

# GPACA AGM 2021 Director's Report

**Directors (March 2020-March 2021):** Dee Conrad (Co-Chair), Peter Garcin (Co-Chair), Paul Aucoin (Treasurer), Stacey Godsoe (Secretary), Thomas Sullivan, Tara Jaskowiak, Ebony Newell, Kristy Boutilier, Sadie Watson

## Year in Review

2020 was an extraordinary, challenging year for everyone across the world. We are privileged and fortunate to live here in Nova Scotia, and especially the South Shore where we have weathered the pandemic better than most. We're all thankful to see the way the Atlantic provinces handled the challenges, putting us in the position to have a more "normal" existence in comparison to many across the world. For GPACA, it was a very quiet year, where normal in-person meetings, events and other initiatives weren't possible. However, we were able to continue our regular meetings online--meeting 6 times in 2020. Despite the lower case numbers here in Nova Scotia, the disruption to daily life created many challenges for many within the province. Still, there are some bright spots to highlight from the past year.

## Support for PRES

We also have to be incredibly thankful to the outstanding effort and dedication by the staff at PRES to deliver the most normal programming possible for all the students this year. Their adaptability and dedication has been inspiring.

In our continuing advocacy for PRES, we did submit a joint letter of support with the PRES SAC to then-Education Minister Zach Churchill for an Addition & Alteration (A&A) to the school to ensure its long term sustainability.

We can confirm that the Regional Center did submit a request to the government for an A&A, but as of the release of the Capital Plan this past February PRES was not on that plan. That does not mean that it isn't possible, or that it has been denied, GPACA will continue to advocate for the long term sustainability of the school!

## Support for After-School Program

In 2020, one of the major initiatives advocated for by GPACA members Tara Jaskowiak, Sadie Watson and Kristy Boutilier was the implementation of an after-school care program. This program has been incredibly valuable to families within the Greater Petite Area and GPACA is committed to the sustainability of this program. Affordable, safe childcare is an essential service for working families in our community and an asset to retain and attract more people to the area.

As part of a show of support for the after school care staff at PRES, GPACA made a donation to the after-school program staff members in recognition of their hardwork and dedication.

## Internet Access

With the advent of remote learning last year, the question of Internet access became a much more pressing issue, as much of rural Nova Scotia does not have adequate broadband access to be able to participate in remote learning, creating an equity issue. The Crown Corporation, Develop NS and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg are working to address this inequality, and have a goal to have 99% coverage by 2023. We had some discussions with the municipality, and are happy to see that nearly every area within our region is flagged to be upgraded. We will continue to check in on progress.

## Membership Fees

In 2020, we waived membership fees given the pandemic and the inability to meet in person. Despite the improving conditions, we will also waive membership fees again in 2021 and will continue to meet virtually for the foreseeable future until it has been deemed safe by public health.

## Looking Ahead

As we start to see the vaccine rollout, we are all starting to hope for a light at the end of the tunnel in 2021. It has been a challenging year for all, but we have seen our communities pull together once again to support each other in these difficult times and as we anticipate the potential end of the pandemic, perhaps we can emerge with a renewed appreciation for neighbours and community. GPACA will continue to advocate for PRES and surrounding communities to the extent that we can during these times. Hopefully, we will see a return to some level of normalcy before we have to meet again in 2022 when we may be able to meet in person.