

## Chinook's Edge honours Ray Hoppins and Kirk Wassmer with Roy E. Cope Award

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Chinook's Edge School Board is happy to announce it has selected two individuals to receive the Roy E. Cope Award for 2024. Ray Hoppins, Associate Superintendent, and Kirk Wassmer, band teacher at Didsbury High School are being honoured for their significant contributions to student success. Both educators are retiring in June 2024.

### *Ray Hoppins known for treating everyone the way he would want a family member to be treated*

Hoppins has been a teacher and educator for 32 years, including 2 years of teaching in Vegreville and 30 years of service in Chinook's Edge, as teacher, vice principal, and division principal and, since 2011, as an Associate Superintendent.

"It was an emotional moment for me when I found out about this recognition," said Hoppins. "It's a pretty special thing. Thinking about my time in Chinook's Edge prompted so many flashbacks of fond memories and positive experiences here. Chinook's Edge has been and is my home."

Superintendent Kurt Sacher said, "Ray's work has been felt throughout the division. Ray created efficient processes for new hires and transferring staff that take care of our people. He developed Aspiring Leaders and Developing Leaders, which has strengthened our up-and-coming and new leaders. Ray is highly respected throughout the province for the way he approaches People Services work."

"Ray's system-wide impact is deeply respected within the division, as well, because of the way he works with individual staff members. Ray treats everyone the way he would want a family member to be treated. He helps our people get to healthy places so that they can be their best when working with students," said Sacher.

Hoppins said, "Thank you to the division's staff - my colleagues. I'm very grateful. There are so many individuals I've been fortunate enough to connect with; it would be impossible to name them all. Support staff, teachers, leaders and bus drivers - you all have made my career here fulfilling and enjoyable. Thank you."

Hoppins said he decided to be a teacher after a summer job during his university years, where he helped to run 4-H camps for youth. "I knew then, that if there could be a career interacting with youth it would bring me joy and meaning. So, that's where it started," said Hoppins.

Hoppins said his favorite part of his career has been watching students grow, change and succeed. "It brings me great pride to see children grow and live happy lives. I love bumping into former students. I see them regularly, and when we talk, it's great to know they are paying it forward. It's incredibly rewarding."

### *'Hard to quantify' Kirk Wassmer's special impact on students at Didsbury High School*

Wassmer has been a teacher for 35 years, starting his career in Revelstoke and on Vancouver Island. Wassmer has spent the last 23 years teaching band at Didsbury High School (DHS).

When he found out he would be receiving the Roy E. Cope Award, Wassmer said, "I was stunned. When I looked up previous recipients of the award, and considered the impact of these individuals, I was even more stunned. I am humbled to be considered to be in the same league. I've always felt I was just doing what a music teacher should be doing."

Wassmer said his journey to become a band teacher was influenced by other music teachers and teacher mentors. "I had some pretty amazing band teachers when I was a kid, and throughout university. I've had many role models and appreciated qualities in them that I've tried to carry into my own teaching."

About half of the DHS student population is enrolled in band. DHS Principal Scott MacDonald believes the high proportion is due to Wassmer's approach. "His love of music and the way he relates to students is remarkable, and that impacts our whole school. The way Kirk encourages and believes in students elevates their relationships with other students and with staff. Kirk's presence makes our school a better place to be. It is hard to quantify something that special."

MacDonald said every year a handful of graduating students go on to pursue a career in music, some of which have returned to the division as music teachers.

Superintendent Kurt Sacher said, "Kirk's impact throughout the division, collaborating with and supporting other music teachers has been widely felt and appreciated." Also, Sacher said, "Kirk understands the development of youth and genuinely cares for them. He is a humble person and an exceptional teacher."

Sacher said he enjoys being at DHS first thing in the morning. "The jazz band plays then and that's a great way for everyone to start the day."

Highlights for Wassmer, over his career, include trips with the students and the commissioning of new pieces of music for the DHS band to play, but working with the students tops the list. "Relationships are all that matters. I firmly believe in that." Wassmer plans to continue to play music when he retires, and explore opportunities for guest conducting and adjudicating.

### ***Congratulations from the Board***

"Ray and Kirk are both exceptional educators and individuals," said Holly Bilton, Chinook's Edge Board Chair. "We are grateful for the incredible work they've done and the difference they've made in Chinook's Edge for students and staff. Ray's legacy is one of ensuring our people are well cared for. Kirk's legacy includes a passion for music shared with his students and a feeling of inclusion and belonging for each one at school. Thank you Kirk and thank you Ray for all you've done."

Roy E. Cope was the Superintendent of Schools for the County of Red Deer prior to the creation of Chinook's Edge School Division in 1995. The award, named after Cope, is given to any person who, in the opinion of the Board, has made a significant contribution to the educational welfare of students.