

FALL 2023 | VOLUME 102 NUMBER 1

MBTEACHER

NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



**AI IN THE
CLASSROOM:
THERE'S MORE TO
LOVE THAN HATE**

**TIPIS & TELESCOPES
EMPOWERING
INDIGENOUS KIDS**

**EGALE CANADA HELPING
CREATE SAFER SCHOOLS**

**EDUCATION IS A
SYMPHONY OF CHANGE**

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COVER STORY AI IN THE CLASSROOM: THERE'S MORE TO LOVE THAN TO HATE

Artificial Intelligence has taken the world by storm and sparked concern among educators wondering what this latest tech revolution has in store. While caution is advisable, Manitoba teacher Kirsten Thompson says the advantages for educators are considerable, and well worth exploring.

BOOK
REVIEWS
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TIPIS AND TELESCOPES BRINGS ANCESTRAL WORLD VIEWS INTO FOCUS

Centring traditional Indigenous knowledge and science is the driving idea behind the Tipis and Telescopes event which was held in Winnipeg in May. The gathering hosted nearly 160 students from Frontier, Louis Riel, St. James-Assiniboia and Seven Oaks School Divisions.



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EGALE CANADA HELPS TEACHERS CREATE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

In Manitoba and across Canada, hate, bigotry, intolerance and discrimination threaten to dominate discussion at tables from board rooms to dining rooms. Egale Canada's back to school resources give educators new tools to help create safer, enlightened and compassionate classrooms.



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A SYMPHONY OF CHANGE: FACING THE FLOW OF EMOTIONS CHANGE CAN BRING

Change in education could be described metaphorically as music, with many variations. Like music, change can evoke emotions, spark creativity, and require harmonious elements. Just as no musical experience is the same, neither is the school day!

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Mackenzie Kolton

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Mackenzie Kolton oversees the development of inclusive school initiatives, inclusive workplace trainings and educational resources in her role as director of learning at Egale. In her previous role as the manager of program innovation at Big Brothers Big Sisters, she co-developed Manitoba's first Queer Lens Mental Health Training. In addition, Mackenzie worked with The Get REAL Movement for six years as their MB program coordinator and as a team lead speaker, reaching over 150,000 students, educators, parents/guardians, and corporate businesses across the country. Through this, Mackenzie has a deep understanding of 2SLGBTQI curriculum and how to integrate inclusivity and diversity into a variety of spaces.



Rob Fisher

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Rob Fisher is in the fourth and final year of his term as Council of School Leaders (COSL) chair. He is currently on secondment from R.D. Parker Collegiate where he was the principal. Rob's experience in education over the past 41 years includes serving as principal of École Riverside School, and as curriculum coordinator and teacher in Thompson. He also spent two years seconded to Manitoba Education. Rob was a guest of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation for the first 19 years of his career, serving as physical education and computer teacher, vice principal, principal and director of education.



Lisa Carlson

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Lisa Carlson is a senior years English/history/agriculture teacher at Elm Creek School in Prairie Rose School Division. An educator for 25 years, Lisa has taught various subjects from Grades 3 to 12. When not teaching, she enjoys being part of the Manitoba Reading Association (MRA) and the Pembina Escarpment Reading Council (PERC), as well as spending time with her family and friends on their cattle farm west of Elm Creek, Manitoba. Lisa's favourite pastime is reading various books from picture books to adult fiction and non-fiction. She especially enjoys reading Young Adult books as a way to share her love of reading with her students.



MTS IS HERE FOR YOU

Nathan Martindale

Going back to school is always challenging, and the times we live in don't make it any easier.

I hope you had a chance to rest and recharge this summer and spend time with family and friends. The days tend to fly by and we find ourselves at the start of a brand new school year, with the spectrum of emotions that go with it. It's natural to feel anxious as we enter into fall, even when we approach the year anticipating the best. Remember that the MTS Member and Family Assistance Program, offered through HumanaCare, is always there for you. You can go online or call 24 hours a day to arrange service. Please visit mbteach.org for more information to get started. It's okay to not be okay sometimes.

PROVINCIAL ELECTION

Manitobans headed to the polls on October 3, decisively and historically electing a government to be led by Canada's 1st First Nations premier. Throughout the campaign MTS maintained its longstanding call for public school funding that is dependable and meets the growing and increasingly complex needs of students, not just in an election year, but every year. Through our #RealTeacherTalkMB campaign MTS members unflinchingly showcased the reality of their classrooms in the face of seven years of chronic underfunding. This is our members' voice. That voice is what drives and directs the union's efforts to achieve working and learning conditions foundational to a democratic, vibrant and inclusive society. MTS will do all in its power to work with the newly elected government to advance the cause of public education and achieve funding levels that demonstrate clear, equitable and dependable investment in *all* students.

CREATING SAFER AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

As teachers we work hard to create safer and inclusive spaces in our schools. Recently we have experienced a wave of hate, homophobia, transphobia, and corrosive intolerance. As a union, MTS has a responsibility to stand up and push back against hate, bigotry and all types of aggression to champion the safety of students and school staff. Rest assured that where there is hate, we will show up. We will not back down, and we will speak out—and act out—to defend each student and teacher's right to live and work in peace and safety.

PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT SERVES EVERYONE

Going back to school is always challenging, and the times we live in don't make it any easier. I can't promise a year of smooth sailing, but I can promise you this: MTS is here for you. We will continue to bargain in good faith—and eventually go to arbitration to obtain—a provincial collective agreement, aiming to ensure our members can catch up and keep up. We will embrace equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging as core to all we stand for as educators, and we will hear and amplify your voice as we work together in the interest of a public education system that serves everyone.

Remember you can always reach us by phone, email, and through our social media channels. Have a good year, take care of yourself, and stay in touch. [T](#)

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FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

PURPOSE- INTENTION- DIRECTION

Danielle Fullan Kolton, Ph.D.

This year marks a new chapter as we develop a strategic plan.

As an organization, MTS faces pivotal questions: *Who are we? Why do we? Where are we going?* This year marks a new chapter as we develop a strategic plan.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

A well executed strategic plan will shape how your fees benefit teachers, the profession's status, and public education. Specifically, it will guide priorities, operations, political action and positions, and member engagement.

Having just completed a two-year journey with our equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) organizational scan, the strategic plan is compelled to reflect the recommendations of the final report per resolution 2023-6 from the annual general meeting of Provincial Council in May, 2023. You can access the final report of the EDI Scan in **MyProfile**.

Member engagement is the heartbeat of union work, and this whole issue showcases voices from across the province in articles like *The Principal of the Thing* (page 28), *Book Reviews* (page 34), *We Asked Teachers* (page 26), *MTS Provincial Council AGM New Delegate Profiles* (page 21), and *Special Area Groups of Educators Profiles* (page 27).

In addition to the hands-on work profiled in those articles, we attract thousands of members each year to our professional learning services and resources. Explore our **Professional Learning Services Catalogue** to grow and develop as a leader and learner. You can also count on this newsmagazine to cover timely professional topics like *AI in the Classroom* (page 14) and *A Symphony of Change* (page 30) which even includes a playlist that I am listening to as I write this.

Be assured: our strategic plan won't deter us from provincial bargaining—core work detailed in *Table Topics: Bargaining Update* (page 24). Neither will it preclude us from responding, directly and vehemently, to emergent issues like the increase in anti-2SLGBTQIA+ movements ranging from book banning to harassment of staff and students on school properties to a lack of representation in curriculum. We recognize the importance of and vigorously defend the role of teachers in supporting students in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and you can find important back-to-school resources offered by the national non-profit organization, Egale, in the article, *All Persons are Equal and None is Other* (page 12).

Our commitment to engagement extends beyond the protection and professional learning of members to critical work we do in partnership with community organizations and school divisions. Learn about a recent meaningful connection in *Connecting with the Land and Stars* (page 8).

For several decades, members engaged with MTS came to know a central figure in the work of teacher collective bargaining. Tom Paci worked in various roles at the Society over his 35+ years, and we were devastated to learn of his recent passing. He was steadfastly devoted to MTS, and his insights and mentorship were valued within and beyond our community. His contributions are honoured on page 25. We remember him fondly and are grateful for how his foundational work has set MTS up for success in our inaugural round of provincial bargaining. May you rest in peace, Tom. 

CONNECTING WITH THE LAND & STARS:

TIPIS & TELESCOPES EVENT EMPOWERS INDIGENOUS KIDS WITH INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

By Matea Tuhtar, MTS Staff

Students from across the province gathered in Winnipeg this spring for the first ever city-based Tipis and Telescopes event. MTS partnered with various school divisions to deliver three days of Indigenous learning, connections and fun.

Centring traditional Indigenous knowledge and science is the driving idea behind the Tipis and Telescopes event which was held in Winnipeg in May, and hosted nearly 160 students from Frontier, Louis Riel, St. James-Assiniboia and Seven Oaks School Divisions.

The Tipis and Telescopes workshops were presented by local Elders and Knowledge Keepers including Winnipeg's own "star guy" Elder Wilfred Buck who is an expert in Indigenous star-lore, as well as Dr. Juan-Carlos Chavez, a US-based researcher in Indigenous knowledge.

"A big purpose of this event was to empower Indigenous kids with Indigenous knowledge," says Sarah Gazan, staff officer at MTS. "It's the recognition that there's other equally valid ways of seeing and understanding the world, besides just the Western ways."

The three-day event was planned through a collaboration between The Manitoba Teachers' Society, Frontier, Louis Riel, St. James-Assiniboia, and Seven Oaks School Divisions, the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba, Ogijita Pimatiswin Kinamatawin, and the Spirit Horse

Initiative. Tipis and Telescopes events have been held since 2014 through Elder Wilfred Buck, though the collaborative May event was the biggest to date in Manitoba.

EVENT HOSTS STUDENTS FROM ACROSS MANITOBA

Students travelled from as far as Moose Lake, Wabowden and Grand Rapids to attend the event, which started with a welcoming and opening ceremonies on Monday night, followed by a full day of activities on Tuesday and Wednesday. Some of the sessions

included: Animal processing, Archery, Art, Bottle rockets, Circle drumming, Indigenous games, Star stories in two planetariums, Traditional medicines, as well as Men's, Women's and Two-Spirit teachings.

"It was wonderful for the metro and rural kids to connect through this event," says April Waters, who is the Administrator of Indigenous Achievement & Community Support at St. James-Assiniboia School Division, and was part of the organizing committee. "They don't often get the chance to interact and they learn so much from each other."

Waters also notes that a lot of the students in urban settings don't have a chance to go out to their home communities. "For us to be able to do some actual land based teachings within an urban setting was so good for the students and teachers because they could see that you don't have to go outside the city to still have meaningful learning in that way."

FIRST NATIONS ASTRONOMY TEACHINGS

This meaningful learning is what has been driving Buck in his teachings

of First Nations astronomy. "It's important for First Nations students that ancestral worldviews related to science are reflected in their education in as prevalent a manner as those associated with Greek and Roman mythology. When the Elders tell you their stories it's up to you to pull out all the knowledge that is there, and that was meant for you to understand. And you piece it together. It is our responsibility to pass these stories to our children."

"It's really about elevating Indigenous knowledge that has existed here for





thousands of years,” says Gazan. “One of the things that colonization and oppression have done is disconnect our kids from the land and their sense of who they are. It was wonderful watching the kids make those connections and see that you can be a scientist while incorporating an Indigenous understanding of the world as well, because it’s equally valid. Our people had an education system prior to colonization.”

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN DIVISIONS

Gazan says that the May event also created partnerships between school divisions. “Because oftentimes, when you’re doing Indigenous education, you’re doing it in isolation. Doing this event, we’ve created those partnerships and we hope to continue working together.”

Waters has already started thinking

about what her school division can do with events like this in the future. “What can we do to bring in kids who are just so hungry for having themselves represented in activities and seeing their culture celebrated and valued? And it’s so important for non-Indigenous kids to sit and learn as well, because that’s how we build those relationships, and respect and understanding. That’s still so highly needed.”



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ALL PERSONS ARE EQUAL AND NONE IS OTHER:

EGALE CANADA HELPS TEACHERS CREATE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS FOR 2SLGBTQI YOUTH

By Mackenzie Kolton (she/her), Director, Learning, Egale Canada

"I had a handful of teachers who were very supportive and receptive to our frustrations as LGBTQ students. I want them to know how appreciated they are. They saved my life."

– Student, *Still in Every Class in Every School* (2021)

With anti-2SLGBTQI hate on the rise, and homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia remaining rampant in schools, it's more important than ever that we all come together to create safe and inclusive schools for 2SLGBTQI students. Egale Canada's new back-to-school resources have been developed to complement our existing Inclusive Schools initiatives that teachers across Canada have been using in their classrooms for decades.

Egale's national report, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, shows that 2SLGBTQI students continue to face unacceptable amounts of discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

The report, conducted in partnership with researchers from the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, surveyed over 3,500 middle school and high school students across Canada. Of the many concerning findings within the report, we saw that 64 per cent of all participants reported hearing homophobic comments daily or weekly at school. The situation is particularly challenging for students who are trans and/or nonbinary, as trans and/or nonbinary students were the group most likely to report experiencing almost all forms of harassment and victimization. Of the trans respondents to the survey, 57 per cent had been targets of mean rumours or lies, and

79 per cent of trans students who had been the victims of physical harassment reported that teachers and staff were ineffective in addressing transphobic harassment.

As the report suggests, the impact of these negative experiences can result in a variety of adverse outcomes for 2SLGBTQI youth, including higher levels of emotional distress, more negative experiences in school, social marginalization, lower feelings of safety in schools, lower academic performance, and weaker school attachment.

It is also important to acknowledge that this reality in our schools is in addition to the undeniable rise in anti-2SLGBTQI hate that we are seeing across Canada and around the world. From coast to coast, 2SLGBTQI community events are being protested, disrupted, and even cancelled due to safety concerns. For the first time ever, the federal government had to step in and provide emergency security funding to support organizations this Pride season amidst increased hate. Transphobia and homophobia are spreading through schools from board meetings to on-campus speaking engagements; at some schools, the Pride flag has been desecrated on numerous occasions. The message could not be more clear—our 2SLGBTQI communities are under attack.

Despite these deeply troubling circumstances, when students who participated in the *Still in Every Class in Every School* report were asked what they wanted their teachers to know about supporting 2SLGBTQI people, they provided inspiring and constructive feedback.

Specifically, students are asking their teachers to:

- understand why silence around 2SLGBTQI topics is harmful,
- stop making assumptions about their gender and/or sexual identities,
- use chosen pronouns,
- include 2SLGBTQI people in classroom examples,
- appreciate the importance of teacher support, and,
- acknowledge the barriers that many of them face.

Every student deserves the right to learn in an environment free from violence, harassment, and bullying. While there remains a great deal of work to do to create safer, accepting, and inclusive schools for 2SLGBTQI students, it is important for teachers to know that they have a crucial role to play, and that there are resources and support available. It is more important than ever that explicit efforts are made to visibly support, respect, include, and



validate 2SLGBTQI students, and teachers should feel empowered to take action. As we saw in the *Still in Every Class in Every School* report, there are tangible actions with positive outcomes that teachers can take to show 2SLGBTQI students they are supported, and in turn, students want these teachers to know how appreciated they are.

As the leading national organization for 2SLGBTQI people and issues, Egale has a comprehensive suite of Inclusive Schools resources specifically tailored for all members of our school communities including teachers, students, principals and vice principals, and parents/guardians. Our resources include curriculum-aligned toolkits with videos, classroom materials,

discussion questions, downloadable school posters, educational webinars, training sessions, and more. Beyond our Inclusive Schools resources, as part of our Back-to-School campaign, we've curated a list of existing resources to get you started as well as all new resources on how to tackle hate in schools—for educators, parents, and students.

Based on the inclusive principle that students are better supported when they see themselves reflected in the curriculum, it is clear that 2SLGBTQI-inclusive curriculum is a critical component of supporting 2SLGBTQI students in schools. However, this has not yet been adequately addressed in most education systems.

One respondent in the *Still in Every Class in Every School* survey said, "I would like it if LGBTQ issues were discussed in class and not just ignored."

Another student wrote, "Literally anything taught about the LGBT community would be helpful. I shouldn't have to learn everything on a private browser in my bedroom, hiding my search history from my parents so I could learn about the community and everything related to it."

Teachers are the champions of inclusion, and Egale has the resources to help you continue growing your skills, knowledge, and confidence so that you can be a supportive, affirming adult in the lives of your 2SLGBTQI students. **T**

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

BACK TO SCHOOL

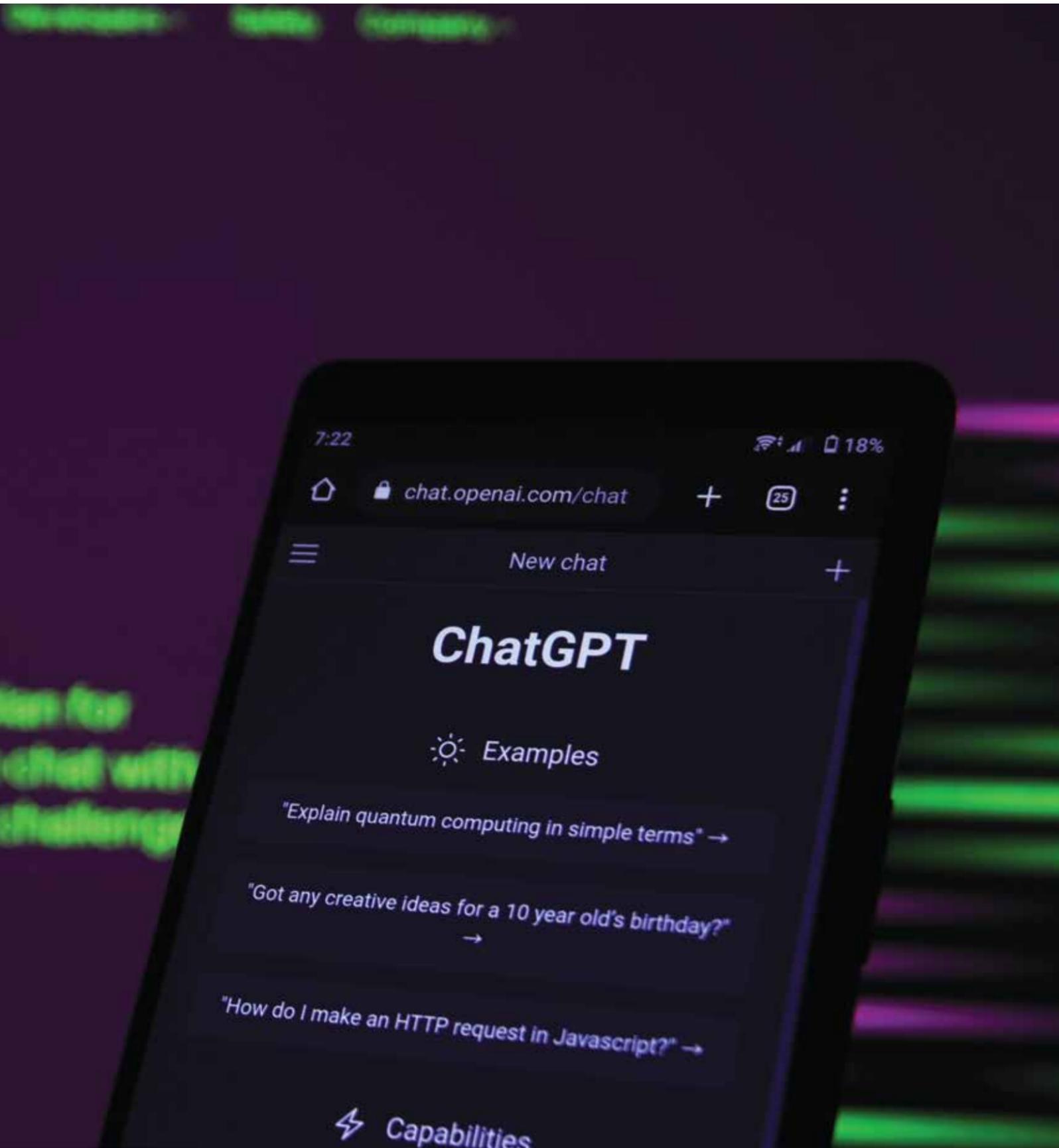
Every member of your school community is encouraged to visit <https://egale.ca/back-to-school/> or scan the QR code to access our free resources and learn more about how to be a champion for creating inclusive classrooms for all students.



EGALE NATIONAL REPORT

Egale's national report, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, shows that 2SLGBTQI students continue to face unacceptable amounts of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. To learn more visit <https://egale.ca/awareness/still-in-every-class/> or scan the QR code.





AI IN THE CLASSROOM

THERE'S MORE TO LOVE THAN TO HATE

By Raman Job, MTS Staff

A mind-blowing tech revolution is bearing down on you as an educator. Open AI's ChatGPT and a hundred variations of artificial intelligence are about to delight and terrify you as they claim space in your professional life.

Even though AI apps and products might worry or upset you now, future you will use them as routinely as you now use Google.

Kirsten Thompson, president of the Manitoba Association of Educational Technology Leaders (MAETL), is deep into ChatGPT. She says artificial intelligence can help write lesson plans and class newsletters, craft grant applications, prepare slide decks, refine communication, and save you a ton of time in the process.

Whenever she demos ChatGPT to her colleagues, they recognize the possibilities instantly.

- Want a 12-question multiple-choice quiz on chapter 6 of *Wuthering Heights* targeted to a Grade 10 reader? Enter a prompt, wait a minute and you'll have one.
- Need practice sheets for your pre-cal students? Feed in the Manitoba learning objectives and parameters into your prompts and you'll have them soon enough.
- Need a set of discussion questions that align with a learning objective in the Manitoba history curriculum? Write a prompt and you'll get them.

"The response I usually get goes something like, 'My gosh, it would have taken me an hour to put together something like this.' So, one reason I

encourage teachers to use chat is that it can replace or automate tedious tasks. That means more face time with students."

And that face time is critical. No amount of artificial intelligence will replace certified teachers, who do infinitely more than impart facts and figures to students. The countless professional judgements made by educators in the classroom every day are not the kind of tasks the technology can tackle. Still, there are times when AI can be more friend than foe.

DRAFTS NOT LINKS

Thompson explains that while today's search engines call up pages of links for you to explore and eventually use to fashion a draft, AI platforms give you an almost immediate draft in response to your prompts. So ChatGPT responses can become the basic foundation for whatever project you're working on.

"We call it prompt engineering," says Thompson. "And you can layer prompts on top of prompts to continue to refine the responses you get."

"And since all these platforms like ChatGPT, Microsoft's Bing and Google's Bard are language learning models, you can actually ask them for more information and get it."

"You essentially carry on a conversation. The machine is continually aware of the context of your previous prompts as you work toward getting what you need. You can't do that with a browser."

Thompson says it's then up to you to



Kirsten Thompson, MTS member and president of the Manitoba Association of Educational Technology Leaders, says artificial intelligence can help refine communication and save a ton of time in the process.

review what it's given you and use your own judgement to fact check and edit it before using. It's like working with a partner who can retrieve and package information for you to vet and adapt for your own purposes.

"And you would never pass off someone else's research or opinions as your own," she says. "When you are building a piece of writing, an exam, a rubric, anything, you know what's ethical and what's not."

Thompson says the biggest fear in using AI is that the results can be passed off as someone else's work—and that opens up a whole host of concerns.

But she points to a massive open online course called ETMOOC 2.0 by University of Regina professor Alec Couros and colleagues. "The resources page is completely open to anybody and has lots of fantastic tools, including a specific section on online plagiarism checkers."

Plus, Thompson has said for years that if students can Google the answers to your tests, then you need a better test. "Likewise, if students can use ChatGPT for your assessment, let's face it, you need a better assessment."

So how does a teacher get their feet wet when it comes to ChatGPT and AI?

Thompson says she's usually leery about recommending tech books because as soon as they're published, they're out of date. But she wanted to find an excellent AI primer she could recommend to her teacher friends.

She found that in Matt Miller's book *AI for Educators*. "A big concept in the

book is you cannot look at today's technology through yesterday's lens."

FRESH TECH INSPIRES FEAR

It's natural that new technologies inspire trepidation. The calculator sparked fears of in-class cheating, the microwave oven would irradiate us by jostling food molecules, even the debit card had its detractors for scooping money directly out of our bank accounts, with no apparent opportunity for refunds.

"I've been watching the MTS #RealTeacherTalkMB series online and reading about how colleagues are stressed and burnt out. That's a real issue, a complicated issue, and AI is definitely not a cure-all. But one big benefit to using chatbots and AI is that you really can save yourself time."

Thompson says there's an art to building the prompt; it's not a matter of asking a single question and having AI spit out exactly what you need. "There's a learning curve. But just like anything else, you tackle it one step at a time. And you determine exactly if or how much you want to use in your professional life."

CURATION VS. CREATION

In reality, we've been using AI for years, says Thompson: in Google maps that show us retail outlets near us, in algorithms displaying our preferred topics in social media—even in the autocorrect we take for granted. She says this first phase of artificial intelligence is classified as curation.

Creation, the second phase, is where

AI is headed now. Here the application scans sources and intelligently selects information from them to build coherent conversational responses—which may or may not be accurate.

Tom Tarrant, principal of Manitoba's online school InformNet, told the Winnipeg Free Press that, "When used appropriately, AI helps to spur critical thinking and engage learners. Leveraging these tools also helps our students and staff stay on top of current trends and innovations."

Tarrant warned that some students are misusing the tools. When they do, they are affecting their own learning and are hurting themselves in the long run.

Thompson says MAETL has been promoting chatbots while educating school staff about privacy and other ethical issues when using new AI tools. At last May's *Riding the Wave* conference, MAETL launched a free chatbot called BYTE along with its partner Code Breaker Inc.

Specifically designed for Manitoba students and teachers, there is no account or fee required (MAETL pays for that). It includes profanity and suicidal ideation filters, has no user login or tracking, and the reading level never exceeds Grade 12.

"Chatbots and AI are not perfect," says Thompson. "But given the advantages they offer us as educators, we would be remiss not to use them to their full capabilities." 

WORKSHOP & RESOURCES

COSL WINTER CONFERENCE

Kirsten Thompson will present a workshop on *AI for Educators* at this year's COSL Winter Conference in Feb. 2024. Use the free MAETL-sponsored Code Breaker chatbot by scanning the QR code or going to <https://www.codebreakeredu.com/chat/>.



AI FOR EDUCATORS

Matt Miller's book *AI for Educators: Learning Strategies, Teacher Efficiencies, and a Vision for an Artificial Intelligence Future* is an excellent AI primer to ChatGPT. To learn more visit <https://ditchthattextbook.com/ai-edu/> or scan the QR code.




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We'd love to hear your feedback as well as ideas for future episodes and guests. Email us at MBTeachersUnplugged@mbteach.org.

Mais attendez, il y a plus! MTS is recording en français as well, so watch for more information on *Au Cœur de l'éducation* launching soon.



THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME:

REFLECTIONS ON ADVOCACY AND ACTION WITH NATHAN AND CYNTHIA

By Anne Bennett, MTS Staff

With the pandemic (mostly) behind us and a number of challenges ahead, MTS President Nathan Martindale and Vice President Cynthia Taylor talk Teachers' College, provincial bargaining, promoting member mental health and their key priorities for 2023-24.



Nathan Martindale, MTS president



Cynthia Taylor, MTS vice president

With Provincial Council behind us and a new school year ahead, what are your priorities for 2023-24?

NM My priorities are to continue to amplify the voice of our members and raise awareness of the impact of seven years of underfunding of public education. This means advocating with a new government after October 3 for working and learning conditions in our classrooms that meet the needs of both teachers and students. I'm also highly focused on negotiating our first provincial collective agreement as a member of the Provincial Bargaining Table Team and beginning my new role as an MTS appointee to the TRAF Board.

CT The process of running for vice president and talking with the members helped me define four clear priorities: to engage more members in the work of the union, communicate the many ways in which MTS serves them, celebrate the diversity of our profession, and listen to our members' perspectives with the intent of doing all I can to advance and enhance the teaching profession in Manitoba.

What are the greatest challenges facing our members right now, and how will MTS respond?

NM One of the great challenges facing our members right now is stress and burnout. From overcrowded classrooms to fewer supports for the students who need them, to an increase in violence toward teachers, the list is long. MTS plays a critical role in advocating on behalf of members, not only when meeting with the Minister of Education, but in all the other provincial tables and working groups that we participate in, of which there are more than 50.

CT The greatest challenge facing our members right now is staying safe and well in the profession. There are many forces both internal and external that make it tough for people to perform at their best. MTS has a profound role to play in removing obstacles and strengthening our community of educators. It's essential that our members feel supported in their work. I hope that we can also develop more ways to help people grow and connect to one another across the membership.

We're in the midst of historic provincial bargaining for Manitoba teachers. How, if at all, does that change the union and its relationship with Local associations?

NM The biggest change is specific to the role that Local associations have played in the bargaining process. While Locals no longer hold a bargaining certificate, members in each association have important roles in the Provincial Bargaining protocol. And Locals will continue to be the first point of contact for members—a crucial role in the overall structure of the Society. Locals are essential to what we do and who we are as a union, and that isn't changing.

CT I think that it strengthens the relationship and allows us to work together more effectively. It's about the collective efforts; there is no union without Locals. It is essential that the lines of communication stay open and two-way about needs and trends. The Local will continue to play a critical role in identifying and articulating member needs in many different ways throughout the organization.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there's been lots of discussion about burnout. What role does MTS play in promoting and prioritizing teacher mental health?

NM Our role is crucial. During the pandemic, MTS channeled the voices of its members with education partners and compelled the province to focus on teacher wellbeing. Since then, Manitoba teachers participated in a nation-wide CTF survey that illustrated the mental health struggles our members face. Teacher mental health was a major theme throughout our #RealTeacherTalkMB campaign, and when I sit down with the Minister of Education, teacher mental health is always on the agenda. A healthy classroom starts with a healthy teacher.

CT We need to use our lines of communication and promote not only techniques and tools for wellbeing and mental health, but also to showcase members who are working to find balance and boundaries between work life and home life. Social media is a great tool for that. MTS has the privilege

of representing folks who cultivate the future of our communities through their work with students. There are few things more important than that. MTS needs to do all it can to advance working and learning conditions that support the health of its members and a brighter future for all of us.

A College of Teachers, or the prospect of one, has been a topic of conversation for some time in Manitoba. No matter the outcome of the provincial election, is there reason to believe a College is inevitable? What will be our response?

NM I don't believe a College of Teachers is necessarily inevitable, but I do believe that ongoing dialogue related to regulation is—and that's a good thing. Some folks have interpreted the Society's stance on a College as a reflection of some intent to shield predatory or incompetent teachers. This is unequivocally incorrect. I'm a parent as well as a teacher, and like any other parent I clearly want trustworthy, excellent teachers in the classroom. The safety of children is and will always be a teacher's first and non-negotiable priority.

MTS is also committed to the cultivation of excellence in the profession, and the right of every member to due process and representation in disciplinary matters. MTS does not question the need for professional regulation and oversight. What it does question is the need for a College structure, with its enormous and costly bureaucracy, and the potential for duplication of what are already existing and effective services within MTS. There is always more we can do to enhance the transparency and accountability of processes, and we will continue to participate in dialogue with government related to those issues.

CT MTS has done a successful job thus far of regulating our members within the confines of its jurisdiction. We as colleagues hold each other to a high standard and I believe we have done so for more than 100 years. In terms of a College of Teachers, I believe it is essential that our members are part of whatever process is put in place. It is also important that we inform our members of each step along the way and let them know that the union continues to provide service and protection.

In the MTS #RealTeacherTalkMB campaign which began last spring, members described heartbreaking realities in their classrooms that are a direct result of chronic underfunding in public education. To what extent will our members' comments fuel the MTS agenda in the coming year?

NM These comments paint a vivid picture, for voters and for the new government, of what's happening in Manitoba classrooms. And you're right, it's heartbreaking. That insight resulted in public engagement on social media that was record-breaking for MTS. I'd like to thank those who took the time to share their perspectives, as difficult as it was. The evidence is clear, the stories are real, and they strengthen our resolve to fight for funding that consistently meets the growing and complex needs in our classrooms.

CT These comments will stay front of mind as Locals and the union continue to advocate for the needs of members. These are the stories that go unheard as teachers carry on their duties for students and families. Our jobs are complex, but I do not want the carrying cost of the profession to outweigh people's personal health and wellness. The voices of our members—their realities, their perspectives, their wellbeing—drive me to do the work I do, and I feel a tremendous sense of responsibility and accountability for that.

The EDI scan conducted in 2022-23 has produced some compelling—and it's fair to say challenging—findings. As a union, where do we go from here?

NM Compelling and challenging findings, absolutely. I've read the report and am ready to do the work to address these findings. I would encourage all members to review the EDI scan. The full report is available to every member via their MTS MyProfile account at mbteach.org. The resolution passed at the 2023 Provincial Council meeting provides clear direction on how to proceed, with the creation of

a three-year strategic plan to guide the organization in implementing recommendations in ways that deliver real, meaningful, demonstrable change.

CT There is no doubt about it—the EDI scan shed light on many different issues that MTS needs to address. And we need to do it thoughtfully and intentionally. It's tempting after reading the report to just dive in and start changing things. But I was pleased that the consultants recommended we first create a plan to guide our efforts. Deeply entrenched ideas and biases are not easily unearthed or addressed. And while it may be hard for some folks to hear that we're going to "slow down to speed up", we need to take time to internalize what we've learned so that we create real, tangible change instead of settling for short-sighted, knee-jerk reactions. As a union, we also need to engage our membership in a more fulsome way. Participating in the EDI scan was just the beginning. As we turn to exploration and implementation of recommendations, our role as a union is to support and create space for our members so we find the way forward together.

How do you measure success in your role?

NM My work at MTS is guided by what is in the best interests of teachers. This has always been my north star and serves as a constant reminder of who I work for—the members. I am successful in my job if the conversations I have and the decisions I make (as an officer or a member of the Provincial Executive) align with this guiding principle.

CT I will measure success by continuing to work with good intent and to be collaborative. Decision making and change can be hard; knowing that despite your best efforts, not everyone will be happy. I think success for me is being able to stand behind and own decisions that are made within that time and place.

What gets you fired up about the work?

NM Lots of things! After ten years of working full-time on behalf of members at the Local and provincial levels, I still love it. I get fired up advocating for members, whether it's during an interview, or in a meeting with the Minister of Education. I thrive when groups of people come together in acts of solidarity and I'm always up for a rally! I also enjoy my roles within the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

CT It's the people. Helping teachers and working in collaboration/collectively is something that I love. I'm happy to hear from our members; to know their stories is what fuels my commitment to the work. I am also fueled by the desire to grow our profession and reflect the diversity that we talk about when it comes to schools and classrooms. And I'm driven to make sure that students and families have access to free education that allows them to grow and learn and showcase their talents and gifts.

What's your ideal future vision for MTS as we face the challenges and opportunities ahead?

NM It's one in which we go forward stronger and more inclusively as a union. There are incredible opportunities ahead, and in my ideal vision for the future of MTS, I see more and more members becoming engaged in both their Local and in the Society. It won't happen overnight, but I'm excited to put the work in now, so that five, 10, 20 years down the road, the organization is even stronger than it is today.

CT My vision for MTS is to further connect our members to the union and to one another. I would love for our 16,600 members to know all the ways MTS works for them and how it provides a place to grow, learn and dialogue. MTS should be a place that changes and grows alongside its members and continues to advocate for their needs. **T**



MTS PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AGM NEW DELEGATE PROFILES

MTS Provincial Council AGM welcomed a record number of new delegates in May, 2023. Here a few first-timers share what they thought of the experience (and why you should get involved, too!)



LINDA KORKAR

Je suis enseignante depuis 12 ans, et je suis orthopédagogue à l'École Précieux-Sang à la DSFM. J'étais enseignante titulaire pour 9 ans à la DSFM. Ensuite, j'occupais un poste d'orthopédagogue à l'École Précieux-Sang. Je suis responsable des élèves nouveaux arrivants.

C'est ma première année d'être représentante au conseil de l'AÉFM. Je suis nouvelle à l'exécutif 2023-

2025. Je siège le comité de finances publiques et un Comité ad hoc membres internationaux.

J'ai beaucoup aimé et apprécié ma première AGA. Ce fut une excellente expérience et un nouvel apprentissage. Durant l'AGA, l'AÉFM a proposé une motion ayant un coût de 30 000\$. La motion fut adoptée afin d'assurer plus de traduction en français.

Anecdote: J'aime la lecture, la broderie et la cuisine.

Local: L'Association des éducatrices et des éducateurs franco-manitobains



BLUE JAY BRIDGE

I've just finished my 22nd year of teaching, and I currently teach physical education at Royal School.

I subbed for a year before getting my first permanent position at Henry G. Izatt School. I taught there for 14 years, then it was off to Beaumont School to teach early years physical education. I was at Beaumont for six years and am now finishing my second

year at Royal School.

I attended Provincial Council AGM as an alternate and began officially working with PTTA in September as public relations chair. I thought Provincial Council was an excellent few days with extremely passionate and committed educators.

Fun Fact: I worked at YM/YWCA Camp Stephens from 1997-2001, and in my last year I went on a six-week canoe trip. Forty-two days in the bush. At one point we went a week without seeing another human. Pretty cool!

Local: Pembina Trails Teachers' Association



MARIA A.T. REGERO

I taught for 15 years in the Philippines, and the past six years here in Thompson. I teach Grade 5 in Wapanohk Community School.

I was teaching high school in the Philippines, and when I moved to Canada I subbed for a year because I was taking classes and student teaching in high school. I teach science, math, health and art, while my teaching partner does ELA, social studies and Cree. I've been involved in our Local for six years and became treasurer of the TTA three years ago.

I would like to come back as a Provincial Council delegate because I learn a lot and meet delegates who can help me with my position in the Local and also being a teacher.

Fun Fact: I am a very approachable person, very fun to be with and very helpful. I dance (but not too much singing) and cook Filipino dishes. I love traveling, especially to historical places.

Local: Thompson Teachers' Association



TANYA STOKOTELNY

I've taught for 10 years and am currently a student services teacher at Frontenac School. I support the Grade 1/2 classes this year. I started my teaching career as a special education teacher with the Toronto District School Board. There I taught

students in a self-contained Grades 4, 5, and 6 class who had different special needs. I moved to Winnipeg and began teaching in Louis Riel, making the move to student services in my second year there. Besides Frontenac School, I have taught at Victor Mager, Darwin, and Minnetonka Schools. 2022-23 was my first year being involved with my Local.

I very much enjoyed participating in Provincial Council AGM! I learned a lot and met so many passionate and interesting people. My colleagues were also very supportive and helpful in navigating me through the whole experience. I hope to be back next year!

Fun Fact: My not-so-secret hobby is photography and I love seeing the world through my camera lens. I have had the privilege of shooting over 100 weddings here in Winnipeg, and although I don't do that anymore I feel fortunate to have shared many special days with so many lovely couples.

Local: Louis Riel Teachers' Association



RAYA CHARRIER

I've been a teacher for 12 years. I worked at Dr. George Johnson school for 11 years (minus two maternity leaves)—mostly Grades 7/8 and Grade 8 and assistant principal. Last year I was at Arborg Collegiate wearing many hats (math, science, career education, resource, assistant principal). And this upcoming year I'll take on K-9 resource and reading interventions at Riverton Early Middle School for one semester, covering a maternity leave, then back to Arborg Collegiate in January, 2024.

This September I will be going on 10 years involved with my Local (again, minus maternity leaves). I'm currently vice president—but act as a proxy for our president during regional meetings, Presidents' Council and AGM as he is a PX member. I also act as education finance chair, and I've been both public relations and professional development chair in the past.

I was so excited to finally be able to attend Provincial Council AGM after

many years on our Local. I really enjoyed seeing the format of the meeting and liked that everyone respected the formality of the parliamentary (I think that's the right word?) style. It helped me gain more insight into those types of formal meetings and appreciate the process behind them. I also really enjoyed watching other members engage deeply in that process with one another. It made for more thoughtful discussion in my opinion.

I really admired the way that the meeting chairs conducted themselves, giving space for new delegates to learn the process. They should be commended for their obvious skills! Everything was also meticulously organized and thought out. I was intrigued by the campaigning process and learned much about that side of things. I look forward to attending again in the future!

Fun Fact: My husband is also a teacher in Evergreen. We have two small children (and a dog) and live on my family's homestead in the Interlake. We love our communities, have a passion for rural public education, and work hard to bring opportunities to our communities while enjoying small-town life.

Local: Evergreen Teachers' Association



CERI JOHNSON

I've been teaching for 19 years, currently at Mary Montgomery School in Virden.

I started my teaching career in northern Manitoba at Garden Hill First Nation. I have taught at two Hutterite Colony schools and was principal at one school for five years prior to moving to Mary Montgomery.

I've attended meetings and been part of several committees with my Local over the years, but have been more involved in the past year. I have been the professional development chair and have participated in a number of seminars for other committees.

My first Provincial Council AGM was a very interesting process that I didn't realize happened. I enjoyed my time there and look forward to many more.

Fun Fact: I love to keep busy in my garden in the summer but also like to get away with my family. I love to snowboard in the winter and spend time at the hill with my kids.

Local: Fort la Bosse Teachers' Association



ANDREW KLAPRAT

I've been a teacher for nine years. Currently I teach physical education at École Powerview, a K-12 school located in Powerview-Pine Falls, roughly 90 minutes NW of Winnipeg.

I started my teaching career as a substitute in Sunrise School Division. My first term contract in 2014-15 took me to my high school alma mater, École Edward Schreyer, in Beausejour. In April of 2016 I started teaching on reserve at Sagkeeng Anicinabe High School, located in Sagkeeng First Nation. I spent the remainder of that school year, plus an additional four school years working there. I am about to start my fourth year at Powerview School.

This coming year will be my third year serving with my Local executive. I'm the collective bargaining chair in the STA and also sit on our Scholarship Committee.

I was impressed by the organization of the Provincial Council meetings involving teachers from across the province. It was amazing how smoothly everything functioned in session. It was a neat experience, and I am hoping to return to Provincial Council in future years.

Fun Fact: I enjoy traveling around the province with my high school basketball team and hope to run into colleagues at various gyms around the province. Looking forward to my first overseas trip later this year, when my wife and I go to New Zealand for her brother's wedding!

Local: Sunrise Teachers' Association

Project Overseas

Project Overseas is accepting applications from Manitoba educators wanting to work with colleagues in developing countries in the summer of 2024.

Project Overseas is a joint endeavor of The Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) to support partners in developing countries as they co-plan and co-deliver professional learning to local teachers.

Since 1962, Project Overseas has assisted teacher organizations in over 50 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Caribbean. Every July, Project Overseas places over 50 volunteers in between 10 to 15 countries.

Apply today online at mbteach.org!

For more information please contact Simon Normandeau at snormandeau@mbteach.org

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS
NOVEMBER 3, 2023**



TABLE TOPICS: MTS BARGAINING UPDATE

Negotiations on behalf of Manitoba’s 16,600 MTS members are taking place centrally and at tables across the province. Here’s the latest news.

PROVINCIAL BARGAINING TABLE

As was reported to members in June, the MTS Table Team and the Employers’ Organization reached an impasse on June 13, 2023. A bargaining impasse occurs when the two sides negotiating are unable to reach an agreement on some or all items and become deadlocked. In this case, the parties’ differing and firmly held positions on salaries led to the impasse.

MTS is seeking harmonization of teacher salary scales, along with adjustments for inflation protection and economic growth. Harmonization of salaries would provide a northern and southern salary scale that has “the best of the best” salaries at each step and class. The Employers’ Organization’s wage offer was similar to the unwritten—and as MGEU coined, “restrictive”—wage mandate of the PC government that led to strikes by both liquor and lottery and MPI workers. While wage growth in Canada has been pegged at between four and five per cent, the PC government repeatedly offered workers around two per cent or less—numbers which are far below inflation and unacceptable to the union.

MTS has therefore initiated binding interest arbitration, the process by which independent arbitrators work towards a reasonable resolution of issues determined to be at impasse. This is the only means of dispute resolution available to teachers in Manitoba, who do not have the right to strike.

It’s important to note that impasse is *not* the end of all negotiations. It is in the best interests of both parties to limit the number of items that must be arbitrated. As we await the arbitration, the parties will continue to meet to bargain other outstanding issues on the following dates:

- September 18 & 19, 2023
- October 5 & 6, 2023
- November 2 & 3, 2023

- November 29 & 30, 2023
- December 20 & 21, 2023
- January 11 & 12, 2024
- February 28, 2024

With the election of a new government on October 3, the team is hopeful that greater progress can be made at the bargaining table. We will keep you updated throughout the fall and winter. Bargaining updates are available to MTS members in MyProfile at mbteach.org.

AÉFM (FRANCOPHONE PROVINCIAL TABLE)

The DSFM met with the AÉFM on the following dates:

- December 14, 2022
- February 1, 2023
- April 4, 2023
- May 3, 2023
- May 30, 2023
- June 15, 2023

Cancelled Meetings:

- April 24, 2023
- May 17, 2023
- May 29, 2023
- June 7, 2023

The above cancelled meetings were canceled by the DSFM. The MTS Table Team noted that the tone of negotiations changed greatly following a DSFM meeting with the PC government on May 29, 2023. Prior to this time, the parties were negotiating in a very positive way, and the AÉFM was optimistic that an agreement would be achievable by the end of June. That has not happened. Negotiations will continue this fall.

NELSON HOUSE TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION

Nelson House and Sandy Bay teachers are MTS members but under federal jurisdiction. The NHTA, through the conciliation process last spring, was able to achieve a new



collective agreement from 2018-2022 for the same pay increases achieved throughout Manitoba; 1.6%, 1.4%, 0.5% and a COLA of 3.3%. In addition, they had improvements with regard to maternity and parental leave.

SANDY BAY TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION

In the fall of 2022, the SBTA reached an agreement for 2022/2023 for a COLA based on the 2022 Statistics Canada average Manitoba inflation rate which is 7.9%. This sets a precedent for teacher salaries in the province as we expect teachers’ salaries to keep pace with inflation.

Bargaining updates are available through your MTS MyProfile account. If you haven’t registered yet, please do at mbteach.org or scan the QR code to stay up to date on all things MTS. Have a question related to bargaining? Email provincialbargaining@mbteach.org



IN MEMORY OF TOM PACI

With profound sadness The Manitoba Teachers’ Society acknowledges the death of Tom Paci, our colleague, friend and ally, on September 6, 2023.

Tom held a pivotal role as the inaugural economic analyst at the Society and later dedicated two decades of his career to serving as the department head of Teacher Welfare. He was also an assistant general secretary for nine months shortly before his retirement.

Tom’s influence extended far and wide, as he played a crucial role in negotiating over 50 collective agreements that improved the working conditions of members across the province. His skill at the bargaining table was without peer, resonating both within and beyond MTS. Tom was also renowned for his impeccable poker face and showcased his expertise in matters of economics, teacher welfare and collective bargaining through 55

arbitrations during his more than 35 years with the Society. His testimony in proceedings brought by the Partnership to Protect Public Services, of which MTS was a part, was pivotal in the 2020 Court of Queen’s Bench decision finding *Bill 28: The Public Services Sustainability Act* unconstitutional.

Many MTS staff members and Local presidents were fortunate to benefit from Tom’s mentorship and maintained their connection with him in his retirement, a testament to Tom’s dedication, not only to MTS, but to the people who bring the union to life.

His tenure with the Society was marked by a capacity for thoughtful, considered reflection, steadfast commitment to the



labour movement and foundational belief in the power of public education. Tom is survived by his wife, Denise, who we hold in our hearts at this most difficult time. He will be deeply missed.

WE ASKED TEACHERS:

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS SCHOOL YEAR?



KELLY C.

I'm working in student services and I'm looking forward to learning and growing in this role and welcoming new students this year. I'm looking forward to more professional development as well as continuing with MTS and my role on the executive of the PTTA.

Local: Pembina Trails Teachers' Association



RAYA C.

I'm covering part of a maternity leave for the first semester and I'm looking forward to working with K-8 students, because the little ones often give a fresh perspective on how to love learning. I'm excited to try something new and gain a new understanding of some different roles in my school division, and work with new colleagues that I haven't worked with before.

Local: Evergreen Teachers' Association



JEN G.

One of the things I'm looking forward to is teaching a bunch of students from last year, so I'll be able to see their growth over a two-year period of time. Even over summer they've grown so much! I have a student who's deaf and she knows American Sign Language. I've been learning ASL outside of school, and I'm looking forward to learning more together this year.

Local: Flin Flon Teachers' Association



HARPREET M.

We had a bit of a shift in our school and a lot of teachers moved around. My new neighboring teachers are people I've always wanted to work with, so I'm excited about that. As for the classroom work, we've done a lot of PD in my school on Building Thinking Classrooms so I'm looking forward to applying that PD in a new grade level that I haven't taught before. This will be the first time I'll be teaching a straight grade, I've always taught multi-ages before this so I'm looking forward to just teaching Grade 6 this year.

Local: Seven Oaks Teachers' Association



BRETT D.

I teach Grades 7 and 8 and I always look forward to meeting the new kids that come into our school. They're a little timid and they're very curious and have a lot of questions, and because we're a 7-12 school I get to see them grow up. It's nice to get to know their personalities. I teach phys-ed and French and I'm always looking forward to trying new things in the classroom and getting the kids motivated and excited about French.

Local: Prairie Spirit Teachers' Association



AMITA K.

I'm going back to school after a maternity leave, and I'm looking forward to building relationships with my new students and creating a fun learning environment in my French Immersion classroom. My goal this year is to take the kids out for volunteering field trips to instill a sense of community involvement, and to inspire my kids to be better humans. I'm a new mom, but I've been teaching for 18 years so I'm looking forward to going back to that part of my identity.

Local: Seven Oaks Teachers' Association



JOEL Y.

I'm looking forward to meeting my new class of Grade 3 students and working with my amazing colleagues at École Bannatyne. Elementary is still new to me so I'm looking forward to trying some different things in my classroom this year, and honing my craft. I was teaching high school for 17 years so this has been a big change and learning curve. What I like about elementary kids is that I get to spend more time with my students, as opposed to an hour a day in Grade 9 science class. Grade 3 is a great age—they're a little bit more independent but still eager to learn—lots and lots of fun.

Local: St. James Assiniboia Teachers' Association

SPOTLIGHT ON SAGEs

Spotlight on SAGEs is a regular feature highlighting opportunities for enrichment and inspiration offered by the MTS Special Area Groups of Educators.



THE MANITOBA SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Manitoba Social Science Teachers' Association (MSSTA) seeks to protect the place of social sciences in the Manitoba curriculum. It publishes a bi-annual journal; organizes an annual province-wide conference; works with other like-minded organizations in the fields of history, geography and the social sciences; is represented on Department of Education curriculum committees; and provides a forum through which teachers, university academics, Department of Education personnel, and others involved in the teaching of the social sciences, can meet.

This year's MSSTA MTS PD Day is being delivered in partnership with ERiM (Extremism and Radicalization to Violence Prevention in Manitoba). ERiM is an organization of Manitoba educators and education stakeholders funded by Public Safety Canada to develop a resource for teachers to recognize and counter radicalization within their schools before it occurs. We are pleased to launch this new resource at our October PD Day and to welcome our keynote speaker, Dr. Barbara Perry, one of the foremost Canadian experts in the areas of radicalization, right-wing extremism, and hate crime along with our plenary panelists, Brad Galloway and Mubin Shaikh.

To learn more about our PD session visit mssta.org/professional-development.html or scan the QR code.



MANITOBA TEACHERS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Manitoba Teachers for Students with Learning Disabilities (MTSLD) is committed to building awareness and capacity for Manitoba teachers who work with students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). We provide opportunities to network, advocate, and build community to celebrate our SLD learners. We will also strive to showcase impactful local projects and initiatives utilizing best practices for SLD learners.

Join us for MTS PD Day for "Inclusion for All", with a range of sessions regarding numeracy (dyscalculia), literacy (dyslexia, dysgraphia) and emotional well-being for all learners—but especially for those with learning disabilities. Presentations target early years students through adult learners with topics such as technology and culturally responsive pedagogy. And, our keynote, Dr. Nancy Wise, will focus on inclusivity within French Immersion schools.

We have presenters from Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and Universities of Manitoba, Winnipeg and Brandon. We also have a special presentation from a Manitoba school division about their Project 30 Initiative. See you there!

To learn more about our PD session visit sites.google.com/view/mtslid2021/home or scan the QR code.



THE PRINCIPAL OF THE THING:

THE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL LEADERS

By Rob Fisher, COSL Chairperson

School leadership is challenging (understatement of the year), and as a former principal at R.D. Parker Collegiate in Thompson, Manitoba, I say so from experience. Both then and now I'm a fan of any resources and support I can get to help me be a great principal. And for me that's where the Council of School Leaders (COSL) comes in.

For me and many other school leaders across the province, COSL is a game-changer. And the best part: if you're a principal or vice principal and a member of MTS, you're already a member!

This year we estimate that COSL has a provincial membership of approximately 1,100, and it exists to provide leadership and support to school leaders and aspiring school leaders. One way we do this is by promoting professional development. A misconception we sometimes hear is that only current COSL members are allowed to attend our professional development sessions. This is not true. Everyone who is interested is welcome to attend and I hope many of you will do so. We have a number of great PD opportunities ready to roll this year.

PD OPPORTUNITIES

The COSL Fall Conference (on MTS PD day) will be held virtually on Zoom on Friday October 20, 2023. We have a great lineup of speakers scheduled including Cindy Blackstock, Kirsten Thompson, Steve Munby and Sean Carleton. You can register now on mbteach.org.

The COSL Winter conference will be held February 16 and 17, 2024, at the Victoria Inn, Winnipeg. We're still in the planning stages of this event, but the event kicks off with a keynote by Keith McPherson followed by a "principal jam." Think of this as a campfire jam session—without the fire. Participants are asked to bring an acoustic guitar with them, and if you know three chords, you're all set! This is a great opportunity for us to connect, share experiences, and learn from each other.

Field Led courses (FLC) are credited towards the provincial Certificate in School Leadership. You can find full information about these under the PD tab at mbteach.org.

FLC 6, *Leading Safe, Caring, and Inclusive Schools* is offered virtually by MTS September, 2023 – April, 2024 and is already fully subscribed.

FLC 3, *Educational Leadership* will be offered virtually in the summer, 2024.

Other virtual offerings:

- Tuesday, November 14, 2023, "A day in the life of a principal."

- Wednesday, January 10, 2024, "Leading learning and organizations: Balance and practical tools".

- Tuesday March 19, 2024, "Exploring models for continuous improvement planning".

These virtual learning sessions begin at 4:15 p.m. Watch for more information coming soon.

COLLABORATING ACROSS CANADA

COSL also collaborates with other organizations in Canada or elsewhere having the same or like aims and objectives. One example of this is our affiliation with the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP). The next national CAP conference will be held in Toronto, April 23-26, 2024.

The following year the national conference, CAP 2025, will be right here in Winnipeg, May 13-16, 2025, where we will host principals, vice principals, and aspiring school leaders from across Canada and around the world, so save these dates in your calendars.

Another way COSL provides leadership and support to school leaders is through our

governance structure. The COSL Leadership team is responsible for conducting the affairs of COSL between meetings of the Board of Directors. This year your leadership team is Tracy Vanstone (PTA) Brian Straub (RETTA), Chris Hicks (RRVTA), Donna Johnston (TTA), Jude Guzzi (WTA), and me, Chairperson Rob Fisher (TTA).

COSL Directors representing all regions around the province meet four times per year and attend our AGM scheduled for April 12 and 13, 2024. We're always looking for COSL members to act as delegates interested in participating at the AGM, so consider contacting your COSL director or regional contact if this is something that interests you.

ADVOCATING ON THE ISSUES

COSL also provides leadership and support to school leaders by advocating on educational issues, educational administration issues, and all other issues of concern to principals and vice principals. One way we do this is by our participation in outside bodies and committees.

Currently COSL has representation on

12 outside bodies around the province and across Canada. These include the Canadian Association of Principals Board of Directors, the Treaty Education for All Steering Committee, the Certificate in School Leadership Review Committee, Education Workforce Mental Health and Resilience Working Group, the Inter-organizational Curriculum Advisory Committee, the Manitoba High School Athletic Association Board of Directors, the Student Services/ Inclusive Education Consultation Committee, the Technical Vocational Leadership Council, ERiM - Education to Counter Radicalization to Violence in Manitoba, the Provincial School Leadership Framework Advisory Team, principal's learning networks, and the Red River Métis Education Working Group.

COSL also advises MTS on matters relating to the administration of schools. We do this through our ongoing relationships with the Provincial Executive, ÉFM president, MTS officers (our president, vice president, executive director, and directors), and staff officers of the Society. In addition, Cheryl Chuckry, the MTS director of professional status, supports the governance of COSL and

serves as a direct line to the MTS officers, where COSL updates are shared.

COSL is also present at all Provincial Executive meetings, Presidents' Council meetings, at Provincial Council (MTS AGM), and as part of the provincial bargaining protocol.

There you have it, a brief tour of all things COSL. It's a great community of school leaders and aspiring school leaders, learning together and supporting one another. And we all could use a bit more of that, couldn't we?

If you have any questions or concerns or would like to hear more about what COSL is doing on your behalf, contact your COSL director, regional contact, or reach out to me directly via email at cosl@mbteach.org. Have a great school year, and I hope to see you soon.

If you would like to present a breakout session at the next national CAP conference, check out the call for presentations at tinyurl.com/cap2024call or scan the QR code. 



A SYMPHONY OF CHANGE:

AS EDUCATORS WE CONSTANTLY FACE THE FLOW OF EMOTIONS THAT CHANGE BRINGS

By Sascha Epp, MTS Staff

Anticipation rises, and musicians create a cacophony of sounds as they tune their instruments. The lights dim, and I move to the edge of my seat. The conductor raises their baton. In one dramatic gesture, the magic of music fills the concert hall and transports me on an emotional journey: changes in melody, harmony, tempo, and dynamics keep my attention fixed, engaged, and captivated.

Change in education could be described metaphorically as music, with many variations. Like music, change can evoke emotions, spark creativity, and require harmonious elements. Just as no musical experience is the same, neither is the school day!

What comes to mind when you encounter change? Is it overwhelming fear, more demands, or anxiety? It may be a feeling of loss of control or insecurity. How would we function without change?

As an educator, you constantly face changes and the flow of emotions that change brings. As an agent of change, you are like a music composer. You shape the future through small adjustments (getting a new student today) or significant shifts (the department is rolling out another mandated policy). During some moments, you may relish being the composer, using creativity and inspiration, and you become the driver of change with ease: for example, developing themes and units for the upcoming term.

You may embrace change as the constant

in your life and work and thrive as the melody changes or transposes. You might describe change as an opportunity to learn and grow, a form of excitement, continuous improvement, or innovation; these were the words used by students in the Zoom chat during the Council for School Leaders (COSL) Field-led Course on Change Leadership that I instructed this past summer.

As the course developer (or composer), I have spent the past year curating material on change. During and post-pandemic, I discovered that change advice abounds.

Current research points to a now-famous statistic from McKinsey & Company, stating that 70% of change efforts fail. This data emphasizes that the work of change involves analyzing existing structures, identifying areas for improvement, and designing strategies for positive transformation. In the same way a composer meticulously crafts musical notes to create a symphony, some educational changes require careful planning and orchestration.

Many also say that we should view the

pandemic as a catalyst for transformation, a “wake-up call” for change in education. Yet, in many ways, the truth is that humans have a natural tendency to revert to the familiar; back to the old, same structure of lessons, assignments, and assessments. What happens when we hear the same song on the radio too often?

FIVE WAYS YOU CAN EMBRACE CHANGE

We all have a reason for listening to music: entertainment, relaxation, or motivation. Similarly, with change in education, one must understand the rationale for change. Therefore, step one begins with: “Why”.

1. UNDERSTAND THE “WHY”

People are much more apt to understand and accept change if they know why change is necessary. School leadership can help here, sharing why particular changes are a requirement. It is recommended that with this step, you muster up your confidence and ask questions. Seek out “the why.”



When you have answers, your mindset becomes everything. Your perspective will set the course. If you remain open and curious and embrace a bit of challenge, the change will be harmonious or “music to your ears.”

2. LISTEN

To create masterful, beautiful music, the composer and the musicians must listen keenly and work harmoniously to produce a unified sound. Similarly, change requires collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders, such as colleagues, policymakers, and community members, to achieve collective goals.

Listening to students and embracing student voices in the change process in schools can be the key to engaging students, which is every educator’s mission. Student voice allows for relationship-building, collaboration, connection, and positive school culture. If you focus on student voice, not only do you create impact and meaning, but you can also “Engage the world, change the world”, (Fullan, 2018).

When listening to colleagues, I have learned through experience that what might appear to be a person’s reticence to change is actually a sign that they fear it. They may be wondering, “What might happen if things don’t go as I planned? Why would I give up control and venture into the unknown?” A symphony is known for its emotional highs and lows, with moments of crescendo and decrescendo. Similarly, change often involves peaks of progress and moments that require perseverance during challenges and setbacks.

Simultaneously, as we work collaboratively in schools, we must recognize the diverse responses to change in one another – an inclusive, positive move to enhance the “music” in our buildings.

3. FIND BALANCE

As a former principal and teacher, I worked alongside educators who welcomed and embraced change. We were well-accustomed to the departmental announcements, the shiny, new curricular packages arriving in the mailboxes, or the activity bandwagon we were all

drawn to use. In education, we go full circle sometimes: Let’s teach phonics, no, switch to whole language, okay, and then go back to phonics again!

One particular “change virtuoso,” Brenda Margetts, had been a Kindergarten teacher in Balmoral, Manitoba, for 40+ years. When faced with change, she addressed it in the healthiest way. Instead of going “back to the drawing board” and getting tangled in an emotional response, Margetts acknowledged the change required, recognized her strengths, and found a positive balance between what she knew worked in the classroom with what was new. Just as a conductor may adjust the symphony’s tempo or key to evoke specific emotions, change initiatives must be adaptable. Flexibility allows you to be responsive to feedback and unforeseen circumstances, ensuring that progress continues.

How can educators balance the diverse responses to change in one another while enhancing the “music” in their buildings?

4. FOCUS ON YOURSELF AND WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

Singers and instruments require breath, and they know too well that breathing is essential to making tuneful music. Jodi Carrington reminds herself and others to “Drop your shoulders, and breathe.” Take a deep breath when entering your school, classroom, or make a change.

You can also connect to your heart, assess your values, and try to shift your mindset from the victim (change is happening TO me) to the composer (I can take ownership of the change and control specific things) Katrina Marshall Dyrting, and Susan Salzbremer, (March 23, 2020). Dyrting and Salzbremer liken this self-discovery to the Japanese art of “Ikigai” (pronounced ee-kee-guy). Ikigai is a Japanese concept that means your ‘reason for being.’ ‘Iki’ in Japanese means life, and ‘gai’ describes value or worth. Your ikigai is your life purpose or your bliss. It brings you joy and inspires you to get out of bed daily.

When you are the change maker, you have control. Fullan encourages educators to step back, develop a clear vision, plan intentionally, and adapt to effect

significant, lasting improvement. It is only then that we can put in the hard work of creating deep, meaningful, and enduring change.

You must repeatedly reassess traditional methods and embrace innovation. As an educator, you work hard for profound societal changes through your diligence in promoting, protecting, and seeking justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Similarly, Cale Birk, a composer of his new book *Drift: Observable Impact on Rigorous Learning*, reveals the following: listen and hear, look and observe. His simple method recommends that we connect change to a need, increasing student engagement. He then says that we need to create and look for opportunities that make a change observable. When we consciously make this step and observe the change taking place, we can actually see the difference. Then we can share successes and build structures that require us to show we have evolved. Finally, we can truly embrace the process of change that is sustainable and meets the needs of our audience – those who are changing.

Either way, it is critical to get out there and look around, be curious and do the research. When you are inspired, you end up growing and improving. Try the approach of creating achievable, minor, or “micro changes,” from *Atomic Habits* by James Clear. These small changes or choices are the foundations of more significant change. Collectively, they make a difference, even when you feel no movement, or your efforts seem unnoticeable or under-recognized.

5. TALK TO OTHERS

“We look all the time, but we don’t see. We listen, but we don’t hear. In this world where there is so much noise, we’ve been missing, more and more these days, the thing that matters most: we were never meant to do any of this alone.” – Dr. Jodi Carrington.

Symphonies are not solo performances. Before letting change “get to you,” ground yourself by speaking with someone. Acknowledge the difference and what is problematic about it. This conversation can be with a colleague or a Local association



member. Alternatively, you can contact a staff officer at The Manitoba Teachers’ Society at 204-888-7961 or toll-free at 1-800-262-8803.

As you move through each change, both personally and professionally, it is essential to know that your union is supportive of your needs: whether it be in advocating for employee rights via your Local association, professional growth offerings from MTS Professional French

Language Services, looking after your health by better understanding Disability Benefits, labour relations through MTS Teacher Welfare, or by strengthening your relationships with others using MTS Mediation Services and/or the Member and Family Assistance Program: HumanaCare.

You can be a change-maker and embrace change through understanding, listening, balancing, focusing, and talking to others.

Remember, while change is ironically a constant part of life, you can remain optimistic. Embrace it! It is your quest to be the “composers of awe-inspiring music” and use the various components in education: curriculum, students, and resources to harmonize. You can create, thrive, and allow your melody to shine through education – the “symphony of change.” 

SUPPORT THROUGH CHANGE

CHANGE SONGS & MESSAGES

This article would only be complete with some fun and inspirational listening! Scan the QR code to find our playlist of *Change Songs and Messages* on YouTube.



YOUR UNION WORKING FOR YOU

As you move through change MTS is here to support your needs: whether it be through professional growth, labour relations, benefits or mediation services. To learn more visit mbteach.org or scan the QR code.



BOOK REVIEWS

By Lisa Carlson, Elm Creek School, Senior Years Teacher



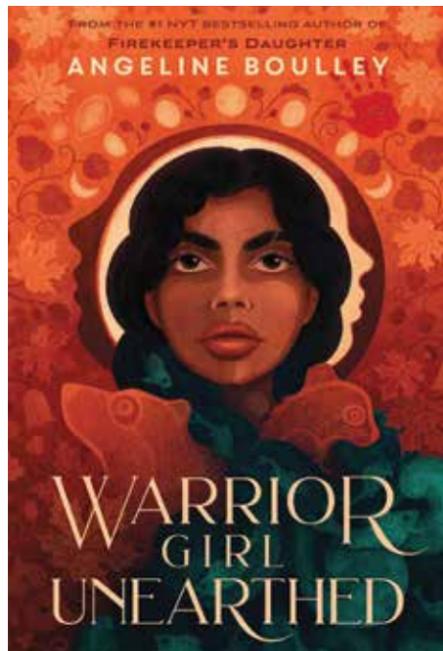
WHEN YOU GET THE CHANCE

Author: Tom Ryan and Robin Stevenson
Publisher: Running Press Kids (2021)

When their grandfather passes away, cousins Mark and Talia reconnect at his funeral in Toronto. Mark lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Talia in Victoria, British Columbia. Once the funeral is over, the big decision of whether to keep or sell the family's beloved summer cottage needs to be made. Tensions run high due to a family fight in the past, as well as how to best help their grandmother, whose health is also failing. While left alone at the cottage, the two teens and Mark's younger sister make the decision to "borrow" the grandparents' car and head to Toronto for Pride. Both Mark and Talia are queer, and Talia wants to reconnect with her girlfriend, who recently moved to Toronto. Along the way the three meet some colourful

characters who guide them through their first Toronto Pride experience.

Tom Ryan and Robin Stevenson (both part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community) do an excellent job of not only telling the teens' stories, but also in teaching the reader about what it's like to be a queer teen in present-day Canada. One of my favourite parts of the story was when the three kids meet Shirley Jr. and Babs, an older lesbian couple, who had been together well before societal norms accepted gay couples. As someone who has not experienced Toronto Pride, I was able to gain a better idea of both the event's celebration and joy, and why Pride events are so important for all of us.



WARRIOR GIRL UNEARTHED

Author: Angeline Boulley
Publisher: Henry Holt and Co. (BYR) (2023)

After a fender bender in her aunt's vehicle, Perry Firekeeper must get a summer job to pay for the repairs. Perry lands a job at the local museum, where she learns of the "Warrior Girl", an ancestor whose remains are stored at another location, along with the remains of twelve other Anishinaabe ancestors stored at a university. Perry, along with several of her friends, make it their mission to have these remains returned to where they rightfully belong, no matter what it takes.

This 2023 release is one of the top Young Adult novels I've read this year. The author discusses many pertinent issues Indigenous people face today, including murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people, boarding schools (residential schools in Canada), and the importance of educating today's youth.

The topic of repatriation of sacred Indigenous items and the remains of ancestors from museums and universities is one not often found in young adult literature, so I found this particularly interesting. While the story takes place in the United States, this does not detract from teaching about how Indigenous cultures are taking back their culture and righting past wrongs committed by colonizers.

Author Angeline Boulley, a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, beautifully describes various ceremonies, customs and the language of her people. *Warrior Girl Unearthed* is Boulley's second book, with *Firekeeper's Daughter* being her first. I recommend reading the novels in order, for continuity. Both are excellent, well-thought-out mysteries and offer much to learn about the Anishinaabe culture.



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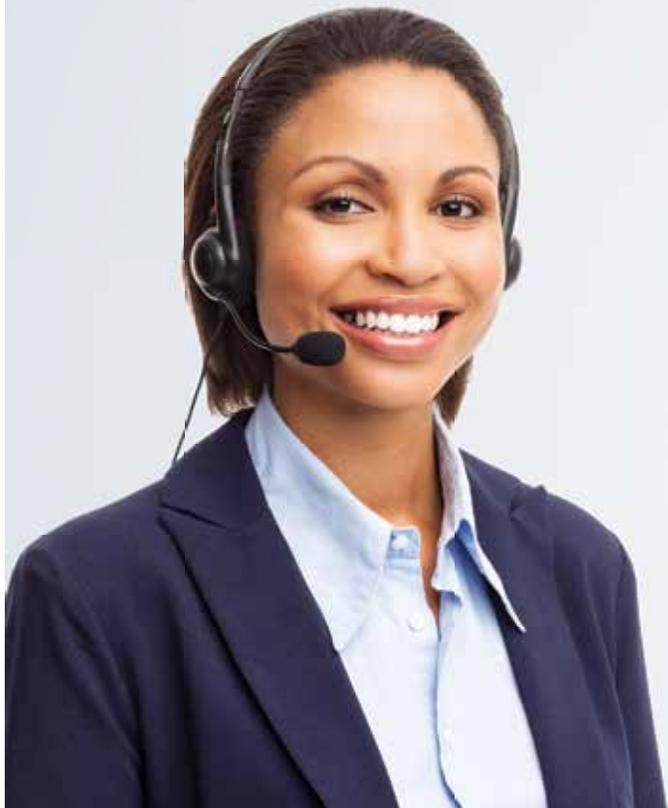
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