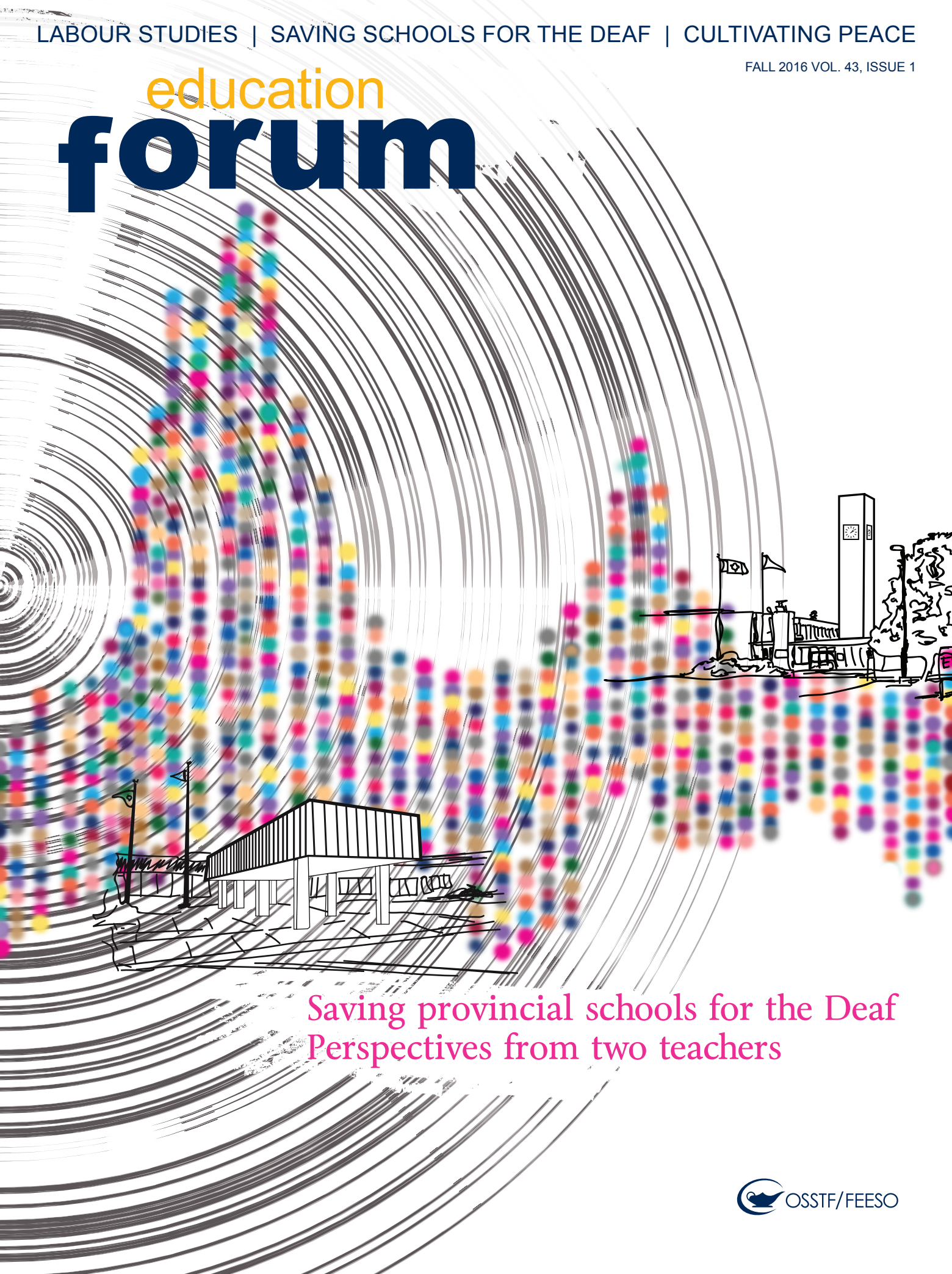


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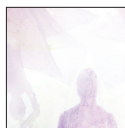
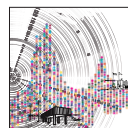
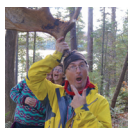
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# So long dear readers

The editor's favourite stories



If there has been one constant in my life, it has been that the best opportunities seem to find me at the most inconvenient times. I have recently seized the opportunity to pursue work assignments in a different department of OSSTF/FEESO. Because of this, I will no longer be the editor of *Education Forum*.

Yes, this saddens me but as I said this was my own choice. However, I hope you will indulge me as I share my favourite stories and accomplishments over the three short years that I helped produce this magazine.

I wanted to begin my tenure at *Education Forum* with a series on our members' pensions. I began by engaging former OSSTF/FEESO president and general secretary Rod Albert to write a feature on the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP). In the next issue I had our own Jack Jones write a piece on the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS). Both Rod and Jack went into detail about how both plans were created and how their structure provides stability for our members. We ended the series with former Ontario Teachers' Federation president Terry Hamilton writing about the ethical challenges faced by pension funds when they decide how to invest.

As environmental issues seemed to preoccupy our members more and more, I struggled to know how best to provide an article that would both engage the topic and challenge our readers. When Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* was published, I knew I had my entry point. After many phone calls and emails, I managed to secure an interview with Ms. Klein. Both Nanci Henderson and

I then had to quickly read the book before the interview (true confession: I listened to the audio version—it was over 20 hours!). Nanci's amazing interview was published in our winter 2015 issue.

Head injuries and concussions have always been special concern for me. When I found that Dr. Liana Brown of Trent University was publishing work on students and concussions, I knew we had to share some of her data. Her article in the fall 2015 issue included a timeline to help students, parents and teachers plan how a young person can reintegrate into school life after receiving a concussion. I was especially proud that this front-cover issue landed on MPPs' desks on the same day of the first reading of *Rowan's Law* in the Ontario Legislature.

Hands down the most-read article of my time as editor was last issue's feature on educational assistants who must wear protective equipment. Their stories, captured so sensitively by Vanessa Woodacre, struck a chord with many of our readers. The story spread like wildfire across the country and was even incorporated into one college's curriculum.

Probably my most proud accomplishment, however, was the creation of *Education Forum.ca*. As we moved toward a digital platform, I have seen a greater engagement between our readers and the magazine. If you haven't yet visited us online, like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

See ya folks! It was a pleasure and a privilege.

Randy Banderob, Editor  
editor@education-forum.ca

A large, stylized red pencil is shown in the process of drawing the word "Goodbye" in a cursive script. The pencil is positioned diagonally across the page, with its tip pointing towards the bottom right corner. The word "Goodbye" is written in a large, flowing, red cursive font, with the final 'y' having a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right.



# Au revoir chers lecteurs

## Les articles préférés du rédacteur

Un fait demeure constant dans ma vie : les meilleures perspectives se présentent à moi aux moments les plus inopportuns. J'ai récemment saisi l'occasion de prendre une affectation dans un autre service d'OSSTF/FEESO. De ce fait, je cesserai d'être le rédacteur en chef d'*Education Forum*.

Oui, j'ai de la peine, mais comme indiqué précédemment, le choix était le mien. Toutefois, j'espère que vous me donnerez le plaisir de partager mes histoires et réalisations préférées de ces trois brèves années durant lesquelles j'ai contribué à la production du présent magazine.

Je voulais commencer mon mandat à *Education Forum* par une série sur les régimes de retraite de nos membres. J'ai d'abord invité Rod Albert, ancien président et secrétaire général d'OSSTF/FEESO, à rédiger un article sur le Régime de retraite des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario (RREO). Dans le numéro suivant, j'ai demandé à Jack Jones du Bureau provincial d'écrire un article sur le Régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario (OMERS). Rod et Jack sont tous deux rentrés dans les détails sur la création des deux régimes et sur la manière dont leur structure assure une stabilité à nos membres. Nous avons clos la série avec Terry Hamilton, ancien président de la Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario, décrivant les défis d'éthique auxquels les fonds de pension sont confrontés au moment de décider des placements.

À mesure que les questions environnementales semblaient préoccuper de plus en plus nos membres, j'avais du mal à trouver le meilleur moyen de produire un article qui portait à discussion et qui tiendrait nos lecteurs en haleine. À la sortie de *This Changes Everything* de Naomi Klein, j'ai su que j'avais ma percée. Après plusieurs appels téléphoniques et courriels, j'ai obtenu une entrevue avec M<sup>me</sup> Klein. Sans tarder, Nanci Henderson et moi-même avons à lire le livre avant l'entrevue

(pour dire vrai : j'ai écouté la version sonore pendant plus de 20 heures!). La formidable interview de Nanci a été publiée dans notre numéro de l'hiver 2015.

Les traumatismes crâniens et les commotions cérébrales ont toujours été une source d'intérêt personnel. Lorsque j'ai appris que D<sup>re</sup> Liana Brown de *Trent University* publiait des travaux sur les commotions cérébrales affectant les étudiants, j'ai su qu'il faudrait partager une partie de son travail. Son article du numéro de l'automne 2015 comprenait un échéancier afin d'aider les élèves, les parents et les enseignants à planifier de quelle manière un jeune peut réintégrer l'école après avoir subi une commotion cérébrale. Quelle n'a pas été ma fierté lorsque cet article à la une du magazine s'est retrouvé sur le bureau des députés le jour même de la première lecture de la *Loi Rowan* à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

Incontestablement, l'article le plus lu de mon mandat de rédacteur en chef est celui du dernier numéro sur les aides à l'enseignement et les éducatrices devant porter de l'équipement de protection. Leurs histoires, recueillies avec tant de sensibilité par Vanessa Woodacre, ont touché la corde sensible de bon nombre de nos lecteurs. L'article s'est propagé à une vitesse foudroyante dans tout le pays et a même été incorporé dans le programme d'études d'un collège.

Toutefois, la réalisation qui fait probablement ma plus grande fierté est la création d'Education-Forum.ca. Notre passage à une plateforme numérique m'a permis de constater une relation plus importante entre nos lecteurs et le magazine. Si vous ne nous avez pas encore rendu visite en ligne, aimez-nous sur Facebook et suivez-nous sur Twitter.

À bientôt! Ce fut pour moi un plaisir et un honneur!

Randy Banderob, rédacteur en chef  
editor@education-forum.ca



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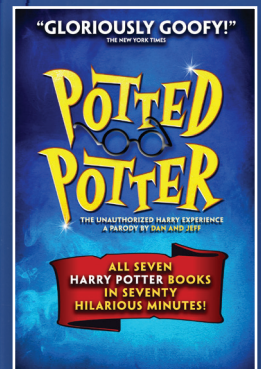
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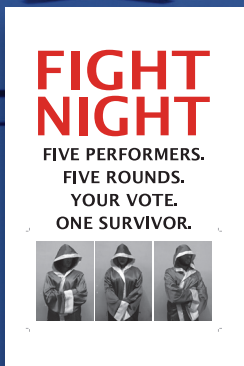


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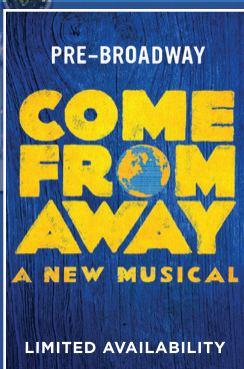


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# Time well spent

A walk in the woods with students



They arrived late, grumpy, unenthused, unprepared and ill-equipped. I wasn't a happy camper! Dangling from their packs were frying pans, cooking pots, over-sized sleeping bags with no waterproofing. Inside was a hodgepodge of loose gear, including a wide assortment of food—loaves of Wonder bread, several cans of ravioli, beans and corn, rice and breakfast cereal in their original containers.

Now, this would have been a normal affair if I was going on one of my regular trips with students who had limited experience in wilderness travel. This group however, were my dual credit students; a secondary school class signed up for an Outdoor Leadership course at a college I teach at. If they pass, they get a high school credit and a college credit—and a solid amount of time playing out in the woods.

It was the other instructor, Ben, travelling with me, who saved the day. Be-

fore I gave them all a failing grade and cancelled the bus, he pulled me aside and suggested an alternative teaching technique to just simply losing my temper with them. Ben reminded me that the seven days wandering the woods would do wonders for them, cancelling the trip wouldn't.

Ben's philosophy was hard for me to grasp. I'm fifty-two years old and have taught for over thirty years. At times I become more than just a little uptight at the youth of today. Part of me wanted to have the bus leave at 9:00 a.m. sharp, dismissing anyone who wasn't there, but Ben had a good point; let nature teach them rather than us. We both knew that by the third day they would hate the trip. They usually do. They'd curse the weather, the cold, the weight of their packs. They would also crave their addictions—phones, alcohol, drugs. Day five or six would be a turning point however. All the negative would wash

away. The students would be in solid shape, realize how to pack properly, be used to the poor conditions, and fight off their addictions. They would finally be used to being out there, and loving every minute of it.

We arrived at the trail access by noon and in a cold downpour rain we headed out. Some were miserable, complaining seconds out of the gate. Some were anxious. One even vomited a couple times. Others started singing loud and obnoxious songs. The learning had begun.

I prayed a bear would visit our camp the first night. I'm not sure why it didn't. The students were told to hang their food bags to keep them away from any nuisance bruin wandering into camp for a snack. Some food packs weren't even hung, and the ones that were could have easily been taken down. Rather than getting angry though, I changed tactics. I took one of the worst bear hangs—the pack was simply tied





to the trunk of a small birch tree—and dragged it a few hundred meters back in the woods. When the students woke up and started searching, I sat back and watched the action. Panic set in when the group couldn't find their food, some started the blame game when they discovered it, and then began the accusations on who was at fault. My technique worked. Heck, even if it didn't, I enjoyed watching it all unfold.

Individual cooking groups made breakfast. All of them tried consuming the heaviest food items in their packs, to reduce daytime loads. One group enjoyed bacon and hamburger patties pressed between water-soaked balls of Wonder bread. Another group fried up a couple eggs. They had a dozen starting out but by hanging the carton on the side of someone's pack, the rest ended up breaking. I was actually amazed that two survived.

We headed out just before 10:00 a.m. and came back to the campsite a half hour later. The student chosen to take the lead had taken us the wrong way. Ben and I knew the error the moment we started hiking—but again, we were allowing nature to do most of the teaching on this trip. We were just going along for the ride.

Moods heightened a bit when we stopped for lunch beside a majestic cascade flushing alongside maple and beech trees lit up by fall foliage. The sun even peeked through for a bit. However, when packs were strapped back on, and the rain turned to hail, questions and concerns about us continuing on began to fester amongst a few in the group. By the time we reached our second campsite on Maggie Lake there was talk about splitting up. Some wanted to press on, others wanted a slower pace,

and one student wanted to go home.

On the morning of day two, I was walking out with five students who all said they had injuries and couldn't continue.

I continued on after the group of students were picked up, travelling counterclockwise on the loop in hopes to soon catch up to the rest of the group traveling with Ben. On day five I caught up to them, just prior to a hail storm, followed by a brief snow storm. The temperature had dropped significantly, averaging four degrees Celsius. It was cold and wet. The students went about their business of setting up tents, a tarp and gathering wood, happily oblivious to the weather. They had become used to the foul conditions, immersing themselves in their environment rather than battling against it.

They were definitely hyped from *surviving* the extensive hike. There were stories of blinding snow squalls, exhausting uphill scrambles, dehydration, and twisted ankles. But there were also stories of scenic vistas, wildlife sightings and fun times had while on the trail. The group had acclimatized to life in the woods—it was time well spent.

It is interesting how time spent in nature can readjust our characters, allowing us to become familiar once again with wild places. These students left their modern comforts and walked aimlessly—and unprepared—into a cold,

wet and foreign environment. For the first few days, all of them questioned being there. They showed signs of anxiety and depression, and an urge to go home. Seven days later, the remaining students walked out feeling confident, prepared, connected to wilderness and themselves.

A few years later I went off on a quest to find where they all ended up. One was a teacher, one was short order cook, and another was a jet fighter pilot. Each one I found, however, said that our trip to Algonquin changed their lives forever.

I also looked for the others who had given up on day two. I only found three. None seemed happy, and all said it was unfair that they failed the course because they didn't finish their time in the woods.

There's definitely magic in the forest. My daughter has taught me that. She's been going on lengthy canoe trips since she was two. It's been part of her life wandering the woods. Kyla has reminded me that we are all born from wilderness. Every culture on this planet originated from the wilds. It only seems you get disconnected the older you get, and phobic (or unaware) of what's out there. Time spent out there doesn't necessarily change you—it reminds you of who you really are. That's magical.

---

**Kevin Callan** is the author of thirteen books, including the best-selling *The Happy Camper*, a popular series of paddling guides, and *Wilderness Pleasures: A Practical Guide to Camping Bliss*.





# Labour studies

The world of work through an academic lens



Nick Ruhloff is an intelligent, articulate young man who has just completed a master's degree at McMaster University. Later this year he'll be entering Osgoode Hall Law School. By almost any standard he's on a path that many people would envy, and he gives a lot of the credit for that to his undergraduate experience in the Labour Studies program at Brock University.

Brock is one of five universities in Ontario that offers a program in labour studies. The others are York University, McMaster University, Laurentian University and the University of Windsor.

The program at Brock was launched in 1989.

"One of the reasons the program was initiated was to recognize the immense contribution that working women and men had made to the university," says Larry Savage, Director of Brock's Centre for Labour Studies. Savage points out that the university was built, in part,

owing to thousands of union members across the Niagara region who donated a day's pay each year for five years to the university's building fund.

"And so that history also plays an important role in teaching and learning about labour issues at Brock," he explains. (For more on the history of Brock University see Rothwell, *Education Forum*, Winter 2015, p. 11.)

As with all the other labour studies programs in Ontario, the Brock program looks at more than just traditional union-management relations. "Our program and courses all revolve around examining work with a critical lens—who controls it, how is it allocated, how do we make work better," says Savage.

Nick Ruhloff is emphatic about the value of the program. "I think it's a very sophisticated program intellectually and academically," he says. "It's interdisciplinary, so you rely on sociology, political science, anthropology, geography.

You get a wealth of perspectives that you won't get in most other programs, and it provides an opportunity for truly rigorous academic work. Because of my background in labour studies, I just felt much better prepared to deal with what was in front of me at a master's level."

Labour studies, though, is much more than a strictly intellectual or academic pursuit. It is arguably as relevant to almost anyone's real-world experience as any field of study.

"Labour studies is not an abstract discipline," says Stephanie Ross of the Work and Labour Studies program at York University. "We all have to work, and work plays an important role in our lives and has a huge impact on what kind of life we end up living. So the central questions we explore have everything to do with what students will encounter in their lives."

Rather than considering workers and the work they do from the viewpoint of



management, as in a business or commerce program, a labour studies approach is concerned with the perspective and the interests of workers themselves.

“We look at the relationship between workers, employers, governments and the broader society, and we concern ourselves with how workers experience those relationships,” says Ross. “Rather than seeing workers as a problem for managers to solve, labour studies provides students with the tools to ask critical questions about how work is organized in our society and who gets access to what kinds of work. Questions about what work is considered valuable or meaningful and is well enough remunerated to support a decent life, and what work is not valued in that way.”

Labour studies programs are concerned not just with examining and understanding the forces at play within the world of work, but also with exploring the ways we can make work a better experience and confront what Ross calls the “systems of inequality that are expressed in the labour market and in our workplaces.”

An obvious way to confront workplace inequality, of course, is through a union, and labour studies programs invariably explore how unions and collective bargaining bring about significant improvements in salaries and working conditions, and ensure that workers are treated fairly and have access to due process when they are not.

Robert Storey, Director of the School of Labour Studies at McMaster University, says, “Our students learn that, historically speaking, the ways in which working people have been able to right the wrongs and redress the inequalities is by standing up to the bosses, and for the most part that needs to be done collectively. That’s the way you secure your rights—even your individual rights. These things are very important to know as people try to find their way in this very confusing and sometimes threaten-

ing world of work that is emerging.”

Of course, the most threatening feature of the current labour market is the extent to which precarious work is becoming the norm, particularly for young workers. The prevalence of low-wage, part-time jobs and short-term contracts create workplace environments where it’s virtually impossible to organize a union. This has given rise to non-traditional kinds of collective organizing. Stephanie Ross says that her students at York examine not just the kinds of economic conditions and government policy decisions that create a precarious labour environment, but also the kinds of actions workers are undertaking to fight it.

“Our job as professors is to try to help students understand how precarious work came to be, and also to look at groups of people within the province or across North America who are collectively trying to fight against precarious work,” says Ross. “These groups are developing all kinds of interesting strategies, whether it’s the Fight for \$15 movement, or new kinds of workers organizations that are not just workplace based. They are trying to deal with the fact that people might have multiple employers or are always on contract or working freelance, but who still need a way to collectively defend their rights an advocate for themselves.”

A common concern among labour studies departments is that high school graduates considering what they want to study in university are almost invariably unaware of the programs. They’ve never encountered anything like labour studies in secondary school, and the programs don’t seem to be on the radar of most guidance counsellors. Consequently, the students who end up graduating from labour studies often start their post-secondary career pursuing a different academic discipline. Students who have an activist inclination or are involved in the social justice movement often gravitate toward labour studies after their first year. And sometimes students from more mainstream programs will take one labour studies course as an elective and discover that they find it more compelling than their current major. Often that’s

because labour studies will turn a critical eye to certain assumptions that are inherent in other areas of study.

“I’ve seen people from business and commerce and human resource management programs come into labour studies and have a kind of epiphany,” says Stephanie Ross. “They realize that they have to challenge a lot of what they’ve been talking about in those programs.”

A labour studies degree gives students more than a gratifying academic experience and a solid understanding of the multiple issues that will impact their working lives. Graduates, in fact, generally have a high degree of success securing meaningful employment, often closely related to the focus of their studies. Not surprisingly, many find careers in labour relations, but others find their way into public policy and administration roles with governments or non-profits, or opt for advocacy roles in organizations focused on social justice. And some graduates, like Nick Ruhloff, go to law school.

Of those who do move into labour relations careers, not all end up working on the union side of the table. Reuben Roth of the Labour Studies program at Laurentian University points out that labour studies graduates are often attractive recruits for human resources departments.

“Far from being turned off by a graduate with a labour studies degree, smart employers who are unionized actually look for students who can understand both sides of the fence,” says Roth.

But whatever role they end up in, labour studies graduates tend to find themselves in positions where they can influence change.

“Our graduates have had impact well out of proportion to their numbers,” explains Ross. “They almost inevitably end up in leadership roles.”

And it certainly can’t be a bad thing for people in leadership roles to have an informed and nuanced understanding of the world of work, and an inclination to put the interests of workers at the forefront.

---

**Michael Young** is an Executive Assistant in the Communications/Political Action Department at Provincial Office.



# Running a school on unstable funding

The success of Nbisiing Secondary School



On the edge of the north shore of Lake Nipissing, resides a small school like few of its kind. On the outside it looks like any high school throughout the province, but it isn't. To be quite honest it technically isn't even in the province; this is Nipissing First Nation's Nbisiing Secondary School. This school is not isolated, located a little more than one kilometre from territorial boundary which touches the municipal boundary of North Bay. North Bay like any municipality boast all four types of Boards totalling six high schools, all provincial day schools. However, Nbisiing isn't one of them, it is a "federal school" (we'll get to that later). What is intriguing about Nbisiing, is the story of how the school links a traditional perspective with a plan for future generations.

The school, according to Chief Scott McLeod, has been evolving for a long time. Forty years ago, Band Council created the position of Education Di-

rector. This person was to support and counsel students (adult or otherwise) who attended provincial day schools. From those humble beginnings, current Director Fran Couchie explains, evolved an adult education program to help students obtain their GED so that they could get jobs and opportunities to support their families. Mrs. Couchie and Chief McLeod state that they realized early on that high school students in the community could benefit from their adult programming. Chief McLeod states, "This evolution on the surface seems odd, but for us [creating Nbisiing] was a natural shift." The shift was from education support to educating ourselves and the Nipissing First Nations (NFN) Education Department was created. Chief McLeod says, "This was a way for us to improve our quality of life by recognizing and reconnecting with our history." Nipissing First Nation has always prioritized education amongst

its people, understanding that education is fundamental in the advancement of its Nation. Nbisiing is a crucial step in the reassertion of jurisdiction, but it's not a closed door approach. It's in the cultural heritage of Nipissing to be a kind, welcoming and friendly people who are open to sharing and cooperation. Nbisiing is again one of their strongest testaments to this traditional way of thinking.

Being a federal school, they choose to offer programming from Grades 9 to 12 from the Ontario Curriculum and deliver its content with a culturally relevant perspective. What does this mean? Well students attending Nbisiing earn Ministry credits and an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) upon achieving Ministry of Education (MOE) graduation requirements. This allows them to enter Ontario colleges and universities on equal footing with their provincial counterparts. Nbisiing



**As a band member myself  
the feeling of being home is  
clearly felt while walking  
its halls.**

in return, opens its doors to the Ministry inspectors to ensure that they are delivering the spirit of the curriculum to its students. Yet the Band Council and Education Department maintain control over the operations, staffing and context in which curriculum is taught. NFN ensures that every teacher is Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) registered, it also so happens that many are band members themselves or have strong ties to the community. This gives students a cultural and academic balance, not readily available in provincial day schools. Student success is the very root of their approach, which can be seen everywhere throughout the school.

As a band member myself the feeling of being home is clearly felt while walking its halls. Speaking to teachers, administrators, the director of education, the Chief, as well as students, one gets a strong sense that they are all working towards a singular purpose, which is the betterment of our nation. Everyone sees, understands and plays a vital role in this process. Mrs. Sawyer, principal of the school says, "It's home. Many of our

school leaders are community leaders and students see themselves as potential leaders." Mrs. Couchie adds, "We can focus on us, to build ourselves up." NFN is a forerunner in applying the traditional value that it takes individuals to raise a nation and a nation to raise individuals.

So why attend a small federal school over a provincial school, especially since it's not isolated and students have options. "In a world of data-driven success predictors we are trying to redefine what success means for us, for the school and for our nation," says Mrs. Sawyer. They look forward to expanding their opportunities that education provides individuals. Chief McLeod states, "We are shifting again...We have PhDs, MDs, Lawyers, BAs, MAs and Journeypersons...now we are looking to create the economic environment for that education to help us all as a nation...to bring our children home." Nipissing First Nation is a forward-thinking First Nation who is willing to wait out the long-term return that the investment in education brings.

This beautiful facility has quite the potpourri of mixed funding, from federal dollars to band dollars which make up the bulk of their stable funding. They also access funds from less stable grants from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, a variety of provincial and fed-

eral Ministries, as well as reverse tuition agreements with other boards and the MOE and tuition transfers from other First Nations. Unlike provincial schools they do not have the formal structures or human resources to find and secure funds as seen within a school board or ministry tax base, as a result much of their time as staff and administrators is devoted to filling out proposals to secure the grant money needed to keep afloat and everyone contributes. "We do what we need to do for the betterment of your students," says Chief McLeod. This comes at a cost in several ways, to maintain the high competitive level of programming and unique opportunities to comparable provincial schools as mentioned earlier located less than 15 kilometres away; everyone must play a role in finding, generating and reinvesting money into this facility. I listened to how students used grant money and a business model of creating and selling certain crafts, clothing and products produced in class to regenerate money for classroom supplies. They often do a moose hunt where they use all the parts of the kill to either generate funds and to provide supplies for classes such as: hides for drums, bones to create traditional tools, meat to supply foods classes for cooking and in turn they sell to students/community member for reinvestment in the school. For every



additional dollar they get through special grants, they look at models that will help them to be self-sufficient and gain a maximal return on that investment. This however, does not leave any margin for error as grants are not stable yet are needed as they look to compete against their bigger more stable competitors the public system.

After touring the school, speaking to everyone involved in its operations, Nipissing is truly more than a school. It is the link between a community's traditional heritage, its world view and the future. As a band member myself, I am proud, humbled and honoured to be a part of such a strong community, one that has seen the value of education. As Chief McLeod said, "Education strengthens and enriches our community...it pushes us forward to fulfill our ultimate goal which is independence."

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**Daniel M. Stevens** is a teacher in District 4, Near North and is a band member of the Nipissing First Nation.



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# Oasis SKATEBOARD

# FACTORY





## SKATEBOARD FACTORY CHURNING OUT AN EDUCATED LOT

Toronto alternative school making a difference for at-risk youth

by Bill Hodgins

Call it a shift change.

In reference to the Toronto District School Board's Oasis Skateboard Factory, that could mean a shift away from traditional teaching methods; you know, where students move from classroom to classroom, lining up in rows of desks and taking notes until their hands begin to cramp.

Craig Morrison views it differently. In his classroom, showing up for class is like showing up for work. There are business plans and professional deadlines, and while the "3 Rs" model of education still rings true, there is a heavy emphasis on client satisfaction and career opportunity.

"We see coming to school daily as sort of working a shift with us," Morrison says. "We don't expect that every student who graduates from here is going to run their own skateboard company but they are learning creative entrepreneurial skills that they can apply to any business or any job situation. I think our students are really prepared for the modern work world."

In the shadows of the University of Toronto, Ryerson University and the Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD), Morrison's classroom is just a blip on the education radar that can easily

be missed. It's tucked in a small corner just south of the Scadding Court Community Centre near Dundas and Bathurst streets. The skatepark outside isn't one that would draw out-of-town enthusiasts to its rails and jumps, but the work produced inside has gotten some notice. The students have collaborated with international designers and renowned creative artists, and even Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has visited the studio.

Still, those accolades and achievements can't compare to the difference this school makes in the lives of its students.

It's early April, late in the afternoon, and Julia Saint Amour is in clean-up mode. She stops to consider the classroom she's in. "I was in a different school before and failing," she says. "I dropped out of school...was getting into some miscreant stuff. Then my friend said, 'You should come to Oasis. You're artsy. It would be good for you.'" She's now looking forward to graduating high school in June. "I find myself doing something with my life I like compared to where I was before, getting into bad shit. I love it here. It's like home...it's like family. It means the world to me."

Johnny Bartlett's story isn't so different.





"If it wasn't for this, I wouldn't be passing high school. I would have dropped out by now," he says. Instead, he's been accepted into Seneca College's Art Fundamentals program in the fall.

Morrison says it's not uncommon for Oasis Skateboard Factory's graduates to get into their first choice of college or university, a feat he feels should be recognized, especially considering where some of these students are coming from. "Some were the first in their families to graduate high school, let alone go beyond."

The Oasis Skateboard Factory ([oasis skateboarding.blogspot.ca](http://oasis skateboarding.blogspot.ca)) is part of the larger Oasis Alternative School, initially designed as a program for at-risk youth. Students are often the square pegs who don't fit the round holes that make up most of the places familiar in mainstream education. Morrison, who leads the group with fellow teachers Lauren Hortie and Sarah Lewis, fits that description as well.

"My whole career has been built around those types of students." Initially, he was inspired by the innovations in board building by Roarokit Skateboard Company and introduced skateboards into his art curriculum as a way to further engage students, but the idea continued to bud. He saw an opportunity to take it further. He pitched his proposal to the higher-ups at Oasis, then to the school board. He foresaw the school as part of the greater inner city arts community, and with a classroom adjacent to the Dunbat Skatepark, he saw a way students could earn all the credits they

need for high school through the lens of skateboard and street culture.

Its beginnings were maybe somewhat stereotypical. "Picture me and 15 dudes; guys you could imagine would be attracted to this." But as its popularity grew, the program expanded and the skateboard factory's roots dug deeper into the soil. It now takes 26 students a semester, and diversity ranks high in the school's agenda.

"We have kids who are typical skateboard dudes, girls into skateboarding, we have graffiti artists and tattoo artists...some kids are into writing. When we put them together in a team, we can do a lot."

Gender diversity—half of those students accepted into the program are female—is a part of that success. There is no quota per se, "but it's something we feel committed to. We're committed to maximum diversity in the classroom." It's what the business world should look like, he says, so it's something students should come to expect. "And we feel with maximum diversity, we can solve any design problem that comes our way in a really interesting way."

When it comes to classroom work, that "business world" credence weighs heavily in the foundation of the school's curriculum.

"Every project is a real-world project," Morrison says. "We never do an essay that's just marked then shredded afterward. If you do writing, it's for a publication or it's for marketing material, or it's for a published zine or skateboard publication. Everything we do, we do

in collaboration with professionals in the real world. They may be in a meeting with a whole range of people who are often much older, but they can see themselves being in the industries."

There are still some people who view skateboarding as a waste of time or a toy, but they don't realize it's a multi-million dollar industry, Morrison says. His students can see that.

"We may have a unique arts program that engages kids, but we do art as entrepreneurship."


"It's a business program we've built into it. They are building their own brands, learning how to run a business. We have a lot of pop-up shops, we sell everything we make and we get hired by clients to do jobs for them. In that way, they are learning how to work with clients...and important things like being on time, doing high quality work, and making sure a job is done in a way that creates the next job. Every day they get marked on professionalism...that's being on time and on task, meeting daily goals and getting the basic learning skills you don't normally see marked on a report card."

It's a successful business plan that has generated even more opportunities for Oasis.

"We make skateboards...that's the core of what we do. But we also do other things for people" The students have designed T-shirts for a local taco shop, mini boards for a local hotel, and other products for people who appreciate their street art model.

"We have a chart in the classroom on the local projects we're working on and it ranges from a barbecue restaurant that needs T-shirts or art for a local coffee shop where the owners were skaters when they were younger. Someone may want a skateboard with their company logo on it. We've had a company ask us to design buttons to advertise their business. It's not only business interaction but also a level of career mentorship."





Morrison says the fact that they are now sought out has allowed them to carefully consider who they want to do business with.

“We have a strong commitment to social justice in our classroom. We often talk about who you want to work with...a big corporation that doesn’t pay its workers well or with a small coffee shop that deals in a direct trade model. They are meeting other young people in these jobs and they start to see themselves having a place in the working world.”

He says what the students are learning doesn’t mean they are limiting themselves to a future in skateboard culture.


“They are learning that they can do anything...they just need to be passionate.” The school could have been led by a teacher who was into cooking, setting the kids up to work in a restaurant or food cart. It’s just about getting the students to buy in, and to show up ready to work each day.

Morrison and his colleagues have also found ways to adapt traditional studies into the school curriculum. History might focus on local Toronto icons. And Native Studies is part of the program now, whether it’s examining how native art can be integrated into a product in collaboration with that community or how up-cycling of old skateboards might correspond with First Nations practices.

“We’re collaborating with students in Nunavut right now.” A planned trip there to work on a mural was scrapped when there was a fire in the community, but some correspondence and collaboration on other projects have continued. One project included a skateboard designed for former Prime Minister Paul Martin; a supporter of aboriginal issues who needed a gift for an event. Other government leaders who have learned of their work have had boards designed for them as well, and Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau dropped by the factory—before being elected leader of the country—and picked up a board as well.

Another project involved the prototype and design of a number of original boards to support Skateistan ([www.skateistan.org](http://www.skateistan.org))—a fundraising project to support people in Afghanistan.



Skateistan believes that the community-building effects of skateboarding are especially powerful in Afghanistan, which has experienced over 30 years of ongoing conflict and social dislocation. Operating as an Afghan NGO, Skateistan builds trust among youth and develops their confidence, leadership, and life skills. “The students held a fundraiser with local skate shop Longboard Living and were able to send money to Afghanistan. They learned that to be successful, you need to help others be successful.

Closer to home, work from the students can be found in several neighbouring businesses.

“This semester, there are seven events we are participating in. We started at the Gladstone Hotel where every student is matched with a professional artist... the drummer for Sloan was one of the artists involved,” Morrison says. “It was a great career project where they got to meet a lot of people in the industry.” Also, every piece created was sold. Another project involved art for a local coffee shop, where coffee was used to stain the boards. Some of the work still hangs in there.

“I have always taught in downtown Toronto where basically, the city is our

classroom. If there is something we need, we know where to find it. We may need to laser etch something over at OCAD or we made need to find remote materials to get something to market. Our school is all about community connection. We’ve all come to recognize the resources in the community and we

work to connect people to that.”

Morrison says the school mission is built on four values; pillars that are the foundation of Oasis’ success:

**Creativity**—“That’s obvious in all the work we do.”

**Social Responsibility**—“We’re always investigating materials we are using and whether we are helping people in what we do.”

**Professionalism**—“We’re always trying to raise the bar and make sure everything we do is done professionally.”

**Fun**—“Fun is part of our mandate. It’s about celebrating together when we have success and inviting the public in on this. It may mean there are days when we stop work and we go into the skatepark. It’s like that old one-room school model where we spend all our time together.”

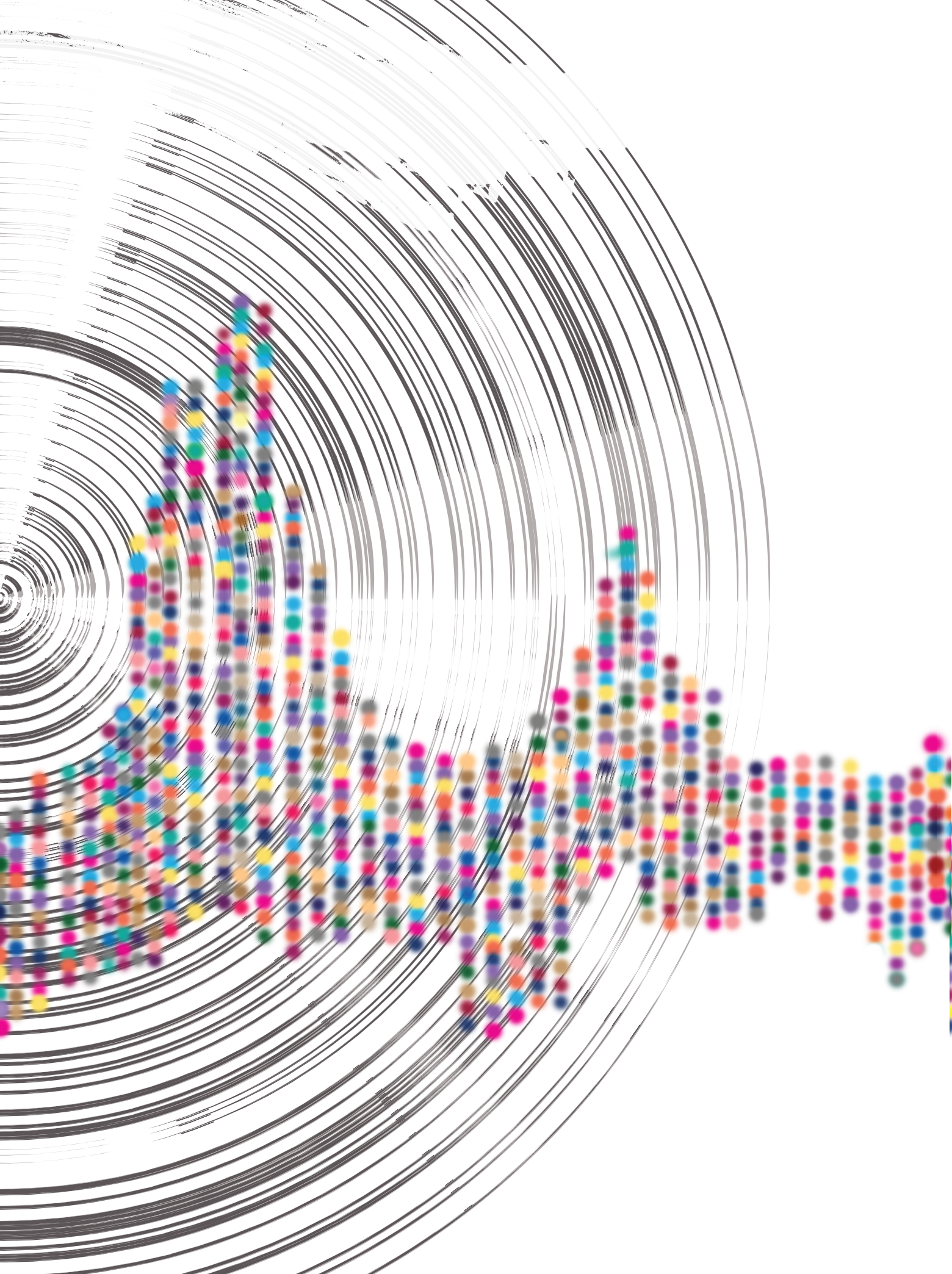
In as much as it all brings satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment to the students at Oasis Skateboard Factory, Morrison can’t help but feel the same way.

“People think you need to be a remarkable teacher to do this kind of stuff. I think it’s the opposite. I think every teacher in the province is working hard right now, but I enjoy this because I am really clear on designing tangible outcomes. We have something to show for that. For the students, it can be about identity and the students get a strong identity here. We prove that.”

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**Bill Hodgins** is a Peterborough-based communications specialist, a former journalist and a father of three.





# Saving provincial schools for the Deaf

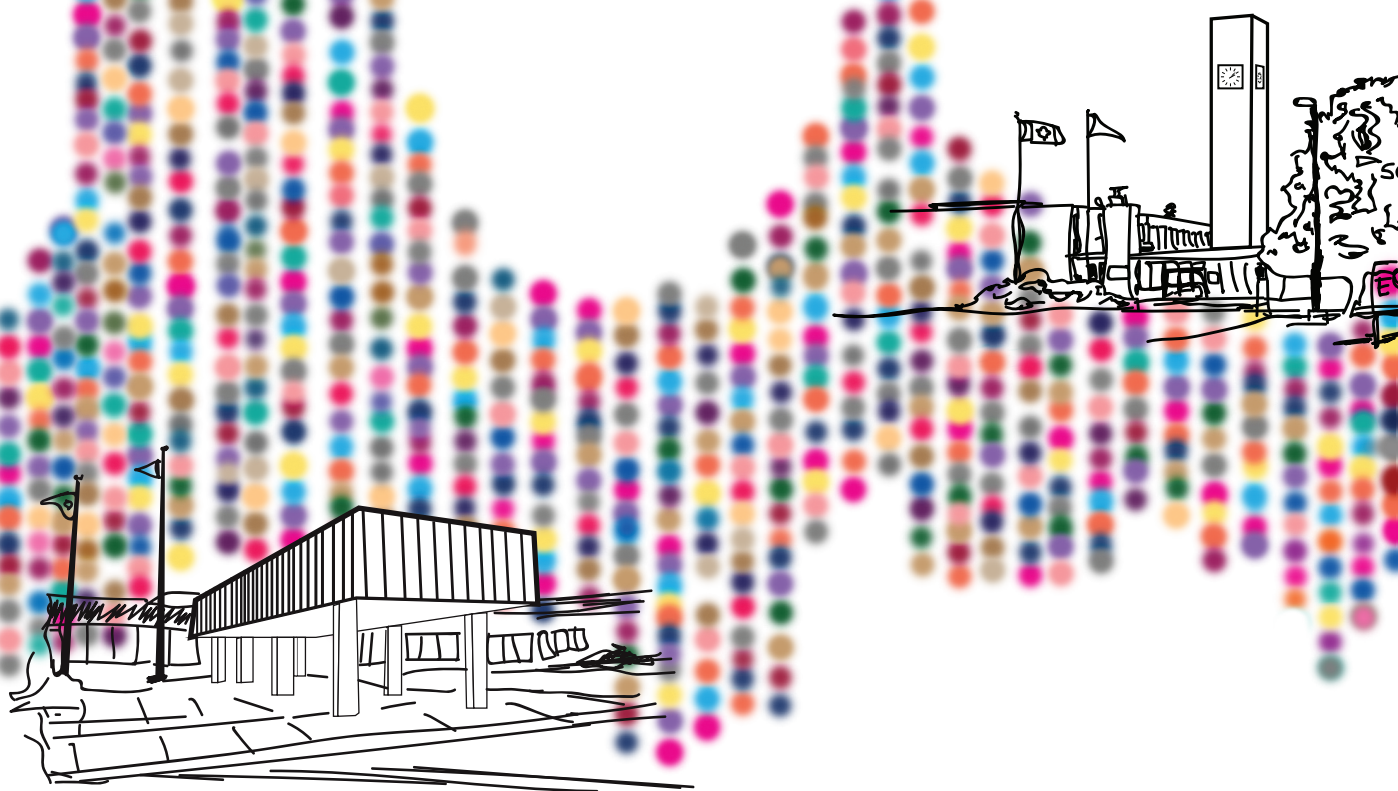
## Perspectives from two teachers

by Odete Lopes and David Sykes

I first went to Robarts School for the Deaf when it first opened in 1974 for Grade 8. I had attended EC Drury School for the Deaf before I transferred. Attending Provincial Schools Branch (PSB) schools for the Deaf has made me the person I am. The schools instilled a confidence in me that I could do or be anything I wanted, I still carry that confidence today. The opportunities and experience I was provided are vast and numerous.

I was able to be a part of many athletic teams: swimming, synchronised

swimming, track and field, basketball, gymnastics and volleyball. I was actually the one Deaf student on an all-hearing synchronised swim team. Four of us from Robarts had been invited to tryout with a local team. I made it on the team and worked with my hearing peers. Our volleyball team would compete against the local schools in tournaments. I remember one tournament that we were invited to where the host school had a Triple-A volleyball team. We faced them and won! We couldn't believe it and I don't think anyone else did. The head-



Artwork: Kristina Ferorelli



lines in the papers that week were, “Robarts school upsets Saunders.” The experience gained while competing for Robarts was immense. It gave me the confidence of going on and competing for Canada at the Deaf Olympics. Competing also gave me the opportunity to meet and socialise with my hearing peers. I made friends with members of the opposing teams. We hung out together and attended each others’ parties.

Our school offered a variety of clubs. I was a part of the photography, diving and drama clubs. It was just like any other school in the area. The opportunities were there for us to gain experience and had the social aspect of school with people who shared the same language. I was a part of our school parliament where I took on a number of roles from rep all the way to president. I had the opportunities to work with other students. I was able to tutor students who may have been having difficulties. I was always trying to help other students. I believe these experiences led me to my chosen field, a teacher and guidance counsellor at EC Drury School for the Deaf.

Academically I was challenged as a student. We were taught what our hearing peers were being taught in the local schools. My teachers constantly encouraged me and always had high expectations. In my final year of high school I was taking a leadership course. Part of that course was a work experience component. I was able to see if teaching was what I wanted by teaching gym in the Elementary school. I was accepted to Gallaudet University in Washington DC and went on to become a teacher. At Gallaudet were not seen as “less than” or “unable to,” we were seen as capable adolescences who happened to be Deaf.

The only way I was able to become the person I am today is because I went to a PSB school for the Deaf. I was in an environment where I could be a part of every aspect of high school life. Robarts School for the Deaf was where I was normal, where we all used the same language. I was never forgotten or let out because of communication. There were no barriers. I was able to have a rich high school life as any other student should have.

If I had gone to a local school I would not have had full access to my education or information. I would not have had the many opportunities for athletics and clubs. I may have been able to be a part of student parliament but not at the capacity of the president. I would have been isolated, just me and my interpreter, without the freedom to just chat with my peers or join a conversation I overhear. An interpreter wouldn’t be there for all the normal little incidental moments in high school which are a big part of the whole high school experience. My teachers would have most likely seen me as “the poor deaf child.” I would not have been challenged or giving the opportunities I had at Robarts School for the Deaf. I have talked to other Deaf people who were mainstreamed. They have told me about their experiences and it is heartbreaking—the isolation and rejection that they faced. I am who I am because of attending a PSB school for the Deaf. Without Robarts School for the Deaf I honestly can’t imagine how my life would have ended up.

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**Odete Lopes** is a Deaf teacher at EC Drury School for the Deaf.



As a hearing person who has been a teacher of the Deaf for over a decade, I think I have learned a thing or two about Deaf education and Deaf culture. Some of this occurred during the York University Deaf Education Diploma program and the American Sign Language (ASL) classes from the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), but the vast majority of this knowledge comes from experiential learning from colleagues and students.

This is a critical time in Ontario's Deaf Education history as bureaucrats who do not share my insight or experience verge on a cultural genocide of Deaf communities. Deaf culture thrives within the schools for the Deaf; that same culture and language suffers greatly within mainstream schools. As a hearing person immersed in Deaf culture I have to be grateful for being welcomed into this world.

People often share stories about their travels. They will detail the food, music, landscape and so forth. Sometimes the happy traveller exclaims how they were welcomed into a new community, acquired some culture, and usually they suggest I should go there too I suppose I could report the same is true of my journey into the Deaf world.

I was an alien in the Deaf world in 2004, unfamiliar with their language, history, politics, or culture. Added to that, I was ignorant of their generational struggles; I knew little about their yearning for autonomy and self-determination. Now in 2016, it seems like all that history is coming to life with the scrutiny provincial schools are currently under.

The erroneous assumptions I made about the Deaf resulted in many misunderstandings and miscommunications. I came to realize that I was working within my own social constructs which did not parallel the Deaf in any way. Although I did not board an airplane, I travelled into the Deaf world. In fact I was transitioning between the Deaf and hearing world daily, something that would become seamless for me, but something that will always be very difficult, challenging, and full of obstacles for Deaf persons.





Over time my daily headaches from working in ASL subsided. With the help of many patient Deaf colleagues I was able to better understand my students and Deaf colleagues, many of which are now friends. My key learnings about Deaf education are summarized as follows:

- 1 The Deaf have been oppressed by hearing people for generations, only recently have they gained a measure of autonomy and had their input considered in determining the education of their children;
- 2 Most Deaf don't read lips, it's a very rare talent and too often assumed by hearing people to be commonplace;
- 3 ASL is a rich language and a language of instruction that is a right for the Deaf under Ontario law;
- 4 The Bilingual-Bicultural approach in provincial schools rose out of 150 years of Deaf education experience and studies. It is the best mode for teaching children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- 5 Deaf children in the mainstream are socially isolated and suffer greatly in such settings;
- 6 A Deaf dance party is a lot louder that you might assume. Their stereo always goes to eleven; you need it that loud to shake the building.

In 2002 and 2003 I was a teacher at Centennial Secondary School in Belleville. During that time I had the opportunity to coach a few students from the Provincial School for the Deaf, Sir James Whitney, which was just a stone's throw away. I would later come to know that the school in Belleville was the original Ontario School for the Deaf, founded in 1870. The school has a long history of teaching the Deaf and in stature parallels the architecture and style of the provincial parliament buildings and old city hall courts.

In the year 2004 I changed my course in life and ended up at EC Drury High School in the Halton board, that was attached to the EC Drury School for the Deaf. It seems like no matter what I did, the Deaf theme was in the picture. I accepted a position with the Provincial School in 2005. Since that time I have learned a great deal about Deaf culture, communicating with the Deaf, living with Deaf people, and being able

to call them friends.

Having lived and worked in Europe, I would like to think I know something about culture shock, but really nothing can prepare you for immersing yourself in a Deaf community. When I was hired the need for teachers was so great that I was given an interpreter for a year with the expectation I would acquire ASL and be able to teach on my own the following year. Taking those classes in ASL and teaching in a language I was learning resulted in a headache each evening for about six months. In retrospect I realize how fortunate I was to have some awesome teachers myself, Ron Hall is a lifetime member of OSSTF/FEESO's District 30, Provincial Schools Authority Teachers (PSAT) and was also one of my first ASL instructors. Ron demonstrated great patience in sharing his language with me and the importance of ASL in instructing Deaf children. Ron had a great sense of humour which I think

helped me persevere through the headaches that were a daily ritual. Learning a language is stressful, being a "hearie" in a Deaf world is also stressful, but gaining acceptance and making a difference makes it all worthwhile.

I find it astounding that a person can be considered a teacher of the Deaf and be unable to communicate in ASL, but apparently the qualification is achievable without ASL proficiency. It has been an incredible journey, one that I'm more than happy to talk about at length with anyone that will listen. I now find myself 12 years from retirement and the president of District 30, representing a host of Deaf and hearing teachers, proud to do so, particularly at a time when the future of provincial schools for the Deaf is uncertain, as is that retirement.

---

**David Sykes** is a hearing teacher at EC Drury School for the Deaf and president of District 30, PSAT.



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namaste

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namaste



# Cultivating peace within ourselves

An introduction to mindfulness for educators

by Stephanie Benn and Micky Renders

Over the past several years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of anxiety-related diseases and diagnoses. All of us involved in the education system have witnessed first-hand the impact of anxiety in our offices, our classrooms, our schools, and in our communities. We are gradually waking up to the fact that problems like stress, anxiety, and depression are becoming epidemic.

Self-regulation is a skill that we talk about, especially in relation to student behaviour, but we often miss a key component of self-regulation—the ability to recognize our own mental states and to find positive and self-nourishing ways to respond to these states. When we get stuck in the “flight or fight” response to stress and change, we often lose ourselves in the moment—a reaction which jeopardizes

*/continued on page 26*



## Cultiver la paix en soi

Initiation des éducateurs à la pleine conscience

par Stephanie Benn et Micky Renders

Au cours des dernières années, il y a eu une nette augmentation du nombre de maladies et de diagnostics liés à l'anxiété. Membres du milieu éducatif, nous avons tous été les témoins directs de l'incidence qu'a l'anxiété dans nos bureaux, classes, écoles et communautés. Nous réalisons progressivement que des problèmes comme le stress, l'anxiété et la dépression prennent des proportions épidémiques.

L'autorégulation est une compétence dont nous parlons, notamment en ce qui concerne le comportement des élèves, mais nous passons souvent à côté d'un des éléments essentiels de l'autorégulation — la capacité à reconnaître notre propre état d'esprit et à trouver des moyens positifs et auto-enrichissants en réaction à cet état. Lorsque nous sommes pris dans une réaction de « lutte ou de fuite » par rapport au stress et au changement, nous

*/suite à la page 27*



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dizes our integrity, our dignity and our overall mental well-being.

Mental health, like physical health, is something we need to make time for on a regular basis and mindfulness is a way we can frame this intention. Mindfulness teaches us ways to stay present even in the most stressful moments—to stay grounded and to observe the changing nature of our feelings.

The most widely used definition of mindfulness comes from Jon Kabat-Zinn, Professor of Medicine and creator of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society. Zinn describes mindfulness as the means of paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. To be ‘in the present moment’ means that whether we are writing on the board, walking in the hallway, listening to a colleague or at home washing the dishes, we are focused and concentrated on that physical experience alone.

Although the practice sounds simple and accessible, it requires the quiet determination to be present and to stay present—an act that, when repeated, begins to hard-wire our brains to be responsive rather than reactive—moving away from the “fight or flight” response that keeps us stressed and defensive.

Cultivating compassion and peace within ourselves and our world is the ultimate aim of mindfulness practice, and we begin by taking care of ourselves by slowing down, by listening attentively to ourselves and others, and by observing our own fragility and strength compassionately.

Meditation is a key practice of mindfulness. As we sit quietly, the natural and quiet rhythm of our breath is the tool we use to stay present. As thoughts and feelings wax and wane, we note them and return to our breath. We bear witness to our emotions without judgment and with compassion for our own physical and mental experiences. Meditation is not about emptying our mind, nor is it about mulling something over. It is about observing what is going on with openness and curiosity. When we no-

tice our mind is wandering, we refocus on our breath. And we repeat this over and over.

Beginners may not find this process an easy one. Sometimes focusing on our breath brings a heightened awareness of how anxious we are—our breathing might be irregular and shallow and this might bring us initial discomfort. This is by no means a sign of failure. Rather, it is concrete evidence of the good work we are doing to rewire our brains.

When we practice mindfulness meditation with regularity, we learn to stay grounded and fresh in spite of the sudden storms we might encounter. Ten to twenty minutes of daily meditation for eight weeks is shown (using MRIs) to change our brain physically, leading to better concentration, focus and improved decision-making.

In the UK, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Mindfulness established a program of mindfulness classes in Parliament attended by 115 Parliamentarians and 80 of its staff. The group has just published its findings, concluding that mindfulness “is an important innovation in mental health which warrants serious attention from politicians, policymakers, public services in health, education and criminal justice as well as employers, professional bodies, and the researchers, universities and donor foundations who can develop the evidence base further.”

It is recommended that any one interested in using mindfulness in their classrooms or schools first start with their own practice. In the daily rush and tumble of doing our jobs, we can get caught like a kite in the wind and so can the students and broader community that we serve. In reality, we can take things at a much slower pace—an act that can quickly transform our work, our teaching and our schools.

Ask anyone who’s been practicing mindfulness if they wish they started earlier in life. The answer will be a resounding “Yes!”

#### **Documented benefits of mindfulness:**

- reduces insomnia, improved quality of sleep;

To be ‘in the present moment’ means that whether we are writing on the board, walking in the hallway, listening to a colleague or at home washing the dishes, we are focused and concentrated on that physical experience alone.

- helps a variety of medical conditions, including cardiovascular disease, asthma, type II diabetes, PMS and chronic pain;
- mindfulness reduces anxiety, depression and stress;
- increased emotional regulation;
- increased social skills;
- increased self-esteem;
- increased concentration and focus;
- increased working memory and planning and organization;
- increased sense of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance;
- decreased ADHD behaviors—specifically hyperactivity and impulsivity;
- decreased negative affect/ emotions;
- fewer conduct and anger management problems.

Found on [www.DiscoverMindfulness.ca](http://www.DiscoverMindfulness.ca) and [www.mindfuleducation.org/research](http://www.mindfuleducation.org/research).

**Stephanie Benn** is an elementary teacher at Edmison Heights. **Micky Renders** is a secondary teacher at PACE@PCVS. Both, have been committed practitioners of mindfulness for a number of years. For further information contact [stephanie\\_benn@kprdsb.ca](mailto:stephanie_benn@kprdsb.ca) or [micky\\_renders@kprdsb.ca](mailto:micky_renders@kprdsb.ca).





sombrons souvent dans l'instant — une réaction qui compromet notre intégrité, dignité et bien-être mental général.

La santé mentale, comme la santé physique, mérite que nous lui consacrons régulièrement du temps et cette intention peut se manifester par la pleine conscience. Celle-ci nous enseigne des manières de demeurer présents, même dans les situations les plus stressantes — de garder notre calme et d'observer le caractère évolutif de nos sentiments.

La définition de pleine conscience la plus communément utilisée est celle du Dr Jon Kabat-Zinn, professeur de médecine et créateur du *Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society*. Dr Zinn décrit la pleine conscience comme étant le moyen de prêter attention de manière particulière : délibérément, dans le moment présent et sans jugement. Être « dans le moment présent » signifie que peu importe que nous soyons en train d'écrire au tableau, de marcher dans le couloir, d'écouter un collègue ou à la maison en train de faire la vaisselle, toute notre attention est portée uniquement sur cette expérience physique.

Bien que la pratique paraisse simple et accessible, elle requiert la paisible détermination d'être présent et de le rester — un acte qui, lorsqu'on le répète, commence à inculquer à notre cerveau d'être réceptif plutôt que réactif — nous écartant ainsi de la réaction de « lutte ou de fuite » qui nous stresse et nous met sur la défensive.

Cultiver la compassion et la paix en soi et en notre monde est le but ultime de la pratique de la pleine conscience et la manière de commencer à prendre soin de nous est en ralentissant, en écoutant attentivement les autres et nous-mêmes et en observant avec compassion notre propre fragilité et force.

La méditation est une pratique clé de la pleine conscience. Assis en l'absence de bruit, le rythme naturel et léger de notre souffle est l'outil utilisé pour rester dans le moment présent. Tandis que nos pensées et sensations se forment et s'estompent, nous y sommes attentifs et nous nous concentrons à nouveau sur

notre respiration. Nous portons attention à nos émotions sans jugement et avec compassion à l'égard de nos propres expériences physiques et mentales. En méditation, il ne s'agit pas de vider son esprit ni de cogiter sur quelque chose. Il s'agit d'observer ce qui se passe avec ouverture d'esprit et curiosité. Quand nous réalisons que notre esprit vagabonde, nous nous recentrons sur notre respiration. Et nous le faisons plusieurs fois de suite.

Les débutants pourront ne pas trouver ce processus facile. Parfois le fait de se concentrer sur sa respiration accroît la sensation d'anxiété — notre souffle peut être irrégulier et superficiel et au départ cela peut créer un sentiment de gêne. C'est loin d'être un signe d'échec. Au contraire, c'est la preuve tangible de l'efficacité du travail de rétablissement des circuits de notre cerveau.

Quand nous pratiquons régulièrement la méditation de pleine conscience, nous apprenons à rester calmes et dispos malgré les difficultés soudaines que nous pouvons rencontrer. Il est démontré (à l'aide d'IRM) que de dix à vingt minutes de méditation par jour pendant huit semaines modifient physiquement notre cerveau, conduisant à une concentration et une attention supérieures et à une prise de décision améliorée.

Au Royaume-Uni, le *Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group* a mis en place au Parlement un programme de classes de pleine conscience suivi par 115 parlementaires et 80 membres de son personnel. Le groupe vient de publier ses résultats, concluant que la pleine conscience « est une importante innovation en matière de santé mentale justifiant une attention particulière des politiciens, responsables politiques, des services publics en santé, en éducation et en justice pénale ainsi que des employeurs, organisations professionnelles, chercheurs, universités et fondations caritatives qui peuvent étendre davantage la base de données probantes. »

On recommande à quiconque intéressé à avoir recours à la pleine conscience dans sa classe ou son école de commencer à la pratiquer d'abord eux-mêmes. Dans le tourbillon et la frénésie quoti-

dienne de l'exercice de nos fonctions, on peut se retrouver, tout comme les élèves et la communauté que nous servons, pris comme un cerf-volant dans le vent. En réalité, on peut aborder les choses beaucoup plus lentement : une action qui peut transformer rapidement notre travail, notre enseignement et nos écoles.

Demandez à quiconque pratique la pleine conscience s'il regrette de ne pas l'avoir fait plus tôt. La réponse sera résolument « Oui! ».

### **Bienfaits documentés de la pleine conscience :**

- atténue l'insomnie, augmente la qualité du sommeil
- a un effet positif sur toute une gamme d'affections médicales, dont les maladies cardiovasculaires, l'asthme, le diabète de type II, le SPM et la douleur chronique
- réduit l'anxiété, la dépression et le stress
- accroît le contrôle des émotions
- renforce les aptitudes sociales
- améliore l'estime de soi
- améliore la concentration et l'attention
- améliore la mémoire de travail et les compétences en matière de planification et d'organisation
- accroît le sentiment de sérénité, l'état de relaxation et l'acceptation de soi
- diminue les comportements liés au TDAH, notamment l'hyperactivité et l'impulsivité
- diminue les émotions/affects négatifs
- réduit les problèmes de comportement et de gestion de la colère.

Trouvés sur [www.DiscoverMindfulness.ca](http://www.DiscoverMindfulness.ca) et [www.mindfuleducation.org/research](http://www.mindfuleducation.org/research).

**Stephanie Benn** est enseignante à l'élémentaire à Edmison Heights.

**Micky Renders** est enseignante au secondaire à PACE@PCVS. Toutes deux sont depuis plusieurs années des adeptes de la pleine conscience. Pour de plus amples renseignements, communiquez avec [micky\\_renders@kprdsb.ca](mailto:micky_renders@kprdsb.ca) ou [stephanie\\_benn@kprdsb.ca](mailto:stephanie_benn@kprdsb.ca).







# Celebrating our work with students

## A history of OSSTF/FEESO's Student Achievement Awards

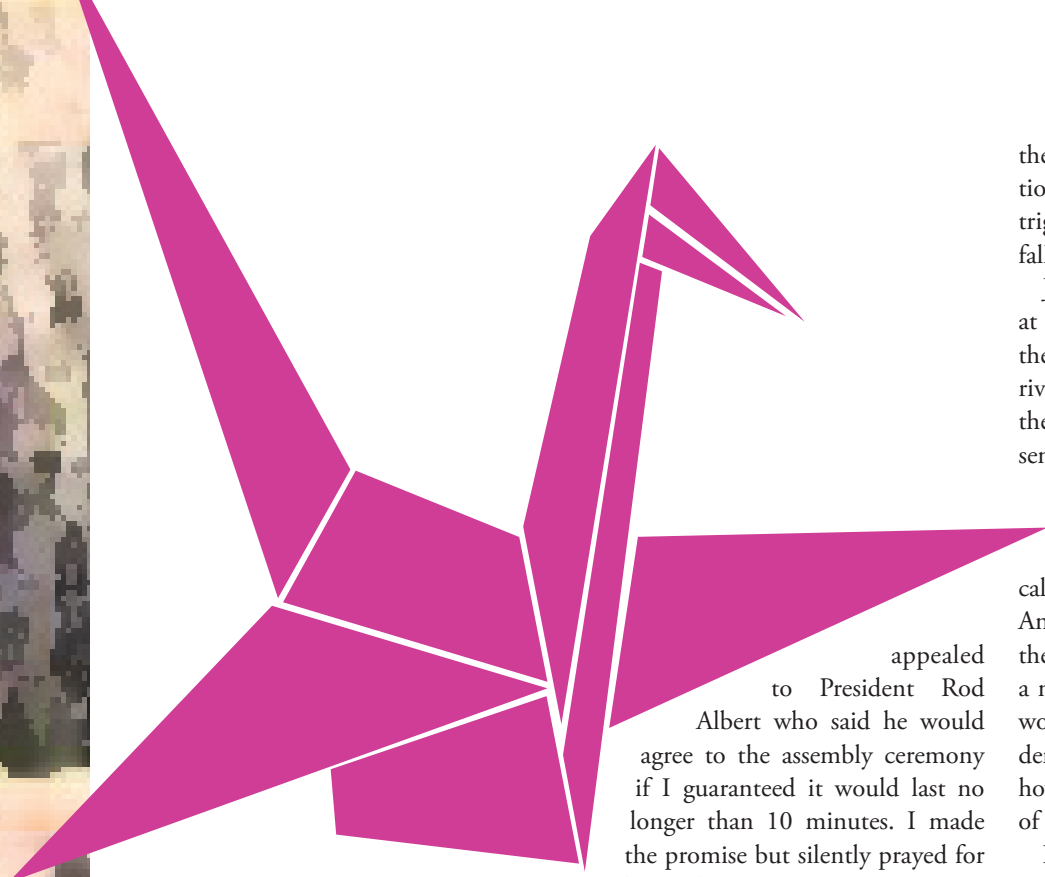
by Jack Hutton

Five hundred delegates at the 1987 OSSTF/FEESO annual assembly were getting fidgety as they watched the time creeping closer to the noon-hour break on Monday, March 16, the final day of their three-day marathon at the Skyline Hotel in Toronto. More than a few were heading for the exit to check out of their rooms as President Rod Albert announced that he and Education Minister Sean Conway were about to present awards before lunch to the first winners of a new student essay competition called the Marion Drysdale Awards.

A slide presentation appeared within seconds on giant screens around the room, reminding delegates that the theme of the essay competition was the *United Nations International Year of Peace*. Many recognized photographs of a Japanese girl, Sadako Sasaki, who died 10 years after the world's first atomic bomb exploded near her home at Hiroshima. Two-year-old Sadako was blown out a window of her home but miraculously survived. Shortly before her 12th birthday, unexplained swellings appeared on her neck. Doctors diagnosed terminal leukemia and gave the child not long to live. Sadako heard a legend that she would be granted a life-giving wish if she folded 1,000 paper cranes. Sadako died on October 25, 1955, without getting her wish.

Today there is a statue of Sadako Sasaki at Hiroshima Peace Park in Japan. Thousands of young Japanese bring folded paper cranes there every year to honour Sadako's memory. The last slide hushed the audience of 500 OSSTF/FEESO members. It was a close-up of Sadako Sasaki, surrounded in her funeral coffin by 1,000 paper cranes. An unseen narrator boomed: "Ladies and gentlemen. It's time to meet your Marion Drysdale winners."





Four nervous students rose at the extreme rear of the ballroom to begin a slow walk to the front, led by David Oleniuk, a member of the OSSTF/FEESO provincial Communications Committee. Meanwhile, the voices of students from Port Dover Composite School filled the ballroom with a pulsating slow rock song called *Voice of Peace*. Twenty students in the school's senior music class had recorded the song only weeks earlier, with words and music written by two members of their group.

The sight of students had an electrifying effect upon the delegates who had just endured more than two days of debating mind-numbing resolutions. They jumped to their feet, cheering, whistling and weeping as the students walked through the emotional standing ovation. It was a moment of history. Never before had the Federation honoured the achievements of their own students in a provincial spotlight.

That historic assembly ceremony almost never happened. I was in charge of the first Marion Drysdale Awards ceremony as the Federation's first provincial communications director and was told that the awards would have to be handed out elsewhere in the hotel. I privately

appealed to President Rod Albert who said he would agree to the assembly ceremony if I guaranteed it would last no longer than 10 minutes. I made the promise but silently prayed for future forgiveness, knowing it was impossible. I added to my sins by seating the winners at the very rear of the giant ballroom so they would have to walk through the whole assembly. To my surprise no one complained later. Everyone in the entire ballroom was floating on an emotional high that has continued to this day. The student awards ceremony has been the highlight of every assembly since then.

Next spring is the 30th anniversary of those first presentations, so it is time to share how the Drysdale Awards were born. The original awards were named for a long-time OSSTF/FEESO provincial office secretary, Marion Drysdale, who died in October 1983, after a lengthy battle with cancer. Marion, who had been secretary to three OSSTF/FEESO general secretaries, loved reading about British history and especially the Royal Family. The 1984 annual assembly approved a student essay competition in Drysdale's memory but it never really got off the ground. The provincial Communications Committee was asked to plan a new provincial essay competition in her name for the 1986–1987 school year and Vice-President Jim Head, the Provincial Executive liaison to the committee, suggested the *United Nations International Year of Peace* as its

theme. Thanks to Head, the competition was linked to Sadako Sasaki, which triggered an immediate response in the fall of 1986.

Joy Kinsman was branch president at Port Dover Composite School when the Drysdale information packet arrived. Kinsman was also in charge of the school's music programs and her senior class music students quickly noticed the Drysdale information.

That inspired a student, Debby Field, to write the words for a song called *Voice of Peace* in one evening. Another student, Heather Murray, saw the words the next day and composed a melody while other students sang the words over her shoulder. A Japanese student at their school later showed them how to fold paper cranes in memory of Sadako.

In early February, Joy Kinsman brought Heather Murray's handwritten music to an OSSTF/FEESO provincial communications workshop in Toronto. I loved the song and arranged a day-long recording session for her class at a small recording studio in Scarborough. The 20 students sounded like the Mormon Tabernacle Choir after many hours of over-dubbing.

I played that two-minute cassette recording for the first Marion Drysdale Awards ceremony, and I will be forever grateful to a delegate who jerked his right thumb upwards as the winners started to walk. I immediately cranked the sound up to the level of the 1976 Rocky movie theme music. The powerful message of the Port Dover voices brought many to tears in the room, including myself. The Drysdale student competition immediately took on a new life. My five-minute slide presentation was replaced one year later by a professional video that included interviews with all the winners at their home schools. The provincial award categories were also expanded to include poetry, video, artwork and music. The high quality of many of the student submissions over the years has been more than matched by the quality of the annual video documentaries on the winning students and their OSSTF/FEESO mentors.

The original Marion Drysdale Awards, now known as the Student Achievement Awards, have evolved over three decades...Much has also changed in the world of communications. We live in a world of texting, hashtags, slam poetry, digital communication that did not exist 30 years ago, and 24/7 access to unlimited on-line knowledge through our cell phones.

Right from the beginning, the Drysdale competition has been unlike any similar student competition in Canada. I believe that the special quality of the competition goes all the way back to our first provincial judging in Toronto on March 2, 1987. A Grade 10 Basic level student from Brantford was singled out by the judges for suggesting a day of concern about world peace at Parliament Hill, attended by students from every high school in Canada. The student's mangled spelling would have instantly disqualified him from most academic competitions, but the judges granted him a special award for his political insights. The *Brantford Expositor* ran the boy's essay (spelling corrected by us) as a guest editorial, making him a mini-celebrity. The student's mother said in a letter: "My son had self-confidence and hope from that day on." Similar success stories over the years could fill this entire magazine. Ryan Sutherland from Strathroy District Collegiate Institute was not expected to walk again after a 1987 car accident that left him in a coma for eight weeks. He was encouraged by teacher Joyce Sifton to write an essay describing his efforts to regain a normal life and walked unaided through a standing ovation to receive his provincial Drysdale award at the 1990 provincial OSSTF/FEESO annual assembly. Sifton went on to sponsor other provincial winners from her school.

In the fall of 1988 teacher Kathryn Wilson thought of one of her students at Niagara Falls Collegiate and Vocational Institute when she read that the new Drysdale theme was *Growing Up Differently*. Shawn Dalgleish, 18, who suffered from cerebral palsy, attended her learning resource centre for 70 minutes each day. Shawn was enthusiastic but needed

the help of a peer tutor and his faithful laptop (10 words a minute) to communicate. He started his essay in the first week of October and only finished it the evening before the December 15 deadline in Kathryn Wilson's kitchen. Shawn received his Basic category award the following spring at the OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Assembly.

The original Marion Drysdale Awards, now known as the Student Achievement Awards, have evolved over three decades. Winners now receive \$1,000, up from the original \$300. Much has also changed in the world of communications. We live in a world of texting, hashtags, slam poetry, digital communication that did not exist 30 years ago, and 24/7 access to unlimited on-line knowledge through our cell phones.

The OSSTF/FEESO Student Achievement Awards have more than kept pace, thanks to a sub-committee of the Federation's Communications/Political Committee (CPAC), known as the Recognition and Promotion Committee (RECPRO). Chaired by Francinna Collard, who teaches English and Visual Arts at Russell High School, east of Ottawa, the CPAC Recognition and Promotion subcommittee has continued to encourage students to find innovative ways of expressing themselves, including slam poetry. The theme of the most recent student achievement awards is a perfect illustration of how the subcommittee has stayed in touch with this computer/savvy generation. Students were asked to base their entries upon a much-used acronym, *LOL (Laugh Out Loud)*. One provincial award winner turned laughter into a character in her slam poem. Another award winner not only produced a social

campaign video examining laughter but composed and performed a song to accompany the provincial video about the winners. The excellence of the submissions was perhaps the highest in a decade.

Randy Banderob, a former English department head in Peterborough, now an Executive Assistant in the provincial Educational Services Department, has co-ordinated OSSTF/FEESO's Student Achievement Awards for the past seven years. He believes there is a reason why the competition is so successful. "Every year the awards select eight very compelling and remarkable students," he says. "I suspect it is because, given the chance, every student can demonstrate that they are compelling and remarkable. The Student Achievement Awards provide that opportunity."

Francinna Collard is blown away by many of the submissions that come to her subcommittee for regional judging. "One of the most striking things to me, as a judge, is to see how much life experience the students actually have, and how that experience is so deeply embedded in their written and visual work. So much maturity is reflected in how they take the theme and interpret it in their own way. The beauty and depth of some of the visual art and media products is astounding to me. So much talent!"

Bill Freeman, an award-winning Toronto author and a long-time provincial judge of the competition, gives caring teachers and other OSSTF/FEESO





Author Jack Hutton with Joy Kinsman, former branch president at Port Dover Composite School

mentors major credit for the success of the provincial competition. “Good teachers are ones who know how to draw the best out of their students. Judging from the quality of the submissions, there is no doubt in my mind that we are blessed with very good teachers in the province of Ontario.”

OSSTF/FEESO President Paul Elliott, a highly regarded teacher at Rainy River High School and Fort Frances High School before being elected to the OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Executive in 2005, says: “I have no doubt that our Student Achievement Awards program is recognized by many as probably the most impressive in Ontario and possibly Canada. I know of no other set of awards that considers students’ work so carefully and at the same time celebrates the work of teachers and educational support workers.”

So what comes next? The theme of the next Student Achievement Awards is *Mirror Mirror*, a provocative title suggested by a gifted 15-year-old special education student at Thomas A Stewart Secondary School in Peterborough. Her teacher Vanessa Woodacre, is a member of Francinna Collard’s sub-committee and successfully proposed her student’s idea for the 2016–2017 competition.

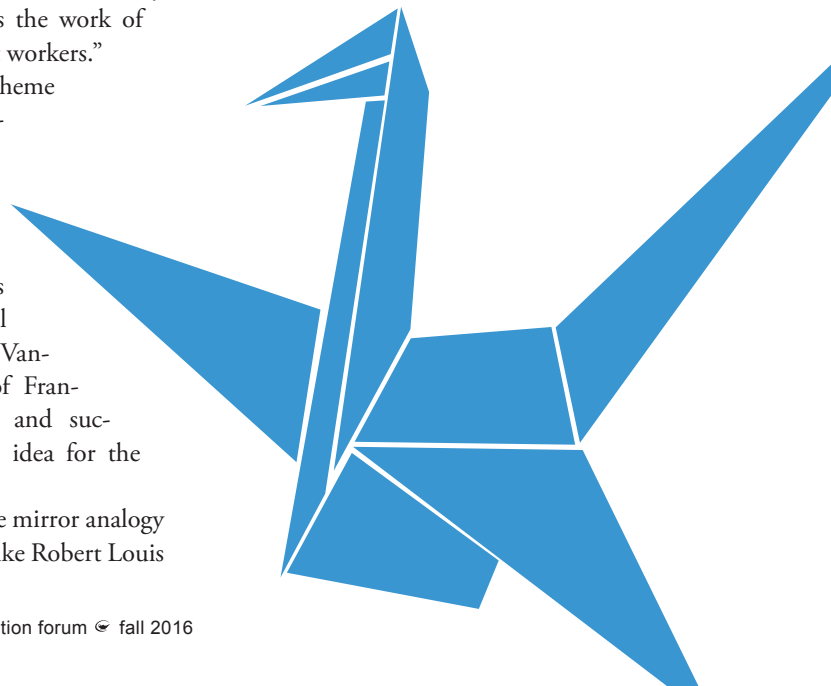
Did that student know that the mirror analogy has fascinated writers and poets like Robert Louis

Stevenson, Pauline Johnson and Walt Whitman for more than a century? I don’t know the answer but I am confident that at least one or two students across Ontario are about to top them all.

Marion Drysdale must be smiling somewhere. Her passionate love affair with language and storytelling is alive and well, thanks to the OSSTF/FEESO student awards named in her honour.

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**Jack Hutton** is a former OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office Communications Director and is the co-Director, along with his wife Linda Jackson-Hutton, of Bala’s Museum. He continues to help judge these same awards that he himself initiated 30 years ago.







#MirrorMirror

**OSSTF/FEESO  
PRESENTS  
THE 2017  
STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARDS**  
IN HONOUR OF  
MARION DRYSDALE

**EIGHT  
\$1000  
PRIZES  
TO BE WON!**





# Aga Khan Museum

An inspiring collection of the arts of Muslim civilizations



A part from housing some of the most beautiful and creative artwork I have had the privilege of seeing in person, hats off must go to the design of the Aga Khan Museum building itself. Its amazing contemporary style uses light and large spaces to showcase the art and display it in a way that achieves a seamless connection between the eclectic art of the ancient world of Islam and modern day design. It is no wonder this building is an architectural prize winner.

The entrance way to the permanent collection of over 1,000 pieces, welcomes the visitor with an incredible mesmerizing animated vignette. It gradually displays bit by bit, artistic elements, themes and objects used within the various pieces of art found throughout the gallery.

The museum showcases diverse works of art from Islamic civilization from the 8th century through to the 21st century. These incredible pieces that originated from Muslim civilizations from the Iberian Peninsula to China, include various collections of architectural decoration; calligraphy and illumination; ceramics; luxury objects; metalwork; painted manuscripts; Qur'ans and science and learning. The museum's mission is to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of the contribution that Muslim civilizations have made to world heritage.

An exceptional treat was the temporary exhibition entitled *Marvellous Creatures: Animals in Islamic Art* that included artworks that used images of real and mythical animals that were used in legends and fables throughout the Islamic world. Their purpose, to educate and inform the youth

and the future generations.

Open to all ages to explore, the museum also offers educational programs for secondary students. A general tour on its own, has links to visual arts, language, math, social studies, history, geography, Canada, world studies and religions.

*Pattern Play in Art and Math*, developed for Grades 9–12 is a two-hour exploration searching the Museum and galleries for geometric shapes and arabesque designs. *Colours in Islamic Art* gives Grades 7–12 a two-hour opportunity to discover the colours of the pre-modern world and how artists created and utilized vibrant pigments that have survived for centuries. There is *Visual Storytelling* offered to all ages where students travel through Iran, India, Central Asia, and beyond investigating storytelling techniques and they see how artists narrate cultural histories through traditional and contemporary contexts. The *Silk Route Adventures* for Grades 9–12 is a two-hour discovery of the permanent collection and special exhibitions examining the many ways that the Silk Routes encouraged the diffusion of goods, ideas, peoples, and cultures across Europe and Asia.

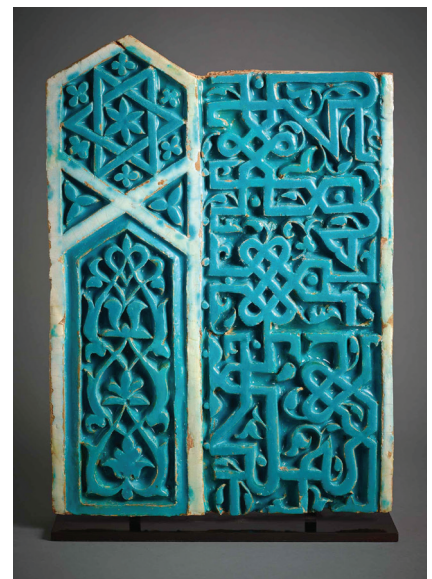
The museum is open to the public Tuesday to Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. except Wednesdays, when hours are extended to 8:00 p.m.

Pre-booked school visits and programs are available throughout the school year Monday to Friday mornings or afternoons. Please inquire regarding full-day programs and the flexibility of visit times by emailing [learn@agakhanmuseum.org](mailto:learn@agakhanmuseum.org) or by calling 416.646.4677. For all other information visit [www.agakhanmuseum.org](http://www.agakhanmuseum.org).

(l-r): *Qur'an Juz'*, Iran 6.6 x 4.7 cm, mid-15th century, Ink, opaque watercolour, and gold on paper, leather binding and *Dish*, Iznik, Turkey, 34.3 cm, height 7.4 cm, 1570–80, Fritware, underglaze-painted.





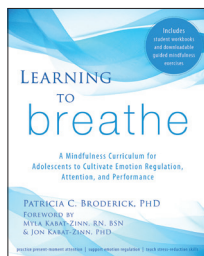


Above (c): *Accordion Album of Calligraphic Examples in "Shikasteh Nasta'liq"*, Iran, 29.2 x 19 cm, 1800–50, Ink and gold on paper with leather binding; *Incense Burner*, Eastern Iran, 28 x 28 cm, 11th century, Copper inlaid bronze; *Tile Panel*, Central Asia, 51.8 x 37.5 x 6.4 cm, second half of 14th century, Earthenware, carved and glazed; *Robe*, Iran or Central Asia, Height 140 cm, 13th–14th centuries; Silk and metal thread; *The story of Haftvad and the worm*, folio from *Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp*, Tabriz, Iran, 47 x 31.8 cm, 1540, Opaque watercolour, gold, ink, paper and *Devotional Calligraphic Composition*, India (Historic Hindustan), 12 x 19.2 cm, 17th century, Opaque watercolour, ink, and gold on paper.



# Top picks

## Reviews



**Learning to Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance**  
**By Patricia C. Broderick (Author), Myla Kabat-Zinn (Foreword), Jon Kabat-Zinn (Foreword)**  
**New Harbinger Publications**  
**(June 1, 2013)**  
**288 pages, \$65.00**  
**Reviewed by Stephanie Benn**

*Learning to breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance* (L2B) is an extremely useful text for anyone who is thinking of bringing mindfulness to their classroom or school. Following the core practices of mindfulness-based stress reduction, this curriculum guide includes everything teachers and support staff might need to guide their students in learning the practice of mindfulness.

Broderick, a research associate and founder of the Stress Reduction Centre at the University of Pennsylvania, has carefully crafted a classroom-friendly, step-by-step guide for introducing mindfulness to both middle school-age children and adolescents.

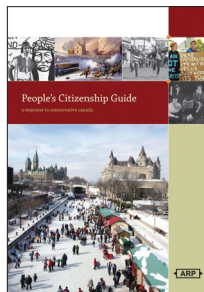
Initially, the book presents research conducted into the mental health of adolescents since 2000 and points to a dramatically rising epidemic of mental disorders that meet “diagnostic criteria” by 2010. The author uses this research along with developmental data about the inner workings of the adolescent mind to build a compelling case for mindfulness training as a relevant and effective intervention strategy.

L2B includes two different student workbooks as well as many visual and informational aids for the classroom. The curriculum covers six themes that relate to the word BREATHE—the Body, Reflection, Emotions, Attention, Tenderness, Healthy Habits of Mind and Empowerment. The author seems to have carefully considered what gaps school staff might encounter in delivering this curriculum. She includes scripted lessons, downloadable audio and text support, as well as relevant background information to help unpack the neuroscience supporting this practice.

Given the rise of mental health disorders within our classroom and the impact of this rise on the overall health of our school communities, the L2B curriculum is well-timed and highly relevant. It is a resource which just might help build the capacity for resilience and healing in our students.

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**Stephanie Benn** is an elementary teacher at Edmison Heights.



**A People's Citizenship Guide: A Response to Conservative Canada**  
**Edited by Eysyllt Jones and Adele Perry**  
**Arbeiter Ring Publishing (Nov. 15 2011)**  
**80 pages, \$14.95**  
**Reviewed by Carlos Santander-Maturana**

It's very refreshing indeed, to come across a citizenship guide so entirely different to the current version available to prospective new Canadians. The editors of *A People's Citizenship Guide: A Response to Conservative Canada* are proposing that we recognize and acknowl-

edge that Canada is still very much a colonial society built on indigenous land, and that since the early incursion of Europeans into what is now Canada, there has been an uneasy and often bigoted relationship with its original inhabitants. The “official” history, and most recently the former conservative government of Stephen Harper went to great lengths to offer a very narrow and reactionary view of our past and future. *A People's Citizenship Guide: A Response to Conservative Canada* makes a compelling argument that through our history we can recognize a thread of oppression, repression, and exclusion at many levels. At the same time it celebrates a history of collective action that opposes the establishment, all with the aim to secure a more democratic and equitable society.

*A People's Citizenship Guide: A Response to Conservative Canada* is divided into chapters dealing with very specific issues based around Canadian symbols. The authors' approach is a far cry from the aristocratic, heraldic symbols of a bygone era. The symbols chosen are a bit more prosaic, if not more realistic: the small town Chinese restaurant, the Inuksuk on the side of the highway, Niagara Falls, The Community Rink, Poutine, and my all-time favourite Canadian song by the Guess Who *American Woman*, and its rejection of American pop culture and values. While I was basking in the glow of the “we are better than them” attitude, the author threw a bucket of cold water, bringing me down to earth with a sober reminder that we are very good at deflecting and ignoring our own “ghettos” and “war machines.”

The section dealing with multiculturalism is of particular interest. The authors, while recognizing that Canadians as a whole embrace multiculturalism as an official policy, note that the government (and to a great extent Canadians) support “veneer multiculturalism.” They are happy to celebrate the food and dances of diverse cultures in summer festivals, but ignore the more serious issues that immigrants are facing in Canadian society.

While the guide was written by a collective—many authors with different

areas of expertise and points of view—there is a palpable cohesion between them that provides the reader with a different vision of what constitutes Canada: vision developed through a critical analysis and non-compliance with the official story.

I highly recommend the guide to anyone interested in Canadian history, politics, and immigration policies. In particular, the book could be an invaluable resource to Civics teachers.

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**Carlos Santander-Maturana** is an Educational Assistant with District 6A, Thunder Bay.



**What's Yours is Mine: Against the Sharing Economy**

By Tom Slee

**Between the Lines (February 2016)**

**216 pages, \$26.95**

**Reviewed by Larry Farquharson**

Marketing is everywhere. Words are chosen carefully to convey just the right message. Case in point: 'sharing economy.' Everyone has an idea of what that is and means. Or do we?

In *What's Yours Is Mine*, author Tom Slee takes those two words and gives them a rigorous shakedown. If you are on one side or the other, or perhaps in the middle, of a host of issues which have arisen as a result of the emergence of this market force, Slee's take will either confirm or refute whatever it is you believe, because in the end it is about belief system. Beliefs do have a way of affecting lives, however.

Slee takes aim at what he sees as the contradiction that exists in the world currently called the Sharing Economy (he makes a point of capitalizing the

term, and acknowledges it's a fluid thing which may look different as it evolves). First, he says, it's a stretch to call it sharing. Whereas the movement may have originally been borne out of the Internet culture of openness and leveraging technology to connect service and service provider, corporate greed has re-shaped it into a billion-dollar war game, shifting the culture to one disconcertingly reminiscent, for Slee, of the women's movement for workplace equality, and attacking hard-fought-for gains in both worker and consumer protections through regulatory frameworks.

With chapters to give a historical context that has brought us to the technology-driven sharing economy, highlight the big players and copycats, and refine and define aspects of the sharing economy such as 'neighbours helping neighbours' and 'strangers trusting strangers,' *What's Yours Is Mine* is a reflective exploration of facets of the obvious and not-so-obvious dynamics of this economic system.

"A starting point is we recognize [the sharing economy] for what it is." Slee's book will definitely help you out with that.

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**Larry Farquharson** is a teacher in District 11, Thames Valley.

**Full Catastrophe Living (Revised Edition): Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness**

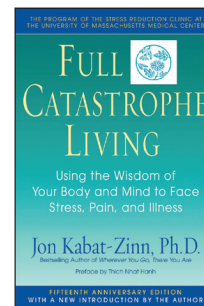
By Jon Kabat-Zinn

**Penguin Random House Canada**

**720 pages, \$23.00**

**Reviewed by Stephanie Benn**

In choosing the title, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, author Jon Kabat-Zinn acknowledges the various stresses caused by the unpredictability of daily life. The book is an invitation to bring awareness to the suffering that can too often come to frame our lives and to realize that our suffering need not and should not be what defines us.



Kabat-Zinn is Professor of Medicine *Emeritus* at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and creator of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR). MBSR, his eight-week introduction into the research and practice of mindfulness, is described fully within this self-help text and begins with anecdotes about some of the clients who have participated in the program over the years. Through these stories, the reader is given an opportunity to connect both to the people, their struggles, and the practice of MBSR.

According to Kabat-Zinn, practice is the key to mindfulness and practice refers to our attitude and willingness to change the way we relate to ourselves and to others. While meditation, yoga, and a healthy lifestyle are core to the practice, it is our commitment to compassion for ourselves and others that is key.

While reading this book, I was experiencing a good deal of back pain and my first reaction to Kabat-Zinn was defensive. However, instead of reaching for pain medication, I sat with my own discomfort, brought awareness to what I was thinking as I experienced the pain and, the feeling shifted ever so slightly. In that tiny glimpse into the possibilities offered by the practice of mindfulness, I was compelled to give it a try—testimony to the value of this book.

*Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* is an excellent manual for those wishing to begin their own exploration of mindfulness.

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**Stephanie Benn** is an elementary teacher at Edmison Heights.





# Events

Conferences,  
PD opportunities and  
other items of interest

**September 30, 2016**

**Transgender Voice and  
Communication Training  
Speech Language and Audiology  
Canada workshop  
Venue TBA, Toronto, ON**

This workshop will orient voice clinicians to the unique needs of the transgender client. It will equip therapists with the necessary skills to guide transgender clients in meeting their overall communication goals. The presenters will also review the existing evidence base available to those working with transgender individuals. For more information visit: [osla.on.ca](http://osla.on.ca).

**October 20–21, 2016**

**Ontario Physical and Health  
Education Association Annual  
Conference  
Scotiabank Convention Centre,  
Niagara Falls, ON**

Packed with invaluable experiences, the Ophea conference presents educators from across the field with essential information, teaching tools, and new insights on ways to support the healthy, active living of children and youth. For more information visit: [conference.ophea.net](http://conference.ophea.net).

**October 20–23, 2016**

**Rise Up! Conference  
ONBIDA's Literacy and Learning  
Conference  
Shaw Centre, Ottawa, ON**

The CLC's Rise Up! conference is an opportunity for union activists to come together and explore equality and fairness for all. Participants will empower each other by acknowledging struggles, celebrating gains, and sharing stories. As human rights activists, those attending will celebrate diversity and use their collective power to create real change for all Canadians. For more information please visit: [riseup2016.ca](http://riseup2016.ca).

**October 21–23, 2016**

**Pick Your Path 2016  
Council of Ontario Drama and Dance  
Educators Conference  
White Oaks Spa and Resort, Niagara-  
on-the-lake, ON**

The 2016 CODE Conference will include a new education series featuring panels of Ontario, Canadian and International Drama and Dance Educators, including Dr. Kathleen Gallagher and Dr. Barry Freeman, will discuss the pedagogy and learning in our fields. A special workshop at the Shaw Festival will cater to those interested in musical theatre. For more information visit: [code.on.ca](http://code.on.ca).

**October 23–24, 2016**

**Connecting Students to Connecting  
Pathways  
OCEA Fall Symposium  
Blue Mountain Rsr, Collingwood, ON**

The Ontario Cooperative Education Association will be hosting their fall symposium in Collingwood. The OCEA strives to provide the leadership and vision needed for optimal professional development of its members. The Association also develops and facilitates access to information, resources and other supports relevant to its members. For more information visit: [oceca.on.ca](http://oceca.on.ca).

**November 12, 2016**

**Making Connections  
People for Education Annual  
Conference  
Venue TBA, Toronto, ON**

Every November People for Education brings together parents, trustees, experts, educators and community members to learn, make connections, participate in hands-on training sessions and hear about the latest and best education research. For more information visit: [peopleforeducation.ca/events-workshops/come-to-our-conference](http://peopleforeducation.ca/events-workshops/come-to-our-conference).

**November 15–17, 2016**

**Inclusion: A Cause For Celebration  
Early Childhood Resource Teacher  
Network of Ontario's Annual  
Conference  
Holiday Inn, Ottawa, ON**

What has become of Inclusive Education? Come deconstruct the philosophy and practice behind what inclusion means and who it is designed to support. Speakers include Shelley Moore and Dr. Kathryn Underwood. For more information visit: [ecrtno.ca/save-the-date-30th-annual-conference-2](http://ecrtno.ca/save-the-date-30th-annual-conference-2).

**November 11–12, 2016**

**Professional Focus  
OASW Social Work Provincial  
Conference  
Venue TBA, Toronto, Ontario**

The Ontario Association of Social Workers' annual conference an exciting networking opportunity to highlight and share research, clinical interventions, community programs, education, prevention, policy, social planning, publications, and any other aspect of social work. For more information visit: [oasw.org](http://oasw.org).

**November 13–15, 2016**

**38th Annual Ontario Student  
Leadership Conference  
Niagara Falls, ON**

The 38th Annual Ontario Student Leadership Conference is kicking it into full gear! More than 2000 students and teachers will gather in Niagara Falls to hear from some of today's best speakers to teach, entertain, and inspire teachers/students from across Ontario. For more information visit: [ylcc.com/student-conferences](http://ylcc.com/student-conferences).

**November 10–12, 2016**

**Connect. Explore. Create.  
Experience the Possibilities!  
Science Teachers' Association of  
Ontario Conference 2016  
The International Plaza Hotel,  
Toronto, ON**

This year's conference invites you to connect with other science educators, to learn from and with each other; to explore the Exhibit Hall, the extensive selection of workshops, and the first ever STAO Playground and to create teaching and learning experiences to energize your classroom. For more information visit: [stao.ca/cms/conference-home](http://stao.ca/cms/conference-home).



# Your road to retirement

## TIP 1



**It's never too early  
to start planning**

Most people regret not planning for their retirement sooner. Experts say to achieve a healthy retirement it's best to start at least 5-10 years in advance, ideally in your 40s. Come to us for supportive advice, tips and planning workshops.

## TIP 2



**You need  
insurance**

Healthcare needs in retirement are unpredictable. On a fixed income, it's important to have a comprehensive group insurance plan like RTO/ERO offers to cover unexpected costs.

## TIP 3



**Get expert advice  
with RTO/ERO**

You can trust us. We are the largest non-profit organization that caters to the needs of the retired education community. Come to us for retirement lifestyle opportunities and resources.



Get more retirement tips, resources and workshop information, visit  
[www.rto-ero.org/education-community](https://www.rto-ero.org/education-community)  
1-800-361-9888 | 416-962-9463





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