

December 8, 2023

For Immediate Release: SD27 Superintendent Retiring

At the November 28 in-camera meeting of the Board, Superintendent, Chris van der Mark informed the Board of Education of his intent to retire at the end of the current school year. Mr. van der Mark joined SD27 in April 2019 following significant difficulties that resulted in a Special Advisor and the need for comprehensive changes across the school district.

Through careful recruitment of top senior leaders, the development of leadership capacity across administration, and enhanced relationships through collaboration and partnership with local indigenous communities, the IUOE and CCTA, SD27 has made massive strides. While we continue to see improved outcomes for students, especially Indigenous students, we have also made remarkable, transformative changes to technological delivery and through the finance department. The District faces none of the financial uncertainty or pressures of 5 years ago, while finding ways to spend money in efforts to better support students. Though happy with the progress under Mr. van der Mark's leadership, we know we still have much to do as we continue to focus on key strategic areas such as Indigenous language and culture, instructional capacity, inclusive learning communities and leadership capacity, among others.

SD 27 has placed a priority on recruiting exceptional senior leaders and has developed very clear succession planning through this deliberate strategy, including the arrival of Assistant Superintendent, Cheryl Lenardon in 2020. Ms. Lenardon, now Deputy Superintendent, has played a key role in district transformation, especially with regards to Indigenous Education, Outdoor Learning, Healthy Schools, Mental Health initiatives and the comprehensive restructuring of the strategic plan to help facilitate transformation, while also creating processes through policy and AP development. Ms. Lenardon has already begun to take on components of the Superintendent duties as part of Mr. van der Mark's role this year has included work with the Ministry of Education and Child Care. Ms. Lenardon will formally assume the full role of Superintendent of Schools, on August 1, 2024.

Said Chair Patenaude, "We congratulate Mr. van der Mark on his upcoming retirement. I'm not sure if Chris, or any of us, knew what we were embarking on 5 years ago. Some of the change has been profound, none more so than the renewed focus on teaching and learning, which we frequently hear about from staff through their engagement and its impact on their practice. We wish him the very best in his future endeavors! We also feel very fortunate to have assembled senior leadership that includes Deputy Lenardon who has been integral in the work that has transpired, and who will continue to lead us into the future."

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