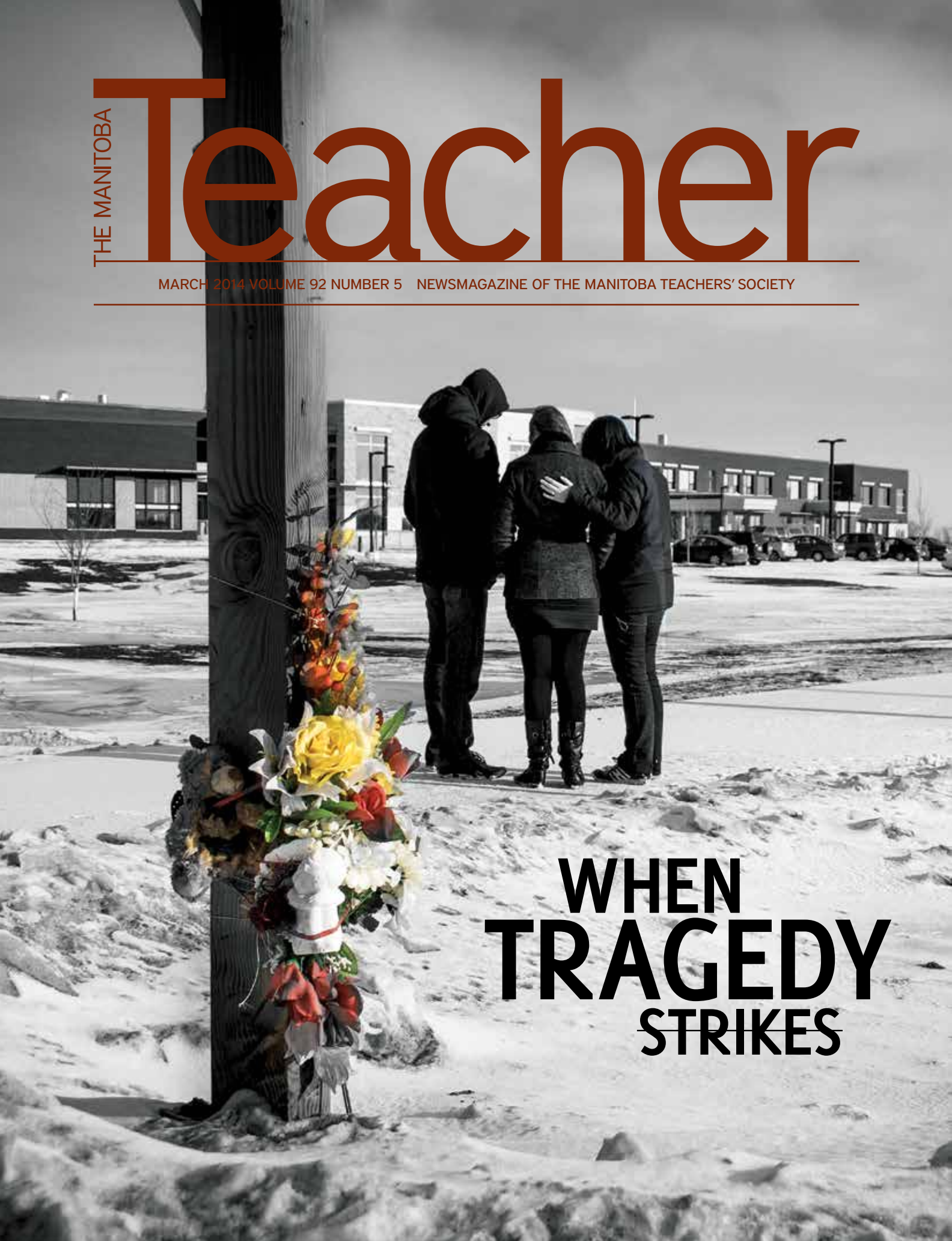


THE MANITOBA

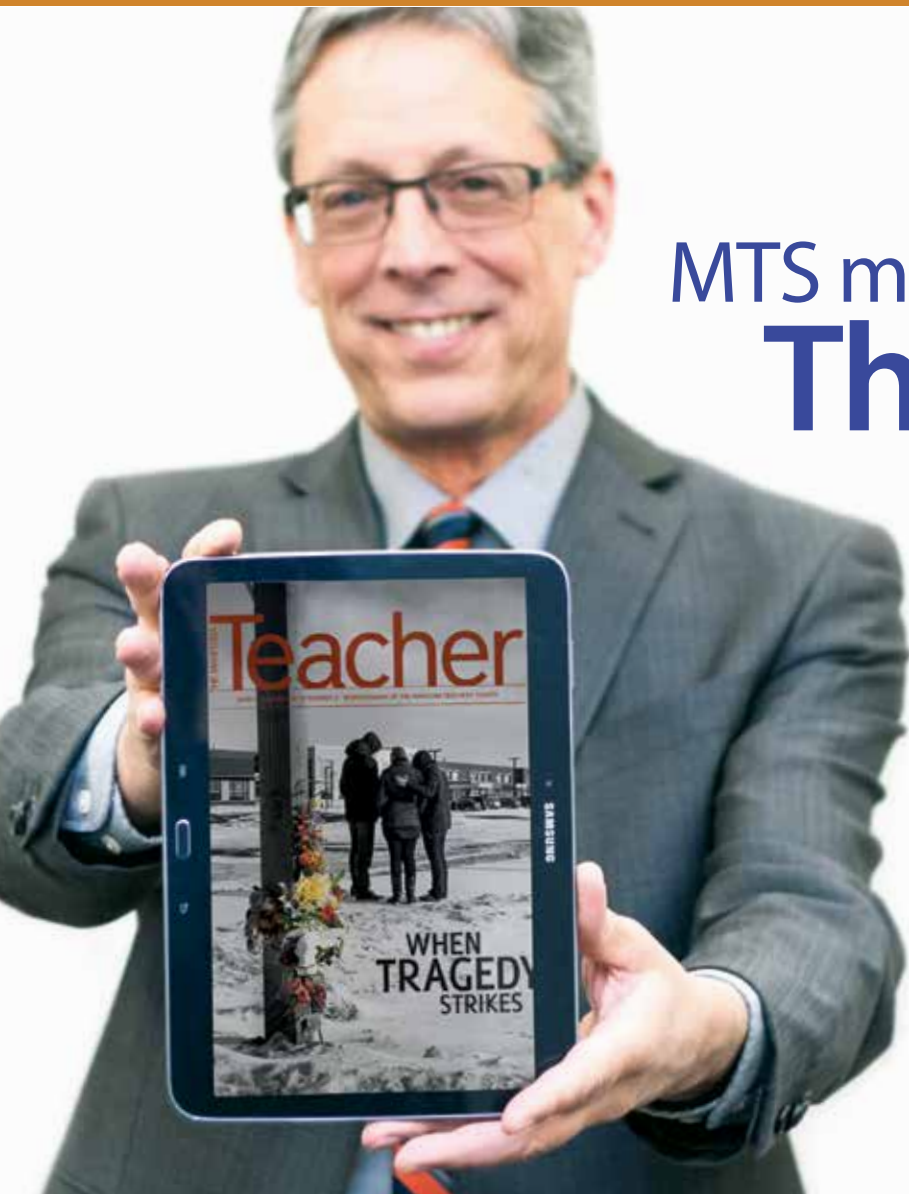
# Teacher

MARCH 2014 VOLUME 92 NUMBER 5 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



**WHEN  
TRAGEDY  
STRIKES**





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THE MANITOBA **Teacher**

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In 2007 22 per cent of the membership was under 35 years of age.



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Manitoban students help Third World kids overcome obstacles to education







## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

PAUL OLSON

It's been a tough couple of years for our members teaching in Sandy Bay First Nation. Over \$737,000 in teacher insurance contributions, pension contributions, and union dues are missing, benefits and pensions have been suspended, teachers are paid irregularly, and they've been dealing with this since at least June 2012.

MTS normally enforces collective agreements through the Manitoba Labour Board, but that solution simply led to more broken promises from SBFN. We've had 19 months of this, and there was simply no relief in sight for our members. Some other path had to be found.

With great regret, we've petitioned Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) to place Sandy Bay First Nation under what's known as "third party management". In particular, we've asked them to ensure that the money provided for education actually goes to education.

There is precisely zero joy around here on this matter.

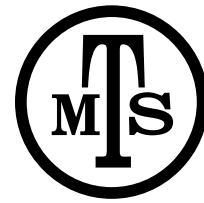
MTS has come a long way on matters of Aboriginal education. We have the Aboriginal Voice and Action Standing Committee to advise the Executive and ultimately AGM on matters pertaining to Aboriginal education. The first professional development activity in anyone's memory to be held at our AGM was a session on Idle No More. Staff and Provincial Executive undergo annual Aboriginal awareness (cultural proficiency) training. We work jointly with the Treaty Relations Commission on teacher resource development, and we are helping to organize a symposium on Aboriginal education. We've even designated space and provided custom ventilation here in the building so that if members want to smudge they need only let us know ahead of time.

Asking the federal government to intervene in First Nations governance should give all Canadians pause. It reminds me of another time that euro-centric governments intervened in First Nations education, and that didn't go so well, did it? We still see the echoes of those policies in too many broken lives and communities.

First Nations education funding increases in Canada have been capped at two per cent per year for the last 17 years. Net impact? A kid going to on-reserve school is funded at several thousand dollars less per year than a kid going to the neighboring public school. You can argue jurisdiction all you like, but the point is that it's obscene. One child is not worth more than another. And let's be honest, providing services in remote locations typically costs more per child, not less.

We stand up for our members in Sandy Bay without hesitation or apology. There are serious local matters that demand attention and repair, and Sandy Bay stands in unflattering contrast to any number of First Nations that demonstrate excellent governance even with sometimes scarce resources. Federal funding levels are an issue and a consideration—not an excuse.

Please do what you can to educate those taking any joy in our appeal for third party management. We will find a way forward—but there is nothing here to sing about.



## The Manitoba Teachers' Society

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## INSIDE MTS

KEN PEARCE, GENERAL SECRETARY

Five years from now we will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MTS. Your memories and the experiences of those who came before will be a huge part of that.

The Society's history began in 1919 at a key point in Manitoba's social and political development. Teachers were affected along with other workers. In 1922, Brandon's teachers were fired, two months before the end of the school year, for failing to agree to a 25 per cent pay cut. Since then, the Society has worked tirelessly to create for its members an organization that is both a union and a professional organization. You may have your own records of some of the challenges and successes you have witnessed over the years. If so, please contact the Society to share your experiences.

As we look ahead, we are working to create a comprehensive archive for the Society. We have hired a consultant to examine our record keeping and physical archiving and to establish an effective archival system.

At the same time, staff members are working on preparing materials for our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. You will recall the resolution from the 2012 Annual General Meeting:

*That the Society begin to prepare for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society and that these preparations include, but not be limited to, collecting stories from past presidents and staff, other long service members, researching records and archives and developing a plan to move forward, including any necessary resolutions.*

We will provide additional information after staff have completed their most immediate task of finding visuals as a starting point to our project. Once they have established a process for interviewing, this next step will begin.

Society bylaws and policies are also being reviewed and brought up to date with modern language and renewed focus on clarity. The Policy Handbook is being thoroughly revised and is being presented this year in a new format. This review will see the establishment of a less cumbersome Policy Handbook. It will help standing committees discuss the specifics of policy that support the Society's broad positions established by Provincial Council.

## Bylaw Resolutions

Bylaw XVI of The Manitoba Teachers' Society requires that all resolutions proposing to amend bylaws be published.

Following are some of the bylaws proposed to be amended at the 2014 Annual General Meeting. The full list of Constitution and Bylaw resolutions received from associations and the provincial executive are published on the MTS website, [www.mbteach.org](http://www.mbteach.org). Copies can also be obtained via email from Marni Sharples at [msharples@mbteach.org](mailto:msharples@mbteach.org)

In brief, the bylaw and constitution resolutions include:

- The Provincial Council (general meeting) of MTS to be held every two years rather than every year.
- The insertion of member rights into bylaws
- The addition of a bylaw clause to permit the holding of a Special Provincial Council Meeting for an emergent issue
- The provision for an appeals mechanism to Provincial Council from members
- The requirement of members to exhaust internal remedies for disputes before using other steps
- Granting the Provincial Executive the

power to approve premiums for insurances operated by the Society, rather than having to wait for a Provincial Council meeting.

- Granting members the right of appeal to the Provincial Executive when refused service by the General Secretary (a practice that is followed but not currently contained in bylaws as a right of membership)
- Establishing voting requirements for the passage of Constitutional and Bylaw changes

- Changing the submission dates of Constitution, Bylaw and Policy resolutions
- The insertion into Bylaws of the penalties for breaches of the Code of Professional Practice that were formerly held in the Constitution
- Deletion of the existing Bylaws and Policies Handbook of the Society and the adoption of six new bylaws and two general policies

Again, the detailed bylaw resolutions can be found at [www.mbteach.org](http://www.mbteach.org)

## Notice of Call

This notice is given in compliance with Bylaw II of the bylaws of The Manitoba Teachers' Society. The 95<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Provincial Council of The Manitoba Teachers' Society will be held May 22, 23 and 24, 2014 at the Fairmont Hotel, Winnipeg. Provincial Council consists of representatives named by teacher associations and the Éducatrices et éducateurs francophones du Manitoba plus members of the current Provincial Executive. The number of delegates representing each association depends on the number of members in that association.



## The Canadian Museum For Human Rights

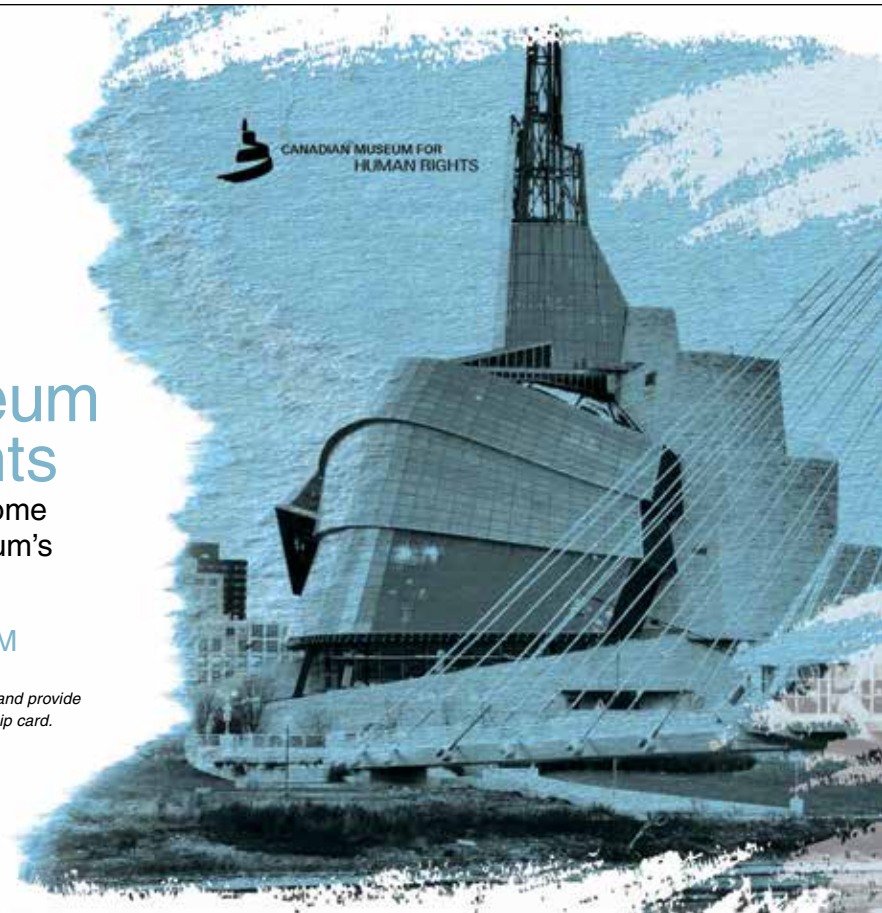
is pleased to host a special welcome to MTS members from the Museum's Learning & Programming staff.

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## WHEN TRAGEDY STRIKES

BY PAT ST. GERMAIN

If you don't know how you'd react in a crisis, consider yourself lucky. Paul Magnan knows all too well how a school tragedy can throw students, teachers and principals into emotional tailspins.

That's one reason the Sunrise School Division assistant superintendent and his colleagues maintain a meticulously detailed crisis-response plan, with a 15-member team ready to activate it at a moment's notice.

When Magnan was principal of Powerview School in the 1990s, a student committed suicide by hanging, a tragedy that was compounded by the fact the small kindergarten - Grade 12 school had been hit by a series of losses over a relatively short period.

"We had a team that came to support us, but we knew it was bigger than us so we brought in the local ministers," Magnan says.

"It was really about how do we support kids, because kids were really upset."

But Magnan found he needed support himself, and he was grateful to have someone from the division to guide him.

"I thought I was a macho male principal, that this happened and I can go ahead and deal with it," he says.

"Well I can tell you I sure was glad that I had somebody standing right beside me, behind me. And when I was talking to my staff the first morning, when I was having a tough time with words, somebody jumped right in and picked up for me.

"We even had to bring somebody in to answer the phones for us because the





school secretaries ... it's just having another person there."

Divisional response teams are deployed across the province when school teams need help dealing with crises — a fatal car accident, a health-related death or even murder.

Liz Myles, principal at Ecole Beausejour Middle School, served on the Sunrise division's crisis-response team for several years. She says rural schools deal with the same traumatic events that hit inner-city schools, including terminal illnesses, suicides and fatal incidents of domestic violence.

One year, a new young teacher at Myles' kindergarten - Grade 5 school was killed in a car accident on her way home from a parent-teacher meeting, a tragedy that affected the entire school.

Myles says the school community is like a family. Teachers bond with colleagues and forge connections with students — a requirement that's unique to the job — and in many rural schools multi-age classrooms mean they work with the same kids for multiple years.

The divisional crisis team is ready to step in and take over duties for staff who are blindsided by a sudden loss. As a principal on the team, Myles might have addressed the morning staff meeting, prepared a letter to send home to parents and performed any other task a school's principal didn't feel up to performing.

Divisional social workers, psychologists and counselors who are trained in grief counseling are part of the team and they adhere to detailed protocols.

Magnan says teachers are called to attend an early staff meeting and the divisional team assemblies at the school before they arrive. If teachers are not able to face the day, substitute teachers will step in, or a team member may accompany a teacher to class to help him or her talk to students or

just act as a support during classes.

A second staff meeting is held at the end of the day and if necessary the crisis team will plan to return the following morning.

Magnan says the team tries to cover all the bases, making sure teachers are OK to drive home and meeting with bus drivers to share information, offer support and enlist their help. Bus drivers are asked to let the team know if they notice kids who are especially upset over the following days and weeks, and the crisis team checks back after about 10 days to make sure it's done a complete job.

Border Land School Division assistant superintendent Carol Braun says most divisions follow a similar template.

School crisis teams identify which staff members and students are most likely to need support. In the case of a student death, it may be the child's best friend, a teacher who was especially close or even a custodian who had a bond with the child.

In some cases, staff may feel they're not up to teaching a class, but they may want to stay at school to be with colleagues. The school support system can be important for helping staff and students come to terms with any crisis. After two teens were killed in separate car accidents near Altona during the summer break, W.C. Miller Collegiate was opened to let the school community come together for support.

Braun says it's important to get accurate information about a critical incident to avoid speculation, and to share the information appropriately. She says the emotional toll of a tragedy can have a negative impact on learning, but the experience can also be an opportunity to develop resilience.

MTS Educator Assistance Program counselor Sylvie Ringuette says teachers rarely need professional counseling after a tragic event. But it's important to have support so they can try to make sense of what

happened and share their feelings.

"What we see is they find comfort with each other, with their own natural support system," Ringuette says.

Re-establishing a normal routine as soon as possible will help the healing process along, but it's important to be flexible and allow everyone to grieve in their own way.

"Be prepared to be surprised by how people react. Perhaps the ones we feel will react strongly will not," she says. "Some people will have a delayed reaction, days or weeks later."

Sleeplessness, nightmares and changes in appetite are normal. After a traumatic event, people might function well most of the time but have periodic emotional breakdowns, and that's normal too.

However, if someone is still struggling after several weeks, or if the crisis touched a nerve — recalling a similar loss or trauma from their past — they should seek counseling.

"We are here for the staff that are having a hard time moving on or are having a hard time getting back to work because they are having triggers," Ringuette says.

As part of its crisis preparation strategy, the Sunrise division gives all teachers packages that include information on the grieving process and symptoms to watch for in children.

Magnan says in many cases — the death of a child's parent, for example — the school team is probably equipped to offer any support that's needed.

But when a school has dealt with multiple events, or the current situation might trigger memories of a recent loss, divisional crisis team members know they should be ready to help staff and students cope.

"It's unfortunate that we've learned by trial and error and by experience ... but we have."

The Manitoba Teachers' Society

## SAGE ADVICE

### SHARE YOUR EXPERTISE

Special Area Groups of Educators are looking for teachers with specific expertise to share their knowledge with colleagues at next October's SAGE Day conferences. See the list of SAGES and contacts at [www.mbteach.org/professional-development/sages.html](http://www.mbteach.org/professional-development/sages.html)





# UNIQUE IDEA OPENS DOORS FOR TWO KINDS OF STUDENTS

BY MATEA TUHTAR

**W**hen you think of occupational therapists in schools, you are likely to associate them with special needs students.

But as River East Collegiate Student Services Head Janie Kupskey discovered, occupational therapists have a lot more to offer to schools than first meets the eye.

Kupskey spearheaded a new venture at River East where the student services department opened their doors to two occupational therapy masters students from The University of Manitoba. The first of its kind, the merger was intended to provide in-school experience for the Masters students and provide occupational therapy to the universal student population at the high school.

“Our school system already has occupational therapists who work with special needs or high-risk students,” she says. “This was different. This was looking towards the future. People don’t know that occupational therapists also do other things—I didn’t know, and I’ve been in the system a long time.”

The two Masters students set up a table in Student Services and made themselves

accessible to any student who wished to speak to them. The pair dealt with concerns such as time management, housing, resume developing, job finding, career planning, exam anxiety, and post-secondary planning among others. They also provided help with accessing community resources such as leisure activities, immigration centers, health centers, library resources, cultural centers and Manitoba associations such as the Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba.

“For two months, those girls had line-ups at their table,” says Kupskey. “They were skilled in reaching out to different pieces of society—they saw top academics, students who are extremely stressed at exam time as well as the very needy, at-risk population here. And they had zero problems working with them. I know how occupational therapists work in a school division and I know how social work and counselling works, but this was a whole new gig. It was amazing how well it fit.”

An important piece was providing information to new Canadians, something that often gets missed in schools.

“When new Canadians come into our system it’s usually a huge stress for them—there is a lot of stuff that we as a school don’t often look at. We just go ‘Here are your classes, this is what you’re going to do’, but these kids barely know how to get from home to school. New immigrants might not know how to access services as simple as where you get bus tickets, or if you had to go to the hospital, who would you call?”

Often students who are new Canadians are taking care of their parents who might not have the language skills, and don’t know how to access all the resources and services available to them.

“The occupational therapy students were able to show these kids all the different things they can do to make their everyday life better so they can focus on their academics.”

Another important part was dealing with kids from low socio-economic backgrounds. “They would sit and talk about things like ‘What would you do if there is no food in the house? Who could you connect with—do you have those numbers? Or what if your little brother or sis-

ter isn’t making it to school and you can’t take them because you have to go to school yourself?”

“This is the type of information that is invaluable to students who might not know how to find out for themselves.”

Kupskey says the U of M students were looking at the environmental aspects—something that school counsellors often wish they had more opportunity for in their busy schedules.

“They help a student be successful in their ‘environment’ and that extends beyond the school into the community. Resumes, job training, interview skills—those are also things we’d love to do but we just don’t have time. It was a huge load off our back.”

Though the teachers in Student Services were their daily supervisors, the U of M students had weekly debriefings with the divisional occupational therapist consultant Donna Glasgow, as well as with their U of M contact. And though she admits that supervising student teachers can sometimes add on work for teachers, Kupskey says there was no work involved with the Masters students.

“We just asked them what they wanted to do, and then said ‘go with it!’. There was no training on our part—these are interested people who want to be there. It was seamless, and the most amazing experience of teaming up with a different educational branch.”

The occupational therapy students cannot do a job that someone is employed to do, nor are they there to replace or assist someone with a job already.

“This is separate,” says Kupskey, adding that student services, principals, superintendent and the occupational therapy supervisor all had to be on board to embrace the program.

The program is in its second year with a new set of students arriving from U of M this winter, and Kupskey hopes it continues into the future.

“It’s really been a win-win situation. We had a wonderful response—and when they left, they left a gap. There was a hole there. And it just shows you that being proactive with commitment you can join hands in education with different outreaches and it can be amazing.”



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# UNIONS & YOUNG PEOPLE

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

In early October a number of Manitoba labour leaders gathered at The Manitoba Teachers' Society building to hear a talk from the author of the new book *From Demonized to Organized: Building the New Union Movement*.

Most of the questions afterward focused on a single theme: How do you get young people interested in the union?

Author Nora Loreto said there is a generational gap separating young workers and older union activists that has to be bridged.

How to go about building that bridge is still elusive, but the question is becoming more critical as outside forces build against unions and union members.

It is also important because some unions, such as The Manitoba Teachers' Society, are getting younger.

Just six years ago 33 per cent of MTS mem-

bers were under the age of 40. Today more than 38 per cent are under 40. In 2007, 22 per cent of the membership was under 35 years of age. Today that group accounts for over 25 per cent of members.

And that could accelerate over the next few years as a huge group of baby boomer teachers make decisions on retirement. More than 2,000 teachers are eligible to retire this year alone. Almost 30 per cent of public school teachers will be eligible to retire over the next five years.

MTS President Paul Olson says increasing the involvement of younger workers in the union is an issue, but wonders if "in some ways, it's the wrong question."

"I wonder if it's less a question of why young people don't get involved, but more a question of what do they want, what do they need and how do we provide it?"

Pablo Godoy, national representative for

the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), says unions in general haven't done a good job connecting with young workers.

"I think unions are extremely relevant, but I don't think they are too present or prevalent when it comes to young workers," he told CBC. "It's not necessarily on their minds."

Author Loreto says younger people, under the age of 40, aren't as likely to get involved in organizations as quickly as their older colleagues once did.

They have probably come out of school with a large debt, might be in a job that is not secure and could well be skeptical about all organizations.

"Young people are often as cynical about unions as they are of corporations."

That is an observation mirrored by others involved with organizing young people.

Heather Smith, president of Rock The Vote

MORE ON FOLLOWING PAGE...

Just six years ago  
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In 2007  
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members.





in the U.S., which helps register young voters, says young people can get passionate about causes, but that if they don't see results, that passion can fade.

"There's increased cynicism," she told Atlantic Magazine. "They see their voices being trumped by corporate interests. Young people are not feeling like they're being heard or valued in the political process."

Loreto agrees.

"It isn't because young people don't care. Just because they're not involved doesn't mean they don't care. They just feel they're completely powerless."

At the same time, it might be that young workers are just satisfied with the job their unions are doing and in the absence of any outside threats don't see any need to be involved.

While it is true young teachers in Manitoba are generally satisfied with the job the union is doing, a majority would still consider getting involved in Society work.

According to results of an MTS member poll a year ago, 69 per cent of teachers under the age of 35 said they felt the union was doing an excellent or good job.

to cut public school funding, Jurassic Park was the No. 1 movie and Kim Campbell was prime minister of Canada.

And Olson says simply telling young teachers – who may be thankful, but not inspired – how the union fought the good fight sometime in the past can too often sound like bragging.

"And that's not a great way to make friends."

In the United States, where attacks on unions have become more pronounced, activism among young people, including young teachers has been growing.

The situation with unions is much different to the south, and ominous for the future here. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, more than 700 bills targeting unions were introduced in U.S. state houses in 2011.

One of the biggest battles was in Ohio where unions and supporters successfully had anti-union legislation rolled back, thanks to a partnership between young people and old union hands.

"The basic message that Occupy Wall Street has – that people are fed up with the top one per cent getting everything – it resonates with

"They deal with these issues every day in their classrooms with their students. They are part of their working life," he says. "Traditional labour issues may not be the best first conversation with these teachers."

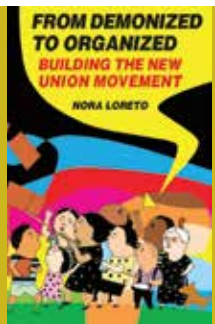
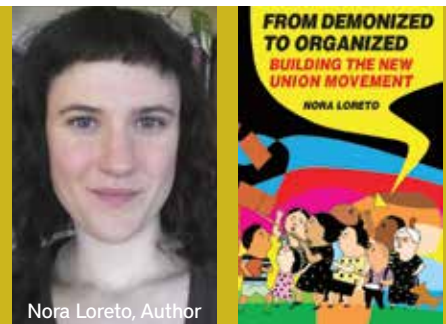
That was underscored recently during the province-wide discussions on gay-straight alliances in school and the province's measures to protect students from bullying. Much of the discussion was carried on by the union and teachers in general, he says.

"We need to tell a much more compelling narrative as to what labour is doing that goes beyond issues of naked, self-interest," he says.

**"I wonder if it's less a question of why young people don't get involved, but more a question of what do they want, what do they need and how do we provide it?"**

- Paul Olson, MTS President

**In early October a number of Manitoba labour leaders gathered at The Manitoba Teachers' Society building to hear a talk from Nora Loreto, the author of the new book *From Demonized to Organized: Building the New Union Movement*.**



The same poll found that 54 per cent of teachers in that age group would consider getting involved in the union. And that was more than five percentage points higher than the response by older teachers.

Olson says he doesn't think there is a lack of willingness on the part of young teachers to become engaged in issues they feel strongly about.

"Young people are willing to get involved and be active, but not to sit around in a meeting and talk."

As well, unions in Manitoba have had a peaceful relationship with the provincial government for more than a decade. A 35-year-old teacher today was just starting high school the last time the union fought with the government over any major issue. When Tory Premier Gary Filmon introduced measures

union members and young people," AFL-CIO Political Director Mike Podhorzer said in an interview with The Atlantic.

On the other hand, many young teachers also became activists in attempts to refashion their own unions. In Los Angeles, a faction within the union is pushing the union away from its focus on contracts to issues that would improve public schools. Similar efforts by groups that Time magazine says are largely made up of younger teachers, have started in New York, Boston, Chicago and Washington.

Olson doesn't find that surprising. He thinks young teachers don't feel that strongly about traditional union functions, such as collective bargaining and pensions, but can be passionate about the social justice issues raised by unions or being felt in schools from rising inequality to student debt.

"We need to define ourselves to our teachers and the public in general."

Olson says communications with younger members – with all members – would help bridge whatever generational gaps might exist between members.

In her book, Loreto says "the need for inter-generational education cannot be overstated, and is especially important considering how little each generation truly understands of each other's experiences."

"Not only do older workers have to recognize that young people have an entirely different experience than they themselves had," she says, "they must also understand that younger workers have very little knowledge of the history of why the union is organized and structured in the way that it is."

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# TEACHER BY DAY GRAPHIC NOVELIST BY NIGHT

BY MATEA TUHTAR

**M**uch like a superhero in a comic book, teacher Greg Chomichuk leads a double life.

He spends his days with his students teaching AP Psychology, English, and Drama at St. James Collegiate where he's worked for the last 6 years. His nights on the other hand, are filled with monsters, science fiction landscapes and strange creatures he dreams up, writes about and illustrates.

And if you ask him, the two lives support each very well.

"You don't have to begrudge your day job to be an artist," says Chomichuk. At least it's never stopped him.

A writer, teacher, mixed media artist, graphic novelist, and family man, Chomichuk wears many hats. He won the Manitoba Book Award for Best Illustrated Book in 2011 for his graphic novel *The Imagination Manifesto*, has been nominated for Best English Graphic Novel and Best Artist for another graphic novel *Raygun Gothic* at the 2013 Aurora Awards, has owned a comic book store, and is the founder of Alchemical Press—a small publishing company that to date has published six graphic novels, including two children's graphic novels. He also presents workshops on comics, has a couple of projects coming out soon, and is a subject of a documentary called *Artist by Night*.

"People say 'Oh, you have two jobs?' No, I have two passions," says Chomichuk. "I love teaching and I love writing and making stories. And no day feels like work if you're passionate about it."

It's that love of storytelling that Chomichuk tries to pass onto his students. When his English class did an exploration of the play *Macbeth*,

Chomichuk used a whole class narrative exercise to get his students into the story.

"We gave every student a character from the play and spent a month where each student had a hand in writing their own version of the play. They worked collaboratively—the only set up was they had to stay within the original character motivation."

The response from students was "incredible". "They could take any action they wanted within 1040 Scotland," says Chomichuk. "What was great about it is it meant they had to ask questions. Where does this take place, what was that Glamis place like? All those questions became self-motivated."

Once they were hooked on the story, the students studied the real play—recognizing their and their classmates' characters in the book—now with a vested interest.

"We encode memory based on emotion—emotion requires a lot less effort than repetition. So if a kid is invested and interested in whatever the subject is, and has a strong emotional content to it, then their recall is much higher," says Chomichuk, who also presented the whole class narrative idea at the 2013 SAGE Conference.

Chomichuk is currently applying the same concept for the 1920 science fiction Czech play *RUR*, which first introduced the word "robot" to the English language. "We're looking at that notion and the whole modern application of robots, basically showing kids the world economists believe they will live in at my age."

Chomichuk shares his students' work on a classroom blog and uses it for a mnemonic for ideas during teaching.

"I curate students' work," he says. "I'll get their individual permissions to 'share with the world'. As soon as it's for an audience, they want to do better. It's amazing the pride they have."



*Giving them answers doesn't help.... They can find the answer—but they need to know what questions to ask—why it's worthwhile.*

One of the ways the students are exploring *RUR* is by creating their own robots—"It's all about triggering honest responses."

Chomichuk is most interested in his students' responses.

"When it comes down to it, it's about trying to make the students the authors of their own work. I try to remember when I'm talking to these kids about what their future is going to be—I'm not the expert, nor can I ever be the expert, because 20 years from now the world will not be the same. So giving them answers doesn't help. And now every kid carries the sum total of all human knowledge in their pocket. They can find the answer—but they need to know what questions to ask—why it's worthwhile."

Though he's always written and drawn, Chomichuk started creating comics around the same time he pursued his edu-

cation training. "Comics sort of came out of the fact that you're supposed to write what you know. But since I was writing a lot of fantastical things, in order to really 'know them' I would draw them."

Winnipeg is 'full of comic people', says Chomichuk, adding that comics have grown up a lot in Canada in the last 20–30 years, though only catching up to how Europe and Asia have been treating the medium for the last century. The Central Canada Comic Con—an annual fan convention held in Winnipeg every year—is a good place to find out more about the world of comics and check out new graphic novels.

"Graphic novels are outselling print books," says Chomichuk, "It's the only growing sector in the print industry."

And they're not just reserved for new work—many literary classics have been adapted as graphic novels including *Frankenstein*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and the *Odyssey*, to name a few. Chomichuk has used graphic novels in the classroom and says that anything that makes a story accessible is a good thing.

In his first week of teaching, a student raised their hand and asked him about the *Imagination Manifesto*. "I Google all my new teachers', he said," laughs Chomichuk.

Though he doesn't hide the fact that he creates comics, he enjoys having an outlet for his own voice outside the classroom, which is why he tends to separate his teaching world from the comic world.

"Because as teachers, whether we believe it or not, we're in an influential position—our notions of politics and society are supposed to be absent. We're supposed to let them make their own decisions and find their own voice. So I think what some kids have connected with, is that out there in the world, I'm also speaking with my own voice."

Finding your own voice, whether through drawing or writing is the key in Chomichuk's teaching.

"In everything, it doesn't matter what medium, people can now get what they want. They don't have to take what you give them—they can find out for themselves. I approach my classroom and books the same way—people can get what they want. So don't waste their time."

To find out more about Chomichuk's work visit his blog at [comicalchemy.blogspot.ca](http://comicalchemy.blogspot.ca)



Greg Chomichuk





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## THE CRISIS AT SANDY BAY

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

A teacher for 23 years, Mike Beaulieu has a special pride in teaching at the school on the Sandy Bay First Nation. The Isaac Beaulieu Memorial School is named in honour of his father, an education activist, school board chair and person who was instrumental in ensuring teachers were protected by The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Mike Beaulieu has never needed that protection more than he does now.

For more than two years teachers at the school have seen pay cheques occasionally come up short and arrive irregularly. While regular pay is now up to date, there are still serious problems.

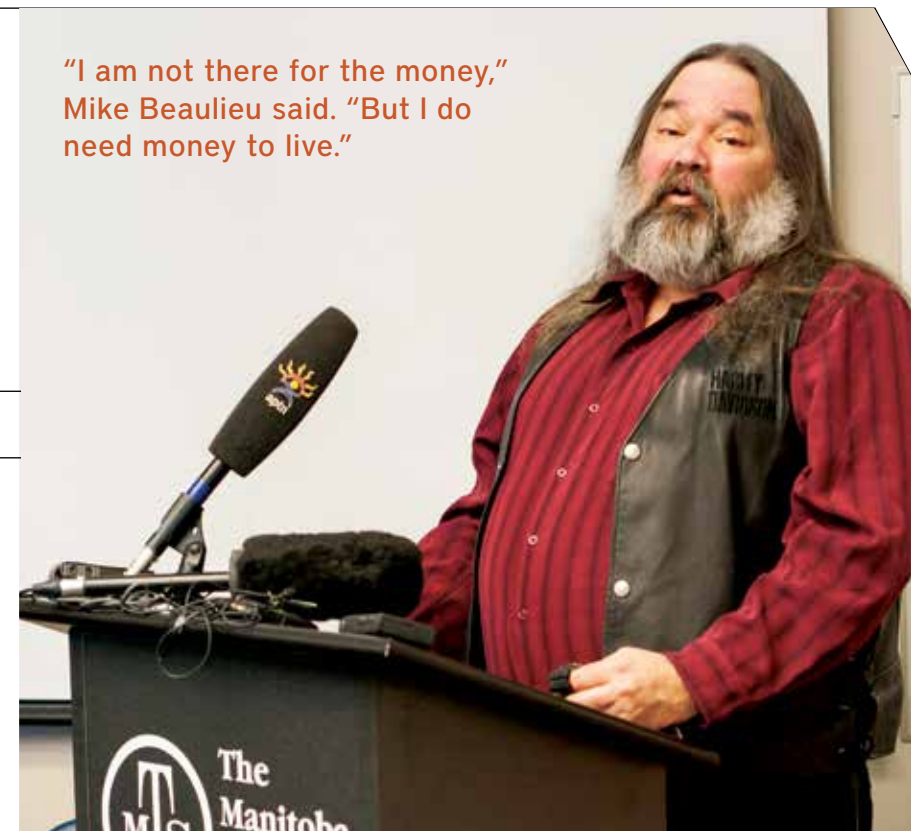
They have discovered that the band has not remitted deductions taken off teachers' cheques for benefits, income tax and pensions totalling more than \$750,000. Some retired teachers have been refused pensions and others refused health care that was supposed to have been covered by the payments they made.

After months of discussion and a succession of promises that the problems would be corrected, The Manitoba Teachers' Society requested the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to appoint a third-party manager to take over band finances. At press time, the department had not responded.

"We have agonized over this, but have come out of 19 months of promises that have been broken over and over and over again," says MTS President Paul Olson.

Beaulieu said he was especially disheartened since his father was instrumental in getting the K-12 school built.

"I am proud to be teaching in a school named after my dad," he said. "He was



"I am not there for the money," Mike Beaulieu said. "But I do need money to live."

the first to get MTS into the school because he wanted to ensure that Sandy Bay got quality teachers. That's my home community. That's the school my dad built and I don't want to have to leave.

"Our leadership has talked about the importance of education. I believe that education is where our future lies. But what is happening at Sandy Bay is undermining that future."

He said the problems are not confined to the teachers. Morale at the school has dropped and many of the 1,000 students are also under stress because they all know the situation and some are children of the people affected.

Marlene Lavasseur, a former teacher, left and took a teaching job at a school on the Ebb and Flow reserve because the delay in cheques often left her with bills to pay and no money. As well, she needed to access her group health and couldn't.

"In the end, my health was suffering," she says. "I just had to leave the school. It was a decision I had to make just to survive."

Band Chief Russell Beaulieu has admitted benefits and contributions have not been remitted since 2012, but placed blame on the previous band administra-

tion for racking up debts of almost \$20 million. As well, he said he didn't know where the money deducted from pay cheques has gone. But, he rejected any demand to put the band under third-party management.

Olson said if the reserve is having financial difficulties and if those are a result of a lack of education funding from the federal government, then MTS is willing to help any efforts to improve that situation.

"This would be a perfect time to put a spotlight on those issues."

In the meantime, teachers have had to deal with financial institutions to which they are making payments or pay for medicines and eye glasses from their own pockets.

"I am not there for the money," Mike Beaulieu said. "But I do need money to live."

Sandy Bay is one of two Manitoba reserves where MTS represents teachers.

According to a report on the band's website, Sandy Bay is working to pay off debts to a wide range of suppliers from a funeral home to the Manitoba Textbook Bureau.



# Teaching isn't ROCKET SCIENCE ... it's harder

BY RYAN FULLER

When I was twenty-two years old, I took a position as an aerospace engineer working on the design of NASA's next-generation spacecraft. I considered it my dream job. With a degree in mechanical engineering, the only career ambition I could articulate was that I wanted to work on something space-related.

As I walked down the cubicle aisles on my first day of work, I was awestruck by the drawings of Apollo-like spacecraft structures. This wasn't some documentary on the space industry – this was what I was going to be working on. The pinnacle of my career star-struckness occurred at a meeting I attended between my manager and a group of NASA representatives in which they discussed how much the heat shield would deflect when the craft landed in water, and how much g-force astronauts could withstand. We were indeed working on some real space...stuff.

I was extremely motivated during my first year of work. I got in earlier and stayed later than most, and I tried to learn everything I could from my more experienced colleagues. The work certainly wasn't easy. Our team was trying to re-engineer, with modern technology, something that was designed in the sixties. As a design engineer, I

had to integrate the efforts of several different groups that often didn't talk to each other or even get along very well. Because we were working on a one-of-a-kind project, many of the problems we ran into were being solved for the first time. I had to come up with design solutions that met several requirements and my deadlines haunted me like a thousand nightmares. Over the course of the next few years, I completed my work with a relatively high level of success.

Despite all of this, I felt there was something missing. I was working on an intriguing and challenging project, and I was being recognized for my success, but I struggled with the question of why I was doing it. What higher purpose was I serving? My inability to answer this question led me down a journey that included a year and a half of traveling, reading and thinking that culminated in my applying and being accepted to Teach For America.

Because I've worked as a teacher and an aerospace engineer, I find it fascinating how different the public perception of both careers is, especially when the realities of the professions are considered. When I told people that I worked on the design of a NASA spacecraft, their mouths would drop and their eyes would pop, their minds no doubt filled with images of men in white lab coats running between rocket engines

and blackboards filled with equations of untold complexity. The truth is that most people will give aerospace engineers tremendous respect without having any idea what they actually do.

And then there's teaching. No one can fully understand how difficult teaching is until he or she personally experiences it. When I solved engineering problems, I had to use my brain. When I solve teaching problems, I use my entire being – everything I have. A typical engineering task involves sending an email to a colleague about a design solution that we had been working on that week. A typical teacher task involves explaining for the fourth time how to get the variable out of the exponent while two students put their heads down, three students start texting, two girls in the back start talking and one student provokes another from across the classroom. As a teacher, I must prioritize the problems of getting the distracted students refocused and stabilizing the cross-classroom conflict before it escalates into a shouting match or worse, all the while making sure the learning of the other twenty-five students in the room doesn't come to a complete halt. I also must solve these problems in a consistent, respectful way that best serves the needs of the students because if I don't, the problems will increase in num-

ber and become more difficult to solve.

As an engineer, I dealt with very complex design problems, but before I decided how to solve them, I had a chance to think, research, and reflect for hours, days, or even weeks. I was also solving them as part of a team and had many opportunities to consult colleagues for advice before making any decisions. As a teacher, I have seconds to decide how to solve several problems at once for hours at a time without any real break. Teachers are almost always the only adults in the room and for many teachers, the adults who should be supporting them actually make their jobs more challenging. There are days of teaching that make a day in the office seem like a vacation.

I think one of the biggest misconceptions about teaching is that it is a single job. Teaching is actually two jobs. The first job is the one that teachers are familiar with and that people who have not taught can pretend doesn't exist. The tasks involved in this job include lesson planning, grading, calling parents, writing emails, filling out paperwork, going to meetings, attending training, tutoring, and occasionally sponsoring a club or coaching a sport. The time allotted to teachers for this work is usually one hour per workday. The reality, however, is that the time spent on these tasks could easily fill a traditional forty-hour work week.

And then there's the teaching part of teaching, which would more aptly be called the performance. Because it is a performance. When Monday morning arrives, there is no time for a teacher to recount weekend activities in the coffee room. There is no time to ease into the week by reading news websites in between checking emails. Every morning a teacher is on stage, conducting a symphony of human development. A teacher must simultaneously explain the content correctly, make the material interesting, ensure that students are staying on task and that they understand the material, and be ready to deal with the curve balls that will be thrown at her every fifteen seconds – without flinching – for five hours. And if, for some reason, she is not able to inspire, educate, and relate to thirty students at once, she has to be ready to get them back on track because no matter what students say or do to detract from the lesson, they want structure, they want to learn and they want to be prepared for life.

That said, I experience more failure every

five minutes of teaching than I experienced in a week as an engineer. Giving a presentation to NASA about how the thermal protection system of a spacecraft is connected to the primary structure is a cakewalk compared to trying to get 30 teenagers excited about logarithms. A difficult moment in engineering involves a customer in a big meeting pointing out a design problem that I hadn't considered. The concerns of the customer can be eased with a carefully crafted statement that basically says, "You're right. We'll look into it." A difficult moment in teaching involves a student – one who has a history of being bullied and having suicidal thoughts – telling me that she is pregnant 30 seconds before class starts. What carefully crafted statement is going to help her?

The moments of success seem to come less often as a teacher, but when they do arrive, they can make up for all the failures. The excitement on a student's face when she understands something after struggling with it for a while. The look a student gives you when he realizes you really care about him. That lesson when all the energy in the room is directed toward the day's objective. The shared laughter between teacher and student that comes from a joke that only they understand.

Sometimes the successes don't come until well down the line, when a teacher realizes she played a big part in altering a student's life for the better – like when I found out the two-minute presentation I gave on petroleum engineering changed what one of my students wanted to do with his life. In each second of her chaotic day, a teacher has a chance to drastically change the life of her students for the better. How many people can say that?

New teachers should understand that pouring your soul into something you care so deeply about yet fail at so regularly is one of the most difficult things you will ever experience in your life. The corps members that I work with in my community could have entered any field and succeeded because they are extremely competent people who work hard.

Teaching, though, is different. In teaching, a person can be extremely competent, work relentlessly, and still fail miserably. In fact, that is the reality for most first-year teachers who are often put into positions in which success seems impossible. For people who have been so successful up to that point in their lives, failure is a difficult thing to face, especially when that failure involves young people not being able to realize their full potential in life.



*Giving a presentation to NASA about how the thermal protection system of a spacecraft is connected to the primary structure is a cakewalk compared to trying to get 30 teenagers excited about logarithms.*

Because of all this, sometimes teachers think about leaving for other professions. As someone who quit his job designing a NASA spacecraft during a severe recession without any clear plan, I realize that sometimes you have to do what feels right to you. For me, 30 pairs of eyes looking up at me answer the once-burning question about the higher purpose of my work. As someone with a great education and leadership qualities, you have the opportunity to do whatever you want. You can choose to leave whenever you want. You can go into any field and achieve great things. You have that choice.

Just don't forget about the ones who don't have a choice. Don't forget about the ones that don't get to choose what school they go to. Who don't get to choose their teachers. Who don't get to choose how the students around them act. Who don't get to choose what environment they were born into. Don't forget about them. They'll be there Monday morning.

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BY JENNIFER MCFEE

There is joy in generosity. It's a simple lesson that creates connections among classrooms, countries and cultures. Hundreds of Manitoba students are experiencing this concept first-hand by participating in an international initiative to help Third World kids overcome obstacles to education.

It all began four years ago when my husband and I launched a project called The Privilege of Giving, which aims to help victims of conflict in the Putumayo region of Colombia, South America.

Through our project, we began to provide school supplies, backpacks and textbooks to Grade 1 students at an elementary school in southern Colombia. Thanks to the generosity of family and friends, we have been able to increase the number of students that we support each year.

Now the project is set to expand even further, since École River Heights School and Teulon Elementary School have jumped onboard to provide assistance and friendship to the kids in Colombia.

Throughout the country, Colombian residents live in an unstable environment that stems from a decades-long struggle involving guerillas, government and other armed groups. Many families have lost everything in the face of violence. With no other options available, millions of people have left all that is familiar and forged a new life with little more than the few items they could carry with them.

My husband, Ricardo Burbano, is originally from Colombia, where he worked for international organizations that provided humanitarian aid to displaced people. After he immigrated to Canada five years ago, he wanted to keep helping families in his home country.



**STUDENTS**  
*helping*  
**STUDENTS**

Photos by Colleen McFee





**DROPOUT RATES HAVE DECREASED AT THIS PARTICULAR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SINCE THE STUDENTS BEGAN RECEIVING SUPPLIES...**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Jennifer McFee receives a hug from student Estafany Muñoz Estacio, who is starting Grade 4 this year; Veronica Tistoy Jacanamejoy is grateful to receive school supplies through The Privilege of Giving; Ricardo Burbano gives a hug to his son and student Lucy Adriana Tisoy Jacanamejoy; Teacher Mercedes Rosero helped to identify which students are most in need of assistance.

PREVIOUS PAGE, LARGE IMAGE: Dani Manuel Burbano Chasoy has received his school supplies through The Privilege of Giving for several years. SMALL IMAGE: Students at Escuela Michoacán play on humble schoolyard equipment.



We decided to start a pilot project near Ricardo's hometown to lend a hand to the impoverished students at Escuela Michoacán. At this humble institution, five teachers provide education to 105 students from kindergarten to Grade 5.

As a teacher at this school, Eraythe Córdoba sees many children living in poverty with families that have been displaced due to violence. A large number of students also belong to the indigenous Inga culture, which is struggling to preserve its traditions and customs.

"It is tremendously gratifying to know that there are other schools in the world that have noticed the problem that we are facing and that have a sense of fraternity and solidarity with those who are desperately in need," Córdoba says, with the assistance of a translator.

Many adults have not graduated in this rural area, and this trend is already continuing with the next generation. Kids often drop out of elementary school to toil alongside their parents in the fields, where they earn low wages as agricultural labourers. As the children grow older, they become too ashamed to go back to the classroom.

However, dropout rates have decreased at this particular elementary school since the students began receiving supplies through The Privilege of Giving.

"Today, thanks to the help from our friends in Canada, we have been able to keep many more children in school, in addition to allowing them to attend school during their early years. This means the kids are going to school at the appropriate age," Córdoba says.

"Thanks to the help that we have received, self-esteem among students has improved,

THANKS TO THE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS IN CANADA, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO KEEP MANY MORE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL, IN ADDITION TO ALLOWING THEM TO ATTEND SCHOOL DURING THEIR EARLY YEARS.

their schoolwork has improved, and I am convinced that their academic level has improved. When you have the right tools, this improves by 100 per cent."

This year, the Colombian students will be even better equipped for education, since our initiative has expanded exponentially with the help of local schools.

In the spring, École River Heights School hosted an overnight outing to raise awareness and supplies for the cause.

Science teacher Linda McPherson felt inspired by the commitment to help schools in Colombia, so she organized a sleepover event for students who wanted to get involved.

"As a We Day school, we look for opportunities for our students to participate in service learning opportunities," says McPherson, who is also a special education resource teacher.

"Our school has participated in the 30-Hour Famine in the past, and we decided to combine a school supply drive with the Famine's traditional sleepover in the school. Once we shared the idea with our Grade 7 classes, they were very eager to participate."

The River Heights group filled boxes with backpacks, school supplies, jumping ropes

and more. They also raised funds through a pancake breakfast, which will help to cover some of the costs to transport the items to South America.

Taking the project one step further, Teulon Elementary recently embarked on a twin-school relationship with Escuela Michoacán.

Grade 5 teacher Jacqui Holod says the local students are pleased to partner in education with their Colombian counterparts. Through a social justice program that runs throughout the Interlake School Division, Teulon Elementary's MY Voice group will guide the participation of the entire school.

"An excited group of Grade 5 and 6 students bubbled in to their most recent meeting of the MY Voice group to create and plan a support and awareness initiative for the Colombian students," says Holod, who also teaches music.

"The Teulon students are planning an educational partnership, which includes gathering school supplies, small musical instruments and backpacks to send to their Colombian friends."

In exchange, the Teulon students hope to receive messages from their faraway

MORE ON FOLLOWING PAGE...

*Colombian teachers provide their perspective* TRANSLATED BY MONIQUE JAMES

The teachers at Escuela Michoacán shared some insight into the situation of their students. In response to several questions sent by email, Eraythe Córdoba provided answers on behalf of fellow teachers Mercedes Rosero, Esperanza Calvache, Ana Inés Vallejo and Gloria Rodriguez.

**Q:** What does it mean to the Colombian teachers and students to receive help from schools in Canada?

**A:** All demonstrations of support contribute to better living conditions for the students and their families.

For the students, it weighs on them to see how other students from the urban sector are equipped with the best school supplies, items that they cannot aspire to own due to their socio-economic condition. It moves us and

saddens us. But it is very gratifying to know that over there, on the other side of the world, there are students with better conditions that are helping.

For the teachers, who every year breathe in the misery and the abandonment from the state, we have to act as fathers and mothers to so many children. We have shed many tears while witnessing the misery and abandonment of children by their families. We have seen all too many children

come to school crying because they have not had anything to eat.

**Q:** What is the impact on the students?

**A:** The impact is felt in different dimensions. In the human sense, we see the face of each of the children when they open their bags and see notebooks, pens, crayons. For many of them, it's the best gift.

MORE ON FOLLOWING PAGE...





CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE...

amigos. They would also like to learn about Colombian culture, which is vastly different from their own Canadian experience, Holod adds.

“We are looking forward to learning with our Colombian friends,” she says.

For Christine Penner, assistant superintendent of the Interlake School Division, this project aligns with an overarching goal.

“The Interlake School Division is committed to twinning all of our schools with schools in other countries,” Penner says, adding that 10 of the division’s 21 schools are already involved in this type of arrangement.

“The goal of this initiative is to promote cultural diversity and understanding, and to encourage students to critically examine inequalities and injustices in the world.”

Like Penner, we also envision an opportunity to create collaborations through The Privilege of Giving.

Since 2010, we have been delivering school supplies each January to coincide with the new school year in Colombia. Our goal is to help ease the financial burden for families by providing them with some of the tools needed to succeed in education.

We also intend to equip the teachers with supplies for art, music and physical education, since their resources are meagre.

By creating these cross-cultural connections, we hope the Colombian children will feel encouraged to stay in school. By doing so, their education might pull them out of poverty and provide more opportunities in their lives.

Going forward, we aim to help more and more children, both in Colombia and in other developing countries. We have already identified the next schools we would like to assist, ideally in partnership with Manitoban institutions. We also hope to co-ordinate a volunteer program for Canadian educators who would like an opportunity to teach English, art, music and other subjects in Colombia.

To José Antonio Ramos, director of the San Antonio del Porotoyaco Educational Centre in Colombia, this type of international relationship can create a ripple effect of positive change.

With six schools in the area that he oversees, Ramos hopes more connections will develop between Canadian and Colombian schools. “This would allow us to learn from others, to share our experiences as educators, to exchange knowledge, to exchange culture,” Ramos says through a translator.

“Moreover, it would be an opportunity to consider other possibilities for projects, to build dreams together and to make it possible to attain our objectives.”

We would like to help Ramos and other Colombian educators achieve these goals. For more information or to get involved in this project, please contact us at [jmcfee@outlook.com](mailto:jmcfee@outlook.com).

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE...

In the academic sense, it is extremely empowering to start the school year this way. Prior to receiving this assistance, the first two weeks of class were very challenging because we had to hear the laments of parents who were upset because their children didn’t have school supplies. But what broke our hearts most of all was seeing kids coming to school using only plastic bags. Today, thanks to your help, we see the kids run past with colourful school bags. The children are very proud to show off their bags and state that the bags are a gift from another country, from students in Canada.

**Q:** What message would you send to Canadian teachers?

**A:** God exists, and we see this in every human face that feels pain on behalf of others—when they see others in need

and who freely decide to share a little or a lot. We are aware of our economic and social limitations, but we oppose our situation. We contest the fact that minors quit school because they lack economic resources. We contest the fact that we have to see our boys and girls with tears in their eyes due to abandonment and poverty.

This is why we struggle every day. It fills us with emotion and it fills our eyes with tears that Canadian teachers want to fight with us. We welcome you. To those who are already allied with us, may God reward you. To those who are thinking of supporting this noble cause, you are welcome to witness some of the happiness on the faces of brothers of the world who are suffering in misery. The greatest reward is a hug from he who is most in need, a smile from he who is hungry, a handshake that expresses the solidarity in sharing a space in which the other person’s pain can also be felt.

**Q:** What is your hope for the future of the students at Escuela Michoacán?

**A:** I would like for their future to have some economic stability. That each day is not a struggle to get by but rather that they would have everything they need to live with a decent quality of life—one that would allow them to dream, to visualize the future. I would like these boys and girls to aspire to a professional future, to dream of being the best lawyers, doctors, engineers.

We want them to get an education and then transform history. We hope that among them, there will be many Gandhis and Mandelas and Mother Teresas. We hope that they will become Colombian men and women who are capable of envisioning another way of living in harmony with others and with nature.

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# PORTFOLIO

## Clever computer users

SplashData has announced its annual list of the 25 most common passwords found on the Internet. For the first time since SplashData began compiling its annual list, "password" has lost its title as the most common and therefore Worst Password, and two-time runner-up "123456" took the dubious honor. "Password" fell to #2. SplashData's top 25 list was compiled from files containing millions of stolen passwords posted online during the previous year.



- |              |                |               |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. 123456    | 11. 123123     | 21. password1 |
| 2. password  | 12. admin      | 22. princess  |
| 3. 12345678  | 13. 1234567890 | 23. azerty    |
| 4. Qwerty    | 14. letmein    | 24. trustno1  |
| 5. abc123    | 15. photoshop  | 25. 000000    |
| 6. 123456789 | 16. 1234       |               |
| 7. 111111    | 17. monkey     |               |
| 8. 1234567   | 18. shadow     |               |
| 9. iloveyou  | 19. sunshine   |               |
| 10. adobe123 | 20. 12345      |               |

## BRIGHT IN NAME ONLY



South Carolina State Sen. (and candidate for the U.S. senate) Lee Bright has the solution for school shootings - let teachers carry machine guns. In an interview Bright said teachers should be able to patrol playgrounds with whatever firearm they want, including machine guns. As part of his Senate campaign, Bright held a raffle in which the winner took home a brand new M4, optic ready, AR-15 rifle, the type of gun used in the 2012 massacre of 20 school children and six educators at Newtown, Connecticut.

## Masking the truth

With failing memory, Canada's immigration minister, Chris Alexander, recently rose to secure the vote of Ukrainian-Canadians by attacking anti-democratic laws imposed on government protestors in Ukraine.

Speaking to a rally of Ukrainian-Canadians in Toronto, the minister was especially disturbed by laws that made it illegal for protesters to wear face masks, use loudspeakers, or set up tents at rallies.

Calling such laws "repressive measures" he assured the crowd the Canadian government would re-

spond to these "seriously retrograde measures."

Alexander's memory apparently didn't extend back to last May when he and his government passed a law that made it a crime in Canada to wear a mask during a riot or unlawful assembly. It carries a maximum 10-year prison sentence.



## BOY, WHO WOULD WANT TO BE A BILLIONAIRE

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

**B**oy, who would want to be a billionaire (or even a lowly millionaire these days), downtrodden and maligned as they are these days.

Why it's gotten to the point where if they ever did walk down the street with the other 99 per cent of the world they would be picked on and called names and, apparently, shipped off to internment camps or worse. Their yachts and private jets are their last refuge. They must peer out the portholes wondering how their lives came to this.

Take poor venture capitalist Tom Perkins. In a letter to the Wall Street Journal, the billionaire bemoaned his lot in life; that there is a war on the top one per cent of income earners. He equated Nazi Germany's persecution of its one per cent - "namely, Jews" - with "the progressive war on the American one per cent - namely, the rich."

"This is a very dangerous drift in our American thinking. Kristallnacht was unthinkable in 1930; is its descendent 'progressive' radicalism unthinkable now?" Later,

supposedly clarifying his comments, he pointed out in reference to the Kristallnacht allusion, that during an

Occupy Wall Street demonstration some windows in a luxury car dealership were broken. Obviously that was close enough to the "night of broken glass" in Nazi Germany.

Any thinking person can see Hitler's imprint on anyone questioning the fact, for example, the 85 richest people in the world control more of the planet's wealth than the bottom half of the world's population. Those numbers are from the jackbooted folks at Oxfam.

That would be 85 people on the one side and 3.5 billion on the other, which just shows what an unnoticed, neglected minority billionaires are. They huddle behind their gates awaiting the knock on the door.

And Perkins is not alone. Billionaire (and apparent historical scholar) Stephen Schwarzman compared a proposal to tax private equity income at the same rate as anyone else's income to a war. Of course, not just any war: "It's like when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939."

Yes, pretty much exactly the same.

Billionaire hedge fund manager, Leon Cooperman, would give that a nod. He thinks Barack Obama's electoral victories are the same as the rise of the Third Reich.

"You know, the largest and greatest country in the free world put a 47-year-old guy that never worked a day in his life in charge of the free world," Cooperman told Atlantic magazine. "Not totally different from taking Adolf Hitler in Germany and making him in charge of Germany because people were economically dissatisfied."

Then there's supermarket and real estate tycoon John Catsimatidis who said of tax increases on the rich: "Hitler punished the Jews. We can't have punishing the two per cent-group right now."

Overblown? Insulting? Out of touch? Not at all. The situation is so dire that the billionaires have spent billions to get like-thinking candidates elected in the U.S. at every level of government.

Fortunately, they still have some funds the Nazis haven't taken away. Income for the top one per cent grew by an estimated 31 per cent from 2009 to 2012. Income for the other 99 per cent grew 0.4 per cent, according to CNNMoney.

The billionaire Koch brothers spent some \$400 million on the 2012 elections in the U.S., prompting the Senate majority leader to say that "we have two brothers who are actually trying to buy the country."

Canadian moguls don't appear to be as worried about the storm troopers as much as their southern counterparts, but that is probably because they already have a friend in charge of the country.

As long as the federal government keeps cutting services and attempting to get rid of unions and the higher salaries they bring to everyone, then they don't have to worry about Nazis coming to take their Rolexes and Rolls.

So, we can all sleep better swaddled in that comforting knowledge.



## Bieber Nation

So, Justin Bieber, eh? Illegal drag racing, drunk driving, assault, drug use, world's happiest mug shot and so much anguish over the apparent down-the-drain swirl.

No need to worry, though. He's well on his way to becoming the next mayor of Toronto.



Billionaire Stephen Schwarzman compared a proposal to tax private equity income at the same rate as anyone else's income to a war. Of course, not just any war: "It's like when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939."





# REFRESH

**RAMAN JOB,**  
PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR

## Stop burning jet fuel, tweet instead

Many teachers say Twitter is their “best form of PD” – and it’s no surprise. The best part of any PD event are the things teachers share with other teachers.

So, who wouldn’t love a tool that allows you to connect with other educators interested in the same things you are: while at school or in your PJs, without burning jet fuel, and with colleagues who value help and sharing as a common currency?

Twitter is no longer an edgy mobile tool for geeks. And it’s not just an entertaining way to connect with other fans of everything from Game of Thrones to documentaries, to your favourite TSN personality. It’s a legitimate platform for teachers, professors, artists, writers, social and community agencies, and businesses to share and connect.

If you haven’t signed up for Twitter yet, open an account and see what all the fuss is about. You’re going to need some mentoring, so Google one of the many Twitter for Teachers guides, attend a social media workshop, or better yet, ask a colleague for help.

There’s a good chance you’re already sharing a staff room with one of more than 800 colleagues across Manitoba who are already on Twitter (to say nothing of the tens of thousands across North America) as well as roughly 100 principals, 100 schools, 16 teacher associations, and at least 10 school divisions.

Make sure to follow the Society’s official account, @mbteachers. And if you’re seriously interested in PD, follow @MTSlearning, our freshly minted account dedicated to tweets about professional learning.

Mental health and wellness tweets? We’ve got plenty. Follow @MTSwellness for great links and resources from our EAP department.

Not ready to jump into an account yet? Check out the search tool at [twitter.com/search](https://twitter.com/search). Pop in a term and Twitter will give you real-time results on what people are sharing about the subjects, passions and pastimes that are important to you.

Finally, you’ll find superb depth and variety in the conversations taking place on scores of education-related chats happening every day of the week. We’ll talk about them in detail in the next column. But for now, search these 10 popular chats (shown at left). There’s always a place for you in the Twitterverse.

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