

SPECIAL
EDITION

THE MANITOBA **Teacher**

APRIL/MAY 2020 VOLUME 98 NUMBER 6 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



**CLIMATE
CHANGES**

**CURRICULUM
DOESN'T**

Teaching in
the time of
coronavirus
PAGES 6-11

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The cast of *The Color Purple*. Photo courtesy of Ian Jackson, Epic Photography. ©2019

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APRIL/MAY 2020 VOLUME 98 NUMBER 6 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

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MTS announces the 2020 winners



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FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

JAMES BEDFORD

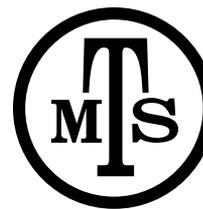
When I started teaching I remember how concerned I was that I would make a mistake. Having my own classroom was different than student teaching, because my cooperating teachers, who were outstanding, were always nearby and could fix my mistakes. Being on my own was different. I was teaching alone for the first time. I don't know about you, but for me doing something for the first time can be an anxious experience. And aren't we all doing some things for the first time right now?

Following the advice of the province's Chief Public Health Officer, we are now in a time of what we are calling Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning. I may not be experiencing this as a classroom teacher, but as a parent I am watching our youngest daughter turn our kitchen island into her classroom. Her friends are there too, as faces and voices on her phone as they all work on their courses together. Her teachers are in contact regularly. We are appreciative of the work they are doing. Is it perfect? No. Are they all teaching and learning together? Yes. Will they all get better at it as time goes by? Yes. Will this replace classrooms in the future? No. The most effective learning takes place in the classroom, under the guidance of teachers.

Right now we are doing what we need to be doing, under difficult circumstances, with imperfect technology which is anything but uniform across the province. For the duration of this emergency, we will continually improve at what we are doing because that's what teachers do. We should take pride in the supportive comments that Minister Goertzen has made respecting the work that teachers are doing right now. Know that we are in regular contact with the Minister, Manitoba Education and our education partners. As members have questions, we seek the answers. And our staff has been outstanding at getting those answers out to members. My sincere compliments to all of them.

I don't know how long we shall all be working remotely. I do know that the answer likely depends on our ability to limit our contact with others and stay home, following the advice of the province's Chief Public Health Officer. We are certainly making decisions within the operations of the Society that reflect following that advice, but at the same time ensuring that the necessary business continues. This certainly doesn't mean business as usual, but rather it means that the activities and decisions that need to happen so that the Society continues to be a strong advocate for its members happen.

So from my home to yours, thank you for the Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning. But also look after yourself. We all need to take the time to be a parent, a partner, a spouse, a friend and a family member to those around us, now more than ever. Your Society will be with you every step of the way.



The Manitoba Teachers' Society

This special edition of The Teacher and online Coronavirus coverage created by the MTS communications department:

Anne Bennett, content
Lindsey Enns, content
Raman Job, content
Matthew Kehler, design
Krista Rutledge, design
George Stephenson, content
Mireille Theriault, advertising
Samantha Turenne, content

Circulation

Jennifer Nasse, jnasse@mbteach.org

The Manitoba Teacher

191 Harcourt Street
Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2
Phone: (204) 888-7961
Fax: (204) 831-0877

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INSIDE MTS BETTER DAYS ARE COMING

ROLAND STANKEVICIUS, GENERAL SECRETARY

Spring 2020, will be remembered as a time all generations of people shared in a common concern and experience. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the course of human history in so many ways, our behaviours, our perspectives, our values and most importantly our appreciation of how science and science facts can provide a clear and concrete path forward when dealing with the many and varied threats to our human existence.

It has become a source of solace and solutions when we hear the facts, evidence and the path forward from those trusted leaders, who until recently were only in the background. Leaders such as Anthony Fauci, Theresa Tam, Brent Roussin, Lanette Siragusa are now at centre stage providing the knowledgeable voices to guide our decision-making and problem solving. In provinces across Canada and with our state partners world-wide we are seeing varying results where heed is paid to the science or not.

I am grateful that in Canada we continue to embrace a scientific, fact-based response to this lethal virus as we wait for an effective vaccine. We can act on robust, effective human behaviour quickly (and we have) as the scientific breakthrough of a vaccine is many months in the future. Our newly adopted behaviors on improved hand hygiene, staunch social distancing and a veto on human gatherings (#Stayathome) is a mandatory survival strategy for a foreseeable future, if we are to flatten the curve of infections and the outcomes of too many deaths too quickly.

Manitoba's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin is unequivocal in his direction to, 'stay home and maintain social distancing measures.' His straightforward message to all of us is to be part of the solution, "Stay home and maintain social distancing measures. We need to continue with our efforts, [because] our efforts are likely showing some benefits. But now is not the time to lift them. We need to double our efforts to continue to keep this curve flat in Manitoba." Today our essential workers in health care, food, shelter, security services are on the frontlines of this crisis at great personal risk.



Those of us in the non-essential services sector can best support and acknowledge their personal safety and their risks by the simple sacrifice that non-essential travel, in-person gatherings and meetings that all undermine their labours must stop. We must not be part of the problem.

In tandem with provincial health orders the Society has moved all its operations and business activities to a work from home model and only those essential in-house business, security and maintenance functions are being attended by a essential services team at McMaster House and Bradley Square. The services of the Society to the Membership continue unabated and for the most part, we have had a seamless integration of this new model of our work world and service to members. In-person interactions are an unfortunate required casualty of the virus in our community at this time but our use of communications technologies, smart devices and the internet are proving to be an excellent alternative to those meetings and exchanges that have been through personal human contact.

Further, as we continue to advocate support for an effective and efficient response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Manitoba, while also attending to the essential business and democratic processes of the Society, the upcoming in-person meetings of the MTS Provincial Executive, Presidents' Council and the 2020 Manitoba Teachers' Society Provincial Council Meeting (AGM) will

take place using alternate virtual/electronic formats. The in-person attendance at these events have now been cancelled for 2020.

These are difficult decisions and actions to make. These decisions are challenging and difficult as our norms and routines are disrupted. There is a sense of loss and disorder of regular processes and procedures are sidelined. However, this is the sacrifice that must be made today and tomorrow and the correct leadership action is to support guidance and advice (and defer to) of the trusted experts who understand how to best react and respond to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

It is everyone's hope and wish that we can return to some form of our prior normalcy in the weeks and months ahead. Schools could reopen and friends could reunite, offices and shops could bustle. If the current round of social distancing and stay at home measures work as their early results show, the pandemic may ebb enough for things to return to a semblance of former practices. We can anticipate that this 'new normal' will be significantly different from past practices and we will all continue to deal with change, adjustments and disruption. We will have to be prepared and positive for this reality in times in front of us. As my father-in-law still often says in his inimitable positive tones, as he spends his days isolated in an assisted living residence (in his 90th year), "Better Days Are Coming!"

LEADING FROM HOME

On March 20, 2020, the province declared a state of emergency to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Among other profound changes to Manitobans' daily life it meant the fracturing of the school year for more than 220,000 students and teachers.

And for the person entrusted with putting the pieces back together – Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen – life has been no less transformed.

“I would go out to a 100 to a 150 events a month and that’s all ended. It is almost like I’ve been unelected,” he said. “I miss the interaction with people but it’s caused me to be home more in the evening with my family. There are plenty of things that are difficult but it’s important that we try to find the things that are positive.”

Goertzen has been splitting his time between working from home and at his office in the Manitoba Legislature, acknowledging that some meetings just work better in person.

He spoke to The Manitoba Teacher from his home office via Zoom. Keiko his 14-year-old miniature dachshund, was content to sleep on his lap, while his 13-year-old son Malachi snapped a photo for Goertzen’s Twitter account. His wife Kim, working reduced hours due to the pandemic has created a daily schedule for Malachi to make sure he completes his assignments on time. She has taken care to include classes like phys-ed and all the things that would happen over the course of a normal school day to help ease the transition to remote learning.

Goertzen said that he has been hearing lots of positive things from parents about how students and teachers are adapting to learning and teaching remotely, but he

“BOTH FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE GOVERNMENT SIDE, THE PACE OF THAT CHANGE HAS BEEN REMARKABLE AND HOW QUICKLY YOU HAVE TO MAKE DECISIONS AND RESPOND TO SOME OF THOSE CHANGES. THAT HAS BEEN REALLY DIFFICULT AND I IMAGINE THERE ARE PLENTY MORE OF THOSE DECISIONS AND CHANGES TO COME.”

- Kelvin Goertzen, Education Minister

is still worried about the loss of learning that will occur over this time.

“I worry that in communities where the internet isn’t as available or where there isn’t that same sense of connectedness in other ways that we may not be hearing about some of the challenges. I worry not about the things that I know, but about the things I don’t know,” he said. “I worry about what that gap will look like in the new school year, because there will be a gap.”

He said that on the one hand this experience reinforces the importance of classroom learning, teacher-student interaction and the role of the teacher.

“It gives you that new appreciation of how important classroom learning is and maybe we sometimes took that for

granted,” he said.

On the other hand, he said that the forced school closures does open your mind to new opportunities, for example using technology more often and determining how that can be done in coordination with in class learning.

“It might give young people the confidence to learn more independently as well, and to learn more at home,” he said. “It won’t be the same for everybody, but some young people might realize that they can take more control over their education and can do more at home and strive more and challenge themselves more.”

Goertzen said the biggest challenge in his role has been trying to keep up with how much has changed so quickly. He said that almost daily, there have been new directives coming forward and many of these are things that you would not have anticipated the day before, much less three weeks before.

“Both from the educational perspective and the government side, the pace of that change has been remarkable and how quickly you have to make decisions and respond to some of those changes,” he said. “That has been really difficult and I imagine there are plenty more of those decisions and changes to come.”

He said this situation has given him new appreciation for political leaders and others who have lived through times of significant stress and struggles like war and other health related issues.

“It’s amazing that people had to live through that for months and sometimes years and continue to make those difficult decisions,” he said. “I have new respect for people who have gone through those challenges. We’ve only been in it for three



Samantha Turenne does home-to-home video interview with Kelvin Goertzen.

weeks but it sure feels like a lifetime.”

In addition to the pace of responding to and adapting to the changes, Goertzen has been equally amazed at the speed at which public perception can evolve.

Thinking back to the initial decision that school would be suspended, beginning one week before spring break and lasting for one week after, Goertzen said that he went to the grocery store that evening and the overwhelming response from his constituents was, “this might be a little soon, a bit of an overreaction.”

Over the weekend, things started to change as other provinces announced that they were closing schools effectively immediately.

“By Monday, it had gone from maybe we’re closing too soon to why are you waiting a week? You have to close the schools immediately,” he said. “I was bombarded with messages on social media and phone calls and emails saying you shouldn’t be keeping the schools open this week.”

In hindsight, Goertzen stands by the decision on the date of the school closures that was based on the medical advice from the public health officer.

“It was the right decision but over those three days nothing had really changed

from the Manitoba context but people’s individual mortality had changed based on what they were seeing in other places,” he said. “It was a lesson for me in how fast our views can change based on what we’re hearing around us and then it is equally incredible how quickly people can adapt to these new realities.”

His only regret about the school closures is the impact on Grade 12s.

“We will have the opportunity to catch up with everyone under Grade 12 both academically and socially but we would have missed that opportunity with the Grade 12s,” he said. “This is their graduation year and those of us who have that in our memory know how special that is and even if we get back in time for graduation, it’s not going to be exactly the same.”

He remembers how he anticipated his graduation; those last days in the hallways with friends.

“It really bothers me that they won’t be able to have that,” he said. “What we do know is that they’re going to have great futures. But at that age, you’re kind of living in the moment a lot more, and to not have that moment in the way that you have anticipated it is really too bad.”

As for the recommendations from the

K-12 review, they will not be released until COVID-19 is behind us.

“It’s not on the radar right now. Society is focused on getting through the worst of the pandemic, getting through to the other side and hopefully returning life to some sort of normalcy, even if it’s incrementally,” he said. “People need to see the light at the end of the tunnel first. We need to get back to a normal existence and then we can talk about the report.”

In the meantime, The Goertzen’s, like other Manitobans are using the time at home to reset and focus on the things that really matter. They have started writing notes to people they know, just to say hello and to check in on how things are going. Their goal is to write about 100 notes.

He said that these are the types of things that they should have been doing before now, but that life was so busy, there simply was not enough time.

“We’ve realized that we need to be more intentional in thanking people for what they’re doing not just now, but especially now, and we will try to carry that forward,” he said.

On that note, Keiko wakes up and begins to sneeze. How quickly we adapt. We had forgotten he was even there.

NEXT SCHOOL YEAR

The exact date of the beginning of the next school year is still up in the air, but one thing is certain, there will be assessments to determine the extent of loss of learning that occurred over the closures.

“In September, potentially, if things start to resume back to a normal school environment then the education system is going to be dealing with the fact that a number of students have fallen behind,” said education minister, Kelvin Goertzen. “We’re going to have to figure out collectively how we’re going to deal with that because we can’t just ignore it.”

Goertzen said that there will have to be discussions about supplemental learning.

“We’re going to have to look at things that happen within the school year, whether that is personal development days or different things which are all good things but they take away from that core learning,” he said. “We’re going to have to look at that school calendar and say well these are days that haven’t been traditionally used for in classroom learning but they might have to be.”

He added that teachers and those in the profession will understand the need to look at how the days on the school calendar are currently used because, “ultimately, their goal is to have students do well and they know that the

circumstances are exceptional here.”

MTS president, James Bedford said that the beginning of the school year is too far off to make predictions about the effect of the school closures on student learning.

“We will have a clearer picture of what is needed this fall,” said Bedford. “At that point, I would be happy to sit down with the minister and other education stakeholders to discuss the ways in which we can best support students.”

Bedford said that there are too many variables involved, especially since we are dealing with unprecedented circumstances, to determine exactly what types of supports students will need.

He said that teachers have been working hard to ensure that students keep learning over the closure and he is hopeful that the learning gap will not be significant.

“We know that nothing replaces a teacher in the classroom with a student. But there are amazing teachers throughout this province who have adapted and made the best of the situation,” said Bedford. “Teachers have embraced remote learning and are using it as an opportunity to explore creative and innovative ways to stay connected with their students. There is still plenty of learning happening.”

MEAL PROGRAM IN THE WORKS

The provincial government is issuing a request for proposals to help with the delivery of food so that students who depend on in-school meal programs can continue to be supported during the closures.

“There is no question that those in-school meals were helping thousands of students,” said education minister, Kelvin Goertzen. “We know that with school not happening now it is causing a gap which might be exasperated by the fact that you now have people who are

having other economic hardships because they’ve been laid off.”

Goertzen said that the problem is not necessarily getting better and is in fact getting a bit worse, so “we are going to try to bridge some of that to continue to provide for those students now that they are not in schools.”

The government hopes to have a plan in place shortly.

A TEST FOR TEACHING

Letters, online classrooms, homework packages, videos and phone calls are among some of the creative ways Manitoba teachers are staying connected with their students amid school closures due to COVID-19.

While some schools have carefully crafted take-home kits with plenty of supplies and hard copies of lessons, others have lent out books as well as laptops and other technology to ensure all of their students have equal access to online learning. Some schools have gone the extra mile to ensure students and their families have access to food.

Michelle Jean-Paul, principal of École Templeton, says their school collected kid-friendly food and cash donations in March for those who rely on meal and snack programs.

“It’s not just teachers, all school staff are jumping in to help put care packages together and go out and deliver them to families,” she said. “It’s great to see our school communities coming together for those in need.”

Teachers have taken this time to either explore online teaching resources or to continue utilizing what they’ve already been using outside of the classroom. Some of the online programs include Google Classroom, ClassDojo, Microsoft 365, Microsoft OneNote and Seesaw just to name a few. Applications such as Zoom, Skype, Facebook and Instagram have also been useful.

“We’re trying everything we can to get them engaged in this kind of learning,” said Barb Makowsky, who teaches Grades 5 and 6 at Centennial School in Selkirk. “I don’t want them to fall behind.”



JUMPING JACKS ON TIKTOK

In an effort to inspire his students to keep moving, Brendan Edie, a Grade 7 homeroom and physical education teacher at École Morden Middle School, has moved his gym class to TikTok.

“Anytime you don’t have kids in the room, whether it be in a classroom or gymnasium, it can be a challenge,” said Edie. “The circumstances that we are currently in have given teachers the opportunity to showcase their creativity.”

Edie launched a 21-day challenge where students can follow along and complete daily physical health and well-being activities online on the popular app, TikTok.

“I wanted to create content that I could share with my entire school to help families generate ideas to keep students active,” he said. “It’s a fun way for students to get up and moving while at home.”

His 21-day challenge can be accessed via his Twitter page “@mredieteaches” and on his YouTube channel, “PE with Mr.E.” Once on the YouTube channel, students have the option to work out on their own or complete activities with him – a virtual physical education class. He has also created additional challenges to supplement the 21-day program on a platform that he is still learning about – TikTok. His TikTok profile is “@PEwithMrE.”

“It’s not always a workout, sometimes there are activities like master a TikTok dance, or create an obstacle course at home,” he said. “Though I do value fitness, I think it appeals to a broader range of students when the activity changes.”



LEARNING IN THE KITCHEN

Science teachers are also finding creative ways to keep their students engaged.

Madame Waters and her assistant Félix have built and launched rockets,

inflated balloons placed over milk bottles, which created chemical reactions and more.

“This is a way that I can help,” said Meghan Waters, a Grade 7 and 8 teacher at École Varennes. “I am on mat leave so I am able to pick and choose which experiments I want to do. I feel for teachers who have the monumental task of condensing their curriculum.”

Waters is using a book given to her by her mother, a former teacher, which includes more than 500 science experiments. After choosing an experiment, Waters translates it into French and then performs the experiment, which is then posted to her YouTube channel, which can be found by visiting, <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheLadywaters>.

“I try to pick experiments that use things around the house, or those that can be acquired easily,” she said. “I also incorporate core words when speaking so that kids just learning French will be able to follow along.”

Shannon Baxter says she’s also looking at alternatives for science experiments for her high school students.

“I think we’re going to do a lot baking, a lot of kitchen science,” said Baxter, who teaches Grade 10 general science and Grade 11 chemistry at Collège Béliveau. “We had done a couple (experiments) already so it’s not like they haven’t had any lab experience ... but if this continues they won’t get that entire lab experience before entering Grade 12.”

Jennifer Paszat, a dual track (French/English) teacher, quickly realized that the class suspension meant that some of her students wouldn’t have access to instruments at home, so she did the next best thing - she started a kitchen band.

“My Grade 2 students had the opportunity to go to the WSO for a concert and we heard the musicians creating music using things found at home, so I figured why not and the kitchen band was born,” said Paszkat, a K-2 music teacher. “They can compose music or just have fun doing the rhythmic patterns.”

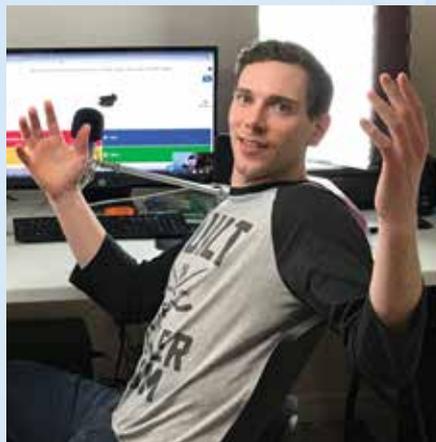
Paszkat also teaches Grades 1 and 2 Early Exposure French, another subject that is extremely hands-on with a predominately oral based curriculum.

“For many parents, their only prior experience with French was when they went to elementary school,” she said. “We also have a large number of EAL students, which means their parents are learning

English and may not have the confidence to help their child in French.”

She turned to Seesaw, a program recommended by her school division for communicating with families, and ended up creating videos that fulfilled the needs of all her students – la musique en français.

“I know all my Grade 1 and 2 French students know our welcome song ‘Bonjour mes amis’ so I asked them to make a video with their family,” she said. “It was a beautiful example of how students can teach their parents and it was obvious how much fun everyone had. We had whole families singing together, moms and their kids. This is what it should be like.”



LEARNING CAN BE A KA-HOOT

George Pearce, a Grade 7 and 8 math and science teacher at Gordon Bell High School, says he’s been having some difficulty getting all of his students together for a specific time slot to conduct meetings or lessons.

“It’s a tough time for everyone, especially kids. With everything that’s going on it’s hard to focus and many students are just unmotivated to do work,” he said. “It was hard enough to get them engaged in class and now I can’t even get a hold of the kids I really need to.”

He quickly realized that to encourage participation and ensure learning, he had to make it fun. Luckily, he knew just what to do. Pearce’s students were already familiar with Kahoot, an online learning platform, since he had used it in the classroom many times.

Kahoot uses multiple-choice questions to boost engagement, while providing real time teacher feedback on complex concepts.

“I live stream my screen and kids watch my stream and answer the questions

on their devices by selecting the corresponding button,” said Pearce. “I am able to talk to anyone participating while the questions are up and offer clarification and explanations as needed.”

Recognizing that with social distancing in effect, parents are looking for learning activities for their children, he opened it up, so anyone can join in.

“Students and parents have been having a hoot – a Kahoot to be exact, learning about things like Newton’s Laws and practicing critical thinking and problem solving,” he said.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, LEARN!

When it comes to filming videos, Claire Rodger admits she’s not used to being in front of the camera.

“I’m used to being in front of a classroom,” said Rodger, who teaches math, phys-ed and health at Hugh John MacDonald School. “There have been a lot of bloopers but sometimes we leave them in there because we know if we’re laughing, they’re laughing as well.”

Rodger went from posting one video a day to her online classroom to now doing two to three a day. Although she admits it can be time consuming, short and simple videos can be a great teaching tool.

“Students can take their time, they can review it at their own pleasure which is really nice,” she said. “They can also re-watch it several times if they have any questions or if they missed something and then they can do their assignment at their own pace.”

Jonathan Burnham, who also teaches math, phys-ed and health at the

school, says he tries to make his videos as interesting and visual as possible.

“I’ve put dog ears on my head, just trying to be animated,” he said. “I’ve tried adding text to the videos and stuff like that and exploring different apps to add some fun to it.”

Warren du Plooy, who teaches Grades 7-9 English at the school, says his students have also been sending him videos.

“With these short little video assignments, I’m trying to show them that they can still interact with each other, connect with each other, even though we’re not supposed to see each other physically,” he said.

Amélie Carrier, a kindergarten teacher at École Précieux-Sang, a K-8 school in the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, has been using Skype to check in with her students.

“Everything is better when it can be said out loud and interpreted orally,” she said. “It’s also especially important for children to have structure right now, and part of that structure includes seeing their teacher. Having their teacher take time to talk to them, to listen to them and to remind them that we believe in them is critical.”

Carrier plans to check in with each student, 15 in total, on a weekly basis or more frequently if needed. She uses this time to assign new exercises and tasks for the coming week to ensure that her students can continue to develop their skills. She also makes a point of including parents in the conversation.

“It is equally important that parents are supported during this time, so that they feel empowered to help their children in their learning,” she said.

She asserts that while technology is helpful in keeping us connected, it also presents one of the biggest challenges.

“Every parent and child does not have access to all the tools needed to stay connected and each child has different needs,” she said. “Not all software can make long videos for more concrete explanations which is necessary for some parents and children. I am still working out what is the best way to ensure each student is getting what they need to succeed. Nothing can replace the in classroom learning, but we are all trying our best to stay on top of things.”



STAYING CONNECTED WITHOUT TECHNOLOGY

Writing letters, phone calls and delivering homework packages are some of the ways teachers at Juniper Elementary School in Thompson are leading their students through lessons without technology.

“In times like this when we go out of our comfort zones, we can provide a quality education,” said Grade 4 teacher Kelley Taite. “Just having that communication piece, being able to write, telling them what we miss about them ... has been great.”

Taite said it’s important for teachers to let their students know now more than ever that they’re here for them.

“I think the kids still need to see that we’re still here ... and we’re still working towards their education.”

Kaidie Morris, who teaches Grade 1 and 2 at the school, has been sending her students a video of her reading every morning, just like they would start their days normally in class. She’s also been sending them video updates of their class pet, Bruni, the bearded dragon. Since some of her students don’t always have access to technology, Morris says the videos are great because they can watch them on their own time.

“Everyone’s experiencing new challenges but up here we have a lot of kids without technology,” Morris said. “But we do have the advantage that we’re a small community so we can deliver work to them easily if needed.”

Taite says she’s hoping to keep the school’s land based lessons alive by making videos about ice fishing and how to make a dream catcher.

“We’re really looking at doing everything we can to reach our kids,” she said. “I’m quite excited about what our Manitoba teachers have done, and I’m proud to be one of them.”

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SCIENCE AHEAD OF CURRI- CULUM

BY JENNIFER MCFEE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT KEHLER

Discussions about climate change continue to heat up across the country and around the globe. Yet when it comes to Manitoba's climate change curriculum, there's no denying that updates are long overdue.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia and Lund University analyzed textbooks and curricula from every province and territory. They determined that the curriculum from Manitoba — as well as from Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island — presented human-caused climate change as a debatable topic. However, the scientific consensus is that humans are the driving force for climate change.

Seth Wynes is the lead author of a report of their findings, which was published in PLOS One scientific journal. Wynes started the research while pursuing a master's degree at Lund University in Sweden along with co-author Kimberley A. Nicholas. Currently, Wynes is finishing his PhD in the department of geography at the University of British Columbia.

"I was a high school science teacher before I went back to grad school to study this, so that was part of the motivation. I wanted to know how climate change is taught in Canada and what areas offer room for improvement," he said.

"I think it's important that students in Canada understand the problem of climate change because if they don't have an understanding of basic facts surrounding this issue, then they won't be motivated to help solve the problem — and we need everyone's help."

The researchers created a framework of basic ideas supported by science that every student should know about climate change.

"Students should know that the earth is warming, it's because of humans, experts agree on this, it's bad, but we can fix it," Wynes said.

"We applied this framework to Canadian secondary science curricula and we also followed that up with interviews of the people who wrote the curriculum documents that we analyzed."

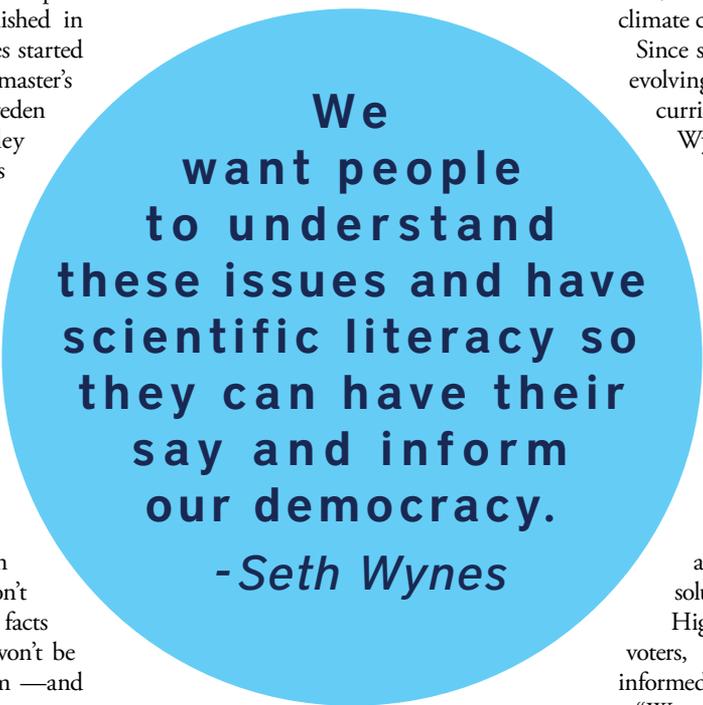
Looking across the country, they discovered that Ontario and Saskatchewan had the most comprehensive coverage of climate change. Provinces with older curriculum documents, like Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, had the least coverage.

"Manitoba was somewhere in the middle,

but Manitoba also had some statements that encouraged focus on the controversy around climate change. This is concerning because there is no scientific controversy around whether climate change is happening and what's causing it," Wynes said.

"We know that climate change is happening. There's overwhelming consensus in the scientific community that it's caused by humans burning fossil fuels. So when a curriculum document says to look at both sides of the issue, that's going to lead students astray. They will be getting a muddled picture when the information in that regard is really clear and straightforward."

The research looks at the official curriculum



**We
want people
to understand
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say and inform
our democracy.
-Seth Wynes**

writing process, which can take a long time to update. However, Wynes notes that teachers and school boards are continually changing their processes.

"Our study points to how important it is to review how climate change is being taught because it might very well be out of date," he said.

"What's happening on the ground in Manitoba might be different than what's in the curriculum documents, but teachers on the ground should still be supported by those curriculum documents. They should be devoting class time and resources to this. They should also be receiving training on the latest and best methods to teach this."

A Manitoba government spokesperson

said there is no set schedule for curricular renewal or update and it is unknown when the climate change curriculum will next be updated. However, he said Manitoba's Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Review might address curriculum in its report.

Evidence that climate change occurs due to natural events and human activities is investigated and evaluated in Manitoba curriculum along with mitigation efforts, the spokesperson added.

He pointed out that Manitoba Education has developed a cross-curricular approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The ESD website contains links to various other websites that provide current data, activities and resources related to climate change.

Since scientific information is continually evolving, that's even more reason to revise curriculum documents frequently, Wynes added.

"Teachers in Canada are professionals and I have a lot of faith in them to deal with tricky subjects like this. That being said, sometimes there might be controversies over teaching in their community," he said.

"It's important that they're being supported by their school boards and administration. Definitely, though, there's space for teachers to step up and find a project that students find engaging and allow them to contribute to solutions towards climate change."

High school students will soon become voters, so it's essential that they're well informed on the topic, he added.

"We want people to understand these issues and have scientific literacy so they can have their say and inform our democracy," he said.

Today's youth are interested in taking action, which is evident in the influx of students becoming involved in recent movements like the Fridays for Future climate strikes.

"It's important that they're being provided with the latest and best information so they understand the problem and they're able to contribute," he said.

"Every student needs to know not just what climate change means to them but how they can help. It's going to be a growing part of their future, so it matters a lot that they understand how they'll be impacted by it."

A delicate balance

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In a world never more willing to consider new ways of teaching and learning, the traditional structure of the school day is very much on the table.

As learning shifts to online platforms and virtual, rather than physical, connections become the norm, teachers, students and parents alike are exploring ways to balance the day to create conditions for optimal learning and wellbeing.

One concept getting traction in a pre-COVID-19 world is the concept of the “balanced school day.” A number of schools in Manitoba have adopted the format to great success; and our new—or at least temporary—normal creates a great opportunity for at-home education.

The Louis Riel School Division (LRSD), has embraced the opportunity at two of its schools: École Provencher and Lavallee School. There the traditional school day has been shaken up in an effort to increase physical activity, mental acuity and wellbeing. And it’s working.

Both schools deviated from the usual schedule that had two 15-minute recesses and an hour for lunch in exchange for one that has three 100-minute blocks of instructional time and two nutritional/fitness breaks. This balanced approach to education is aptly named a balanced school day.

Although the two school’s daily schedules look slightly different, the benefits are the same: extended physical activity for students, more opportunities to eat throughout the day, more prep time and collaboration among teachers and maximized learning with fewer interruptions and transitions.

The schedule switch-up in École Provencher was championed by Celeste Dilka, Student Services Teacher, based on her positive experience with it when she worked in a different school division.

“I’ve never worked in a school with a ‘traditional’ schedule,” said Dilka. “It was difficult to adjust, and I felt like I was always rushed and that there was a lot of wasted time.”

Working with Lyette Carrière, the former principal of École Provencher, and



“There was a bit of a learning curve at the beginning, but overall, it’s been pretty smooth. I’ve noticed the students aren’t as tired at the end of the day. Kids learn better in the morning—they’re more focused—so this schedule helps them stay engaged.”

- Shelly Hynes, Grade 3 teacher at École Provencher

David Charney, Vice Principal, the three educators joined forces to create a plan of action. After months of research and consultations with staff, parents and senior leadership, École Provencher announced it would be implementing a balanced school day at the start of the 2019-2020 school year.

“There was a bit of a learning curve at the beginning, but overall, it’s been pretty smooth,” said Shelly Hynes, a Grade 3 teacher at École Provencher. “I’ve noticed the students aren’t as tired at the end of the day. Kids learn better in the morning—they’re more focused—so this schedule helps them stay engaged.”

Students in Hynes’ class also agree with her assessment of the new schedule.

“I like that we don’t have to stop and start a bunch of times,” said Ruby, a student in Grade 3. “We don’t have to rush and put our winter clothes on and off and on and off. Also, there’s more time to play with friends.”

For some learners, getting dressed for recess in the winter months can be challenging and time consuming, especially for younger students. With two longer recess breaks instead of three shorter ones, students are outside longer and transitions between classes are easier.

As one of the recess supervisors, Charney sees the benefits first-hand.

“The balanced school day allows for so much more authentic, play-based learning,” said Charney. “Students can start a game and actually finish it within the new half-hour break. I think it’s reduced feelings of anxiety because kids aren’t rushed to get outside and have the time to problem solve, build friendships and work together.”

Although increased physical activity is an important focus of the balanced school day, improved well-being is also a priority. École Provencher has a daily 15-minute mental health break in the afternoon to help students refocus and learn about mindfulness. These breaks can include

activities such as colouring, breathing exercises or quiet time.

Katie Anderson, who has one son in pre-school and one in Grade 3, said she sees a big difference in her oldest since he's been a part of a balanced school day.

"My son, Paolo, has developed a new vocabulary around mental health. He's able to express the way he's feeling and recognizes when he needs to step back and take a break. He's also coming home feeling more tired, in a good way, because of the focus on physical wellness."

While the new schedule is showing a positive impact on learners, teachers have also been experiencing the benefits. Michèle Olson, Principal at École Provencher, said she's noticed an increase in collaboration among staff.

"The longer blocks of time outdoors for students means longer blocks of prep time for our staff," said Olson. "Teachers can take time for themselves, debrief and collaborate with one another. We've held staff meetings during the breaks, and I've even seen a few teachers starting to do yoga together!"

Shelly Hopper, Principal at Lavallee School, also saw an increase in staff satisfaction.

"Staff were enthusiastic about the change to a balanced school day. Teachers are able to plan comprehensive lessons that are not interrupted by frequent transitions and often mention that the days actually feel shorter."

Lavallee School was the first to implement the balanced school day in LRSD in the fall of 2017. Now in the school's third year with the new schedule, Hopper says keeping an open and ongoing dialogue with the community is key to the continued success of the new schedule.

"The biggest question from parents was in regard to packing lunches and ensuring that students had opportunities to eat at both breaks within the day," said Hopper. "We found it helpful to provide additional and ongoing support to students and families about packing nutritious lunches that are easily separated into two parts. We've noticed that students are eating more of their lunches throughout the day."

With students in kindergarten to Grade 8, administration at Lavallee School has had to adapt the school day schedule to ensure it fits everyone's needs.

"There are a few times throughout the year that require some shuffling," said Hopper. "For example, if Practical

Arts for Grade 7 and 8 students is in the afternoon, those students will follow a more typical schedule. We've also made accommodations for substitutes and part-time staff working mornings or afternoons."

Despite the need for occasional adjustments, the switch to a balanced school day for Lavallee School and École Provencher has been a relatively easy transition and a change that Mark, a Grade 3 École Provencher learner, hopes is here to stay.

"It's way better and I never want to go back to the other kind of day."

It might be a while before "the other kind of day" becomes an option. As our communities consider myriad ways of optimizing learning remotely, the balanced school day seems prophetic. Intellectual and emotional intelligence are rooted in healthy bodies and minds.

As we learn to survive and thrive within the context of a global pandemic, balancing our days with study, movement, nourishment and creativity have never been more vital. They're habits that in the weeks and months ahead may well redefine our thinking about lots of things—including the school day.

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JESSICA KAKEEWAY-CATCHEWAY

The desire to serve comes naturally to Jessica Kakeeway-Catcheway, a Grade 4 student at John Pritchard School. Jessica is always looking for ways to help others. In class, she was inspired by a unit on the United Nations' Goals for Sustainability, focusing specifically on zero poverty and zero hunger – two huge national issues. She asked if she could raise money to support the school's breakfast program knowing that having a good breakfast can make or break students' ability to learn during the school day. Through her consistent hard work, selfless acts and leadership skills, Jessica and her classmates were able to raise \$300 to directly benefit students who rely on John Pritchard School's breakfast program.



JACINDA HOULE

Jacinda Houle, a 16-year-old student at Portage Collegiate Institute, has been an ardent promoter of Indigenous dance and culture since Grade 9. She's been a pow-wow dancer since she was eight. She is also completely invested in her school and the Portage community. She's the first one to raise her hand when teachers or students need help, and she's a strong believer in teaching reconciliation. A member of the First Nation Leadership Group at the Collegiate, Jacinda runs dance groups at North Memorial School and Fort la Reine School. Wherever she teaches culture and dance, her non-Indigenous students outnumber the Indigenous students.



DEV AMBARAM-BARTH

Fourteen-year-old Dev Ambaram-Barth has big fans, all right. His teachers at Arthur E. Wright Community School, residents at Maples Personal Care Home and a group of patients at Deer Lodge Centre just can't say enough about him. You could call Dev a one-person recreation director and you wouldn't be wrong. But the gregarious teen is much more than that. He's a storyteller, a caring friend and a confidant with a genuine heart for making connections with seniors. He's invested well over 100 hours in this work and residents immediately flock to his activity groups. One resident who was feeling blue but wary of joining, eventually did. Within a few weeks, he came completely out of his shell. His wife said the transformation was remarkable.



MANITOBA YOUTH FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Iona Taylor (Collège Louis-Riel), Courtney Tosh (Miles Macdonell) and Sunny Enkin Lewis (Grant Park High School) organized last September's huge Rally for Climate Change at the Manitoba Legislature. These three passionate and articulate students absolutely outdid themselves. The rally and march count among the largest Winnipeg has seen since the 1919 General Strike. The media coverage was outstanding and their ability to mobilize a multi-age crowd of over 15,000 is worthy of kudos alone. They are not afraid to defend the cause of educating students and adults on climate change in school, on the ground or in the community. Plans for a second rally have been put on hold due to the pandemic.



The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society

Business as (un)usual

STORY BY ANNE BENNETT

As connected as our world has become, courtesy of all manner of technological advances, human beings remain social creatures. Most would agree that while emails are efficient and FaceTime is fabulous, there's nothing like a good old fashioned face-to-face to get the job done.

Which is why MTS, like all other teachers' unions across Canada, and indeed all organizations literally everywhere, is grappling with how to hold important events such as annual general meetings in ways that are both democratic and effective.

No small challenge in the midst of a pandemic, given the vital opportunity such meetings present for dialogue, debate, and of course, elections.

Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) communications director, Andrew King, says for many jurisdictions across the country, few firm decisions have been made as to the

manner, or timing, of AGMs.

"Many are still up in the air," says King, adding that options being considered include online formats and dates later in the summer and fall of 2020. A number of jurisdictions have postponed, or even cancelled this year's AGM outright.

"At this moment in time, in addition to your team at MTS, Éducatrices et éducateurs francophones du Manitoba (EFM) has indicated they'll host a virtual meeting."

Here at home, cancellation is not on the table. MTS is exploring a variety of platforms to deliver a creative and effective solution to delivering the Society's Provincial Council AGM. In addition, presidents' council and provincial executive meetings will continue as planned using tools like Zoom to keep the business of the Society on track.

MTS general secretary, Roland Stankevicius, is in regular contact with his counterparts across Canada to

share perspectives and approaches on connectivity. "It's extremely helpful to compare notes and share best practices, particularly now, under the current circumstances, when we're all finding our way without a map."

Details regarding how the meeting will look and function are still being hammered out, however, Stankevicius is optimistic that appropriate, and creative, solutions will be found. Ensuring transparent and effective election processes for officers at the Local and Provincial levels is obviously a key concern.

"Elections will be different this year as no in-person balloting or counting of paper ballots can take place," says Stankevicius. "Most Locals are using a secure online election platform called Election Buddy. We're vetting options that ensure the security and validity that we require."

Details remain in the planning stages, and will be communicated as soon as possible.

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MTS meets the politicians

STORY BY SAMANTHA TURENNE

Members of the MTS provincial executive met with more than 30 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in early March to speak about teachers' priorities and concerns.

It was an opportunity to highlight some of the organization's key recommendations to the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education, which was set to release their report at the end of March. The release of the report is now delayed due to COVID-19.

The MTS delegation spoke candidly about the impact of poverty in the classroom, the growing need for more resources for special needs students and those requiring mental health supports.

The importance of recruiting and retaining French language teachers and the need for education funding to be adequate, stable and sustainable were also discussed.

MTS President James Bedford stressed the



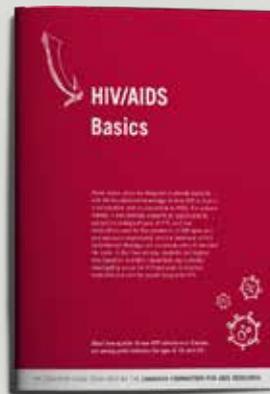
importance of working collaboratively, across party lines, to ensure positive outcomes for current and future students.

Following the meetings, the provincial executive attended Question Period as guests of the Minister of Education. The Official Opposition (NDP) questioned the

government on breakfast programs, while the second opposition (Liberals), in a Member's Statement on International Women's Day, commended MTS on their commitment to empowering women leaders.

This was the third annual all-party lobbying event.

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Stone Soup

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS IN MANITOBA

The Manitoba Teachers' Society was proud to sponsor the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba's eighth annual Stone Soup event in support of school meal programs across the province.

"Teachers are keenly aware of the benefits of good nutrition when it comes to student learning," said James Bedford, MTS president. "Establishing a universal meal program for all school-aged children was one of the Society's recommendations for the province's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education review commission."

The fundraiser's concept borrows from the tale where community members come together to make a large pot of soup for sharing with hungry travelers. While there are many versions of the story, the moral remains the same - sharing benefits everyone who contributes.

In this modern day version, restaurants create their own version of a "stone soup," which is sold to the public with 100 per cent of the proceeds going to school meal programs.

Restaurants also compete for bragging rights for creating the best soup. MTS president James Bedford, joined on the judges' panel by Winnipeg Free Press writer, Jen Zoratti, school principal Michelle Jean-Paul and James Favel, co-founder of Bear Clan had the coveted task of picking the best soup from 12 options.

The judges voted for the chicken corn chowder created by the chefs at Rudy's Eat & Drink, but the public disagreed. The People's Choice winner was a candied bacon and potato chowder concocted by Royal Winnipeg Ballet Catering.

The event was attended by more than 750 people and raised almost \$24,000.

Last year, the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba supported 271 programs province-wide, providing approximately 4.8 million snacks and meals to more than 30,000 students in the kindergarten to grade 12 public school system.

Testing Positive for Idiocy



If Manitoba school divisions are trying to illustrate the need for amalgamations, they're doing a good job of it.

The response of some divisions to the coronavirus crisis has shown the minds behind the decisions are not all created equal.

They had, what really was a simple question: What do we do with staff, particularly teachers, when classes are suspended?

At first some said teachers had to go to school as usual, as if it were just another snow day. Others said teachers had to teach from home. Others had some exotic blend of the two, or three approaches. The best, though, was the divisions that finally acknowledged there was a health concern with having groups of staff members congregating at schools.

So, teachers could teach from home, but they had to provide a daily report to their principal and superintendent as to what they did all day. Missing from that missive was any expectation for

these motivational geniuses to provide a daily report to the school board chair. They may not have had time, needing to get away early to buy a few hundred rolls of toilet paper.

This was all so 1940s and showed what a colossal lack of respect and trust some supervisors have for their staff. Yes, what a great holiday this is, working from home. And yes, filling out daily logs is far more important than connecting with students and trying to teach through a growing crisis. Education is important! Second only to bureaucracy.

Well, if amalgamations of school divisions end up getting rid of some of these archaic attitudes, it will save the system more than money.

Other leaders, with bigger constituencies, too tested positive for blind ignorance. Donald Trump's bizarre news conferences could fill a book on how not to respond in a crisis. Then there were the lesser-known figures who didn't and don't catch the drift of what has been happening.

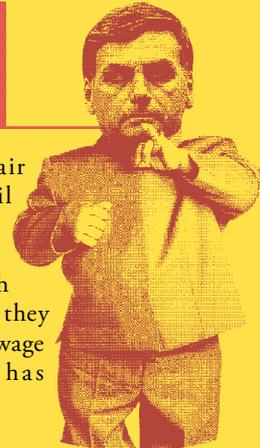


Have a little faith.

Mississippi governor and Donald Trump supporter Tate Reeves was one of the first stable geniuses to ignore the coronavirus pandemic. Hounded to take action in March, Tate closed schools, then took a family trip to Europe after telling citizens to have faith "in the power of prayer." When municipalities ordered shops closed, among other measures, Tate made an order to overrule the cities and forbade the mandatory closure of almost any establishment from gun shops to bars.

Trump's mini-me.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro says Brazil doesn't have to worry about the coronavirus because its citizens don't catch anything, suggesting they can even swim in sewage without effect. He has



referred to COVID-19 as the “sniffles.” Bolsonaro’s campaign slogan is Make Brazil Great Again and he is known to be a homophobe, misogynist and racist. After a visit to meet Donald Trump, 24 members of Bolsonaro’s entourage tested positive for those sniffles.

So, what is an essential service?

Some people have questioned why liquor stores in Manitoba were allowed to stay open when the coffee shop down the street had to close. Well, many health authorities have said it’s important that alcohol-dependent people have access. And one city’s pharmacy is another’s gun store. Chicago has deemed gun stores as an essential service. Minneapolis says food courts inside airports are essential. New Orleans likes bike shops, Phoenix likes pretty well everything except bars, movie theatres and gyms. And of the big cities that have them, almost all consider cannabis stores essential.



Life was a beach.

A county in Sonoma, California closed its beaches to the public since too many people were crowding together to escape home confinement. It turned out the empty beaches were a perfect place for one man and his family to enjoy, and even post the day’s outing on social media. The man was the county’s emergency management director.

BEACH
CLOSED

Tough break.

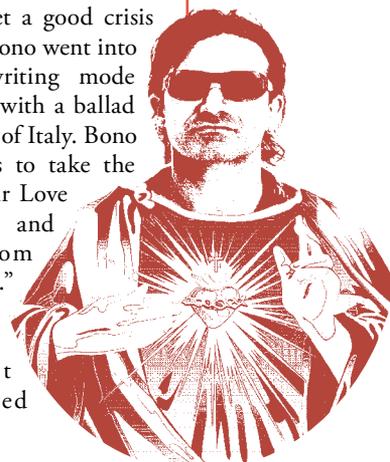
University students on spring break made news by crowding beaches in the U.S. despite directives to practice social distancing. Dozens went home and tested positive for the coronavirus. Some 70 students from the University of Texas chartered a plane to Mexico. More than a third, 28 of them tested positive later. The Washington Post reported numerous others from the University of Tampa to the University of Wisconsin tested positive after returning from spring break.



characters,” said the chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Dana Tizya-Tramm. “They dreamt about it, pointed at a map, jumped in their car, and now they’re in the Yukon. They had no idea where they were going or necessarily what they were doing. “He got off the plane in sweat pants, a jacket and a hat. He didn’t have even mitts on.” The couple were put into quarantine and then put on a plane out of town.

Walk on Bono, walk on.

Not one to let a good crisis go to waste, Bono went into speed song-writing mode and came up with a ballad for the people of Italy. Bono urged Italians to take the song, Let Your Love be Known, and “sing it from the rooftops.” One critic responded: “Haven’t they suffered enough?”



Let's name him Covid.

A soon-to-be father in New York covered up his coronavirus symptoms to be with his wife who was giving birth. She ended up with the virus, too and hospital officials were left scrambling to avoid the virus infecting the whole maternity ward.

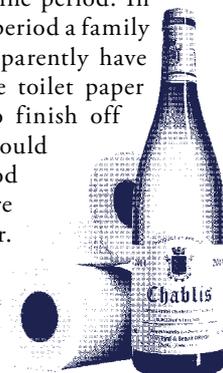
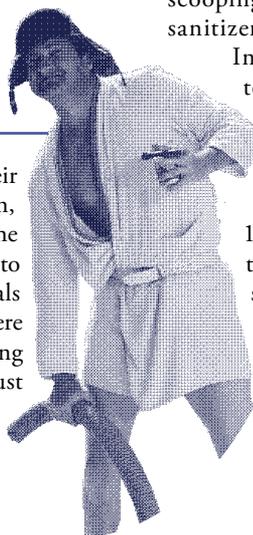


Grab another roll, Jethro.

Trust Popular Mechanics to do some number-crunching for hordes of hoarders scooping up all the toilet paper and hand sanitizer they can pack into their pickup. In brief, a 30-roll Costco pack of toilet paper will last well beyond a 14-day quarantine period. In fact, during that period a family of four would apparently have to, ahem, use the toilet paper 182 times a day to finish off the pack. It would seem their food will run out before the toilet paper. No matter, it probably goes well with a nice Chablis.

Just passing through.

A Quebec couple sold all their belongings, drove 5,000 km, then boarded a plane to the tiny community of Old Crow to escape the coronavirus. Locals were not amused. “We were busy dealing with a life-altering pandemic, and this couple just strolls off the plane like cartoon



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