

THE MANITOBA

# Teacher

MARCH 2016 VOLUME 94 NUMBER 5 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

A close-up portrait of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a dark blazer over a blue top. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**RANA BOKHARI**

'Take the burden off teachers'

Sign up  
for your  
*MyProfile*  
Account

# WIN an iPad!



## MyProfile Sign-up Contest!

- When you sign-up for your *MyProfile* account on the MTS website you will have a chance to win an iPad!
- Sign-up Contest winner will be drawn on:  
March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016
- To be in the draw simply sign-up at the iPad kiosk at MTS or on your own computer.
- Winner will be randomly generated from the list of members who have signed up in *MyProfile*.

*MyProfile* is the members' only area within The Manitoba Teachers' Society webpage.

<https://memberlink.mbteach.org>

*MyProfile* allows you to:

- register for workshops, events and seminars within MTS
- receive direct communication securely from MTS
- have access to members only information and services



The  
Manitoba  
Teachers'  
Society

# Teacher

MARCH 2016 VOLUME 94 NUMBER 5 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

P.4 *From the President*

P.5 *Inside MTS*

P.6 *Rana Bokhari fields questions from MTS*

*Provincial Liberal Leader aims to bring together a variety of experts*



## NICE WOMEN DON'T WANT THE VOTE

P.22 *Teaching tools for suffrage*  
*The Manitoba Museum exhibit on the women's suffrage movement offers opportunities to create curriculum*

P.8 *Learning about school*  
*N.E.E.D.S. helps refugee students adapt to life in the Canadian classroom*



P.12 *Education library celebrates centennial*  
*Teachers visit without leaving the classroom with new digital resources*





## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**NORM GOULD**

About a dozen years ago a tiny group that met occasionally to discuss education issues across four provinces was disbanded.

The group was made up of the four presidents of the teachers' associations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia.

I don't know why it faded away; it was well before my time.

Now, though, the group is once again getting together and could be a major benefit for teachers across the west.

Over the past six years or so there have been a growing number of issues that have not been unique to one province or organization. Indeed, some of them aren't necessarily unique to one country. There have been issues around cuts, around Aboriginal education, around safe schools, bullying and treatment of LGBTQ students and teachers.

Every one of those concerns has been faced, and are still being faced, by at least two or three western provinces. Usually we are all facing the same issues.

Another example is class size. This is an issue that has bedeviled all jurisdictions for many years. Some have tried to get smaller classes through bargaining, some have tried to get government to set limits on class sizes. Fortunately in Manitoba, we persuaded the provincial government to put limits on classes in early years.

Others haven't been so successful, but it helps to hear firsthand accounts of the measures teachers' organizations have taken and which have worked and which haven't. As teachers, it is not unlike when we discuss what classroom methods work and which don't. It can save a lot of time and aggravation.

It might be that we can also save ourselves some time, expense, energy and other resources.

As many of the issues are the same or similar across the provinces, so too are many of our campaigns and messages that we direct to the general public or our own members.

Last month, MTS began airing a TV commercial reinforcing the idea that students and schools need more support, not less; that cutbacks will not enhance education. While the commercial is unique to Manitoba, the message certainly isn't.

Other provinces have promoted the same message, just in different ways and styles. It might be that, through a western presidents' group, we can look to sharing those resources, basically agreeing on a concept and have it promoted across the west. It could reduce the cost for members, but not reduce the effectiveness of a campaign. At the same time it would still allow for individual organizations to have or tailor specific approaches to their specific circumstances and needs.

These are but a few of the mutually-beneficial ways our provincial organizations might help each other and share ideas and resources to the benefit of students, schools and teachers across Western Canada.



# The Manitoba Teachers' Society

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## INSIDE MTS

### EFFORT ON SOCIAL ISSUES NEEDED TO BOOST ACHIEVEMENT

**BOBBI TAILLEFER**, GENERAL SECRETARY

Most recently some of The Manitoba Teachers' Society staff traveled to Alberta to attend meetings hosted by the Alberta Teachers' Association. These annual meetings include teacher organization staff from the provinces and territories in the west and they afford the staff the perfect opportunity to discuss issues that are important to teachers and to share information on the state of the teaching profession.

These meetings, called Western Staff Development Conference, are extremely important professional development for your union staff. The ability to meet with staff from all the organizations in Western Canada provides your MTS staff with the opportunity to discuss challenges and understand issues that affect teachers and teacher unions. Together, we look at sound strategies to support teachers and public education.

The conference opened with a keynote address by Dr. David Berliner, Professor Emeritus at Arizona State University and co-author of "50 Myths & Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools". While this book is obviously America centric, many of his positions are readily applied to the Canadian context. In his book, the myth that was most interesting to me is that there is overwhelming data and evidence that prove that standardized testing and

any rigorous testing schedule is simply ineffective. Rather, the evidence shows that addressing social issues in schools will do more to boost student achievement than more testing, ranking of schools and merit pay for teachers.

Research should inform policy but that is not always the case. Over and over again, the research has shown that the poverty levels of children within a school not only affect PISA test scores but also the scores on all other standardized tests. So why is that? I bet you don't even need to hear me tell you the researchers' answer. As professionals, working closely with our students, you have firsthand experience and know the answers – hungry students have other things on their mind, students in care have other things on their mind, students whose parents are looking for work without success have other things on their mind and on and on it goes. A recent research project showed that, on average, a middle-class family spends \$3,000 per child on school enrichment – in other words, tutors, engineering camps, music camps, math gymnastics, space programs and sports camps, etc. Poorer families, who love their children just as much, simply do not have the same means of amplifying their kids' learning. So why is there continuous pressure to pursue more costly testing when research tells us that it is a futile pursuit?

This is where your organization, MTS, has to assume the role of defender of publicly-funded education. We raise issues such as standardized testing with all the education stakeholders, including the public. Recently, you may have noticed the new MTS television ad, featuring a real life MTS member. We have purchased a lot of air time to talk to Manitobans about education and about what classrooms look like in this era. Our message is simple – classrooms are complex and complicated and education needs support and investment, not cuts and not more testing that gives us the same results and seems to blame poor families for their lack of opportunity. We believe public education is crucial to a democratic and just society. We believe that public education is worthy of investment and professional teachers are worthy of support. We will be making sure that public education is one of the main issues for all the political parties as we enter the election debates.

The stakes are high for the future of publicly funded education and meetings such as the Western Staff Development Conference ensure that your MTS professional staff is aware of the current trends and issues which affect public education and teachers. That knowledge allows your MTS to advocate effectively on your behalf as we work together with all of our partners to build a robust and innovative Manitoba education system.

## NOTICE OF CALL

This notice is given in compliance with Bylaw II of The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

The 97th Annual General Meeting of the Provincial Council of The Manitoba Teachers' Society will be held at 9:00 a.m., May 26, 27 and 28, 2016 at the Fairmont Hotel, Winnipeg.

The Provincial Council consists of representatives named by teacher associations and Les éducatrices et éducateurs francophones du Manitoba plus the members of the current Provincial Executive.

The number of delegates representing each association depends on the number of members in that association.

**Bobbi Taillefer**  
General Secretary



BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

# ‘Listening to the experts’

When pressed during an interview with *The Teacher* about specific educational issues, Provincial Liberal Leader Rana Bokhari is quick to answer.

"I never claim to be the know-all of everything," she says. "I rely on those front-line workers who are dealing with these challenges every day. I am not the expert."

As part of the lead-up to the April 19 Provincial election, *The Teacher* has interviewed all three party leaders about public school policies. Tory Leader Brian Pallister was featured in the January edition and NDP Leader Greg Selinger will be featured in the April edition.

Unlike those two leaders, Bokhari is relatively new to politics and was hesitant at the time of the interview to promise any definitive actions a Liberal government would take on education. She said some would be released closer to election day.

However, she said she will aim at bringing together a variety of experts who work in education to help map out a strategy to address problems facing the education system.

"Let's not dictate to anyone what should happen," she says. "We need to get everyone around the table ... so we know what parents, teachers, administrators are all dealing with."

Even so, she is convinced that one of the main issues facing education is that teachers are being expected to do more and more work that takes them away from what they were hired to do.

"I think there are a lot of issues that shouldn't fall onto teachers; that shouldn't fall onto the educational system," she says. "Some of those, obviously, are the mental health issues. You have autism, you have FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder). It becomes difficult for teachers to not only not have the resources, but have to manage and deal with them."

"The second part of this, frankly, is poverty. I think as our province struggles with child poverty and general poverty issues our children struggle. We seem to want to place that burden on teachers and sometimes it's the community rather than teachers that is better able to manage this."

Bokhari says poverty has a major impact on many functions of government and is felt throughout the education system. If kids and families can't find decent housing or have enough food, it will show up in school work, grades and graduation rates.

The party has promised, if elected, to pilot a guaranteed-annual-income program in a Manitoba community. The province would measure how a basic income for all affects

health, justice and employment.

"This is something that other countries are experimenting with and we believe Manitoba can and should lead the country and the world in this area," Bokhari says. A similar project was conducted in Dauphin in the 1970s. An ongoing study of the results of that project found a marked improvement in educational achievement.

"If you ask an educator, ask a teacher, 'what are your challenges?' ... are we really acknowledging what they are saying? They are talking about poverty issues, but have we addressed the poverty issue in this province? Teachers cannot address those economic issues facing families.

"They're teachers. That's their role. Their job is to teach. The part that falls on us as government and communities is different."

Along with some anti-poverty initiatives, Bokhari has pledged to put more money into mental health services in the province.

"We will have a poverty-reduction plan and we are already committed to a large sum of

Bokhari is skeptical about standardized tests, including international tests that have ranked Manitoba students at, or near, the bottom compared with others in Canada.

"You know, at this point, in 2016, there are so many different ways people learn. I don't know that this is the best way to measure outcomes and success. If your test just shows up on someone's lap one day, but meanwhile teachers are teaching a completely different issue and they're learning differently ... it doesn't mesh. It doesn't make sense."

Kids are different and they learn in different ways.

"If these standardized tests are not ... in line with what is going on in schools it's very concerning. As it stands now, it's a big question mark."

Bokhari says report cards are also another big question mark, despite all the effort that has gone into introducing a standard, province-wide reporting system.

"I think teachers are really feeling the burden," she says. "Really, it's overwhelming

"I think teachers are really feeling the burden. Really, it's overwhelming what they have to do. There's nothing wrong with measuring outcomes, but, again, is it the right way to measure and is it doing what it is meant to do? It's up to teachers to tell us."

- Rana Bokhari

money (\$20 million over four years) to deal with mental health issues for youth – these kids are carrying that burden when they come to schools -- all the way up to elders."

On overall funding of education, she does credit the current government's policy of sustained education funding at the rate of economic growth.

"Let's give credit where credit is due," she says, but adding that she would not commit to continuing that policy without reviewing overall education funding.

"You have to look at the whole thing, what needs to fall on community, what needs to fall on government and what needs to fall on educators."

Again, she says everyone with a stake in education has to be heard on funding and on all of its components from nutrition to socio-economic status. And, she says, the same voices need to be heard when it comes to measuring achievement and standardized testing.

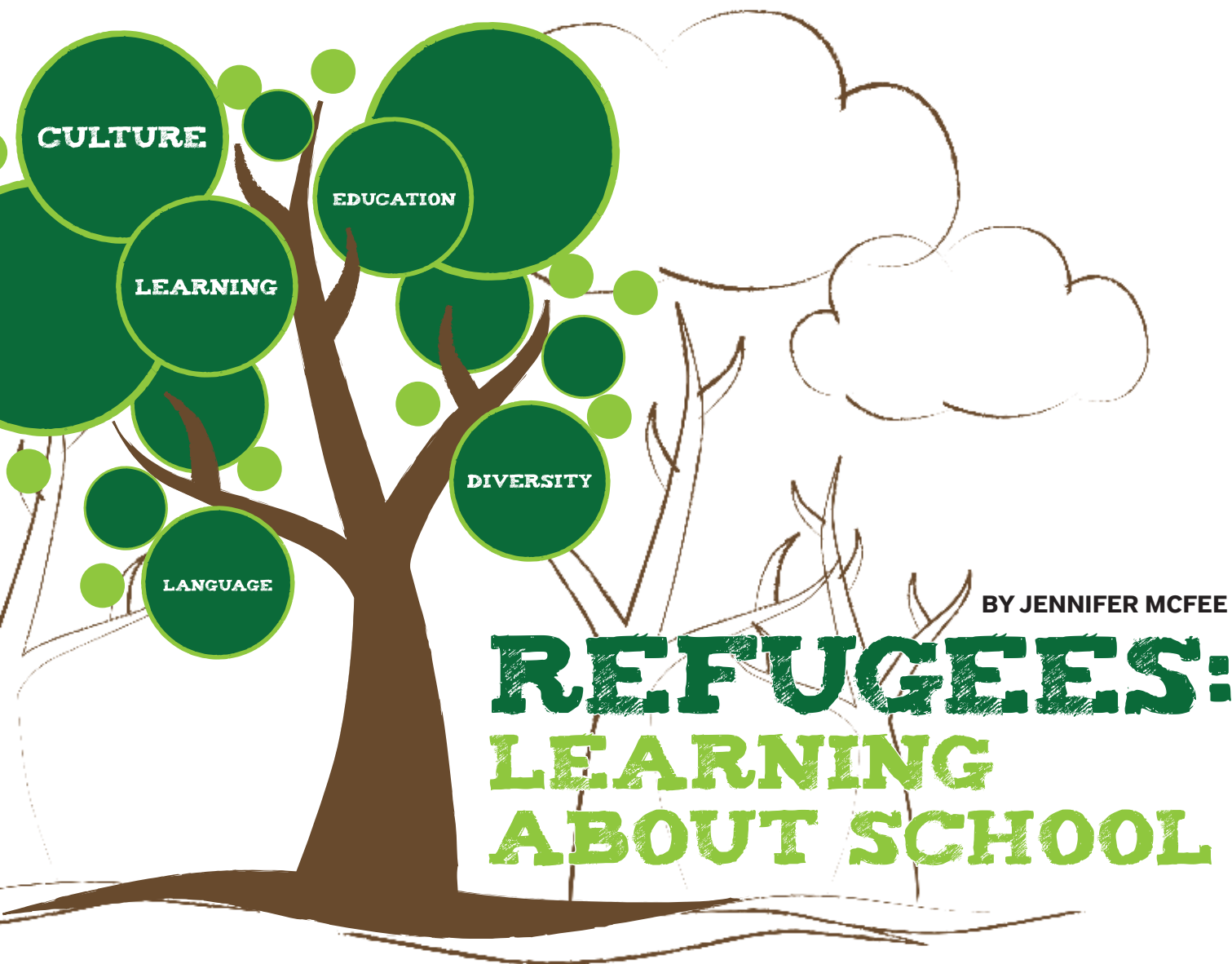
what they have to do. There's nothing wrong with measuring outcomes, but, again, is it the right way to measure and is it doing what it is meant to do? It's up to teachers to tell us."

Bokhari, whose sister is a teacher, promises to "empower" front-line workers so they can make their views known on the issues and problems they face.

"Nobody is teaching just for the fun of it. This is something they are very passionate about. You need to be a certain kind of person. If someone said to me, 'Rana, I would like you to manage 40 students right now,' I would be like: hell no! I know I personally do not have the ability to do that. There are very few people who can. We have to acknowledge that."

She says education would be a high priority in a Liberal government.

"You would be goofy, silly, not to recognize that education at all levels is one of the greatest economic drivers that there is and also empowers our youth."



BY JENNIFER MCFEE

# REFUGEES: LEARNING ABOUT SCHOOL

Being the new kid at school can be challenging at the best of times.

But imagine the plight of refugee students who plunge into Manitoba schools without knowing the language or culture of their classmates.

Not only do they have to adapt to a new society with different social rules, they also need to navigate an unfamiliar school system.

The educational experience can be jarring, especially for those who are attending school for the first time in their lives.

Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services Inc. (N.E.E.D.S.) aims to help these students adapt to life in the classroom and in their new country.

The main goal of the charitable organization is to provide newly arrived refugee youth with education, employment and recreation programs supported by psycho-social educators.

The Introduction to Canadian Education program offers transitional education and orientation to help refugee youth prepare for school.

Program manager Kirby Borgardt explains that the initiative is designed for newly arrived government-assisted refugees aged six to 17 who are waiting to be placed in Winnipeg schools. The duration of the program varies from about two to eight weeks, depending on how long it takes each family to find permanent housing. As a result, the group ebbs and flows constantly with the continuous intake and outtake of students.

“We are the first contact for them when they arrive and also the first contact for a school program. We teach them all those basic building blocks for when they transition into the public school so they have a little bit of understanding of how that system works,” Borgardt says.

“We’re really good at being flexible and going with the flow. That’s so important when you’re working with these sorts of students. Right now, we’re finding that things are changing every day with the Syrian influx.”

In addition to Syria, the main source countries over the past year include Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Iraq.

And for a majority of the young newcomers, two main challenges prevail: a lack of English and a lack of schooling.

“A lot of our students don’t speak English as their first language, so we are building those basic literacy skills,” Borgardt says.

“As well, many of our students either have interrupted schooling or they may never have attended school before. We teach them basic classroom management skills and introduce them to what a typical classroom in a school is like.”



The refugees learn about school etiquette and expectations, such as raising your hand to speak, asking to leave the room, sitting at a desk and working with a partner.

“On top of the basic behavioural skills that we build, we teach curriculum like orientation information. The topics we focus on are education, health, safety and community. Each week, we cycle through one of those topics and then pick specific information on that topic to teach the students about,” Borgardt says.

“Within that, we do an EAL component with basic vocabulary building as well as crime prevention programming. We also talk about different emotions and talk about how to deal with anger. When we’re mad in different cultures, it’s appropriate to do different things. We focus on that so they know what are appropriate ways to deal with their anger here.”

The initiative also focuses on building self-esteem and celebrating differences, which are new concepts for some of the students.

“They’ve come from countries where they might have been persecuted due to differences. Race or religions might have been a factor in their home country, so we teach that no matter who you are, we’re all different and we’re all equal here in Canada,” Borgardt says.

“Men, women, black, white, if you speak English or Punjabi or Arabic – it doesn’t matter.”

The organization’s rules reinforce these teachings with an emphasis on respect and teamwork.

“We talk a lot about being respectful, so that includes being respectful to property, to staff, to other cultures and to other students,” Borgardt says.

N.E.E.D.S also addresses issues that could stem from violent or traumatic situations the refugee youth may have faced in the past.

Borgardt has seen the effects of conflict firsthand, and she also understands the experience of being immersed in an unfamiliar culture. In 2013, she travelled to South Sudan on behalf of the University of Winnipeg to facilitate teacher trainings and to conduct research on the effects of war post-conflict on students in the classroom.

“It was quite an experience. By working with the families that I work with, I do have a good understanding of the challenges they face coming to a new country. But you really cannot 100 per cent grasp that feeling until you’ve been in a situation where you are the only person of your culture, you don’t speak the language and everyone around you does not understand you,” she says.

“Until you’re fully immersed in that, you really cannot 100 per cent comprehend what

that feels like and how overwhelming and scary that is.”

That’s why the work of N.E.E.D.S. is so important to newly arrived refugee youth. After the students receive an initial orientation and are ready to enter the public school system, the organization provides the school with an assessment of their social and classroom skills.

“That way, the teachers might know that they’re able to work in groups or if they have trouble self-monitoring,” Borgardt says.

**“MANY OF OUR STUDENTS EITHER HAVE INTERRUPTED SCHOOLING OR THEY MAY NEVER HAVE ATTENDED SCHOOL BEFORE. WE TEACH THEM BASIC CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND INTRODUCE THEM TO WHAT A TYPICAL CLASSROOM IN A SCHOOL IS LIKE.”**

*- Kirby Borgardt*

After the students start at their new schools, their files remain open with N.E.E.D.S for a year or more. Staff members visit the schools to see how the students are adapting and to address any educational or personal struggles that they face. If they live near the N.E.E.D.S centre, located on Notre Dame Avenue, they can attend programs for employment searches or after-school homework help. For students in other parts of the city, they can be referred to resources in their communities.

While it is difficult for newcomers to adapt, teachers also face challenges when integrating a recent refugee student into their classroom. To help ease the transition, Borgardt offers some tried and true tips for teachers.

“Fostering a positive relationship is really a key to establishing any sort of benefit in the long run. I think that having that relationship is the most important thing you can do,” she says. “If a student trusts you, they’re more willing to go along with what you’re teaching them and respecting the expectations that you have.”

It’s also important to choose words wisely for students who are new to the language. If a teacher tells newcomer students that homework is “due” on Monday, they might understand that they will “do” the homework on Monday in class. Using simple and straightforward vocabulary can minimize potential confusion. As well, teachers might need to provide different activities or instructions for students with a lower English level.

“On top of all of that, be patient. It can be really frustrating working with a student who doesn’t speak English if you don’t have an interpreter available, but it’s just as frustrating for the student,” Borgardt says.

“At times as a teacher, you might get



overwhelmed, but you just need to be patient. They are facing an uphill battle, and that patience is going to allow them to make those mistakes and to take the time that they need to learn.”

Last but not least, Borgardt urges teachers to express kindness to these newcomers.

“Unfortunately, there’s a lot of people in our communities and in our society who are not the nicest, so any time that a student can meet somebody who greets them with a smile and is kind to them, it makes their lives so much easier here,” she says. “Teachers can make a huge difference.”



# **NEW MTS TV COMMERCIAL ON AIR!**

By the time you read this issue you may have already spotted the new MTS ad on television. The message of the ad "Our kids need more support, not less" was inspired by direct quotes we've heard from teachers and parents across Manitoba. Through our annual membership survey and focus groups with both teachers and parents we've heard time and time again that today's classrooms are complex, there is inadequate funding for special needs and EAL, and that every classroom in our province is unique.

The commercial will be running throughout the winter in advance of the provincial election in spring.

"We want to make sure that when politicians talk about education, The Manitoba Teachers' Society is the go-to authority on what is happening in today's classrooms and schools," says MTS President Norm Gould.

Nearly 50 teachers from across Manitoba auditioned for the lead role which ended up going to Lundar teacher Lauren Marshall. The commercial was shot in a home in Warren, Manitoba, as well as at Warren Elementary School.

**YOU CAN CHECK OUT  
THE NEW AD ON TV  
OR BY VISITING OUR  
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**TEACHERS INSTITUTE**  
 ON CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY



BY MATEA TUHTAR

# 100 years *from books to bytes*

**M**anitoba's only education library celebrates its Centennial this year and begins its next 100 years with new digital resources that mean teachers across the province can visit without ever leaving their classrooms.

The Manitoba Education Resource Library is now offering video streaming on a variety of topics in addition to its 900 student e-books and online professional development education journals.

The library was founded July 1, 1916 and is the only provincial education library in Canada.

"It's been a presence in Manitoba for a long time," says Program Manager Nancy Girardin. "We're here for anyone working within the Manitoba K-12 education system."

This includes not just teachers, but also EAs, counsellors, administrators, as well as post-secondary students and instructors that are related to education.

The library offers fiction and non-fiction books on various subjects, Manitoba recommended resources, DVD's, and educational kits like different rocks and minerals, light and sound experiments, magnets and math manipulatives. Games and models are also available, as well as audio CD's, educational pictures and posters, puppets and print copies of the Manitoba Curriculum.

But the library's new digital resources are something Girardin is very excited about.

"We have video streaming available on our website on a variety of different subjects and grade levels from the best educational publishers. This lets teachers go online and play the program and show it to their classroom that way, instead of borrowing a DVD."

The website also stocks educational journals on any topic that a teacher might be looking for.

"So if you enter a term like "teaching fractions" you might get hundreds of articles on that topic. It's great for professional development."

The library's newest video streaming is their CBC Curio collection which gives teachers and students streaming access to the best in educational content from CBC and Radio-Canada. The materials range from current CBC shows such as *The Fifth Estate* and David Suzuki's *The Nature of Things*, all the way to old News in Review clips, starting in 1990. Also available are documentaries from television and radio, news reports, archival material, stock shots and more.

It includes resources for all subject areas and all ages, in English or French.

"Every month they (CBC) take the main news stories and condense them into short clips, along with teaching resources and guides to help teachers use the videos," explains Girardin.

Best of all it's completely free of charge. As is everything else at the Manitoba Education Resource Library.

Not only that, but they will send teachers' materials anywhere in the province with no cost. Teachers can fill out a subject request form online, or email and phone the library to place a request for materials. The library staff will then do a search and put a collection of resources together and send it to your school.

"So a teacher could call and say 'I'm doing this topic at this grade level, can you send me some resources like books, DVD's and kits?' And we will get the package together and send it out, free of charge, wherever your school may be located in Manitoba."

This service can be particularly useful to rural or northern teachers who might not have the same access to materials as city teachers, or might not be able to come down to the library in person.

The resources are loaned out for 28 days, with the exception of DVD's which are two weeks. Teachers can also renew resources as long as another teacher is not waiting for them.

Karen Burkett is a Teacher-Librarian at Hastings School and says that she finds the Manitoba Education Resource Library ... "very useful. I access it several times a month. I request materials for myself, for the collaboration projects I'm working on with other teachers, and for teachers who are working on projects of their own."

Burkett says the library provides a broader scope of materials than she can offer at her school library, and she often uses their resources for collection development of her own school library.

Girardin says the library keeps up with the trends in education and works with consultants in the department to make sure they're up to date on new materials. Schools can also book Library staff to come out for "Lunch and Learn" sessions to hold an orientation for the teachers at the school.

"We definitely want to spread the word to all teachers to let them know we're there for them. We've had amazing responses from educators, when they find out what we can do they're always so pleased. We're helping them do their job and make their job easier - and it's always free to educators. It's really a no-lose situation," says Girardin.

To learn more about the Manitoba Education Resource Library visit: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/mel/> or visit at: 1181 Portage Ave.



**"It's been a presence in Manitoba for a long time."**  
- Nancy Girardin



**"We're here for anyone working within the Manitoba K-12 education system."**  
- Nancy Girardin



**As a teacher,**  
I know our kids need more support, not less.

 **The Manitoba Teachers' Society**



BY DONNA MAXWELL

# the TILLIKUM LENS project

The Tillikum Lens really clicked with students at a school in Ontario earlier this year when photos they took during the weeklong project swayed some members of the local school board to invite the students, and their photos, to their next board meeting.

The school board was considering closing Lakefield District Secondary School and the students' photos, which documented their sadness over the school's impending demise, impacted the board members enough that they wanted their colleagues to see them before they made a final decision.

Jonathon Reynolds, executive director of the International Sustainability Education Foundation, which started Tillikum Lens a year-and-a-half ago, said it aims to uplift Indigenous youth by showing them the power of photos and how they can be used to tell a story, sometimes, an important story, like how much your school means to you.

Reynolds said the students took all kinds of photos during the week, ones showing them smiling and happy, others showing their school and their sad faces, reflecting how they felt about the closure. When it came time to select pictures to display at an exhibit at the school, they chose only the sad, sombre ones.

He said he asked why they only chose the sad ones to display, and their answer was "that's the story we're trying to tell".

"Their ability to just pick that up and go with it was amazing, in a one-week course," Reynolds said.

"They knew their mission."

And though it's unknown whether they were able to sway the board, Reynolds said they made their point.

"They resonated with the people who are the actual decision makers and even if they don't change it, at least they know now that saying something and doing something, people will take seriously, and that in itself gives them a sense of power that they wouldn't have had before."

Reynolds said Tillikum Lens – Tillikum means 'people' in the Chinook language – was inspired by paintings done in the 1930s by school children in Osoyoos, B.C., trying to save their school. Reynolds saw them at the Osoyoos Desert Cultural Centre, where they're on display today.

"Those pictures were pretty powerful and they managed to maintain the sort of culture and the school within that area all through that period, so I thought, well, a picture's worth a thousand words, right?" Reynolds said.

"We kind of took it from there. And I wanted to set up a program that wasn't just go in, share something and then leave and

Above: Mark Blieske with group spokesman Will Miller and the paddle he created

Below: Grade 9 student Taylor Stewart, 13, sands her paddle while Blieske helps Autumn Hardwick with hers

Contact: Jonathon Reynolds, Tillikum Lens/Paddles Across Canada at [jonathon.r@sustainabilityeducation.ca](mailto:jonathon.r@sustainabilityeducation.ca)

disappear. It had to be some sort of a longer term engagement.”

Tillikum Lens workshops began in B.C. and are now making their way across the country. They already partner with Sony, who provides cameras, and they’ve taken on a new partner in the Canadian Canoe Museum and now students not only learn how to take photos and have them tell a story, they learn how to build a paddle and when the ice thaws, they’ll go on a day-long canoe trip with their instructor.

Lockport School in St. Andrews recently hosted a Tillikum Lens/Paddles Across Canada workshop and retired teacher Mark Blieske returned to teach eight Indigenous students both photography and woodworking. Blieske, who used to teach woodworking and graphics at the school, was the ideal man for the job – he taught for 36 years in the Lord Selkirk School Division, and he and his students made canoes and paddles in class and he took them on a yearly camping trip. He may be retired, but the trips continue.

“I’m still doing it. I still go on the canoe trips, I still work with the kids with paddles, I volunteer my time now and this year will be my 79th and 80th trip with Lord Selkirk School Division students,” Blieske said.

It’s a project that certainly seems made for Blieske, and during the week in January that he spent at his old school, his enthusiasm for the work, and the kids, was evident. He was back in his element, and loving what the dual-stream workshop was doing for his charges.

Certainly they’re learning camera skills and the impact a photo can have, as well as woodworking, but the lessons run much deeper than that.

“They’re learning how to relate with other people and they’re talking amongst each other, you can hear them now. The first day, they didn’t talk, now they are,” Blieske said.

“Self confidence is another thing that we get through this. As a teacher, I learn a lot, just how to approach this whole milieu of students that are such a disparity of socioeconomic backgrounds. As well as just how they act and react with each other, I love that.”

And while the Lockport group didn’t have a pressing issue, like the closing of their school, to document, they still have stories to tell, whether it’s what their lives are like from day to day, or simply the experience of taking a piece of wood and turning it into a beautiful paddle.

Blieske’s group, like all groups from schools that participate, was chosen by the school’s guidance counsellor, and had to meet the criteria that included being an

Indigenous student and having varied social backgrounds.

The students were in grades 7-9, and when they walked into the workshop they didn’t know each other, but as Blieske said, they worked side by side and became friends in short order.

He said it was fascinating to see them develop, literally right before his eyes. During one session where the students had to take turns being the photographer in charge of a group shot, he watched as they learned how to lead and organize the others so the shot could be achieved.

**The original goal of Tillikum Lens was to have the students make a statement to the larger community through their photos. The fact the workshops created a change within their smaller group was a**

**“wonderful, synergistic thing”**

*- Jonathon Reynolds*

Lockport principal Daryl Loeppky said the benefits of the workshop can be seen in the junior high school’s hallways.

“A junior high school is a really despaired group of kids all over the place trying to find themselves, that sort of thing, and where do you fit in and this was a really neat opportunity to meld eight students together around a certain theme of their heritage,” he said.

“To me, that’s the neatest thing to see from a social perspective.”

Reynolds said the original goal of Tillikum Lens was to have the students make a statement to the larger community through their photos. The fact the workshops created a change within their smaller group was a “wonderful, synergistic thing”.

“We expected to be able to use these programs to build community outside of their own community, but we didn’t realize how powerful it would be within their own

communities as well,” Reynolds said.

“That’s a real bonus.”

The Tillikum Lens has partnered with other activities before, like archery, and now it’s paddle making. Reynolds said that’s proven to be a unifying force as well, with some students signing on because they’re interested in the photography element and others drawn in by the woodworking.

At Lockport, the making of the paddle taught students woodworking, a skill some had no experience in, but it also provided an opportunity for students to delve into their heritage. Blieske said some had plenty of knowledge about their background, while others had very little.

“We’re trying to show them the culture. And a lot of them don’t even know what their past culture is. I’ve asked them, ‘do you know anything about your past native culture? And a lot of them don’t know.”

The project wraps up in a couple of really big ways. The students’ photos were on display at the Silver Canoe Dinner at Festival du Voyageur, where all eight students were treated to dinner and group spokesman, 15-year-old Will Miller, spoke to the guests about the project.

Miller, who was voted spokesman by the others in the group, said he was honoured by their confidence in him.

“It made me feel really great, like a high honour. I didn’t know if I was ready for it, but I feel like I can handle it,” he said.

The school stepped up again, and before the dinner, human ecology teacher Kristin Fillion and vice-principal Diane Steiner taught the student etiquette so they’d know which fork to use and when.

Miller said he learned so much during the week, from confidence and respect for others to how difficult life was for his ancestors. He liked making the paddle and knowing how hard it was for those who made them years ago.

“We’re learning about different hand held tools that were used by the natives before us, like the curve knife, and how hard it was to make paddles back then compared to now,” Miller said.

“We have all these electric sanders and different tools so it’s so easy to make paddles now, compared to back then.”

He’s also made new friends and he’s glad he had that opportunity.

In the spring, the students will reunite with Blieske for a day-trip down either the Seine or Assiniboine River where they’ll get to use the paddles they made. They’ll end up at Fort Gibraltar and have lunch.

“It’ll be kind of neat, ending up the canoe trip at a fort,” Blieske said.

# Teachers aware of **LGBTQ** incidents

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

**T**eachers across Canada are well aware of incidents of bullying and harassment of LGBTQ students, says a report released in January.

The Every Teacher Project found that almost 70 per cent of teachers surveyed were aware of verbal harassment of students in the previous 12 months.

The report – LGBTQ-inclusive education in Canada’s K-12 schools – involved interviews with about 3,400 teachers, making it the largest study of its kind in the world. The study was headed by Dr. Catherine Taylor, education professor at The University of Winnipeg, in partnership with The Manitoba Teachers’ Society.

The study found that there was a wide range of incidents involving harassment. Just over 40 per cent of teachers were aware of cyber-bullying, 25 per cent aware of graffiti and 23 per cent aware of sexual harassment.

At the same time, the study found a vast majority of teachers support LGBTQ-inclusive education and almost all agree it was important that LGBTQ students have someone to talk to. At the same time, however, fewer felt comfortable discussing LGBTQ topics.

“Nearly three quarters either strongly agreed (44 per cent) or somewhat agreed (29 per cent) that they were comfortable in such discussions,” the study found. “This opens but does not answer the question, why do some teachers who approve of LGBTQ inclusion not feel comfortable practicing it?”

The study found that guidance counsellors were most comfortable with the topic, along with teachers in high schools. It also found that types of schools played a role.

“Educators from Catholic schools were much less likely to feel comfortable discussing LGBTQ issues with their students (57 per cent) than those from secular schools,” the report said, noting that teachers from both types of schools supported LGBTQ-inclusive education almost equally.

Aside from some levels of discomfort, the study found that only 37 per cent of educators participated in LGBTQ efforts



**The study found a vast majority of teachers support LGBTQ-inclusive education and almost all agree it was important that LGBTQ students have someone to talk to. At the same time, however, fewer felt comfortable discussing LGBTQ topics.**

at their schools. It found there were substantial regional differences, with 45 per cent participation in Ontario and British Columbia to just 15 per cent in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Manitoba the figure was 29 per cent.

“We looked into the data and found that teachers were typically being held back by system resources,” said Taylor.

Teachers identified a lack of training, professional development, coverage in Bachelor of Education programs and a lack of support from school divisions and

ministries of education as issues.

“That’s discouraging in a way but it’s also something that points (to) a way forward for us and shows us what needs to be done in order to improve the situation.”

While the study found that 97 per cent of educators consider their schools to be safe or somewhat safe, that drops (72 per cent) when they are asked if they were safe or somewhat safe for LGB students.

Among other findings in the report:

- Two-thirds were aware of teachers being harassed for being LGBTQ.
- Almost all rated their school as safe but far fewer rated their school as safe for LGB or transgender students.
- 30% of educators felt their schools have responded effectively to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic harassment.
- Just over 50 per cent of high schools have Gay-Straight Alliance clubs.

The full report is available on the MTS website: <http://www.mbteach.org/news/news.html#final>





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# Awareness lacking on pensions

BY MATEA TUHTAR

It's never too early to start planning for your retirement, though many teachers aren't becoming familiar with their pensions until they reach the tail end of their careers, says a recent survey by the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund (TRAF).

Every four years, TRAF conducts a membership survey of active and retired members about their perspectives on the services they receive from TRAF and their awareness of what TRAF does.

While the results were positive in terms of user satisfaction, an area that stood out the most is that younger teachers aren't as knowledgeable about their pension plan, and some have a misunderstanding about what TRAF's role actually is.

According to the survey, approximately 40 per cent of members think TRAF offers financial planning or investment services and is in control of pension legislation.

"That's not TRAF's role so it's surprising to see that," says Brenda Venuto, vice-president of member services at TRAF. "We've never offered those services and we are governed by the Teachers' Pensions Act, which is government controlled. So one of my objectives is to clarify what TRAF's role is – we're the administrator of the teacher pension plan."

And TRAF wants their members to have the information they need to make educated decisions about their future, especially those in early, or mid-career, the group that the survey found to be less engaged with their pensions.

"Teachers will spend a number of years in university to prepare for their career in teaching, which is about 26 years on average, and the truth is they typically spend longer years in retirement," says Venuto. "We often hear from those approaching retirement saying 'I wish I had known more about the pension plan when I was younger.' TRAF offers a variety of services and it seems like some members aren't as familiar with them as we would want them to be."

Another surprising result from the latest survey showed that 49 per cent of members don't recall receiving an email telling them their latest benefit statement is now available online. The benefits statement is the one single document that's personalized that all teachers receive from TRAF. It's published online once



a year, in late January, and is available to all the teachers who are registered for TRAF's online services.

"It's important for teachers to be familiar with their benefit statement and monitor it," says Venuto. Besides a projected retirement amount, the statement contains other important information such as death benefit and beneficiary information. "Teachers should verify that the information is correct and follow up with TRAF on any discrepancies."

The only way to receive the benefit statement is by signing up for online services with TRAF, which teachers can do by visiting the TRAF website and registering. The website also contains useful features such as a pension estimator tool, tax calculator, and records of a teacher's career in respect of contributions, salary, and service. Teachers can also declare their beneficiary online, apply for pension and update their contact information. Visitors to the website can also view videos of TRAF retirement seminars.

According to Venuto, teachers often visit the TRAF website when driven by a life event – such as going on maternity leave, or looking into pension buy back. "It's with these life events that teachers should be aware of the impact on their pensions," says Venuto, noting that sometimes members are ready to retire and only then find out that their records are not up to date.

"In case of a marriage breakup, the person

might think that it was dealt with, but they never notified their pension plan. So now they might be looking for a document they can't find, or might have to find a former spouse to get documents signed."

Retirement should be a fairly simple process according to TRAF, and teachers have a responsibility to educate themselves along the way by keeping track of their statements, reading their correspondence from TRAF which includes an online newsletter, and calling or visiting the TRAF offices if they have any questions.

"We realize that it's not a high priority in teachers' lives – they're busy with their classrooms and all they have to deal with, so pensions are low on the priority list," says Venuto. "So it's really the awareness that TRAF exists, and what it offers and to know where they're at because pensions can be impacted by life events – those are the things I'd like to get across."

TRAF holds retirement information seminars coordinated through MTS which all members 48 years or older are invited to, and younger teachers can attend early and mid-career seminars on Pension Sustainability which can be found at [www.mbteach.org/health-benefits/benefits\\_seminars.html](http://www.mbteach.org/health-benefits/benefits_seminars.html).

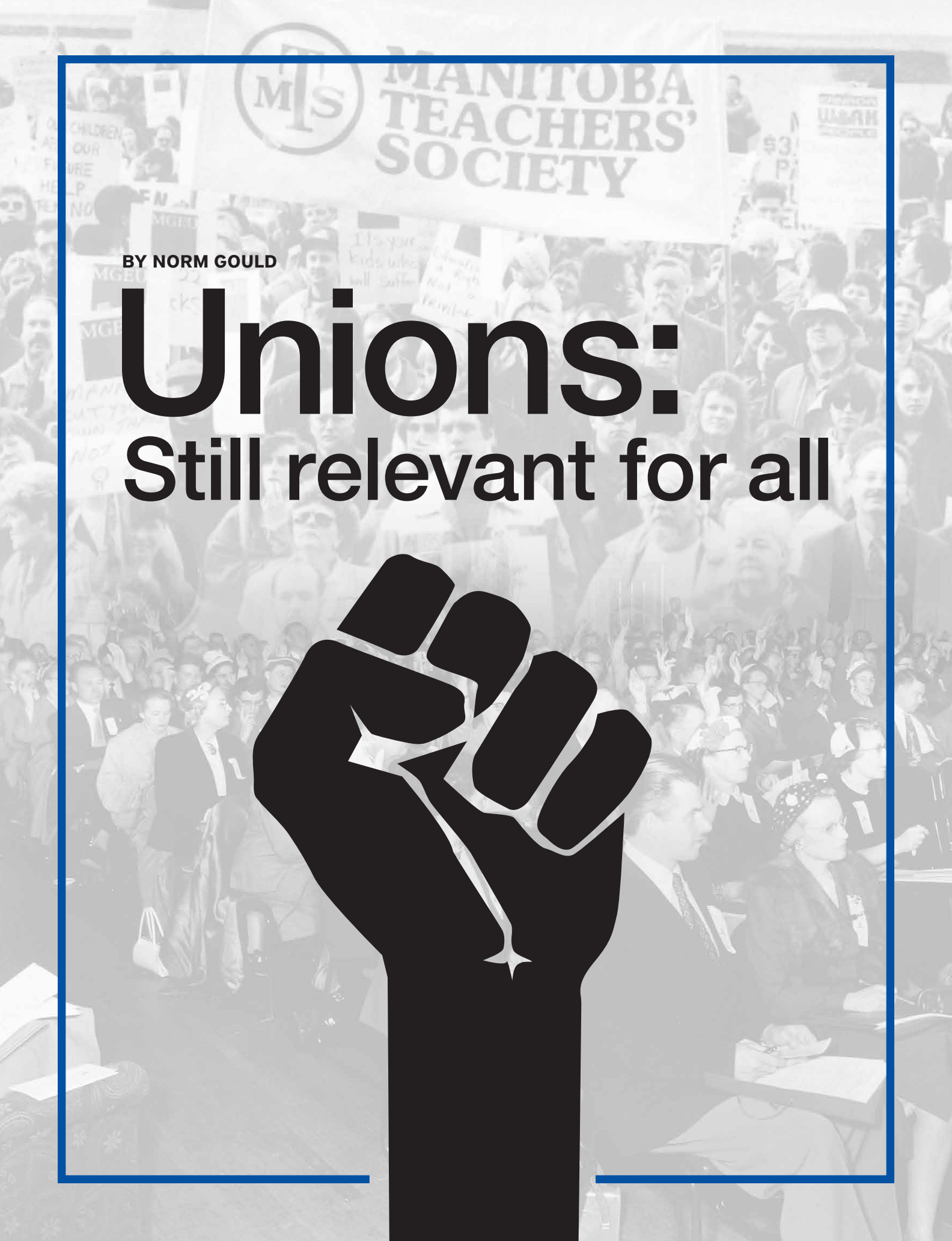
The latest TRAF benefit statement was published at the end of January 2016. To view it, log into your online services or visit [www.traf.mb.ca](http://www.traf.mb.ca) to register.



**MANITOBA  
TEACHERS'  
SOCIETY**

BY NORM GOULD

# Unions: Still relevant for all



**B**efore the cone of silence descended on provincial government announcements, I found myself caught in conversations about unions and their role in today's society.

The issue had arisen because The Manitoba Teachers' Society was asked to respond to the string of education announcements being made by the province. That's not a problem. We know through our polling and other research that the views of teachers are highly valued by the general public.

The conversations that followed these announcements often dwelled on the observation that the Society supported the announcements, which was true. Unfortunately, too many people mistake our support of policies for support of political parties.

While many of these casual talks are positive, with people recognizing the role and importance of unions, others quickly become hostile, with questions and criticisms of unions, their supposed power and importance in modern life.

I don't mind a good argument. I reflect back on a comment made by a former colleague, Jim Morgan, who said: "I don't mind arguing with you, if you are going to learn something."

I found it somewhat ironic that at the same time these arguments about unions were being raised, lawyers for a California teacher were in front of the Supreme Court in the United States arguing that she shouldn't have to pay fees to her union, even while receiving the benefits the union achieved.

As well, during the same period an Oxfam study was released that showed the growth in inequality worldwide where 62 individuals had as much wealth as the bottom half of the world's population or 3.5 billion people.

It said the wealth of the bottom half dropped 41 percent in five years while the 62 billionaires saw an increase of 44 per cent in their wealth.

There are a number of reasons for growing inequality in the world in general and North America in particular and one is the decline in unionization.

An analysis by American Prospect magazine last year showed that there was a direct link between the decline in unions in the United States and the rise of inequality of wealth.

"Over the last several decades, union membership in the United States has declined precipitously, from 24 percent of all wage and salary workers in 1973 to 11.1 percent today," it said. "At the same time, our economy has increasingly begun to favor the

wealthiest members of society."

It pointed out that the labour share of income reached its lowest level since 1929, a level where the top one per cent take home the same share of income as the bottom 50 per cent.

The findings have been supported by other research, such as that by sociologists at Ohio State University who found "reductions in union strength attributable to policies endorsed by Reagan and by later neoliberal administrations helped create the acceleration in inequality after 1981."

Those policies included such legislation as so-called right-to-work laws which eliminate mandatory union membership and union dues. In other words, workers can opt out of paying union dues while still getting the benefits of union membership. They are free riders.

## Without unions,

would a large swath of workers now have OVERTIME, or MEDICAL LEAVE or PENSIONS or PAID VACATIONS or EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK...? Of course the answer is no. Many non-union workers are still waiting for their employers to dole out some of those benefits.

Such laws have been introduced in a number of U.S. states, but far more significant is the case that was heard before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Sadly, it involves a California teacher who thinks paying a fee to her union is a violation of her free speech. Even though the union, by agreement, does not use her fee for political activities, she still wants a free ride.

This case is a threat to public service unions throughout the U.S. and, if many observers are right and the Supreme Court upholds the challenge, it will be a stunning blow to their very existence.

And what would happen then?

We will see even more inequality among all workers. As far as wages go, it will be a race to the bottom. There is no doubt a wave of unionization lifts all boats. But if there are no

unions to generate the wave, then all workers will tread water and sink.

A study by the Economic Policy Institute in the United States found that "in states that have adopted Right-to-Work (RTW), annual wages and benefits are about \$1,500 lower than for comparable workers in non-RTW states—for both union and non-union workers—and the odds of getting health insurance or a pension through one's job are also lower."

Again, there have been studies pointing out the same thing, as well as noting that RTW has not resulted in job creation in those states. But common sense trumps all the studies. If there is no one to negotiate for workers, where is the incentive for employers to provide any benefits or protections for employees?

Without unions, would a large swath of workers now have overtime, or medical leave or pensions or paid vacations or equal pay for equal work ...? Of course the answer is no. Many non-union workers are still waiting for their employers to dole out some of those benefits.

As well as fighting for such benefits for its members, The Manitoba Teachers' Society – and other teachers' organizations – also fights for policies and legislation to improve education, not just for teachers but for students.

Some look at it as a union dictating to a government what it should do. Despite not having the right to strike, the media have called us "the powerful teachers' union" as if that explains anything.

Yes, we are strong because we are a union who represents a large group of people, but if we are indeed powerful it is because what we strive to achieve is supported by our members, students, parents and the public. If governments adopt policies we support, it's because they know those policies have the support of most other voters. It isn't a union dictating anything, it is a union giving voice to those who do the work on a daily basis and those who want young Manitobans educated in the best ways possible.

For the past few years we have spoken out loud and long against the types of labour policies adopted in some U.S. states and that have become proposals of certain parties in Canada. So far, those anti-labour schemes have not caught the interest of the public, given the results of some Canadian elections.

But they are always in the background, and sometimes in the foreground based on some of those conversations I have had, and we will remain vigilant not just for our members, but for all workers whose quality of life relies on the collective work of unions.

*Norm Gould is the president of The Manitoba Teachers' Society.*



Roland Sawatzky, Curator, The Manitoba Museum

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

# NICE WOMEN DON'T WANT THE VOTE



Bookended by elections, the timing couldn't be much better for The Manitoba Museum exhibit on the women's suffrage movement.

And for teachers, the exhibit offers ample opportunities to create curriculum connections.

The temporary exhibit, entitled *Nice Women Don't Want the Vote*, launched in November soon after the federal election. On opening day, newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau created a cabinet with equal representation from both men and women. The exhibit wraps up April 10, days before Manitoba's provincial election.

The museum was also a hub of celebrations for the 100th anniversary celebrations of the date when most Manitoban women won the right to vote in provincial elections. On Jan. 28, 1916, the Manitoba Legislature amended the Manitoba Election Act to allow some women to vote in provincial elections. The exhibit outlines the tumultuous journey to reach that point.

Curator of history Roland Sawatzky says the exhibit focuses on the people who were involved in the movement, as well as others who weren't included in the momentum.

Much support for the movement came from rural women in agricultural communities as well as women who worked in Winnipeg factories. The suffrage movement also included members of the city's growing middle class.

At the same time, the Indigenous population and many recent immigrants were left out of the momentum.

"In fact, the Mennonites and Ukrainians

and Doukhobors had their votes taken away from them in 1917 due to the federal Wartime Elections Act. So just after the women got the vote in Manitoba, a lot of the immigrant women had their vote taken away within a year," Sawatzky says.

"These were on different levels of government but, at the same time, it was very symbolic of the kinds of tensions that you would find during World War I. The provincial government gave them the vote and then the federal government barred them from voting. Democracy is not this gradual rise of everyone being able to vote. It was up and down. People had to fight for it."

The exhibit also examines the main methods and arguments used for and against the idea of women voting. Articles and letters were published in local labour newsletters and agricultural periodicals. Petitions circulated and crowds flocked to community halls for open debates. In 1914, Nellie McClung was famously involved in a mock parliament at the Walker Theatre. Different groups of suffragists fought with different goals in mind. Some focused on equality while others focused on property rights and prohibition.

An impressive array of artifacts are featured throughout the exhibit, which is set to travel to the New Iceland Heritage Museum in Gimli, Sipiweske Museum in Wawanesa, the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau and the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach.

Sawatzky encourages school groups to visit the exhibit while they have the chance.



Much support for the movement came from rural women in agricultural communities as well as women who worked in Winnipeg factories. The suffrage movement also included members of the city's growing middle class. At the same time, the Indigenous population and many recent immigrants were left out of the momentum.



"We've had a really good response from the schools," he says. We really wanted this to be a big part of the school programs and we developed it for the curriculum."

Adding to the scholastic value, the museum hired education consultant René Gillis to develop a teacher's guide for Manitoba educators.

"We printed off 500 of those and every teacher who comes to the exhibit with their class gets a free copy of it. It's bilingual and it has lots of big colour photographs in the middle for class activities," Sawatzky says.

"It gives the context and also a bunch of possible activities for each interest level there might be. All the school groups that are coming here are using the book before and afterwards as well. It's something you can take into the class and get more into detail."

For Gillis, it was important to develop the guide to accompany the exhibit but also to act as a freestanding teaching resource.

"The exhibit will only be here for a certain time, but if they can't see the exhibit, there's full coloured pictures of all the artifacts. It's all primary sources that are used in the document too," says Gillis, a retired curriculum consultant in social studies and former teacher.

"It's based on the historical thinking concepts of Dr. Peter Seixas at UBC, which our Grade 11 history course is based on too. We're trying to encourage teachers to work towards teaching historical thinking as a way of teaching history."

The teacher's guide references six historical

thinking concepts: historical significance, evidence, continuity and change, cause and consequence, historical perspectives and ethical dimension.

"There are also short biographies of each of the key figures in the suffragist movement and primary source photographs," Gillis says. "It's kind of neat because you get to see these women and how they dressed in the document itself."

The guide is divided into themes that are also self-standing modules that link particularly well into social studies curriculum for Grade 9 and Grade 11. Teachers could also make modifications to incorporate the resource for Grade 6 classes. As well, possibilities exist to incorporate material into other subject areas, especially language arts and drama.

The first module looks at the questions of whether women's suffrage in Manitoba was a grassroots movement or an elitist movement.

From there, the second module examines involvement in public discourse and the types of tools feminists used at that time in contrast with communication methods of today.

The third module delves into the concepts of feminism, maternalism and equal rights.

"There were some maternal feminists and the others were equal rights feminists, so it looks at what approach they had. Equal rights feminists say that women should have a vote just simply because, as citizens, they should be entitled to exactly the same rights as men," Gillis explains.

"And the maternal feminists at the turn of the century would have been saying that since

women are naturally fit to be mothers, they actually have a built-in moral sense that would outfit them adequately for making ethical decisions in politics."

The fourth module focuses on property law and women's suffrage, which Gillis says was a huge issue at the time.

"If you were a widow, you might not hold any property whatsoever. That's just how it worked because there wasn't a dower law at the time," she says. "So if your husband died and you worked on the family farm together, it was not necessarily in your name."

The fifth module hones in on the issue of temperance and suffrage, since many suffragists at the time were also involved in the movement for prohibition.

"Winnipeg was kind of a rocking place at the turn of the century, so they saw alcohol as the source of all social ills," Gillis says. "A lot of them were temperance activists."

The sixth and final module looks at immigration, war and suffrage.

"It was in the midst of war, 1914 to 1919, so things changed very rapidly for women and for everyone. Prior to that, we were just accepting immigration like crazy in the west, and that was changing our demographic profile," Gillis says. "Those are two factors that affected the suffragist movement a lot too."

"Sometimes I think that the young women who are growing up today take for granted all of these rights that they have and they think that all of the battles have been fought. Well, they haven't really been. There are still a lot of issues that women are fighting for today too."

# PORTFOLIO



## Still sore losers!

The federal Liberals were elected with a majority on Oct. 19, 2015. The so-called honeymoon period didn't last long.

**Trudeau Liberals breaking promises like pretzel sticks**

- Les MacPherson, *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, Dec. 8, 2015 / 49 days later

**Canada's new prime minister over-promises and under-delivers**

- Dennis Gruending, *United Church Observer*, Jan. 14, 2016 / 87 days later

**Broken promises piling up for Trudeau**

- *Edmonton Sun*, Dec. 21, 2015 / 62 days later

## More than just pants on fire

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON



As the provincial election campaign gets hotter, we can only hope that an apparent trend in campaign politics doesn't emerge here: blatant lying.

The one thing candidates seem to have learned over the past few years in the United States and Canada is they can put out more fiction than Stephen King -- and get away with it.

Nowhere has the practice become more refined than in the United States where lies are blasted from political podiums like confetti on election night.

The Pulitzer Prize winning project Politifact, which fact-checks and categorizes statements made by politicians, has found its worst Pants on Fire category a raging wildfire of falsehoods.

"This cycle is very different with the number of flat-out wrong claims," the editor in chief told *The Daily Beast*. "Just go through our Pants on Fire section. You'll see way more examples than previous years."

Of course, the campaign for the White House this year involves Donald Trump, home of the whopper. And why not? With every fib and fabrication his support has held or grown. When confronted with obvious deceptions, he (like other politicians) tried to make it a simple matter of opinion.

For example, he placed a signed plaque on his golf course in Virginia, claiming it was the site of a major event in the Civil War. Local historians said no such incident occurred



NOTHING LIKE THIS EVER ON THE SCREEN!



The Motion Picture Association of America is the lobbying arm of major movie studios in the United States and also the organization that lets you know about the nasty bits in movies.

Through its ratings system it even differentiates the kind of violence one will see in certain movies from "creature violence" (Godzilla) to "fantasy violence" (Alice in Wonderland).

Kevin Polowy, senior editor of Yahoo Movies, has catalogued some of the oddest MPAA warnings on movies.

**Dead Alive** (1993): "Rated R for an *abundance of outrageous gore.*"

**The Skateboard Kid II** (1995): "Rated PG for brief mild language and *an adolescent punch in the nose.*"

**Mr. Deeds** (2002): "Rated PG-13 for language including sexual references, and *some rear nudity.*"

**Mean Girls** (2004): "Rated PG-13 for sexual content, language and *some teen partying.*"

**The Monuments Men** (2014): "Rated PG-13 for some images of war violence and *historical smoking.*"

**Grumpier Old Men** (1995): "Rated PG-13 for *salty language* and innuendos."

there. When asked about it, he attacked the historians: "How would they know that? Were they there?" No they weren't, but apparently he was.

Although the media know he's Trump in name and trumpety in action, few in the media are willing to actually say he is lying.

These past months have seen his most egregious nose-stretchers described as "disputed" facts, "controversial" statements, "faulty" statistics and "questionable" claims. Timid CNN even put onscreen the absurd question: "Does Donald Trump transcend the truth?" Transcend? The media just don't know what to do with a pathological liar.

Much of the time, reporters just aren't knowledgeable enough to know when a candidate is lying or, if they do, they feel they have to get someone else to say it. That someone is usually an opponent, so it becomes one candidate's word against another. Supposed balance. The only thing missing is the truth.

That was underscored in the last federal election in Canada. Stephen Harper made a number of claims about the performance of the Canadian economy that were, flatly, not true. For example, he said during one leaders' debate that Canada had the strongest employment growth among G7 nations. In fact, Canada ranked second or fourth depending on whether one used employment growth or employment rate statistics.

Then there was the ad in which he said the

Liberals and NDP "have left the door wide open" to a "Netflix tax." In fact both those parties had stated they would not consider such a tax and it was the Conservatives who actually raised the possibility in their 2014 budget.

Lies or opinions?

The comments were reported and repeated and pretty much unchallenged except by some political websites and only then long after they were initially raised.

Michelle Amazeen, an assistant communications professor at Rider University in New Jersey, has said candidates have an incentive to lie because "most media outlets don't have the resources to check for accuracy immediately." Indeed, she says the media also have an incentive to not do much checking because statements, like those of Donald Trump, bring larger audiences and traffic.

"Fact-checking rains on the parade of that revenue model," says Amazeen, who co-authored a study on fact-checking for the American Press Institute.

Or, at its most basic, reporters just feel transcribing wild, undisputed claims is great copy. Maybe so, but come the next provincial election it wouldn't be a stretch to hope that the candidates are at least challenged to support what they say and brought to heel if they can't. In real time.



## the mummy's curse

Eight museum employees in Egypt are reportedly going to trial for botching the reattachment on the beard on the burial mask of King Tut. The move comes after an investigation into how the beard of the 3,000-year-old artifact became detached and then glued back on.

Prosecutors said workers then "recklessly" tried to cover up the mistake, using large amounts of inappropriate glue in an effort to fix it. Artifacts of the pharaoh Tutankhamun are a major tourist attraction in Egypt.

## GUESS IT WAS FIXED



A Mississippi gun store owner and his son were shot to death in a shootout with customers over a disputed \$25 fee. The fee was for repair of a gun. The two customers, also a father and son, were injured.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?  
I'D LOVE TO HELP.  
REACH ME AT [RJOB@MBTEACH.ORG](mailto:rjob@mbteach.org)

# REFRESH

BY RAMAN JOB, PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR

## 7 Social tips to feed your election fever

You may or may not be a political junkie. But we've put together a list of seven Internet resources for the April 19<sup>th</sup> provincial election that you'll find useful, no matter your party preference or level of involvement.

### 1. Politwitter.ca

If you want to keep tabs on who's posting what on election-related social media, cozy up to Politwitter. It indexes Canadian federal and provincial political Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and blog posts all in one location. Want to see who's cutting ribbons and kissing babies? Want an extensive list of politicians and political tweeters as well as

popular hashtags? It's all here. You can even parse tweets by MPs or MLAs, partisan affiliation, province and more. Great tool to study or dip into on demand.

### 2. Manitoba Votes app

Not sure who's running? This slick app for iPhone, Android and BB phones puts a candidates list; plus voting information including poll locations, contact numbers, FAQs and election buzz in the palm of your hands. What about ID requirements, advance polls, accessibility and translation services, and absentee voting for snowbirds? All right here. Dig as deep as you want.

### 3. Elections Manitoba website

Yes, the Manitoba Votes app is handy, but the full-featured Elections Manitoba site, [electionsmanitoba.ca](http://electionsmanitoba.ca), is even more comprehensive. It includes enumerator training videos, forms and guides, tabs for media and teachers, and more MB election goodness than they could possibly squeeze into the app. Pay special attention to their "Teaching Citizenship, Democracy & Participation in Elections" program and instructions for booking a "Your Power to Choose" workshop. Good idea to bookmark this one. Oh, and don't forget to check out the Elections Manitoba Facebook page!

### 4. WFP Twitter list of candidates

This wonderful 82-candidate Twitter list is compiled by multi-media producer Kristin Annable of the Winnipeg Free Press. Yes, Manitoba politicians have picked up Twitter in a much bigger way than last time we headed to the polls in 2011. You'll find plenty of pics, posts and opinions from nominated candidates in every part of the province. How do you follow the list? Log in to Twitter. Search

for the WFP account, @winnipegnews, click "view lists" under the gear icon, and subscribe to "Prov. Election Candidates List". Voilà!

### 5. Twitter hashtags

Ready for some interesting chat and information gathering? You'll find plenty of election-related discussion on #mbpoli, #mbelxn - the two most active hashtags. You'll also find good material on #mb16, as well. Remember to keep it civil. Strong opinions evoke strong responses. Keep your professional hat on at all times.

### 6. Refresh your memory, citizen

You probably haven't heard much about the humble [manitobaelection.ca](http://manitobaelection.ca) site. It bills itself as a "citizen-created election resource" and you'll notice most of the information is from the October 4, 2011 Manitoba election. But what a resource. It's a thorough time capsule of the last time we elected a government complete with candidates, constituencies, news, and especially maps. Yes, maps of election results dating back to 1958. Fascinating? Absolutely!

### 7. Visit 308.com

The threehundredeight.com blog was named after the number of MPs in Canada's House of Commons before the last federal election. So, maybe you've associated it only with federal elections. Truth is, there's a wealth of information on provincial politics as well. Slide way down the right hand margin until you pass "Posts by Polling Firm". Sitting right underneath that is "Provincial Politics Coverage". And that's where you'll find plenty of Keystone province news. Enjoy.

*Want to see a special social media feature? Kick it to me at [rjob@mbteach.org](mailto:rjob@mbteach.org).*



# Nominate your students!



They're kids with a cause—compassionate, creative and courageous. You can see them at every grade level. Students who love serving in their schools and communities.

**Recognize your Young Humanitarians with a YHA nomination.**

Downloadable forms are up at [mbteach.org](http://mbteach.org) and the deadline is **April 8, 2016 at 4pm.**

Join us at our **MTS YHA 2016 Awards** on Wednesday, **May 25, 2016** at the **Fairmont Winnipeg.**



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*Greg Selinger*



*Rana Bokhari*



*Brian Pallister*

Join our virtual town hall on April 6, 2016.

MTS President Norm Gould and the leaders of Manitoba's main political parties will be available to discuss and answer questions about education issues leading up to the provincial election.

**To participate in the call, all you need to do is register for your MyProfile account by visiting <https://memberlink.mbteach.org>.**

Only MTS members with an active account will be invited by phone to participate. Members should ensure their contact information is up to date to be able to hear and ask questions of party leaders.

# VIRTUAL TOWN HALL APRIL 6, 2016

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