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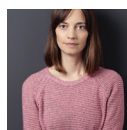


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Workplace violence in schools

Asking the right questions



This past December Vanessa Woodacre and I travelled to the town of Fergus to meet with a small group of Educational Assistants (EAs). We were there to interview them about the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is routinely required at work to protect themselves from the sometimes daily violence they experience while working with their assigned students. You can read Vanessa's article on page 14 of this issue.

While Vanessa began to interview the first EA in a private corner of the room, I asked the others about the protective equipment that they had brought along.

First, I learned that their Kevlar armguards were not the hard, plastic braces I expected; instead they looked like yellow knitted socks. "These protect you from bites?" I asked. "No. No, not really," I was told. The armguards protected them from the puncture wounds associated with bites, but as one EA rolled up her sleeve, I could see the deep purple-green bruise that was the usual if not an uncommon result.

"Is that a denim vest?" I asked. Actually, it was a smock. And yes it was denim because that's the toughest material the EA was able to sew. Yes, they make some of their own safety equipment.

"What about training?" I asked. They rhymed off NVC, NI, BSMT and a series of other acronyms. But some of the physical restraints taught seldom work on larger students or they require more than one person.

"Safety plans?" I asked. The EAs nodded their heads. Yes, students usually have safety

plans but they're not always effective or even up to date. Of course, these are not ordinary students. These are special needs students who have congenital or acquired conditions that have left them with particular propensities for violence. It is the job of the EAs to support these students to achieve success in the classroom and in school settings.

So there is the conundrum. In our schools we have students who have little or no control over their violent actions and they require support. And we have EAs whose job it is to support these students and who are inevitably the victims of their aggressive acts.

The real question to ask is: "Should anyone be expected to be a victim of physical violence at work?"

I can't help but notice the similarity to Ontario's nurses. Like our EAs, they face the prospect of violence on a daily basis. And like our EAs, they are a job class of predominately women. Can it be that the risks of workplace violence for EAs and nurses is at least partly due to gender?

I don't believe the argument that any job should come with an expectation for violence. Where the potential for violence exists, the onus is on the employer to provide required, ongoing safety plans, training, equipment and support. Our EAs, like our nurses, deserve the same commitment to workplace safety as the rest of us.

Randy Banderob, Editor
editor@education-forum.ca

La violence au travail dans les écoles

Poser les bonnes questions

En décembre dernier, Vanessa Woodacre et moi-même, nous nous sommes rendus à Fergus pour rencontrer un petit groupe d'aides à l'enseignement et d'éducatrices. Nous étions là pour les interroger à propos de l'équipement de protection individuelle (EPI) qui est systématiquement exigé au travail afin de les protéger contre la violence parfois quotidienne dont elles sont victimes alors qu'elles travaillent avec les élèves qui leur sont confiés. Vous pouvez lire l'article de Vanessa à la page 4 du présent numéro.

Pendant que Vanessa commençait l'entrevue avec la première éducatrice dans un coin privé de la pièce, je me suis entretenu avec les autres de l'équipement de protection qu'elles avaient elles-mêmes apporté.

Tout d'abord, j'ai appris que leurs protège-bras en Kevlar n'étaient pas les attelles en plastique rigide que j'avais imaginées; ils ressemblaient plutôt à des chaussettes jaunes tricotées. « Elles vous protègent des morsures? » ai-je demandé. « Non, non, pas vraiment » m'a-t-on répondu. Les protège-bras préviennent les blessures par perforation liées aux morsures, mais quand une éducatrice a relevé sa manche, j'ai pu voir une profonde ecchymose pourpre-vert qu'il n'est pas rare de constater.

J'ai demandé : « Est-ce un gilet en denim? » En réalité, c'était un couvre-tout. Eh oui, il était en denim, car il s'agit du matériel le plus résistant que les éducatrices pouvaient coudre. Oui, elles confectionnent elles-mêmes certains de leur équipement de protection.

« Et qu'en est-il de la formation? » Elles ont énuméré les NVCI (techniques d'intervention non violente), la BSMT (formation au système de gestion du comportement) et une série d'autres acronymes. Mais certaines des contraintes physiques enseignées sont rarement efficaces avec les élèves de plus grande taille ou qui nécessitent plus d'une personne.

« Et les plans de sécurité? » Les éducatrices ont hoché de la

tête. Oui, les élèves ont habituellement des plans de sécurité, mais ils ne sont pas toujours efficaces ou même mis à jour. Évidemment, il ne s'agit pas d'élèves ordinaires. Ce sont des élèves ayant des besoins particuliers, qui ont des troubles congénitaux ou acquis leur ayant légué de tendances particulières à la violence. Il incombe aux éducatrices et éducateurs d'appuyer ces élèves afin qu'ils réussissent en classe et à l'école.

C'est donc le dilemme. Dans nos écoles, nous avons des élèves qui contrôlent peu ou pas leurs comportements violents et ils ont besoin de soutien. Et nous avons les éducatrices dont le travail consiste à appuyer ces élèves et qui sont inévitablement les victimes de leurs gestes agressifs.

La vraie question à se poser est : « Est-ce qu'on devrait s'attendre à ce que quelqu'un soit victime de violence physique au travail? »

Je ne peux m'empêcher de remarquer des similitudes avec les infirmières en Ontario. Tout comme nos aides à l'enseignement et éducatrices, elles sont confrontées quotidiennement à la perspective de violence. Et comme pour nos aides à l'enseignement et nos éducatrices, leur classification d'emplois est une de celles à prédominance féminine. Se peut-il que le risque de violence au travail pour les éducatrices et les infirmières soit, à tout le moins, en partie due au genre?

Je n'accepte pas l'argument voulant que l'on doive s'attendre à de la violence dans un emploi. Là où le risque de violence est réel, il incombe à l'employeur de fournir des plans de sécurité, de la formation, de l'équipement et du soutien et de façon continue. Nos éducatrices, comme nos infirmières, méritent le même engagement envers la sécurité au travail tout comme nous.

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Editor Randy Banderob **Managing Editor/Art Direction & Layout** Ronda Allan **Copy Editor** Michael Young **Advertising Co-ordinator** Audrey Bourque **Member** Canadian Educational Press Association; Education Forum (ISSN 0840-9269) is indexed in the Canadian Education Index and available online in the Canadian business & Current Affairs database from Micromedia Ltd., 20 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5C 2N8. Tel. 416-362-5211 **Publisher** Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation/Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario, www.osstf.on.ca. Published tri-annually. Advertising rates listed on the OSSTF/FEESO website www.osstf.on.ca or available upon request **Business Manager** Pierre Côté **Advertising Office** Education Forum, 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, ON M4A 2P3. Tel. 416-751-8300. Fax: 416-751-3394. HST 107800682 RT0001. Although advertisements are screened as carefully as possible, acceptance of an advertisement does not imply OSSTF/FEESO endorsement of the product or service. Advertising contracts are subject to cancellation upon receipt of complaints from members **Subscription Rates** One school or calendar year (3 issues): \$15 + HST. Outside Canada: \$20. Single or back issues \$5 + HST. Outside Canada \$6. **Postmaster** Return undelivered copies to 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, ON M4A 2P3. Canadian publications Mail product Sales Agreement no. 40012523. **Editorial Submissions** Education Forum, 60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, ON M4A 2P3. Tel. 416-751-8300, Toll free 1-800-267-7867; managingeditor@education-forum.ca.



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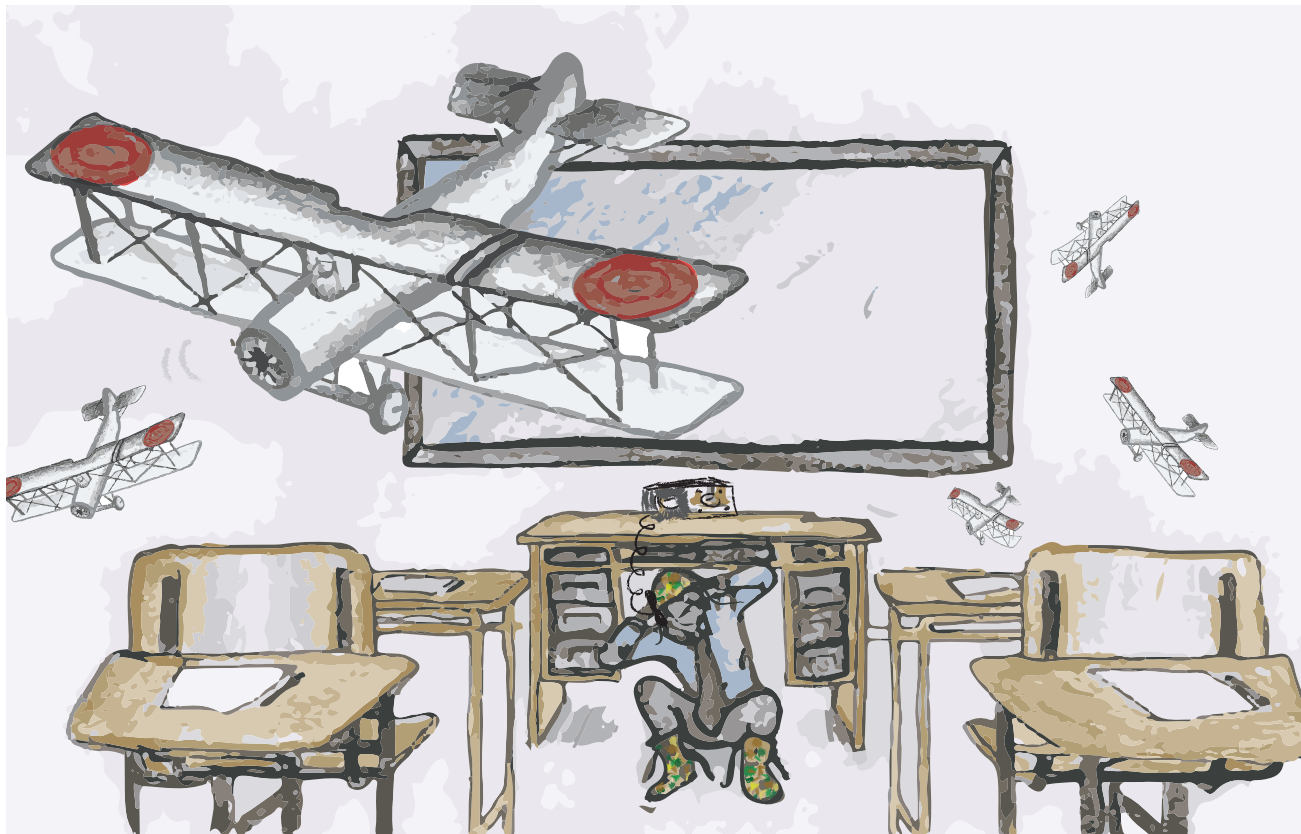
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SEE PAGE 30



Respecting professionalism

Professionals respecting the profession



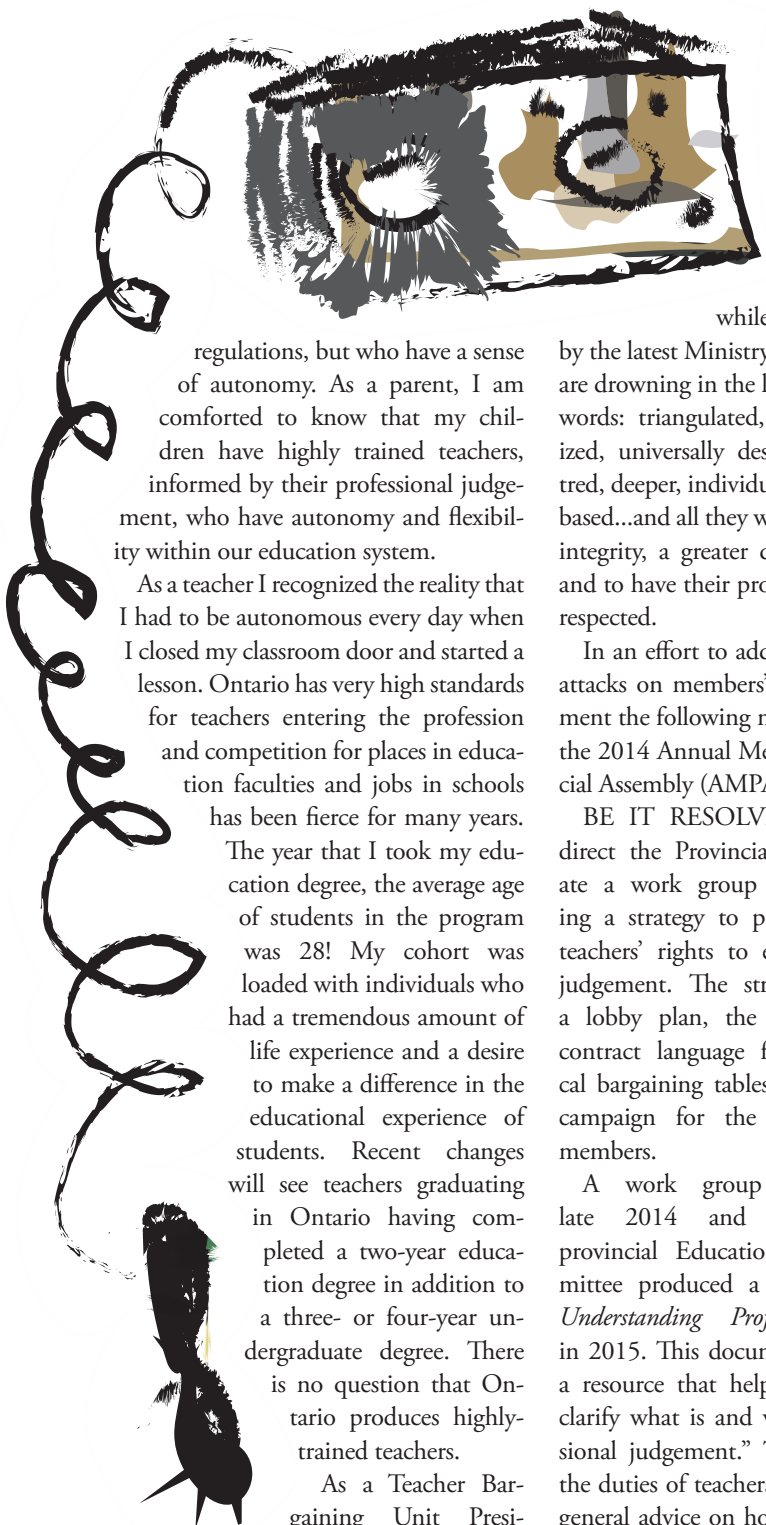
Prior to the start of the First World War, the Canadian-made Ross rifle had become world-renowned for its accuracy in international shooting competitions and as a hunting rifle. When Canada entered the First World War in 1914 it made some sense that the Canadian government equip its infantry with the Ross rifle. Sadly, the grim realities of trench warfare did not compare to the tests where the Ross had shone. Canadian troops would quickly abandon their rifles which jammed due to the poor quality of the mass produced ammunition, the high rate of fire and the muddy conditions. Despite the pleas of the troops to switch to the more reliable British Lee-Enfield rifle, the Generals in the rear directed Canadian front line troops to continue using the Ross rifle until late in 1916.

I have often heard classroom teachers called “front line troops.” Please forgive this history teacher for developing the analogy a little further. As a classroom

teacher I required my own professional judgement, my professional training and my professional experience upon which to make decisions that best met the needs of my students. It was often difficult to reconcile my sense of professionalism, alone at my post, while orders periodically came down through the chain of command from my Generals in the school, Board and Ministry Offices, directing me as to how I should be doing my job. Someone, who was far from the trenches of my everyday reality was making decisions that did not always make sense in my professional judgement or which I felt had a negative impact on my ability to provide the best possible education for my students. Fortunately, as unionized workers, teachers have fought for and continue to push back against attacks on their professionalism and the education system.

My oldest son is in his first year of a university engineering program and, like

any parent, I worry about his success. Fortunately, he has had a very positive start that my son attributes, in part, to his Grade 12 calculus teacher. This teacher used his professional judgement to go beyond the curriculum expectations to give his students what he felt was a better preparation for the next step in their education at university. Parents do not need to read the work of educational research experts like John Hattie to know that the greatest influence on student learning is the classroom teacher. As a parent I want professionals teaching my children to become lifelong learners and critical thinkers. I want teachers who engage my children in meaningful ways and make them want to come to school every day. I remember my teachers because they made learning fun; I remember my teachers’ dedication and commitment. I want my children learning from dynamic and creative professionals, who don’t just uncover the curriculum and follow legislation and



regulations, but who have a sense of autonomy. As a parent, I am comforted to know that my children have highly trained teachers, informed by their professional judgement, who have autonomy and flexibility within our education system.

As a teacher I recognized the reality that I had to be autonomous every day when I closed my classroom door and started a lesson. Ontario has very high standards for teachers entering the profession and competition for places in education faculties and jobs in schools has been fierce for many years.

The year that I took my education degree, the average age of students in the program was 28! My cohort was loaded with individuals who had a tremendous amount of life experience and a desire to make a difference in the educational experience of students. Recent changes will see teachers graduating in Ontario having completed a two-year education degree in addition to a three- or four-year undergraduate degree. There is no question that Ontario produces highly-trained teachers.

As a Teacher Bargaining Unit President, I have been hearing from members in my District for many years that they have felt that their professional judgement has been under attack in an education system that seems more intent on improving test scores than educating students. Teachers across the province complain that principals and school boards are asking teachers to change individual student marks, to change class

averages, to change their Annual Learning Plans, to change how and when they communicate with parents, how lessons are planned and delivered—all

while being bombarded

by the latest Ministry initiatives. Teachers are drowning in the latest education buzz words: triangulated, blended, personalized, universally designed, student-centred, deeper, individualized, competency-based...and all they want to have is course integrity, a greater degree of autonomy and to have their professional judgement respected.

In an effort to address the issue of the attacks on members' professional judgement the following motion was passed at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA):

BE IT RESOLVED THAT AMPA direct the Provincial Executive to create a work group tasked with creating a strategy to protect and enhance teachers' rights to exercise professional judgement. The strategy will include: a lobby plan, the creation of model contract language for central and local bargaining tables, and a "pushback" campaign for the use of individual members.

A work group was formed in late 2014 and subsequently the provincial Educational Services Committee produced a document entitled *Understanding Professional Judgement* in 2015. This document is meant to be a resource that helps teacher members clarify what is and what is not "professional judgement." This document lists the duties of teachers and provides some general advice on how to approach situations where a teacher feels that their professional judgement is being challenged. *Growing Success*, the document that outlines the policies and practices for assessment, evaluation, and reporting in Ontario schools since September 2010 uses the phrase "professional judgement" fifteen times. On the front page of the *Understanding Professional Judgement* document, *Growing Success* is quoted

twice including the following definition: Judgement...is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction. (*Growing Success*, page 152.)

Teachers are drowning in the latest education buzz words...all they want to have is course integrity, a greater degree of autonomy and to have their professional judgement respected.

In September of 2015 this same definition has found its way into the Central Teacher and Occasional Teacher Memorandum of Settlement. The addition of this language is a significant first step in allowing OSSTF/FEESO to grieve when members' ability to use their professional judgement has been tested. While this not a quick fix, members should know that OSSTF/FEESO will continue to take steps to have members' professionalism respected.

If the experience, skills and training of the Canadian troops had been respected, there undoubtedly would have been more success. If the Generals in our education system want to have success, they should respect the experience, skills and training of their professional teachers. It is important to highlight that teachers do have tremendous responsibilities and need to respect their profession, but ultimately teachers need to have their professional judgement respected.

Jeff Barber is the Occasional and Teacher Bargaining Unit President in District 28, Renfrew.

Socialist and proud

The rise of the unapologetic left



Politics, for several decades, seemed to be a world where the concept of the squeaky wheel getting the grease was not only unrealistic in a party system, but almost anathema to most voters. We liked to know where our parties fell on the political spectrum and come to expect that when election platforms were rolled out, we'd not be surprised or shocked, but happy to maintain the status quo with minor tweaks.

But politics is like an experiment in fluid dynamics. While the world is at war, we'd rather worry about survival than major evolutionary shifts in our political systems. We have channeled our politics into smooth-running tracks that never diverge from the mainstream. The right had always had its far right and the left had always had its far left, but neither were allowed into the game for fear of breaching established channels.

This practice of occupying the shift-

ing middle has never been great for diversity of thought, however. It gets governments through some tough times and can help to slow the ship, but not really steer it. It also disenfranchises many exciting social groups and ideas that are never given consideration as they don't fit into the narrow wedge that occupies the electable left and right.

Progressives hearken back to days when traditional right wing values were often further left than most centrist parties today. Much of Bill Davis' platform of the 1970s would have been considered verging on social democrat tenets; it was a time when some aspect of the public good was a stalwart ideal, even in conservative parties.

In a fractured movement that was born largely out of the United States, far right voices started to consolidate in groups that were no longer isolated from political parties, but acted like a virus within the parties themselves. Of-

ten borne of a single issue like the National Rifle Association or Americans for Tax Reform, these groups found like-minded thinkers through the evolution of web connectivity and learning the effectiveness of wedge-issue politics to drive a membership base.

They were bold, brash, politically incorrect, and unapologetically passionate about their issue to their followers. They didn't need to coddle to a broad-based party platform, but instead could get granular and focus lobbying efforts to the point of swinging entire parties.

Their successes rest on one basic premise that has nothing to do with the validity of their cause or the money behind it: they are bucking the trend of political parties and traditional politicians who play diplomacy over safe opposition.

Elements of change are finally starting to sprout in noticeable pockets of left-wing politics. Finally, the left is learning

the lessons of being unapologetic.

There's no small coincidence that the burgeoning affection for a more forthright style in politics is accompanied by the age of the web, where oceans of information can only be offset by something which stands out against the wallpaper that frames it.

Kshama Sawant, a City Councillor in Seattle, openly ran as a socialist candidate and helped to usher in a \$15 minimum wage in that city while being arrested at an airport protest during the struggle.

Jeremy Corbyn used a groundswell of party faithful and new, young party members to move from being a fringe candidate to becoming the leader of a centrist Labour Party in the United Kingdom. This while supporting anti-austerity budgets, clamping down on corporate tax loopholes, renationalization of utilities and railways, abolishing university tuition and sitting as the national chair of the Stop the War Coalition.

It's little wonder self-described socialist Bernie Sanders is making waves in a US Democratic Party primary season

where most money, union, and corporate support is going to Hillary Clinton. In a US system where Sanders shouldn't have a chance, he seems to stick around and gain new followers at every whistle stop.

Rachel Notley had a caucus of four Alberta NDP members going into the 2015 provincial election. With no reasonable or rational chance of winning, she could afford to be unapologetically left in proposals to end the flat tax in Alberta, end corporate and union donations in provincial elections, raise taxes on large corporations and high income earners, and cap emissions from the oil sands. She currently leads a 54 member majority caucus in a province that had been Conservative for 44 years.

We are, in Canada, seemingly plagued by so-called centrists that have been slouching towards the right over the past few decades. Our hopes for true left-wing socialist, or even social democrat government seems more often hampered by our left-wing parties trying to centre themselves in elections. Such platforms are not often failures of policy however. Progress-

sive stances still form the base for all left-wing platforms. The sales pitch is tragically lacking.

There is no hope for the left in politicians who are scared of self-identifying as left.

There have been enough camouflage words like "progressive" and "democrat" over the past century to obfuscate the simple fact that many of us are socialists in a world that demonized the term during the Cold War. In the same way that equity seeking groups have a practice of taking back words and terms that were once used in derogatory slurs, unionists and people who believe in collective change for the betterment of all must do the same.

We should be wary of leaders of the left who cower at accusations of being "socialist" and try to divert to being "progressive," "democrat," or "social democrat." The leaders who are making change and affecting politics today, when accused of being socialist are saying "You're damn right I'm socialist, and if you're living in this society with me, why the hell aren't you?"

When the right-wing craved decisiveness and authenticity, there were those whose conviction for the romanticized Libertarian provided inspiration to even centrists begging for something that seemed authentic in a sea of political wrangling.

The Left needs to stop apologizing for being leftist even if it means not fitting into the safety of the centrist cocoon. It's no longer acceptable to have left-wing leaders who try to sell the Left as centrist. The only future of left-wing parties and leaders, who desperately dance the line of the centrist vortex in hopes of being electable, is to stop apologizing for being who they are.

It's not about winning an election. It's about being able to hold your head up when walking out of one and say that we're ready for the next.

Anthony Marco is a teacher in District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth and is a member of the provincial Communications/Political Action Committee.



My world, Our planet

The 14th World Festival of Children's Theatre



PIANO-winter:
A scene from a performance by the deaf children of PIANO Theatre from Nizhny Novgorod, Russia.

Plate-spinning. Peeling onions. Juggling things—lots of things, each different from the others. These are some of the images that have helped our team describe organizing the 14th World Festival of Children's Theatre (WFCT), coming to Stratford in June.

These images are familiar to teachers who organize curricula, young people, time, space and so many other variables and distractions as they guide students toward understanding. Forty years in a secondary classroom and an Ontario Faculty of Education have taught me how to deal with multiple, competing priorities. On this project, more than four years of preparation have flown past and the final exam is coming soon!

Stratford, arguably Canada's foremost theatre city, is hosting almost 300 young people from 20 countries and all continents for ten days of performances, workshops and social events. It's theatre "for children, by children." The festi-

val puts the children's voices front and centre, so the audience will understand how they view their world. It values their ideas ahead of adults' ideas, who in North America often perform what they think is best for children.

"My World, Our Planet" is our festival's theme, asking young people to tell stories that share hopes and fears, visions of a green Earth, dreams and dreamers, little worlds in this big world, the enchanted kingdom and the secret garden; stories that could be set in the past, present or future and explore and honour the creativity of young people.

FESTIVAL ORIGINS

The WFCT originated in 1990 under the auspices of the International Amateur Theatre Association (AITA/IATA). Lingen (Ems), a city of 54,000 in north-west Germany, is the festival's home, where it returns every fourth year. In the intervening even-numbered years, festi-

vals have been held in Antalya, Turkey; Copenhagen, Denmark; Toyama, Japan; Moscow, Russia and Havana, Cuba.

The festival has never been to North America until now. Stratford is by far the smallest city to host a World Festival of Children's Theatre. In a city of 33,000, our visitors will be noticed! It's also the first to be organized entirely by volunteers, many of whom are teachers.

The festival is a celebration. There are no Best Performance awards, however, the selection process is competitive. Forty-five applications arrived from all continents.

We will celebrate young people's creative work from AFRICA: Uganda, Zimbabwe; ASIA: Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Palestine; EUROPE: Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia; NORTH AMERICA: Canada, El Salvador, United States; SOUTH AMERICA: Colombia, Cuba, Paraguay and OCEANIA: Australia.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Getting major community partners on board early was vital. Each recognized the potential in this enormous dream to build a new sense of community. Each bought into the festival's mission: "to make a positive change in children's lives....," which informs every decision we make. Stratford's WFCT Administrative Director and retired teacher Wendy McNaughton realized, that in organizing this festival, we were doing what we always tried to do in the classroom: building a sense that everyone has a significant role to play in the success of the group and focusing on that goal.

For the first time in its history, the festival will include a meaningful role for the local education system. The visiting children will be twinned and home-hosted with local classrooms, with whom both will learn through meaningful activities prior to the festival. The children will attend their host school for two mornings.

The WFCT would not be possible without the enthusiastic support of the federations and school boards. "We are very excited about this opportunity for our students to not only be enriched by the performances, but also by their potential interactions and learnings from students from around the world," says Jane Morris, Avon Maitland DSB Superintendent. Teachers will also ben-

efit, according to Jeff Denys, OSSTF/FEESO District 8, Avon Maitland Teachers' Bargaining Unit President: "This is a great way for teachers to help their students learn about the world beyond their district borders. And when students make new friends in other countries, they learn empathy, the antidote to bullying." Sarah Papoff, President of the Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators, says, "Showcasing children's voices is an empowering and crucial way to highlight our connections and to inspire emotional literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and innovation that impacts and changes our world, locally and globally."

A SYMPOSIUM INSIDE THE FESTIVAL

"PLAY! A Symposium" is a two-and-a-half-day international conference focusing on the importance of creativity. It will run in the middle of the festival, from June 10 to 12, (June 10 is a PA day in many Ontario boards!) and takes place at the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus.

The symposium is about exploring questions and imagination in young people. It will take a dynamic, open approach to interacting with artists, researchers, practitioners, and parents from all over the world!

Teachers and others will learn from and exchange ideas with high-profile education experts including Britain's Jonothan Neelands and Patrice Baldwin, Canada's David Booth, Kathy Lundy, Juliana Saxton, and Larry Swartz, among others. International presenters from the United States, Nepal, Bangladesh, Iran, Ghana, South Africa and Germany, to name a few, will be complemented by presentations from Right to Play Canada, and Clowns Without Borders. Registration opens in February.

Videos from children's groups worldwide will play on the three story projection wall. They are responses to our

"Our Stories, Our Planet: A Global Invitation" student-led project organized by retired drama teacher Helen Zdriluk's Centre Stage Theatre School in Burlington. Her students' invitation asks young people everywhere to share their stories on video. Your students can be part of the project!

WORKSHOPS AND MORE

The visiting children will participate in workshops most mornings, organized by a teacher committee, led by Gail Fricker. A director's forum brings the play directors together to share their best practices. The Interfaith Event at the Stratford Festival Theatre and multicultural community picnic will bring the children closer to the Stratford community in a different way. The adults will be treated each night to international food prepared at The Local Community Food Centre and a Canadian-themed gala dinner rounds out the festival. All of the children and adults, including the host families, will attend the Stratford Festival's "The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe." A "World Village and Cultural Expo" will be set up near the river—and much more.

The plates will stop spinning, the onions will be peeled and the juggling will stop when the children go home. But the long-term friendships they formed at the festival will touch their lives for a very long time.

And that makes all the difference.

WEBSITES:

World Festival of Children's Theatre:
www.wfct.ca

PLAY! A Symposium:
www.playsymposium.com

Our Stories, Our Planet: A Global Invitation:
www.playsymposium.com/a-global-invitation

Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE): www.code.on.ca
International Amateur Theatre Association (AITA/IATA): www.aitaiata.org

Todo vive:

A member of the group **Axioma Teatro**, Asunción, Paraguay with a symbol from their play "Todo Vive" (Everything Lives).



Photo: Clara Zeleda

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PROTECTING OURSELVES AT SCHOOL



Personal protective equipment and EAs

by Vanessa Woodacre

He lunges and she instinctively ducks out of the path of his fist. He kicks her leg. She doesn't say anything. He spits at her and screams profanities. She reaches up to wipe the spit away and he scratches her arm. Her ears are ringing.

It's 9:00 a.m. and class has just begun. He's the student she's been assigned to work with this year in her role as an Educational Assistant (EA). She is wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and is following the student's safety plan.

The end of her day will be filled with paperwork: a Use of Non-Violent Protocols form, an Antecedent Behavior Consequence Log, a Safety Plan Log form, a Violent Incident Report form (VIR) and a Student Incident form. Following a workplace injury protocol that includes a phone call to the HR person at the board, she will also inform her administration of the incident. Just another day in the life of an EA.

It took me 15 minutes to complete all the forms that would be required for just this one scenario. But I was just trying to gain a sense of what's required of the EA after such an incident; I didn't factor in the time it would take to speak with admin, call the board of-fice or forward all the forms to their proper destinations. Did I mention most forms are time sensitive and must be completed in 24 hours?

Hitting, spitting, kicking, hair pulling, biting, scratching, profanities, death threats and exposure to feces and urine are just some of the incidents of workplace violence EAs experience on a daily basis.

On the front line

"Workplace violence is the number one issue for our staff," says Tracey Marshall, ESSP/ECE Bargaining Unit President within OSSTF/FEESO District 18, Upper Grand. "We want to keep them safe, and as a union we are constantly developing policies and strategies to respond to our members' needs. The vast majority of my day is focused on helping staff navigate violent incidents that stem directly from their work with students. Education workers need a clear message about what constitutes a violent incident, how they can report it and the supports available from their union and their employer."

To gain a better understanding of how workplace violence affects the work and the lives of EAs, I spoke with six EAs from District 18 in December of 2015. We conducted the interviews in the new downtown library in Fergus, overlooking the Grand River. It was a beautiful setting that stood in stark contrast to the disturbing experiences of workplace violence described by the EAs. Almost all of the interviewees had worked over 10 years in the education field, and most had experienced some type of injury and lost time from work, directly as a result of their work with students who were violent.

Several of the EAs said they had been asked by administrators to downplay their injuries, and were often met with responses such as, "You're not really that hurt, are you?" Others reported that they were encouraged to not fill out a Violent Incident Report form, the rationale being that there was no intent on the part of the student to harm the worker.

A number of EAs recalled that when

they were first hired, their role was to help the whole class with accommodations and modifications. Now, however, an EA usually isn't assigned unless a student displays violent behaviour. Consequently, the number of jobs is shrinking, but the workload within each job is greater and has become more dangerous.

Experiences with workplace violence affect more than just the EAs' working lives. Their family life, their health and their general well-being are all impacted by violent incidents in the workplace. A family member said to EA Leanne Jolley, "I know why you love your work...but is your health worth it?"

Erinn Yetman received a severe concussion when she was attacked by a student to whom she was not assigned. Although she was already injured by the initial attack, she put herself at additional risk in order to ensure the safety of her own student. Her experience illustrates a common theme: EAs routinely risk their own safety to protect other staff, other students and, above all, to ensure the safety of their own students. And far too often, as in Yetman's case, their commitment to the safety of those around them can have significant impacts on their lives outside of work. Yetman describes her experience with workplace violence as, "the worst experience of violence in any part of my life. No one talks about what happens after. The 11 months in bed, wearing earplugs, sunglasses, no noise or any light. It wasn't just I who lived this, it was my whole family. The focus of my job, at the end of the day, is to not get hurt, after helping my students find their place in society."

Sharon Blake, an EA who was, in her words, "elbowed into a concussion," is

very clear about the wide-ranging impact of that one incident. “It’s not just a 9–5 injury,” she says. “It’s my whole life.” Yet, in the same breath she echoes a sentiment that was common among the EAs I spoke to: “I love what I do, when there are enough of us to do our job properly.”

It became clear to me, in fact, that all of these women love what they do. They care deeply about their students and their students’ learning. They simply want to be safe while they’re doing their jobs.

Some staff have chosen to leave the secondary panel for jobs in the elementary panel, hoping they could escape more severe workplace violence incidents. Most feel that it hasn’t made a difference in terms of their safety at work. EAs have still been injured while working in the elementary panel, some so severely that several months off work were required for recovery.

The EAs I spoke to all use various forms of personal protective equipment,

and I was interested to know how some of the equipment worked and what kind of injuries they were designed to protect.

In general, PPE is worn when the threat of injury can’t be reduced by other means. Several staff noted that the equipment didn’t always work, as some of it is merely sports equipment that’s been repurposed for worker safety. Some of the PPE was made by the EAs themselves. Students adapt quickly and learn to pinch or bite them in areas where harder protective surfaces didn’t provide cover.

The EAs I spoke to pointed out that it’s not always easy to work when using personal protective equipment. PPE often impedes mobility, and it can be very hot during the summer. Some EAs also feel that students avoid them when they are fully dressed in PPE, intimidated by their resemblance to riot police. If employees don’t wear the PPE provided, however, they risk not being covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

PPE for support workers in education has included, but is certainly not limited to, gloves, arm guards, and shin guards—all to protect from pinching, scratches, punches, kicks and biting. Chest protectors of different materials are used to protect workers from kicks, bites, punches, and scratches to the trunk of the body. Smocks protect from bodily fluids, and helmets are sometimes used to protect from punches, head butting and hair pulls. There are also facial masks to protect workers from being spat upon, punched in the face, scratched or bitten. The use of PPE is covered in the *Ontario Health and Safety Act* under the Health Care and Residential Facilities and Industries section, but not specifically for education workers.

More than half of the EAs I interviewed described situations in which they had not been informed that the student they were working with had a prior history of violent attacks, and it was only after an injury had occurred that safety protocols were put into place. Many staff feel that unless there is a threat of a work stoppage due to unsafe working conditions, their concerns

about violent incidents in the workplace simply aren’t being heard. PPE is often issued reluctantly and only after many requests. It is often not properly fitted to specific staff, and it must be shared between staff members even when the working conditions are hot and the equipment is soaked in sweat, or when it has been contaminated by a student’s bodily fluids.

The EAs are trained in a variety of proactive prevention techniques. These include: BMS (Behaviour Management Systems), NVCI (Non-Violent Crisis Intervention), CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) and UMAB (Understanding and Managing Aggressive Behaviour). EAs are expected to use these techniques in the midst of extremely stressful situations. But as EA Leanne Jolley puts it, “When you’ve been hit, you can’t think.”

Most of these programs use one person and two person holds to respond to a student whose behaviour has escalated to the point where an intervention by staff is needed. None of these holds, however, take into account a student who might be taller than one’s shoulder,



or the potential lack of mobility that certain PPE would impose upon a worker. For those kinds of situations, staff would have to request training specific to their equipment and their student, in order to ensure an acceptable degree of work-

place safety. Some staff complain about not receiving the required training in a timely manner, leaving them at higher risk for injury. This is especially true when a high-risk student registers part-way during the year. Even with appropri-

ate equipment and training, some violent incidents will require that back-up support staff be called from other areas of the school to assist, and this can result in dangerously inadequate response times to violent incidents.

Hard Data: Ontario

Incidents of workplace injury leading to loss of time at work

National Occupation Classification	2010	2011	2012	2013
Secondary School Teachers	306	375	340	324
Early childhood educators & Assistants	338	311	298	338
Elementary & Secondary School Assistants	729	809	867	939

Source: Association of Workers' Compensation Boards of Canada (AWCBC), National Work Injury/Disease Statistics Program (NWISP), publication title or date of data extraction.

Note: In British Columbia and Alberta, incidents of workplace violence are reported separately from workplace injury. In Ontario, they are not.



Comprehensive statistics on workplace injuries and hazards as a result of violent actions by students are difficult to find in Ontario.

What happens to all of the VIR forms filled out by support staff and teachers? Answers from the EAs I spoke with were varied. At least one reported that their administrator uses the data to improve student safety by examining and reviewing it with staff. Most others report that the forms they complete seem to slip into some great abyss, never to be discussed with those who spend the time filling them out.

Biting, scratching, hair pulling, verbal threats and assaults, etc. are all grossly under-reported and rarely make it to a WSIB claim process. Other reasons for a lack of correct data collection would be "Worker Non-Claiming, Employer Under-Reporting, and Employer Induced Claim Suppression," according to a brief issued by Institute for Work and Health. It seems clear that the available numbers don't tell a whole truth.

"By The Numbers," a statistical WSIB report, notes that working with food products or animals is potentially hazardous, but doesn't address injuries that occur as a result of working with a violent student.

Photos: Randy Banderob



Officials in British Columbia (BC) seem to think that it is possible to identify working with violent students as a workplace hazard. The BC Worker's Compensation Board put out a "Worksafe Bulletin" in 2013, listing 115 workers having lost time for having experienced violent incidents by students. That's certainly not a comprehensive analysis, but it does lead one to wonder why Ontario is so far behind.

The Ontario Ministry of Labour (MOL) doesn't use the same National Occupation Classification (NOC) system that the WSIB does. This affects data outcomes. It begs the question, how do we protect workers we don't even categorize in the same way?

If the publication produced by the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety entitled, *School Workers: Health and Safety* is an indication of the federal government's commitment to improving safety for education workers, that commitment is woefully inadequate. The publication doesn't include all job classes or address all hazards, and fails to align itself with current policy on positive discipline or special needs policies.

A scan of the most current WSIB projects on workplace hazard issues revealed that none are addressing hazards in the education field. Topics for projects include, "Safe Work Limits While Wearing Firefighting Protective Equip-



ment." What about education support staff concerns?

We know that educational support workers who work with our most challenging student population, students with special needs, are at risk of experiencing workplace violence on a daily basis. It's entirely unacceptable—especially in light of all the paperwork that follows a violent incident—that there almost no useful data or analysis to help us address the issue.

What's next?

After speaking with the EAs from District 18, it was clear to me that none of these women would remain in their jobs—and continue to face, on a daily basis, the ever-present risk of a violent incident—if they were not enormously dedicated and thoroughly committed to the success of the students with whom they work. It's a level of risk that most of us would never consent to in any aspect of our lives. It's long overdue for the Government of Ontario and the school boards of the province to acknowledge and take seriously the hazards faced by educational support staff in Ontario's schools.

What are we going to do to support our union brothers and sisters? Continue the conversation and share with us at @EducationForum on Twitter or at facebook.com/EducationForum.

Many EAs confirm that it isn't just the initial incident that affects them, but additional challenges that come later. Educational assistants who've been injured at work and have required time away from the job are sometimes faced with return to work processes that are made difficult by unsupportive employers and by government red tape.

"I go back because each day is different. Everyone has the right to an education. If the student feels they've been successful, it's been a good day." Says EA Dianna Wallace.

"If you went to work every day and someone in the next cubicle spit at you, swore at you or kicked you, you would leave your job, or they would be fired. We don't have that ability. It will be the same at the next school."—Leanne Jolley

Most staff described their family as being upset and concerned they were being injured at work and that they were required to wear personal protective equipment to protect themselves while working with students.

More than one EA asked me, "I might be safe because I have all of this equipment on, but what about the other staff, the other students?"

"When violence happens to a person outside of their workplace, they are treated differently than when a violent incident happens to them at work. That needs to change. An assault at work leaves people with the same residual effects and damage as an assault that occurs on the street or in their home."

—Tracey Marshall

Vanessa Woodacre is a member of District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge, and is a teacher in a Section 23 classroom.

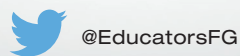
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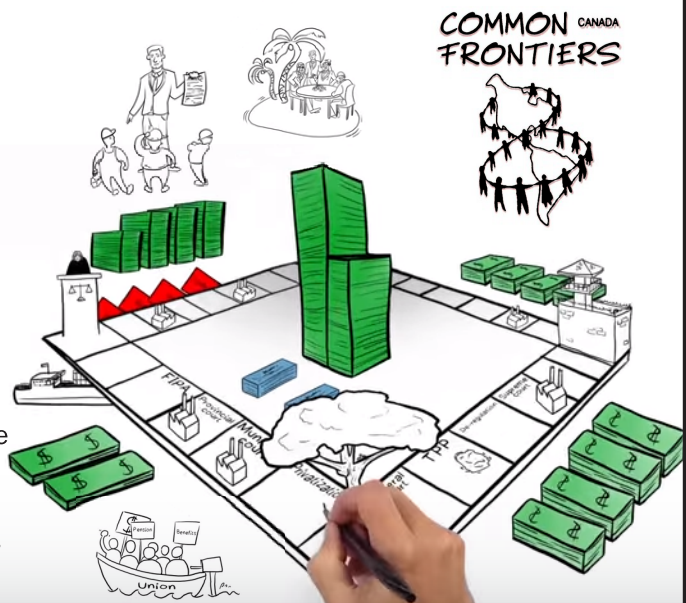
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FREE TRADE 101


Free Trade Agreements 101 is a video created by Common Frontiers Canada and narrated from the corporate perspective of free trade agreements (FTAs). Highlights of the video include how FTAs increase corporate power while eroding state sovereignty and weakening democratic authority. How FTAs are central to the destructive neoliberal framework of privatization and deregulation is also demonstrated.

Free Trade Agreements 101 also discusses how the investor-state dispute provisions in FTAs affords foreign corporations the right to sue for compensation when public services are expanded or when privatization is reversed.

This is a great video to show to classes, to share on social media and to engage students on this important issue for all Canadians.



www.commonfrontiers.ca | Twitter: @comfront01



Electoral reform

More than a classroom experiment

by Susan Rab

A favourite lesson in a Civics or Politics class is to hold simulations of multiple concurrent elections. Candidates, ridings and parties are quickly identified. Students maintain particular voter profiles while indicating their preferences using several different sets of ballots. Ballots are sent to separate 'Elections Canada' offices. Confusion invariably ensues as each group announces a different set of results to the class. Student chief electoral officers soon discover that their instructions, identified as ranked ballots, proportional representation (PR) or single member plurality, are different from the others.

Students learn that both the methods of casting and the methods of counting ballots determine results at least as much as voter preference does. When they dig deeper, they become particularly interested in the peculiarities of the single-member plurality or first past the post (FPTP) system currently used in Canadian provincial and federal elections.

In a riding with four viable candidates or parties, it is possible to win with less than 30 per cent of the vote, as Xavier Barsalou-Duval in the Quebec riding of Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères did in the 2015 federal election.

It is also possible for a party to win 100 per cent of the seats with only 60 per cent of the vote, as occurred in the New Brunswick legislature in the 1987 provincial election.

In fact, at the federal level, of the 13 majority governments of the last 70 years, only four had support of more than half of Canadian voters.

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Réforme électorale

Plus qu'une expérience en classe

par Susan Rab

Une leçon de prédilection d'une classe de civisme ou de politique consiste à organiser des simulations de plusieurs élections. Les candidats, circonscriptions et partis sont rapidement identifiés. Les élèves assurent le maintien des profils précis de l'électorat tout en indiquant leurs préférences à l'aide de plusieurs séries différentes de bulletins de vote. Les bulletins de vote sont envoyés à des bureaux fictifs distincts d'Élections Canada. La confusion s'installe invariablement au fur et à mesure que chaque groupe annonce à la classe une série de résultats différents. Les élèves directeurs généraux des élections découvrent rapidement que leurs instructions, identifiées comme bulletins classés, représentation proportionnelle ou scrutin uninominal majoritaire, diffèrent des autres.

Les élèves apprennent que les modes de scrutin et de dépouillement déterminent tous deux les résultats du moins autant que les préférences des électeurs. Lorsqu'ils s'y attardent plus longtemps, ils s'intéressent particulièrement aux particularités du système de scrutin uninominal majoritaire utilisé à l'heure actuelle lors des élections provinciales et fédérales au Canada.

Dans une circonscription ayant quatre candidats ou partis viables, il est possible de l'emporter avec moins de 30 pour cent des suffrages, comme l'a fait Xavier Barsalou-Duval dans la circonscription de Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères au Québec, lors de l'élection fédérale de 2015.

Il est aussi possible qu'un parti remporte 100 pour cent des sièges avec seulement 60 pour cent du suffrage, comme ce fut le cas lors de l'élection provinciale de

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Students see how difficult it is for new parties with significantly scattered support across the country, such as the Greens, to get noticed and are shocked to hear that a party with seats in only one province, such as the Bloc Québécois, can be the official opposition.

They test out potential results of various other electoral systems and weigh which ones seem more accurate, fairer or more reflective of voter intentions. It is important to be clear that none of the systems intrinsically help one party over another. All parties (and many voters) will adjust their behaviour according to whatever electoral system changes are made.

Debates and discussions about electoral reform become all the more important in 2016 and must occur in union halls, staffrooms and family dining rooms. As a candidate in the federal election, newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised that “the next federal election should be the last conducted under the current first-past-the-post electoral system.” Maryam Monsef, Minister of Democratic Institutions and MP Peterborough—Kawartha, has now been instructed to “bring forward a proposal to establish a special parliamentary committee to consult on electoral reform, including preferential ballots and proportional representation.”

And Canada appears to be ready for the consultation. In December 2015, the Broadbent Institute found that the vast majority of Canadians think that Canada’s system for electing members of Parliament needs to change. Almost half thought those changes needed to be significant.

During the campaign, the New Democratic Party, the Green Party and the Bloc Québécois supported proportional representation. The Liberals were less clear on reform preferences. Liberal Party policy favours ranked ballots and a previous caucus was split on proportional representation. The Conservatives have opposed PR and are currently distracting from the necessary substantive debate by focusing instead on a national referendum.

Among the grassroots organizations seeking electoral change, Fair Vote Canada has taken the lead. It describes itself as a grassroots multi-partisan citizens’ campaign for voting system reform and promotes the introduction of an element of proportional representation into elections for all levels of government and throughout civil society. OSSTF/FEESO formally supported its campaign during the 2015 federal election. Fair Vote is currently actively

lobbying MPs to ensure that positive reform occurs.

Despite its commonly cited criticism of being complicated, a popular PR system among electoral reformers is the Mixed Member Proportional system (MMP). However, focusing on confusion is a false criticism.

First, it assumes that our current electoral system is simple. While the average citizen may be able to answer with

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1987 à l'Assemblée législative du Nouveau-Brunswick.

En fait, au niveau fédéral, des 13 gouvernements majoritaires des 70 dernières années, seulement quatre avaient reçu l'appui de plus de la moitié de l'électorat canadien.

Les élèves voient à quel point il est difficile pour les nouveaux partis, ayant un appui important dispersé à travers le pays, comme le Parti vert, de se faire remarquer et ils sont étonnés d'apprendre qu'un parti ayant des sièges dans une seule province, comme le Bloc Québécois, peut constituer l'opposition officielle.

Ils analysent les résultats éventuels des divers autres systèmes électoraux et ils déterminent ceux qui semblent plus précis, plus équitables ou plus représentatifs des intentions des électeurs. Il importe de bien comprendre qu'aucun des systèmes en soi n'aide un parti plus

qu'un autre. Tous les partis (et plusieurs électeurs) ajusteront leur comportement d'après les modifications apportées au système électoral.

Les débats et discussions sur la réforme électorale sont d'autant plus importants en 2016 et doivent se produire au sein du syndicat, dans les salles du personnel et les salles à manger familiales. Comme candidat à l'élection fédérale, Justin Trudeau, le nouveau premier ministre élu, a promis que « la prochaine élection fédérale devrait être la dernière menée sous le système uninominal majoritaire ». Maryam Monsef, ministre des Institutions démocratiques et députée de Peterborough—Kawartha, s'est vu confier la tâche « de formuler une proposition visant à créer un comité parlementaire spécial chargé de procéder à des consultations sur la réforme électorale, y compris les votes préférentiels et la représentation proportionnelle. »

Et le Canada semble être prêt pour la consultation. En décembre 2015, l'Ins-

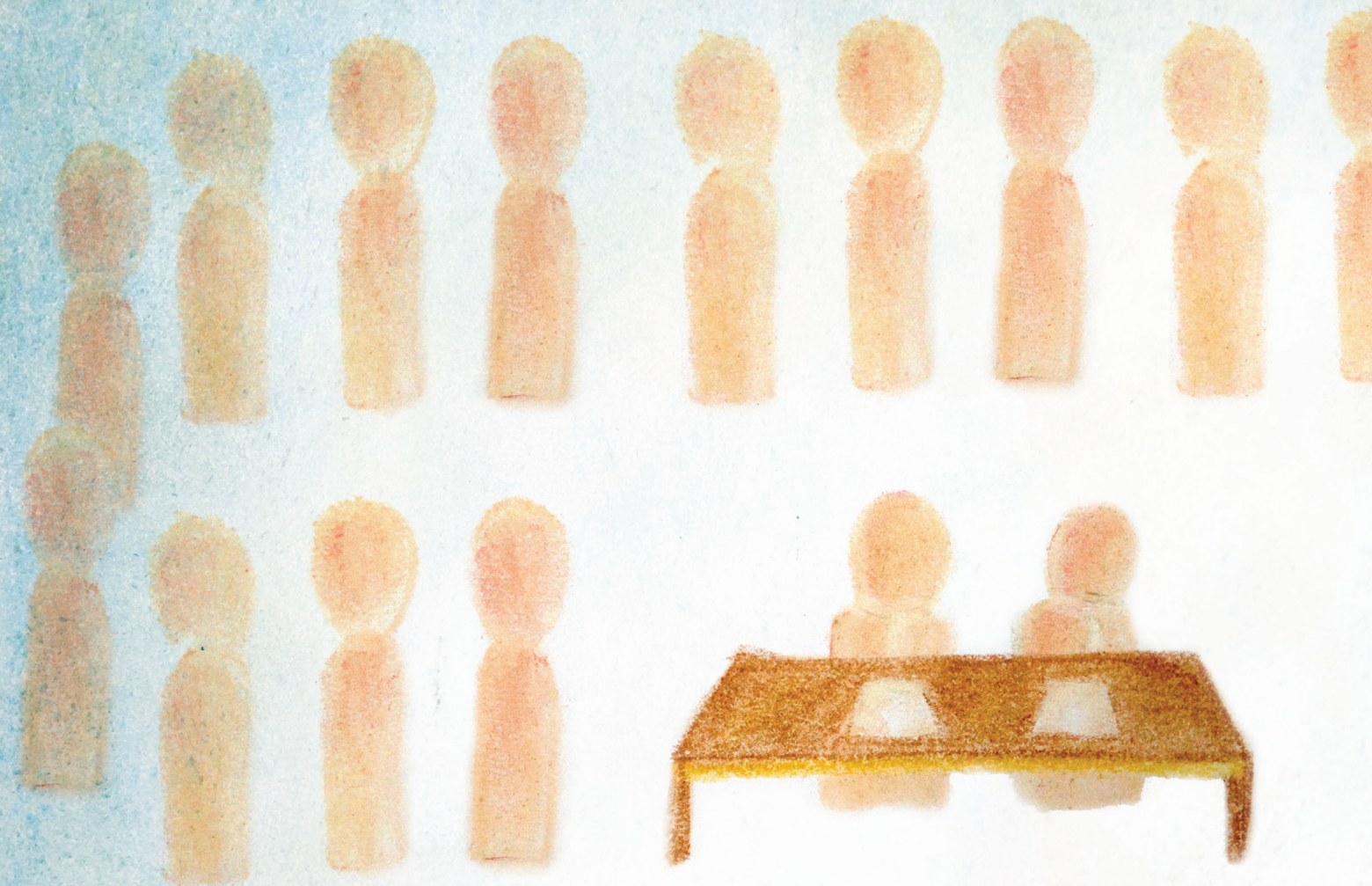
titut Broadbent a constaté que la grande majorité des Canadiennes et Canadiens sont d'avis que le système pour l'élection des députés doit changer. Près de la moitié pensent que ces changements doivent être importants.

Durant la campagne électorale, le Nouveau Parti démocratique, le Parti vert et le Bloc Québécois ont soutenu la représentation proportionnelle. Les Libéraux étaient moins clairs sur leurs préférences quant à la réforme. Les politiques du Parti libéral favorisent le scrutin préférentiel et un précédent caucus était divisé par rapport à la représentation proportionnelle. Les Conservateurs s'opposent à la représentation proportionnelle et entravent à présent le débat de fond nécessaire en se concentrant plutôt sur un référendum national.

Parmi les organisations de la base en quête de modifications au système électoral, Représentation équitable au Canada (*Fair Vote Canada*) a pris les devants. Il se décrit comme étant à la fois un mouvement et une campagne nationale

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ease and accuracy that under FPTP the winning candidate in a riding is the one who received the most votes on election day. However, many Canadians have difficulty explaining how one becomes Prime Minister and most would be hard pressed to describe a typical leadership race. Interestingly enough, no Canadian political party uses FPTP to choose its leader. Explaining the intricacies and vagrancies of the nomination process, generally considered to be the key barrier to women and other under-represented groups of citizens, requires significant effort.

While there are many forms of pro-

portional representation, Canadian discussions have focused on mixed member proportional systems. The essence of MMP is certainly simple enough. The descriptor "mixed" indicates that votes are counted in two ways. Local ridings continue to have a representative chosen by the most number of votes in that riding. But additional top-up seats are allocated in proportion to popular vote.

For people who like simplicity, the number of seats for each party proportionally matches the percentage of popular vote.

There are 181 countries around the world that currently use some variation of proportional representation at differ-

ent levels of government. New Zealand, Germany, Mexico and Venezuela all use a form of MMP for national elections. Canada will be able to choose among tried and tested possibilities, each of which would result in slightly different results. Instead of looking for a perfect consensus on the perfect electoral system, Canadians must acknowledge that FPTP must finally be replaced, and rally around one proportional representation system to take us into the future.

Susan Rab is a teacher in District 25, Ottawa-Carleton and is on the provincial Communications/Political Action Committee.



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qui souhaite réformer le système électoral. Des gens de toute allégeance politique y adhèrent. Ils souhaiteraient voir en place, à tous les paliers de gouvernement et dans les institutions de la société civile, un aspect du système de la représentation proportionnelle. OSSTF/FEESO a formellement soutenu leur campagne durant l'élection fédérale de 2015. Représentation équitable au Canada exerce actuellement des pressions auprès des députés dans l'espoir que se produise une réforme positive.

Bien que l'on invoque couramment sa complexité, le système de représentation proportionnelle courant chez les réformateurs électoraux est le système de représentation proportionnelle mixte (RPM). Toutefois, cibler la confusion est une fausse accusation.

Mais mettre l'accent sur le chaos constitue une fausse critique.

Tout d'abord, cela suppose que notre système électoral actuel est simple. Tandis que le citoyen moyen peut être en mesure de répondre plus facilement et de façon précise, que selon le scrutin uninominal majoritaire, le candidat vainqueur dans une circonscription est celui qui a obtenu le plus grand nombre de suffrages le jour des élections. Cependant,

plusieurs Canadiennes et Canadiens ont de la difficulté à expliquer de quelle manière une personne devient première ministre et la plupart auraient du mal à décrire une course typique à la direction. Curieusement, aucun parti politique canadien n'utilise le scrutin uninominal majoritaire pour choisir son chef. Expliquer toute la complexité du processus de mise en candidature, généralement considéré comme étant l'obstacle majeur pour les femmes et les autres groupes de citoyens sous-représentés, exige des efforts considérables.

Bien qu'il existe de nombreuses formes de représentation proportionnelle, les discussions des Canadiennes et Canadiens ont porté sur les systèmes de représentation proportionnelle mixtes (RPM). Le principe de la RPM est assez facile. Le descripteur « mixte » indique que les votes sont dépouillés de deux façons différentes. Les circonscriptions locales continuent d'avoir un représentant choisi par le plus grand nombre de voix dans cette circonscription. Mais des sièges supplémentaires sont attribués proportionnellement au

suffrage populaire.

Pour ceux qui aiment la simplicité : le nombre de sièges de chaque parti correspond, de façon proportionnelle, au pourcentage du suffrage populaire.

Il existe 181 pays dans le monde entier qui utilisent actuellement des variantes de la représentation proportionnelle à différents paliers de gouvernement. La Nouvelle-Zélande, l'Allemagne, le Mexique et le Venezuela ont tous recours à une forme de RPM pour les élections nationales. Le Canada pourra choisir parmi des possibilités éprouvées, dont chacune se traduirait par des résultats légèrement différents. Plutôt que de chercher un consensus parfait sur le système électoral parfait, les Canadiennes et Canadiens doivent reconnaître que le scrutin uninominal majoritaire doit être définitivement remplacé et se rallier à un système de représentation proportionnelle pour l'avenir.

Susan Rab est enseignante au District 25, Ottawa-Carleton et siège au Comité provincial des communications/action politique.



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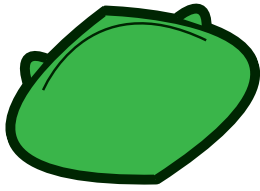
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Does dissection still have a place in the classroom?

by Bill Hodgins



For many secondary students, science class dissection is a rite of passage. There is sense of validation...a cultural accomplishment. It's another check on one's life list.

"I can remember the smells of formaldehyde, the carefulness of using scalpel and tools, and even the ickiness of digestive liquids in the stomach of the pig," says Andrea Hennings.

Hennings is a graduate of Trent University, holding both a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Education with teachables in Biology and Geography.

She vividly recalls her initiation into dissection.

"This was a one-time experience in my high school and to me it felt like a rite of passage...I felt a little squeamish at first. This was my first time dissecting. But I thought it was fun, new, and hands-on, which is one of the best ways that I learn."

Hennings says that experience has helped her in her role as an educator. Currently, she travels from school to school throughout the province, speaking to students about invasive species as well as healthy habitats and biodiversity. She believes the hands-on involvement she received in school has helped her in understanding the impacts of the environment on certain species; that it makes her a better teacher.

"Using animals for learning is similar to growing animals for consumption or plants for consumption," she says. "Maybe it is all ethically unfortunate that we use (once) living things to learn but I believe that is the only way we are about to learn about the world around us."

But there are others in education who believe just as strongly in alternatives to animal dissection; that there are economic motives for considering something different, not to mention ethical reasons as well.

And for those opposed to the practice of classroom dissection, those pressures—coming from

both the board budget level and the consciousness of the students themselves—are good reasons to consider anatomical models or digital programs.

John Vince is a science teacher at Frontenac Secondary School in Kingston. He experienced dissection as a student at both the secondary school and university levels, and he's had to instruct other students in the same way. Today, he struggles to justify the need and cost of letting high school students cut into animal samples.

"At most schools, science budgets are being more and more pinched," he says. "It's an expensive use of dollars for short-term gain. When you buy these \$30-a-piece pigs, that's a lot of money for most of our schools."

Ethically, he says it's hard to justify as well.

"We are seeing that more and more, kids are aware of issues around factory farms...issues around how the animals are harvested or produced. I'm just not sure if that makes the most sense."

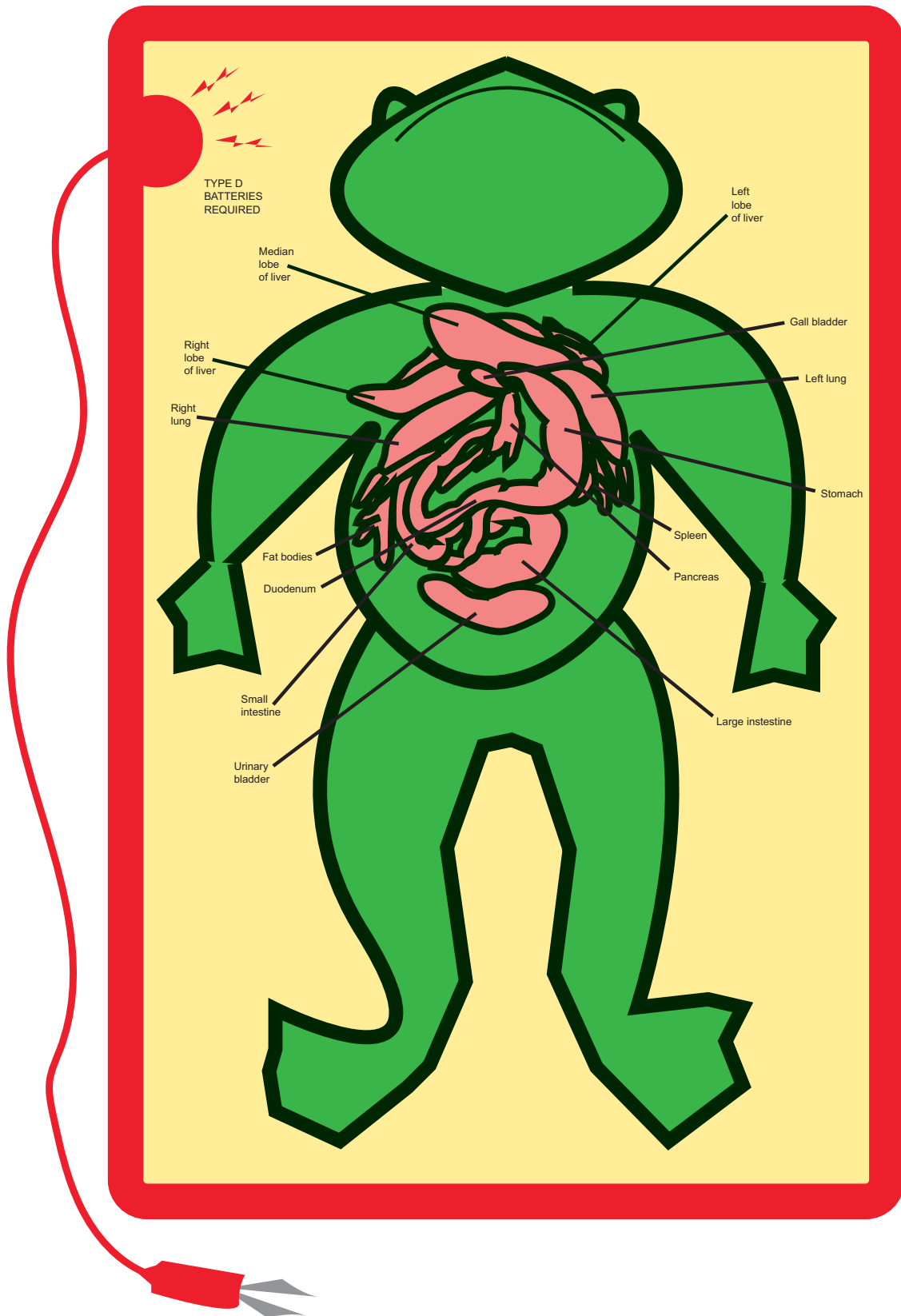
Certainly, there are societal pressures around the topic of dissection in the classroom. The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has weighed into the discussion. "Modern teaching methods—including interactive computer simulations and clay models—save animals' lives, cost less than animal dissection, are suitable for all students, and are more effective than animal dissection," PETA claims.

They've extended that message both to the public and the education sector, promoting alternatives to animal dissection.

According to PETA, "in nearly every comparative study ever published, students taught using non-animal methods such as interactive computer simulations tested as well as or better than their peers who were taught using animals for dissection and other animal-based exercises."

Instead, it lobbies for methods such as







narrated software programs with physiology animations or well-labeled anatomical models that allow students to learn “more efficiently, without being distracted by the gore of cutting up dead animals and trying to differentiate the discolored body parts.”

They also believe that by using models or animations, each body system can be studied and virtually dissected repeatedly until students are confident with the material.

And it's not just PETA pushing for change. The New England Anti-Vivisection Society (NEAVS) is a US-based, national animal advocacy organization dedicated to ending the use of animals in research, testing, and science education. They go so far as to advocate for “cruelty-free classrooms” and suggest that involving animal use may have negative psychological effects on students.

It's difficult to ignore the economics of virtual alternatives. The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), a Washington-based non-profit that includes physicians from around the globe, investigated the costs of using animals versus alternatives in biology classrooms.

“New programs offer stunning educational advantages while reducing costs and decreasing reliance on animals,” according to PCRM. It says alternatives cost thousands less than dissection, last for years, and several groups of students can use them simultaneously during each academic year.

For example, it puts the five-year cost of virtual frog dissection at just under \$2,100 compared to almost \$2,400 using animal samples. Over the same pe-

riod of time, it estimates the savings in fetal pig dissections versus virtual education at as much as \$2,600, and for cats the savings could reach \$4,200 over a five-year period.

Then there's the growing business sector specializing in dissection alternatives who are capitalizing on that ethical wave. Programs such as Visual Frog, CatWorks Virtual Dissection, and Froguts Fetal Pig are finding welcome space on school-based hard drives.

That's something Vince can appreciate.

“Every teacher is different in how they approach (dissection)...how they handle it.” Vince says the curriculum has changed over the past decade and expectations are quite different now. Often, it's only a small part of the Grade 11 curriculum, he says, and it allows for alternatives such as computer simulations and the use of anatomical models.

“There are always some students who look forward to it and some who are apprehensive.”

“It's difficult to tell a student you have to do it when the curriculum offers three choices. Typically when they do it there are kids who don't want to. They can work in another room on a virtual model.” It's also one reason why students are put into groups of three or four for animal dissection. There might be one or two who really want to do it and then the others can observe.

“I just don't know how useful it is. When I taught biology, we didn't do it anymore. I just don't think it's worth it.” There's the argument that students going on to vet school or medical school would benefit, but he says that's not the case with most in the classroom.

“What you want the student to get out of it is the relation between the various systems...the relationship between the circulatory system and the respiratory system. But the online frogs have been around for a while now and they are getting quite good. You can buy fairly detailed mounted anatomical models

that are just as good. And when you have a large class just hacking away at the animals, are they getting anything out of it anyway?”

Hennings still thinks so.

“I remember there were students in the class who were grossed out from the thought of dissecting the animals and they didn't want to participate in it. This is one of the reasons why our teacher put us in pairs, to reduce the amount of involvement from those who didn't want to participate.”

But those that did participate took great interest, she says. And she feels it better prepared her for further dissections in university. “We dissected a pigeon, a shark, a rat and a mudpuppy, and each person in the course had their own. Each week we would learn the different systems of the body; integumentary, skeletal, nervous, muscular, cardiovascular and respiratory, reproductive and digestive systems.”

“It was a difficult course to remember all the different systems, their anatomy and in different types of species, mammals, birds and amphibians. The hands-on experience and carefulness that I took with the specimens and my learning were greatly enhanced by using previously living animals.”

Hennings does believe that electronic or digital models can help students who do not feel comfortable with actual species dissection or feel morally wrong about it. “Actually, I'm glad there are alternatives because I know students in my future classrooms might prefer using these methods. But I find that actual species dissection as an experience is valid and might not be achieved in an electronic setting.”

“I see the point of view of using animals grown just for dissection as bad ethically but I never had these feelings during my dissection experiences. I still feel students can learn significantly more from the hands-on experience.”

Vince says he can respect that there

are two schools of thought. “Some of my colleagues would argue that well, do you want a doctor who has never cut

into that, but really anyone who is going to be a doctor is going to go on and take anatomy courses at university. And

they’re going to work on actual human cadavers and get that experience there; that is a lot more relevant.



A peak into the world of virtual dissection

I guess I expected it to be a little like the old game of Operation.

Remember how you had to use a set of tweezers to carefully remove organs from Cavity Sam, fearful that if you weren’t careful enough, his red lightbulb nose would illuminate and you would hear a shocking buzzer sound?

Well, online dissection is nothing like that. But if you are interested in virtual organ examination, it can still be fun.

It’s been a decade or two (maybe more) since my high school biology teacher provided an opportunity to slice into a frog, all in the name of science of course.

We each received photocopied diagrams ahead of time to tell us what we could expect to find. I don’t recall everything about that day, but it still holds some significant space in my personal memory bank. What I learned that day, not so much.

That was one of my first takeaways from my online dissection attempt. There was a real opportunity to learn here. There would be step-by-step explanations.

There are plenty of options available on the Internet, but many online users had good things to say about Froguts. (It took me a little while to clue into

the company’s clever name...frog guts.) But Froguts offers a free demo that’s worth trying if you want to experience virtual dissection.

The three-dimensional graphics are impressive, and with a little mouse movement the user can rotate the frog and tilt it from side to side.

Information on the screen explained what I was looking at, and by hovering over different areas such as the nare and tympanum, I was told a little about some of the frog’s features and how they work. I didn’t get that on my old high school photocopy instruction. Did you know that on bullfrogs the tympanum actually amplifies their croaking sound? I learned that here.

When you are ready to start your dissection, you have a selection of tools to choose from. There is a scalpel, scissors, pins, forceps, and even more if you upgrade from the demo. I followed the directions and with my mouse, then chose the scalpel to cut the frog open. Maybe this can’t compare to actually cutting with a real scalpel, but it does require the user to be accurate. Once three cuts are made, the user can select pins and—again with the mouse—pin back the skin to see inside. Scissors are required to cut the thorax.

By hovering the mouse over different areas of the frog’s anatomy, the user can identify different organs and learn their role in the frog. Through the Froguts programs, the user is directed on a step-by-step level.

Finding certain organs—such as the bladder and small intestine—was simple enough, but I had a difficult time finding the lungs. They weren’t where I thought they would be.

As you continue, you learn more about the organs and the skeletal and respiratory systems, but ultimately it prompts you to purchase the full program to proceed.

With the full program, you can take your dissection skills deeper into the frog, discover information about circulatory and reproduction systems, and Froguts also offers the opportunity to virtually cut into a squid, starfish, cow eye, fetal pig, and other common classroom dissection species.

It can be pretty graphic—and that’s a good thing. Realism is what makes programs such as these worthwhile. And if your stomach can’t take it, you can always stick to Cavity Sam. Surely he’ll be hiding out at some yard sale or thrift store in your neighbourhood.


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



The sustainable society

A Common Threads project

by Taina Kanerva and Alison Rimmel



We are at a pivotal moment in history. We face an epidemic of short-term thinking which prioritizes profit above all else. Distressing evidence reveals the toll our voracious modern lifestyles have on the earth. The consequences of our seemingly insatiable desire for newer, better, and more, can no longer be ignored.

The organism which destroys its environment destroys itself.
(Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind)

The challenge for education is how to switch from the nation-state focus that currently dominates the system, to a planetary consciousness that is not focused on globalization and trade (O'Sullivan, 1999). The key many feel to developing this new ideal is education for sustainability or environmental education. If handled carefully, environmental education could bring about "ecological literacy" or eco-literacy in humans.

The great challenge of our time is to build and nurture sustainable communities—communities that are designed in such a way that their ways of life, businesses, economies, physical structures, and technologies do not interfere with nature's inherent ability to sustain life. The first step in this endeavor is to understand the principles of organization that ecosystems have developed to sustain the web of life. This understanding is what we call ecological literacy.
(Centre for Ecoliteracy & Capra, 2000, www.ecoliteracy.org)

Ecosystems, water, and nutrients all rely on cycling to maintain sustainability. There is no waste in an ecological community as waste for one creature is food for another. Energy from the sun drives the cycles that run the earth and the diversity that exists on earth provides resiliency and strength to its communities. To be eco-literate requires one to have an understanding of these basic principles and of the organization of life in ecosystems and how they relate to human communities. Ecological literacy would enable students to understand how the basic metaphors and processes of the past influence their current ways of thinking and acting, and explore the culturally reconciled nature of technology.

The project

Fear for the future has ignited demand for a more balanced, holistic approach to growth and development models. People across the globe have begun questioning dominant paradigms of success and progress. This project seeks to provide students with a different lens through which to see the future of society; to empower them by learning that there is another way.

The Sustainable Society, our sixth Common Threads initiative, brought together a dynamic team of six educators from across the province. They travelled to Venezuela and Norway, two uniquely different countries, to explore different approaches taken to maintain social justice, equity, fairness, and democracy. The goal was to investigate the interconnected relationships between people, planet, and profit. The team met with numerous diverse stakeholders, immersed themselves in local culture, and had many unforgettable experiences.

In July of 2014, the team went to Venezuela to discover how the social system, media, education and distribution of wealth work in the country. They met with several community leaders in Cara-

cas to listen to their history and understand their points of view. Knowledge of the workings of the oil industry were defined through meetings with Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA) (Petroleum of Venezuela), the state-owned oil and gas company. The team learned about several of their social programs through first-hand accounts from students and social organizations that ranged from local collectivos to national publishers and media networks. This was expanded upon by a visit with the ALBA bank to understand their system of trade with other member countries based on social needs. The socialist model used in Venezuela demonstrated the strength of people working together to bring improvements to the lives of many.

Then in August 2014, the team went to Norway to research the success of the revered Nordic Model. Each

Common Threads is OSSTF/FEESO's international solidarity program which offers members the opportunity to travel abroad and conduct research resulting in the creation of new progressive curriculum on critical issues.

day thought-provoking meetings were held with different organizations and government representatives, including; Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, Institute for Labour and Social Research, and Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions. Norway's research-based, tripartite approach to natural resource management and prioritization of a strong social welfare system illustrated the benefits of long-term planning and systems thinking.

Throughout this project comparisons and contrasts are made between Canada, Venezuela, and Norway; the common denominator of this atypical cohort is petroleum. Managing the extraction, production, and distribution, of this precious non-renewable resource has a direct and indisputable impact on the ability of a society to be sustainable.



Models of development

The two countries chosen for the project both have distinct models of development. These models offer Canada a variety of options to examine as we move towards a sustainable society.

The two models examined in this project are:

1. The Nordic Model as seen in Norway
2. The Bolivarian Revolution as seen in Venezuela

The Nordic Model

This model of development incorporates free market capitalism and social benefits. These benefits are paid for via taxes and managed by the government for the good of all citizens. This creates a mixed economic system that reduces the gap between the rich and the poor through redistributive taxation and creates a strong public sector while preserving the benefits of capitalism. Norway nationalized their North Sea petroleum resource. This permitted them

to utilize a percentage of the proceeds to enhance and extend their social programs, mainly health and education. Development of the petroleum resource was not dictated by the needs of “quarterly returns on investment,” but rather by the needs of society. The majority of the profits from oil have been placed into a reserve fund, taking the value of the “Natural Bank” and transferring to economic security for future generations.

The Bolivarian Revolution

The “Bolivarian Revolution” refers to a leftist political process and social movement in Venezuela initiated by late Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez. The “Bolivarian Revolution” (named after Simón Bolívar, an early 19th-century Venezuelan and Latin American revolutionary leader) seeks to create a mass movement to realise Bolivarianism (popular democracy, economic independence, equitable distribution of revenues, and an end to political corruption)

in Venezuela. This policy (Chavismo) has nationalized several key industries, including the petroleum industry, with the proceeds from such development intended for improving health care and education, reducing poverty, and improving the literacy of the population. Chavismo policies include nationalization, social welfare programs (Bolivarian Missions), and opposition to neoliberalism (particularly the policies of the IMF and the World Bank).

Both Norway and Venezuela used their petroleum resource for the benefit of society but with differing impacts on social sustainability. This is in contrast to the North American approach where development of the petroleum resource does not consider

long term social, environmental or economic sustainability, but instead prioritizes maximizing return on investment. Interestingly, the idea of using the profits from oil for the benefit of society originated in Canada.

The Canadian Model that never was

Both Alberta and Norway began extracting oil in the early 1970s. Since then Alberta has extracted approximately 54 billion barrels to Norway’s 38 billion barrels. In 1976, the Premier of Alberta at the time, Peter Lougheed, created the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, and began depositing 30 per cent of oil royalties. Lougheed hoped to diversify the province’s economy and devoted much of the funds to hospitals, education and rail transport for grain. However, when oil prices sank and provincial revenues dropped Alberta stopped adding new royalty money to the Heritage Fund. In the mid-1990s, the province created general revenue by withdrawing yearly investment income from the fund. Alberta turned management of the fund over to the new Alberta

Investment Management Corp. in 2008.

Norway hoped to build a domestic oil industry in 1972 with the creation of Statoil, which is now the 10th-largest oil company in the world, and still 67 per cent state-owned. In 1990, Norway created the Petroleum Fund, based on the model of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust, and began depositing tax and licensing revenues from private oil companies, as well as the interest and dividends from Statoil. Now known as the Government Pension Fund Global, it is currently the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund and is valued at 7300 billion Kroners or approximately \$1.2 trillion Canadian Dollars. In contrast, as of March 31, 2015, the Alberta Heritage Fund’s assets had fair market value of \$17.9 billion.

The curriculum

Initially conceptualizing of what this project would look like proved challenging for the team. Determining all the factors which compose a sustainable society was no easy task. However, the vision of empowering students with the knowledge that there is another path to choose was the primary driving force. Poverty and environmental degradation are not inevitable if we embrace sustainable lifestyles and demand sustainable policies.

The lessons in this project have been organized into four units which conceptually build on each other, but also work as stand-alone lessons. Students will engage in a range of independent and collaborative activities. All lessons were designed using the inquiry model to facilitate intellectual curiosity and critical thinking, in-line with recent Ontario curriculum revisions.

Unit 1: Introduction to sustainability

The concept of sustainability encompasses multiple intersecting elements. Positionality and location are fundamental ideas in sustainability discourse. Acknowledging our place on planet earth is a necessary starting point. Introductory discussions about non-renewable resources and our fixation with economic growth are also essential.

Unit 2: Individual choices

What difference can I make? This is not an uncommon teenage sentiment. Youth and adults alike need practical avenues to live more sustainably and contribute to making society more sustainable. Individually reflecting consumption habits and food choices provides opportunity to consider possible changes that contribute to a sustainable lifestyle.

Unit 3: Community choices

Taking a step outside of oneself and investigating how decisions are made in society is a step toward freedom, autonomy, justice, and sustainability. Finding a voice through participation in the democratic process or artistic expression allows citizens to raise awareness in the public sphere; increasing transparency of government actions at the local and national level.

Unit 4: System choices

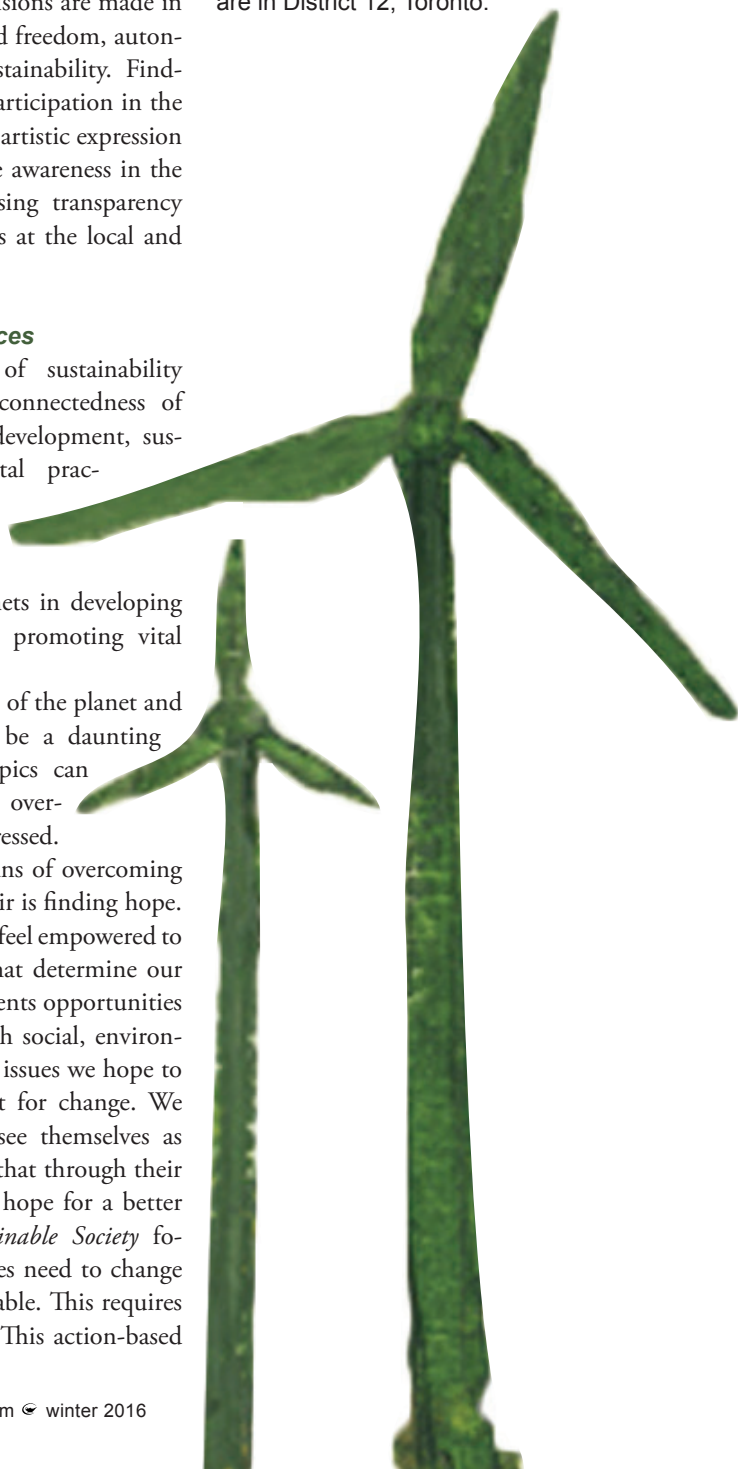
The big picture of sustainability illuminates the interconnectedness of sustainable resource development, sustainable environmental practices, and sustainable economies, as explicitly clear equally important tenets in developing a sustainable society, promoting vital systems thinking.

Examining the state of the planet and its environment can be a daunting task. Often these topics can leave students feeling overwhelmed and depressed. One of the main means of overcoming these feelings of despair is finding hope. It is vital that students feel empowered to change the systems that determine our future. By giving students opportunities to actively engage with social, environmental and economic issues we hope to empower them to act for change. We hope that they will see themselves as agents of change and that through their actions they can find hope for a better tomorrow. *The Sustainable Society* focuses on how countries need to change in order to be sustainable. This requires a change in mindset. This action-based

project is designed to give hope to both teachers and students. Students need to think for sustainability today, we all do.

The interdisciplinary Common Threads *The Sustainable Society* curriculum package will be available to teachers in 2016. You will be able to find the resource information at: www.osstf.on.ca/common-threads-sustainable-society.

Taina Kanerva is a teacher at RH King Academy and **Alison Rimell** is a teacher at Dr Norman Bethune CI, both are in District 12, Toronto.



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Eldon House

A step back in time



Many of us have a childhood memory of playing hide-and-seek in, what may have seemed to have been, a humongous home. The many rooms and areas one had to choose from seemed endless and so intriguing. Relive that feeling or experience the joy for the first time with a visit to Eldon House in London, ON.

Eldon House, built in 1834, is an historic site in downtown London that has been preserved and maintained since 1960 when it was donated to the city. This grandiose home, lived in by four generations of the Harris family, is a prime example of Georgian and Regency architectural styles. It is surrounded by what many consider to be the most beautiful gardens in the city. Inside, it contains family heirlooms, furnishings and priceless treasures of the Harris family.

Through many of its offered tours, children's programs, workshops, tea programs, special events, lectures and walking tours, one can explore rarely seen sections of Eldon House and its carriage house. Participants, are guided through nooks and crannies including attics and cellars by an expert historical interpreter.

Eldon House also offers a wide variety of education programs available for students of various levels including ESL, throughout the school year. These include interactive art tours, custom education, hands-on studio experiences and curriculum-based historical programs.

One of its latest school programs for secondary students is *Eldon House: The Homefront in WWI* (Grades 9 and 10). This program can be used in

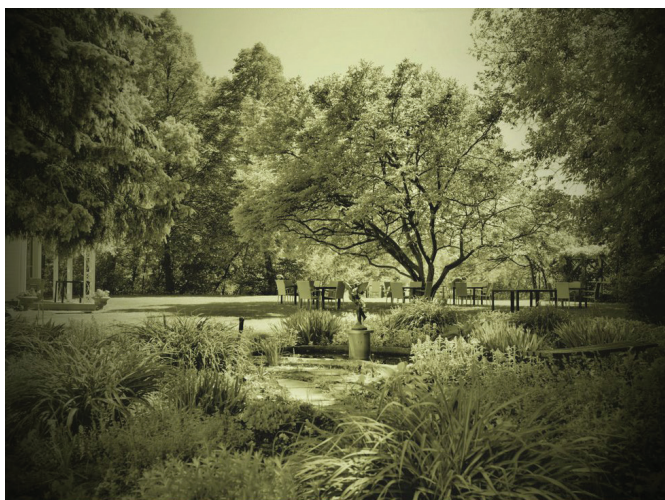
conjunction with the Ontario curriculum and its course *Canadian World Studies—Canadian History Since World War I*, Grade 10.

During this 90-minute program, students learn about the home front during the Great War and the Harris family involvement in the military. This program features artifacts from the war and a focus on the hardships experienced by women and families on the home front. Also included, is a tour of Eldon House as well as student-directed activities supported by information on five distinct themes.

Another program offered at the secondary level is *From the Victorian to the Modern: Canadian History since WWI* (Grade 10). This program focuses on the history of Eldon House and the Harris Family in the 20th century. The involvement of the Harris Family in the First World War, technological change in the 1920s and 1930s, and the impact of immigration, are explored through a series of artifacts and archival materials. The large forces of history in the 20th century are personalized through the experiences of London's Harris family. This is also 90-minutes, and includes a tour of Eldon House and interaction with hands on artifacts.

Lastly, the *Art Tour: The Eldon House Collection* provides students with an in depth tour of Eldon House artworks, crafts and furniture.

For more information on what Eldon House has to offer or to book a program or tour please call 519.661.5169 or visit www.eldonhouse.ca.



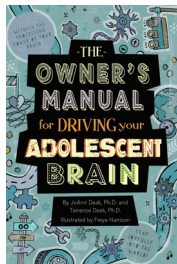


Facing page (l-r): Eldon House West gardens and Eldon House Morning Room detail. Above (c): Eldon House Dining Room, Eldon House at sunset and Eldon House Green Bedroom.

Photos: Courtesy of Eldon House Heritage Site

Top picks

Reviews



The Owner's Manual for Driving Your Adolescent Brain

By JoAnn and Terrence Deak, Ph.D
Illustrator Freya Harrison
Little Pickle Press, United States, 2013
71 pages, \$15.95 (paper), \$4.99 (eBook)
Reviewed by Nanci Henderson

The first draw for any reader of this owner's manual of the brain by Drs. JoAnne and Terrence Deak are illustrator Freya Harrison's fun, stylistic and colourful graphics. *The Owner's Manual for Driving Your Adolescent Brain* attempts to distill the basics of developmental neuroscience into digestible tidbits for curious teenagers.

While the concept and layout of the book are appropriate, this is a text to be studied in consultation with a Special Education, Family Studies or Psychology teacher rather than an accessible resource for the self-directed teen learner. The introduction acknowledges the complexity of adolescence and promises to help teens "interpret all the warning signs and prevent problems down the road." However the bulk of the text would require a classroom teacher's skill-set to make the brain's anatomy and processes understandable and relevant for most students.

There are a few quick experiments for readers to test their brains, as well as explanations about how hormones, emotions and sleep hamper or enhance brain development. There are as many eye-catching subheadings scattered throughout this resource as there are pieces of folksy advice. The tone seam-

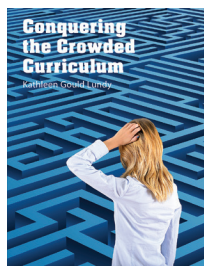
lessly merges hip scientist with caring adult. The overarching message is that if you take the classic advice from adults—get sleep, persist through challenges, be patient and be careful with alcohol and drugs—you will probably get through adolescence intact. The advice is nicely dressed up with neuroscience and an easy glossary of terms.

Is it a must read? No. Is it a fun text to share in a Learning Strategies, Parenting or Introduction to Psychology? Absolutely!

Nanci Henderson is a teacher at Cameron Heights CI in District 24, Waterloo and is a member of the provincial Communications/Political Action Committee.

Conquering the Crowded Curriculum

By Kathleen Gould Lundy
Pembroke Publishers
128 pages, \$24.95 (paper), \$21.95 (eBook), \$34.95 (paper & eBook)
Reviewed by Vanessa Woodacre



A measure of a good book, is would I pick it up again? The answer is a resounding yes to *Conquering the Crowded Curriculum*. I suspect that most teachers would use and refer to this book much as they would a teacher mentor. It contains an excellent blend of simplified theory put into practical hands-on, easy to follow ideas. It is reflective of current educational pedagogy and comments on a wide range of panel experiences.

Conquering the Crowded Curriculum begins with how to build inclusive communities in a way you may have not considered. It also discusses promoting student identities, taking the same risks as educators that we ask of students, building inquiry based learners and in-

tegrating curriculum-using themes. It is a practical guide, designed to shrink the curriculum into ways one can integrate into daily practice. It is designed with thoughtful and well-researched practices, reduced into sound bite sized pieces for a busy educator.

Find your passion for teaching again by exploring some new ideas and putting them directly into practice. This is an excellent book that can be applied to any subject teaching area.

Vanessa Woodacre is a member of District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge and is a teacher in a Section 23 classroom.

The Reason You Walk: A Memoir

By Wab Kinew
Viking, Penguin Random House
Canada Books Inc, 2015
273 288 pages, \$25.00 (hardcover), \$4.99 (eBook)
Reviewed by Nanci Henderson

The metaphor implicit in the title of Wab Kinew's inaugural biography *The Reason You Walk: A Memoir* encompasses both the literal, as well as the spiritual aspects of one Aboriginal family's journey towards healing.

The timing of the book's release, within the context of the December 2015 final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, illustrates the generational damage caused by the residential school system. This system that Kinew terms "a large-scale experiment in social engineering" designed to "kill the Indian in the child" has paradoxically given rise to his family's activism and empowerment in ensuring that the Anishinaabeg language, customs, culture and voice are protected for generations to come. Kinew effectively accounts his father's life before, during and after residential school, emphasizing his father's process of healing and reconciliation both of his Aboriginal and Catholic identities.

This is a narrative of survival and forgiveness. It is hopeful and ripe with irony. Simultaneously, Kinew weaves his own journey through rebellion, addiction and empowerment into his father's experiences, helping to depict for others



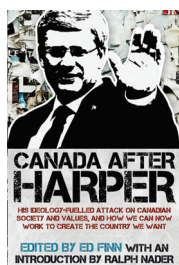
how the generations grapple with, explore and move forward from their pasts.

This is an optimistic love story devoid of cynicism. Kinew helps us all feel more comfortable addressing the complexity of our shared history by inviting the reader into his culture and worldview, so that we may participate in evolving our shared society together with more understanding.

Nanci Henderson is a teacher at Cameron Heights CI in District 24, Waterloo and is a member of the provincial Communications/Political Action Committee.

Canada after Harper: His ideology-fuelled attack on Canadian society and values, and how we can now work to create the country we want

Edited by Ed Finn,
Introduction by Ralph Nader
Lorimer; First Edition edition
(Aug. 13 2015)
400 pages, \$22.95 (paper),
\$16.95 (ebook)
Reviewed by Ryan Kelly



Canada after Harper is, as the book's subtitle says, a compilation of essays dedicated to Stephen Harper's "ideology-fuelled attack on Canadian society and values, and how we can resist and create the country we want."

Is this a relevant book in the wake

of our post-Harper era? Most certainly. Perhaps even more so now that Canada's new government is one with a rich history of dubious, neoliberal policy and practice. Edited by journalist and storied socialist Ed Finn, and with introduction by Ralph Nader, *Canada after Harper* reads as both a caution toward the increasing similarity between American and Canadian politics, while defining a model of best practices in governance toward everything from the exercise of democracy to stable social policy. And as such, this is a resounding success.

A book of four parts, *Canada after Harper* delineates our path to democratic rejuvenation by the environment, the economy, social issues, and government and politics. Contributors include ex-parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page, David Suzuki, and many other leading authorities that fight for a Canada that has nonetheless become '...less egalitarian, less socially progressive, and less environmentally protective.'—a decline that tells a national history where income and social inequality have increased as a direct result of government-led policy designed to benefit very few. While the Canadian identity under Harper has changed considerably from one that was more respected in the global community, social democracy in Canada is poised to recover in many meaningful ways. This is in large part due to the work of those featured in this book. Replete with many thoughtful contributions, the reader is provided with a clear and affective path forward. In a universe where history forever seems to repeat itself, this book is timely, engaging, and highly relevant. As much a collection of essays as it is a toolbox, readers are provided everything necessary to navigate the path from passivism to activism.

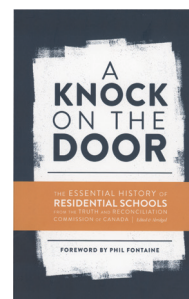
Ryan Kelly is a teacher in District 13, Durham and a long-time labour activist.

A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

By National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

University of Manitoba Press (2016)
274 pages, \$17.95
Reviewed by Gary Fenn

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) gave us, as Canadians, the unique opportunity to bring together the collective stories and experiences of Canada's indigenous peoples in the Indian Residential School System. *A Knock on the Door* gives us a small sampling of the often horrible experiences as told by residential school survivors.



While this could serve as an essential textbook on the history of Canada's residential schools, it goes beyond just the telling of stories; it prompts a very real and necessary discussion about the future, and about hope.

We are asked to consider the legacy of these schools on the many indigenous peoples, which leads us to a greater understanding of the issues that our First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples face today. What does reconciliation mean for all Canadians, indigenous or non-indigenous? To accomplish true reconciliation, we are called to action through an analysis of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are listed and explained.

For educators and students, this is an excellent resource which acts as an abridged version of the final TRC report. However, it is far from a typical textbook or government report. These are stories told by real people who had very real experiences that need to be shared with all Canadians.

Gary Fenn is an Executive Assistant in the Communications/Political Action Department at Provincial Office.

Reconciliation

Not another initiative



OTTAWA, CANADA - DECEMBER 15, 2015: The six-years of work of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners have taken their toll on their families, says chairman Justice Murray Sinclair.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) did something that was long overdue. While it brought together the collective stories of the abuses and cultural genocide that the Indian Residential School System imposed on indigenous peoples, it also brought a message of hope and looking forward. When the final TRC report was delivered in December 2015, Canadians were not told to feel ashamed or carry a heavy burden of guilt for what their government and religious institutions did to indigenous peoples. Instead, we were asked to help move forward and redefine the relationship we have with First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI).

That is reconciliation. We have the truth. The work of the TRC added to the long list of truths that already existed related to our treatment of indigenous peoples since first contact. We now have to move forward to help heal the relationship. And, this will not happen overnight. This will take generations to repair and educators will play a significant role in this process.

When we examine what we have done in enhancing indigenous education in Ontario, we can pat ourselves a little on the back. We have an Aboriginal Education Framework that tasks educators to integrate FNMI content across the curriculum. We have courses in Native Studies and Languages we can offer to students. Lesson plans and resources are now more abundant.

However, if reconciliation is to truly occur over the long term, we need to get over our trepidation of bringing in more

FNMI content into our classrooms. Whether it is our fear of getting it wrong, or claiming that you lack adequate knowledge and understating of FNMI culture and history, we can no longer use those as barriers.

We need to work with our local FNMI communities, include them in the process and build those relationships. As educators, we need to shift away from the paternalistic paradigm and build partnerships. This will take the support of government resources, FNMI communities and a willingness of all parties to set aside the latent distrust of each other that is still palpable in many communities. No one said it would be easy.

This is not some initiative that will be here today, gone tomorrow. This is not something that requires one-time funding or short-term attention. This must be a sustained effort to be inclusive of indigenous peoples in our teachings and work as educators. They are fundamental to the history of Canada as they were here first, the rest of us were immigrants one time or another. Their history and their stories come from here, not from some other far-off land. They are our fellow Canadians and our partners moving forward.

Gary Fenn is an Executive Assistant in the Communications/Political Action Department at Provincial Office and is the staff liaison to the First Nations, Métis, Inuit Advisory Work Group.

La réconciliation

Pas une autre initiative

La Commission de vérité et réconciliation du Canada (CVR) a réalisé quelque chose qui s'imposait depuis longtemps. Bien qu'elle ait réuni les témoignages collectifs d'abus et de génocide culturel qu'a imposé le système des pensionnats indiens à nos peuples autochtones, elle a également transmis un message d'espoir et d'avenir. Lors du dépôt du rapport final de la CVR en décembre 2015, on n'a pas dit aux Canadiennes et Canadiens d'éprouver de la honte et de porter le poids énorme de la culpabilité pour ce qu'ont fait leur gouvernement et les établissements religieux au peuple autochtone. On nous a plutôt demandé d'aider à aller de l'avant et à redéfinir la relation que nous avons avec les Premières Nations, Métis et Inuits (PNMI).

C'est la réconciliation. Nous avons la vérité. Le travail de la CVR est venu s'ajouter à la longue liste de vérités déjà existantes liées à la manière dont nous traitons les peuples autochtones depuis le contact initial. Nous devons maintenant avancer pour aider à restaurer la relation. Et cela ne se fera pas du jour au lendemain. Il nous faudra plusieurs générations pour y arriver et le personnel en éducation jouera un rôle essentiel dans ce processus.

Lorsque nous regardons ce que nous avons fait en Ontario pour améliorer l'éducation des Autochtones, nous pouvons nous en féliciter. Nous avons un cadre d'éducation autochtone qui charge le personnel en éducation d'intégrer du contenu des Premières Nations, des Métis et des Inuits (PNMI) dans tous les programmes scolaires. Nous avons des cours d'études et de langues autochtones que nous pouvons offrir aux élèves. Les plans de leçons et les ressources sont actuellement plus nombreux.

Toutefois, si la réconciliation devait réellement se réaliser

à long terme, nous devons surmonter notre appréhension à l'ajout de plus de contenu des PNMI dans nos classes. Que ce soit par crainte de commettre des erreurs ou en affirmant que nous n'avons pas les connaissances ni la compréhension adéquate de la culture et de l'histoire des PNMI, on ne peut désormais plus avoir recours à ces obstacles.

Nous devons collaborer avec nos communautés locales des PNMI, les inclure dans le processus et établir ces relations. En tant qu'éducateurs, nous devons délaisser le concept paternaliste et créer des partenariats. Il nous faudra l'appui des ressources gouvernementales, des communautés des PNMI et la volonté de toutes les parties de mettre de côté la méfiance latente les uns vis-à-vis des autres qui se fait toujours sentir dans plusieurs communautés. Personne n'a dit que ce serait facile.

Il ne s'agit pas d'une quelconque initiative existante aujourd'hui, mais disparue demain. Ce n'est pas quelque chose qui nécessite un financement unique ou une attention à court terme. Il faut consentir à un effort soutenu pour inclure les Autochtones dans notre enseignement et notre travail en tant qu'éducateurs. Ils revêtent une importance dans l'histoire du Canada, car ils étaient les premiers peuples; tous les autres, nous étions immigrants à un moment ou à un autre. Leur histoire et leurs témoignages sont d'ici et non pas d'un pays lointain. Ils sont nos compatriotes et nos partenaires dans l'avancement.

Gary Fenn est adjoint exécutif au Secteur des communications/action politique du Bureau provincial et assure la liaison auprès du Groupe de travail consultatif des Premières Nations, Métis et Inuits.

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readership to include an **ONLINE** version of THE magazine.

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Events

Conferences, PD opportunities and other items of interest

April 24–26, 2016

**40 Years of Achieving Excellence:
Celebrating in the Capital!
The Westin, Ottawa, ON**

The Ontario Cooperative Education Association will be hosting their annual conference in Ottawa this year. The event will include an “unpacking” of the Community-Connected Experiential Learning Policy Framework. For more information visit: www.ocea.on.ca.

April 27, 2016

**Sixth Annual Collaborative State of
Mind Conference
Mississauga Grand,
Mississauga, ON**

“Starting with the ‘self’: Self-regulation for the adults who care for children & youth” is the theme of this conference hosted by the Peel Children and Youth Initiative. This conference is suitable for adults who work with children or youth in education or social services and who are interested greater collaboration with those facing mental health issues. For more information visit: www.pcyi.org/csomc.

May 12–13, 2016

**OFSAA Women’s Sport School
Durham College, Oshawa, ON**

“The Women’s Sport School is a professional development conference that brings together teacher-coaches from across the province to share ideas and get motivated. The program encompasses a wide variety of sessions for both curricular and co-curricular programs with sessions geared to high school and middle school teachers. The aim of the Women’s Sport School is to increase participants’ knowledge in several areas of school sport, expose them to new/unconventional sports, teaching methods, as well as provide opportuni-

ties for discussion groups with peers. This is an affordable professional development opportunity that should not be missed!”

May 13, 2016

**EcoLinks Conference
Terra Cotta, ON**

Attend hands-on workshops by educators, for educators. Build new skills to engage students in Environmental Education. Network and have fun outside with like-minded professionals. This event are open to outdoor & environmental educators, ECEs, administrators, homeschoolers and any teachers (K-12) wanting to integrate environmental content. For more information visit: www.home.osee.ca.

June 3, 2016

**Growing ECE Access and Quality:
Opportunities and Challenges
George Brown College, Toronto, ON**

The Summer Institute is an annual collaboration between the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College and the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto. The Institute strives to offer timely information to inform research, policy and practice. As Canada embarks on a new early years strategy, the Institute looks at the conflict between increasing access to early childhood programs while maintaining quality. For more information visit: www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/Events

June 3, 2016

**OSLA Voice Conference
BMO Institute for Learning,
Toronto, ON**

This Voice Therapy Conference is designed to be a practical professional development opportunity. Content will range from introductory to advanced levels and will cover a wide range of topics that have been most frequently requested by OSLA members. This conference will offer a one-of-a-kind educational experience, invaluable networking opportunities, and connection to a wide range of exhibitors relevant

to the field. For more information visit: www.osla.on.ca.

June 5–7, 2016

**2016 ECNO Conference
Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston, ON**

Registration for the Educational Computing Network of Ontario’s conference opens Monday March 7. This year’s theme, “Pushing Change,” speaks to the realities of keeping current with the extraordinary pace of technology evolution. Featured guests will include David Usher. For more information visit: www.ecnoconference.com.

October 21–23, 2016

**46th Annual CODE Conference
White Oaks Resort,
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON**

The theme for this year’s Council of Drama and Dance Educator’s conference is “Pick Your Own Path.” Workshops will demonstrate the use of drama and dance as powerful means for teachers to use inquiry with students at all levels. For more information visit: www.codeconferences.ca.

November 6–8, 2016

**Ontario School Counsellor
Association Conference
International Plaza Hotel and
Conference Centre, Toronto, ON**

With this year’s theme, “The Connected Counsellor,” OSCA is striving to highlight the many connections counsellors need to support students. OSCA is currently accepting a call for presenters with a deadline for submissions of April 30, 2016. For more information visit: www.oscaconference.ca.

November 20–21, 2016

**Higher Education Summit
Sheraton Centre, Toronto, ON**

Hosted by Colleges Ontario, the Higher Education Summit explores the major issues of the day and the challenges facing educators, governments, business leaders and others. Featured speakers will include American political economist Robert B. Reich and outdoor adventure athlete Will Gadd. For information visit: highereducationsummit.ca.



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TIP 2



**You need
insurance**

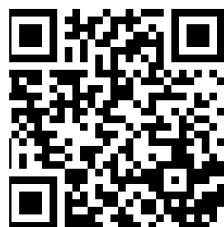
Healthcare needs in retirement are unpredictable. On a fixed income, it's important to have a comprehensive group insurance plan like RTO/ERO offers to cover unexpected costs.

TIP 3



**Get expert advice
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