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From the President

Dear Members,

As we prepare for the arrival of spring, the Seven Oaks Teachers' Association turns its attention to the upcoming SOTA Executive elections in May. Why should you consider becoming involved in union work? What are the roles and responsibilities of a SOTA Executive member? Involvement goes beyond the traditional view of bargaining and grievances. A union works to create appropriate working conditions while raising the profile of the profession, supporting public education, and puts student learning at the forefront. A teachers' union addresses challenges public education faces and how it impacts the work teachers do with students everyday. Union work is an opportunity for teachers to advocate for change in the field of public education, in areas that directly and indirectly impact their work in the classroom.



Members of the SOTA Executive bring a wide knowledge base and vast experiences to meetings, providing all participants opportunities to broaden their professional network and collaborate with other educators. This leads to building a better understanding of our profession. SOTA Executive members can develop leadership skills and knowledge that can be applied to daily work in a classroom or for future career aspirations. So, if you are interested in expanding your teacher skill set, advocating for public education and teacher's rights, then consider joining the 2026-2027 SOTA Executive. For further information, see page 4 of this edition of The Acorn.

In Solidarity,

Jeff Cieszecki

Educational Leave

Educational leave enables individual teachers and or teams of teachers to link their practice to research and research to practice. It is important for teachers to engage in professional dialogue and to reflect upon their assumptions, ideas, beliefs and values about teaching and learning.

The Educational Leave Fund supports individual teachers and teams of teachers by providing funds for release time to study, discuss, research, observe and/or investigate educational topics. Activities leading to professional growth can include:

1. action research
2. book studies
3. post-graduate study through a post-secondary institution (to a maximum of 40 days per certificate/degree), course work and practicums are not covered
4. classroom/site visits
5. a combination of the above.

Ed Leave Proposals must be submitted electronically to a maximum of three pages. Guideline for application process are on the SOTA website:

<http://www.sotamb.org/sotaboard-pd-fund.html>

Applicants will be invited to present (20 minutes) a summary of their proposal with the Joint SOTA/Board Committee.

Deadline for applications for leaves to be used September - January 31 of the next school year is **April 1st, 2026**.



Applications for In Province, including tuition, must be submitted a minimum of 10 days prior to the activity.

SOTA/Board PD Fund Q&A

What should I include in the rationale?

The PD application must have a rationale that includes:

- i) How does attending this PD inform your practice?
- ii) How does attending this PD impact your work in Seven Oaks?

How do I apply for a PD activity?

All applications must be submitted online through the Employee Connect online management system except for MIP Grant and Ed Leave applications.

Can I still apply for PD funding this school year?

Yes! You may be approved for funding for up to TWO activities per year. There are ample funds available to support autonomous teacher professional development.

When do I need to apply to the fund?

The application deadline for In-Province requests is 10 calendar days prior to the start of the activity (including Tuition). For Out of Province requests, the application deadline for all conferences and workshops occurring in a given month, must be submitted by the first school day of the month prior.

Questions about PD? Call your SOTA VP, Karen Vaarmeyer, at 204-985-6120.

**SPOT the
ERROR!**

**If you spot
an error in
the ACON,
email the
SOTA office.
You could
win a gift
card and
your very
own,
Oakley, the
SOTA phone
holder!**



SOTA
Seven Oaks Teachers' Association

Internationally Educated Teacher Workshop

Join SOTA, MTS, and EFM for a workshop for information about of the role of the Manitoba Teachers' Society and Seven Oaks Teachers' Association.

Date: February 12, 2026

Time: 4:00 pm

Location: Garden City Collegiate Library

Email office@sota.mbteach.org to register



Manitoba Teacher Registry and Teacher Competencies

Join SOTA and MTS for information regarding these competency standards and how they affect teachers.

Date: February 25, 2026

Time: 4:30 pm

Location: Service & Learning Centre (1985 Grassmere Rd)

Email office@sota.mbteach.org to register

SOTA Nominations

Who can be on SOTA Executive?

Any interested SOTA Member can put their name forward for any position on SOTA Executive.

How much time is required?

Executive meets the first Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm. SOTA Council meets the third Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm.

Why might executive be right for me?

Have you ever...

Felt like you want to know more about being a member in SOTA?

Felt like your voice needs to be heard?

Felt like giving back to your colleagues from the past, present and future?

Wanted to make a difference in working lives of SOTA members...

SOTA Executive may be right for You!

First Slate:

- Deadline: 4 pm March 10th, 2026. Candidates will send a biography and may send an election statement
- 1st slate of candidates will be announced 4 pm, March 17th, 2026

Final Slate:

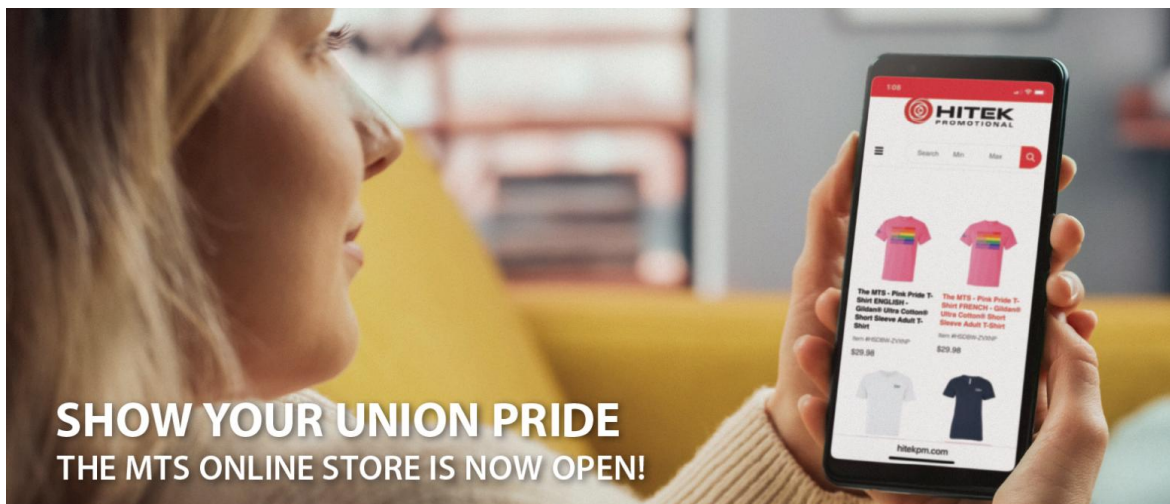
- Deadline: 4 pm April 14th, 2026. Candidates will send a biography and may send an election statement (neither to exceed 250 words), and nomination form that includes a nominator and 10 signatures from SOTA members
- Final Slate of candidates will be announced 4 pm, April 28th, 2026
- **If election is needed, it must be completed by May 10**



Nominations or questions can be sent to Kristen Koshelanyk, Nominations Chair at: kristen.koshelanyk@7oaks.org

Executive positions include:
Treasurer
Secretary
President
Vice President
9 Members-at-Large

MTS Updates



SHOW YOUR UNION PRIDE
THE MTS ONLINE STORE IS NOW OPEN!

Show your Union Pride and stand together in MTS branded apparel.

The MTS Store is open now through February 28, 2026.

Order your MTS merchandise at <https://www.hitekpm.com/sr/4373555>



**MB TEACHER
MAGAZINE**

[The Long Path to
Certification](#)

Porfira Pedrina has never been one to walk away from a challenge and her journey into Manitoba's education system is a powerful reminder of what persistence, advocacy, and a deep belief in equity can accomplish

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP Symposium | 2026

**Bodies, Boundaries, and Brilliance:
Leading Through Every Stage**

Bodies, Boundaries, and Brilliance: Leading Through Every Stage celebrates the resilience, wisdom, and power that women bring to leadership at every stage of their lives. Each stage brings a season of profound change, marked by both challenges and opportunities, and offers a unique vantage point for redefining what leadership can look like.

Friday, March 6, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 7, 2026 – 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Fee:

\$40.00 Members | \$20 Student Members | \$50.00 Non-Members

[Register for the Women and Leadership Symposium 2026](#)

Remember. Celebrate. Uplift.

**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**

**Remember.
Celebrate. Uplift.**

A curated collection of books and multimedia resources celebrating Black history, culture, and voices to foster meaningful learning all year long.

<https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/index.php/black-history-month-resources-2026/>

EXPLORE THE WINTER OUTDOORS!



**SKATE! HIKE! SKI!
EXPLORE!**

★ ★ **SOTA** ★ ★

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY BINGO CHALLENGE

February / March

<p>Go Skating</p>	<p>Go for a neighborhood walk</p>	<p>Watch a sunrise / sunset</p>	<p>Take a wildlife photo</p>
<p>Go on the Forks River Trail</p>	<p>Attend Festival du Voyageur</p>	<p>Outdoor lunchtime walk with a colleague</p>	<p>Hike a trail</p>
<p>Build a snow sculpture</p>	<p>Visit a new park</p>	<p>Your choice</p>	<p>Walk a new trail</p>
<p>Enjoy a campfire</p>	<p>Take a road trip to a nearby town</p>	<p>Take a picture of snowflake</p>	<p>Have not drink outside</p>
<p>Identify 3 trees</p>	<p>Have a winter picnic</p>	<p>Go skiing</p>	<p>Visit Oak Hammock Marsh or Fort Whyte</p>

How to play: Complete any 4 activities and take pictures of yourself doing each activity from February 10 – March 22. You will then be entered to win a draw for a prize. Receive a BONUS entry for any activity that you complete with a SOTA colleague(s). Send your photos to: sotateacherwellness@gmail.com with the subject line: Explore the Outdoors Winner will be announced on SOTA's Instagram Story on March 25th, 2026!

SOTA

Seven Oaks Teachers' Association



EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS MEETING

Information on the
transition of SOTA Health
Benefits to MPSE/Blue
Cross Plan

Presented by:
Dan Turner, MTS staff

April 6, 2026
SOPAC Theatre
711 Jefferson Ave
4:30 pm

Live stream available at:
<https://vimeo.com/event/5694184/4aOfbOaO59>



Contest Corner: I love to Read Month

Send your name and the correct book titles by 4:00 pm on **February 23rd, 2026**, to vicepresident@sota.mbteach.org to enter to win one of five SOTA prize bundles!



Can you guess the book titles by emoji?

How well do you speak 🗨️ emoji? Since the first 🗨️ emojis appeared in the 90's, they have developed into a language 🗨️ all their own. Test your skill 🗨️ and see if you can ace 100 our quiz ? of 20 popular YA reads 📖 from your ORLA libraries 🏠!

1. 🧙 + 🧙
2. 🍔 🍕 🍗 🎲 🎮
3. 🧛 🍷 🍏
4. 🪓
5. ⭐ 👧
6. 1 3 📼 ?
7. 📄 🏙️ 🍷
8. 👧 📖 🖋️
9. 🗺️ 🚶 🌪️
10. 👠 🤖 🍷
11. 🟠 👑 👧
12. 👦 ⚡ 🕶️ + 🧙 💎
13. 🏔️ 🧊 ❄️
14. 💎 🥚 🐉 👦
15. 🏙️ 🦷 🦷
16. 📺 🍷 😍 👧
17. 5 🌊 👽 🍷
18. 👦 ⚡ 🍴 🏛️
19. 👗 VS 👗 👑
20. 🍳 🍳 🛖

2025-2026 SOTA Dates



February 2026

3rd - SOTA Executive

17th - SOTA Council Meeting- Virtual

March 2026

3rd - SOTA Executive

24th - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City
Collegiate Library

April 2026

7th - SOTA Executive

21st - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City
Collegiate Library

May 2026

5th - SOTA Executive

12th - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City
Collegiate Library

June 2026

2nd - SOTA Executive

16th - SOTA Council Meeting- Collège Garden City
Collegiate Library

SOTA Council

Each school or workplace is allowed one councillor for each ten members and at least one alternate for every two councillors. One councillor shall be designated the Head Councillor.

Join us at Council, typically the third Tuesday of each month.

**Get involved
with SOTA
Council!**

Contact Us

SOTA office
204-985-6120

President
Jeff Cieszecki
president@sota.
mbteach.org

Vice President
Karen Vaarmeyer
vicepresident@sota.
mbteach.org

All matters will be dealt
with in confidence.

Manitoba Teachers'
Society general
switchboard:
204-888-7961

MONTHLY MEETING

Be Connected. Be Heard. Be Informed.