young people. It marks the end of one phase of their life and the beginning of another. Because of this, graduation is a huge celebration for the school, the students, and the families. This is no different at Wesmor Public High School. Staff and students work together to make an event that is memorable for all. The

ceremony and grand march are held at the EA Rawlinson Centre and a luncheon for all the graduates and their guests is provided by the Wesmor Public High School staff.

In the planning for this event, the graduating students choose their theme and song and then the organizing and decorating is taken over by the school staff. The school staff see this as their

gift to the graduates and is their way of showing each graduating student how special they truly are.

held each spring to showcase some of these beautiful dresses. Wow- way to go Wesmor!

To assist graduates’ with the financial barrier of acquiring graduation outfits it is done with class at Wesmor! Each year Wesmor runs a Grad Dress Program, headed by educational associate Kathy Nagy. Gently used grad dresses are donated to the Program by people in the community and by local businesses. As well, P.A. Quick Clean donates the dry cleaning for all these dresses. Even shoes and accessories have been donated to compliment the dress. This gives grads the opportunity to purchase a fabulous dress for a minimal fee which in turn helps to make grad a special occasion for all, no matter what their financial situation. A spectacular fashion show, hosted by Trevor Gowan of Power 99 FM, is





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# LONG SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS & RETIREES

*SRPSD Board of Education recognizes the staff that help make Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division a place of excellence and are proud of their dedication to student achievement. Our staff work collaboratively to face the shared learning challenges encountered by students and families within our community on their to graduation!*

*The following employees were honoured at the annual Recognition Event on June 9, 2014.*

## 10 YEARS

Patricia Anderson	Holly Brotzel	Lorie Fiddler	Angela Nordstrom	
Priscilla Balicki	Kim Cowan	Pamela Fraser	Nicole Philp	
Laren Ball	Amanda Cyr	Karisa Klaassen	Shelley Reid	Cheryl Turner
Tracey Beaven	Colette Daelick	Lianne Lafond	Sharon Schuetz	Dani Van Steelandt
Diane Benson	Karen Dahl	Terry Lawreniuk	Joan Sommerfeld	Liane Whiting
Lois Borrowman	Sylvia Delisle	Douglas MacKenzie	Brandi Sparboe	
Nadine Bouchard	Colette Durette	Nathan Noble	Adam Svenkeson	

## 15 YEARS

Trent Armitage	Celine Freed	Monica Jones	Tammy Morin	Troy Semenchuk
Lana Bannerman	Tracy Gaudet	Sharon Kaponyas	Barry Nelson	Leigh-Ann Subchyshyn
Rhonda Berezowski	Michelle Grimard	Eleanor Kaufhold	Kathy Noble	Robert Tomy
Claudia Boehm	Avis Halcro	Cheryl Ledding	Bonnie Novotny	Shelley Toporowski
Colleen Boyer	Patricia Hazzard	Debbie Lorenzen	Roy Richard	Barry Torborg
Serena Collins	Kathleen Herzog	Angela Lysitiz	Emelia Schiller	Joanne Tournier
April Crain	Lori Hrynkiw	Pattie Lysyk	Debbie Schreiner	

## 20 YEARS

Cheryl Arcand	Kelly Corrigan	Rosalind Johnson	Ken Morrison	Tracy Rouault
Josie Baribeau	Lorraine Crawford	Rachelle Kraus	Suzanne Quiring	Darlene Schultz
Lori Belyea	Gail Delooze	Kevin LaVallee	Wade Reddekopp	Debbie Unger
Warren Bergstrom	Florence Hannah	Kevin Lundgren	Debra Reynaud	Denise Wilkinson
Brenda Bernath	Patty Herriot	Terry MacLeod	Andy Rouault	Judith Yohnke

## 25 YEARS

Brenda Andrews	Cecile Elliott	Dawn Kilmer	Julie Price	
Gladys Angelski	Mark Hastings	Tammie Leonard	Tanis Quaale	Shelley Storey-Humble
Sharon Bird	Ina Holmen	Karen Lyster	John Schultz	Sonya Wiberg
Maureen Currie	Tammie Horan	Margaret Marsollier	Janet Slater	
Dhipak Dookhun	Karen Jasieniuk	Sharon Paul	Susan Stobbs	

## 30 YEARS

Simon Brown	Dale Meyers
Joanne Eikland	Fay Morar-Kaufenberg
Brenda Evans	Alan Nunn
Sandra Fauchoux	Jane Parrott
Bev Hoda	Pat Rowland
Val Jessop	

## 35 YEARS

Brenda Heise	Joyce Ward
Darryl Koivisto	Carol Yeo
Cheryl Pillar	

## 40 YEARS

Barry Zelenski

## 45 YEARS

Albert Paradis

## RETIREES

Debbie Ashby	Carol Blair	Brenda Heise	Dawna Larson	Pat Rowland
Jim Banman	Laura Brillinger	Holly Hobbs	Bonnie Lucas	Linda Soles
Dorothy Barton	Brenda Cromartie	Bev Hoda	Jane Parrott	Laurie Ann Sutherland
Mike Basaraba	Brenda Evans	Linda Hodgins	Julie Price	Debbie Unger
Elaine Beres	Eddie Glendinning	Val Jessop	Tanis Quaale	Bill Yeaman
Warren Bergstrom	Judy Hadland	Terry Jones	Suzanne Quiring	Carol Yeo
David Bissky	MaryAnn Hammond	Brenda Kernaleguen	Richard Ronning	Judy Yohnke
				Penny Zelensky