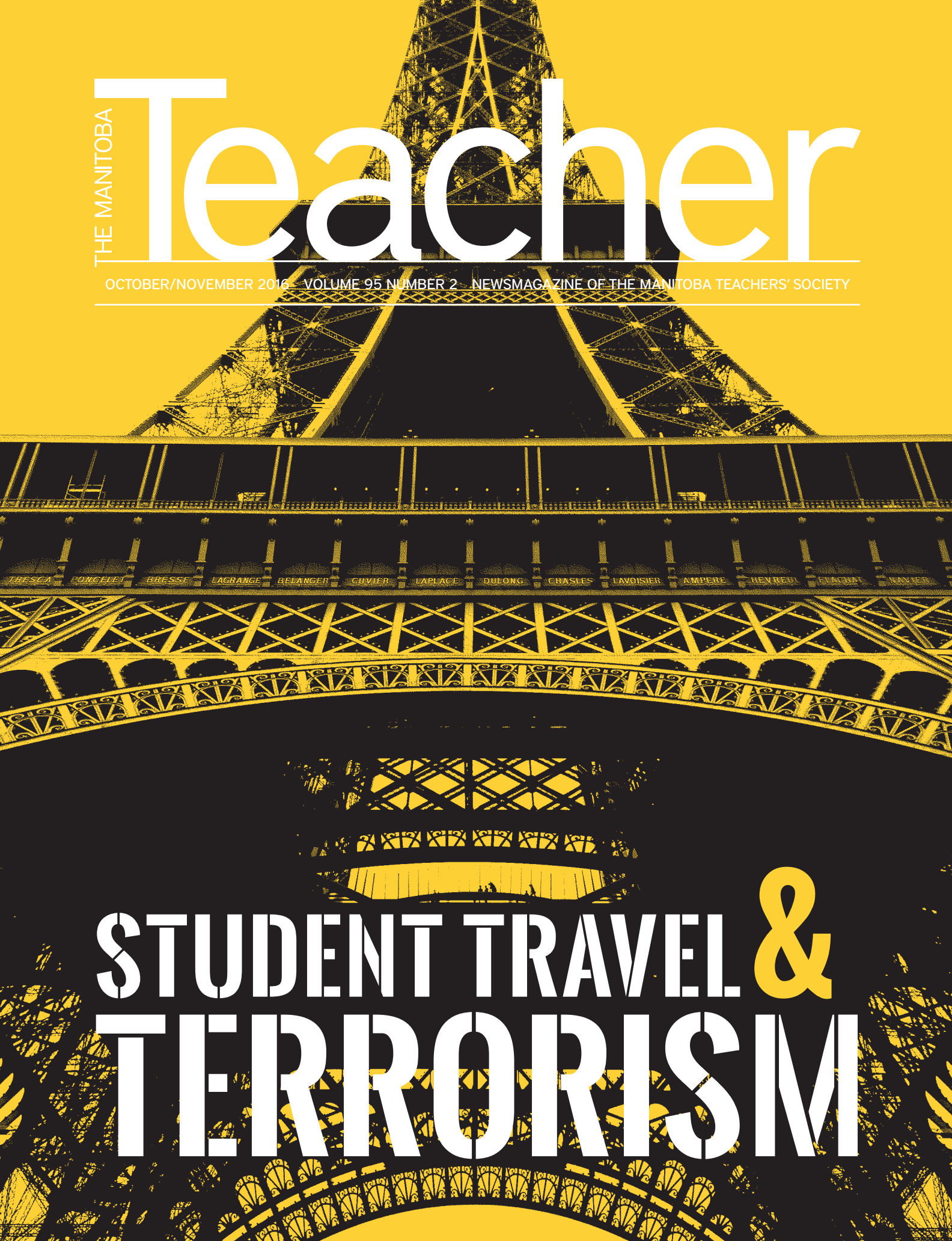


THE MANITOBA

Teacher

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2016 VOLUME 95 NUMBER 2 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



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THE MANITOBA Teacher

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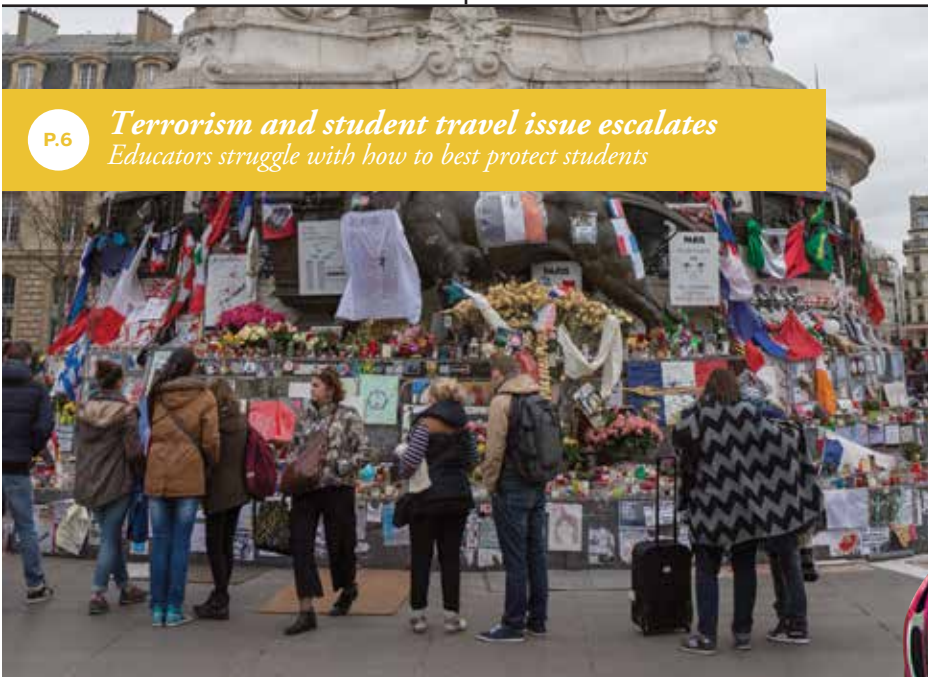
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

NORM GOULD

At the beginning of every meeting of your Provincial Executive, I acknowledge that the meeting is being held on the traditional territories of a number of First Nations.

While the practice is becoming more common among numerous organizations and institutions, there are still some who wonder why we do it.

Your Provincial Executive and Provincial Council have pioneered a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing Aboriginal education and our understanding of the past and the experiences of Canada's first peoples.

It is not so-called "political correctness" or just an obligation. It is a payment of a debt to history and a responsibility to the present.

This is a small way to show our members, students and the public that we know and honour the history of Indigenous Canadians. At its most basic, it is a show of respect.

This initiative – and others we have taken – are especially important for an organization of teachers. It is our duty to both learn and to teach; to learn and to teach about the traditional lands on which we work and of the treaties that were entered into regarding those lands.

At MTS we have taken that beyond the acknowledgement at meetings. Each year we have an Aboriginal Awareness Day at MTS, where staff attend various sessions on Aboriginal history and the impact on current issues.

MTS has a standing committee on Aboriginal education issues and has been heavily involved in the promotion of, and involvement in, existing outside activities such as Orange Shirt Day and Aboriginal Day Live at the Forks.

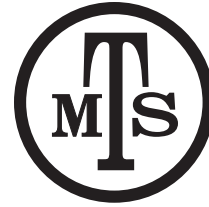
MTS will also be installing a plaque at the Harcourt Street entrance to McMaster House acknowledging that our headquarters is situated on traditional lands.

The plaque acknowledgement is in Cree, Ojibway, Michif, Dakota, French and English.

It says: McMaster House and Bradley Square are located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Ininew and Dakota peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis nation. The Manitoba Teachers' Society respects the Treaties that were made on this territory.

Similar acknowledgements will be contained on certificates created for all the teachers' associations of MTS.

Again, these are small, but important steps, we are taking (and there will be more) to ensure Indigenous communities and their history are fully a part of our classrooms, the education system and society in general.



The Manitoba Teachers' Society

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INSIDE MTS

NO FORTUNE OR FAME, BUT ROCK STARS ALL THE SAME

BOBBI TAILLEFER, GENERAL SECRETARY

Can you even imagine what it would be like if teachers were treated like they were rock stars?

Imagine walking in a parade of 3,000 people and the side of the street was lined with spectators clapping and chanting “Teachers! Teachers! Thank you!” That was our experience as about 200 members of The Manitoba Teachers’ Society walked along the Main Street during Steinbach’s first annual Pride Parade in early July. The recognition and appreciation that was shown to MTS members that day was an exceptional and emotional experience and one that I will cherish for a very long time.

Our membership views the organization’s support of social justice issues as a given. That was the backdrop to our discussion on MTS support of Pride Parades at the last AGM.

This hotly debated topic was examined through the lens of the level of support MTS would give to Pride Parades. Our members never questioned MTS

participation at these events. We know that teachers are leaders in their communities and that they use that influence wisely in order to achieve positive change in schools and also in our larger society.

Regardless of religious or personal beliefs, members of MTS believe in safe and inclusive schools and worksites for both students and staff. The ability to be who you are and be safe is primordial.

That is why the Society has recently partnered with researchers from a variety of universities, funded by a SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) grant, to study mistreatment in schools. The survey was conducted in June and concluded at the beginning of July. MTS members participated in great numbers and the researchers are currently compiling and analyzing the data. When the data are released, we want to use it in a constructive way to develop strategies to help create and maintain schools as healthy, learning and working environments.

Many of our school divisions have spent a great amount of time and energy to ensure the safety and wellness of staff and students with all kinds of policies. Their efforts are both laudable and appreciated. It is our hope that the additional information gleaned from the study will help them re-examine their policies and procedures. It is also our hope that their effectiveness will be confirmed or enhanced and that best practices will be shared around the province.

At the end of the day, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society works hard on behalf of its members to make sure that we stay true to our mission of safeguarding the welfare of teachers, the status of the teaching profession and the cause of public education in Manitoba.

To my mind, this means that all of the members who volunteer with MTS and its hard working staff really are the equivalent to rock stars.

PX makes room for baby

If you happen to hear baby babble coming from an MTS Provincial Executive meeting, don’t be alarmed. It’s just baby London giving her opinion on whatever important matter is being discussed that day.

When PX member Ashleigh Deeley Michaluk was expecting, she decided that she wanted to continue to fulfill her mandate while on maternity leave.

“And as an organization that has almost 75 per cent women, we need to turn ourselves into pretzels to accommodate that,” says MTS General Secretary Bobbi Taillefer who consulted with Deeley Michaluk to make sure that MTS could support her and the baby. An infant change table already exists in one of the Harcourt bathrooms, and a

little nursery was set up so that London could be looked after while her mom was in meetings and while she didn’t need to feed.

The rest of the executive, as well as Deeley Michaluk’s Superintendent Ted Fransen, have been very helpful in having Deeley Michaluk continue in her role, nursing baby in tow. And while having a new mom bring her baby to work isn’t a new idea, it’s something that the Society will continue to support in the future.

“It’s really important for us that women of all ages and stages can have a place in this organization,” says Taillefer. “And having a baby in the meeting created a very lovely atmosphere. It’s also kind of a focus and reminder of why we’re doing what we’re doing.”





Duane Brothers is an early riser, but he didn't have a relaxing morning on March 22.

The superintendent of the Louis Riel School Division was watching the news as part of his get-ready-for-the-day ritual when he saw reports about the 2016 terrorist bombings in the Brussels airport and a metro station in the Belgium capital.

His phone soon rang with a colleague on the other end, making sure he was aware students from Collège Jeanne-Sauvé were supposed to be flying to Europe that day – through the Brussels airport.

“I'm looking at the news and I'm seeing two attacks and I'm hearing news of more attacks taking place beyond those ones,” Brothers says. “Frankly, at that point it was an easy decision for us to make.”

That decision was to cancel the spring break trip.

“We contacted the principal. We heard back about insurance,” Brothers recalls. “The insurer said that as long as the division cancelled the trip, not the school, then there was a high chance they'd be reimbursed.”

“So as soon as I got into the office, we drafted a letter and we had a letter to the insurer by about 8:30 in the morning.”

Brothers wasn't the only Manitoba school superintendent who had to make some quick decisions that day.

St. James-Assiniboia School Division had students from St. James Collegiate and Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate

DANGER

SAFETY

EDUCATION

BY JUDY OWEN

RISK



at the airport already, waiting to fly to Germany through Brussels. They were sent home. Students from Westwood Collegiate were actually in flight to Brussels when the bombings occurred and were rerouted to Paris.

Students from Oak Park High School in the Pembina Trails School Division were scheduled to leave on a European trip that afternoon, going through Brussels. The trip was cancelled, but the travel company proposed a different trip to Rome. Once things checked out with travel advisories and the insurance company, they left within a couple days. A group from Vincent Massey Collegiate was already in Germany and returned home as scheduled.

It was a bit of déjà vu for Pembina Trails superintendent Ted Fransen.

In November 2015, seven students and two teachers from Vincent Massey Collegiate were part of a student exchange in private homes in France. They were spending a few days in Paris before returning home, right at the time of co-ordinated terrorist shootings and suicide bombings in a concert hall, stadium and bars and restaurants that left 130 people dead and almost 400 injured.

The students' activities were limited, partly because Paris was basically in a lockdown, and the group arrived home as planned.

The terrorism and student travel issue has become so significant, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents put it on its agenda for an October meeting.

The issue has reverberated across Canada and the world with educators struggling with how best to protect students. Last year three school divisions in Alberta suspended all international trips for the last seven months of the school year.

Plans for student travel in Manitoba continue.

With another school year underway, Fransen says the past events haven't caused Pembina Trails to curb travel.

"We certainly examine every request from a school regarding travel. We examine them carefully," he says. "There might be a heightened sense of due diligence now."

Four high schools in the division are planning a trip to Vimy, France, for the 100th anniversary of the Vimy Ridge battle in early April 2017.

Fransen is reviewing those plans for students and staff from Oak Park, Shaftesbury, Fort Richmond and Vincent Massey.

There is increased concern about safety at such a large event that will attract people from around the world.

"We monitor as much as we can and we are prepared to make the decision we made with Oak Park because student safety is first and foremost," Fransen says.

Students from Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School also plan to go to Vimy, a trip that's been approved in principle, says Lord Selkirk School Division superintendent Scott Kwasnitza.

There will be consultations with the tour

company, while advice from provincial and federal government authorities will be followed, he says, adding regional superintendents in the southeast Interlake have talked about it at length.

"We never want to put somebody in harm's way and we're never going to do that," Kwasnitza says. "But I think we have to be cautious that we don't knee jerk and shut all these trips down completely."

"I think we have always looked at this with an open mind. It would be easy just to say you can't travel internationally anymore, but that would be a lost opportunity. I think that's the new reality in 2016 that we face as school division leaders."

The Selkirk high school had two trips in the past six months. One was to the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Ireland), right around the time of the Brussels bombings. Another was in July, a group that went on a humanitarian trip to Ecuador. Both excursions went off without a hitch.

Darren Thomas, risk manager for the Manitoba School Boards Association, says he's there to advise schools because some insurance companies may not cover trips to certain areas.

"Political unrest, natural disaster, common sense tells you not to go to that area," Thomas says.

The government of Canada's travel website provides risk advisories for countries around the world.

For example, in mid-September, the

There's no doubt student travel makes the world come alive more than a textbook or movie, but these days the threat of terrorist attacks can quickly unpack suitcases.

This year, some trips by Manitoba students, and many across Canada, were cancelled or changed because of shootings or bombings abroad.

Here are some local school trips that were affected:

- A Collège Jeanne-Sauvé trip through Brussels was cancelled March 22, 2016, because of terrorist bombings on that day in the Belgium capital
- College Sturgeon Heights and St. James Collegiate had a trip to Germany, through Brussels, on March 22 cancelled. Some Sturgeon Heights students were already in Germany and came home as scheduled
- A European trip by Oak Park High School students through Brussels was cancelled, but some students went to Italy instead within a couple of days
- Westwood Collegiate students were already in the air to Brussels when the bombings occurred. Their flight was rerouted to Paris
- Miles Macdonell Collegiate students had a trip to Portugal, via Brussels, rerouted before they left, and flew through Montreal and New York

advisories for Belgium and France read “you should exercise a high degree of caution due to the current elevated threat of terrorism.” The United Kingdom and Italy were “exercise normal security precautions.”

“The question really has to be asked, ‘Is the trip worth the effort that it takes? Is the educational component of the trip worthy of the money that you’re spending, the time that you’re dedicating,’” Thomas says. “Or is there somewhere in Canada or North America that you could go to that may be the equivalent.”

Of course, Thomas and the superintendents know violent or dangerous events can happen anywhere, citing the 2014 shooting at Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

“On a go-forward basis, we believe in European travel. We just simply want to continue to do our due diligence,” says Brothers, adding the division is reviewing the tour and insurance companies it uses because some have different guidelines.

After the Collège Jeanne-Sauvé trip was cancelled, others went ahead, Brothers says. That week, one group flew into Paris, but didn’t leave the airport. They caught another flight to southern France and went to Switzerland.

He knows the Collège Jeanne-Sauvé students, who met that day with school administrators, were disappointed. A meeting for parents was also held that night and they were supportive of the division’s decision.

“They were glad that we made the decision rather than leaving it up to them and having their kids really upset with them, and having some kids that were going and some kids that were not going,” Brothers says.

“Parents get it. They were watching the news as well.”

Fransen had mixed reviews from parents when he made the final decision to cancel the Oak Park trip.

“Some were upset with the division, with me, because it was my decision,” he says. “I consulted, of course, but in the end somebody had to make the decision and that fell to me. So some were upset, some were thrilled. I suspect the ones that I didn’t hear from were in the middle.”

Brothers, Kwasnitza and Fransen welcome the discussion planned by the school superintendents.

“There’s value in sharing lessons learned,” Kwasnitza says. “Any opportunity that we have as superintendents to talk about whether divisions have experienced some of the lessons learned, some of the insights that we gather from hindsight, I think those are great opportunities and a great chance to brainstorm and learn from each other.”

Pharos Response, a critical incident and security company in Britain, issued these suggestions for student travel:

- Consider increasing supervision ratios from normal arrangements. If for example small groups of older students are allowed to spend short periods of time indirectly supervised by staff, consider removing this additional freedom
- Stay alert to local and national news before and during
- Carefully consider the relative benefits of visits to religious or political venues and events that could be considered higher risk
- Communicate openly with customers or parents in advance to reassure them that safety is the priority and has been carefully considered by the organizers. Provide contact details of visit leaders for them to contact during trip
- Remind students to remain vigilant and alert, reporting anything suspicious to leaders
- Brief participants in advance that if they are caught up in a security situation, that they should try and get away as quickly but safely from the immediate vicinity as possible, leaving baggage or other belongings behind
- Brief participants in advance to follow instructions of police or security forces at all times, being mindful that they may be armed and appear more intimidating than they are used to. Officers might be extremely forceful, direct and may even point weapons directly at them and others
- Brief participants what to do if separated from each other in the event of a security incident. This should include designating specified physical meeting points and contact telephone numbers for staff. Remember that mobile phones may not work in the immediate hours after an incident so it is additionally important to designate a meeting location. Consider use of public phones where they still exist for contacting the school or office. Phone networks were blocked by police in London following the 2005 attacks but were deliberately maintained by the French police in Paris November 2015
- Data based communication services such as WhatsApp might work even when voice calls don’t so consider setting up a trip-specific WhatsApp group for communicating in an emergency
- Consider providing all participants with a printed emergency contact card with the school’s or office’s landline telephone number on it and provide space for them to write down their own home landline number
- Leaders should carry a spare mobile phone (if possible on a different telephone network to the other handset) and spare battery or auxiliary charger. Simple items like a notebook, pen and torch can be really useful too
- Each Leader should carry a team list with all participant details, including medical conditions and next of kin noted
- Tell students that if they are separated, to ask for assistance from a police officer or other security official and state that they are a part of a school group. Remind them that police and security forces may be very forceful with the public in the immediate vicinity of an incident: this is necessary until people’s identities are confirmed
- Carry water (not just fizzy drinks!) and snacks on visits in case of travel disruption and long delays, especially in warmer months or climates
- Carry additional personal medication in case of long delays



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

191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2

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

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

Email: nkerr@mbteach.org

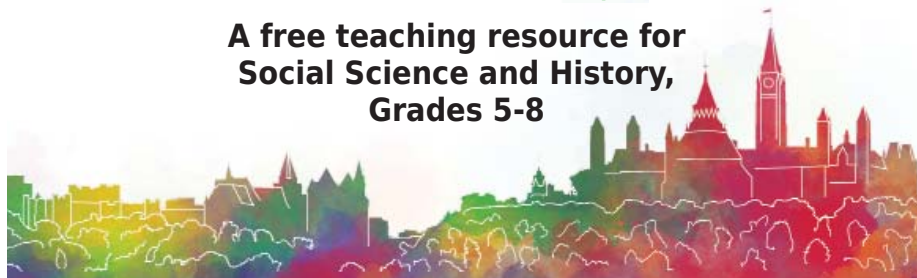


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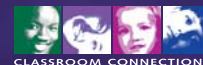
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> *Teacher Triathlete
Chantal Givens
training for
September's
Paralympic
Games in Rio*



A ROLE MODEL IN

Rio

BY JUDY OWEN

Chantal Givens brought students and staff of Collège Jeanne Sauvé to Brazil with her when she competed in September's Paralympic Games.

Well, they weren't there in real life, but a Canadian flag they had signed and given to the Winnipeg physical education teacher on the last day of school was taped to a wall in her room at the Athletes Village.

It was a memento that touched the triathlete.

"I found it really interesting to read because some of the students I knew well, but some of them I haven't even taught and they signed it and kind of wrote some neat things," Givens, 38, said by phone from Rio de Janeiro after her competition.

"That was really, really nice. I'm hoping to be able to share some of my experiences as well because I think, especially being in physical education and health, it's so important for people to realize what their potential is."

Givens, who was born without her left hand, finished eighth in the PT4 classification event with a time of 1:19:13. American Grace Norman won gold in 1:10:39.

The paratriathlon was making its debut at the Games. It started with a 750-metre swim off Copacabana Beach and then a 20-kilometre bike ride along the coastline and a five-km run.

"I have no regrets about how I raced. I'm a little bit disappointed at the results because I came back from behind," said Givens, who had husband Ian, her mom and an aunt there cheering her on.

"I'm really proud about how I kept it together mentally. I mentally rehearsed how different little things could happen and all of the things I had rehearsed, almost all of those happened during the race."

First, her new wetsuit ripped as she was putting it on. Then she mis-sighted one of the buoys in the water for a second. She also dropped her swim cap when she was transitioning from the swim to the bike portion. If athletes don't pick up their caps, they're penalized.

Her bike computer also stopped working, which she wanted to use to ensure she didn't go out too hard in the first lap.

"Considering all those things happened and I knew that I was 11th coming out

of the water, out of 11 (competitors), I'm really happy that I didn't judge. I just stayed focused and worked on the next leg."

She felt strong throughout the race, but everyone in her field "had their A-game on."

"In that sense, I don't have any regrets," said Givens, who broke her shoulder blade in August 2015 after a bike crash during a race.

"I did what I set out to do."

The emotional high point of the competition was just before her race, when the athletes were introduced in front of fans in grandstands before they

"If anything, I hope people get inspired and think about not if they can do things, but how they can do things and what they can do and just smile and set some personal goals because everybody can better themselves."

- Chantal Givens

were taken to a pontoon for the swim portion, she said.

There were also a few amusing moments, including the first day at the athletes village.

The pipes for plumbing are smaller in Brazil and toilet paper isn't flushed to avoid clogging, she said. Instead, it's put in receptacles.

Paper signs were put up in the building about that, but there were visually impaired athletes who didn't read them.

"The first night, they had the assistants from the entire Canadian Paralympic team, people that are really high up there, running around plunging toilets," Givens said with a laugh.

She was amazed how big the event was

and the organization it took to pull it off. She didn't attend the opening ceremony as her competition was a few days away, but was staying for the closing ceremony.

The stepmother of two children will start teaching the day after she returns. She had limited her teaching to 28 per cent, one class a semester, before the Games so she could train, but will return to 71 per cent.

Her road to Rio and the rare experience will be some of the stories she tells students, whom she always tries to encourage.

"When I was their age, I was in springboard diving and I had dreams of going to the Olympics" said Givens, who was born in Edmonton, Alta., and moved to Winnipeg in 2006.

"But I was the least naturally talented person. I was the one who would be dead last in every competition. I worked hard and I made (diving) nationals and didn't look back.

"Most schools will have those select few athletes who just tend to excel at every sport and the other people that are there, I think it's great for them to see that someone who is working, someone who's probably past the age of what would be ideal for what an athlete is, someone who has a family, can go out and do something great.

"If I can do that, they can do that. I'm hoping that it helps people kind of look at themselves and set some goals."

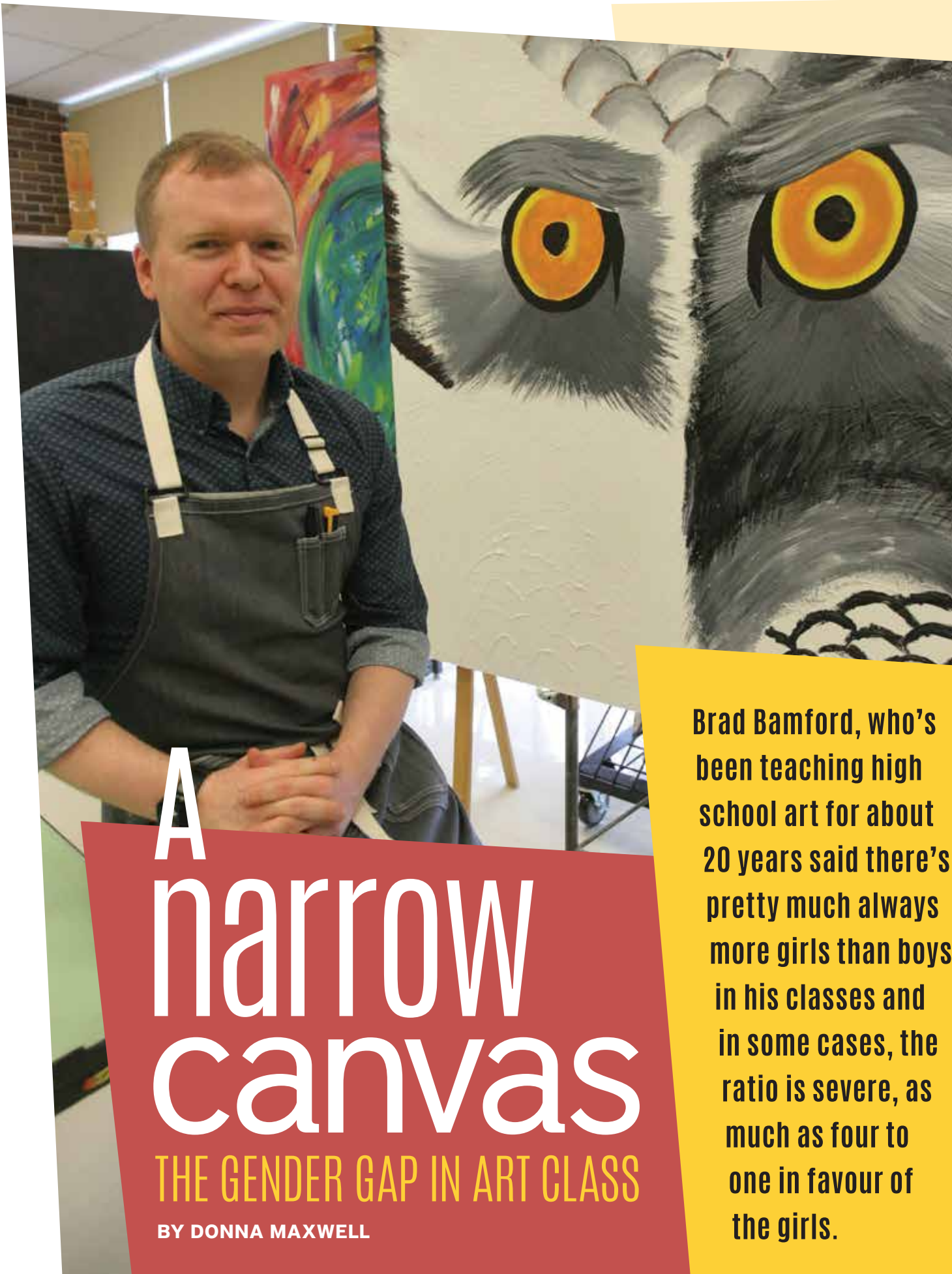
But it's not only students Givens can be a role model for.

When she heard about the July 2015 mail bombing in a Winnipeg law office that caused lawyer Maria Mitousis to lose her right hand, Givens tracked her down through Facebook and sent her a message, offering to answer any questions she may have when she was ready.

The pair have since become friends, with Mitousis sending Givens messages during the Paralympics.

When she turned on her phone after her event, there were actually 47 messages from different people, support she'll always remember.

"If anything, I hope people get inspired and think about not if they can do things, but how they can do things and what they can do and just smile and set some personal goals because everybody can better themselves."



A narrow canvas

THE GENDER GAP IN ART CLASS

BY DONNA MAXWELL

Brad Bamford, who's been teaching high school art for about 20 years said there's pretty much always more girls than boys in his classes and in some cases, the ratio is severe, as much as four to one in favour of the girls.

If you were to walk into one of Brad Bamford's art classes at Selkirk Regional Comprehensive High School you wouldn't, at first glance, be able to tell which students were gifted and which were there because they needed to fill a credit, but you would be able to tell one thing – most of the students are girls.

Bamford, who's been teaching high school art for about 20 years said there's pretty much always more girls than boys in his classes and in some cases, the ratio is severe, as much as four to one in favour of the girls.

"It wasn't something that I'd given a whole lot of thought to when I was in school, there were definitely boys and girls in our class but probably when I look back on it there were more girls," Bamford said.

"But it was really when I came back to the school environment as a teacher that I could see that there definitely were more girls taking art than boys. The girls tended to more often be at the top of class and I would say as my teaching career has progressed, I've probably just seen those two trends almost kind of strengthen over time as opposed to staying where they were 20 years ago."

Though he was always aware of the male deficit in his own classes, he admits he didn't really do anything about it, figuring as long as he was doing his best to be a good art teacher there wasn't much else he could do. But it was always in the back of his mind.

A few years ago, that back-of-mind thought did what many of those types of thoughts do, and pushed its way to the front. Bamford began researching the female dominance in his class and discovered the same imbalance has been colouring art classrooms around the world.

He's now presented The Gender Gap – information he's pulled together from existing research on girl/boy ratio – at the National Art Education Association conference in New Orleans and at the Manitoba Teachers' Association 2015 Professional Development Day.

Though he admits the gap in his Selkirk classroom could be wider than others due to it being a vocational school – where male students who want to create or work with their hands have several other options, including automotive, welding and culinary – it still exists in other schools as well.

Bamford said there are basically five reasons why boys aren't taking art in high school while girls are, and the boys who are taking it are lagging behind their female counterparts.

He said research shows boys are falling behind in school in general. A Swedish study he references in his presentation shows boys are falling behind girls in every subject except phys ed.

"Basically boys are outperforming girls in physical education, in every other subject boys are being outperformed by girls and in some of the math, technology, physics, chemistry, the gap between girls' and boys' performances was closer, but girls are still outperforming boys," Bamford said.

"But the subject in which there was the very largest difference of all between girls' and boys' marks was in art."

Art is also an undervalued subject, Bamford said. There was a time when girls were underrepresented in fields like math, science and engineering so efforts went into encouraging girls to take those subjects. The fact boys haven't been taking art in great numbers for years hasn't really hit many people's radar.

"It kind of suggests we think math and science are important as a society, and so we're concerned about inequities that are taking place in that field, whereas art, well it's just art. Oh well, no big deal. So it's the idea that art as a subject is kind of undervalued."

Research also suggests art has become a gendered subject, one that people actually associate with femininity, Bamford said.

There's even a book, written by Penn Dalton, called 'The Gendering of Art Education' and Bamford said the author said art was once considered a male dominated field but it had strong connections to manufacturing, design and technology and over time it has become gendered female, and more connected to expression, feelings and creativity.

"It's resulted into this gendering or feminization of art and art education," Bamford said.

Cultural factors also come into play Bamford said, and a male child from a home where it's expected he'll pursue a career from a narrow range of selection, might be unlikely to enrol in art simply because it wouldn't aid in achieving his employment goals.

"As a result boys are kind of discouraged from taking art even if it may be an interest of theirs and that because the same expectations are not being put on girls about their career aspirations, it sort of makes it almost OK for them to decide to take art, or parents will be more accepting

of their daughter taking art than they will of their son taking art, because of cultural factors at work."

Finally, Bamford said, boys' strengths, needs and interests aren't always reflected in art courses.

There's no easy fix to closing the gender gap in art class, Bamford said, but researchers have come up with a number of techniques that Bamford said are akin to best practices that could help bring the boys back to class.

And he said none of them are designed to have a negative effect on girls in the class.

"I think it is important to make the point that I think a lot of the things that can help boys in terms of art education are not things that are going to harm girls, or set girls back or take away from the great strides that girls have made in art education."

The suggestions to get boys back into art include having great art teachers in middle school. A strong teacher will show students that even if you're not the best artist, everyone can learn, much the same as every other subject.

Bamford said it's interesting that from a young age kids feel that art is simply something that you're either good at or you're not, yet when a young student struggles with math, he or she knows they need to keep trying and they'll get better.

"We accept with math that yes, it might come more easily to some people, but with some work and effort we can learn math and can better our math skills," Bamford said.

"Even by quite a young age, kids have internalized this idea that somehow that's art, and some people are good at it and some aren't."

Showing that there's a connection between art and careers could draw more boys to class as well. Bamford said the idea of STEM – Science Technology Engineering Math – needs to be changed to STEAM, with the 'A' representing art and design.

Teachers can also change the projects they offer in class so they have a range of purposes and a practical function, use different materials and offer different opportunities, like working in spaces outside of the classroom, and incorporate design exercises on the computer.

Bamford said since presenting The Gender Gap a couple of times, he's more aware of what he's doing in his own classroom to try and encourage male students.

"No one has a lot of hard, firm answers yet, but bringing it to light and talking about it starts to make some difference."

LET'S TALK!

Discussing **RACE,** **RACISM** and other **DIFFICULT TOPICS** with students



Educators play a crucial role in helping students navigate current events and talk openly about the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of social inequality and discrimination. Learning how to communicate about topics like police violence, economic inequality, mass incarceration and white privilege requires practice, and facilitating these conversations demands skill—regardless of who we are, our intentions or how long we’ve been teaching.

Use these strategies to build confidence and prepare yourself to normalize conversations about race and racism. You can also use them to prepare yourself to discuss other types of discrimination, such as gender bias, ableism, and religious or anti-LGBTQ persecution.

ASSESS YOUR COMFORT LEVEL

Many educators avoid talking about race and racism. It can be uncomfortable, controversial and may call for skills few of us possess. Often, this avoidance comes down to fears of misspeaking, sounding racist or militant, exacerbating differences or hurting feelings.

Part of getting students ready to talk about race and racism is to first deal with our own feelings and experiences. Before starting a classroom discussion, do a simple self-assessment.

Consider the following statements and select the one that best describes how you feel.

- I would rather not talk about race/racism.
- I am very uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually comfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am very comfortable talking about race/racism.

Then use a sentence-stem activity to self-reflect.

- The hard part of talking about race/racism is ...
- The beneficial part of talking about race/racism is ...
- My own experiences of race taught me ...
- My students’ experiences of race are different from mine because ...

After reflecting on your own comfort level and experience, think about ways to grow confident.

- Do you worry about your ability to

answer students’ questions about race and racism? If so, commit to accepting that you don’t have all the answers, and embrace the opportunity to learn with your students.

- Do you feel ill-prepared to talk about race and racism? If so, commit to learning more about the issues by studying history, following current events and brushing up on anti-racism work.
- Do you reroute classroom discussions when you sense resistance or anger in the room? If so, commit to riding out the discussion next time.
- Do you feel isolated in your experience of race and racism? If so, commit to identifying a colleague with whom you can co-teach, plan or debrief.

FIND COMFORT IN DISCOMFORT

Teaching about structural inequality such as racism requires courage and confidence—from you and from your students. It’s normal to feel discomfort or anger as you reflect on your own experiences with racial inequality. But the more you engage in and moderate difficult conversations, the more confident you’ll become. The conversations may not necessarily get easier, but your ability to press toward more meaningful dialogue will expand. Stay engaged; the journey is worth the effort.

Being uncomfortable should not mean being unsafe. With your students, establish classroom norms that include a list of specific words and phrases that students commit to not using. The list might include calling people’s opinions “stupid” or “lame,” using the n-word or the r-word, or saying, “That’s so gay!”

Students can create and sign a contract of norms and behaviors that define the classroom community as a socially and emotionally safe place. The contract might include such statements as “Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment” or “Put-downs of any kind are never OK” or “Speak directly to each other, not the teacher.” If students want to tell stories about their own racial identities and experiences, consider establishing a structure that allows each person to share uninterrupted, without response from other students. (See our resource on Serial Testimony for more information: tolerance.org/meaningful-discussions.) Established norms or a contract can help students support a healthy classroom environment and reduce the likelihood that you will have to intervene.

Avoiding conversations about race and racism can arise from our own fears of being perceived as clueless, racist or militant. As you prepare to engage students in the conversation, consider this question: What will this discussion potentially expose about me?

List three vulnerabilities that you worry could limit your effectiveness. Next, identify three strengths that you believe will help you lead open and honest dialogues. Finally, list specific needs that, if met, would improve your ability to guide difficult conversations.

Students' reactions to talking about race and racism will vary. They may react passively, show sorrow, express anger or respond unpredictably. Some students may become visibly upset; others may push back against discussing these topics in class. Many of these reactions stem from feelings such as pain, anger, confusion, guilt, shame and the urge to blame others.

Seeing members of the class respond emotionally may elicit reactions from you or other students. Guilt and shame can lead to crying that may immobilize conversation. Anger might lead to interruptions, loud talking, sarcasm or explicit confrontations—all of which can impede important dialogue. Your role is to remain calm and assess the

Commit to accepting that you don't have all the answers, and embrace the opportunity to learn with your students.

situation. If the tension in the room appears to be prompting dialogue and learning, continue to monitor, but let the conversation play out. If the tension boils over in confrontation that jeopardizes student safety (emotional or otherwise), take steps to diffuse the situation.

Refer back to the previous list. How can the strengths you listed calm students and diffuse tension, yet avoid shutting down the conversation? Spend some time thinking ahead about how you will react to strong emotions.

Planning ahead and establishing a safe space within your classroom should diminish

students' discomfort. It's important to note, however, that for some students—particularly members of marginalized, non-dominant or targeted identity groups—you may not be able to provide complete safety. It's also true that overemphasizing identity safety runs the risk of minimizing the diverse realities of our students' lived experiences both in and outside school. In addition to providing safety for your students, build their resilience and strength so they will be more willing to take the risks involved with feeling uncomfortable.

Facilitating difficult conversations can be emotionally draining or even painful. Make time to recharge in positive ways. Find colleagues or friends who can listen while you debrief conversations about race and racism. Take advantage of professional learning communities where you can discuss the dynamics in your classroom. Keep a professional journal and use writing to process and reflect.

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Limelight on learning at

MTYP

BY JENNIFER MCFEE



It's easy to give props to Manitoba Theatre for Young People for allowing education issues to take centre stage.

Since the theatre company opened in 1982, it has excelled at creating stage productions that appeal to a young audiences and adults alike. Every production casts a light on theatre as an education tool for all ages.

For artistic director Pablo Felices-Luna, he always thinks of MTYP as being closely connected to teachers, principals and parents.

"It's not just because they're the people who bring children to theatre but because I think we share some values with them. We really believe that children and young people are incredible and amazing. We have as much to learn from them as they can learn from us," he says.

"So we need to engage them in ways that are meaningful, that are relevant to them, that speak to the stage of development that they're at — just like we would tailor curriculum in schools."

Located in a 28,000-square-foot performance facility at The Forks, MTYP aims to create curriculum connections for educators. At the same time, the

organization depends on teachers since they are the ones who have daily connections with children and youth.

"There's this constant exchange between us and teachers and principals — and, by extension, parents and grandparents. It's not just for children and youth," Felices-Luna says.

"If you're a teacher or a principal, parent or grandparent and you're in the theatre or school gym when the show's happening, you're part of the audience too, so we need to be reaching out to you."

Casey Shapira, mainstage school sales coordinator, works closely with classes that are coming to MTYP to see a show. At the same time, MTYP also brings performances directly to the students through its touring program.

For the 2016-17 season, two shows will hit the road on tour: *Routes*, which is geared for ages 12 and up, and *Dib and Dob*, which caters to kids aged six to 10.

"All together, we're touring for about 20 weeks into schools in Winnipeg as well as in rural Manitoba and a little bit in Kenora and some other places in Ontario," Shapira says.

"All of our seven shows this year also play at Manitoba Theatre for Young People, so we have schools that come to us. There are hundreds of performances."

This season, curriculum connections include language and poetry through *Alligator Pie* and *Dib and Dob*. Then *The Jungle Book* and *Gretel and Hansel* offer a taste of classic literature with a twist.

Heavier topics such as eating disorders, violence and bullying are addressed in shows such as *Mess and Routes*, which are geared for older students. And with *Baobab*, which will take the stage right before spring break, the energy is upbeat with African music and folklore, masks, puppetry and shadow work.

Throughout the plays, thematic threads weave around sibling relationships (*Dib and Dob*, *Gretel and Hansel*) as well as human-animal relationships (*Alligator Pie*, *The Jungle Book*, *Baobab*).

Through a partnership with Winnipeg School Division, MTYP offers \$1 off tickets for performances at its own venue and as well as a discount that can be used towards touring shows, Shapira adds.

And when classes come to The Forks

to watch a show, many teachers opt to create a daylong outing by also visiting the Children's Museum or the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Adding to the excitement, MTYP is offering shows in French this year aimed at audiences from kindergarten to Grade 8. There will be a total of six performances in French for both Gretel and Hansel, which is for grades 4 to 8, and also for Baobab, which is for kindergarten to Grade 4

"We're really excited about that. I believe this is the largest age group that we've ever done for French performances," Shapira says. "It's a really cool offering for your immersion programs."

In addition to stage shows, MTYP also offers workshops for students as well as for teachers.

Theatre School director Kent Suss encourages teachers to take advantage of MTYP's drama outreach program.

"We offer workshops in anything theatre-related — and we offer them to teachers as professional development as well as to students of all ages," Suss says. "We love to be involved with schools by coming to PD days."

Suss will be giving workshops at the upcoming SAGE conference aimed for early and middle years teachers.

"There's a workshop about how drama can create a positive classroom culture through drama games and the kind of interpersonal communication that drama develops," he says.

"The other workshop focuses on teaching specific drama skills in a drama class but also using it across the curriculum by integrating a drama experience into your learning about social studies or language arts. The high cultural and social elements of social studies lend themselves very well to drama."

Throughout the year, other workshops are available and they can be customized to meet the needs of each specific group.

"We can teach any kind of workshop. We can go to a workshop where there's just teachers and teach them about how to use puppetry in their class and how to use masks by building masks as well as performing and training with masks. We can teach about video, filmmaking and animation," he says.

"We love the chance to spread the art of theatre directly to students but also by equipping teachers to be able to accomplish what they want to do."

As well, five studios are available at the MTYP building to add to the experience for teachers and students.

"We love to have field trips here," Suss says. "Our building is this wealth of great usable space right here at The Forks."

Suss hopes to develop a strong enough connection with teachers that they will encourage arts-oriented students to consider extracurricular classes at MTYP.

"We would love for teachers to be our cheerleaders and ambassadors for our school. So if they have students in their program that are interested in the arts, then they should send them to us to have classes here in the evenings and weekends. We would love to have that kind of relationship with them," he says.

"There are lots of examples where a student has come to us and learned from us in our program and then they go back to their school and become the lead in the school musical."

Adding to the options, MTYP also offers a program called Native Youth Theatre, which features free acting courses geared for Aboriginal actors aged nine to 18. In addition to developing imagination, creativity and self-confidence, the program focuses on building a sense of community.

For more information about what Manitoba Theatre for Young People can offer to teachers, visit www.mtyp.ca and click on the "For Educators" tab.



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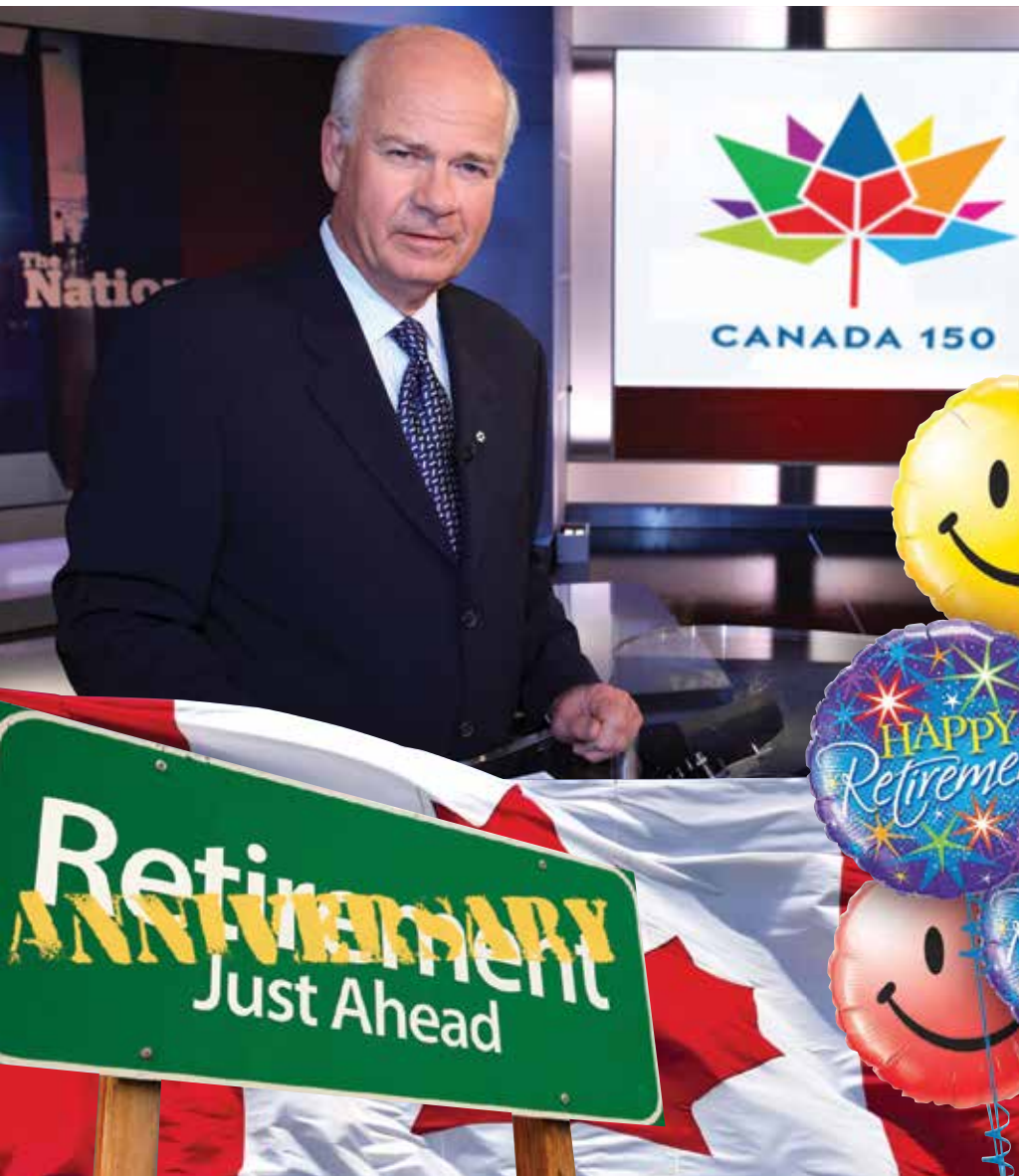
WHO SAID IT?

HERE ARE SOME QUOTES FROM EITHER REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE **DONALD TRUMP** AND U.S. PRESIDENT **DWAYNE ELIZONDO MOUNTAIN DEW HERBERT GAMACHO**, FROM THE MOVIE **IDIOCRACY**. CAN YOU PICK WHICH IDIOT SAID WHAT?

1. "REMEMBER, NEW ENVIRONMENT FRIENDLY LIGHT BULBS CAN CAUSE CANCER."
2. "I WILL BE THE GREATEST JOBS PRESIDENT THAT GOD EVER CREATED, I TELL YOU THAT."
3. "I'M A GENIUS"
4. "I BEAT CHINA ALL THE TIME. ALL THE TIME."

Broken news! Talking head nods off

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON



Next July 1, Canada Day, is apparently a big one. Fireworks across the skies. Deep digging into what it means to be Canadian. Anthems. Flags. Joy. Tears.

Yes, it is the date Peter Mansbridge says he will step down as anchor of CBC's *The National*.

Oh, and off in the sideshow tent, it will be Canada's 150th birthday.

Well, it's not like Peter Mansbridge has ever been accused of being overly humble.

But really, squeezing onto the stage of a country's milestone event plows a new furrow in the field of self-important news readers.

It reveals once again that CBC's measure of self-awareness would unlikely reach the rim of a thimble.

It shows that despite all so-called corporation stars that have left the CBC's image in tatters, the celebrity culture continues to thrive. While excellent work -- like the local CBC series on *Surviving High School* -- gets turned out by those on the ground floor, those in the penthouse send it all to the basement.

5. "IF THERE IS ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE ATLANTIC CITY, IT'S BIG BUSINESS. OR TWO WORDS BIG BUSINESS."

6. "LISTEN, YOU MOTHER****RS, WE'RE GOING TO TAX YOU 25 PERCENT!"

7. "THIS VERY EXPENSIVE GLOBAL WARMING BULL**** HAS GOT TO STOP."

8. "MY IQ IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST - AND YOU ALL KNOW IT! PLEASE DON'T FEEL SO STUPID OR INSECURE; IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT."

9. "NOW I UNDERSTAND EVERYONE'S SH****S EMOTIONAL RIGHT NOW. BUT I'VE GOT A THREE-POINT PLAN THAT'S GOING TO FIX EVERYTHING."

10. "IN LIFE YOU HAVE TO RELY ON THE PAST, AND THAT'S CALLED HISTORY."

READ IT AND WEEP. DONALD TRUMP SAID ALL BUT NO. 9.



MAYOR CLICHÉ McJARGON

(We will) "assess the dialogue going forward."

Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman on growth tax discussions.



Makes for a striking LinkedIn resume

An Indiana man who lost out on a teaching job chose an unusual way to show he was the better choice. Apparently he sent the successful teacher packages containing four dead skunks and a racoon with a note telling the recipient to resign. He also spray painted his competitor's vehicle and threatened to kill his fiancé. He was charged with stalking, intimidation and criminal mischief. Another lesson learned.

That was supposed to change. When CBC draped itself in sackcloth and ashes after the Jian Ghomeshi, Amanda Lang and Evan Solomon catastrophes, it was expected that the tail would no longer be wagging the dog. The ethical breaches and allegations of its stars made clear that its on-air hosts were able to do pretty much whatever they wanted.

Timorous bosses were cowed by their celebrity subordinates to the point they overlooked abhorrent behaviour and conduct that in the end carved vast chunks off CBC's credibility.

By allowing (or, more horrifying, suggesting it) Peter Mansbridge to step down from The National on Canada's 150th Anniversary it just illustrates that the celebrity culture has not been eradicated at CBC no matter how it makes the corporation look.

Really, how monumental must an ego be to announce a quasi-retirement (only giving up The National, not everything) 10 months in advance and culminating on July 1? Will he have a farewell tour, reading news from different cities in Canada? Will his final show be a reading on the pitcher's mound at the Roger's Centre in Toronto? Was he simply jealous of the publicity surrounding the Tragically Hip?

When anchor Lloyd Robertson retired from the CTV news desk, he did it on the day of his 35th anniversary with the network. Small potatoes, that. Not quite grandiose enough for those in the rarified

air atop the CBC tower. No doubt planning for one of those only-at-CBC spectacles is well underway.

At least it will happen, albeit many years overdue.

No doubt the questions surrounding his paid speaking gigs – sometimes to groups like the Canadian Petroleum Association – would have laid low lesser beings in the CBC roster. But the perception of conflicts of interest isn't enough to tarnish stars in the broadcast sky.

Even before his imperious, partial-retirement announcement, he had become the caricature of the smug, pompous anchor copied elsewhere more as satire than serious. His whipping softball questions to those in power sparked little more than eye rolling.

Even when he anchored the opening of the Rio Olympics, his continual recitation of every problem in every country that appeared made it sound like the play-by-play was being done by Statler and Waldorf, the grumpy old men from the Muppet Show.

Unfortunately, we will likely be subjected to more of that since his nominal-retirement announcement did not include bowing out of the special events on CBC.

We can only hope that his salary – which Canadalandshow.ca recently reported was \$1.1 million a year– will be altered accordingly. Maybe some of that extra dough could be used by those who cover the news and not just read it.



MAP SHORTAGE HITS NEW YORK

In an article revealing Libertarian president candidate Gary Johnson's ignorance about Syria, the New York Times exposed its own depth of knowledge.

During an MSNBC interview, Johnson was asked what he would do about Aleppo?

"And what is Aleppo?", he asked.

In its reporting of the exchange, The Times called Aleppo the "de facto capital of the Islamic State."

It followed that with a correction, pointing out that Raqqa was the de facto capital of the Islamic State and that Aleppo was the capital of Syria.

It followed that with a correction of the correction, pointing out that Damascus was the capital of Syria, not Aleppo.

Aleppo has been the focal point of the country's refugee crisis.

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

Twitter gets a shorter learning curve



Twitter is an incredibly useful tool for promoting events like the upcoming MTS Professional Development Day on Friday, October 21st.

Twitter, the social media chameleon you can use for anything from fine-tuning your PD to backchanneling your conference to broadcasting a revolution is rolling out big changes this month.

Why should you care?

Because your Twitter experience is about to get a lot better.

From now on if you post photos, videos, GIFs, polls—even @names in replies—they won't be counted against your 140-character tweet limit. You can attach this content to your tweets without sacrificing precious space.

Not only that but you'll be able to retweet yourself and even quote tweet yourself, a great way to save characters if you're attaching a previous tweet to a current one for context.

There's no more need to use '@username' to begin a response to an individual that you also want all your peeps to see. Any message starting with an '@username' will also be seen by all of your followers. (Remember this when you think you're tweeting semi-privately. You may want to opt for a direct message.)

All of these changes should mean a shorter learning curve for folks new to the platform and make conversations much more fluid and in-depth.

Twitter Basics

While we're on the subject of changes, let's review some basics that will help you get the most from Twitter:



1) Make your Twitter profile public – good things happen when you start connecting with people. Setting your account to private inhibits people from knowing and contacting you. If it's important to you to keep your account private – by all means do so. But the learning and the fun really start when you open up to others and start to share.

2) If you can't ever see yourself tweeting, keep in mind there's a good chance your school division or colleagues are already there. If you go to the @mbteachers twitter lists you'll see categories for schools, divisions, educators, superintendents, community organizations and media. Check out who you know in the Twitterverse. There's a world of rich PD conversations going on around you. But it will be invisible to you unless you dive in.

3) You are known by the company you keep. Devote some time each week to prune your followers. You don't want friends or colleagues going through your followers and finding junk and lewd

spammers. You didn't invite them to follow you, so set a notification for new followers and don't hesitate to block and report any unsavoury accounts.

4) Google 'Twitter Lists' and learn how to use them. They turn that huge firehose of daily tweets into manageable streams. You can set up or follow lists for #mbedchat members, fellow colleagues, thought leaders, schools in your division, education leaders, social justice activists and media. Rather than having to sift through tonnes of content, you can conjure up the latest tweets from any group you choose with a single click.

5) If posting photos of students, make sure you or your school have media releases that include social media coverage for them. Check with your administrator and always follow your school division's policy in that regard.

6) Remember, your tweets are intensely public so always wear your professional hat.

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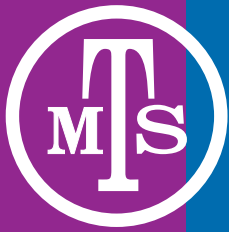


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Register at www.mbteach.org (through my profile)