

THE MANITOBA Teacher

MARCH 2021 VOLUME 99 NUMBER 5 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



Maternity & Parental Leave



Are you planning to take maternity and/or parental leave? Information is available on our website at ***mbteach.org*** or contact:

Ashleigh Deeley Michaluk, Staff Officer, Teacher Welfare

The Manitoba Teachers' Society
Teacher Welfare Department
191 Harcourt Street
Winnipeg MB R3J 3H2

Phone: 204-831-3065/1-866-494-5747 (ext 232)

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

Email: amichaluk@mbteach.org

Virtual Maternity and Parental Leave Seminars from 4:30 to 5:30 PM on:

Tuesday, March 23, 2021 | Tuesday, April 27, 2021 | Tuesday, May 25, 2021 | Tuesday, June 15, 2021

Please email amichaluk@mbteach.org to register.

THE MANITOBA Teacher

MARCH 2021 VOLUME 99 NUMBER 5 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

P.4

From the President

P.5

Inside MTS



P.6

A year with COVID in the classroom

Deputy Minister Dana Rudy ensures all voices are at the table



P.15

Gov't continues to tighten purse strings on education

Failure to fund education leaves long-lasting effects on MB students



As we near the one year mark of school closures in Manitoba, here's our version of a COVID-19 timeline of events.



*Winnipeg School Division through the ages
Caelan Thomson grows up in Winnipeg's largest school division*



FROM THE PRESIDENT

JAMES BEDFORD

If the path from poverty depends on a robust, well-funded public education system, then the province of Manitoba is failing. With some of the highest child poverty rates in the country, and the fact that public education funding has not kept pace with inflation for five consecutive years, it is a fair comment that all school-aged children in this province are being shortchanged - those from impoverished households, even more so.

In the recent education funding announcement, the provincial government was quick to boast that an increase of \$20.8 million in funding meant a record level of investment in public education. And while this is the highest dollar investment in Manitoba history, it only tells half the story.

Had the government considered funding public education solely at the rate of inflation, calculated at two per cent annually, the result would have been an increase of more than 10 per cent over five years. Funding at the rate of inflation would enable school divisions to continue to offer the same level of supports and resources to students - nothing more. Since 2016, the government has provided a 4.36 per cent increase in education funding, less than half the rate of inflation for this period.

There is also the issue of student population growth, which has increased annually at about one per cent since 2016. Yes, the 2020-21 school year saw a break in this pattern for pandemic related reasons, but it is expected to be just a pause. Added together, the government has provided less than a third of the necessary increases in funding for students. On top of this shortfall, we have the increasingly complex and diverse needs of the student population, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has highlighted the gross inequities in our public education system and created more. Too many students come from homes that are experiencing economic hardship and food insecurity, now worsened due to the pandemic. These same students often lack access to technology required for remote learning. While some divisions have done an admirable job of providing devices and internet connection, many are still struggling. Existing disparities in education are widened, leaving marginalized students at an even greater disadvantage.

Shockingly, it appears the government has failed to account for the impact of COVID-19 on student recovery learning needs. We know from membership polls that 80 per cent of teachers say that recovery learning this year was more challenging when compared to the previous school year. And this from three months of remote learning in Spring 2020, not from an entire school year where teaching and learning are in a state of upheaval.

In past years, inadequate funding has led to larger class sizes, cuts of student electives and apprenticeship programs. The underfunding of education directly affects student opportunities and outcomes, whereas adequate funding provides students with the resources and supports needed to succeed.

I know that we are all speaking out about the impacts of underfunding on our students and our classrooms, but is the government listening? And are they listening to the needs of our students? The next generation of Manitobans. The next generation of voters.

THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

Editor

George Stephenson
gstephenson@mbteach.org
Phone: 204-831-3058

Design

Krista Rutledge

Photography

Lindsey Enns

Circulation

Jennifer Nasse
jnasse@mbteach.org

Advertising

Matea Tuhtar
advertising@mbteach.org

The Manitoba Teacher

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

Published seven times a year
(September-June) by The Manitoba
Teachers' Society. Articles and views
published herein do not necessarily
represent the policies nor the views
of the Society.

Join other Manitoba teachers who
follow us on Facebook, Twitter and
Instagram.

 /manitobateachers

  /mbteachers

Publications Mail Agreement

40063378 ISSN 002-228X

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

Information Management

The Manitoba Teachers' Society
191 Harcourt Street
Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2
mts-im@mbteach.org





INSIDE MTS

A COVID YEAR-IN-REVIEW: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

DANIELLE FULLAN KOLTON, PH.D., GENERAL SECRETARY

If the expression, “Life is like a box of chocolates” stands true, then the last year did not disappoint. Each week brought novel issues. Continual change and lack of clarity took its toll on our members, and our staff mantra quickly became *Change – Challenge – Communicate – Repeat*.

The last 12 months have felt like a 100, and as we take pause in this issue to review and reflect on the year that was (and still is), I cannot think of a better way to frame it than *the good, the bad, and the ugly*.

The Good

It is hard to characterize anything COVID-related as good but there are noteworthy parts of this experience that deserve recognition. Overwhelmingly, the creativity and resilience of teachers and principal teachers has been nothing short of extraordinary.

Teachers in Manitoba continue to face the challenges of the pandemic with much skill and success. On the front lines of education, they lead their students and families through the storm. Though impossible to capture all, we have showcased the work, strategies, and celebrations of many of our members on social media, through every issue of *The Teacher*, and in our *Picture This* campaign.

At our request, you have used your voices to share stories and experiences, participate in surveys, provide feedback, and communicate directly with us across many platforms. Your telephone townhall messages were listened to and published and government heard them. You shared how underfunding has impacted you and your students through our social media campaign. This engagement is activism. It is action. It is advocacy. It is awesome. #useyourvoice

Operationally, we are evolving and discovering new ways to provide services and supports, and this involuntary change has opened our imagination in new ways. The challenge and disruption fuel our grit as we persevere and work across departments. Our volume of communications has exploded, and we charge forward weekly to champion and amplify your voices.

The work of the last year has not all been pandemic related as evidenced by our bargaining prowess, showcased in the unanimous PTTA arbitration award. Significant gains were made on the association’s three key proposals of economic protection, defined job expectations, and job security. This award is an unprecedented decision for teachers and enshrining inflation protection in an interest arbitration award is a breakthrough in Manitoba teacher collective bargaining. As well, Beautiful Plains Teachers’ Association also ratified an agreement. This is worthy of much celebration as the first PSSA-covered agreement to settle with wage increases beyond the parameters of Bill 28.

The Bad

Uncertainty and endurance are big-ticket items; that is, they come at a price and our members are paying it. You planned and prepared through breaks, you experienced reassignments, you struggle with worries about safety, you juggle family and personal needs, and you invent and reinvent on the daily.

Inconsistent communication, unreasonable workload expectations, and constant change continue to impact you, and an alarmingly high number of members report exhaustion, anxiety, and concern about their efficacy as a teacher and their mental and emotional health. While 62 per cent of Manitoba teachers reported a reasonable to good sense of coping, a concerning 38 per cent of teachers feel like they are barely or not coping at all (Canadian Teachers’ Federation mental health check-in survey).

Emergent issues have peppered each week including mask mandates, anti-maskers, funding, remote learning, duplex teaching, grade 12 provincial exams, compliance of health orders, pandemic response level changes (red/rose; orange/peach), offloading of public health work, rapid testing, vaccination priority, and case reporting transparency, to name a few.

This has reinforced for us that teacher voice is critical.

The Ugly

While the pandemic rages on, another storyline plays out on the sidelines. The delayed release of the Education Review and menacing Bills (16, 45, 64) - rumoured to be rapidly pushed through to proclamation - loom heavy as we all contemplate what the impact of additional stress, pressure, and “modernization” of education will be. All levels of the system have been held hostage to the enigmatic plans.

While Bill 28 was deemed unconstitutional last year, other mechanisms to interfere with bargaining have surfaced. And we are fighting. Hard. Repeatedly we ask ourselves: why must we battle for the constitutional right to bargain freely and fairly?


The smoke and mirrors of the education funding announcement has caused further worry after five years of funding cuts. Commentary about lowest achievement levels in the country spark concern that teachers might become the scapegoat for years of underfunding, ignorance, and neglect on social policy and responsibility.

And let us not forget the overused pandemic words now deemed ugly in my humble opinion. Can we agree that “unprecedented”, “pivot”, “fundamentals”, and “your mic is off” ought never to be uttered again? Ever.

Now What?

If there is anything that 101 years have taught us, it is that The Manitoba Teachers’ Society is a force to be reckoned with. Some of what we are experiencing now is like the movie *Groundhog Day*: We have been here before in some way, shape, or form. Other challenges of 2020-2021 have no playbook.

We have a blueprint for managing adversity, and it works. And while we may have the blueprint, *you* are the ink: We cannot do this work without you, the members, the heart of this organization. Your voice, your connection, and your action guide us in working for you. Together, we got this.

A portrait of Dana Rudy, Deputy Minister, a woman with shoulder-length brown hair and glasses, smiling. She is wearing a dark blazer over a grey top. The background is a light blue gradient.

"The education system is actually quite resilient. We have seen creativity and innovation emerge. I've seen positive stories of how teachers and school staff have really risen to the challenge and are doing things to make things better for students through these really difficult times, to make sure that learning continues."

- Dana Rudy Deputy Minister

A YEAR WITH COVID

BY SAMANTHA TURENNE

Deputy Minister Dana Rudy joined the Department of Education in February 2020, just a few weeks before the education minister announced that schools would be closed for three weeks.

"It definitely was not the easiest way to join a department, but because we were dealing with something that was so incredibly new, I didn't feel alone or out of place," she said. "I felt like we were all in it together learning about a new virus and kind of forging a path together that none of us have been on."

She quickly connected with stakeholders to ensure all voices were at the table, as the COVID-19 numbers continued to rise across Canada. And for a year now she has been the primary contact day-to-day and week-to-week with the education community.

"I didn't have a clear sense about the stakeholder relationships going into this. But the lack of assumptions was beneficial. We are all incredibly proud of the relationships that have been built."

Those partners, including MTS, have met online almost every week to discuss what is going well and what isn't. It's during those meetings, MTS has been able to highlight problems teachers are facing and request policy changes. A number of those requests have been met.

Rudy said that bringing Donna Davison, Coordinator of the COVID Response Unit into the department to help ensure a strong rural and school division perspective at the table, has been very helpful, along with the efforts of many department staff and stakeholder organizations.

The Department of Education recently conducted a reflection of its winter action plan which included a list of priorities to be accomplished within 60 days of the new calendar year. Rudy said that almost all the priorities were checked off the list well before the 60-day deadline but acknowledged that the low COVID numbers have played a role.

"Had we been in a situation with more community transmission or if we find ourselves there in the future, many of those priority actions will be critical," she said. "Things can change on a dime, and we must be prepared."

She said that throughout the pandemic she has been in contact with the Chief

Public Health Officer and members of the Public Health team, sometimes many times a week.

"From the very beginning we made some decisions and principles about how we were going to proceed. One of

TOTAL CASES
in schools since
Sept. 1, 2020

2,234

STUDENT CASES

1,708

STAFF CASES

526

SCHOOLS WITH
one or more
cases

476

the very first principles we made was that we were going to follow public health advice. It's been a great working relationship."

For the current school year, Rudy said the goal was to start the year off on a good footing with the focus on in-class learning.

"We put all of our efforts and energies over the summer into trying to put as many provisions and public health measures in place as we could with a focus on in-class learning," she said.

She said that division's opening schools in June was a hard decision but was an important step to achieving a level of comfort for the public, returning during the pandemic.

"We thought it was the best step towards being able to successfully open schools in the fall."

Rudy pointed to the lack of connections with people as being a challenge of working in the pandemic.

"One of the major things that makes this the hardest is the lack of in-person connections," she said. "When you can get in a room and plan things out or put things on the white board, you're definitely able to move things much more quickly than when you're working in a virtual way. But we have learned to adapt."

She said that she can appreciate and understand how teachers must feel everyday as they try to connect with their students who are not in the same environment.

"I'm proud of the fact that we've been able to sustain the level of response planning and partnership for almost a year now, and that Manitoba has had so much success in keeping schools safe and open," she said.

A year into her role, Rudy has learned a few lessons.

"The education system is actually quite resilient. We have seen creativity and innovation emerge. I've seen positive stories of how teachers and school staff have really risen to the challenge and are doing things to make things better for students through these really difficult times, to make sure that learning continues," she said.

Another key takeaway is the importance of effective communications.

"You can never communicate enough. It doesn't matter how many times we thought we were clear on our message, it was important for us to keep talking and keep the lines of communication open," she said. "We ultimately want to create an education system that has standards and is consistent so we can move forward together."





REMOTE CENTRE GETS CLOSER

BY LINDSEY ENNS

It's been nearly two months since the Manitoba Remote Learning Support Centre officially launched and one teacher says it's been like a light at the end of a long dark tunnel.

"It's taken over a bit of that online piece and that's taken a lot of pressure off," said Natalie Radchuk, a learning support teacher at Dalhousie School. "Teachers have been finding it really hard to also do the remote learning piece."

When the centre first opened on Jan. 4, Radchuk admits she was curious, so she decided to reach out for some resources for Grade 6 students learning numeracy and literacy remotely.

"I didn't need them for the content part but wanted to see if they had any ideas for online learning," she said. "I was really pleasantly surprised how much stuff they sent me."

"It was a multitude of really helpful, easy to follow resources."

Deputy Education Minister Dana Rudy admits the launch of the learning support centre was "difficult" because they wanted to be able to support students learning from home as well as teachers.

"Right now, it seems to be well underway and I think in large part because some of the pressures of remote learning have come down," Rudy said. "But had we had an escalating situation, we needed to be ready with enough staff to meet demand."

More than 100 staff are currently working at the centre including teachers, instructional coaches, student service professionals and educational assistants, and additional recruitment will continue

as demand is assessed, according to the province.

The centre has continuous intake and is receiving new students daily. As of Feb. 19, a total of 642 students were enrolled to receive remote learning supports. Sixty per cent of these students are from 26 school divisions, while the remaining 40 per cent represent home schooling families.

"The centre is there to support students, families and teachers," Rudy said. "There's staff that are available as a support team to really help in a variety of different ways."

Rudy said she also wants teachers to know that the centre offers direct mental health supports, pointing out that there are 5.5 student service staff positions tasked with providing mental health and wellness support to teachers, students and families engaged in remote learning.

"We have highly qualified individuals on the support team that can help navigate really tricky situations, can offer direct services to their students or help support families," she said.

The student service staff positions also support students with special needs attached to the centre as well as extend beyond the centre to students, families homeschooling and to teachers in the field.

The centre also has the capacity to deliver service en français, with the hiring of 20 high school and university students to provide French oral language support to French Immersion students who are learning remotely.

Radchuk said the centre could be a great resource for new teachers or those tasked with teaching a new subject.

"They provided a service that made my life super easy," she said. "It was amazing. I got so much stuff."

Some of the resources she received included learning targets, rubric, an online protractor, anchor charts, links to YouTube videos, art apps, worksheets as well as several links to helpful websites. Radchuk says she plans to share all of the information she received with other teachers at her school.

She also encourages other teachers to reach out to the centre for help.

"I didn't know what to expect, not that I was skeptical or anything, but I just wanted to see," she said. "I am a seasoned teacher and am literate when it comes to technology ... but this made it easier for me because I would have had to spend my time researching during the day when I don't have the time."

The Manitoba Remote Learning Support Centre is operated in partnership with Manitoba Education, St. James-Assiniboia and Pembina Trails school divisions along with a provincial leadership committee, comprised of representatives from the Louis Riel, Mystery Lake, Winnipeg, Pine Creek, Hanover, Portage La Prairie, Brandon, and South West Horizon school divisions and the division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM).

"The other thing that's been really fantastic about the remote learning support centre is the amount of project based learning that's gone onto the online portal. These resources created by teachers, for teachers will be used for a long time ... including in a classroom setting. I thank everyone that has been involved," Rudy said.



You Deserve a
Break, Book Your
Staycation Today.

Thank You
Teachers Rate
from \$119/night

Delta Winnipeg
by Marriott

Book now

D
DELTA
HOTELS
MARRIOTT
WINNIPEG

MEMBER OF
MARRIOTT BONVOY™

Free first year membership for retired teachers

STORY BY ANNE BENNETT

The Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba (RTAM) has launched a recruitment initiative designed to encourage membership growth. Starting January 1, 2021, new applicants will receive their first year of membership free of charge.

Bill Cann, president of RTAM, says despite the many benefits of membership in the association, the percentage of teachers electing to join has fallen in recent years. In providing complimentary membership for the first year, Cann hopes to showcase all the association has to offer.

"Our mission is to serve and advocate for all retired teachers in the province," he says. "Ongoing networking opportunities, retirement planning and wellness programs, access to competitive travel, extended health and dental insurance plans, and a voice in advocating to defend our defined benefit pension plan are just a few of the benefits that deliver real value to our members."

At present, just over 62 per cent of retired teachers in the province have joined the association, a number Cann wants to see increased.

"With the first year free initiative, the ultimate goal would be to attract 100 percent of retired teachers. There is literally no down-side to joining, and a lot to be gained, especially access to the Prestige Travel insurance."

RTAM recently revamped its website, offering a helpful "Benefits at a Glance" document that compares the RTAM (Johnson), MTS (Blue Cross) and WTA (Manulife) insurance programs.

"As we did when we were part of MTS, at RTAM we use our numbers to amplify the voice of each and every member in Manitoba. Teachers have worked hard to get to the point of retirement, and we want to work

together to ensure every one of them is supported, protected, and enjoys the best quality of life possible."

Networking with former colleagues and new friends is one of the primary benefits of the organization. On March 18, 2021, The Hon. Murray Sinclair will address the RTAM Board meeting, to provide insight into the 94 Calls to Action of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The association also provides an outlet for teachers' passion for education and equity with special projects. Recently, RTAM published the book "Roots", written and illustrated by Indigenous author Brie Phillips, winner of RTAM's scholarship to the University College of the North. A copy of the book has been provided to each school in Manitoba.

Cann, who started his teaching career as assistant teacher librarian at Winnipeg's Gordon Bell High School in 1973 and concluded it as principal at Bruce Middle School, is a believer in the power of teachers. And he doesn't see that power diminishing on retirement.

"Teachers have a voice, and that voice is so essential. Now more than ever we need an active, vocal, energized membership. Membership in RTAM is one way to stay connected and ensure our voices remain relevant in a time when robust public education is so very important. The longer we can stay united and advocate for what's best for our members, the better our members' lives will be, long after they've left the classroom."

For more information on the free first year of membership in RTAM, and how membership can benefit you, go to rtam.mb.ca or call 204-889-3660, toll-free 1-888-393-8082 or email info@rtam.mb.ca.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA SERIOUSLY

 manitobateachers  mbteachers  mbteachers



Stay on top of it all by checking mbteach.org for the latest in education and COVID-19 information. Make sure our news follows you – by following us on social media. You'll find fun, inspiration and collaboration with colleagues who'd love to share with you.



SAVE AN
ADDITIONAL **15%**
ON YOUR
INSURANCE PREMIUM



GROUP INSURANCE PROGRAM



La Salle
Insurance

Plezia INSURANCE
BROKERS

**Exclusive to The
Manitoba Teachers' Society**

- Save an additional 15% on your insurance premium
- No Financing Fees for Monthly or 3 Pay Plans
- Intact Assistance Endorsement Included

6 LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU!

Visit www.lasalleinsurance.com for more information



STORY BY LINDSEY ENNS
ILLUSTRATION BY MATT KEHLER

COVID-19 TIMELINE

It's been over a year since the first Canadian case of COVID-19, and Manitobans frantically began buying toilet paper, hand sanitizer and Lysol wipes. Since then, our regular, everyday lives have been upended in almost every way and with it has come a laundry list of pressures and changes to our education system. As we near the one year mark of school closures in Manitoba, here's our version of a COVID-19 timeline of events.

START

JAN. 25, 2020

First Canadian case of COVID-19 is reported

LOSE A TURN

AUG. 13, 2020

MTS calls for mandatory masks in schools

FORWARD 2 SPACES

JULY 30, 2020

Manitoba unveils its final back-to-school plan

JULY 8, 2020

Education savings amid school shutdowns are redirected to classrooms

JUNE 25, 2020

Manitoba unveils plan for upcoming school year, which includes three scenarios

BACK 4 SPACES

SEPT. 2, 2020

Teachers return to school and MTS calls on the government to use the recently announced \$85.4 million in federal funding to ensure schools are safe

SEPT. 8, 2020

Students return back to school

SEPT. 16, 2020

With multiple confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Winnipeg schools, MTS calls on the province to deploy funds aimed at making schools safe

SEPT. 21, 2020

Safe Schools funding is allocated to school divisions



SEPT. 23, 2020

Province extends breakfast program for students and their families

NOV. 2, 2020

Schools in the Winnipeg Metropolitan and Northern health regions are moved to code orange

LOSE A TURN

SHORT CUT

FEB. 5, 2021

New Education Minister Cliff Cullen makes public education funding announcement. When capital funding is deducted from the total, the amount of funding going into Manitoba classrooms is barely 1 per cent. Cullen also announces a \$5.5 million increase to special needs funding

BACK TO START

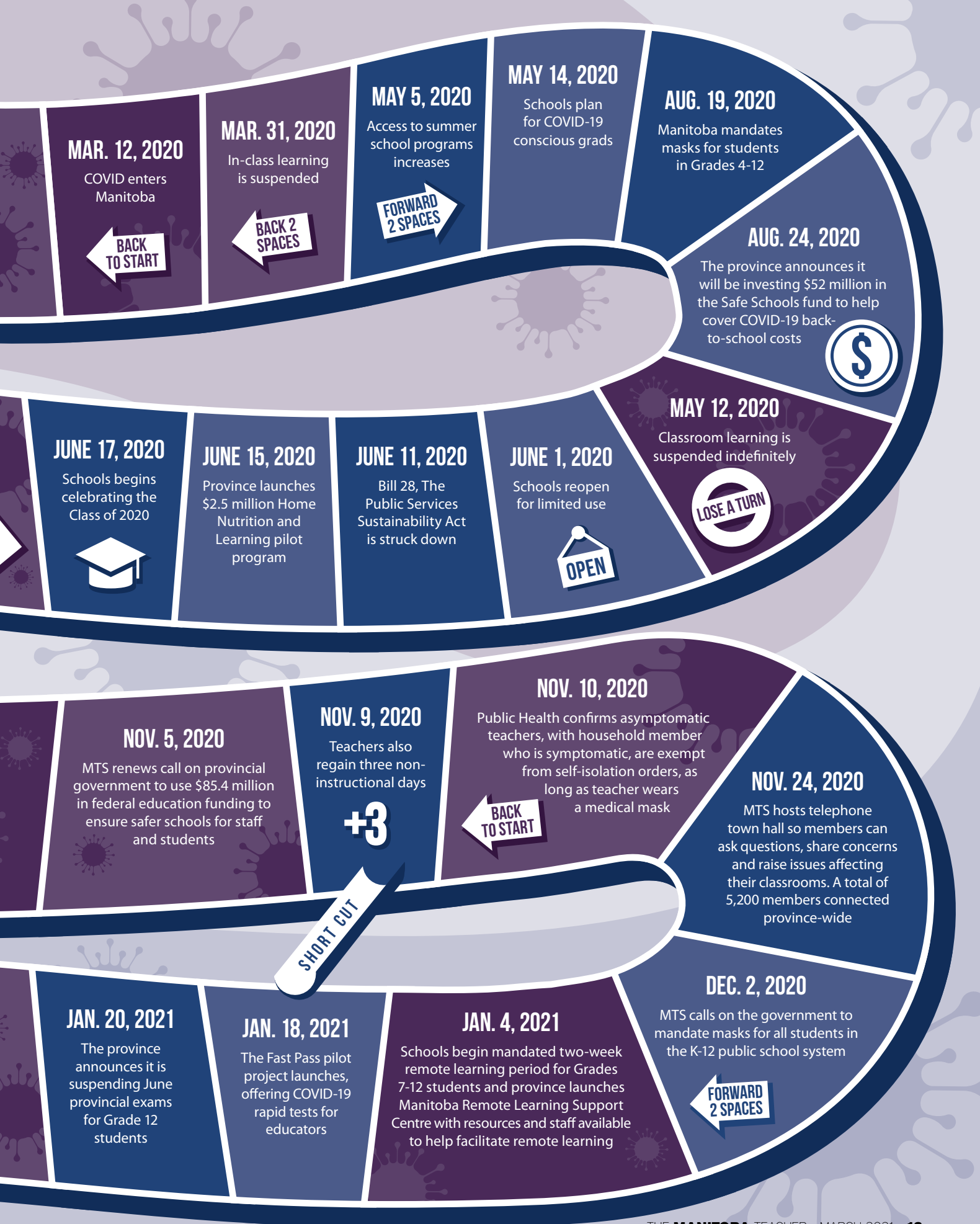
FEB. 4, 2021

Province launches online dashboard tracking COVID-19 cases in Manitoba schools

JAN. 27, 2021

The province unveils COVID-19 vaccination list, does not include teachers. "Teachers don't need a pat on the back, what they need is a shot in the arm so that they can continue to do what they do best – teach in a classroom," – MTS President James Bedford





Claiming home office expenses

STORY BY BOB JOHNSTON

Reprinted with permission from the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Bulletin/with additions of Manitoba-specific information.

The details below are provided for information purposes only and do not constitute general or individual financial/taxation advice.

MTS members with specific questions about their circumstances or eligibility must contact a certified financial advisor or tax consultant.

In general, employees required to work from home have always been able to claim home office expenses on their income tax return. For 2020, however, the Federal Government has announced changes that will make it possible for those who worked from home in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, as now proposed by the Federal Government, employees who worked from home (including teachers) can use the new rules to claim this deduction for the 2020 income tax year.

A teacher is eligible to claim a temporary flat rate deduction for home office expenses for the period they worked from home, if they meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

- A teacher worked from home in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic or your employer required you to work from home. (Note: as Manitoba teachers were required to work from home due to school closures beginning on March 23, 2020, they meet this requirement).
- A teacher worked more than 50% of the time from home for a period of at least four consecutive weeks in 2020. (Note: Manitoba teachers also meet this requirement, as schools were not reopened to them until June 1, 2020).
- A teacher only claims home office expenses and does not claim any other employment expenses (line 22900 of your income tax return).
- Your employer did not reimburse you for all of your home office expenses.

Eligible teachers can claim a deduction of \$2.00 for each day they worked at home in 2020 due to COVID-19 up to a maximum of \$400.00 (200 working days) per individual.

Using the new temporary flat rate method means that teachers do not have to calculate the size of their home work space, keep supporting documents, or get



Eligible teachers can claim a deduction of \$2.00 for each day they worked at home in 2020 due to COVID-19 up to a maximum of \$400.00 (200 working days) per individual.

Form T2200 completed and signed by their employer.

Any day that a teacher worked full-time or part-time hours from home, counts as a workday. However, you cannot count:

- days off
- vacation days
- sick leave days
- other leave or absence days

Each individual working from home who meets the eligibility criteria can use the temporary flat rate method to calculate their deduction for home office expenses. This means multiple people working from the same home can each make a claim.

This new temporary flat rate method applies only to the 2020 tax year.

The use of a shorter qualifying period will ensue that more employee can claim the deduction than would otherwise have been possible under the longstanding practice.

Employees with larger claims for home office expenses can still choose to use the original, more detailed method to calculate their home office expenses deduction for 2020.

To discuss your eligibility for claiming home office expenses, please contact your certified financial advisor or tax consultant.

FUNDING FALLS SHORT FOR FIFTH YEAR

BY SAMANTHA TURENNE

The provincial government's failure to adequately fund education, for five years in a row, will have dire and long-lasting effects on the delivery of education and student outcomes for Manitoba students.

"The government boasts that this is the most funding education has ever received, but that's only half the story," said MTS President James Bedford. "What is missing from this narrative is the fact that this funding is not enough to meet the increasing needs of Manitoba's K-12 student population."

Bedford also said that increased resources will be required to meet students' learning recovery needs following the pandemic.

Today's investment of 1.56 per cent continues the government's trend of funding education below the rate of inflation. When capital funding is deducted from the total, the amount of funding going into Manitoba classrooms is barely 1 per cent.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced

the important role of public education in our society. It has also highlighted the significant inequities in the system," Bedford said. "With everything that has happened in the past year, the government's continued refusal to invest in public education is incomprehensible."

The government has continued to tighten the purse strings on education funding, and with the impending release of the recommendations from the K-12 education review, there is concern that schools will have to make tough choices about staffing and programing, Bedford said.

"We have said from day one, that any additional costs to implementing the K-12 recommendations must come with adequate funding. There is simply no room for extras," he said. "At the end of the day, when the government does not fulfill its funding responsibility, it's the students that suffer and quite frankly that is unacceptable."



The government also announced a \$5.5 million increase to special needs funding.

"We are pleased to see that government is responding to concerns we have been raising around special needs funding," Bedford said. "We look forward to hearing the details on how these funds will be used in the classrooms to meet these diverse student needs."

In a recent poll conducted by Viewpoints Research, on behalf of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the majority of Manitobans (64 per cent) said that the province should spend more on education.

LEARNING SUFFERS FROM UNDERFUNDING

Thank you to teachers who responded to our call to tell us how education underfunding has impacted your classrooms.

If there was more funding, my students could have reasonably sized classes, where they can get the specific instruction and feedback they deserve.

Bus routes have changed and some kids are on the bus for more than an hour, others are now being picked up 30 minutes earlier than before.

The school library does not have budget to buy new books so, in the last 12 months I've spent more than \$1,000 on my classroom library.

I do not want to hope for anything anymore. I just want my students to be properly funded and unsafe situations properly corrected.

There's not enough money in the budget to replace consumable supplies for science experiments, art supplies, or to replace novels and text books.

There is nothing left to cut! The next thing you know students will be supervising themselves in the classroom.

If there was more funding, my students could have a laptop to use for distance learning and more.

Guidance and resource positions are being reduced or cut despite increasing needs.

I have spent 40 plus hours applying for grants to be able to purchase food to run a free breakfast program.

If there was more funding, my students could have clinical supports provided in a timely and consistent manner.

COVID opens door to inclusion

STORY BY MICHAEL BAKER

March 2020, a date that will live on in lockdown infamy. Can you remember the good old days when you could stroll down hallways, attend meetings, run extra-curriculars, and teach without doth and donning PPE?

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed a lot of things in education. It has also highlighted and reaffirmed what we all knew, public education is front-line and essential. And yet, In the midst of these transitional times, how has inclusion looked at your school? Has your school/school division used the Covid-19 pandemic as justification for inclusionary pull-back, or unprecedented opportunity for development?

Inclusion: attitudes have real-life consequences

Inclusion is as much, perhaps more, about the attitudes, perspectives, and actions we hold than it is about location. In a recent study (literature review), Dr. John R. R. Freer (University of Windsor) found that students attitudes can have a significant influence on whether students feel acceptance and belonging in their school. Negative attitudes toward Disability pose a barrier to equitable social experiences for students with Disabilities, which work in opposition to inclusive initiatives. For people with Disabilities, a lack of equity in opportunities often ends in poverty, social insecurity, and healthcare precarity (see Bill C-7), but begins with us in education.

A time to reflect

February 2021 was Manitoba Inclusive Education Month. The proclamation issued by the Provincial Minister of Education, Cliff Cullen, affirms a commitment to fostering inclusion for all Manitobans. This affirmation is supported by the notion that inclusion is a way of thinking and acting. As such, it is continuously incumbent upon all Manitoba educators and administrators to reflect on, and provide data for school and divisional specific inclusive initiatives.

It was only 40 years ago people with Disabilities in Canada won the Constitutional Right to equality. As a direct consequence, the Disability community in Canada continues to



confront discrimination, known as ableism, on a daily basis. Breaking down barriers and educating young Canadians is both our responsibility and privilege as educators. I continue to believe education holds the key to a more equitable society specifically because educators continue to innovate during times of hardship, not in spite of them. It is exactly for this reason the education community must continually evaluate and rethink their Inclusive education approach, strategies, and goals.

Educating for a better future

As an educator at Springfield Collegiate (Sunrise School Division), I developed an "Introduction to Disability Studies" course, approved by Manitoba Education & Training, as a significant initiative to address attitudinal barriers and ableism through education. As an educator, I have always believed education holds the key to building a more equitable and inclusive society. With the support of my Principal (Mr. Kevin Doell) and Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Learning (Mrs. Jackie Julien), our school has been pushing the boundaries of Inclusive education.

In early October 2020, I received an email: "I am reaching out about the Article from the Manitoba Teacher Magazine (December, 2018) about the course you started, "Introduction to Disability Studies". I have been thinking about it ever since I read the

article, and I really think we need this type of course at Fort Richmond Collegiate. I know things are hectic right now with Covid protocols etc., but I'm hoping when you have some time we can connect. I look forward to hearing from you!"

My first thought was, wow this educator held onto an article from 2018, what a pro! Immediately following, I thought, In the midst of these transitional times, Carla Bouchard (Resource Teacher, Fort Richmond Collegiate) was innovating, pushing the boundaries amidst a global pandemic, using Covid-19 as an unprecedented opportunity for development.

That email, started a conversation that led to a collaborative relationship between our two schools. This fall, Fort Richmond Collegiate (Pembina Trails School Division) will be offering Introduction to Disability Studies and educating for a better future.

Covid-19 has done a lot to the local and global community. And yet, one year in, it has only strengthened my belief in the power of education, and the drive-resilience-and innovation of the Manitoba education community.

Michael Baker is a student service teacher at Springfield Collegiate Institute who works primarily with students with disabilities and co-ordinates a team of four educational assistants who do the same.



Kinesiology student appreciates support and resources of Access Program

Join the Access community at UM

Taylor Tutkaluke always knew she wanted to go to university and make a difference. Her plan was to study Kinesiology and then pursue occupational therapy. But it wasn't until her second year at the University of Manitoba when a work colleague suggested she apply to the Access Program.

"I wish I had Access in my first year," says Tutkaluke, who grew up in North Winnipeg playing competitive ringette. Because Access provides smaller first year classes, her biology class would have had less than a dozen students rather than what seemed like hundreds, and it would have been much easier and less intimidating

to approach the instructor and ask questions because she would have really gotten to know them.

"I definitely recommend Access to anyone starting university. Access goes above and beyond to provide us with support. I can't imagine my university experience without it."

The Access Program at the University of Manitoba provides holistic support to Indigenous, newcomer, and other U of M students, empowering them on their path to success.

"Everyone in Access is so welcoming. They are like my extended family, providing support and

resources I didn't know existed."

Access staff let Tutkaluke know about scholarships and financial support she could apply for, lessening her financial burden and obligation to work while she studied. The counsellors are always there for her, ready to listen. "I always feel much more supported, bouncing things off another unbiased person. That's so crucial."

Tutkaluke was also eager to join Access in order to connect to her Indigenous culture.

"They have helped me tremendously to better understand myself and areas of my identity, and to better understand Indigenous people."

She began attending Access cultural workshops, made her own medicine bag, listened to the wisdom of Unkan (Grandfather) Wanbdi, and found herself newly immersed in her culture. Access also connected her to the greater Métis community on the UM campus.

Tutkaluke says her biggest challenge is time management. Because she continues to work and actively volunteer in her community while she studies, finding the right balance and way to schedule her time is important. Access also helps with that.

Now Tutkaluke encourages other Indigenous students to start their university studies with the Access Program.

Students who plan to start their studies at the University of Manitoba this fall should apply to the Access Program by May 1.

umextended.ca/access

"I don't think I would be where I am today without the supports of the Access Program. Access is really good because it establishes a community within a larger whole."

Brandon Wosniak, UM student,
Métis living in Winnipeg



ACCESS Program

Discover the path between you and your dreams

The Access Program includes two paths:

- University of Manitoba Access Program (UMAP) supports students in degree and diploma programs.
- Health Careers Access Program (HCAP) supports Indigenous (Status, Non-Status, Métis, Inuit) students for entry to health-related professions.

To learn more visit, umextended.ca/access or call 204-474-8000

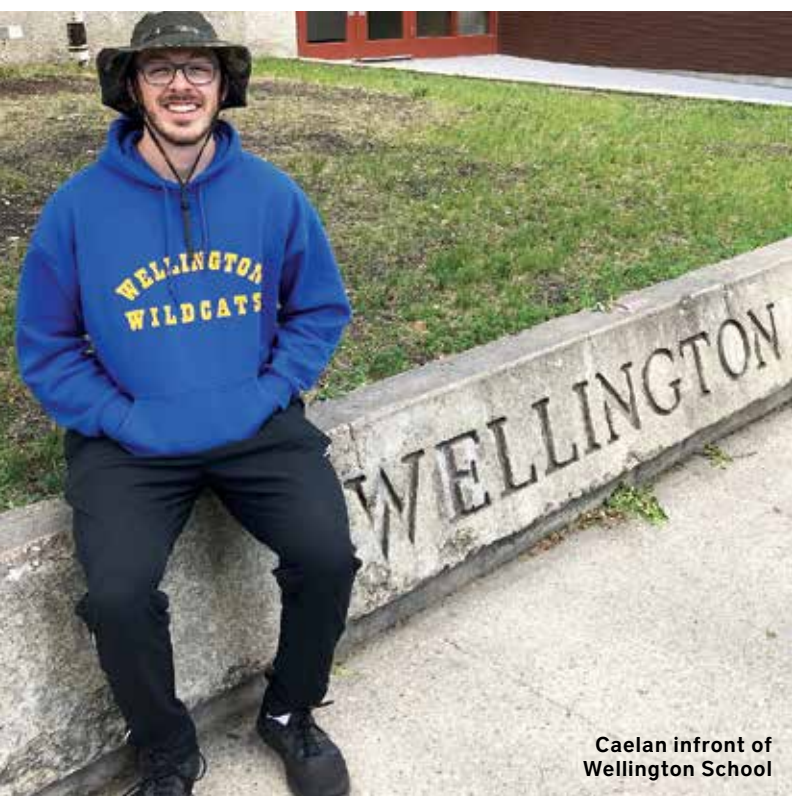


University
of Manitoba

Extended Education



#AccessUM



Caelan in front of Wellington School



Caelan coaching basketball



Caelan's last game as a Grade 12 student at Grant Park



Caelan student teaching at Grant Park with his high school phys-ed teachers

GROWING UP IN THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

BY LINDSEY ENNS

It's safe to say that Caelan Thomson and his family are quite familiar with Winnipeg's largest school division.

Thomson's father, Bob, was a Winnipeg School Division (WSD) teacher for 35 years and his mother taught in the same division for 11 years.

Thomson attended WSD schools for all grade levels and went on to work as a grounds keeper for the division in both high school and university. While obtaining his education degree, he began coaching basketball in the division and then substitute teaching. Today he's a phys-ed teacher at Wellington School.

"Growing up in a household with two teachers, it was hard to not go into teaching," Thomson said with a laugh. "I always wanted to be a teacher right from the start, and I always wanted to be a phys-ed teacher."

Bob said he and his wife are very proud of their oldest son for following in their footsteps.

"He really transmits to his students just that love of learning," Bob said, adding he doesn't know of too many people whose whole life has revolved around the WSD. "We realized

he was in a pretty unique situation because he had not only gone through all of the school levels ... but he also had worked to pay his way through university by working for the division.

"We're proud and we know that he's proud that he can look back and say 'I'm a Division 1 guy.'"

Thomson said many of his own teachers had such a positive impact on him that it led him to pursue a career in education. For him, WSD "kind of feels like home" after so many years and he plans to stay put and carry out his career there.

"As the division has changed, I have also changed," he said. "Creating a welcoming environment at all schools is just something that's carried out."

"We have such amazing and respectful kids and being across the division you get to see just how great it is."

Although this school year has been a challenging one due to the pandemic, Thomson says he's amazed at how his colleagues and students have been able to adapt.

"We tried to plan ahead a lot in the summer, but no amount of planning could have prepared us for this school year," he said.

Thomson says he's been learning along the way with his students. He's been trying to incorporate physical activity as much as he can virtually with his students via Google Meet. His class has also spent more time working on mindfulness, yoga, dancing as well as the importance of their overall wellbeing during this stressful time.

"We did touch on that stuff before but it was brought forward a lot more this year. I can't imagine how hard this would be being a student going through all of this," he said. "It's important to just take the time to slow down and check in with each other."

Thomson says he credits coaching basketball with helping him get his foot in the door with the WSD.

"Coaching was a great way to get involved early and helped me build connections with those school prior to graduating."

New NFB platform a portal for teachers



At the risk of overstating the obvious, the 2020-21 school year has been a challenge, and public school teachers are looking to new platforms for resources that engage kids in a pandemic world.

One such gem can be found in the National Film Board of Canada's archives. This month NFB Education launched a sneak peek of its all new educational platform, with access to over 6,000 films and interactive productions, along with exclusive access to over 1,000 educational films and new releases. Free of charge access is available until April 1, 2021.

The collection highlights the amazing diversity of the NFB's collection and explores content through activities designed by Canadian teachers and other experts. Study guides are categorized by film or production title for easy searching. Films are categorized by suggested age ranges along with activities, questions and topics designed to help teachers lead discussions and promote enquiry with students.

Documentaries, long a staple of the NFB, tackle topics such as racism – *Dresden Story: Racism in 1950s Canada* – and environmental stewardship – *Borealis: Seeing the Forest Through the Trees*.

Sports offerings include *The Rink*, a short silent film, and *Gone Curling*, a short comedy.

Compelling storytelling brings historical events to life, as it does in *Martha*, which follows a Winnipeg holocaust survivor and on a visit to a Holocaust museum, igniting painful memories, including a haunting personal encounter with one of Nazi Germany's most notorious figures. And *John Ware*, which re-examines the mythology surrounding a Black cowboy who settled in Alberta, before the turn of the 20th century.

Check out the NFB's diverse and comprehensive archive at NFB.ca/education.

TEACHER MORTGAGE

Exclusively for members of
The Manitoba Teacher's Society
teachermortgage.ca

ADRIAN SCHULZ
MORTGAGE AGENT
204.272.3763
centumfinancial.ca

EACH OFFICE IS INDEPENDENTLY OWNED & OPERATED

Fairway
Divorce Solutions®

**CALL TODAY FOR A
FREE CONSULTATION**

Our strategic flat-fee mediation model empowers you to reach resolution. Bring smart financial solutions to your divorce while protecting your children. Reduce time, reduce stress, protect the kids and preserve assets.

**CHANGING
THE WAY DIVORCE HAPPENS™**

FairwayDivorce.com | (204) 414-9181
Manitoba@FairwayDivorce.com

PORTFOLIO



WHAT A SURPRISE!

Researchers at the University of Cambridge have discovered people who espouse extremist views perform poorly on complex mental tasks.

Really.

The study involved hundreds of participants who undertook a variety of test over two weeks. Overall, the researchers found that ideological attitudes mirrored cognitive decision-making. A key finding was that people with extremist attitudes tended to think about the world in black and white terms, and struggled with complex tasks that required intricate mental steps, said lead author Dr Leor Zmigrod at Cambridge's department of psychology.

Well, it's called political science

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON



Through most of the COVID pandemic the provincial government has explained the actions it has taken are all based on science.

It did seem that way for much of the year, even as the scientific knowledge around the virus expanded rapidly. For example, we went from science-based questions about the need for masks to science-based suggestions that double masking will help.

More recently, though, politics has oozed into the conversations with the reappearance of Premier Brian Pallister at regular news conferences.

It really began back in August when Pallister, trumpets blaring, unveiled the campaign to reopen the province, touting the words Ready. Safe. Grow and RestartMB. At the time about 15 new cases were being registered per day. Good enough for Pallister to pour Gatorade over his head and declare victory.

Others weren't impressed. The apparent Nostradamus of the legislature, Liberal Leader Dougald Lamont said at the time: "I don't understand why they would do this when we could be facing a second wave [of COVID-19 cases] in the fall. It doesn't really do anything. It's pure self-promotion."

Two months after he said that new cases were topping 500 a day and the words Ready. Safe. Grow were hustled



THEY'RE GR-R-REAT! (NOT)

US customs agents recently found breakfast is sometimes not all it's cracked up to be after finding a shipment of frosted cereal in which the flakes were coated with cocaine. A sniffer dog discovered the haul, estimated to be worth \$2.8 million. "Officers found white powder and the flakes were coated in a grayish substance after the dog alerted on the shipment," the Cincinnati Enquirer reported. The shipment, from South America, was destined for Hong Kong.

FOREVER 91

Two Florida women disguised as elderly grandmothers were caught trying to get their second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. A health official said the women were caught dressing up as "grannies" – "the bonnets, the gloves, the glasses, the whole thing" – at a vaccination site. No one was sure how they got the first shot. The women were 34 and 44 years of age.

into witness protection, apparently along with the premier. About the only thing restarted in MB was a second wave, certainly predicted by "the science" if not our Reopen Ringmaster.

Now that the number of new cases has taken a slow downward trajectory and the premier has come out of seclusion to show us the only thing bubbling in his scientific beaker is politics. With the development of vaccines, he has taken every opportunity to blame Ottawa for any public health failures.

At one of his news conferences, he came up with the hilarious declaration that he wasn't "pointing fingers." Well, no, he was pointing all his fingers, thumbs and toes at the federal government as if Trudeau had his finger on the button of the vaccine-making machine.

Pallister hauled out statistics from somewhere claiming Canada is somewhere around Zambia in getting vaccines into arms. And then he tops that with the untrue claim Canada would not allow provinces to buy vaccines directly from manufacturers.

To show how tough he is (perhaps living out one of his laboured sports' analogies), he went ahead and broke that non-existent rule by making a deal with a company in Calgary that has yet to bring any approved drug to market.

Pallister hasn't had to answer much for his own actions or inactions. The legislature has not been in session and, for the most part, the questions at his occasional news conferences have been less than Grade A Prime.

Many reporters just wing it, without preparation or research, sounding more like lost tourists asking directions to the train station in Mozambique. Um, uh, well, um, er, ah.

It isn't that Pallister should have to answer for every twist and turn in the pandemic's impact on Manitoba.

But he should have to answer for the happy dance he did back in August, which certainly seemed at the time to be his self-anointed Mission Accomplished moment. It was a time he should have listened to the science.

He should have been spending money on advertising to encourage the use of masks and physical distancing and emphasizing the province was still under threat. Ironically, it has been that awful federal government advertising those measures.

But no, he has reinforced the impression at every step that he wants to reopen Manitoba businesses, perhaps cut a ribbon or two, let customers return, no matter what they might be carrying.

Ask any teacher. That's not science.



HOW BIG HEARTED

When people in Texas were hit with huge power bills after the cold disaster that hit the state, CPS Energy came up with a solution: customers could pay the bills over 10 years. One customer who kept the lights on in the freezing weather was hit with a \$16,752 electric bill charged to his credit card – 70 times what he usually pays for all of his utilities combined. Electric costs vary according to demand under the state's byzantine system. It is government by the ironically named Electric Reliability Council of Texas.

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

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? CATCHING UP WITH YHA WINNER LOIZZA AQUINO



Loizza Aquino's web page lists 17 prestigious recognitions since she first won the MTS Young Humanitarian Award back in 2014.

Since then, she's received the RBC's Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award, earned the YMCA Peace Medal, received a \$70,000 TD scholarship, and was recognized by the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba. She has spoken to audiences in Toronto, Boston, London, Manila, and was invited to the launch of a new mental health initiative at U.N. headquarters in New York City.

It's been a hectic ride for the 21-year-old founder of Peace of Mind Canada and current Rising Youth Grants Administrator at Taking It Global in Toronto.

Aquino has been a passionate advocate for youth mental health since her middle school experience at H.G. Izatt Middle School and later at Vincent Massey Collegiate. But it was the deaths by suicide of a high school friend and three other students that left her grief-stricken and doubly determined to help her peers.

Part of the agenda for the first three youth conferences she held in Winnipeg was an open mic session, where any audience

member could stand up and share. It was raw and powerful – and proved to be one of the highest rated sharing sessions of the events.

"Being vulnerable and sharing your story in front of hundreds or thousands of people can be scary," she says of her own experience. "I've had people coming up to me at international events saying, 'I've never told anybody this before, but...'" and that was the beginning of every single conversation I had."

Social media was integral to the formation of Youth Against Mental Illness Stigma (YAMIS), one of her early endeavours. "I have mixed feelings about social media because it invites a lot of unhealthy comparisons which can damage your mental health. But as an organizing tool it played a huge role in getting everything off the ground. At that time it was Twitter, but Instagram has taken its place."

Aquino says she appreciates the teachers and administrators that invested time in her. She also stresses the need for diversity among mentors. "It's so important having immigrants, women, youth and people of colour as mentors. Because you look at this person and you say, 'they look exactly like me, they're the same age as me and they've

done so much.' And knowing I can do what this person did and that they're willing to help me is so powerful."

Aquino has advice for K-12 students who want to start a movement, conference or a local initiative. "You can't do everything alone. Find like-minded people who are just as passionate as you are. With friends who support you and understand the vision, you can do anything, right?"

Aquino had that amazing team and support when she received her second MTS Young Humanitarian Award while at Vincent Massey Collegiate in 2017. That year, her co-organizers were Charles Apolinario, West Kildonan Collegiate; Jayda Hope, River East Collegiate; and Arjay Certeza, Collège Garden City Collegiate.

What's next for the globally recognized speaker who shifted her studies from Toronto to Winnipeg when COVID-19 hit last year?

"I've dedicated a lot of my childhood to other people," says Aquino. "It wasn't necessarily focused around myself. So, I think I'll pause and take some time to figure out what's best for me."

The ultimate goal? "Easy, an immigration lawyer or social worker."

Keep updated with The SUB



The Manitoba Sub is a monthly e-newsletter with breaking news, upcoming events and much more delivered right to your inbox.

Didn't get the email? Call Contact Services to update your email address. **Still didn't get the email?** Check your spam folder! This is an email worth reading.

THE MANITOBA **Sub** | **mts** THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

Contact Services
can be reached at:
1-800-262-8803



THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

LABOUR SCHOOL

PRESENTS

LABOUR RELATIONS & LEADERSHIP

Participants will explore a range of labour relations topics while developing leadership and facilitation skills. Each session will provide offerings on behalf of the Teacher Welfare and Professional and French Language Services departments. Participants will examine current initiatives developed by unions to engage the 21st century member and address working conditions for the current labour force.

Visit **mbteach.org** for details on the application process and criteria for candidates.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 16, 2021, 4 p.m.