

THE MANITOBA

# Teacher

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015 VOLUME 94 NUMBER 2 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

## Lives Lost

COPING WITH TEEN SUICIDE





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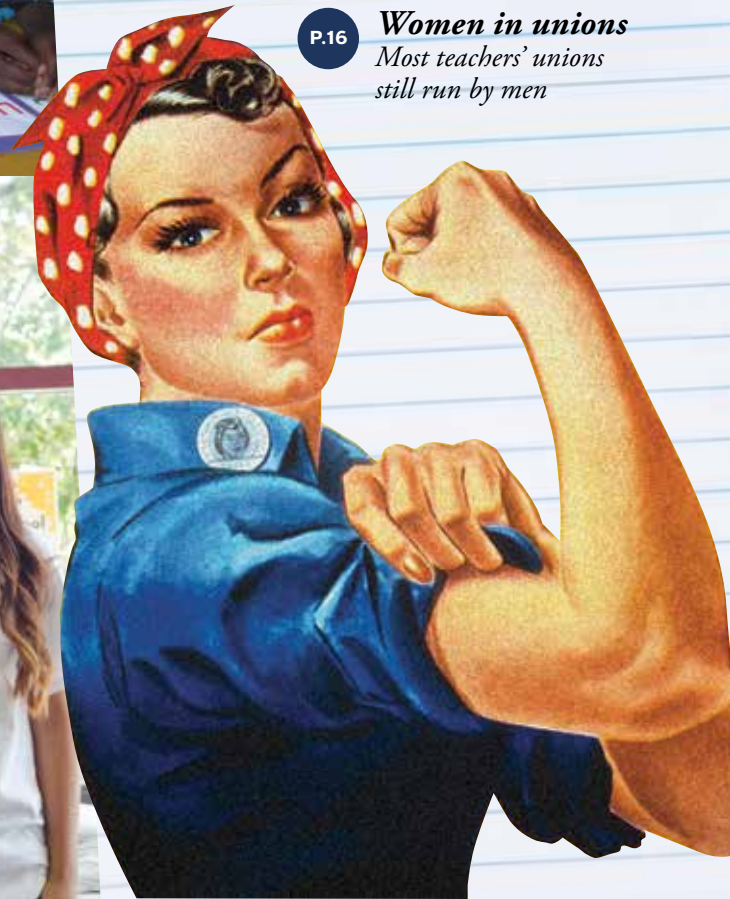
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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**NORM GOULD**

One of the more difficult tasks for any person in elected office is keeping in touch with the people you represent.

It's no different for those elected to the provincial executive of MTS and certainly not for the president. We have formal and informal meetings and long discussions about what we think are the biggest issues facing our members and their schools.

It is ironic, though, that positions that allow a person to have these meetings are ones that take us further from the classroom.

One of our main responsibilities is, bluntly, to know what we're talking about, to make sure we know what is top of mind of our members.

At the end of September we tried something we haven't done before at MTS. We held what has been described as a virtual town hall. It was a chance for members to raise questions and issues by calling in to the president for an hour, asking questions directly or leaving them to be answered later. Some people just stayed on the line to listen, others sent email questions.

In all, more than 800 members participated, asking questions and offering opinions. There were comments and questions on everything from student mental health and child poverty to EAL support for immigration influx and how to motivate teachers to vote in the federal election.

We also had social media buzzing or, more to the point, tweeting, with hundreds of comments posted.

It was heartening to hear from teachers afterward who were listening who said the event was worthwhile and urged us to do it again.

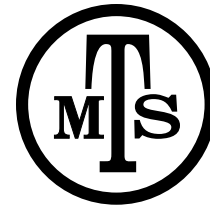
For me, it was invigorating and exciting talking with, and hearing from, members in so many different ways on so many different concerns.

For a first time out, it was successful, but hope we can reach even more members the next time.

At this point we hope to do it again ahead of the provincial election in April. The provincial election campaign will certainly involve many more issues that will directly impact teachers and principals in Manitoba schools.

We will put a lot of effort into providing as much information as possible leading up to the provincial election. We have already started looking at how we can encourage and accommodate the involvement of even more members.

We believe it is the job and the responsibility of The Manitoba Teachers' Society to get as much information as we possibly can about each of the political parties' stances on educational issues and to present those in an objective, unbiased way to help our members make their decisions come election day.



# The Manitoba Teachers' Society

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## INSIDE MTS

### 'SORRY' STILL HAS MEANING AND PLACE IN SCHOOLS

**BOBBI TAILLEFER**, GENERAL SECRETARY

Last year I had the privilege of vacationing in Florida with my husband Paul. It was a well-deserved break in the sun where we were able to visit with family, play loads of golf and hit the beach. I am always conscious that when I am in the US that I am a guest in that country and I hope to blend in as best I can. I have noted on many occasions that other tourists don't seem to feel the same way and I am often horrified by situations of cultural faux pas. Not wanting to make a faux pas myself I will bend myself into a pretzel to be a good cultural guest which explains why I played along in the following situation.

Like any good Canadian I use "sorry" excessively and ended up apologizing to a retail clerk for exchanging a baby outfit for our granddaughter that was too short. The clerk instantly says "you aren't from around here are you because that is not how we pronounce sorry, we say sawree". She then proceeded to make me repeat it "correctly" until she was satisfied that I

met the Florida standard pronunciation of sorry and then finally returned my funds.

This situation was the catalyst for me thinking a great deal about how and when we use sorry or should use sorry. Frankly I believe our excessive utilization of sorry has cheapened the experience a bit. It is often a way of just using a word to permit or excuse our gaffes. However, as professionals and as educators the ability to apologize and mean it is essential in our practice. It is indeed a big person that can see the error of their ways, take responsibility for the hurt they have caused, apologize unreservedly and then learn from the experience and move on as a better person. It is a great educator that can demonstrate that they can take responsibility for mistakes and model for students, colleagues and parents the appropriate use of an apology.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society Code of Professional Practice, which is part of Bylaw IV of MTS bylaws, and to which all members are obliged to follow, contains the measures and expectations of how a

professional educator, working in a public school, conducts themselves. While it is not explicit, "sawree" plays a big part in the Code, for instance #4 A member's conduct is characterized by consideration and good faith and in #2 A member acts with integrity and diligence when carrying out professional duties.

There is no doubt that schools as workplaces are the most pleasant when proper, sincere apologies are part of the culture. If you as a member of MTS believe that you have an apology to make – then go for it! Identify the circumstances that warrant the apology, make it specific and genuine to your offended party and then feel the freedom of owning your actions and making amends. At the end of the day a true professional can and will apologize and embrace Mahatma Gandhi's words when he said "I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people."

## \$177 M goes to teacher pensions

BY LIAM MARTIN

This fall, the Manitoba government committed \$177 million towards teachers' pensions, including \$107.9 million that will go directly to the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund (TRAF).

"While other provincial governments are cutting costs through austerity measures and defined benefit plans are being replaced by targeted benefit and defined contribution plans, this investment in public pensions ensures our plan will be sustainable," said MTS President Norm Gould.

This investment is the latest in a series of pension successes the Manitoba Teachers' Society has earned on behalf of its members.

In 2007, the province invested \$1.5 billion

**"While other provincial governments are cutting costs through austerity measures and defined benefit plans are being replaced by targeted benefit and defined contribution plans, this investment in public pensions ensures our plan will be sustainable,"**

*- Norm Gould, MTS President*

into creating the Province of Manitoba Trust Account (PMTA) which helped address TRAF's unfunded liabilities.

This money was used to pre-fund the teachers' pension plan up to 75 per cent, which guaranteed the long-term viability of teachers' defined benefit pensions in Manitoba.

"Since the creation of TRAF 90 years ago, Manitoba governments of all stripes have worked with the Manitoba Teachers' Society to ensure that teachers have access to a guaranteed pension plan.

"This most recent investment confirms that the Manitoba government values the role teachers have in providing quality, public education to Manitoba families," added Gould.

# Teen suicide

## Averting the tragedy

A teenage death is a tragedy. Regardless of how a teen dies, it's something that shouldn't happen and it affects everyone who knew them – and often many who didn't – deeply.

Young people aren't supposed to die so when they do, whether it's in a car crash or some other type of accident it's shocking and evokes all kinds of emotions, from sadness to anger and beyond.

When a teen dies by suicide, it's all those things and more. The people left behind most often can't understand the reasons why and so along with the sadness there's confusion, feelings of guilt and, in some cases, even embarrassment.

The sad reality is that every year, about 12 teens in Manitoba will die by suicide. That's 12 families devastated by loss, and countless friends and acquaintances left reeling.

Among those are the teen's school family. Everyone from administrators and teachers, fellow students, custodians and bus drivers are impacted by the suicide death of a student. Divisions across the province are working hard to be proactive in a world where teenagers deal with pressures their parents never had.

Judy Dunn will tell you she is well versed – not an authority but well versed – in the reality of suicide. It's a reality she wishes she knew far less about. Her son, Andrew, died by suicide when he was 23, but he'd been battling with suicidal thoughts from at least the age of 15. Judy Dunn fought the battle with him.

"I know more than I ever wanted to," she says, almost 10 years after Andrew's death on Dec. 12, 2006.

She learned of her son's suicidal thoughts when she found a black binder under his bed when she was cleaning his room. She'd already noticed changes in her once happy son's behaviour and reasoned away the changes. He was wearing mostly black clothes, but she figured she liked black clothes too and kids do change in adolescence. But he also had, for the past couple of years, come to dislike holidays

and even his birthday, things that when he was younger he used to get very excited about.

"His tastes seemed to change. He used to love birthdays and Christmas and got very excited about that stuff, and he started calling them Hallmark days."

Dunn said Andrew's thinking became negative and she knew he'd started drinking, not heavily and not all the time, but she said when he did drink, he drank to excess. Though she wasn't thrilled with some of his behaviour, she figured he was just a teenager being a teenager.

But when she found the binder and opened it up she was shocked by its contents and said she could no longer chalk his moods and behaviour up to teenage angst.

"I don't even know for sure what possessed me (to open it), I guess just cause it was under the bed," Dunn said.

The binder contained writings that were "really, really dark", Dunn said, and they left her reeling.

"The fact that he did want to kill himself. Everything that he wrote in it basically saying, you're a loser, you're stupid, everything was negative about himself, the world and the fact he'd be better off dead," Dunn said.

"My heart came up into my throat, I thought I was gonna be sick, and I just thought 'Oh my god, this isn't just an adolescence thing.'"

Dunn confronted Andrew, who was angry she'd pried into his personal life and most private thoughts, and from that day forward she worked to try and help her son – to try and save her son.

Andrew did go to a doctor and did begin taking anti-depressant medication but in the years that ensued he would go on and off his meds, Dunn said, and drift in and out of good times and bad. And he became skilled at hiding his true feelings, wearing a mask as Dunn puts it, so that he wouldn't have to answer his mother's and other's questions about his well being.

"The majority of his friends couldn't believe that he was dealing with anything because he

was always there for everyone else, he was always the one making the jokes, he was wearing his mask very, very well and they had no idea that he was in such pain inside," Dunn said.

The night Andrew died he was out with friends and even made a joke about his impending death. Dunn said when a friend asked him how things were going, Andrew replied that he was fine, he was gonna kill himself, but other than that everything was fine. His friends laughed, she said, having no clue that he was serious.

"They just laughed because they thought it was just a joke," she said.

Andrew also phoned a friend that night, a girl, but it was late and she didn't answer her phone. Later she told Dunn how guilt ridden she was, but Dunn said it's not her fault, nor is it the fault of the friends that he'd joked with earlier in the night. They could have no way of knowing, because Andrew hid it so well.

Even his mother thought he was doing well at the time of his death.

"You can't blame yourself, but 99 per cent of the time there's signs, it's whether they're readable signs or noticeable signs. Or if (the person is) joking at the same time, you write it off," Dunn said.

"Again I could see things in him, but not at that time. When he died actually I thought he was doing quite well. I was more concerned with him a few months prior after losing a job that he had really wanted."

Since Andrew's death, Dunn has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of suicide and educate others on what they can do to help. Though Andrew had finished high school when he died, Dunn said it still impacted his former school's staff and students. Almost immediately following his death, Dunn started what would become [andrewdunn.org](http://andrewdunn.org), and through annual walks and other events, they've raised more than \$300,000 that goes towards education, awareness, stigma reduction and various mental health initiatives.

Andrew attended Springfield Collegiate in

the Sunrise School Division, and every year students and staff come to the Andrew Dunn Walk, held the day before Mother's Day at the Oakbank Arena. The school donates their stage and students come and set it up.

Dunn said it's crucial schools do more to teach students about their own mental health, and prepare staff to recognize when students are struggling. She said teachers are "sort of like the first responders in a lot of cases," and making sure they're prepared is absolutely vital.

That's why [andrewdunn.org](http://andrewdunn.org) has helped Sunrise fund training so that teachers and students can be made more aware of the signs of someone who's struggling and considering suicide and what they can do to help.

Colleen Boomer is a social worker in Sunrise, and a member of the [andrewdunn.org](http://andrewdunn.org) committee, and she said the division deals with suicide and mental illness with proactive and preventative measures but is also prepared to be reactive if necessary.

Boomer has been trained in programs like Tattered Teddies, which tries to identify children aged 5-12 who might be struggling with mental health issues and even feeling suicidal, and Straight Talk, which helps teachers and other staff be aware of warning signs of suicide and give them basic tools to help the student. Boomer trains other staff members to deliver both programs.

She said schools have had to adapt to a changing world, and there's real consideration in today's classrooms of the fact that kids, even very young kids, can grapple with emotions and become overwhelmed by them. Schools now have some form of mindfulness teachings as part of the curriculum in almost every grade.

"Young children, or even teenagers, they're sometimes overwhelmed with feelings and they really don't know what it is and what to do with it and it just keeps happening," Boomer said.

"And it can turn into anxiety, it can turn into depression if we don't teach them, it's normal, we all get those (feelings). You just have to somehow control it."

She agreed with Dunn that giving teachers and other staff the skills to help suicidal students is crucial, and, she said, teachers need to be prepared in case a student suicide becomes their reality.

"We haven't had to deal with a suicide in many years, but just a death alone, it levels all the teachers, and the kids come to school and they count on the teachers to be in charge and cool and handling things...so we support the teachers," Boomer said.

When two Garden City Collegiate students committed suicide within days of each other last June, it sent shock waves through the



Judy Dunn will tell you she is well versed – not an authority but well versed – in the reality of suicide. It's a reality she wishes she knew far less about. Her son, Andrew, died by suicide when he was 23, but he'd been battling with suicidal thoughts from at least the age of 15. Judy Dunn fought the battle with him.

entire province, and Boomer said students and teachers in every division were impacted. Instagram and Twitter told students everywhere about the deaths and while Garden City obviously bore the brunt of the pain, Boomer said all students had fears and emotions they needed to deal with.

Sunrise was delivering a program called Safe Talk to Grade 11 students in Oakbank that day, and the three-hour long program that teaches students about warning signs of a suicidal student, and how to help them out, took on a very real tone. Boomer said she'd already sat in on a few Safe Talk sessions and was impressed with the students' attention and participation, but there was even more engagement that day.

"Maybe that's why they were so talkative," she said. "They didn't want that to happen in their school."

Sunrise, like all schools in the province, has a crisis response team and a policy on how to respond in crisis situations. Boomer

said though there was no official response in her division to last year's suicides, she said everyone was on "hyper alert" mode.

Kelly Schettler, co-ordinator of transition services at MacDonald Youth Services, said they have a mobile crisis unit that can assist if needed, but they have to be called in.

"We don't (go into the schools). School divisions at this point all have really good internal systems for responding at the time of crisis. What our mobile crisis team...does is we offer individual supports to any students or youth who might need it in the aftermath," Schettler said.

Schettler said while everyone is affected in the wake of a suicide, there's additional concern for close friends of the student who died and others who might be struggling with similar issues. She said those teens can react in different ways.

"Sometimes seeing the reality of what (suicide) is like, and what that has done for people, might be the reality check of what

a death is really like,” she said, noting they would still encourage the student to seek help or at least talk about their feelings.

Some students might go the other way and begin comparing themselves to the student who died, and figure if they did it, what’s the point for them, she said. And then there’s the feelings of guilt for not being able to help their friend.

“That’s why schools will have somebody present within the building, within the school available to students, because I think that it’s fair to say that there’s often students who staff might have more concerns about than others. So in the aftermath it’s worthwhile checking in if you’ve got a student that you know has had similar struggles, then you’d certainly want to check in with them, as well as close friends, people that they were in a relationship with, whether it’s a girlfriend, boyfriend or just friendships,” Schettler said.

Schettler said it’s important to let friends know that a suicide death isn’t their fault.

“You try to be reassuring. There’s nothing that anyone could do...it is never anybody’s fault,” she said.

“People might not be ready to accept that yet and so it’s the reassurance of just how absolutely sad that person must have been to have done something that...has no solution, that you can’t go back.”

And while counsellors certainly have their role, Schettler said even in a situation as difficult as suicide, people still want to talk to people they know. It could be a teacher they’ve formed a bond with or a coach they’ve spent a lot of time with. And that’s who should be checking in with the student on an ongoing basis and making sure they’re OK. If after talking, you’re still worried, then you should get professional help.

“We’re more likely to talk to people that we feel safe with,” she said.

“Me as a stranger, just because I know how to ask the questions, doesn’t necessarily make me the best person, because, why should they talk to me? For the person who has that relationship, the message would be ‘I’m really worried about you and I don’t know how to help you right now, but I’m gonna get you the help you need.’”

Schettler said if you are worried someone is suicidal, ask them. A common misconception is that by asking, you’ll put the thought in their head, and she said that’s wrong.

“It couldn’t be further from the truth. It’s my experience that when you ask the question, somebody who is struggling with those feelings will feel very relieved that it’s out in the open and they can actually talk about it.”

“That will not cause somebody to kill themselves.”



YAMIS organizer Loizza Aquino poses with fellow student Noah Martin. Aquino hopes to see more attention paid to mental health in schools.



Taylor Demetrioff, Director of Youth Programming for the Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba, spoke to students about his personal battle with mental health issues and about all the resources available to anyone struggling in their own life.



# From tragedy comes peace of mind

**L**oizza Aquino remembers the day last June when she had to go to school for the first time following her friend's death by suicide.

A memorial was already set up at her school, Vincent Massey, and candles and cards were placed among the students who were sitting there, remembering their friend, Miguel.

She said his death united the students in their grief.

"There was a lot of people just sitting there," Aquino said. "It was all kinds of people because he was friends with so many people. Whether you were popular or not popular, everyone was just sitting there together. It definitely struck a lot of people."

It struck 15-year-old Aquino perhaps harder than most. She gave the eulogy at her friend's funeral and she said they had been friends since she was a young girl. He had been the first person to make her aware of mental illness and the struggle some people have.

But even though he would talk to her and let her know when he was having a hard time, she never saw his death coming, and she has a hard time putting her feelings about it into words.

"I want to say (it's) tragic, but I don't think it really suits it. I just think that it was...I really don't know what word to use 'cause everyone was so shook by it, because no one saw it coming. He came to school the day before, talked to the same people, hung out with the same people, smiled at everyone, said the same things and did the same things he would have done. It was fine," she said.

"Then we said bye to each other at the end of the day, and that was it."

Aquino and a group of students from other Winnipeg high schools formed Peace of Mind 204 and a couple of months before Miguel's death, they were already working on YAMIS – Youth Against Mental Illness Stigma. His death put even more meaning behind the task at hand.

The 11 students who hail from Vincent Massey, Kelvin, Garden City, West Kildonan, Sturgeon Heights, St. Paul's and Churchill and make up Peace of Mind 204, want to remove the stigma from mental illness, and make everyone – those who suffer from mental health issues especially, but also others who don't – realize that there's no shame in asking for help.

"(The main point) is definitely to talk about it," Aquino said. A former MTS Young Humanitarian winner who fundraised for a school in Kenya, raised funds for typhoon victims in the Philippines, and distributed

"It was pretty unexpected, no warning signs whatsoever. He never really told me anything (at that time) even though he always told me if something was going on."

She said teenagers are under an incredible amount of pressure these days, often juggling school and jobs and working hard to be accepted by their peers and to find self worth. She said being cool or popular is hard in today's world, because "being yourself isn't cool anymore".

She thinks the stigma that surrounds mental illness kept Miguel from seeking out help. She said students don't want to admit

**The 11 students who hail from Vincent Massey, Kelvin, Garden City, West Kildonan, Sturgeon Heights, St. Paul's and Churchill and make up Peace of Mind 204, want to remove the stigma from mental illness, and make everyone – those who suffer from mental health issues especially, but also others who don't – realize that there's no shame in asking for help.**

anti-bullying Day of Pink t-shirts for newcomers to her school, Aquino has a history of encouraging young people to talk about their issues.

"You can't get help if no one knows you need it."

YAMIS took place at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People last month, and it brought together speakers and performers with the aim of getting people to realize the stigma that continues to surround mental illness is killing people.

Aquino said her friend, who was two years older than her, was skilled at hiding his problems, and she said she doubts others at their school had any idea he was struggling.

"Not many people knew how he was feeling. He was always...the type of guy to always smile, always tell you to have a good day, always tell you to have a good night, ask how you are...and always smiling," she said.

they can't keep up in math class, never mind admitting they're depressed.

"That's a lot of it. Especially because, you know, you're a guy, you're in Grade 12, you should be able to overcome any obstacles in your life, you need to be tough, you need to be strong," she said.

"People are afraid to be judged, to be thought of as a weak person."

Aquino said with Peace of Mind, they hope to appeal to their own age group to start accepting others for who and what they are and they also want the adults in their lives to take teenagers' concerns more seriously.

"Something I hear a lot is, 'oh, you're a teenager, what do you have to worry about?' And that makes me cringe every time."

*Follow Aquino on Twitter @loizzaaquino and on her blog at [loizzaaquino.blogspot.com](http://loizzaaquino.blogspot.com).*

BY KELLY FEWER

# LGBTTQ

## Beyond the textbooks

Every day Manitoba teachers in subject areas such as English Language Arts, History, Family Studies, Physical Education and the Sciences are making decisions about content to be used in their classrooms.

Unfortunately, not all are trusted to use their professional judgement in making those decisions.

Fear of parental and public backlash has made many teachers increasingly afraid to discuss sensitive topics and to use materials that could be valuable teaching tools, but may contain profanity, sexual content, or violence.

One area under that cloud of fear is the ability and willingness of teachers to speak with students about LGBTTQ issues in the classroom. Until quite recently, the traditional heterosexual view in curriculums has gone essentially unchallenged.

Unless students have teachers “who go beyond what the textbook provides, they may graduate from high school being none the wiser that heteronormativity paints an inaccurate picture of social life and perpetuates intolerance,” says Stephen Thornton, chair of the secondary education department at the University of South Florida.

Teachers can play a critical role in discrediting the idea that normal and heterosexual are synonymous terms.

For teachers, a vital task in the classroom is to break down stereotypes and expose students to different ways of thinking and being, in order to help them to open their minds and develop empathy for those who are treated as outsiders.

It is valuable and important to discuss different performances of masculinity and femininity in order to broaden “the students’ understandings of masculinity and femininity beyond the inflexible binaries that are most familiar in popular culture,” says Roberta Hammett, professor at Memorial University and researcher on gender issues.

This year on CBC’s annual “Canada Reads” competition, a young adult novel was featured for the first time. It was Raziel Reid’s *When Everything Feels like the Movies*. Reid’s novel follows Jude, a 15-year old boy who is openly gay and often wears make-up and feminine clothes. Living in a small town and being gay/trans, Jude is bullied, ridiculed and abused constantly, both at school and at home. In order to cope, Jude imagines he is the star of a

movie about his life and everyone who surrounds him is playing a role.

The theme of the 2015 Canada Reads competition was: “What is one book to break barriers?” As a young adult novel about a gay/trans youth, the book has tremendous potential to break down barriers for the LGBTTQ community.

However, one of the reasons panelists argued that this book would not be as effective in breaking barriers was that it would not be taught in schools due to some of the graphic sexual and violent content.

I would argue that this is a book that is desperately needed at the high school level. Studies have shown that the most commonly taught novels in English Language Arts have hardly changed in the last two to three decades.

Canonized texts like *The Catcher in the Rye* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* did break barriers when they were first taught in high school and *Catcher* remains one of the most banned books of all time. Holden Caulfield’s honest musings on issues such as sex, alcohol and family rang true for millions of youth, and helped them to understand and explore their own feelings on some of the same topics.

When *Everything Feels like the Movies* can be the *Catcher in the Rye* for today’s youth. Jude faces very serious issues such as bullying, physical and emotional abuse, self-acceptance and isolation. Many teens today will be able to relate to these issues and the raw and honest way they are described by the main character.

Unfortunately, the rawness of this character will be problematic for many parents and educators; there is a lot of profanity as well as some graphic sexual content throughout the novel. The inevitable focus on sexuality in materials that normalize the LGBTTQ point of view, is, I believe what has stopped many educators from including adolescent literature with LGBTTQ themes in their curriculums.

Queer literature is an emerging genre that generally includes literature that contains narratives that portray characters, plot and/or themes that reflect the experiences of members of the LGBTTQ community. There is very little queer literature in high school classrooms, but *When Everything Feels like the Movies* can change that.

“As we read stories, we activate the part of the brain that is

responsible for developing empathy,” says Leah Fowler, author and professor at the University of Lethbridge. That’s important as a common complaint from many educators is that today’s students lack empathy.

Teachers should be presenting texts to students with characters they can relate to or might encounter in their everyday lives, helping students to understand themselves and others on a deeper level. Characters like Jude invite young people to develop empathy, a step towards preventing the tragic teen suicides seen in the last several years, which have generally been precipitated by bullying.

While literature is a powerful tool for introducing ideas and opening up discussion on topics such as gender, Language Arts teachers are not the only ones who should be tasked with having these discussions with students. At the Annual General Meeting of The Manitoba Teachers’ Society (MTS) in 2013, the Society “voted overwhelmingly in favour of a resolution aimed at making sure all students feel included in Manitoba classrooms”.

This resolution asked the provincial government to “review policies to ensure that same-sex families and LGBTQ people are reflected in curricula.” This means that discussions and activities in all content areas should reflect a variety of lifestyles, rather than being exclusively heterosexual. The resolution was aimed to “seek to explicitly speak to sensitive issues being addressed in the classroom and in the Manitoba curriculum ... [to] aid in creating inclusive learning environments for all students and teachers.”

Talking with students and encouraging them to challenge societal norms and to talk to their parents and each other is a really important role of the classroom teacher.

Teachers are not operating in a bubble, but instead trying to affect change outside of the walls of the classrooms. In order to do this, teachers have to challenge students’, as well as their own ways of thinking, and often that will be with material that can be uncomfortable.

In *Everything Feels like the Movies*, Jude says, “You might be sort of real when you start school but you’re quickly typecast and learn all your lines by rote.” Educators should not want students to feel typecast, but to feel free to be who they are without consequence or ridicule.

*Kelly Fewer is an English teacher at Transcona Collegiate.*



## Raziell Reid

*Author of *When Everything Feels like the Movies*, the first young adult novel featured on CBC's annual *Canada Reads* competition!*

# Reaching out to refugees

BY JENNIFER MCFEE



*Early Childhood Centre*



*The Humankind Academy*



HUMANKIND

With education anything is possible

Early education can shape the lives of children, whether they're living in the comforts of Canada or struggling to survive in a refugee camp.

That's one of the motivating factors behind the non-profit humanitarian organization called Humankind International, which aims to empower young children by providing education opportunities.

It all began in 2008 when three friends — Abdi Ahmed, Abdirezak Adam and Muuxi Adam — gathered at Tim Hortons to chat. Muuxi had just returned from a trip to Ethiopia to be reunited with his mother. While he was there, he noticed many impoverished children with no chance to go to school.

All three of the Somali-born refugees believe strongly in the right to learn. They knew they couldn't just sit back and sip coffee without finding a way to improve access to education.

The three motivated men formed the grassroots organization, and they soon discovered that their Canadian-born friends wanted to get involved as well.

They knew that education was also a concern at the Dadaab, a cluster of three refugee camps located in Kenya near the Somali border, since Abdi and Abdirezak had both lived there themselves.

"We asked people at the Dadaab refugee camp what was of immediate need for the community. They said there were a lot of kids under the age of eight who were just playing around with no access to anything. They said there's no early childhood education, especially for children between the age of five and eight," said Abdi, who lived in Dadaab for 12 years.

"For us, we know that education at an early age can shape the mind of the child. We know that it helps the brain function better, and this can help determine what the child will be in the future when they grow up. So we decided that the only way that we can help with this community is to think about setting up an early childhood centre."

They embarked on a fundraising blitz and raised more than \$60,000, with the majority of donations coming from Manitoba schools. In one of Dadaab's three refugee camps, they built a school for five to eight-year-old children. After that, the students can attend a primary school run by the United Nations.

"We took in the first batch of students at the school in January 2014. We had three classrooms and space for 71 kids at the time. Then we had 400 kids show up on the first day, so it was quite difficult to make decisions on who to take and who to leave out," Abdi said.

"Muuxi and community members reached a decision on the most needy at the time when

we started. We took on 71 kids, and 70 per cent of them were malnourished. They did not have access to many other nutrition needs as well as education, so we took in them."

Their goal was to double the number of students in the school by the following January, and thanks to successful fundraising efforts, they were able to reach that target.

Today, the school provides education for up to a maximum of 150 students, paid for in part through an annual fundraising dinner held every June for World Refugee Day. The students are of Somali descent, with half coming from the refugee camp and the other half from the impoverished local community. This inclusion of children from the local community promotes acceptance of the project in the area.

The school employs three teachers plus a head teacher, as well as a cook who provides a nutritional breakfast and lunch. Today, only three children show signs of malnutrition, a drastic improvement from when the school first opened.

"When you're a refugee, there are a lot of things working against you already. You're not allowed to work in the country where you are staying. You are living in a camp. You're not living in a normal housing environment in a normal city. You cannot get higher education. All these things are working against you as a refugee. If a refugee has dropped out of school, it's even worse," Abdi said.

"So for us, our goal is to ensure that many of the refugee kids between the ages of five and eight years get the early head start. If they get the early head start, then the prospects are greater of them completing primary school and secondary school, which is the highest level in the refugee camp."

For Abdi, he can see first-hand the value of education and its impacts in his own life.

"By the time we moved to Kenya, I was already in Grade 7. I completed the rest of school and got a scholarship to study in a high school that was closer to Nairobi," he said.

"Then I went to university in Kenya, where I studied environmental planning and management. That was all before I moved to Canada in 2003."

While he was living in Canada, he received a scholarship to study in Australia. He attended University of Queensland from 2011 to 2012, earning a master's degree in international peace and conflict resolution.

To help more refugee children attain education and improve their lives, Abdi hopes local schools will get involved in the initiative.

"It would be good to create passions for kids to help other kids," he said.

"Our utmost priority would be for people to

help us by becoming monthly donors so we can have the operation of the school supported. Then we can always continue to fundraise to build more schools when the schools are self-sufficient with monthly donors."

A \$25 monthly donation for 12 months provides full tuition for one student for an entire school year, including food, transportation, uniforms, supplies and instructors. Monthly donations can also be made in smaller amounts, since \$10 per month provides nutritious meals and snacks for one student, and \$5 per month provides safe transportation for one student.

"The other way is block-by-block fundraising by kids, which helps us to continue to have more funds to help us to reach other kids," Abdi said.

"So if classrooms can get together to fundraise locally, whether it's five cents a kid or 25 cents a kid, they can take the challenge to help."

So far, more than two dozen Manitoba schools have already contributed to the cause.

Anita Riedl, an EAL teacher at General Wolfe School and a new board member for Humankind International, is tackling the task of fundraising.

"I want to do monthly fundraisers with our EAL program and extend it to the school to start a human rights club," she said.

"The EAL students really connect with a project like this because some of them have lived in refugee camps or they've fled and lived displaced in other countries or their parents were refugees who experienced war more directly. We have a lot of Somali kids that are from that community who know Muuxi and Abdi."

Some schools might consider including Humankind International as part of social justice curriculum. Others might take on fundraising efforts as a classroom or entire school. It's also possible to arrange for a speaker from Humankind International to provide school presentations, Abdi adds.

"If a school can get together to be able to sponsor 20 kids for one month to have their education, that pays the teachers, the cook who provides the food, the food itself, the hygiene supports, the supplies for the school. On top of that, we also provide uniforms for the kids, writing materials and more," he said.

"Sometimes if kids can take on one specific thing, it can be very helpful. They could pay for just one teacher or sponsor the meal of the kids for a month. There is a lot of passion in the community here to support this need for help. We are able to benefit from that because this community is a generous, giving community."

For more information or to get involved, visit the website at [www.humankindintl.org](http://www.humankindintl.org) or email [contact@humankindintl.org](mailto:contact@humankindintl.org).

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# Report undermines education

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BY PAUL TAILLEFER

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The beginning of every school year holds the promise of new and exciting experiences for students even though they face it with some amount of trepidation. They are happy to be reunited with their classmates and look forward to meeting their teachers. This is the beginning of a year long journey of discovery. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that a recent report by the C.D. Howe Institute and reaction by the Winnipeg Free Press has chosen to undermine Manitoba's public education system rather than to celebrate this new beginning.

The C.D. Howe Institute is a Conservative think tank which would like nothing better than to apply a business model to our schools. Students are not clients and should not be treated as such. They deserve the individualized teaching given by the highly qualified professional teachers who are the pride of Manitoba. Organizations like the Howe Institute keep referring to the results of standardized tests as the ultimate gauge of student success and keep forgetting that those results are the snapshot of student performance on one day of the school year. I wonder how companies would feel if we rated them when their employees came to work sick or their managers had just come from home where they had faced a personal family crisis. Our students face many challenges at and away from school and it is unfair to label them based on the results of one day. I believe that David Johnson, as an economist, has little to contribute to the complexities of running an education system.

The Howe Institute spends much time speaking to teacher compensation and concludes there is no relationship between well paid and qualified teachers and student success. On this, I question the interpretation of Manitoba's position within Canada but what I find really interesting is that they ignore world-wide comparisons which the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has shown demonstrate the direct correlation between well paid and highly qualified teachers and student success. Manitoba is on the right track.



The C.D. Howe Institute is a Conservative think tank which would like nothing better than to apply a business model to our schools. Students are not clients and should not be treated as such. They deserve the individualized teaching given by the highly qualified professional teachers who are the pride of Manitoba.

Free Press editors also question the wisdom of local tax levies – this is a direct attack on local decision making. In provinces where local school tax levies have been eliminated, school board trustees have virtually lost all influence when it comes to meeting local needs as those are determined through provincial funding sent to school divisions. Why would parents and taxpayers want to give up the right to deal with needs specific to their communities?

The Free Press makes the insinuation that The Manitoba Teachers' Society is in league with the NDP government while they have a written policy which confirms their non-partisan nature. It is ridiculous to make this statement while ignoring the fact that many, if not all, sectors lobby government on their particular issues.

One final note – as the school year begins, Manitobans can be thankful for the binding arbitration provision for collective bargaining with teachers. You just have to look eastward to Ontario and think how happy students and parents would be if Manitoba faced the same labour disruptions which have put student graduation and extra-curricular activities at risk. All in all, I think Manitoba is in a good place and you can be sure that the teachers who spent parts of their summers improving their qualifications and attending professional development are ready for the challenges which await.

*Paul Taillefer is former president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and newly-minted Manitoban.*



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***– Statistics Canada, May 2015***

# Union Women! The many & the few

**BY GEORGE STEPHENSON**



When the last Annual General Meeting of The Manitoba Teachers' Society ended, delegates had selected a new provincial executive.

Only four of the 13 members of the 2015-2016 executive were women.

But delegates didn't have a diverse slate to choose from.

Of the candidates, 54 per cent were men; in a union where 70 per cent of the members are women.

And MTS is hardly alone.

A headline in the Toronto Star last July put it bluntly: "Why are most teachers' unions still run by men?"

It's a question that could be asked of more than teachers' unions as the past two decades have seen a shift of union membership overall. A Statistics Canada report last spring found that women are more likely than men to be unionized.

"Today, a union member is slightly more likely to be a woman, and working in an office, school or hospital," it said. The differences have come about mainly by the decline in manufacturing jobs, traditionally held by men.

But even as women have become a majority in unionized workplaces across Canada, many, if not most, union leaders are still men.

It is changing, but slowly. Unions, even those with female majorities, are reawakening women's caucuses and committees in an effort to encourage more women to become active in their unions.

"We need to be diverse, to reflect our membership and society," says Bobbi Taillefer, MTS General Secretary and only the second woman (the first was in 2005) to hold the union's top management position in its 96-year history.

Taillefer agrees it is odd to have a women's caucus in an organization where more than 70 per cent of the members are women. Women's caucuses and committees were initially formed years ago when men dominated both the membership and leadership of most unions.

"We still have to work to eliminate every barrier that women might face or feel they face in contributing to the organization," Taillefer says.

The barriers that women in the union see are diverse and many go back decades.

"There are the obvious answers," says Diane Beresford, MTS president in 1997-1998 and now a staff officer. "Women still have more responsibilities at home, from caring for children to caring for elderly parents.

They may not have the time to be involved in union activity, too."

Just over 10 years ago the European Trade Union



Confederation investigated the issue and found “the under-representation of women in the trade union decision-making bodies is due to the following factors:

- “The existence of prejudice, conveyed by hostile reactions, attempts and dissuasion against taking on trade union responsibilities,
- “The rigidity of some rules of procedure,
- “Women’s lack of confidence in their own abilities,
- “The unequal division of family responsibilities (this problem is all the more acute due to the significant number of single mothers).”

The report also cited the male-dominated nature of unions from the times and style of meetings to the availability of members which “means that trade union activity encroaches on the time generally set aside for private life.”

Arlyn Filewich says those were definite factors when she got involved with MTS. She is a staff officer and former member of the provincial executive and former president of the Pembina Trails Teachers’ Association and a mother of three.

“As a wife and mother, it does connect,” she says. “I can identify with those struggles. Being involved in the Society takes a certain level of commitment, both personally and as a family.”

Filewich says she was lucky in that her children understood and supported social activism and she had a husband willing to take over family responsibilities. At the same time, she says unions have to recognize both men and women need a balance in their lives.

“People should be looking for ways to become part of an organization, but still have a family life. You can do it without it taking up all your time.”

It also involves choices that women have to make that men don’t.

In the Toronto Star article the president of the Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers’ Union, Patricia Minnan-Wong, points out she became active in the union before the two male presidents who preceded her.

“I left to get married and raise my family and then I came back after five years. It’s interesting because I would have been ahead of them on the track to become president, but I made that choice.”

Everyone interviewed said it is crucial for more women to become involved for the union to better represent the majority of its members.

“I got involved in unionism as a young teacher because I didn’t think I was being represented,” Filewich says.

Many women in MTS wonder if the 15-year fight over maternity leave provisions wouldn’t have been accomplished sooner or had been a

greater priority if more women were involved in the union in general and bargaining specifically.

The history of unionism, however, is ironically pockmarked by a lack of understanding or caring about women’s issues and opinions. It’s ironic in that the earliest unions – involved in fabric and clothing manufacturing – were organized by women.

Even some of the gains made by women over the years were accomplished for less than altruistic reasons. Some unions in the U.S. joined the fight for equal pay between men and women not because it was fair, but because employers were hiring more and more women, and fewer men, because they could pay them less. In Manitoba equal pay provisions weren’t totally achieved until the Sixties.

In looking at women in the union movement last year, the Guardian said unions of the past did not treat women well.

“Strikes and negotiations were a beer-and-sandwiches job almost exclusively conducted by and for ‘the brothers.’ Meetings were at night, when most women were at home engaged in ironing shirts and childcare. ‘I’m all right, Jack’ was the slogan while, with honourable exceptions, the men paid scant attention to the needs of Jill, often the sole breadwinner in the family. The image of the average trade unionist was a white, working-class and blue-collar bloke: ‘male, pale and stale.’”

There is still a hangover from those days, especially in the way some unions operate and the way in which business has been traditionally conducted, say women within MTS.

Filewich says women and men approach issues differently and discuss them differently and some women feel uncomfortable to speak up.

Beresford agrees, saying that the perception still exists that to be involved in union activity means to be more aggressive and outspoken, especially in areas where there is confrontation or disagreement.

“I don’t think that it’s true any longer,” she says. “We can settle more issues by being cordial and collaborative, co-operative. These are, stereotypically, qualities of women.

“We have to rethink how unions operate and make them more welcoming to women by acknowledging we can accomplish just as much through sweet reason.”

The European union report made the same observation, pointing out that such issues as times of meetings, style of meetings and trade union jargon are still barriers for women.

Taillefer said that is one of the main reasons the Society reinstated the women’s caucus, which meets during the MTS Annual General Meeting.

It is aimed at helping women feel more comfortable raising issues important to them and speaking up during debates.

Whether change continues its slow pace or gathers steam, women who have been

As the numbers of young women in teaching grows, Diane Beresford worries that fewer and fewer of them will become involved in their union.

Beresford, a former president of MTS and now a staff officer, says the proliferation in the use of term contracts for beginning teachers is a dark cloud over their fledgling careers.

“We have a lot of young teachers who have no job security because of the use of term contracts,” she says. “So what do they do? They volunteer for more extra-curricular activities and avoid activities that might have an impact on their careers.”

The involvement of young teachers in the union dovetails with efforts to involve more women. Of teachers up to the age of 25, about 85 per cent are women. Many are on term contracts even though they are, for all intents and purposes, permanently employed.

“It takes a lot of courage to be involved in the union when you’re on a term contract,” Beresford says. “You might get involved in a PD committee, but if you’re involved in bargaining you might fear being seen as a troublemaker or difficult to work with down the road.”

The use of term contracts has resulted in a number of grievances and MTS has been looking at what it can do to rectify the issue.

involved in the union said the benefits of involvement outweigh the commitments of time and energy. They said it is rewarding just in terms of professional development, but also in helping accomplish changes beneficial to teachers and student learning.

# Teachers bring Cup to classroom

**I**t might seem like football and dance are two different disciplines, but for high school teacher Mary Page, they are natural partners and she's managed to combine them in her Grade 9/10 dance class this fall.

She's borrowed the lyrics from the CFL Grey Cup Party Song, applied them to line dancing, and together with her students, has choreographed a new dance that has allowed them to bring their love of football from the field to the dance floor.

The idea struck her when she saw that the Winnipeg-based Grey Cup Festival team was providing an expansive teachers' tool kit on how to use football to teach everything from math to sciences, social studies to language arts, and culture to community spirit.

"I went through the supplement and saw there was lots there about team building and how it's so important to work together on a football team and that's true about dance as well. And I've got a few boys in that class and some very athletic girls so I wanted to help connect football and dance for them," said Page of Transcona Collegiate. "We may even teach it to the whole school before Grey Cup day."

The 103rd Grey Cup Festival Education Supplement was adopted from similar lesson plans created in Saskatchewan when that province hosted the Grey Cup two years ago. The resource went through a rigorous review by the Manitoba Department of Education before it was given a seal of approval for use in Manitoba schools and started being distributed electronically to the schools this fall.

That's how Nissa Chmilowsky, a Grade 5/6 teacher at Darwin Elementary School, says she first saw it and thought it was just another way for her to bring real-world events into the classroom.

"My first impression of the tool kit was that it offered something across all the grades. It didn't matter what grade you teach, I could see there was something there I could pull out," said Chmilowsky, who plans to use it immediately to explore community engagement and fair play in her St. Vital classroom.

"The Investors Group Field is just across the river from us so the kids are pretty aware of football and it's an opportunity to



Mary Page and her students at Transcona Collegiate have created their own dance for the 103rd Grey Cup.

**"I went through the supplement and saw there was lots there about team building and how it's so important to work together on a football team and that's true about dance as well."**

*- Mary Page, Transcona Collegiate*

teach that nothing comes easy, that hard work is involved," said Chmilowsky, who wears her Blue Bombers shirt to school on game days.

Meanwhile, Cheryl Marsh at Springfield Heights School says she'll be using the education supplement and CFL sports stats in her Grade 5 math classes, to teach measurements, distances and probabilities.

"I try to do math in a fun way and orient it to life. Students can buy into math better if it includes a real-world problem. For example we'll go online and look at Investors Group Field through Google Earth and learn how to measure the field. Or we'll set up a Google map with all the cities that have CFL teams as a way to start learning about Canada's cities. We'll learn how far those cities are apart and how far

players will have to travel to get here," said Marsh.

"As teachers we compete with so many things – iPads, PS4s, phones – so to teach in an entertaining way and connect to an event like the Grey Cup, helps. The more relevant we make education, the more students want to learn," she said.

All of this makes Jason Smith, President of the Grey Cup Festival, want to kick up his heels and dance with the students. He and his staff know that hosting the Grey Cup is a once-in-a-generation opportunity and the CFL and the Winnipeg Blue Bombers hope everyone can get engaged.

"The education supplement is just one way for us all to get the entire province to share in the Grey Cup spirit," Smith says.

Teachers who use the 103rd Grey Cup Festival Educational Supplement in their classroom between September 8 and November 29, 2015, will have opportunities to showcase their students' work and will be entered to win a school visit from Blue Bombers players and other prizes as part of the 103rd Grey Cup Festival. Information will be sent to teachers directly so be sure to stay connected by registering your class at [www.103greycupfestival.ca](http://www.103greycupfestival.ca)

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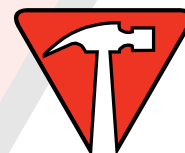
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# PORTFOLIO



## Regret the Error

"Karol Wojtyla was referred to in Saturday's Credo column as 'the first non-Catholic pope for 450 years'. This should, of course, have read "non-Italian". We apologise for the error."

- London Times

## Hold page one!

"Why this is the most important campaign the NDP has ever fought"

- The Globe and Mail

"Flooding hurts food production"

- Winnipeg Free Press

## Stop them, before they run again!

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON



As the endless federal election campaign comes to a thankful end, hopefully there have been lessons learned by the political parties.

This is especially true in Manitoba where we will now slog through the pre-campaign and then the real campaign for the provincial election in April.

### Let's hope that the parties:

**1.** Learn something about social media. During the federal campaign the Conservative Party dumped six candidates, four for apparently saying what they actually believe on Facebook and Twitter. Among their transgressions: mocking the disabled, writing racist and/or sexist comments, making prank telephone calls and, really, for just being colossal asshats.

The Liberals had three candidates resign and a fourth got the boot for past online comments (one who said marijuana doesn't harm children and another for telling someone they were a waste of sperm and should blow their brains out). The NDP had two resign for old comments about Israel and an extremist Jewish group.

Now, the parties have a choice. Maybe weed out the frat boys and lunatics ahead of time or, if they get through the Google-free screening process, let them run. Let voters decide whether to elect someone who video tapes himself dressed as a terrorist making prank telephone calls or another who thinks men are superior to women. At least voters



# AND GET OFF MY LAWN!

A small Alabama town is bringing in what has been dubbed the Saggy Pants Ordinance, banning low-riding pants, short dresses and short shorts.

"We have people walking down the street with their hand in front of them holding up their pants," said Dadeville City Councilman Frank Goodman. "If you come to my house you are going to pull them up before you get on my property, much less in my door. I prayed about this. I know that God would not go around with pants down."

Not stopping there, it also voted to include short dress and short shorts.

# 2011 is the new 2015

Pressprogress.ca pointed out Stephen Harper made an election announcement in Ontario in the same city at the same factory, outlining the same policy he did during the 2011 campaign.

Harper promised at the 2011 and 2015 event at a plastics factory in Markham that a Conservative government would enact reforms to help immigrants get foreign credentials recognized more quickly. Oh, yes he was also joined at both events by MP Paul Calandra.

would know what their candidates think rather than knowing how well they can recite what the leader says they think.

But, no, we will most likely be left with Stepford candidates who say nothing at all, have never used a computer and whose last policy beliefs were scratched on the tiles of a bathroom wall or offered from the top of a barroom stool.

2. Stop recruiting from the cast of the Walking Dead for those phony photo ops -- the ones where the leader stands at a podium and the campaign props in the background are real people who look like they just won a free colonoscopy. Then again, maybe this one should stay. It is pretty hilarious to examine what's behind the leaders, especially when they prop up children, whose dead eyes are rolling everywhere but at the boring guy in the front, toting up the lost minutes of their lives.

It can, of course, go a bit overboard. There was Stephen Harper making an announcement with a group of soot-covered firefighters in B.C., while the wild fires continued unabated in the background. Good thing he didn't take questions. We might have lost a couple hundred more acres.

3. Are faced with a media that aren't suffering from memory loss and have at least a tenuous grasp of the issues. One local CBC host did an interview where it was apparent he didn't know the difference

between government debt and deficit. It's pretty hard to have an educated electorate when the interviewer doesn't even know what they're talking about. And they might also compare what parties say now, compared with what they have said in the past. Media people had such praise for the Daily Show with Jon Stewart because he pointed out the hypocrisy of many politicians and political positions. It's not terribly difficult. It's called research. Not stenography.

Through this past campaign there were websites doing a better job than the regular media with some fact-checking the promises and claims of the parties. And why is that somehow separate from reporting the news and separate from the media outlets themselves?

None of this will likely change for a while, anyway. We'll still see the kids trotted out like lawn signs to provide living backgrounds, candidates tripped up by stupid things they said online when they were young or simply because they are stupid. There are, however, some bright spots emerging in campaigns, especially the information available to voters. Websites and blogs, some independent, some supporting one party or another many times provide more insight and thought than the old media. Much of what we learned about candidates' musings online was uncovered by a lone blogger who just wanted to show what Conservative candidates have posted in the past.

# PRESCIENT PROSE

In 1985, a New York Times writer saw the future and it didn't include computers.

"The limitations come from what people actually do with computers, as opposed to what the marketers expect them to do. On the whole, people don't want to lug a computer with them to the beach or on a train to while away hours they would rather spend reading the sports or business section of the newspaper. Somehow, the microcomputer industry has assumed that everyone would love to have a keyboard grafted on as an extension of their fingers. It just is not so."

"No matter how inexpensive the machines become, and no matter how sophisticated their software, I still can't imagine the average user taking one along when going fishing."



# Forks winter aims at students

BY MATEA TUHTAR

When the snow starts flying and tourists start fleeing, the Forks will be turning its attention to Manitoba students.

The 'original meeting place' in Winnipeg and heritage site, The Forks offers free educational programming for teachers and students in the fall to spring months.

One of the programs is the Arctic Glacier Winter Park programming - a popular option that fills up very quickly, according to Chelsea Thomson, Manager of Marketing and Communications at The Forks.

"It's a great way to get kids out and about in the winter," says Thomson. The Winter Park program allows schools to customize a day of activities in and around The Forks, while attending three learning stations. For one of the stations, students gather inside a traditional teepee and listen to Aboriginal elders tell stories about the history of The Forks site and the Aboriginal community.

"They tell the story of Nanobush and the winter season, and a lot of their spiritual stories that are related to winter," says Thomson, adding that the teepees have a fire pit and benches, and offer wool blankets to keep kids warm.

A craft activity goes along with the story telling where the kids create their own Aboriginal art.

When it's time to go outside, students learn the art of snow sculpting with the help of professional sculptors. The kids work with hard packed pieces of snow and use different plastic tools to make their own snow sculpted creations.

The program usually runs from 11am-1pm, and teachers can round out their day by including winter activities such as skating, tobogganing and snowboarding.

"Groups often pair the Winter Park programming with ice skating," says Thomson. "The Forks has over a kilometer of skating trails on land, as well as two rinks and river skating." Ice skate rentals are available at The Forks market, and a special school priced lunch program is offered at participating restaurants for those groups who wish to stay for a meal.

Once spring hits, another programming option available to schools is the Target Zero Eco Kids tour, sponsored by the

Multi-Material Stewardship Manitoba, which goes along with The Forks' goal to hit "Target Zero": zero garbage, zero water waste and zero carbon emission.

"We partnered up with a group called 'Green Kids,'" says Thomson. "Their actors prepared a script based on the green initiatives we do here at The Forks, and they tour kids around The Forks site in a fun theatrical way that's really engaging to the audience." The Tour encourages participants to think 'green' and minimize their own carbon footprint, and is offered in both French and English.

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- *Chelsea Thomson, Manager Marketing and Communications, The Forks*

Some of the initiatives that students can see on the tour includes the geothermal heating and cooling system that uses energy stored in the earth, the river and ground water, as well as recycling the energy produced in The Forks Market.

Another spot on the tour is the BIOVATOR- an industrial style composter that takes all the organic waste from The Forks tenants, as well as the CMHR, the restaurant on the bridge, and various downtown business that participate in the office collection program. The compost material is then used around The Forks site.

"We also have an urban garden, as well as an orchard," adds Thomson. "The vegetables that are grown in the garden are used in the kitchen at Smith restaurant, and the



orchard has over 60 fruit bearing trees and 75 different fruit bearing shrubs." Thomson says that it's impressive to learn what kind of fruit you can grow in Manitoba, including apples, apricots, cherries, pears and plums, and even tropical fruit like lemons.

The Forks also uses grey water as part of their irrigation systems. And if the students smell french fries on their tour, it might be coming from a tractor near by. All of the equipment at The Forks is powered by bio-fuel from the waste vegetable oil coming from food vendors' deep fryers.

The Forks educational programming needs to be booked ahead of time by contacting The Forks event manager at [education@theforks.com](mailto:education@theforks.com) or by calling 204-987-4378.

Teachers can also visit the site on their own and do a self-guided walking tour with their class with brochures that explore the many historical highlights of the area. For more information visit: [www.theforks.com](http://www.theforks.com)



# wellness FORUM

Please join us for The Manitoba Teachers' Society's 3rd Annual Wellness Forum

**Save the Date**  
**Saturday, November 7, 2015**

The 2015 Wellness Forum planning committee is pleased to offer this exciting event for the third year in a row!

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