

THE MANITOBA

# Teacher

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2019 VOLUME 98 NUMBER 2 NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

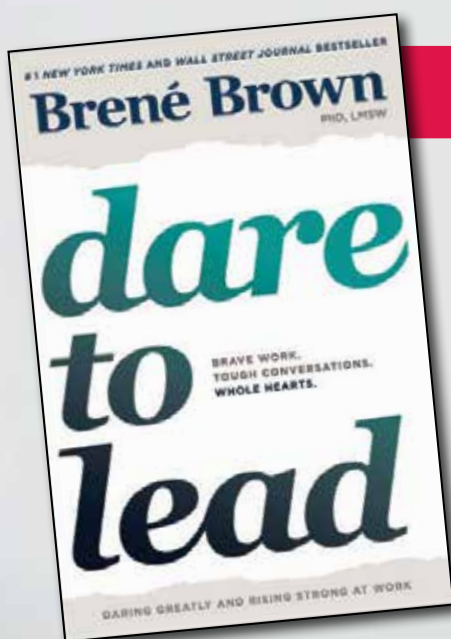
meal programs  
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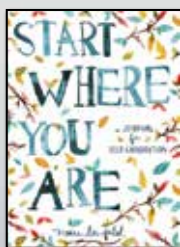


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**Step In, Step Up:  
Empowering Women  
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Watterston



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by Meera  
Lee Patel



**Conversations  
with a Frog**  
by Karl  
Albrecht



The  
Manitoba  
Teachers'  
Society



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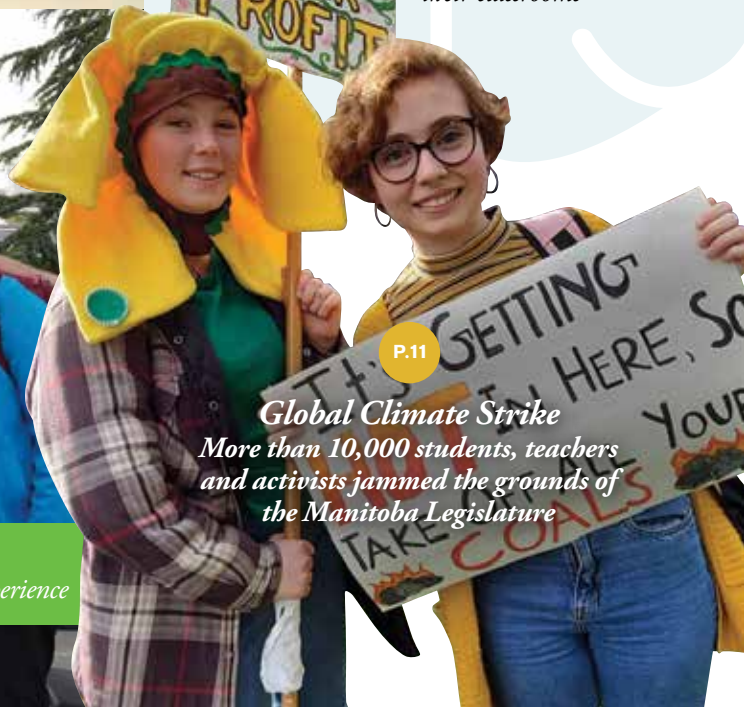
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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**JAMES BEDFORD**

**T**here was a provincial election in Manitoba. You may have been busy enjoying summer and missed some of it. The result was that nothing changed and everything changed. The Progressive Conservatives under Premier Brian Pallister remain in government, but a promise made by the Premier during the campaign will change education funding in Manitoba significantly in the coming decade.

The new government has promised to move the funding of public education away from local property taxes and make it entirely a provincial responsibility. Although a move that the Society favours, as the funding of public education is the constitutional responsibility of every provincial government, there are unanswered questions. Foremost is where over \$850 million dollars of provincial revenue will come from to replace the locally raised property taxes. Your Society also believes that "every child in Manitoba is entitled to an education that meets their needs." The Society believes that local control of schools through elected school trustees currently provides all Manitobans the opportunity to have input into making those decisions locally. What is the plan moving forward?

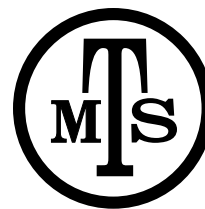
Classrooms and schools are great places because members take the time to plan for both the expected and the unexpected. I believe that there is concern throughout the province because there is no detailed plan for the proposed funding shift. We need to be asking questions and ensuring that this change is not going to result in cuts to public education resources and services. We are not alone with this concern, as Keystone Agricultural Producers' President Bill Campbell was quoted during the election campaign as saying:

"However, KAP also believes that the next provincial government needs to take steps to ensure that rural and urban students continue to have equitable access to educational opportunities, and that this move doesn't represent a long-term cut to the education system."

It is good to know that we are not alone in our concern. Having allies within our diverse community is always good, and as teachers, we have the proven ability to work with everyone. Especially when it comes to the future of our students.

And speaking to our collective future, I had the opportunity to participate in the General Strike for Climate Action on Sept. 27 alongside many of our students and members. Climate change is going to affect us all in the coming years, and I believe that our Society needs to take a leadership role. We can all make positive decisions individually, and I know many of us do. But I believe strongly that as an organization, The Manitoba Teachers' Society can take a leadership role. You, our members, must drive it. I encourage you to have discussions within your Locals. I am optimistic that in May 2020 Provincial Council will have resolutions before it that will guide us to an appropriate and responsive Climate Action Plan.

Our students deserve no less of us. I believe they expect it from us.



**The  
Manitoba  
Teachers'  
Society**

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## INSIDE MTS

### CLIMATE ACTION NEEDED ON GLOBAL SCALE

**ROLAND STANKEVICIUS**, GENERAL SECRETARY

**W**hat will we recall about September 27, 2019 ten years from now? Will the General Strike for Climate Action be that brave step forward that marked a positive turning point or an historical footnote? This question is important for me since, we know, action is required immediately to mitigate climate change.

The General Strike for Climate Action saw hundreds of thousands of people gather around the world - including several thousand at the Manitoba Legislature (see page 11) - to express concern and demand action on addressing the realities of climate change. The facts are frightening and a new reality is unfolding before us in our news and weather reports daily.

Our knowledge regarding the effects of climate change is still imperfect but, it is our understanding, that has been building for decades. There is no doubt the earth is getting warmer and that climate is changing, largely due to greater volumes of trapped greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. That human activity is largely contributing is a scientific fact.

We have caused much of the increase of carbon emissions through our burning of fossil fuels, is factual and incontestable. As early as 1977, *The Greenhouse Effect* by James Black, (Exxon's Products Research Division) cited that human-caused emissions could raise global temperatures and result in serious consequences. Our inability to make meaningful change to protect and preserve our fragile global environment in these intervening 40-plus years is an unhappy reality that now sees a more urgent time frame for action and change.

Our addiction to our carbon-burning economy has become dire, all the while creating great wealth and power for the fossil fuel industries. Oil companies and other carbon exploiters are spending vast sums to fund their self-interested, public information initiatives. They are determined to seed doubt in the public's mind on what is happening to our climate and to sway political candidates



to silence or capitulation. It is so very wrong that some of our major political leaders in Canada (and in many parts of the world) still refuse to participate in meaningful decision-making to undertake real action on climate change.

Again, will Sept. 27 be the day that galvanized the energy and eagerness expressed at the climate rallies by so many school-age children, young families and the older environmental activists to move to more action? The Manitoba rally demonstrated the deep interest and understanding of the high stakes that we are all facing.

What will we do now?

We can all do something positive to reduce our carbon waste and to rethink our understanding of our impact on the environment. We can all make five better choices each day to ease our impact on the climate. Share your new lifestyle habits and let us get on with Climate Action Now!

In each of our daily lives, we must commit to take action now to reduce the rate of global warming and hope to avoid catastrophic events in the lives of the youngest of our demonstrators and marchers who are in our classrooms today. We have a duty to shoulder this

burden now and not pass on a devastating legacy in a few short decades.

The Worldwide General Strike for Climate Action 2019 was an event that was successful on many levels for a day and a time. We know from all sound sources that the window of time to act is closing quickly. Political leadership must be pushed to make the decisions to ensure our future.

It will not be an easy transition. There is no agreed-to roadmap to get us there.

If there is good news, it is that we have a high degree of understanding and knowledge of the science regarding our crisis.

Let's all take the next step to adopt concrete climate action. What will you do to change and act as part of the solution? Our ability to reshape what seems inevitable may yet be attainable through our unassailable human characteristics of innovation, intelligence and determination. That may afford our species and our mother earth a livable future (for our children and their children) to share a livable day, 10 years hence, on 27 September 2029. Climate Action NOW!







# FEEDING the FUTURE

PHOTOS & STORY BY LINDSEY ENNS

**It's just before 8 a.m. on a Tuesday as the smell of fresh pancakes and syrup starts to waft through the hallways of Brooklands School.**

A row of cafeteria tables sit empty near the school's entrance, just waiting to welcome hungry students. Red and blue serving trays and colourful bowls are stacked and ready for the taking, while a clear jug of freshly poured milk sits nearby.

Elsa Garcia, a part-time community connector at the Winnipeg elementary school, is cooking up a fresh batch of fluffy pancakes in preparation for another busy morning serving students breakfast.

"It just sets them up so you know they'll have a good day with something in their tummies," Garcia says. "It's a need in this community. I know a lot of kids come to school without eating breakfast ... and if they can't make it, they know they can get something either way."

On this particular day, students have a choice of cereal or pancakes with a side of freshly cut bananas, orange slices and a glass of milk, which is Melody Wilson's favourite.

"I love breakfast program," the Grade 2 student says with a smile in between sips of milk.

While stirring her bowl of cereal, Grade 5 student Kierstyn Krist says the breakfast program allows her to pay better attention in class and keeps her on time for school.

"I also really like the eggs and toast," she adds.

Brooklands School principal Rex Ferguson-Baird says there's a real social aspect to their breakfast program.

"Nothing builds relationships better than sitting down and breaking bread together," Ferguson-Baird said, adding they serve around 30 students per day. "We know that kids, when they're well fed, they're mentally sharper and they're also able to attend to their lessons and their community better."

Currently, some schools in Manitoba provide a breakfast, lunch or snack program, some at a cost and others for free. The Child

Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM), which helps fund school nutrition programs, supported 271 programs across Manitoba during the 2018-19 school year. The programs provided 30,500 students with consistent, healthy snacks and meals throughout the school day.

CNCM chairperson, Wendy Bloomfield, says the need continues to grow for meal programs across the province each year.

"This all started because teachers were recognizing a need for this," Bloomfield said.

In 2016-17, the CNCM served 3.7 million snacks and meals, reaching 24,000 students and 239 programs. However, 60 per cent of the programs supported by the council said they needed further resources to meet the demand of students.

"The needs are continually going up and our funding has remained the same for a number of years, and so with that our support for schools is continually going down and that concerns the board," Bloomfield added. "The board has been looking at ways to get new sources of funding and has been doing a lot of outreach ... so hopefully kids aren't hungry coming to school."

Erin Harris, who has been teaching at Salisbury Morse Place School for 20 years, says their breakfast cart program serves a real need at their school. Between 90 to 120 students access their program daily.

"For some of our kids, I know that's probably the only food they're going to eat all day until they have dinner," Harris said.

Idrissa, a Grade 7 student at Salisbury Morse Place, says knowing he'll have breakfast waiting for him when he arrives at school is one less thing he has to worry about.

"When we come and we eat it, it's a privilege, it's real good," he said. "We're really lucky."

Studies show that children who are well-nourished have improved memory, problem-

solving skills, and creative abilities, yet, 31 per cent of elementary students and 62 per cent of secondary school students don't eat breakfast daily.

Studies have also shown that nutritional meal programs in schools can lead to improved attendance, health, learning and behaviour for students. Free meal and snack programs also help ensure students have access to essential nutrients throughout the day and can lead to food skills education opportunities while introducing them to new and healthy food choices.

"It's not just about getting something in a child's stomach, it's also looking at getting good nutrition into children and that's a really big focus for the council as well," Bloomfield said, adding the council provides schools with nutritious menus, workshops and online resources.

"We know when students get healthy nutritious food they learn better, eat better, feel better and are more likely to succeed," said Maxine Meadows, a CNCM program dietitian. "We really try and work with the individual school so they work within their budget to try and provide the best menu possible."

"It's always absolutely amazing to see what schools are able to do with what they have."

Being in a rural area has helped Roseau Valley School utilize various resources within the community. Jennifer Collette, the school's vice-principal, says they have a great partnership with their local grocery store.

"Calderwood's (Country Store) has done a really good job at being able to provide us with fresh ingredients," she said. "Being in a community like Dominion City, I feel like this community has so many partners and people really rally together."

She added their breakfast program helps their students start their day off on the right foot.

"I feel like our breakfast program does a really good job of being able to create that culture, that environment we want in our building," Collette said, adding they feed around 100 to 120 students per day. "You see kids in the hallways snacking and eating, it's really nice."

The program is also giving their students a chance to try new foods.

"I like that this isn't just happening in our building, it's going into our community, it's going back into people's homes."

Grade 11 student Julie Spence says there are so many benefits to starting the day with a nutritious breakfast.

"It's so important so that students can



really learn and focus and be prepared to start the day.”

Half of the schools supported by the CNCM choose to offer multiple programs throughout the day, which include a combination of breakfast, snack or lunch in a variety of settings. While some schools utilize a breakfast cart to serve their students, others allow students to come grab food from their cafeteria, while others encourage them to eat with their classmates.

Running a nutrition program is truly a school and community-wide effort, according to the council. Limited funding for buying nutritious food items as well as staffing and volunteer hours to operate the programs remain at the top of the list of challenges for these programs.

“So many programs in the province that are running well are running well because of a staff member or volunteer, that’s key to a program,” Harris said.

Canada is one of the few industrialized countries without a national school food program. Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Brazil, India, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy all have universal school meal programs.

Establishing a universal meal program for all school-aged children at no cost was one of

the Society’s top recommendations for the province’s Kindergarten to Grade 12 education review commission. The CNCM also prepared a written submission and participated in the public hearings for the commission, with key recommendations for increasing access to universal nutrition programs for Manitoba students.

The Society believes with Manitoba’s high child poverty rate, particularly among Indigenous communities, a meal program could help reduce barriers to education. Proper nutrition also supports student learning and can improve children’s long-term health, school attendance and social cohesion. A universal meal program is about lessening the barriers to education that exist.

Child poverty in Manitoba ranges from 12 per cent to 22 per cent, depending on the measure, and is higher than Canada’s overall average, according to the province’s 2017 Child and Youth Report. The percentage is even higher among Indigenous communities where one in two First Nations children, one in four Métis and one in four Inuit live in poverty, all higher than Canada’s national average.

“Teachers often bring food from home to feed their students,” says James Bedford, president of The Manitoba Teachers’ Society. “And

while many schools now have meal programs, the funding is cobbled together from multiple sources, none of which are reliable. Food isn’t a frill—there’s a direct relationship between addressing hunger and improved academic outcomes. Meal programs should have access to a consistent source of funding.”

The Coalition for Healthy School Food, facilitated by Food Secure Canada, is seeking a \$1 billion investment phased in over five years by the federal government in a cost-shared model to create a universal healthy school food program. The coalition is a group of nearly 50 organizations from across Canada advocating for a national school food program.

Brooklands School Principal Ferguson-Baird says he believes there should be an opportunity for Manitoba schools to apply and access funding for a meal program, but it shouldn’t be mandatory.

“(Our) breakfast program draws a number of students who actually get themselves up and ready for school and they know that they can have breakfast,” he said. “I think that if we believe and we understand that this is an opportunity for students to be healthier and to be stronger at school then it’s something that we should probably make universally accessible to schools.”

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# Education bubbles to the top

STORY BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

**M**TS President James Bedford doesn't think the next year will be the year of education in Manitoba.

"I think the next four years will be the year of education. I think I have been very vocal, as many members have, about the fact that public education was not the issue that we felt it should have been during the election campaign.

"There should have been more conversations about public education from all political parties."

He expects the whispers about education policy will become shouts very soon.

The greatest trigger will be the release of the report from the commission reviewing the K-12 education system in the province. Its report and recommendations are expected in the first half of 2020.

The recommendations, and what the government decides, could upend much of the K-12 system. Questions abound. Will the commission recommend amalgamating school divisions? What will happen with school trustees? Will class size caps be recommended? Will it recommend creation of a teachers' college? The list goes on.

On top of that, Premier Brian Pallister has promised to begin the process of eliminating the use of property taxes to fund schools. That alone would mean finding some \$800 million from general revenue.

That promise concerns Bedford, not so much the destination but how the government expects to get there.

"There isn't a plan here. They say they want to get out of funding education through property tax but they've created no clear plan how they're going to replace that \$800 million," he says. "And I wouldn't ever say the plan is we're going to cut education but there isn't a plan to move that taxation."

Bedford hopes that becomes clear in the near future.

Elected president less than four months ago, he has yet to meet Pallister, but believes that the Society can work with the new government, despite some policy differences on how to improve K-12 education. Changes promised and anticipated will need a lot of involvement by educational organizations.

"All of these things need to be part of a



**"I think the next four years will be the year of education. I think I have been very vocal, as many members have, about the fact that public education was not the issue that we felt it should have been during the election campaign."**

*- James Bedford, MTS president*

broader conversation over the next four years," he says. "I hope that The Manitoba Teachers' Society, along with our other education partners, is going to be a voice in that conversation.

"I know that within all political parties there are strong advocates for public education and that includes the government and I hope that all of those voices are heard in the Legislature."

Bedford dismisses accusations that the Society, as a union, is automatically opposed to the new Conservative government.

"We are not members of the Manitoba Federation of Labour and that puts us into a really unique position. We don't directly support the New Democrats. We work closely with the New Democrats because they want to work hard to support public education."

It's a matter of policies over parties. Bedford also wants to keep in touch and work with all other parties – NDP, Liberals and Greens – to discuss and help develop policies on public school education.

"What I would say to the government is that you can't apply that NDP label to The Manitoba Teachers' Society. We want to

work really closely with you to support public education and work with you on where we can put our energies and, frankly, our dollars to do the best for students in Manitoba."

Bedford says if there is one initiative he would like to see the provincial government take it would be a province-wide plan to address poverty.

"If you fix poverty, you fix so many other things," he says. "I think that would be No. 1 and that's not just as president of the Society, that's as a citizen of the province. You look, as a teacher in the classroom and ask what is it that would really benefit everyone in the classroom?"

"You get rid of poverty, you get rid of hungry kids coming to class, they're properly clothed, they're properly fed, so many other things would benefit. But, how do we get there?"

Bedford says it may sound confrontational, but it will take more than a year-end tax break for Manitobans to ensure students are not coming to school hungry.

The Society's No. 1 recommendation to the review commission was implementation of a universal meal program for Manitoba students.

# In Morden, it was debatable

STORY BY LINDSEY ENNS

Nearly 100 debate savvy students, teachers and coaches from across Canada gathered in Morden this fall for the 53rd annual National Student Debate Seminar.

The seminar, which took place Sept. 25-30, is a six-day debate workshop and tournament for beginner to intermediate debaters at the high school level to learn more about the art of debating while meeting like-minded students from across the country.

Hosted by the Canadian Student Debating Federation/Fédération Canadienne des débats d'étudiants, the event is held every year in a different host province and although Manitoba has hosted the event four times previously, this year marked the first time it was held outside Winnipeg.

"This is an exciting time for Morden to showcase a lot of the community and showcase the support we've been able to get for this event," said Michael Macaraeg, the 2019 National Student Debate Seminar host committee organizer as well as a science teacher and debate coach at Morden Collegiate Institute. "We're known for being a hockey and baseball community but these are the sorts of opportunities we want to take advantage of."

French and English debate programs have been growing across Manitoba in recent years, Macaraeg said.

"The ability for students to effectively communicate and being your own advocate are things that people are finding very, very important in students' lives," he added. "We'd like our students to be able to communicate and advocate for themselves in a respectful manner."

Morden Collegiate Institute's debate program started with only a handful of students five years ago and has since grown to include more than 20 students. Some of their students have taken part in competitions and have gone to win awards and qualify at the national level.

"That's phenomenal for a little club that just started debate," he said. "That's really turned a lot of heads that a little rural public school was able to garner interest and achieve a little bit of success."

This year's national debate seminar theme



Orphée Dubé-Gervais, Josiane Côté and Xavier Champagne



Michael Macaraeg  
(Photo by Chris Chiappetta)

was the rural and urban divide. The seminar included debate workshops, an opening ceremony with guest speakers, a debate tournament offered in both French and English at Morden Collegiate Institute and a model youth parliament at the Manitoba Legislative Building. There were also several cultural events including tours of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) in Winnipeg and the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre in Morden as well as an Indigenous Blanket Exercise with Swan Lake First Nation Elders.

"The whole goal of the seminar is an education experience for students to learn about the art of debate."

Another goal of the seminar, which was initially founded in 1967 by Tom Lawson – a former teacher at Trinity College School in Port Hope, Ont. – is to encourage more debate programs in new schools.

This year's debate seminar and competition was a first for Xavier Champagne and Josiane Côté, Grade 12 students at Centre scolaire Léo-Rémillard, which recently started a debate program.

"It's all about respect and also we've been learning about case prep and how to really be able to convince others and create a nice argument," Champagne said, during the group's tour of the CMHR on Sept. 27. "It's been really great. I can have conversations with people that know about politics that are informed so our discussions are really

in depth so it's fun to be with like minded people."

Côté says since she's a beginner when it comes to debate she wasn't sure what to expect, but the seminar was a great experience.

"Since we're all interested in debate we all love to talk and meet people so everyone's gotten along really well; it's been really fun to meet so many different types of people from different provinces," she said. "We're also just getting educated on a lot of subjects like immigration, Indigenous communities, agriculture and urbanization."

For Orphée Dubé-Gervais, a Grade 11 student at École polyvalente Saint-Jérôme in Quebec, the seminar marked her first trip to Manitoba.

"I'm used to other types of landscapes so it's beautiful," she said with a smile. "I like the rural vibe in Morden, it's different from where I live and I like it."

The seminar also allowed her to debate in both French and English for the first time.

"I'm used to French but I like debating in English too because it's a chance to practice for myself and become better and more bilingual."

Debate gives students a chance to brush up on their public speaking and critical thinking skills, Macaraeg said. He added starting a debate program at any school doesn't have to be difficult and the Manitoba Speech and Debate Association is a great resource.



# Students turn up heat on climate change



More than 10,000 students, teachers and activists jammed the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature for Winnipeg's massive Global Climate Strike on Sept. 27. The vibe was festive, the placards brimming with wit and colour - and the message deadly serious. "What do we want? Climate action! When do we want it? Now!" For many early-years students, this was their first rally and the debut of their concerns about climate change. The kids knew exactly why they were there and chanted with a passion that belied their age.







# HOW TO TRAIN BRAINS WITH GAMES



BY  
**JENNIFER  
MCFEE**

When teachers take a chance and incorporate game-based learning into their classrooms, they often find that it's a win-win situation for everyone involved.

The Gaming Association of Manitoba Educators (GAME) formed last year as a SAGE group that is dedicated to using games to enhance learning. The motivation is to encourage students to be more engaged in education and even socialization by integrating games into the school setting.

GAME vice-president Warren Nightingale explained that a group of administrators had been enjoying their own gaming group when they came up with the idea to bring gaming concepts forward as a professional development opportunity for teachers.

"Our initial thoughts were a little bit humble. We thought if we created a SAGE group and did a SAGE session, maybe 50 educators would come out and we'd consider that successful," said Nightingale, who is the vice-principal at Nelson McIntyre Collegiate.

"We were a bit overwhelmed that we had well over 200 folks in our sessions. People had lots of energy, which gave us lots of energy to champion the spirit of gaming in classes."

As the group's second PD day approaches, attendees can look forward to a selection of more than 30 different sessions this time around. Keynote speaker Lucas Gillespie will

be visiting from North Carolina to explore the intersection of games and learning. Another highlight will be a session with Stephen Hassard, a Google-certified design sprint master from YouTube.

For GAME president Mike Heilmann, principal of Glenwood School, it's clear to see the potentially powerful impact of introducing more games in schools.

**"WE WERE A BIT OVERWHELMED THAT WE HAD WELL OVER 200 FOLKS IN OUR SESSIONS. PEOPLE HAD LOTS OF ENERGY, WHICH GAVE US LOTS OF ENERGY TO CHAMPION THE SPIRIT OF GAMING IN CLASSES."**

*- Warren Nightingale, vice-principal*

"At my former school, I started up a game club that included six students who had educational assistants beside them all day, but in my club they were able to play for an hour and a half without support. We were talking about some pretty complicated things and the

kids were super engaged," he said.

"I had one parent in tears because she never thought that her son, who had autism, would be able to spend up to 90 minutes of time with other students in a social setting, yet he was doing that on a weekly basis. As a matter of fact, he was teaching those games to others."

Students have an appetite to experience extracurricular activities, and gaming provides one more opportunity to get involved. From board games to video games, students find a way to connect through the medium.

"There are people who not only enjoy playing video games but there's a whole community of people who enjoy watching. Our division had an informal league that started out with five schools and grew to 13 schools participating. We formed an organization called the Manitoba High School eSports Association, which is gaining momentum as well," Nightingale said.

"Students are wearing uniforms and representing their school and competing against each other. The neat thing is they don't even have to be in the same room. They could be playing against others across the province or even across Canada. You could have a competition with anybody because of the technology — and that's just another part of gaming and engagement."

If other schools are looking to connect kids through gaming, Heilmann notes that several





SAGE sessions provide tips on how to get started.

“The Text Book Bureau fund can actually be used to purchase board games. Those are funds that people usually have trouble spending because they don’t typically use a lot of textbooks anymore, especially in elementary,” he said. “So that’s one way to get games started.”

He also suggests buying a couple of video gaming systems, which could be used to start a club to play games such as Super Smash Bros.

Another idea is to incorporate low-tech game-based learning directly into the classroom.

“When it comes to board games, we don’t want the adults to let their previous experiences with Monopoly or Risk change the way they feel about all the newer games that are out there. These modern games emphasize inclusion so very rarely are people eliminated and they all have a social aspect,” he said.

“Don’t be afraid to jump in because it will get them hooked and open this world to them.”

At the same time, gaming can also create connections and community, Nightingale adds.

“I wouldn’t say it’s a silver bullet. It’s not like all education has to be about gaming; however, it’s an extremely valuable tool to engage lots of kids in a different way,” he said.

“There are so many opportunities for positive social coaching. When the kids come together

to play games, they’re interacting with each other and learning about each other as part of the process. They’re also learning good skills like how to be a gracious winner or loser. They’re building resiliency and the ability to try something different.”

GAME member Kris Drohomereski has gained hands-on experience in the gamification of the middle years classroom.

**“YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT INTERESTS STUDENTS AND WE NEED TO TRY TO RECREATE THOSE EXPERIENCES IF WE WANT LEARNERS THAT ARE PASSIONATE.”**

*- Kris Drohomereski, teacher*

“For me, there are different levels of how games enter the classroom. There are a lot of people using board games in very innovative and exciting ways, whether it’s for mathematics concepts or probability concepts. People are playing a lot of high-level games, and there’s a real demand for it with our students,” said Drohomereski, a Grade 8 teacher at École

Edward Schreyer School.

“With the way video games have changed, there’s a lot of online gaming now and people aren’t side by side in the same room anymore. So board games really offer that face-to-face experience and kids seem to love that. I have groups of kids in my room every lunch hour playing card games and having complex avant-garde game experiences like Axis & Allies. There are a lot of different indie games.”

Drohomereski forged forward with gamification and game-based learning while he was teaching Grade 6. When he came to a lesson on the Klondike, the textbook didn’t seem engaging enough for his students so he created an interactive game that allowed them to make choices and track their outcomes.

A couple years later, he ended up teaching some of those same students in Grade 8, and they still spoke with excitement about that Klondike game.

“They remembered a ton of information we learned. They were so excited, and it was really powerful for me that they could recall so much,” he said.

“So I pulled out the whole file of what I did before and made a new version of it for a medieval game. There were different experiences that would emulate life in the Middle Ages and understanding of people through that period. The cool thing was that math outcomes were also woven into it.”

*continued on pg. 14*

Through that experience, he felt that he achieved a “circus of learning.”

“The kids were all talking about different things and doing different things. It was noisy but it was all purposeful. We had that moment where kids had a lot of ownership over what they were doing and a lot of points of understanding,” he said.

“Kids were talking about strategies after class, and their reflection pieces and responses to life in the middle ages were so much richer. It required a lot of work, but the level of engagement was amazing.”

Since then, it’s been his mission to build more games to capture the energy and attention of his students.

“I build a lot of choice-based games that go through a historical narrative. Depending on how close their choice is to the actual story, they get rewarded or they face consequences, so it guides them through the historical experience in an attractive way,” he said.

“There is a lot of intentionality behind the games to meet the needs of the students. I started designing them because there aren’t a lot of games out there that immerse you in an experience where you create a connection to real-life events. I want to make games to bring kids into that world so they can imagine what it’s really like.”

At the same time, games also provide an avenue to reward students for their progress.

“I want to go beyond simply grades and feedback. I want to break down skills and reward skill development. If the kids own those skills, their overall performance will improve as well,” he said.

“I’ve been developing quests so kids have different choices over which path they take, and I’m able to build different levels into it. The path is much simpler for students who struggle so they get the basic practice they need. There are also enriching paths for my stronger students.”

For him, the first motivating factor is to think about what kind of memories he wants to build for the kids.

“You have to think about what interests students and we need to try to recreate those experiences if we want learners that are passionate,” he said.

“You also need to be willing to take risks

and put yourself out there. When we deal with games, our job as educators is to pull the learning out of things. We don’t need to focus directly on teaching an outcome. Instead, we can pull an understanding out and connect it. We can cover a lot of content if we’re open to experiences.”

Games open the door to multi-modal learning that can enhance abilities in numeracy, literacy, critical thinking, collaboration and so much more.

“We have to put ourselves up to exploring with the kids. When a game doesn’t work out sometimes, you might have to play with the rules on the fly. But kids are fabulous and they are so good about giving advice. They



want to make things better,” he said.

“They love to give feedback and watch the game change. They live in a world where beta tests and alpha tests are happening all the time. They go on forums and share with developers what they want. For that community of learners, being part of the process is important. Kids get super excited and the excitement is infectious.”

As an e-sports coach at Archwood School, Melissa Burns can relate to that irresistible enthusiasm generated through the gaming experience. Last school year, she coached four e-sports teams, each made up of six players in Grade 7 and 8.

Competitive video gaming requires training, similar to the way students would train for a sports team.

“We’re the first middle school in the province that offered it, not just as a video game club but we have an actual competitive club. We are an official team from the school. We go to competitions and we have practices at lunchtime,” said Burns, a musical specialist at the K to 8 school.

“So far, we’ve just been competing against high schools because it’s been hard to find other middle schools that have been willing to jump on board and see it for what it could be.”

Looking ahead, plans are in the works to launch an e-sports association for middle years students in Manitoba. Anyone who is interested in getting involved can contact Burns at [melissa.burns@lrdsd.net](mailto:melissa.burns@lrdsd.net).

“We’re going to have a banner and grow it so that it is recognized, just the same way it would be for regular sports. The neat thing is you get a lot of competitive kids that you would see on the sports teams, but it also catches a lot of those kids who aren’t really involved in extracurriculars,” she said.

“These kids go home and they play video games, so now we have a place for them. It used to be a very isolating activity and they’d just talk to people online, but now all of a sudden they have a community. We’re finding that those kids are connecting and they’re having real relationships with other kids at school that they wouldn’t otherwise connect with.”

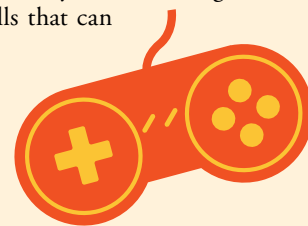
Through e-sports, students learn about team-building and sportsmanship, as well as responsibility and accountability.

Burns also incorporates plenty of practical technical skills that even allow the students to troubleshoot problems with technology and equipment, both in school and in their daily lives.

And when it comes to the question of whether kids are immersed in too much screen time, Burns sees the positives in the experience.

“We live in a very digital age so instead of limiting screen time, why not embrace it and look at it as how can we use it? What kind of transferable skills can we give to our students? We don’t want to naysay it because they’re going to be doing it anyways, so let’s use it in a productive way,” she said.

“Even in the training, there’s a lot of meta-cognition, self-reflection and being able to adapt to things very quickly. I’m finding that it’s been great at sharpening their critical thinking. So, yes, they’re getting better at a video game but they’re also learning all these skills that can help them in other parts of their lives.”





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The Manitoba Teachers' Society  
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## PD AT THE ATOMIC LEVEL

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

A Brandon-based teacher has returned from the ultimate professional development experience, which accelerated his excitement for sharing knowledge about cutting-edge physics.

Christopher Sarkonak travelled to Geneva, Switzerland, from July 7 to 20 as part of the International High School Teacher Programme at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Physics.

"It was beyond my wildest expectations. It was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I didn't even realize everything that they did over there. It was so eye-opening," said Sarkonak, who teaches physics and math at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School.

"One of the best thing was just being able to talk to 44 other teachers from 33 other countries around the world and to learn from them. There were all these different presentations from people at CERN, and there were tours and exhibits and labs and so many things that we can take home right to our classroom."

Among other innovations, CERN is home to the Large Hadron Collider, a 27-kilometre circular particle accelerator that can accelerate two proton beams to 99.9 per cent of the speed of light before smashing them together.

"Nobody realizes that CERN is where the touch screen was invented and where the internet itself was invented. The very first site on the internet was CERN. They invented the MRI, the PET scan, CT scan, radiation therapy," Sarkonak said.

"This technology is all byproducts of the research that they do there. They have to invent the science to make this stuff work. You can't even comprehend the sheer scale of it. It's incredible to see it up close and personal."

Sarkonak was the 15th Canadian to participate in the program during the 21 years that it's been offered. Even more remarkable, he's the only Canadian ever selected directly by CERN. The other Canadian participants have received a reserved spot as regional

winners of the Canadian Association of Physicists teaching excellence award.

"Until now, for the last 21 years, no one has successfully applied directly in competition with thousands of other teachers around the world and actually been chosen from Canada," he said. "It's a tremendous honour."

As a result, Sarkonak was on the radar of representatives from the Perimeter Institute, a theoretical physics research hub based in Waterloo, Ont.

"They sought me out and asked if I'd be interested to join the Perimeter Institute Teacher Network," he said. "This outreach network is made up of people that are able to give official Perimeter Institute PDs across the country."

In September, Sarkonak delivered a presentation to education students at Brandon University and he'll also be speaking at SAGE this fall.

"The opportunities that seem to be coming out of this experience are amazing, especially through the Perimeter Institute," he said. "I'm starting to work with them on curriculum connections in Manitoba."

Since the start of the new school year, Sarkonak says his physics classes have been bursting at the seams. Building on the momentum, he's already creating classroom projects using 3D printers at the school.

"The S'Cool Lab, which is CERN's onsite teacher education lab, gives free blueprints for how to 3D print different lab materials so you don't have to spend tons of money on physics supplies. So I'm printing a model of the ATLAS electromagnets, which is the other major experiment there. The kids can actually turn it on to explore the electromagnetism system and control the particle beams," he said.

"I'm also building a functional model of the accelerator that actually accelerates a little ball bearing using electromagnets. I have so many new ideas and opportunities after this once-in-a-lifetime experience and I feel incredibly invigorated to share them."

# Colleagues main source of bullying

STORY BY SAMANTHA TURENNE

After four years, The Safe and Inclusive Workplace Project is wrapping up. Spearheaded by Dr. Karen Harlos, from the University of Winnipeg, the project partnered with The Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Nurses Union and the Manitoba government to examine the prevalence of workplace bullying and look at ways to minimize and prevent future occurrences.

The MTS data was gathered through an online survey, conducted in 2016, as well as a focus group held in 2017. All MTS members were invited to participate in the online survey, while those who were bullied and/or belonged to groups that were at a higher risk for bullying made up the focus group. More than 3,030 members participated in the project.

According to the results, more than one in four participants (27 per cent) reported being bullied at work in the past six months. The two most common sources of bullying were a supervisor or someone in a higher position and a co-worker or peer. Combined those accounted for 56 per cent of incidents. They were followed by a parent or guardian (27 per cent) and student (20 per cent). Participants could indicate more than one source of bullying, and often did.

The most common type of bullying experienced by members was verbal (94 per cent) followed by physical bullying (11 per cent), and social exclusion (six per cent). Five per cent of participants admitted that they had bullied a co-worker.

Not surprisingly, the data showed that some groups were at higher risk of being bullied. Women were more likely (29 per cent) than men (22 per cent) to say they had been bullied. Sexual minority women were even more likely to say they were bullied (34 per cent).

School leaders (principals and vice-principals) were as likely as other members to say they had been bullied. However, female school leaders were much more likely to say they were bullied (35 per cent) than male school leaders (15 per



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cent). This was especially true for female leaders in middle schools where females were almost three times more likely to report bullying (39 per cent) than their male colleagues (14 per cent).

The bullying of female school leaders worsened in high school where 43 per cent of female principals and vice-principals were bullied compared with 18 per cent of the males. In elementary schools, the stats were similar, with 33 per cent of female leaders being on the receiving end of bullying behavior compared to 15 per cent of their male counterparts.

In general, school leaders were more likely to experience physically intimidating acts than other participants in the study.

Whether participants were victims of bullying or merely observers, the consensus was that workplace bullying negatively impacted their performance at work.

Eighty-five per cent of members who had been bullied and 82 per cent who had observed workplace bullying said it had a negative effect on their work performance.

Respondents said that being bullied or observing others being bullied increased their stress over their role in the workplace. In some cases, there was less clarity about job requirements and how to fulfill them, more demands were added to their work role and there were higher expectations to produce work that exceeded available time or resources.



These individuals also reported feeling a much lower sense of organizational support when compared with those who had not experienced or observed bullying behaviour. They reported stronger intentions to leave their school and their division. Observing student-to-student bullying was associated with a higher intention to leave the school, but not the division.

All Manitoba schools are required to have policies on harassment and violence prevention. However, almost one in five (18 per cent) were unaware that their school had a harassment policy and close to half (42 per cent) did not know that their school had a violence prevention policy. Respondents who were aware of their workplace harassment policy and had received the appropriate training were least likely to say they had been bullied at work (24 per cent).

The good news is that bullying behaviour is being reported. Six out of ten times (62 per cent), the respondents reported incidents of bullying to colleagues or family members. Unfortunately, this behaviour is not being formally reported, which decreased the likelihood for a resolution. A member is deemed to have

made a "formal report" when they inform someone with the power or authority to deal with the bullying behaviour.

A little more than half of the respondents (54 per cent) made a formal report by informing a school leader about bullying while one in five (20 per cent) contacted their local teacher association (20 per cent). Of note, 40 per cent of bullied respondents said they approached the bully while four per cent took no action.

Bullying was more likely to be formally reported by members 30 years old or under (75 per cent), when incidents were physical in nature (82 per cent) and when a parent was the source of bullying (79 per cent). Bullying experiences were less likely to be formally reported when a supervisor was the source of bullying (61 per cent).

The final survey in this study recently concluded and the results are being tabulated. The survey asked some of the same questions as the 2016 version, for tracking purposes, but also expanded its scope by including a series of questions on violence.

The results of the second survey as well as recommendations will be available in the coming months.



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# Assistance plans see ups and downs

BY LINDSEY ENNS

Depression and anxiety driven by a stressful work environment have led hundreds of teachers to seek help through the Society's Educator Assistance Program.

The program, which provides confidential and professional counselling sessions in both French and English to all MTS members, saw a spike in intakes last November.

Ralph Ramore, Educator Assistance Program (EAP) and Disability Benefits Plans (DBP) administrator, who is also marking 25 years with MTS this year, attributes the increase to an array of challenges teachers face in the classroom.

Over the course of the 2018-19 school year, the program saw a total of 475 intakes, which was down from 518 the previous school year. That's compared to 456 intakes in 2016-17 and 345 in 2015-16.

"Last November we had a spike in intakes," Ramore said. "But as the year progressed, it started to play down."

The EAP saw 94 intakes last November alone, which was up from 48 the previous year.

"That's the highest we've ever had ... literally a doubling of the intakes that month from the prior year," he said. "So arguably we were swamped right then and there."

To manage the volume, Ramore said MTS brought on a half-time clinical psychologist from January until the end of June.

"We did our best to resolve that," he said, adding they ended up with a waitlist last spring. "We were booking people up to six weeks down the road for their subsequent session, or initial session, not at all optimal from a clinical psychology perspective."

"You want to get them in as quick as possible."

The EAP provides service to members struggling with a variety of issues related to work or home, such as stress or anxiety. Along with providing confidential and voluntary professional counselling, the program also offers referral services as well as help and intervention at an early stage of difficulty.

The program consists of four full-time counsellors, three based in Winnipeg and one in Brandon, and it provides services to rural and remote areas of the province. They also recently brought on a term counsellor who will work 12 days per month until the end of June.

**The EAP provides service to members struggling with a variety of issues related to work or home, such as stress or anxiety. Along with providing confidential and voluntary professional counselling, the program also offers referral services as well as help and intervention at an early stage of difficulty.**

Some of the common issues counsellors see members for include enhancing self-care in a stressful environment, dealing with changes and transitions, improving professional and personal relationships, dealing with harassment or abuse as well as recognizing and addressing burn-out, depression, stress and anxiety.

The Society's Disability Benefits Plans (DBP) has also seen a slight increase in claims over the years due in part to more seasoned teachers struggling with anxiety and depression, Ramore said.

"It's that sense of loss of control," he said. "If you add external factors that take away

your control ... you take away supports and at the same time when you're asked to do more with less, it makes for a tougher work environment."

When it comes to claims filed under the DBP, at the end of the fiscal year (Aug. 31, 2019), open claims were down 28 when compared to the same time last year.

"The potential claims have dropped and our open claims have dropped and where they've decreased is in part due to more seasoned teachers returning to the workplace," Ramore said.

The Society also has an Early Intervention Program, which is directed at members who are working while experiencing significant physical or mental stressors that could lead to sick leave and a disability claim.

As of June 9, 2019, there was a total of 129 early intervention claims filed under the DBP, that's compared to 133 in June 2010.

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem in any given year. Nearly 50 per cent of those who struggle with anxiety or depression have never seen a doctor, but for those who do seek help, 80 per cent of them will find meaningful improvement in their mental health.

Ramore encourages any members struggling with their mental health to reach out and seek help.

"The worse thing possible is to hold it in tight," he added. "At the end of the day, MTS is a member service organization here to work with members and we have a host of services that do that."

For more information about the EAP along with a list of resources, visit "Educator Assistance Program" under the "Health & Benefits" tab on the MTS website, [mbteach.org](http://mbteach.org).

# PORTFOLIO

\*  
**SORRY TO  
ANYONE LAME  
ENOUGH TO  
BE OFFENDED**

Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer said he's OK with candidates who have said racist or homophobic things in the past as long as they apologize. "As long as someone takes responsibility for what they've said ... and have apologized for that, I accept that."

Scheer, however, wouldn't apologize for bizarre remarks he made in the House of Commons in 2005 comparing same sex marriage with a dog's tail. "How many legs would a dog have if you counted the tail as a leg? The answer is just four. Just because you call a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg. If this bill passes, governments and individual Canadians will be forced to call a tail a leg, nothing more." C'mon, man, at least apologize for a ludicrous metaphor.

Apologies were left for Justin Trudeau whose past blackface hijinks were unearthed and then followed by a Green candidate's admission he performed in blackface for a CBC skit. Let's just blame everything on the CBC and call it a day.

## Well, what was **that** all about?

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON

**36**  
SEATS

**18**  
SEATS

**3**  
SEATS



Well, that was pretty much a dud of democracy – somewhere on the excitement scale between Rice-A-Roni and socks as a gift.

Voters seemed to agree. There are greater lineups at the Habanero Sombrero food truck than there were at any polling station on Election Day. So be it, elections aren't all supposed to be exciting; they're about democracy, the clash of ideas, the debates over the future.

This past provincial election campaign pretty much embodied, well, none of that.

The clash was more of a clank and it became somewhat difficult for opposition parties to debate the incumbent since it appeared he had gone into the Witness Protection Program.

Of course, it was a sound political strategy to call the election early and then hide in some bolthole for much of the campaign. Brian Pallister won, so there you go. Even the Winnipeg Free Press's Dan Lett said the fact he won was an "I told you so" to all those who argued against an early election.

Duh, except nobody, save Dan Lett, had any doubt that the Tories would be re-elected. The argument against ignoring the spirit of Manitoba's fixed election law was not a quarrel of win or lose, but right or wrong.

In the days before jurisdictions implemented fixed-date elections, governments often called early elections when their chances of winning were optimal. Yes it was cynical and most of the times they did win. And in the campaigns the early bird special was overwhelmed by the fact that, ready or not, there would be an election. As it was with this one.

There were no villagers with pitchforks and torches storming the legislature over having to consider voting a year ahead of time. They just scratched it off their 2020



INNOVATIVE LEADERS

## #75 Barbara Rentler

CEO, Ross Stores

So, 1%  
of women are  
innovative?

Business publication Forbes Magazine recently ranked the 100 most innovative CEOs, calling them "the most creative and successful business minds of today." There was one odd thing about the list down at No. 75, the only woman listed in the sea of men.

As author Anand Giridharadas noted in a comment: "There are twice as many men named Stanley as there are women of any name and there are only two Stanleys." Forbes said it would review its methodology in future selections.



## The student iPads had bugs; NO, REALLY

Students in St. Paul, Minnesota, have been told to clean their school-issued iPads after bedbugs were found in several of them. In a letter the St Paul Public School District officials warned parents of "dirty iPad protector cases" after a spokesperson said bed bugs were discovered in five district-issued tablets.

to-do list. It was not, as Lett suggested a "great gambit." It was as daring or doubtful as gravity.

What was more a smack at democracy was the premier taking the electorate for granted, not only in calling the election, but in the way it was conducted. Calling the election in the summer, for a Sept. 10 vote, was another move to ensure a victory.

Summer campaigns do not tend to engage voters. Go to sleep, nothing to see here.

In the past 100 years Manitoba politicians have pretty much left summer alone. During that time only once has a campaign taken up a large chunk of the summer. In 1990 the Conservative government called an early election for Sept. 11. It won a majority. Pallister joined that government two years later in a byelection. Lessons learned?

While the Bummer in the Summer was hardly enthralling, it might have been given a boost had the premier been more willing to debate his record and future plans.

There are lots of legitimate criticisms of leaders' debates. They sometimes contain little more than bobbing heads popping out talking points and zingers scripted by the big foreheads in the backrooms. Sometimes candidates shout over each other, creating indecipherable white noise. But, sometimes they do give us a clear view of the candidates and their views.

Pallister dodged all but the televised debate. Again, a frontrunner doesn't need to debate. It's best just to avoid any forum where their policies might be questioned. It's definitely the right political strategy -- if winning is the only goal -- but hardly one that enhances the democratic process. It shows little respect for the people for whom you claim to care so deeply.

Had the premier bothered to debate more than once, he still would have won the election, but at least the electorate would have heard why he deserved to.

In happier news: Since the election NDP Leader Wab Kinew was able to have his omnipresent toddler removed from his hip. Who says health care is in crisis?



## PRAISE THE LORD AND PASS THE AMMUNITION

The former Gun Appreciation Day wasn't quite enough for a group in the U.S. This year, the day was expanded to be called Guns and God Appreciation Day, no doubt a bit incongruous for some. But not these folks. "The Guns and God Coalition is a grassroots movement to protect our God-given right to self-defense," says its chairman. It's not clear when or where any deity sanctioned the right to use and worship guns.



## If you're going to San Francisco...

Cheapest listed house in San Francisco: One bedroom, one bathroom, 570 square feet, no front or back yard, no garage. But, hey, recently renovated! The city's most expensive property is listed at \$40.5 million. The 9,500 square-foot house takes up a city block.

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# REFRESH

BY RAMAN JOB, PUBLIC RELATIONS FACILITATOR



### Elections in Schools

Sisler High School's Devin King (with Dungeons and Dragons pride tee) after his interview on CJOB's The Start. King was talking democracy, politics and elections in the classroom.



### Blue Bombers Teacher Appreciation Night

Anne Bennett, MTS staff, poses after setting up the MTS swag table at IG Field. Twelve Manitoba teachers were honoured that night, representing 16,000 Society members across the province.



### Orange Shirt Day

Phyllis Webstad was the six-year-old girl who had her shiny orange shirt, a gift from her grandma, taken from her when she entered residential school in B.C. Hers is the foundational story for Orange Shirt Day. Webstad was in town last month for a conference of Elders.



### Global Climate Strike

Janine Brown, an MTS 2019 Young Humanitarian Award winner (centre), and friends at the Global Climate Strike in Winnipeg. This student organized event was the largest of its kind in Winnipeg drawing over 10,000 students, teachers and activists to the Manitoba Legislature.





# project Overseas

## A Gift to the Globe

**Project Overseas is accepting applications from Manitoba educators wanting to work with colleagues in developing countries in the summer of 2020.**

**Application deadline is Monday, October 28, 2019**

This year, MTS, in conjunction with The Canadian Teachers' Federation, will be sponsoring five teachers. Criteria include membership in MTS, an appropriate teacher's certificate, five full years teaching experience in Canada, Canadian citizenship and excellent health.

**For more information & application forms contact:**

Danielle Fullan Kolton  
Assistant General Secretary  
Programs | Professional and French Language Services  
The Manitoba Teachers' Society  
191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2  
Telephone: (204) 831-3064 / 1-866-494-5747 ext. 282  
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**To access information about other workshops offered by MTS:**

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