

Kojima moves to job in Burnaby

By **Wanda McConnell**
Herald Editor

Henry Kojima has left the building.

Kojima, who was superintendent of the River East School Division for the last two years and nine months, has moved to the West Coast to head up the Burnaby School District. He announced his intentions in May and took vacation time to leave River East before his official last day, which is Nov. 16.

The decision to leave wasn't an easy one, he said in an interview before his Oct. 1 departure. However the lure of a new life in Vancouver and the challenge of overseeing a school system double the size of River East was too great to pass up, said Kojima.

He's also going back to his roots. Kojima was born in Burnaby 56 years ago. During the Second World War his family was among the thousands of Japanese moved to internment camps. They ended up in Moose Jaw and after the war, then came to Winnipeg. Kojima graduated from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate.

A career in education was not his first choice. He earned a law degree but never practised law and he tried courses in chartered accounting before realizing his real interest was in working with children.

"Kids are neat," he says, adding it's their sometimes brutal honesty that he likes.

"I tried education and I



Photo by Wanda McConnell

River East School Division superintendent Henry Kojima has moved on to become superintendent of the Burnaby School District.

loved it. I've had no regrets," says Kojima, who began teaching in 1971 in Flin Flon and came to River East a year later. He taught at John Henderson Junior High and Princess Margaret Elementary, and was principal at McLeod and John Pritchard schools before joining the superintendent's department 10 years ago.

While he doesn't regret his career choice, there were things that were frustrating about his years at the helm of Manitoba's second largest school division.

"I think the hardest thing was not being able to provide all of the supports for people in the trenches," he says.

Teachers are being bombarded with curriculum

changes that Kojima sees as necessary. "But you've got to be supportive of people to make those changes successfully."

The government isn't always putting its money where it's mouth is and consequently teachers are being stretched to the limit.

As well, he says, it's frustrating to face a public that expects far more than a

school system is designed to deliver. "Parents are saying this is our job, that's our job. Well, education begins in the home," he says, adding that parents and schools must work together to raise and nurture stable, responsible children.

Kojima, who strived during his tenure to keep the lines of communication open between his department, school staff and parents, says the best thing about his job was the people.

"I've really grown to appreciate the quality of our people. That's the strength of our division. They're what makes the difference," he says. He stresses he can't take credit for the quality staff or open communication. "That's part of our history as a division."

Until Kojima's replacement is found, former River East superintendent George Wall is filling the vacancy.

Meanwhile, a farewell reception has been planned for Kojima on Oct. 21 from 4 to 7 p.m. at Holy Eucharist Parish Centre, 460 Munroe Ave. Tickets are available by calling Lynne Ingaldson at 667-7130 or Vicki Lazaruk at 668-2864 or 925-7999.



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