THIRD SCHOOLS

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 1

DECEMBER 2025

FROM ME TO YOU

A SEASON OF HOPE, FREEDOM, AND CONNECTION

Dear Third Schools Families:

The poet Walt Whitman—after traveling through our country—once observed that Canadians are "quite as American as the best of us." He saw 'America' not merely as a political border, but as a shared spirit of energy and promise across the Hemisphere. Indeed, we like to think Whitman recognized that our distinct Canadian society—where diversity is respected rather than denigrated—represents the noblest aspirations of the New World. It is in this spirit that I have chosen 'America' as our annual theme for the Third Schools system**.**

The first few months of the 2025-2026 School Year have seen many new beginnings. It seems like only a short time ago that I was addressing a rejuvenated Third Academy, LYNX, and **ursa** staff at our August start up activities. Since then, the students, parents, and staff have worked hard. There have been some unexpected twists caused by the public school teacher strike but we mostly remember the sweetness of our well-earned successes. The weeks have been fast paced, we have overcome many trials, and together we can now look forward to celebrating the Holiday Season with family and friends.

Our children are engaged and learning. Across our school system, they are finding their own daily success. Third Schools was designed to meet the diversity of the families that we serve. Fundamentally, we are providing hope, freedom, and connection to ensure that our children thrive. We are humbled to fulfill this noble cause.

While our programming was not interrupted by the recent public school teacher strike, we recognize the existential threat. We are concerned by the recent misguided campaign arguing that independent schools should not receive provincial funding. The fact is that independent schools save the taxpayers of Alberta hundreds of millions of dollars each year. This defund independent schools campaign presents as a threat to parental choice and, most importantly, student success.

We are an independent community of teachers and learners. We believe in the power of education and fully support teachers, students, and their families. Our position is clear: we support students, parents, and teachers in advocating for a fully accessible publicly funded world class, affordable, and safe provincial education system. This includes all the education choices—public, Catholic, francophone, charter, independent, heritage language, ECS, and home school—currently available to all Alberta taxpayer families.

A Corner on Gottingen Street, Halifax (2025)

Board of Directors

David Beresford, Chair

Zeljko Puric, Secretary/Treasurer

Manu Chugh, Director

Keith Mhlanga, Director

Tim Lloyd, Director

Peter Snow, Director

Yash Mattu, Director

Adam Preece, Director

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Glenn Olson

Omkar Nath Channon

Ashid Bahl

Dr. Billy Gilliland

Ambassador at Large

Dr. S. Lal Mattu

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FROM ME TO YOU

A SEASON OF HOPE, FREEDOM, AND CONNECTION (CONTINUED)

That means recognizing the prior right of parents to choose the best education for their child based on their specific educational needs and family values. That means respecting the diversity of Alberta families, where 'one size does not fit all'. That means accepting that public schools are generally failing in serving students with special education needs. There needs to be an equitable education funding structure in Alberta that serves every family and student.

Our advocacy is driven by a belief in a better future, a sentiment that aligns perfectly with the spirit of the days ahead. As we approach the holiday season, we can look forward to spending time with family and friends. The very essence of this season is 'hope'. The darkest days will shortly begin to be brighter and longer. It is a time to celebrate joy, reflect on deeper meanings, and strengthen bonds. I am proud to say that, as Canadians, we distinguish ourselves by carrying with us the very essence of this season on the global stage.

A special celebratory note:

- We installed our new Board of Directors on November 27th. Chair remains David Beresford. Secretary/ Treasurer remains Zeljko Puric. Directors: Manu Chugh, Tim Lloyd, Keith Mhlanga, Peter Snow, Yash Mattu, and Adam Preece. Thank you to our Board for delivering good strategic governance.
- Run Santa Run! 2025 was such a success! You'll see images later in this FMTY. This was a community event—Third Academy, LYNX, **ursa,** Prince of Peace, Shepherd's Care Seniors Centre—held on December 3rd. We had fun, built connections, raised Third Schools' profile, and raised $7,685 for our bursary programs.
- Our Winter Concert 2025 was rescheduled to early January due to a winter storm. There will be art, music, and as always a little drama. I am excited for our children. See you there!

Thank you all. Merry Christmas. Happy Hanukah. Many blessings be upon you, your families, and your friends. May peace be upon all of us.

Sunil Mattu
Head of Schools

"As we approach the holiday season, we can look forward to spending time with family and friends. The very essence of this season is 'hope'."

FROM ME TO YOU

OUR PEARL ANNIVERSARY: 30 YEARS OF HOPE!

It is fitting that as we celebrate our students' successes, we also celebrate the success of Third Schools. Our 30th Anniversary—our 'Pearl Anniversary'—is a significant achievement and we intend to celebrate in style!

- *The Spring Tribute:* Our first celebratory event will be held on Saturday May 23rd 2026. We return to Gasoline Alley at Heritage Park for a formal Gala. This event will primarily honor the dignitaries and long-standing supporters, including our student champions, who have helped build this legacy over the years.
- *The Alumni Celebration:* Plans are in the making for an Alumni event in the fall of 2026. Special guests will, of course, be our students and our parents. This will be a true community party!

They say a pearl is unique among gems because it is created over time by a living creature. Third Schools is no different. We have been built, layer by layer, by the students, families, and educators who have believed in our *raison d'etre* for thirty years. This celebration is not just about looking back; it is about looking forward. I invite you to lend your hand, your voice, and your spirit as we plan this milestone. Together, let's ensure the next chapter of our story is even brighter than the last.

Third Academy: 30 Years of Hope

This school year marks a monumental milestone: our 30th year of service providing hope to families and opportunities to students.

Third Schools was built on a foundation of hope. In 1997, our founder, Dr. S. Lal Mattu, had a dream. Recognizing that conventional systems were often structurally unable to meet the complex needs of every child, Dr. Mattu set out to better serve families with Students with Additional Needs (SWANS) by founding Third Academy.

From those humble beginnings, tens of thousands of students have passed through our corridors. Over the last three decades, we have evolved from a single focus on special education into a comprehensive independent school system: Third Schools. Today, we offer diverse programming choices—including parent-directed home education, shared responsibility, online learning, hybrid instruction, ECS programming, and nature-inspired education—through our three schools: Third Academy, LYNX and **ursa**.

We have grown into a community of 101 professionals serving over one thousand students across Alberta and beyond. And we continue to look forward.

FROM ME TO YOU

OUR PEARL ANNIVERSARY! (CONTINUED)

Expanding Our Horizons

I am incredibly excited about our future initiatives. There is so much happening across our school system.

Parents of Students with Additional Needs (SWANS) find themselves, at times, in a place of hopelessness. They are often desperately looking to find a school that will help their children. We know that this community is underserved. With the addition of modular classrooms at our East Campus, Third Academy will create 40 more seats for September 2026, followed by another 40 seats by September 2027.

We believe that every child on this planet deserves access to an affordable, world-class, and safe education. We know that education 'lifts a person from a cycle of poverty'. An Alberta High School Diploma is highly valued and opens doors to top universities and colleges worldwide. **ursa** Global online—our global brand—delivers hybrid programming 'anywhere, anytime'.

We are also in the conceptualization stage of the LYNX Priddis World School. We have identified a pristine country property near Priddis, southwest of Calgary. This would be a dream site for a university preparatory, 'nature inspired', world school serving local LYNX day students and Alberta/Canada/Worldwide LYNX boarding students. We are currently seeking a champion, an international partner, and a developer to meet our planned occupancy for January 2028.

Please reach into your network of community partners and contact me at smatu@thirdschools.ca to make this dream come true. That is how big ideas like LYNX Priddis World School become reality.

"We believe that every child on this planet deserves access to an affordable, world-class, and safe education. We know that education 'lifts a person from a cycle of poverty'."

The Hector, landed in 1773 at Pictou, Nova Scotia with the first Highlanders

Mi'kmaq greeted the Highlanders and ensured that they survived the first winters by sharing with them how to live on the land

FROM ME TO YOU

SCHOOL UPDATES: A SNAPSHOT OF SUCCESS!

While the most vital communication always takes place directly between parents and their specific school, I want to share a high-level highlight of the incredible momentum we are seeing across our system in 2025-2026.

Third Academy: Giving Hope

Third Academy is operating at full capacity this year with a few seats available at the high school level.

To meet the needs of our students, Rehana Mattu, Principal, has onboarded additional staff who are proving a strong complement to our returning team. Demand for our programming remains exceptionally high—we already have a significant number of prospective families on our waiting list for the 2026-2027 school year!

We are also continuously improving our support services:

Psychology Department

Counselling Therapy continues to be delivered as part of student programming. We have also made changes to support faster turnaround times for psych-ed assessments.

SLP/OT Services

We have restructured our Speech & Language Pathology (SLP) and Occupational Therapy (OT) services to ensure we are meeting the specific needs of our SWANS (Students with Additional Needs). The new teams are delivering services from ECS to Grade 9.

InBus Transportation System

Our student bussing ridership is at an all-time high with over 150 daily riders! Our students are lucky to have their dedicated and caring professional drivers bringing them to school daily. Investment in new buses has also made the ride a little more comfortable.

SCHOOL UPDATES: A SNAPSHOT OF SUCCESS! (CONTINUED)

LYNX: We are Connected

Joe Smith, Principal LYNX, is overseeing tremendous growth over the past year as more families embrace our unique programming approach.

Expansion

We opened our exciting, hybrid nature-inspired program to enthusiastic families with LYNX Edmonton in September 2026.

Enrollment

Student numbers in both our LYNX Calgary and LYNX Okotoks programs have doubled since last year.

Instructional Teams

We have recruited new teaching staff for LYNX Calgary, LYNX Cochrane, and LYNX Edmonton adding strength to our instructional teams.

Kindergarten

We have room to grow in our LYNX ECS program in Calgary. Spread the word and give a Kindergarten kid the best start to their schooling life ever!

SCHOOL UPDATES: A SNAPSHOT OF SUCCESS! (CONTINUED)

ursa: The Freedom to Learn

ursa continues to be a first choice for home based hybrid education in Alberta because it is defined by one word: freedom.

Tracy Gilluley, Principal **ursa**, knows that our homeschooling families have chosen **ursa** because of this freedom. This is the same with our online and onsite families who are looking for programing flexibility. It is the freedom for families to design an education that fits their lives, rather than fitting their lives around a system. Whether through flexible scheduling, global travel, or pursuing passion projects, we provide the platform for your child to learn without limits.

We are also expanding the freedom to learn for our families by expanding:

New Course Offerings

We are adding new optional asynchronous courses, providing more interest led learning pathways for our students, and opening programming choice to non-primary students.

ursa Summer School

For the first time, **ursa** will offer a range of summer school courses in July 2026. This will enable students to 'accelerate' and/or 'upgrade' their learning over the summer.

ursa Summer Study Camps

We are thrilled to announce the launch of our Summer Study Camps in July 2026. Open to international and local students for 2 or 4-week stays, these unique camps blend adventure, culture, and language into an unforgettable experience.

Right across **ursa**, we have reached our enrollment targets with only a few seats available in the online classrooms. Given demand, we will create more junior high classroom capacity for September 2026 .

SCHOOL UPDATES: A SNAPSHOT OF SUCCESS! (CONTINUED)

Our Collective Success

Across our entire system, students are engaged and learning. Whether through the intensive programming and specialized supports at Third Academy, the nature-inspired approach at LYNX, or the freedom found at **ursa,** we are providing families with high quality programming tailored to their needs. Our schools are truly Independent, Inspiring, and Inclusive—and the result is that our children are succeeding.

FROM ME TO YOU

RUN SANTA RUN! 2025: A TRIUMPH OF OUR NORTHERN SPIRIT!

If Walt Whitman was right that 'America' is defined by a spirit of energy and promise, then there is no better example of that spirit than what we witnessed on December 3rd.

With fresh snow, frosty trees, and the sun peeking through the clouds, the setting could not have been better as we embraced our distinct place in this hemisphere with true Northern grit! Run Santa Run! 2025 was a tremendous success and the perfect way to get into the Christmas spirit.

Over 200 participants—a vibrant mix of students, parents, staff, and community members from Third Academy, LYNX, and **ursa** — bundled up at our East Campus. Together, we walked, ran, and skipped to achieve something remarkable. I am overjoyed to share that we received almost $8,000 in donations for Third Schools Bursary Programs.

But the day wasn't just about numbers; it was about connection. Many staff and residents at the Prince of Peace Community were out to cheer us on. We were especially honored to be joined by a special guest, Gayle from Prince of Peace Manor.

RUN SANTA RUN! 2025 (CONTINUED)

Gayle celebrated alongside us and even marked a personal milestone of her own: she took her very first school bus ride ever! Her spirit of adventure was a highlight of the event and a beautiful reminder that our community mosaic spans all generations.

A massive thank you goes out to our sponsors, volunteers, participants, and especially our Third Academy PACs for making this day possible. A special thank you to Nova Slauenwhite, Samantha Kirby, Megan Kemp, Jessica Jordan, Rachelle Klone, and Karen Routledge, as well as our many volunteers on the day of the event.

It's Not Too Late to Give!

While Santa may have left our East Campus, we are accepting donations online until December 31, 2025. Donors will immediately receive a receipt for income tax purposes via CanadaHelps.

Go Here to Donate:
www.runsantarun.ca

View the Memories: Check out the photo gallery from this year's event on our website.

We can't wait to see you back for Run Santa Run! 2026. Until then, thank you for showing that the warmth of this community is strong enough to melt even the coldest winter morning.

RUN SANTA RUN! 2025 (CONTINUED)

FROM ME TO YOU

OUR CORE VALUES: CANADA 'EH!

At Third Schools, we see our values not just as a foundation, but as a reflection of the best parts of the Canadian character. We have built our house strong. Our door is open. We share this land in peace and friendship with our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit neighbours. Ours is a future of endless possibilities.

INDEPENDENT: Serving the Public Good

In a democratic society, power is in the hands of the people. Thirty years ago, our Founders, Dr. S. Lal Mattu and Deep Mattu, freely chose to 'put children first' in establishing Third Academy.

Today, as an Alberta Education accredited independent school system, we take pride in serving the public good through Third Academy, **ursa**, and LYNX — including our support for over 700 home schooling students. To us, this means exercising our ability to support parental choice in innovative ways. We deliver real value to our families, who are all taxpayers in Alberta. We embrace the responsibility that comes with this freedom, knowing we are held accountable not only by Alberta Education but directly to the families we serve.

INSPIRING: Engaged, Ethical, Entrepreneurial

Canada has a long history of punching above its weight on the global stage, and we aim to raise the next generation of leaders to do the same.

We are purposefully designed to enable our students to grow into 21st Century Learners: Engaged Thinkers, Ethical Citizens, and individuals with an Entrepreneurial Spirit. We believe that an inspired education is one that looks to the future. We are preparing our students not just to succeed in the workforce, but to lead Canada with integrity, creativity, and the resilience to adapt to a changing world.

INCLUSIVE: Respecting All

If there is one principle that defines the Canadian identity, it is respecting all. We practice a way of thinking, feeling, and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance of, and belonging for, all children, students, and families. Every student at Third Schools has access to meaningful, relevant learning experiences with

"Canada has a long history of punching above its weight on the global stage, and we aim to raise the next generation of leaders to do the same."

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OUR CORE VALUES: CANADA 'EH! (CONTINUED)

appropriate supports. By offering tailor-made programming choices for all learners, we respect and reflect the true diversity of families in Alberta and around the world.

Sharing Alberta with the World

These values—Independence, Inspiration, and Inclusion—are hallmarks of the best of the Alberta Advantage in education. We believe they are worth sharing.

Through **ursa** Global online, we are offering an affordable, world class, and safe education. By breaking down geographical barriers, we are proud to export the freedom of learning to students across the globe.

Similarly, our vision for the LYNX Priddis World School is to invite the world to our 'neck of the woods.' This means our local LYNX students rubbing shoulders with fellow Albertans, Canadians, and the Nations of the World. By taking Third Schools to the global stage, we are doing our part to make this world a better place for everyone.

The First Face, Ivory, 6,000 BCE

FROM ME TO YOU
SUNIL MATTU'S NEWSLETTER

Need More Information?
Contact Sunil Mattu, Head of Schools
smattu@thirdschools.ca
Phone: 403-690-1408

"Third Schools gives hope… hope for kids, families, and our collective futures."

Dr. S. Lal. Mattu
Founder & Ambassador-at-Large

We believe that how a person thinks, affects how they feel, and hence how they act.

FROM ME TO YOU

- Fully accredited by Alberta Education
- Third Academy: Serving special needs ECS children and students in Grades 1-12
- LYNX 'Nature-inspired' programming for ECS children and students in grades 1-9
- Parent directed home education through **ursa** Parent Directed Grades 1 -12 plus Little Bears Kindergarten
- Shared responsibility home education with onsite and online options through **ursa** Shared Grades 1-12
- Fully teacher directed distance online and onsite education through **ursa** Distance Grades 1-12
- **ursa** Global online for International students Grades 9-12
- **ursa** Summer Study Camps for international and Canadian high school students
- InBus, our own independent school bus transportation system
- Doing whatever it takes to help your student succeed

THIRD SCHOOLS

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Bragg Creek T0L 0K0
Phone 403-288-5335

FOLLOW US ON THE WEB!

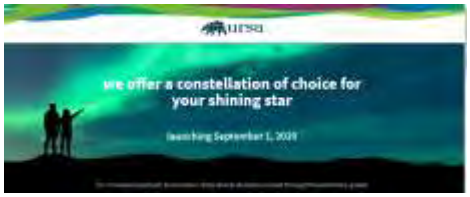
Be sure to visit our websites.

https://thirdacademy.ca

https://lynx.education

https://goursa.education

https://thirdschools.ca

https://inbus.ca

We encourage you to "spread the word" about how we are helping students succeed by posting links to our websites on your social media channels.