

THE MANITOBA

Teacher

DECEMBER 2016 VOLUME 95 NUMBER 3 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



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8:30am – 4:00pm
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8:30am – 4:00pm
Open to public and school tours

9:30am – 3:00pm
Essential Skills stage interactive demonstrations

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Teacher

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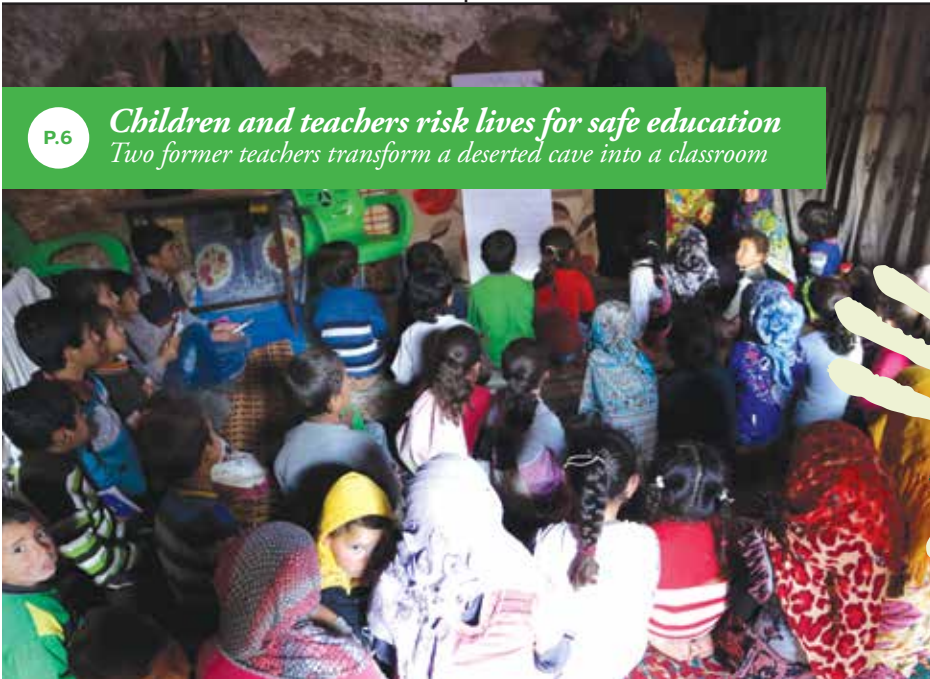
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

NORM GOULD

Most teachers in Manitoba have never experienced the stress and strain of deciding whether to strike and then to walk out of their classrooms because of a bargaining impasse.

Since we don't have the basic right to withhold our services, we have never experienced the divisions and tension and, yes, guilt that comes with leaving our students and not continuing the work we love to do.

Last month all those passions and emotions confronted the professors at the University of Manitoba when they, as members of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA), took strike action.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society was one of the first outside groups to support the professors in their dispute with the university administration. Our members were on the picket line with UMFA and we supplied pickets with food and drinks.

Some people no doubt wondered why we were involving ourselves in the dispute. That this strike wasn't our drama.

Members did so on their own and as part of an MTS initiative for a number of reasons. As a union we certainly support the collective actions of other unions. This is especially true with a union in which we have so much (except the right to strike) in common. We can imagine what an agonizing decision it must have been for teachers to halt classes, even temporarily. We know that taking such a step would not have been done lightly.

And given the parallels in their negotiations and ours, the university experience could well become ours when collective agreements expire in a few years. While UMFA negotiates with the university, as teachers do with school boards, the provincial government is always in the background, peering over the shoulder of the administration. There may come a time when we feel its influence on our negotiations as well.

Beyond that, we also have a close relationship with the university faculties as many of their education students are our student members and most will be full members of MTS, or another teachers' union, in the future.

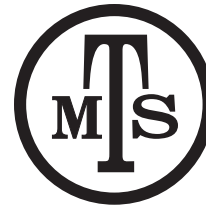
We have a responsibility to ensure education students are getting the best education to become working teachers.

That is why we issued notices to students about the strike and how they should handle their teacher practicum. It was our view that without appropriate supervision by faculty advisors, teacher candidates could not function as student teachers and therefore could not perform the usual roles of teacher candidates.

At the same time we kept in touch with the dean of education to emphasize our position and encourage initiatives to ensure students would receive a proper education without undermining the goals and efforts of the faculty association.

Overall, we looked at the situation as a shared struggle, albeit without sharing the hardship. As I said to the pickets early in the strike: "We stand side by side with our UMFA colleagues. We want a fair deal. We deserve a deal. And we want one now."

We have some concern we may be repeating that demand on behalf of public school teachers at some point down the road.



The Manitoba Teachers' Society

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INSIDE MTS SUCCESS IN COMMITMENT TO ORANGE SHIRT DAY

BOBBI TAILLEFER, GENERAL SECRETARY

When people come together to work for a common goal wonderful things happen. The most recent example of the power of the MTS collective was made evident with Orange Shirt Day.

Orange Shirt Day was an initiative that arose from a story shared during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One woman's story about her residential school experience as a young girl illustrated the dehumanization that occurred during her time there.

In 1973, Phyllis Jack, of Dog Creek reserve in British Columbia, was obliged to attend a residential school despite the fact that she had a loving family and she lived in a healthy community where learning and education were valued. However, because of the government edict, her family prepared for her departure. Like all other students preparing for grade one, Phyllis went shopping for new school clothes. Six year old Phyllis, accompanied by her granny chose a shiny orange shirt as her school attire because she thought that the shirt was beautiful and it made her feel happy.

When she arrived at the residential school, the shirt was taken away as part of the plan to "take the Indian out of the child" by sanitizing any connections to home, family and community. Phyllis

was devastated by the loss of the shirt, but it was just one among many losses that she was to experience.

Orange Shirt Day acknowledges and honours all residential school attendees and, in fact, the gesture of wearing the shirt is a means by which we are repairing a wrong. Effectively, people all across Canada gave Phyllis back her shiny orange shirt and posed a gesture of reconciliation for her and all other residential school attendees.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society, acting on the leadership of the Provincial Executive, MTS staff and our Aboriginal Voice and Action Standing Committee, supported, promoted and implemented this initiative. Our committee developed lesson plans for all age groups. These were available, on our website, free of charge to members and the community at large. As well, MTS staff ensured appropriate media coverage for the day and liaised with educational partners across Manitoba to ensure the day's success.

And success we had! Our shirt and message were retweeted by many organizations and individuals - including the Mayor of Toronto (the Manitoba Teachers' Society logo was on that shirt in that tweet)! But the sweetest success was that the Orange Shirt Day section



on our website and the lesson plans were the most popular hit on our website and remained so for quite some time.

As a teacher, I wish that six year old Phyllis had had a different school experience and I know we can't give that back to her but what we will do is make sure that Orange Shirt Day becomes an annual event that remains a lesson for others – one of respect for diversity and a love of all cultures. Mark your calendar for Sept. 30, 2017.



Maternity & Parental Leave

Are you planning to take maternity and/or parental leave?
Information packages are available from:

Nancy Kerr, Staff Officer

The Manitoba Teachers' Society
Teacher Welfare Department

Phone: 204-831-3086 / 1-800-262-8803

Fax: 204-831-3077 / 1-866-799-5784

Email: nkerr@mbteach.org



**The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society**



Children in the Syrian Arab Republic risk their lives every day just to go to school. Since the conflict began in 2011, there have been more than 4,000 attacks on schools. In the northern governorate of Idleb, two former teachers have transformed a deserted cave into a classroom, so students can get an education in a safe place.

CLASSROOMS

DAMASCUS, Syrian Arab Republic – In the Syrian Arab Republic, going to school for many children is fraught with danger. Every day, children and teachers risk their lives to reach a classroom, as schools continue to come under attack. Yet despite these risks, they persist in doing everything they can to get an education that is rightfully theirs. Their stories are ones of determination and resilience.

One such story comes from a rural area in the northern Syrian governorate of Idleb. Almost all of the children who study at this school have fled violence in northern rural Hama over a year ago, and sought refuge in caves and tents that are spread along this rural area.

Last year, some of the children living in rural Idleb had an opportunity to catch up on the education they have missed. Ahmad* and his wife, who were both teachers in Hama before they were displaced themselves, found a deserted cave which they cleaned up and turned into a school. “We started with children who live nearby, then we expanded and now we have almost 120 students,” he says.

The increasing number of students in the school stands as a testament to the children’s determination to learn despite the terrible odds stacked against them. “We have so many children coming now that we’ve had to divide the day into shifts according to children’s age,” Ahmad says. “The cave was

too small to host all the children, so we have separate times for younger children to come and learn the alphabet, while the older ones who have already been to school learn other topics later.”

There are some drawbacks to running a school in a cave. “During last winter, the cave flooded and we considered stopping the whole project, but children insisted that we continue and we moved to a tent until the cave was dry again,” says Ahmad. “The school is too primitive, but at least it protects the children from bombardment.”

For the children who attend, it’s a bittersweet experience. Muhammad, aged 9, left his town in Hama 10 months ago. “I couldn’t go to school because of the



“ I couldn’t go to school because of the bombardment and we were afraid of the planes. I miss my friends so much and I wish that we go back to our old school. At least we had desks there. We have to sit on the floor here which hurt our feet and back. ”

- Muhammad, 9 year old



“ I miss my old school so much. I also miss our village and our home. But even though we don’t have classes or desks here, but the teachers are so nice. I wish the war to end and I go back to my house and school. I miss everything before the war. ”

- Samah, 9 year old

UNICEF is supporting more than 1,200 dedicated young volunteers to conduct a massive door-to-door campaign to map the numbers and situation of out-of-school children, identify why these children are out of school and reach out to parents and children with information about simplified school enrollment processes and the right to education.

IN CAVES BY UNICEF CANADA SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

bombardment and we were afraid of the planes. I miss my friends so much and I wish that we could go back to our old school. At least we had desks there. We have to sit on the floor here which hurts our feet and back,” he says.

“I learn Arabic, English and mathematics, and I sometimes play with my friends,” says Nadia, also 9. “This school doesn’t have enough light but we are not scared here.”

For many Syrian children, school is a distant memory as the conflict has cost them over five years of their education. For others, it is a word they hear, not knowing what it actually is, having never seen the inside of a classroom. For all of them, education remains an ambition.

In today’s reality in the Syrian Arab Republic, one in three schools is not in use, and many of the schools that remain lack adequate teaching staff, water and hygiene facilities. Many children have been killed or injured in attacks. They live in constant fear as they don’t know when the next attack will come.

Back in Idlib, Ahmad and his wife continue to work unofficially under terrible circumstances. “We face so many difficulties,” Ahmad says. “There are so many things we need – textbooks, notebooks, clothes, schoolbags and other education materials,” he explains. “It is only the child who is losing because of this war,” Ahmad says. “If we don’t do

anything for these children they will lose their education too.”

UNICEF has just launched a back-to-learning campaign aiming to reach 2.5 million children including 200,000 living in 59 besieged and hard-to-reach areas in Aleppo, Hasakeh, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Raqqa and Rural Damascus. UNICEF will provide children with education material, school bags and stationery. The campaign includes social mobilization to encourage parents to send their children to school or benefit from alternative learning opportunities where schools are no longer functioning.

For more information or to donate visit www.unicef.ca

Diplomat visits to thank teachers

BY MATEA TUHTAR

Though it's been some years since he last taught, Membathisi Mdladlana maintains that "Once a teacher, always a teacher." The South African High Commissioner to Canada paid a visit to MTS to touch base on union work in Manitoba, and to express his gratitude to teachers in Canada, who, once upon a time, literally saved the roof over his head.

"Each time I take an official visit to a province I make sure to make a courtesy call to teachers' unions," said Mdladlana. And there's a good reason why. Mdladlana is the former founding father of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union, established at the time through unity talks which were funded by Canadian teachers. "We had to unite over 42 small teachers' unions into one bigger union, and I became the first president of that new union. That created a lot of problems for me. I started getting detention stints, threats on my life, and at some stage I had to resign as a teacher so I don't find myself in the situation where I am a public servant who is also a politician."

But that resignation created all manner of challenges for Mdladlana, who didn't receive a salary for five months and couldn't pay for his car, or the bond on his house. "I was rescued by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, which sent money and rescued my bond." Mdladlana was able to keep his car and his house and says "I know that the Canadian Federation of Teachers was not getting that money from heaven. They were getting it from ordinary teachers, and I'm forever grateful."

Mdladlana praised the work that MTS has been doing and was quick to point out his strong belief in unionism. While in Manitoba, he also visited the President and Vice President of the University of Manitoba while UMFA was on strike. As he entered the University, he passed the UMFA picket line. Mdladlana could not meet with the Premier Brian Pallister, even though he requested to meet.

"I get the sense that there is an anti-



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union vibe in this country, particularly when the last federal government was in power, and to me that is a disappointment. I tell teachers 'It is not good for you to be alone. It's cold outside. That's what a union is – a heating system for when it's cold out there.'

Mdladlana also expressed hope in the

new prime-minister, citing Trudeau's election promise that 'Canada is back!' "Canada has a particular history, so that in South Africa we would never believe that Canada is anti-union. We know Canada to be a Canada of the people. Our freedom in South Africa didn't come on a platter. It was an involvement of many people around the world who supported our cause that made us to be free today. And Canadian teachers were a part of that."

MTS General Secretary Bobbi Taillefer says she calls these kinds of meetings "like putting gas in a tank. It's a big picture reminder that our day to day work is so important. But moments like that, having a meeting with him and listening to the struggles teachers have endured over time, and how we worked together to prevail, that was a good reminder to keep on going. It's a great validation of the work we as teachers are doing and it was another reminder of how important a teachers' union is. We were very grateful for the High Commissioner taking the time to connect with our organization."



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PORTAGE

time travellers



PCI Reunion Pin, 1906:

Established in 1882, PCI is the oldest high school outside of Winnipeg. The first school reunion was held in 1906 and this was a pin worn by an attendee.

Fun Fact:

The 1939 Royal Visit was a hugely popular event that resulted in the renaming of Campbell Street to Royal Road.

It is only a slight exaggeration to call the archives of Portage Collegiate Institute priceless given their unique nature and value to the history of Manitoba. Rest assured, not only is the collection in good hands, much of it wouldn't exist if not for the work of teachers James Kostuchuk and Larry Smith as well as the many students of PCI's archival studies course over the last 15 years.

It all began in preparation for the school's reunion in 2005.

"Our school burned down in 1954 and we lost everything," says Kostuchuk. "So really, we've been recollecting our history."

"PCI started looking for donations in 2000. It was fantastic, we had so much material donated and a lot of it came out of attics or from estates."

Among the rare gems are a picture of the school hockey team in 1903 and a copy of the "Tattler" school newspaper from 1924, handwritten by a student named Katherine Scott.

"It isn't only PCI that we house material for. We host a number of schools that no longer exist or have changed the way they operate in terms of grade levels. We have Arthur Meighan High School, and Victoria School which is now Red River College, Prince Charles and Crescent Wood Schools."

Although the main collection is school-related, they have also received many donations from families in the area.

"The City Library has an archival storage space but it is pretty much full. The local Heritage Committee and the Fort La Reine Museum are looking at some options, but at this time PCI is probably one of the largest repositories of local records in the region."

Many an archive or museum has its own story of how serendipity provided them with their greatest treasures and the PCI archives is no exception.

"About 15 years ago one of my students found a box of photographs at the local museum and, with permission of course, brought some back to show me. I said, 'these are really valuable' and sent her back to find out more. It turned out that when the newspaper had closed down, all of the negatives from one photographer of the Portage Daily Graphic in particular, Yosh Tashiro, were sent to the museum. Unfortunately, the museum didn't have the storage space or the ability to deal with them."

The donation went further, including all of the newspaper's prints and negatives and so what he and his students commonly refer to as the "Yosh Tashiro" photographs actually make up the majority of an estimated 75,000 negatives and prints. It is very likely the largest collection of mid-twentieth century photographs in all of Manitoba. Depicting everyday life and the growth of the area including the Armed Forces base, especially from the 1950s to 1980s, the photos

have been at the heart of the archive course and a starting point for endless projects.

Aside from photos, students have plenty of opportunity to learn about the many types of items that can go into an archive and the various ways of caring, describing and categorizing them. At the moment Kostuchuk says there are 200 boxes of various sizes that fill the approximately 600 square foot classroom. Every shelf of one side is filled with trophies and memorabilia, even an old cone-style megaphone. Framed photos and posters cover the walls including a copper plaque given to every school by the government of Canada in 1927 to commemorate confederation and an election poster for Thomas Greenway, Manitoba Premier in the later 1800s, literally salvaged from a pile of trash. Hung on the far back wall, a giant six-foot, but functional slide-ruler leads to another story.

"That's actually a teaching slide rule. When we first started the archive we didn't have any money but I found two of those that the school was getting rid of so I asked if I could have one for the archive and sell one and use the money for the room. We got \$600 US for it on EBay which was about \$900 Canadian at the time. The kids wrapped it up carefully and we had to send it by bus because it was so big."

From humble beginnings, they have had to move four times -- from a cupboard to an unused room to an office to a large classroom -- to accommodate the growing collection.

The archive still survives on a shoestring budget but now there are 10 computer stations and two laptops, 10 scanners and two hover cameras. The course is limited to 10 students a year.

Larry Smith says the course has its own two outcomes.

"The quality of the work done and attendance are very important. We incorporate the six historical thinking concepts into it. In place of an exam, we have a major project."

Students can pick a topic that interests them whether it's sports, a landmark, or a moment in history but for the past couple of years they have worked closely with the Regional Health Authority on the "Time of Our Life Project".

Kostuchuk is particularly proud of a few standout moments where the archives were used in history lessons with lasting impact.

"One of our finest, proudest moments came from a project a student did that began with a visit to the cemetery by the Portage Developmental Centre. I noticed that there was a marker commemorating veterans that had served in the South African war but there were many dips in the ground that indicated a grave but no marker.

So I told her, 'Solve this. Find out what this was about.' It turned out the PDC was where some of the soldiers who served ended up and if



Sterling Lyon's Jacket Crest, 1942:

Sterling lost a hard fought election for PCI School President in 1944. He received a consolation prize in 1977 when he was elected Premier of Manitoba.

Fun Fact:

Premiers Campbell, Weir, Lyon, and Pallister all graduated from Portage Collegiate Institute. Our current Minister of Education Ian Wishart, also graduated from PCI.

they died there and the families were unable to pay for a marker, they were buried without a headstone. The student wrote to the province and the Minister of Education at the time, Drew Caldwell, wrote back and visited the site. He agreed that this was terrible for the families and within the year there were proper markers for each of those soldiers."

Other assignments have helped students appreciate the limitations of records as products of their time. "We were able to look at a student handbook and promotional literature from the local residential school in class and ask, "What do we know about residential schools from this document? They played sports and it was the home of Canada's Singing Indians. They toured around the world doing show tunes. So we point to this but we also have other materials. A woman by the name of Gladys Cook lived in Portage la Prairie and worked at the friendship centre. They (students) did a very emotionally intense documentary about her life story and what happened to her in residential school. So in the classroom we have discussions about what we believe and why. What is the value of historical evidence?"

In addition to the academic aspect of the course, students gain an appreciation for the very practical applications of archives. In the past school year, without advertising, they have had about three dozen requests to review items or visit the space.

"A couple of years ago we got a call from the Winnipeg Police. There had been a robbery and among the recovered items was a grad ring from PCI." Kostuchuk says the officers were surprised at how quickly they were able to tell them who the likely owner of the ring was. "It was pretty easy. I just had a student look through the yearbook for that year until we found the initials."

The collection of vintage school jackets came in handy when a film company asked to research the styles of clothing worn in the 1950's as did the yearbooks dating back to 1944.

Without question, yearbooks are the most referenced part of the collection. For this reason, those available to the public to peruse are not the "true archival copies" and visitors can access digital versions on-site. Ultimately, the plan is to have a publicly accessible website for the archives but that is another couple of years away.

As interesting as they may be, rare photos or documents are hardly a requirement for establishing an archive.

"Any school can have an archive because even if your school was built yesterday, there is still a history to be done," says Kostuchuk. And while the emphasis is often on reclaiming and restoring dated materials, establishing best practices in the present for future holdings is just as important. This means more than just keeping materials in the best original physical condition.



Teachers Larry Smith and James Kostuchuk





SCHOOL WAS OUT,
BUT WE WERE IN.



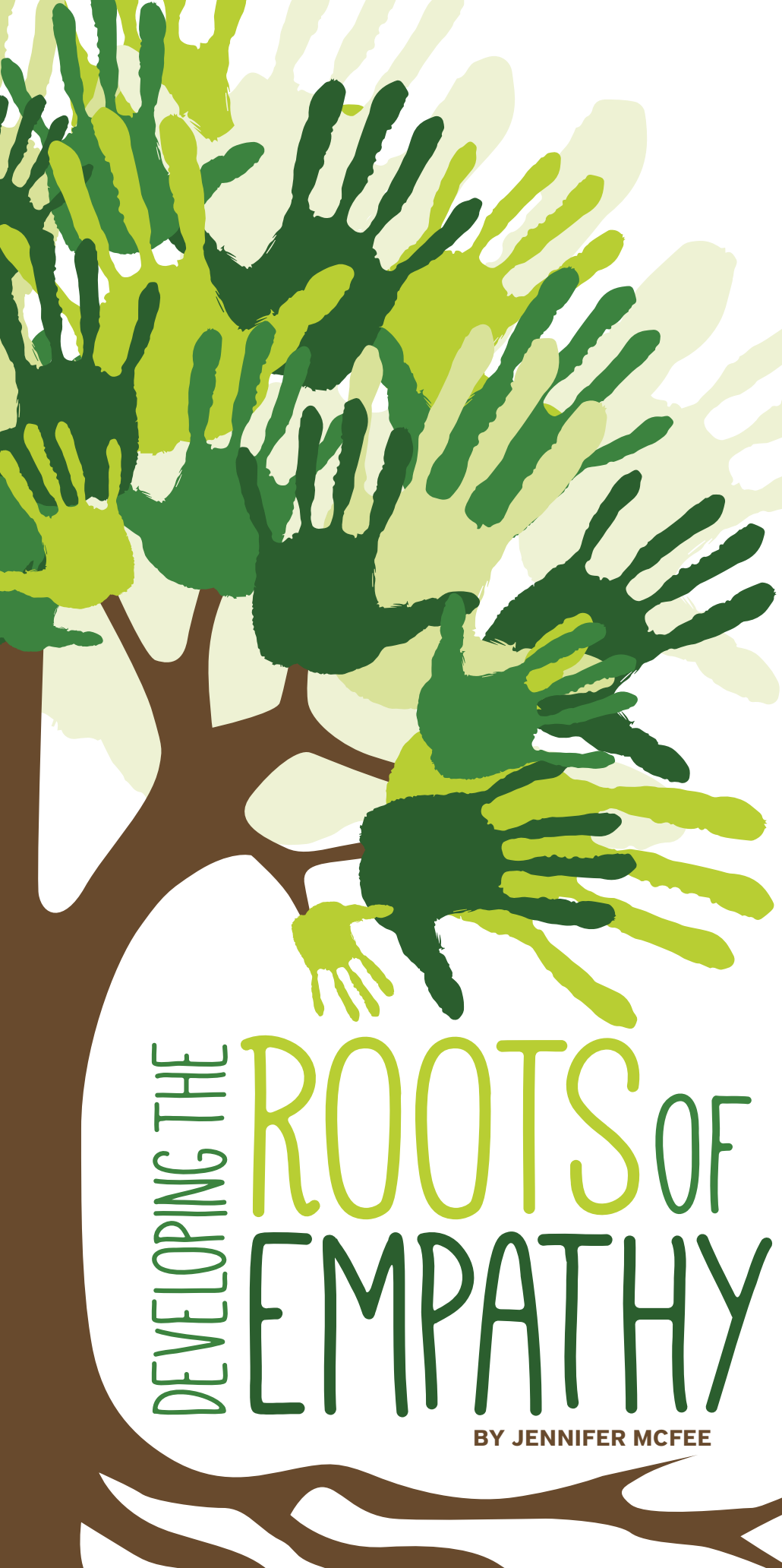


PD DAY & FAB 5 2016

MTS Professional Development Day was held Oct. 21 and featured more than 1,000 workshops hosted by 30 SAGE groups, EFM, COSL and LIFT in Winnipeg, Brandon and numerous satellite sites around the province. More than 10,000 members were engaged in their choice of professional learning opportunities and shared their experiences with colleagues through #MTSPDDAY hashtag on Twitter.

Fab 5 was FABULOUS once again! More than 160 teachers from all corners of the province were inspired by the talented Keith MacPherson, members of the Teacher Led Learning Team (TLLT) and presenters from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. A wide variety of workshops and short information sessions engaged participants throughout the day on Oct. 20.





DEVELOPING THE ROOTS OF EMPATHY

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

My bouncing baby boy began his education early — at the tender age of 12 days old.

That's when wee Baby Jacob made his first appearance at a back-to-school assembly at École Tuxedo Park School, where he was introduced as a Roots of Empathy baby for the 2014-15 school year.

Several weeks later, he began his monthly visits to a Grade 4/5 class as part of the program, which reaches classrooms across the country and around the globe. The eager elementary students greeted Jacob with enthusiasm, welcoming him to their world.

Incorporated in 2000, this non-profit program aims to develop empathy in children and adults alike in an effort to create caring, peaceful and civil societies. At the same time, the program, founded by Mary Gordon, strives to break the intergenerational cycle of violence and poor parenting.

To achieve these goals, a trained Roots of Empathy instructor guides monthly classroom visits with a parent and baby nine times over a school year. The instructor also works with the students before and after each family session for a grand total of 27 classroom visits.

This dedication allows for in-depth exploration and application of the nine Roots of Empathy themes: Meeting the Baby, Crying, Caring and Planning, Emotions, Sleep, Safety, Communicating, Who Am I?, and Goodbye and Good Wishes.

The baby becomes the teacher in the classroom, which could range from kindergarten to Grade 8. Meanwhile, the students observe the growth and development of the baby, who is typically between two and four months old at the onset. At the same time, they witness the nurturing and responsive relationship between the parent and wee one.

This parent-child attachment acts as a model of empathy and becomes a way for students to understand their own feelings as well as the emotions of others. As a result, they develop an emotional awareness that leads to safer environments and kinder classrooms.

At École Tuxedo Park School, the participating class was carefully and thoughtfully chosen. Guidance counsellor Darci Adam said the program served as a targeted intervention for some children who required support with social skills and empathy.

Over the school year, it was impossible not to notice the positive change in these students.

“We only met the baby once a month, but it's the cumulative impact of building a relationship. Through this relationship, they

feel some accountability, especially in terms of developing sensitivity. For example, we focused on remembering to use gentle voices when Baby Jacob came in because if we were all talking, it would be overwhelming for him,” she said.

“They also noticed the personality traits of the baby. We wanted to be really respectful of Jacob’s personality type because he’s not a loud and rambunctious baby. He’s a quiet baby, so we want to reflect that — and that creates empathy by understanding what the other person needs and giving that back to them.”

Over the course of the year, Adam noticed other encouraging impacts that stemmed from the Roots of Empathy interactions.

“There’s some fairly sophisticated social-emotional learning that goes on through the program. We know from the research that it is an impactful program, and I see it as a school counsellor,” she said.

“What I noticed was the look of excitement on the children’s faces when the baby arrives. When Baby Jacob steps into the room, all the eyes light up. They really are trying deeply to be caring people and to understand Jacob and be a good person in his presence. It’s so lovely for these young people to see that powerful kind of impact.”

Through Roots of Empathy, instructors can embrace an effective teaching opportunity that helps to develop good citizenship, she adds.

“It is one of the most powerful ways of teaching empathy that we have as school counsellors. It’s powerful because it’s live action, so it’s not a canned program where you have to convert academic knowledge into personal experience. It is a direct personal experience with empathy because the children get to know the baby and the parent. They develop a real relationship with someone that they don’t know,” she said.

“The whole context is about caring, including how we care for babies so that they become healthy young people. There’s a direct correlation between that learning and what the children do in their own lives. It really does make children kinder, and I totally support it.”

In Manitoba, the initiative launched during the 2000-01 school year and has reached nearly 50,000 children since then. The following year, Manitoba made history by establishing the first francophone Roots of Empathy program in Canada.

Healthy Child Manitoba covers the cost of training instructors, including transportation if needed. Each year, about 60 to 80 people go through the process. In contrast, in most other provinces, school divisions need to pay



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- Darci Adam, Guidance counsellor, École Tuxedo Park School

for their own instructor training.

Colleen Weibel, contractor with Healthy Child Manitoba, said Manitoba’s model makes the program equitable throughout the province.

“We’ve found that it has definitely helped because if a school division doesn’t have the funding, they very likely aren’t going to train people. But we have people that we’ve trained in Brochet and Churchill. We go right down to the U.S.-Canada border and to the east and west,” she said.

“We are very pleased that in the last couple of years we’ve trained people in the school divisions in the western part of the province.”

Last school year, approximately 320 Roots of Empathy programs operated throughout Manitoba.

“We’re very proud of that because if you can maintain 320 programs very equitably across the whole province for 15 years, then the program must be doing something right. It is recognized as a very valuable program,” she said.

“Of course, the number of programs varies within a school division. We have some that only have one program running, and we have some that have 35 programs running. Within that broad spectrum, we have a French curriculum and we also have First Nation programs across the northern part of the province.”

Throughout Manitoba, Weibel also trains mentors who are usually instructors that have delivered the program for at least two years. Currently, 22 mentors are available to help instructors with any concerns, difficulties and challenges that might arise in program delivery.

In addition to mentors, key point people help instructors to find the families and ensure that they have the materials they need. At the same time, they also recommend people for training.

“That’s been part of our sustainability and ownership route. That really puts it right there at the grassroots level for people that are being trained and fitting into a team,” Weibel said.



“The quality of the people that we have coming to the training is just amazing. Their backgrounds educationally and personally and their knowledge of the Roots of Empathy program is just incredible.”

The benefits of the program abound for all involved, including the students, the teachers and the families.

“We acknowledge the students and the instructors, but there are other very integral key components of the program — and the family is one of them. We really appreciate the families that come into the program and step up because it’s not an easy thing to share your parenting and the development of your child,” Weibel said.

“But every family that I’ve spoken with has talked about how it’s provided them with an opportunity to really marvel and watch the development of their baby through the eyes of the children. We acknowledge and appreciate what the families do for us. We feel like it’s a win-win situation for everyone.”

For me, as a Roots of Empathy parent, it was thrilling to see my little baby begin to respond to the students with his own smiles and gestures. It also helped me to mark his milestones and to share these special developments with the Tuxedo Park students, who were always abuzz with excitement. They shared the journey with me as Jacob learned to sit, crawl, smile and reach for toys. They delved into the details of his temperament, his likes and dislikes, his first tooth and his first haircut.

As a result, I paid more attention to these details myself. I valued the opportunity to

engage with the students, who also grew and changed and matured over the school year.

Of course, the teachers are also integral to the program’s delivery, and Weibel is quick to acknowledge their contributions too.

“The instructor comes in and delivers the program. The classroom teacher has the opportunity for that particular time to be a part of the community that they’ve established in that classroom. So we look for them to be there and to be involved in the discussions that go on,” Weibel said.

“At the same time, we also know that there are so many teachers that want to extend the program into their everyday classrooms.”

As a result, she decided to host voluntary information sessions for classroom teachers this fall.

“We’re now looking to provide classroom teachers with more information about the program — and the opportunity to expand it and extend it, if they want to. It’s a huge undertaking to welcome the program into the classroom 27 times a year,” Weibel said.

For the students involved, the impact is evident in their curiosity and the depth of their discussions.

A randomized control study for Manitoba students at all grade levels shows that the beneficial effects include reduced levels of aggression and increased positive behaviour.

At Tuxedo Park school, the students learned how to lower their voices and give Baby Jacob enough space to feel comfortable in the crowd. Surrounding the bright green blanket laid out on the classroom floor, they sang sweetly to him at the beginning and end

of each session. They practised their math skills by monitoring his measurements, and they also honed their prediction abilities as they tried to guess how he had changed since the previous visit. And through keepsake books they created for Jacob, they demonstrated their writing talents and artistic expression.

Their teacher, Claude Lemire, noticed similar changes over the school year.

“This class has come far in terms of learning citizenship skills and treating each other with respect. The students definitely matured, judging from their interest at the beginning and then at the end. It struck their interest to see Jacob’s development and to have discussions about it,” he said.

“I think the kids were awestruck to see how innocent a baby is and how much a baby requires in terms of love and attention and need. I think it touches them and enables them to look outside themselves. It plays on their own vulnerabilities because they remember that they were babies too. This is what Roots of Empathy does to the children — they learn how to care for others and how to be empathetic, and I think this is a good way of sharing that experience together.”

Looking back on my own experience, I feel so privileged to have participated in the program. With an eye on the horizon, I am curious to see how Jacob reacts to being a student himself one day, based on all his early excitement in the school environment as the tiniest teacher.

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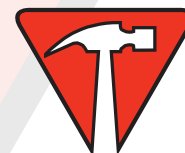
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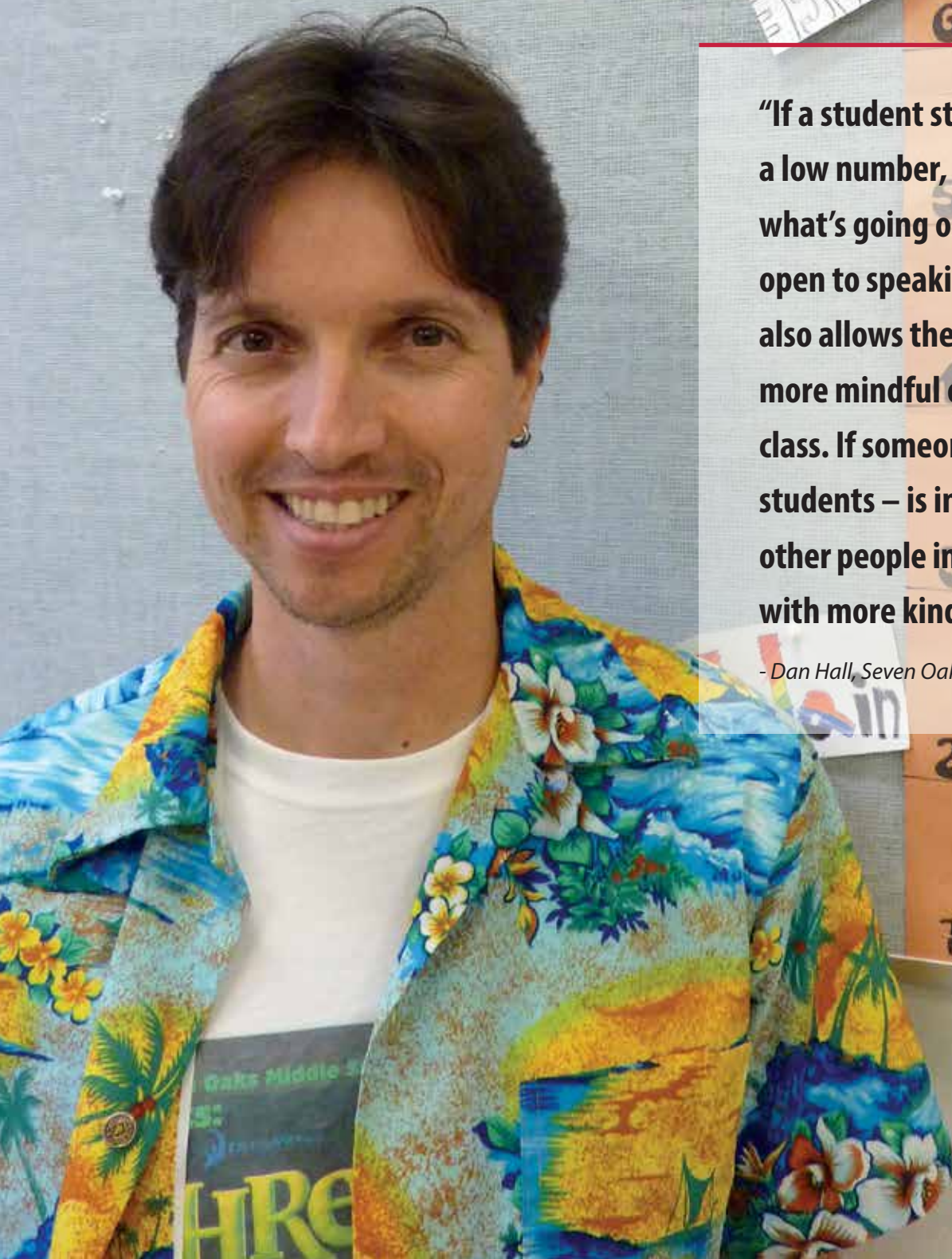
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BY JUDY OWEN

ERASING THE



“If a student starts the day at a low number, I can find out what’s going on, if they are open to speaking about it. It also allows the students to be more mindful of others in the class. If someone – me or the students – is in a bad space, the other people in the class will act with more kindness.”

- Dan Hall, Seven Oaks Middle School

STIGMA

MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOL

Before Dan Hall and his students begin their day, they each walk up to a unique graph on a wall in their classroom.

Taking a piece of paper that has their name on it, Hall and the Grade 8 students at Seven Oaks Middle School pin the paper beside a number ranging from one to 10.

The numbers represent how they're feeling that day, from a low of one to 10 being pretty darn good.

It's a practice Hall started about four years ago, and one that relates to his background in the mental health field.

"It gives me an idea of how kids are doing emotionally during the day," says Hall, who's been a teacher in the Seven Oaks School Division since 2002.

"If a student starts the day at a low number, I can find out what's going on, if they are open to speaking about it. It also allows the students to be more mindful of others in the class. If someone – me or the students – is in a bad space, the other people in the class will act with more kindness."

Prior to becoming a teacher, Hall worked in crisis stabilization and mobile crisis units for adults through a former Salvation Army program. He was also employed in Grace Hospital's mental health department.

That experience has enhanced a role he now has in the Seven Oaks School Division. Hall is one of three staff who are instructors of a Mental Health First Aid Canada program.

After taking the mental health first aid course for adults who interact with youth, Hall was certified as an instructor five years ago.

He and the other two staff instructors, a social worker and a psychologist, have been teaching the course to staff in the division, who can take it free of charge. A fourth instructor recently retired.

The two-day, 14-hour course covers topics such as mood disorders, psychosis, eating

disorders and substance abuse. Participants are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of each one, as well as risk factors, and taught the steps they can take to get help for someone in crisis.

"One of the big things that a lot of people say is, 'I'm not comfortable talking with a student about mental health because I don't know a lot,'" Hall says.

"This course does give you some basic information about mental health issues, so it gives them that comfort level. And it also gives them a comfort level so that if a student is in melt-down mode and the guidance counsellor isn't available, they have the tools to help them."

After he taught the course to some co-workers, the feedback was quick and positive.

"I had teachers the very next week come back and say, 'You know what Dan, the techniques you talked about, I used and it absolutely worked.'"

About 60 to 70 per cent of the division's 1,500 staff has been trained in the course, which some educators in other Manitoba school divisions have also taken.

Seven Oaks has nine schools that have asked for the training, and three or four general sessions are held for staff throughout the year, says Verland Force, the division's assistant superintendent - school services.

The division began offering the course five years ago in a partnership with Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

"It's part of a paradigm shift with respect to how we view mental health," division superintendent Brian O'Leary says. "There's a tremendous stigma to mental illness, far more than having some kind of physical illness.

"If we want to help people to attend to their physical health – get outside, walk, exercise, eat properly – everybody takes that as simply good advice that we should all be thinking about.

"We've tried to shift with mental health, too. What are the things that will help you keep your mood up, attend to your own health and see that your emotional and mental health is in a good state, as you'd like your physical health to be?"

It's a proactive approach, especially when people in distress are often reluctant to seek help, he added.

"So the more as a whole school system people have some skills in recognizing when someone is struggling and helping them get to help, the better off we'll be," O'Leary says. "That's kids, that's parents, that's co-workers."

The school division has dealt with some high-profile incidents of trauma that affected students and staff, including the 2015 suicides of a Grade 12 student and her boyfriend within days of each other.

Hall offered his help as part of the team that went to the school during the crisis.

He says the issue of mental health in the school setting is becoming more important, whether the focus is on students or staff. He even includes mental health as part of the science course he teaches that also covers illnesses such as cancer and diabetes.

Having staff trained in mental health first aid is another way to get rid of the stigma and spark open discussion.

"I wish I could say that life is wonderful, that you'll never run into problems, but that's not reality," Hall says.

"The reality is that there is some bad things that happen, and if you can't cope with those bad things you need help. In my opinion – there's no research to back this up whatsoever – but to me everyone's going to need some sort of mental health help at some point in their lives.

"If we have people around us who know how to help, it'll be a lot better."

Twas the night before New Year's


BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

*WITH A TIP OF THE HAT TO
CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE (1779-1863)*



PORT FOL FO





*Tw'as the night before New Year's and all through the world
We look back at the year and all that's unfurled.
History was written with victories and defeat
And some things we're hoping we'll never repeat.*

*It began long ago in the primary season
With a candidate hopeful beyond any reason.
Treated as comedy along with each gaffe;
No one knew then, he'd have the last laugh.*

*Out on the trail there arose such a clatter.
His Twitter feeds caused his opponents to scatter.
Now, Carson! Now Huckabee! Now Rubio and Cruz,
Downed by a clown with nothing to lose.*

*Boastful and crude, the insults they flew,
From a bagful of wind with a bright orange hue.
And finally, at the end, the pollsters were stumped,
As their whole country was thoroughly trumped.*

*Barack and Hillary just watched with dismay,
As all that they've done might be swept away.
But even as the outcome got stuck in their throats,
The odd fact remained: she got the most votes.*

*In Canada we watched with such disbelief,
And gazed at Ottawa with a sense of relief.
Our PM ain't perfect, even he would agree,
But his policies aren't making anyone flee.*

*Some said to Canada they would surely run,
We do welcome all, but forget your gun.
But, really, very few will actually leave;
They'll just hope that in four years they'll get a reprieve.*

*And, anyway, where in the world could they go?
Not Britain, still dealing with its own tale of woe.
Its Brexit vote there put many on edge,
And others there still trying to get off the ledge.*

*The right wing in France thinks they'll get a bump,
They feel they can pull off their own Donald Trump.
Just scare the people with a fear of the others,
Get them all worried for their daughters and mothers.*

*While Putin's in Russia, his hands were abroad,
And except for the Donald, none would applaud.
Computers were hacked and territories taken;
Aleppo, Crimea and others are still shaken.*

*Iceland might work, there's not many haters,
Its PM was sunk by the Panama Papers.
The Pirate Party there is now on the rise,
Its vote share this year tripled in size.*

*Then there is Manitoba with a government new,
But people still wonder what it will do.
Its policies appear to be hidden away,
Leaving its opponents with nothing to say.*

*The NDP we could just eulogize,
As it still ponders its self-inflicted demise.
Some members seem taken to witness protection,
While others now question their early defection.*

*But that year is past, father time drifts away.
We have to move on without any delay.
But we hear him exclaim, ere he drives out of sight,
Happy New Year to All, Next Time Get It Right!*



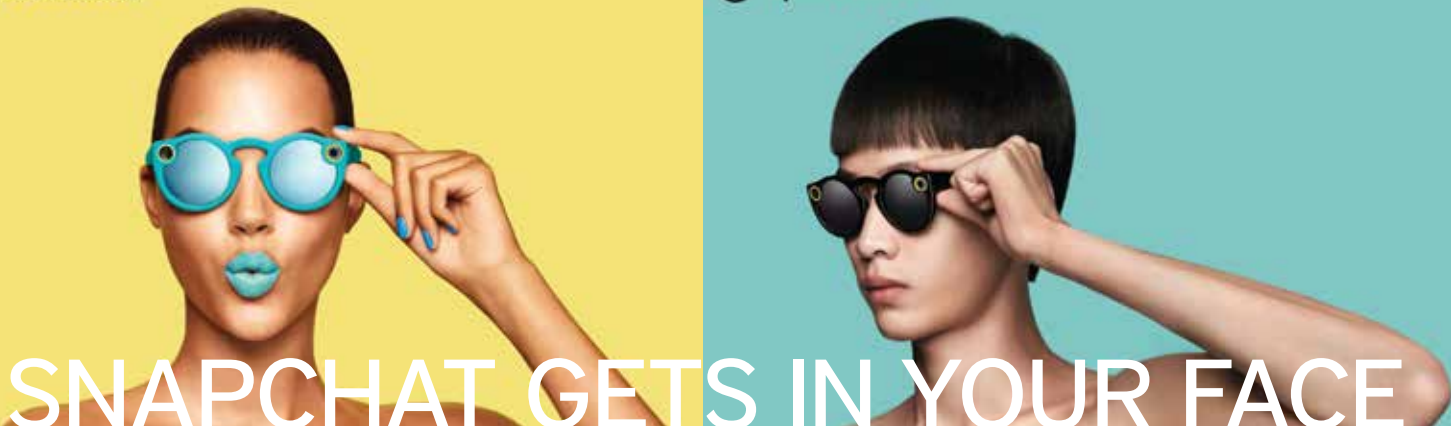
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REFRESH

BY RAMAN JOB, PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR

 Spectacles

 Spectacles



SNAPCHAT GETS IN YOUR FACE

In a world of perpetual beta, no cherished social platform can afford to stand still. When one app's new feature blows up, other platforms naturally plagiarize. Some rock it - others not so much. Here's what's new.

Snapchat gets in your face – with style

Snapchat filters will change your world. Whereas these face-morphing filters can turn you into a licking dog, sticky bee, spinning globe head or bespeckled nerd, Snap's new "world filters" have their own twisted appeal. Clouds now can vomit rainbows, snow can fall from your living room ceiling and balloon hearts can follow you down the hallway. It's easy to write off these gags as adolescent silliness. But there is big marketing money behind these rainbows and unicorns. Respectable news orgs and politicians including our own PM generate daily content, and there's a huge payoff for being seen and adapting well in that social space.

Now, Snapchat hopes to put their latest marketing ploy right on your nose. Snapchat Spectacles are generating huge buzz in the U.S. These stylish sunglasses transmit what you see in 10-second video bursts to your Snap account on your smartphone. Once in

your Memories, you can send them out like any other story. But, get this, you can't simply order these on line! The masses are lining up for Spectacle bots (vending machines) in droves. These machines will spit you out a pair for about \$130 U.S. But they're rare. No sign of them yet in Canada. But one look at spectacles.com and you too will be checking the site daily to see where the first Canadian bot lands.

Silence those wicked Twitter trolls!

You've long been able to mute or block people on Twitter, but the latest anti-cyberbullying features now allow you to filter out any verbal term you don't like from your notifications – anything from “*&%\$#!#” to “Donald Trump”. This doesn't mean your trolls vanish or magically clean up their language. But out of sight is out of mind, and this mute filter will scrub your Twitter notifications of profane comments from personae non-gratae before they ever reach you.

Twitter has also just introduced QR codes – remember those? Teachers still use them for student scavenger hunts and making sure kids can get to a specific site without fumbling through a lengthy URL. But they're coming back in apps too, sort of. You can now

generate your own Twitter QR code to place on printed material, business cards, signage, etc. Tweeters can simply hover your QR code with the reader embedded right in Twitter and then follow you. Twitter is getting knocked for this seemingly useless feature, but hey, your Snapcode is a good old-fashioned QR code and they're doing well. Also, if you use the Facebook Messenger app, you also have your own messenger QR code.

Instagram turns playful rip-off into social gold

While Instagram is still many people's first big social crush, much of the fun these days is happening way up on the IG stories bar at the top of the screen. Instagram stories are a bold rip-off of Snapchat stories, but one that's bound to pay off, as many people have more IG followers than those on Snapchat. Like Snapchat, your stories last for 24 hours. The tools are a little different, but it has that same creative feel. Last month, IG stories introduced live tags in stories and are soon to roll out live links – a tremendous asset to anyone who wants to point to a blog, a home page or media. Until now, only one live link has existed in your IG account and that was the one in your bio.



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- 2 Fill out the four **required** fields.

- 3 Already a member:
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- 4 Click the red button labeled **"Register"**. You will receive an email, to the address you provided, indicating that you now have access to the site.

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