

THE MANITOBA

Teacher

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013 VOLUME 91 NUMBER 4 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

SIERRA
NOBLE:
TORMENT
TO TRIUMPH

DANGERS IN
TWITTERTOWN

READING,
RIGHTS &
RELIGION

TEACHERS'
SURVEY SAYS...

Hold the door open for the person behind you.
Think of something kind to say.
Bring extra lunch to share.
Stand up for someone who is having a hard time.
Smile at someone who looks sad or grumpy.

Remember that making someone feel good, feels awesome.

When someone drops something, pick it up for them.

Compliment the people who impress you.

Remind your friends what you like about them.

Spend time with people who are good to you.

Know that you are never alone.

Read to someone who can't.

If you see someone upset, ask them what's wrong.

Go out of your way to let people know when they make you happy.

Saying the right thing can make someone's day.

If you can help, go for it.

When you see someone sitting alone, ask if you can join.

Think of five things that make you amazing.

Give away clothes you don't wear.

Tell stories with happy endings.

Take time to find the good in someone and then tell them they're great.

Big problems often have simple solutions - ask lots of questions.

Give more hugs.

Offer your time.

Statistics show that everyone has ridiculous ideas.

Statistics show that most brilliant ideas started off as ridiculous.

Feed someone hungry.

Look for new ways to help.

Offer your talents.

Think of five amazing things you can do.

Pick one and make it happen.

Be nice.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society's Young Humanitarian Awards is looking for public school students who exhibit compassion, self-sacrifice and inspiration. Nomination forms and past winners can be found at mbteach.org/yha/yha.html. **Deadline for nominations is 4 pm, Friday, April 5, 2013.** Three individual students and one student group will be honoured at the awards ceremony on Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at the Fairmont Hotel.



Young Humanitarian Awards

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THE MANITOBA Teacher

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President's Column

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Facing the music

Some Manitoba educators have unwittingly stepped over the digital line.

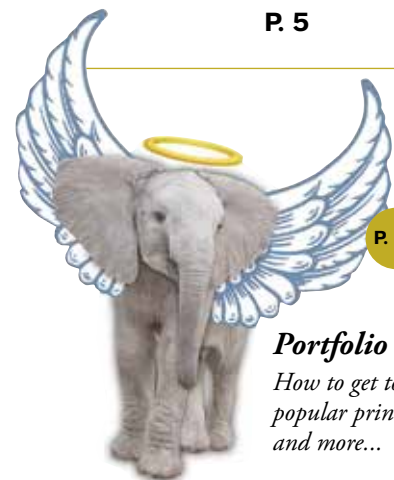
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Religion in the classroom





PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

PAUL OLSON

Out of the Mouths of Aides

The submission deadline for this issue of *The Manitoba Teacher* was December 14th. Typically one writes for when the piece will be read—not for when it's written. Seems reasonable.

Except, in the past 36 hours, Bill C-377 has passed in the House of Commons, Right to Work is being pushed in Ontario, and I've just twitched and sniffed my way through a letter of condolence to a community in Connecticut I'd never heard of before today. So honestly? I just can't quite work myself up to "Happy New Year" at the moment.

When the Manitoba Teachers' Federation was founded 93 years ago, teachers had no job security, little training, no collective agreements. We earned less than the janitor, female teachers couldn't even date, much less marry, and PD was whatever you could find and read.

Though we've greatly improved the lot of teachers and the quality of public education in this country, we are still surrounded by poverty, injustice, homo/transphobia, racism, and misogyny. Wage parity and good health benefits are the norm in teaching (because we PAY for the latter!)—but are actually in decline elsewhere. Kids are growing up in Manitoba who have never known what it is to live without a boil-water advisory, or with a well-equipped school.

I am totally in favour of our students raising funds to build schools and orphanages and wells in Africa. But I also—not instead, ALSO—want to work for a province and a country where we don't ignore serious issues right here at home. I strongly suspect that we don't do more of this local work because we fear catching hell from our own kids at the dinner table.

Former Prime Minister Paul Martin shared a story at the CTF AGM last summer. He was in Africa many years ago to meet with the president of a very poor country, and Martin inquired about the abject poverty he had seen in a village on the way to the meeting.

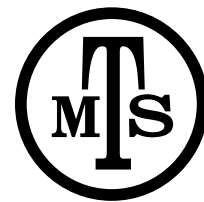
A young aide apparently leaned in to the President and whispered something. The President looked up at Martin, and said, "Mr. Martin, my aide has just told me something, and I would like you to hear it from him as well, in his own words."

At this point, the aide sat up straight, looked Paul Martin in the eye, and said:

"Mr. Martin, I know and love Canada. I did my university degree in your country, and I have been fortunate enough to travel extensively in your country. And sir ... you have nothing to say to us about poverty."

Newtown was a horrible, sick tragedy. However, the story that did not make CNN that day? That globally, we kill a thousand times that number of people every day through hunger. Or that over half the regular users of Winnipeg Harvest are school-aged children.

Inside and outside of MTS, we each and all have much work to do. I think I can get myself to "HappiER New Year!" It's a Resolution, not a Wish.



The Manitoba Teachers' Society

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INSIDE MTS

KEN PEARCE, GENERAL SECRETARY

For the most part, the normal ebb and flow of work we do at MTS is about dealing with day-to-day and week-to-week issues. Our members and affiliated associations are often in need of our immediate attention and help. That is our primary focus on any given day.

At the same time, however, we do look beyond the horizon, anticipating arising issues and needs of our members. Indeed, writing about visions of the future seems appropriate given this new magazine-style format for *The Manitoba Teacher*, the first such change in more than 25 years.

Currently, a number of projects at MTS have begun that are taking us far into the future as well as connecting us with the distant past. In six years, the Society will be 100 years old. One initiative that we are undertaking is looking at the possibilities for celebrating the passage of those who worked on behalf of the Society to bring about changes for both our members and for the social conditions in which they work. For example, our own building(s) should reflect accomplish-

ments from the past and be a place where visitors can view a permanently exhibited panorama of milestones.

We are digitally archiving all our AGM documents and are putting online the book "Chalk Sweat and Cheers" which was written in 1969 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Society. This is one step we can take to enable all our members to read a reflection of our past. In addition, through the archiving process we are searching for items to create a visual history covering those milestones that began in 1919 and which continue to unfold as the Society strives to create effective strategies to meet the needs of members.

By better organizing our records and by completing gaps that exist in our physical documents and photographs, we will be able to make our ongoing record-keeping more effective and be able to use our past to help present discussions mould our future actions. Incidentally, if YOU have photographs from your involvement with the Society, please let me know at kpearce@mbteach.org. As well, we are looking for copies of the MTS policy handbook from 1969 to 1974.

Call for AGM Nominations

In accordance with Bylaw III, nominations are open for vice president and six positions for two-year terms on the Provincial Executive.

Deadline for nominations is March 18, 2013, at 4:00 p.m.

Nominations will be accepted from:

1. Teacher associations and remote local associations.
2. Individual members who have been refused nomination by an association, provided twenty (20) members have endorsed the individual's nomination.

Nomination forms have been sent to all Teacher Associations. When completing the forms, please note:

- you may nominate any number of members to serve on the Provincial Executive
- you may nominate members from any association in Manitoba and members

from any association may endorse an individual's nomination

- associations do not need to seek confirmation of acceptance by nominees (this will be handled through the Society's offices).

Nomination and election to the Provincial Executive will be administered under Bylaw and Policy requirements governing Society elections. Bylaw III C is found on page 14 of the 2012 Policy Handbook. Policy Governance I. 2 and 3 are found on page 119 of the 2012 Policy Handbook.

Nominations will also be accepted during the Annual General Meeting of Provincial Council up to 4:00 p.m. on the second day of the meeting from individual members, provided a nominee is endorsed by ten (10) registered representatives.

NEW FORMAT

Dear Members,

At the 2012 Annual General Meeting a resolution was passed to strike an Ad Hoc committee to do a comprehensive review of *The Manitoba Teacher*.

During our committee's work it was recommended that MTS change the format of the publication to a magazine-style.

The committee believes the result you now hold communicates our message more effectively, and will better serve the needs of our members.

There other advantages as well:

- A more visually appealing publication with a more effective display of content.
- Ease of readability both in print and in digital forms.
- Seamless transition to creating on-line versions with computers, tablets, smartphones, etc
- The ability to easily store and archive material.

The committee felt it paramount that our members be given an opportunity to preview and examine this new look. Therefore the next four editions of *The Manitoba Teacher* will be presented in this new format. Members are encouraged to give their feedback to newmbteacher@mbteach.org and/or do the survey at www.mbteach.org.

Finally, I would like to stress that this preview is a trial run. The Provincial Council at 2013 Annual General Meeting will make the final decision as to whether this will become a permanent fixture at The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Respectfully Yours,

Jason Oliver, *Provincial Executive of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, Chair of the Manitoba Teacher Review Ad Hoc Committee*

Reading on a tablet

To best read the new format *Teacher* on an iPad, go to www.mbteach.org and click on the .pdf of the new *Teacher*. When it's on your screen click on the 'open in iBooks' button. It will then be on your iBooks shelf.

On Android devices open using the PDF reader of your choice.

TAKING NOTE

Province announces anti-bullying action plan

The provincial government has announced an action plan aimed at protecting students from bullying in school, on the street and on the Internet.

“Our government is committed to supporting schools and communities in providing safe and caring learning environments for our students,” said Education Minister Nancy Allan. “We all share a responsibility to work together to provide safe schools where all students feel respected and can reach their full potential. Our anti-bullying plan will further protect students and provide a safe environment while fostering understanding and inclusion.”

The broad anti-bullying strategy includes:

- help for teachers including expanded training supports, workshops and other professional learning opportunities, and ongoing support for the Respect in School initiative;
- help for parents including new online information and resources online on how to recognize, deal with and report bullying; and
- help for students including strengthened anti-bullying legislation and the Tell Them From Me Survey to allow schools to hear directly from students about bullying.

The minister also said the province will move forward with strong legislation that would further support students, broaden reporting of bullying and respect diversity.

“New legislation will also address the role of social media in bullying and allow student-supported initiatives at schools aimed at promoting an inclusive environment such as clubs and activities that promote gender equity and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, anti-racism and respect for people who are disabled by barriers,” said Allan.

MTS Bonspiel Feb. 22–24

The 45th annual MTS Bonspiel will be held Feb. 22–24, sponsored by the Western Teachers’ Association.

Entry forms will be sent to schools and are also available, along with other information, on the MTS website at www.mbteach.org.

The event will be held at the Morden Curling Club. The entry deadline is Feb. 8.

For more information contact Dawn Rigaux, president of the Western Teachers’ Association, at westernpres@hotmail.com.

YHA winners honoured with human rights’ award

Two recipients of MTS Young Humanitarian Awards are now 2012 recipients of the Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award.

Ayla and Van Hamilton of Major Pratt School in Russell, Manitoba, may be two of the youngest ever to receive the Human Rights Youth Award, sponsored by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission, and named for long-time teacher and human rights activist Sybil Shack.

Ayla, in Grade 8, and Van, Grade 3, formed Kids Helping Kids, a project dedicated to raising funds for newcomer moms and dads who work in Russell and struggle financially to buy plane tickets to bring their children to Canada.

With the growing number of Filipino men and women in Russell who have left their children back in the Philippines, Ayla and Van felt there was a need to help them re-unite. With the support from their family, classmates and the Russell community, Ayla and Van raised over \$6,000. The money has been used to purchase airline tickets for travel and also to help with immigration costs.

They plan to reunite nine children with their parents this year, and raise enough funds to bring another nine next year.

Partnership on human rights starts national project

A partnership has been formed among the leaders of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF), the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

The group will create a national initiative called Canadian Defenders for Human Rights.

It is a curriculum tool designed to raise awareness of human rights issues with Canadian high school students. It is also a national mobilizing activity for students from coast to coast to coast, building solidarity, recognition and support for human rights globally and locally.

“This multi-year initiative aims to heighten awareness about human rights, develop students’ critical thinking skills and ignite social activism in support of human rights at the local, national and international levels,” said CTF President Paul Taillefer. “It aims to engage K–12 teachers and students in a collective reflection on cooperation, respect, inclusion, acceptance, respect for diversity, responsibility and equity.”

As the project develops, teachers will have access to:

- A rich selection of K–4, 5–8 and 9–12 lesson plans, links, and background information to teach human rights within a contemporary context;
- A Canadian adaptation of Speak Truth to Power, a highly acclaimed international resource developed by the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights;
- A variety of learning resources, tools and prescribed curriculum on Indigenous peoples to inform non-Indigenous students;
- A digital platform to celebrate student social action at the community level in the pursuit of human rights.

For more education news and features visit www.mbteach.org



BY JUDY OWEN

She’s opened for the likes of Paul McCartney and Bon Jovi and performed for the Queen, a self-assured young woman who lets her passion flow through her voice while skillfully playing the fiddle or guitar.

But singer-songwriter Sierra Noble didn’t always have that confidence.

There was a time when Noble was the target of bullying that made her dread attending high school.

PHOTO: Sierra Noble plays her Warrior’s Lament at a special commemorative ceremony April 9, 2010, at the National War Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Ottawa to honour the service and sacrifices of men and women during the First World War.

I just dreaded going to school every single day because I had no idea what I was going to be hit with any given day.

If not for a special teacher, she wouldn't have been able to overcome the torment.

"Grade 7 was the hardest year in school for me. I was bullied really, really terribly," recalls the 22-year-old, who was born in Ottawa and grew up in Winnipeg.

"It was before there was a lot of awareness about girl bullying and how horribly violent it can be. But it's not physical so it's not something that you see right away.

"It was also right at the beginning of cyber bullying. I was getting all of that. I was having such a hard time that my mom almost pulled me out of school and home schooled me.

"I just dreaded going to school every single day because I had no idea what I was going to be hit with any given day."

Those hits started with two girls, who, as often is the case, were able to draw others into the harassment.

It included spreading rumours, dumping food in her locker and other things done out of the public eye.

"It's a slow breaking-down process of one's spirit," Noble says. "It gets to a point where no matter how obvious things are or how obvious the lies are, the victim just ends up powerless.

"I lost my voice. I wasn't able to stand up for myself because every time I did, I was knocked back down."

She was also teased about playing the fiddle.

"But that was the least of it. That I could deal with because that's what I loved," she says. "But it still gets to you—feeling like you can't express who you are.

"And who I was was music, and being ashamed of that in what's supposed to be a safe community is hard. You just kind of start retreating and then everything gets harder. I had no confidence, I was scared all the time, I had no friends.

"You feel worthless and you feel powerless and you actually feel like nothing."

Telling her teachers didn't work.

"None of my teachers were seeing it," she says. "I would go to them and ask them to help, but they thought it was just light teasing, like mean looks. They had no idea what was really going on."



Finally, Gordon Bell High School Grade 7 homeroom and science teacher Risto Puusa did.

"Mr. Puusa was my best friend," Noble says. "He was there for me and eventually he saw what was going on. And as soon as he saw it, he did something and he stood up for me.

"I wouldn't have made it through another year. I wouldn't have been able to go back to school. It's hard to get people to realize that that's not an overreaction or an exaggeration. It really was that bad.

"At that point, it's always on your mind so there's no possible way to actually learn. It gets in the way of everything."

When asked what Puusa did, she only explains with a soft laugh that he talked to the girls "in his own way."

"It wasn't going to the principal, it wasn't bringing the parents in and talking," she says. "He made simple actions of being on my side and he stood up for me when I couldn't stand up for myself anymore.

"I never forget that, and I never will. And every time I see him, I thank him for what he did for me. He allowed me to be strong again because I had someone on my side when it felt like every single person in my school was up against me."

The bullying didn't completely stop, and in fact continued for years by the two girls, but she grew stronger and didn't let it overwhelm her.

"Eventually, I was able to stand up for myself," she says, adding she occasionally crosses paths with the girls.

"They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. It does eventually, but it scars you. Those scars hurt for a long time before they just become tough skin."

Noble's school years actually began on a positive note, and she fondly remembers teachers who helped her music career and humanitarian causes flourish.

It began with Laura Secord School teacher Shirley Pannell, whom she had for grades 1 to 3.

Calling Pannell a "magical teacher," Noble says she encouraged her students to express themselves through art.

But it was Pannell's personality and not just her curriculum that had a lasting impression.

"She really, really has so much compassion and really focuses on each child and what their passions are, even at that young age," she says.

"For a grade 1 through 3 child that's very young to remember, but she does make that kind of impact."

That compassion for others seemed to rub off on Noble.

In 2000, she and her mother, Sherry, were downtown when they spotted some Canadian Red Cross tents. Curious, they

He allowed me to be strong again because I had someone on my side when it felt like every single person in my school was up against me.

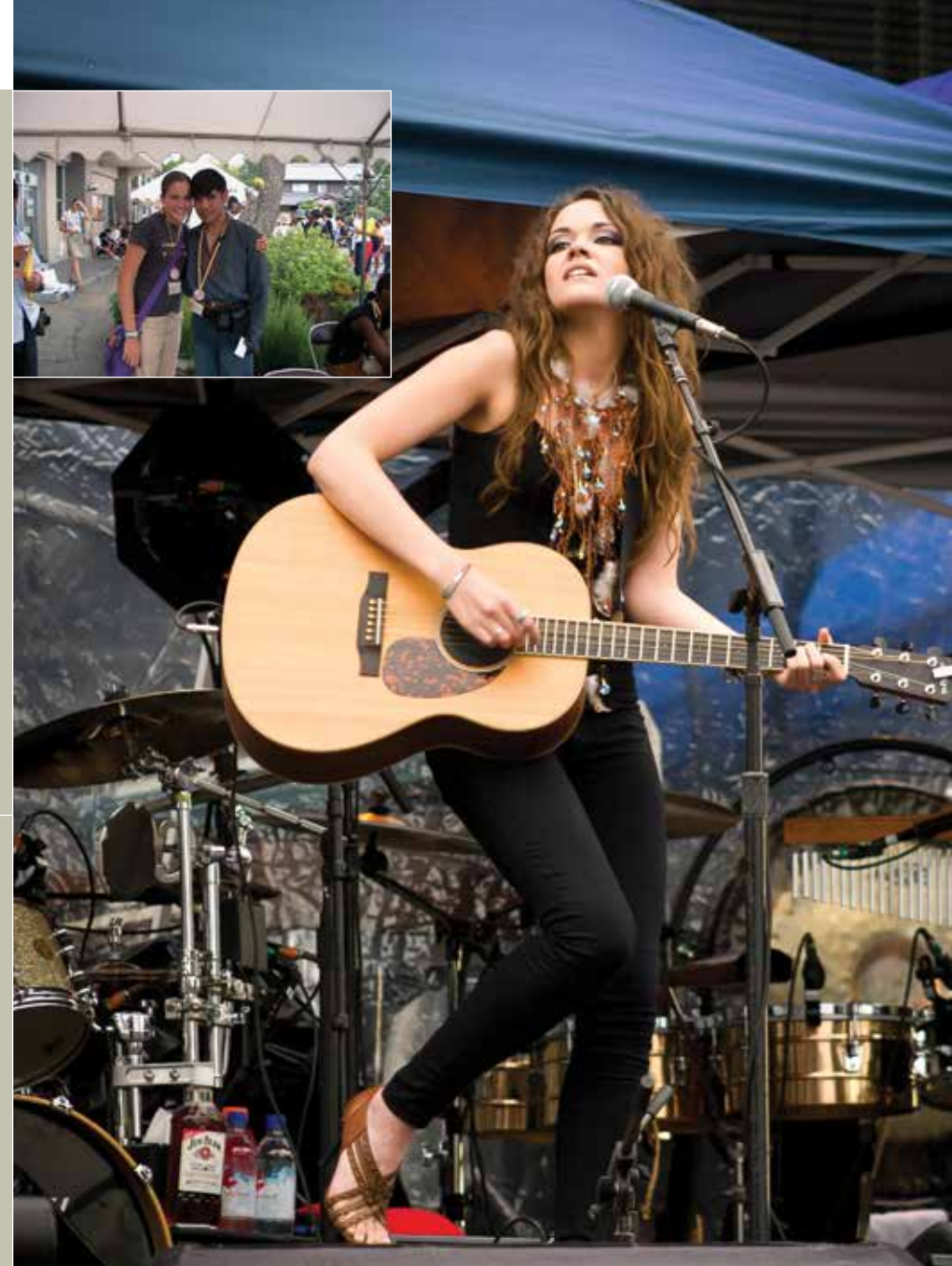
Since the age of 11, Sierra Noble has been recognized for her dedication to humanitarian efforts. Here are some of those awards and honours.

- **2001:** Manitoba Teachers' Society Young Humanitarian Award
- **2002:** Premier's Volunteer Service Award; Inaugural Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal
- **2002:** Youth ambassador for the Manitoba Campaign to Ban Landmines
- **2004:** One of two representatives of Canada at the Ban Landmines International Children's Conference in Japan
- **2004:** Inaugural Manitoba Hydro Spirit of the Earth Youth Award
- **2009:** Minister of Veteran Affairs Commendation
- **2012:** Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal; Canadian Red Cross Manitoba Young Humanitarian of the Year Award

OPPOSITE PAGE: Sierra Noble and Grammy Award-winning producer Russ Titelman after she signed a major recording contract in October, 2012 with Decca Records. Photo by Manish Gosalia Photography.

RIGHT: On stage in Winnipeg in 2010, opening for Bon Jovi. Kelly Morton Photography

INSET: While in Japan in 2004 as one of two Canadian representatives at the Ban Landmines International Children's Conference, Sierra met Afghanistan representative and landmine survivor Nadir Shah.



went inside one and it happened to have displays about landmines.

"It was the first time she had ever been introduced to anything like that," Noble's mother recalls. "I watched her heart burst open."

It was there the young girl met Darryl Toews and Merideth Daun, who would become the founders of the Manitoba Campaign To Ban Landmines.

"After telling me all about landmines and the affects on people around the world, Darryl asked me point blank, 'So what are you going to do about it?'" Noble says.

"I said, 'What can I do, I'm 10?' That's when he gave me his card and told me to come to the Red Cross that week if I really wanted to make a difference."

Noble accepted his invite and it began years of dedication and efforts to rid the world of landmines.

At Wolseley School, which she attended for grades 5 and 6, she had some ideas, but found those she spoke with had "no interest in this 11-year-old girl trying to ban landmines."

It was teacher Andrea Stuart who really listened to the young girl.

"She was the only one at Wolseley School that said yes to me and wanted to help me start what was called Highly Aware Students Taking Action (HASTA)," Noble says.

"It was a group of kids who wanted to learn more about what was going on in the world and take action to help make a change."

Those actions included setting up fundraisers in the school and doing clothing drives for refugees.

Stuart also allowed Noble to put her passion into words.

When her class was told to write and illustrate a book about their favourite animal for an art project, Noble asked Stuart if she could do it on landmines instead.

"Without hesitation, she said, 'Yes, sure.' So I wrote this book called 'The Silent Soldier', and it ended up being a really important book at that time for the community of people that I was working with, which was the Manitoba Campaign to Ban Landmines and also for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines," she says.

She said, 'You will learn things that I will never, ever be able to teach you in a classroom and it would be wrong for me to deprive you of that.'

"That always stuck in my mind because she allowed me to follow a passion. That's really what I think makes the best teacher – not just sticking to curriculum and making sure that your students learn every single fact that is in the curriculum, but being aware and noticing what each student of yours is really drawn to."

The provincial minister of education at that time even asked for a copy of the book for his education library, she adds.

Noble also began volunteering at local places such as IRCOM House, a secondary housing for refugees.

In 2001, she received the first of many honours when she was presented with the Manitoba Teachers' Society Young Humanitarian Award.

At age 12, she became the youth ambassador for the Manitoba Campaign to Ban Landmines. In 2004, she was selected to be one of two representatives of Canada at the Ban Landmines International Children's Conference in Japan.

Over the years, she's given motivating presentations to students from grade school to university, met with politicians and dignitaries, performed at fundraisers and promoted the signing of countless petitions to ban landmines.

She's also been involved in fundraising concerts for a variety of causes and organizations such as Haiti Relief, the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities and the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

In 2005, Noble released an instrumental album of traditional old-time fiddle music and her career began taking off.

Of course, that meant touring sometimes clashed with sitting in a classroom.

Those conflicts were easier to deal with thanks to Lorna Olafson, her grades 8 and 9 teacher.

"I remember in math class she called me aside in her office and she said, 'Sierra, I want you to know that I want you to go and travel when you need to. I know you get a lot of offers to travel and play music and I want you to know how important I think that that is for you to do,'" Noble recalls.

"This stuck with me forever. I realized just how true that was. It was really brought to my mind by somebody that I really respected.

"She said, 'You will learn things that I will never, ever be able to teach you in a classroom and it would be wrong for me to deprive you of that. You go out, you learn to play music, you do what you love and you come back and I'll catch you up on math. Don't worry about that.

"Those were big touring years for me, the launch of what my career is today. If it wasn't for her, I know I would not be where I am today. She was incredible."

Some of Noble's high-profile appearances have included playing fiddle at the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver and performing later that year for Queen Elizabeth during her visit to Winnipeg.

Noble signed a major record deal in October 2012 with Decca Records, which has represented artists such as Louis Armstrong, The Rolling Stones and Patsy Cline. She's been going back and forth between Winnipeg and New York City this winter recording a new album with legendary record producer Russ Titelman (Eric Clapton, James Taylor, George Harrison).

She's also signed a song writing publishing deal with Rondor/Universal in Los Angeles and has fashion endorsements with French designer Lilith and Winnipeg designer Manitobah Mukluks.

Noble's music and humanitarian efforts were noticed by University of Winnipeg president Lloyd Axworthy, who arranged a bursary so she could attend grades 10 to 12 at the U of W Collegiate.

It was an act of kindness she says she'll always greatly appreciate, but what Axworthy thought would be a flexible setting proved to be anything but.

She recalls a Grade 11 history class where students were given a list of major historical events to choose from to do a research paper.

Noble had been invited to play her original composition The Warrior's Lament at the 90th anniversary of Vimy Ridge in France and the paper was due the day she got back.

Vimy Ridge wasn't on the list, but Noble asked the teacher if she could write her

paper about it and her two-week trip that included spending one-on-one time with veterans and current military members.

"She said, 'No.' She told me that it wouldn't be fair to the rest of the class if I got to do that and they were not able to pick what they wanted to do, and that if I didn't get the paper in by the time she handed the marked papers back, I would fail."

Noble decided not to do another topic. "So I failed history. There was no way I was going to pass that up. In my mind, it was honestly her loss because that would have been an incredible paper."

It's what happened when she returned that still makes her shake her head.

"The kicker was, when I got back I ran into her in the hallway and she had tears in her eyes and she said, 'I watched the live footage of the ceremony at Vimy Ridge in France and you were so amazing. Could you come by my office, I would love to hear all about the trip?'" Noble says.

"I said, 'No, sorry.'"

Noble ended up returning to Gordon Bell for Grade 12, a year that included some "personal issues" she was working through.

Once again, some staff members helped her. Guidance counsellor Ann Kirkwood, whom she called "an angel," was there when she needed someone to talk to, as was English teacher Marc Kuly, who encouraged her musical pursuits and made class fun.

It was the gift of their understanding that makes her glad she never decided to finish school through correspondence.

"That's the thing about teachers, if you really care about what you're teaching, correspondence could never truly teach a student what a teacher can," she says.

"There's no way I would have ever traded Grade 12 English with Mr. Kuly for being on the road and learning it through correspondence."

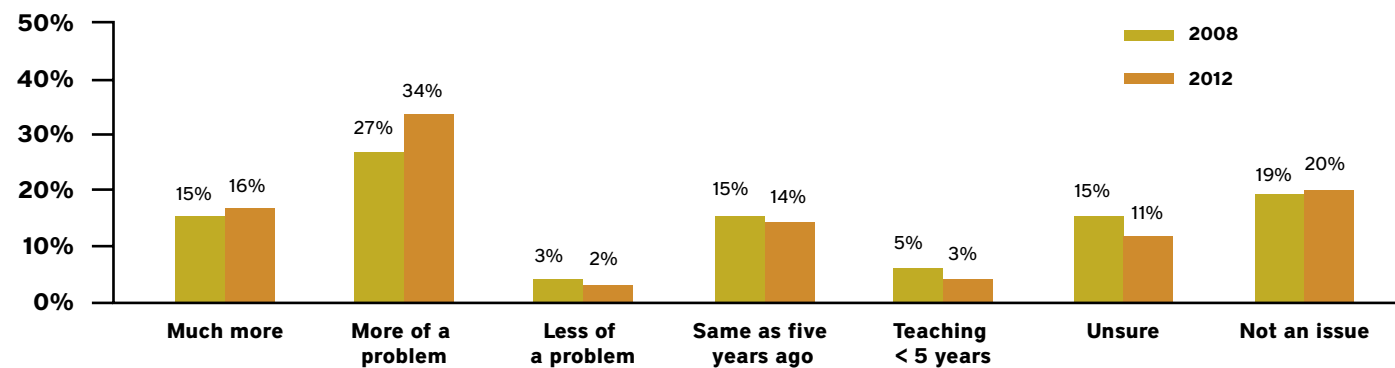
That's why her memories of school will focus on the positive—her favourite teachers.

"Teachers can change lives," Noble says. "I can't imagine how hard it must be to remind yourself of that all of the time as a teacher. You go through a lot as a teacher and you get those difficult students who make your life not as easy and possibly not as inspiring, but you can change lives in whatever way you decide to.

"You can brighten spirits and you can break spirits. It's a huge responsibility to be a teacher, but it can be the greatest gift in a young person's life to have a teacher who really cares."

What YOU think

Cyber-Bullying More or Less of a Problem than 5 Years Ago



In the wake of what happened in Newtown, Connecticut, the safety of schools has been top of mind for many educators and parents.

Each year the Society conducts a telephone survey with a random sample of our members to ask their opinions on a variety of issues related to their working life.

In the most recent, November 2012 survey, MTS included questions related to safety, bullying and violence in schools.

As school leader, the principal is responsible for the safety of everyone in the school.

We asked 202 administrators whether they agreed with this statement: "I have the necessary supports from the school board, police and the community to keep students and staff safe at school."

Ninety-three per cent of administrators agreed with this statement. Of that, 46 per cent strongly agreed. In addition, 92 per cent of principals agreed with the statement, "I believe staff are safe late at night and early in the morning on school property."

MTS also asked teachers and administrators whether they have personally been subjected to violence or threatened with violence by students. Of the 1,009 MTS members surveyed, 11 per cent said they have been subjected to violence; 17 per cent said they have been threatened with violence and 21 said both.

Fifty-one per cent of those surveyed said they have never been threatened or subjected to violence from students. We have asked this question five times since 2005

and there have only been small changes in these numbers over these years. Resource teachers and principals are most likely to say they have been both threatened and subjected to violence by a student.

We also asked MTS members about incidents with angry or abusive parents. Nineteen per cent of teachers say these incidents have increased over the past five years; 62 per cent said the number of these incidents has stayed the same. Only six per cent of members say they have never had an incident with an angry or abusive parent. In 2008, 25 per cent said that the number of these incidents had increased. Teachers aged 46 to 52 are more likely to say these incidents have increased somewhat.

Every year we ask teachers and principals to identify their single biggest concern as an educator. For 20 per cent of administrators, their biggest concern is support for at-risk students, poverty, social problems, mental health issues and dropouts. We also asked principals about their dealings with outside agencies such as Child and Family Services, Justice and Health. Forty-three per cent, said that dealing with these outside agencies is a significant part of their duties and 40 per cent said it was a small part.

The two biggest concerns for teachers are class size and too many demands. Student behaviour and discipline comes in at number three, cited by nine per cent of teachers as their top concern. When we ask MTS members directly whether violence and bullying in their school is more of a prob-

lem than it was five years ago, 30 per cent say it is more of a problem and 46 per cent say it is the same as it was five years ago. Teachers working in schools of 600 or more students are more likely to consider bullying and violence to be more of a problem than in smaller schools. The longer teachers are on the job, the more likely they are to view bullying and violence as the same as it was five years ago.

The good news is that in the opinion of MTS members bullying and violence isn't getting worse in our schools. Since MTS started asking this question in 2002 the number of teachers who say bullying and violence is more of a problem has gone down from 54 per cent in 2002 to the 30 per cent it is today.

The picture is different for cyber-bullying. Fifty per cent of MTS members say that cyber-bullying in their school is more of a problem than it was five years ago. This is a seven per cent increase from when we first asked this question in 2008. Men view it as more of a problem than women do. It is also more of a problem for teachers working in urban schools and schools with more than 600 students.

The sample of teachers surveyed in this poll mirrors the makeup of the teaching population in the province based on such factors as gender, locale, age, and teaching assignment. The telephone survey was conducted in mid-November 2012 with a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 per cent, 19 times out of 20.



MEET, PRAY, LEARN

BY PAT ST. GERMAIN

Dauphin lawyer Chris Tait wouldn't stand for prayer in the classroom as a high school student 26 years ago, and he doesn't think kids and teachers should stand for it now.

Tait's refusal to stand or leave his classroom during daily recitations of the Lord's Prayer at MacGregor Collegiate earned him a suspension in 1986, along with death threats and a barrage of harassing phone calls.

The incident led to a 1992 Court of Queen's Bench decision that struck down mandatory prayer in Manitoba classrooms. Current guidelines are supposed to protect the rights of students and teachers who don't want to participate in religious exercises.

But Tait, who is now a Legal Aid lawyer in Dauphin, says some schools didn't get the memo. And the Department of Education was indifferent when he reported several violations he discovered through Freedom of Information requests he sent to all but three of Manitoba's school divisions last year.

"Consistently the same problems keep emerging and I've alerted the department to these problems before," he says.

"When I made the inquiry last year in terms of correspondence between the department and school divisions, there was not a single memo, not an email sent out. And so it's quite puzzling that the province is alerted to very serious problems that appear to be violations of Charter rights and does absolutely nothing."

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Manitoba Education communications co-ordinator Julie DeVoin says school boards are autonomous entities, and anyone who has a concern should approach their division. If complainants are not satisfied with division action, they can approach the department to address any issues, and they have the further option of taking complaints to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and the courts.

However, Tait says the courts have already found that some practices he flagged are violations under Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees of equal protection and freedom of religion and conscience. And he says the department should be monitoring compliance.

"They've tried to pretend that this is something that local authorities are doing and they can't control it. If that's really the case, then they should change the legislation to remove this provision entirely," he says.

"Just say that prayer is held in the churches, it's not held in the schools."

The Public Schools Act and department guidelines allow for religious exercises only when parents initiate and present petitions to the school board. Schools are to play no role in initiating prayer and parents must opt in rather than ask that their child be

excused. Teachers may volunteer to participate, but prayers cannot be held during instruction time.

However, Tait found prayers were read over the intercom at Rosenort and Ecole Somerset schools, and at Fisher Branch Early Years School and Minitonas Early Years School, parents were required to opt out of religious exercises.

"There are people in the Winkler area who want to opt out who are going into the hallway, which was the same situation in the 1980s, and some stand quietly in class," he says.

Divisions are also required to pass a by-law allowing religious exercises every year, a step that was neglected for the past two years in Prairie Rose School Division, where St. Francois Xavier School ran afoul of guidelines by holding Bible classes called Discovery Time.

Tait says MacGregor Collegiate didn't have daily prayers until a school inspector told the Pine Creek School Division to initiate them when he was in Grade 11. Students lobbied against prayer and Tait took a stand on behalf of a majority of his peers.

He had just turned 17 when he was suspended for five days and put on notice that the division superintendent and school

board would first extend the suspension by 15 days and then make it permanent. But he didn't take the threats sitting down.

"They'd tell me each day that I was suspended and the bus would stop and pick me up the next day, so I kept going back," he says.

When his parents hired a lawyer, the school board relented, but he was harassed by anonymous phone calls and hate mail, including unsigned letters from Winnipeg.

"It's kind of an ironic situation that people say they're promoting some type of morality and the morality is to send an anonymous threat to a teenager," he says.

"A lot of it was just angry, incredibly vicious types of material and it really makes you wonder what these people are promoting, or if they're able to have a moral code that's of any use to anyone."

Tait advises teachers to ask Manitoba Education what's happening in schools province-wide and stop letting the department treat prayer as a local issue.

"I have talked to some (teachers) and they were quite worried about what they're going to do, because there are teachers that indeed don't want to participate in this type of thing and it doesn't seem there's much provision made for them either."

Workload survey coming

MTS is urging members to fill out the annual workload survey that will be coming around in February to help with future collective bargaining.

"The information collected is instrumental in assisting associations with bargaining and, if necessary, in arbitration in the event of an impasse," says MTS President Paul Olson.

The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

All MTS members, regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time or on term, are encouraged to complete the survey, which will be delivered by local presidents and school reps. It is available in French and English. Teachers' names are not included on the questionnaire.

Questions on the survey include:

- Descriptive information about the basics of your job (FT/PT, school size, teacher position, etc.).

- Descriptive information about you (i.e., gender, age, teaching experience).
- Questions about work stressors and impact on your work life and family life.
- Questions about class size and composition.
- Questions about weekly allotment of time (at school and outside of school) related to your work.
- Questions about practical solutions to solving your workload issues.

The MTS Teacher Welfare Department says the data gathered will be "used to profile membership, measure, pattern and trend key teacher workload indicators such as time allotments (hours worked, prep time), class size and compositions and the negative impacts these have on teachers both in their work life and overall quality of life."

The last survey was undertaken in 2009 and its use dates back to 1991.

Once responses are collected only MTS and teacher associations see the results and MTS is assisted in its data services by a company with a long history of providing support to both MTS and the education sector.

While participation in the survey is voluntary a high response rate is necessary in order that the results are statistically representative of MTS members. To also ensure that result, all teachers, not just those with heavy workloads, are encouraged to complete the survey.

"If only teachers with high workloads respond, the results of the survey will not be acceptable because of 'response bias' which means the results could be distorted," the department says.

The surveys will be sent out near the end of January, are expected to be filled out in February and returned before March. The survey is only available in paper form. An online survey was tried in the past with disappointing results.

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CreeSL

BY MARK HALSALL

Traditional languages have long been an essential component of Aboriginal identity. Sadly, indigenous dialects like Cree now have far fewer speakers—the result of residential schools and other corrosive influences of Westernization on Aboriginal culture. Some may be in danger of dying out, since those who still understand and speak these languages are most often elderly.

A school in northern Manitoba is working to reverse this loss of Aboriginal language and identity. Back in 2001, Wapanohk Community School in Thompson became the first provincially mandated school in Manitoba to offer Cree bilingual programming.

Wapanohk is a K–8 school in the Mystery Lake School Division. More than 95 per cent of its nearly 400 students are Aboriginal, the majority of them Cree—the traditional name for which is Ininiw, which means “the people”.

The Cree language program aims to preserve and revitalize the traditional language of the Ininiw, and was launched as a means to enhance students’ success by building stronger connections to families and Aboriginal culture.

“Our goal is to have kids leaving our school in Grade 8 with the ability to communicate in Cree,” says Wapanohk’s principal, Bonnie Rempel. “Our biggest focus is on the oral language. We want students to be able to speak and understand the language.”

According to Ron Cook, the Cree language coordinator for the Mystery Lake School Division, “it is important for the Ininiw to speak their language again.”

“The language clarifies the world view of the people in a way that the English lan-

guage cannot,” he says. “The images and ideas that come with speaking the language solidifies the identity of the Ininiw, and gives the people an inherent strength to live in true harmony with their world.”

According to Rempel, the Cree program at Wapanohk has two streams:

1. K–4 Cree bilingual classes, where 35 to 50 per cent is taught by certified Cree language teachers; and
2. K–8 Cree as a second language classes. Each classroom that is not Cree bilingual receives four 40-minute Cree classes in a six-day cycle.

Cree is spoken and heard from the onset of each day. O Canada is sung in Cree, and the school announcements are in Cree and English. Special events, like the annual

The language clarifies the world view of the people in a way that the English language cannot.

Christmas Concert and National Aboriginal Veterans Day celebrations, are conducted in both languages as well.

Rempel says students enjoy being able to comprehend and communicate in a language spoken by their grandparents or others in their homes.

She adds that “parents who don’t speak Cree are very excited that their kids are learning Cree. They’re excited that their kids are picking up the language that they may have lost.”

Some parents, in fact, are taking it upon themselves to learn the language of the Ininiw at the school, which offers an eight-week Cree program for adults each year.

Rempel, who’s been principal at Wapanohk the past five years, says the school’s goals extend well beyond language training—Aboriginal perspectives are integral to school life.

As an example, Rempel points to the school’s outdoor land-based education program, funded by one of Wapanohk’s education partners, Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents.

Every student in K–8 participates in the six-week program each year, taking part in indigenous customs and practices such as traditional games, trapping, fishing, and food and medicine gathering.

“All of these activities are tied in with our Cree language program,” says Rempel, adding that outdoor land-based education is among many initiatives aimed at imparting traditional knowledge and perspectives and developing cultural identity and pride among students.

“Cultural proficiency is something that we definitely aspire to here,” she says, adding that the Seven Teachings form the basis of the school’s behaviour plan as well as the criteria for student awards. Aboriginal culture is also front and centre at school ceremonies and festivals.

“I think that push to bring back the language and the culture into the home is amazing,” says Angele Bartlett, the school superintendent for Mystery Lake. “It’s a phenomenal program.”

Since Wapanohk became the pilot site for Manitoba’s community schools, the model has been embraced at more than a dozen sites province-wide.

As a community school, it serves as a hub for a broad range of services and opportunities that strengthen and support families and the surrounding community.

According to Rempel, these supports include a breakfast program, after-school clubs and a drop-in centre for kids in the evenings.



Outdoor land-based education is among many initiatives aimed at imparting traditional knowledge and perspectives and developing cultural identity and pride among students.

“We use a whole school approach to try to get these kids as far as we can,” she says. “It’s a very, very busy place.”

Janet Brady, a trustee with the Mystery Lake School Board, says Wapanohk is “very community-based, very community minded... it’s kind of like the community centre for the neighbourhood even though it’s a public school.”

According to www.schoolboardswork.ca, the community school model benefits students in numerous ways, with measureable results that include increased attendance rates, improved academic performance and literacy rates, and fewer behavioural problems.

Rempel says there hasn’t been much research done to measure positive outcomes like these at her school, but she knows parental involvement has definitely increased with more parents volunteering their time and participating in events at Wapanohk.

Rempel says it’s an indication of how the school’s Cree language program and other cultural initiatives are helping to overcome feelings of distrust and alienation towards the education system left over from the residential school era.

“A lot of parents may have a hard time coming into the school over the years,” she says, “but knowing that culture is being taught here and being incorporated into what we do, as well as the language... our parents feel very comfortable here.”

Clint Saulteaux is a single parent who had four kids go through Wapanohk. He says it’s been a great experience for everyone.

“When you walk into the school you feel this positive energy right away,” Salteaux says. “Wapanohk is a place where people do feel welcomed, and people do feel respected.”

Rempel admits the paucity of Cree-speakers sometimes makes it difficult to recruit and retain teachers and education assistants for the language program. That—along with a high degree of transiency among the student population—are two of the school’s biggest challenges.

Helping to offset these challenges is the enthusiastic response from parents and the community.

“We’ve had nothing but positive support,” Rempel says, “We had our community feast two nights ago, and over 500 people came out to celebrate with us, including school trustees. It was fantastic.”

Tough penalties for bad conduct

The Manitoba government has introduced legislation which would improve the process by which The Manitoba Teachers' Society investigates complaints, conducts internal disciplinary procedures and recuperates costs in cases of proven unprofessional conduct by a teacher.

"We are committed to working with The Manitoba Teachers' Society to continue to ensure all teachers adhere to the highest professional standards," Allan said. "This will help ensure our students receive the quality education they need to succeed."

The amendments come following the last MTS annual general meeting. The Society requested an increase in the range of penalties for members found to have engaged in unprofessional conduct or conduct unbecoming a teacher. Following an MTS internal disciplin-

ary review panel hearing, the society would be able to suspend or terminate a teacher's membership in the society or impose a fine to help offset the costs of hearings related to investigations.

Delegates to the MTS Annual General Meeting last May voted in favour of new penalties, including fines of up to \$2,000, suspension or termination of MTS membership and payment of costs up to \$5,000.

Currently, the disciplinary committee can only admonish, censure or recommend the education minister revoke or suspend a teacher's certificate.

The new penalties would be included in changes to the MTS constitution which needs approval of the provincial government. The Society constitution is included in provincial law, The Teachers' Society Act, and therefore can only be changed through an act of the Legislature.

MTS Vice-President Norm Gould, chair of the committee that reviewed

the Code of Professional Practice, said the recommended changes were determined by the committee after reviewing what is done in other jurisdictions and in other unions and after looking at past cases and getting legal opinions.

He said the changes provide new tools for the Society in dealing with unprofessional conduct.

MTS President Paul Olson said the teaching profession must hold itself up to the highest standards of conduct.

"Teachers recognize the need to work together professionally and effectively, and never forget our duty to remain worthy of the public's trust. This legislative change is intended to provide our Professional Conduct and Review Committees with a greater and more nuanced ability to uphold those standards in those rare cases when infractions occur."



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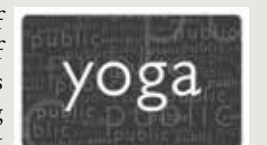
The Lifestyle Pass is a passport-sized booklet that offers over \$2,000 in savings at businesses that focus on health and wellness. To view current offers, please visit thelifestylepass.com. MTS members may purchase the passport at the online store for \$30 (regular price is \$40) plus taxes by entering the promo code MTS. Offer expires October 31, 2013.



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PORTFOLIO

Aww, isn't that cute

Mattel has come out with a new Barbie and quite likely the last Barbie to be still standing on any child's dresser.

It's Katniss Barbie, as in Katniss Everdeen from the Hunger Games. While the movie wasn't recommended for children, they can now play the Games at home.

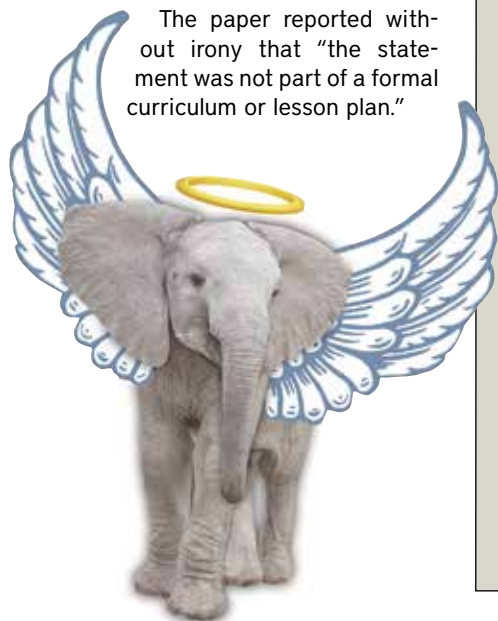
Ken and Skipper! Start running.

The Book of Romney 3:15

A Kentucky teacher is under fire after writing on the whiteboard in class: "You can't be a democrat and go to heaven."

The district superintendent told the local newspaper that the class had been discussing politics around election day, and Baker wrote the statement on the board.

The paper reported without irony that "the statement was not part of a formal curriculum or lesson plan."



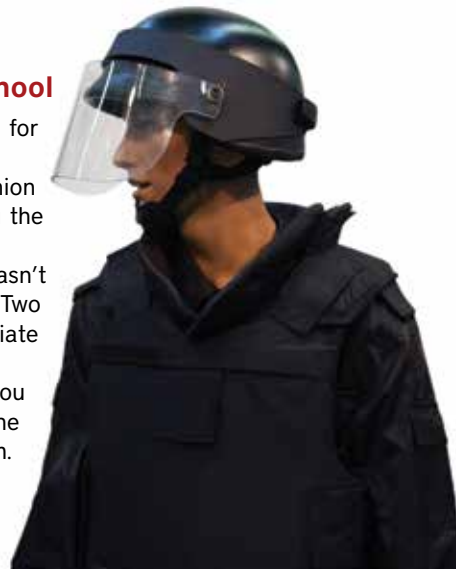
Well, maybe it was a tough school

A teacher in Toledo, Ohio, was fired for wearing a bulletproof vest to school.

She apparently went with the fashion statement "for the purpose of surviving the rest of the school year."

The department of education says it wasn't the only reason the teacher was fired. Two years before she also used "inappropriate language" in dealing with a student:

"If you want to act like a punk or you want to act like a thug, you do [it] on the street. Don't bring it in my classroom. Don't bring it into our school."



BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

If you're reading this, it's the last time I put any stock in any predictions by the Mayans or what dark-clouded pessimists interpreted what the Mayans were predicting.

It turns out they had as much razor-sharp insight as Republican soothsayers who prophesized a Romney landslide back in November although a landslide isn't quite as menacing as world's end.

So those of you who left your Christmas shopping until after Dec. 21 just in case, too bad. The world continues apace.

If the Mayans were around today the media now would most likely be calling their unfinished calendar a "gaffe" that would hurt them when elections for King of Central America roll around.

Gaffe has become pretty much the go-to word for the media although most don't appear to actually know what it means. Google political gaffe and you come up with almost 7 million references.

Recently, the CBC began an item asking whether Liberal leadership candidate Justin Trudeau was "gaffe prone."

To underscore the theory, it pointed out that more than two years ago he criticized Albertans' political views in an interview on a Quebec TV network. And more recently, he said he viewed the long gun registry as a failure. Two things he said over more than two years makes him "prone". You could come up with stronger evidence to show the CBC is ridiculous-prone.

Of course, the CBC wasn't alone. The resurrection of the old interview, which

nobody cared about at the time, and the gun comment were greeted with a solidly-predictable landslide of headlines trumpeting his "gaffes".

- "Another Trudeau gaffe"
- "Gaffetastic."
- "MPs on Alberta gaffe"
- "Trudeau's repeated gaffes"

Headline writers love a word like gaffe. It's short.

None of the articles ever explained, however, how one can commit a gaffe retroactively. How does something said years ago that didn't create even a whisper of a breeze become a full-blown gale of a gaffe in reruns? Is there no statute of limitations on supposed gaffes? Did Prime Minister Stephen Harper commit a gaffe when he signed a letter in 2001 suggesting Albertans "build firewalls around Alberta" including formation of its own police force and withdrawal from the Canada Pension Plan?

No, he didn't.

It was what he believed at the time, just as Trudeau said what he believed at the time. But one's beliefs are getting to be more and more of a hindrance in politics if what you believe could be criticized by more than four people. Or two with a megaphone, microphone or media column.

No, the media have become much more accepting of lies than honesty.

When Mitt Romney told a group of campaign donors that 47 per cent of voters were basically moochers living off the public dole, it was depicted as a gaffe,

Social media mayhem

Five Ontario high school students were suspended for tweets sent after school hours that criticized their teachers. The school board in Brampton described the tweets as malicious, explicitly sexual and violent in nature.

The comments were made off school property and on private time, but the forum—Twitter—is public and therefore the suspensions appropriate. And a student in Mississippi was suspended for posting a rap song, created off-campus, to YouTube that criticized his school and teachers.

PRIVATE COMMENT

GAFFETASTIC!

PUBLIC COMMENT

a mistake, something he shouldn't have said. Eventually it morphed into a slip of the tongue or an inarticulate description.

But through it all, it was mostly a gaffe, even after he said pretty much the same thing after the election to a different group of donors.

Even then, the media accepted that what a politician says when they think they are in private is naturally, and acceptably, different than what they say in public. Like a Venn diagram, the part where those two circles intersect is a gaffe.

And a gaffe, when it really is an inadvertent mistake, is far worse than a lie. A gaffe is a product of performance rather than policy. And the media, so concerned as they are about being supposedly fair, will never call out a politician's untruths even if they are obvious.

So, for any politician it is better to keep hidden anything that might create kick-back and, well, even lie if they have to because the media will never call a lie a lie, but they lurk in the weeds ready and eager to call honesty a gaffe.

Maybe the Mayans' predictions were closer than we thought.

Mercury arising

A Florida school went into lockdown, complete with an emergency visit by police and a hazardous materials team—because of a thermometer.

A chemistry teacher had asked students to bring in substances from the periodic table of elements.

One student brought a thermometer containing mercury, sparking the apocalyptic reaction. Students had been told not to bring certain elements, including mercury.

Quitting is a matter of principal

Research at Michigan State University has found that principals are the principle reason new teachers decide whether to continue teaching.

The conduct of principals has a greater effect on new teachers than workload or resources.

"The principal isn't there just to help the novice teacher handle discipline and classroom management," said lead investigator Prof. Peter Youngs. "What really makes a strong administrative climate is when the principal also knows the academic content well and can work with the beginning teacher on curriculum and instruction."

The study, published in the *Elementary School Journal*, was sparked by findings that nearly a third of teachers in their first two years either change schools or quit altogether.

Researchers surveyed 184 beginning teachers of grades 1-8 in 11 large school districts in Michigan and Indiana.

It found the most important factor for new teachers was the perception of how well the school principal worked with the teaching staff as a whole.



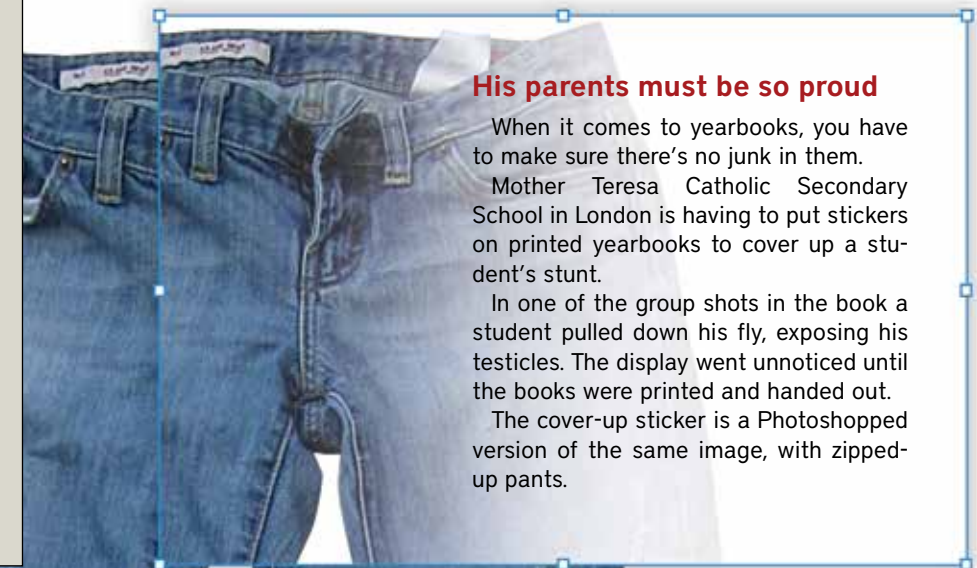
His parents must be so proud

When it comes to yearbooks, you have to make sure there's no junk in them.

Mother Teresa Catholic Secondary School in London is having to put stickers on printed yearbooks to cover up a student's stunt.

In one of the group shots in the book a student pulled down his fly, exposing his testicles. The display went unnoticed until the books were printed and handed out.

The cover-up sticker is a Photoshopped version of the same image, with zipped-up pants.





acing THE MUSIC

Even as more and more red caution flags pop up, some Manitoba educators using social media are still connecting more with catastrophe than colleagues.

There have been several recent disciplinary actions taken against educators who have unwittingly stepped over the digital line.

- One teacher posted a video of her students to her personal Twitter and Facebook accounts and then uploaded it to YouTube. The video showed students working on a science lab but also captures some roughhousing of students in the background. None of the students were aware of the teacher's intent to post the video nor had their parents been apprised of her plan and nor had they given permission. One of the parents happened to see the video and was horrified that the teacher felt it was appropriate to post. A formal complaint followed. The teacher was called to account by the employer. At that meeting the teacher acknowledged that she was unaware of Divisional policy and of the requirements of the Public Schools Act section 47.1(2) "... a prohibition of accessing, uploading, downloading or distributing material that the school has determined to be objectionable." The teacher received a letter of discipline that included a very prescriptive process for her future online activity and posting.
- Two teachers registered for contests—one was a modelling contest that included revealing photos and the other was a performance where adult subject matter was posted. Both had posted photos and videos online. The fitness teacher had very revealing photos posted while the comedian-teacher had really funny material that was both profane and provocative. Both their employers took issue with the off duty conduct of the teachers and required each of them to withdraw.
- Another teacher posted on Facebook that the "principal is once again out of the building and that teachers are struggling to maintain order and discipline. Teachers would really like to have a principal who is

present and accounted for every day in the school". There was a subtext implying that the principal was away for illegitimate reasons and that the rest of the staff still in the building were being left high and dry again to fend for themselves. In reality, the principal was attending a required divisional meeting and had arranged for a teacher in charge. Parents and students were among the teachers Facebook friends and word was out that the teacher had undermined the principal. The principal spoke with the teacher and advised that she would be informing the superintendent.

Bobbi Ethier, MTS assistant general secretary and recently a staff officer who has worked on such personnel cases, says that while social media is a pervasive form of communicating "the impulse to get things posted can also be a recipe for action without consideration or forethought.

"Obviously teachers and principals enjoy the protection of the fundamental provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms however there are indeed some constraints for teachers," she says. "The best way to think about this is as a legal balancing act and its application is both simple and complex."

On one hand, a teacher and principal have certain rights including freedom of opinion and expression. On the other hand, the employer has certain powers and authority to control the actions of employees and to control expression and opinion, within reason, in order to protect the school, its teachers and students.

Ethier says that because a teacher and principal occupy positions of trust within society, arbitrators and judges have ruled that they must be held to a higher standard of personal and professional conduct than other workers.

As Ethier and Paul McKenna, MTS lawyer at Myers Weinberg, wrote in a paper and presentation at the 2011 Canadian Association for the Practical Studies of Law in Education conference in Newfoundland, teachers and principals practice their profession in a "fishbowl".

"They are subject to constant scrutiny at various levels: by students, by parents, by community and by School Boards to name

Across North America, educators have done Facebook face plants. Here are just a few:



- A student teacher was dismissed because of "unprofessional" postings. Her site included comments criticizing her supervisor and a photograph of her wearing a pirate hat and drinking from a plastic cup with the caption "drunken pirate."
- A teacher was suspended after posting comments that a gay history exhibit at the school should be removed; she then urged her friends to pray and eventually called homosexuality a perverted sin.
- A teacher was fired after posting a picture to her Facebook page during a vacation in Germany. The picture showed her with a glass of wine in one hand and a glass of beer in the other. She was touring a brewery at the time.
- A teacher was fired for calling her students future criminals on Facebook.
- A teacher was fired after writing on her blog that her students were "frightfully dim and rat-like".
- A highly regarded guidance counselor was fired after 12 years because photos of her in lingerie and bikinis from her early career as a model were found on the Internet.



a few," Ethier says. "Once educators decide to use Facebook or any other similar social media, it is imperative that they understand that they are about to expand their fishbowl exponentially and that they will be held responsible professionally for their personal posts and online activity."

MTS has created a pamphlet about online safety for educators. It can be accessed on the MTS website here: www.mbteach.org/library/Archives/Brochures/Profession/bro-OnlineSafety.pdf

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Presenter: **Dr. Pérsida Himmele** is an Associate Professor at Millersville University in Pennsylvania. She has been a teacher in bilingual and multilingual classrooms in New York and southern California and a district administrator in Pennsylvania. Pérsida has a Ph.D. in Intercultural Education from Biola University. She and her husband are the authors of several books including the ASCD bestseller, "Total Participation Techniques: Making Every Student an Active Learner".

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