

education forum

*The student's name and pronouns
are protected under the Ontario Human Rights Act.*

Gender is a spectrum.

The most important thing is to support the student in their transition.

*But many kids don't have parental support,
so school is the only safe place where they feel safe.*

Its access to the bathrooms.

I was struggling with depression.

I needed necessary paperwork for a legal name change.

I received a lot of harassment in that job.

I was in the comments section of my midterm report card.

They really struggled to accept this.

But in that small gesture, she made a huge impact.

I was not going to let a sign on a door dictate where my masculinity ends or begins.

I was afraid every time I went to the bathroom that something would happen.

And I realized, without a doubt, that this is who I really was on the inside.

In grade 9, I realized that I was still miserable and really uncomfortable in my own skin.

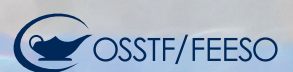
Vincent has a smile that could light up a room.

We did not feel safe in the school cafeteria.

I was met with a lot of hostility from teachers and from students.

VINCENT'S STORY

**Supporting trans youth
in our schools**



TeachersLife™

Scholarships

Supporting the next generation of professionals.

We're helping turn career aspirations into reality with our scholarships. As a Teachers Life policyholder, your children or grandchildren may be eligible.

**Apply by
May 31, 2018**



Hall & Hall Education Award

\$3,000 per year for those entering the 2 year Faculty of Education program.

Log in and apply at:

TeachersLife.com/Scholarships



Contents

winter 2018, vol. 44, issue 2



Departments

- 4 From the Editor/Mot du rédacteur en chef
- 36 Beyond the classroom
- 38 Top picks
- 40 Last Word/Mot de la fin
- 42 Events

Articles

- 7 **Professional Student Services Personnel**
School-based supports for educators and struggling students
by Kate Davidson
- 9 **The attack on pensions**
Retirement security must become a reality for all
by Susan Rab
- 11 **Navigating a post-truth world**
News, fakery and the threat to democracy
by Jason Bremner

Features

- 14 **The Elmira Life and Work Skills Program**
by Janice Harper
- 20 **Vincent's story/L'histoire de Vincent**
by/par Sue Melville
- 30 **Performance appraisal**
by Chantal Mancini

education
forum

Editor Michael Young **Managing Editor/Art Direction & Layout** Ronda Allan **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, osstf.on.ca. Published tri-annually. Advertising rates listed on the website at education-forum.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.



Printed in Canada by union labour



Canadian
Educational
Press
Association
Association
canadienne
de la presse
éducative



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF
LABOUR MEDIA



MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C014584

Tell us a story

In search of the personal perspective



It has been just over a year since I assumed the role of editor at *Education Forum*. Over the course of that year, I have spent a lot of time thinking about how the ideas for our features and articles come about, and what we can do to ensure that we are always exploring fresh topics that our readers will want to explore too.

About half of the articles we publish in *Education Forum* grow out of ideas generated by our editorial board or other members of the team at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office. Sometimes those articles are written by members of Provincial Office staff, and sometimes we approach an OSSTF/FEESO member who we think might be interested in writing about the topic we'd like to see covered.

Occasionally we engage a writer from outside of OSSTF/FEESO. Sometimes we turn to a seasoned freelancer who can approach a topic in a journalistic manner through research and interviews with key players and experts, and some-

times we approach academics or others with appropriate knowledge and expertise, who can write authoritatively about the topic we want to explore.

As for the rest of the stories that appear in the pages of *Education Forum*, almost all of them are proposed and written by individual OSSTF/FEESO members who approach us with ideas they feel would be of interest to our readership. Most of the time these articles are proposed by members with whom I or one of my colleagues at Provincial Office have at least occasional, if not regular, interaction. Typically, these members are local leaders and/or members of provincial committees. In other words, members who are actively engaged and well-versed in various education or labour issues from a Federation point of view. They have the experience and the desire to examine those issues thoughtfully and critically, and they almost invariably deliver engaging articles that provide keen insights valuable to all OSSTF/FEESO members, as well as other readers of *Education Forum*.

One thing I have come to realize over this past year, however, is that some of the most compelling member-authored articles in *Education Forum* have been those with a more personal flavour. I'm thinking of stories that are in some way informed by the author's own distinctive experience—perhaps an experience with a particular issue or challenge they've confronted in the classroom, a community initiative that they or their colleagues have undertaken, or a unique project that they've been involved with. A number of relatively recent articles come to mind. Kristine Klassen's (District 25,

Ottawa-Carleton) "Talking with Teens about Hate," in the Spring 2017 issue, explores the author's discussions with her students following the Quebec City mosque shooting. In the same issue, Krista McCracken (District 35, Universities) gives us "Sharing, Healing and Learning," about the unique work of the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre at Algoma University, where Krista is the Centre's researcher/curator. "Water Warriors," by Diane Ballantyne (District 18, Upper Grand), in the Fall 2017 issue, tells us about OSSTF/FEESO members and others involved in the struggle to save groundwater in Wellington county from private corporate interests. And in the current issue, Sue Melville (District 3, Rainbow) tells us about the extraordinary journey of a former student who is now a powerful advocate for the transgender community in his region.

These are just a few recent examples of engaging articles written from the personal perspectives of individual OSSTF/FEESO members. In a federation comprised of 60,000 members, there must be hundreds of equally compelling stories, and we'd love to publish more of them. But the first step is to find out where those stories are hiding. If you think you have a unique story that would be of interest to *Education Forum's* readership, or even if you'd like to try your hand at exploring a broader education-related issue from a less personal perspective, we're always interested in adding new and distinct voices to the magazine. Please consider getting in touch to talk about your ideas.

Michael Young, Editor
editor@education-forum.ca

Racontez-nous une histoire

À la recherche de la perspective personnelle

Il y a un peu plus d'un an que j'occupe le poste de rédacteur en chef d'*Education Forum*. Pendant cette année, j'ai passé beaucoup de temps à réfléchir sur la façon dont naissent nos idées d'articles vedettes et de reportages et sur ce que nous pourrions faire pour nous assurer que nous examinons toujours de nouveaux thèmes que nos lecteurs voudront aussi explorer avec nous.

Environ la moitié des articles que nous publions dans *Education Forum* viennent d'idées engendrées par notre conseil de rédaction ou d'autres membres de l'équipe du Bureau provincial d'OSSTF/FEESO. Ces articles sont parfois rédigés par des membres du personnel du Bureau provincial et nous approchons parfois des membres d'OSSTF/FEESO qui souhaiterait écrire sur un sujet que nous aimerions couvrir.

Nous faisons occasionnellement appel à un rédacteur à l'extérieur d'OSSTF/FEESO. Nous nous tournons parfois vers un rédacteur pigiste chevronné qui est capable de se pencher sur un thème de façon journalistique en se basant sur des recherches et des entrevues avec des acteurs clés et des experts et, à l'occasion, nous demandons à des chercheurs ou à d'autres personnes possédant les connaissances et l'expertise appropriées et qui savent écrire avec autorité sur le sujet que nous voulons explorer.

Quant aux autres histoires qui sont publiées dans *Education Forum*, elles sont presque toutes proposées et écrites par des membres individuels d'OSSTF/FEESO qui s'adressent à nous avec des idées qui, selon eux, intéresseraient

les lecteurs. La majorité de ces articles nous sont proposés par des membres avec lesquels moi-même ou un de mes collègues du Bureau provincial, avons au moins une interaction occasionnelle sinon régulière. Ces membres sont généralement des dirigeants locaux et (ou) des membres de comités provinciaux. Autrement dit, des membres activement engagés et bien informés sur divers enjeux relatifs à l'éducation et au travail du point de vue de la Fédération. Ils possèdent l'expérience et ont envie d'examiner ces problèmes de façon réfléchie et critique et ils fournissent toujours des articles engageants et qui donnent des connaissances approfondies utiles à tous les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO ainsi qu'aux autres lecteurs d'*Education Forum*.

Cependant, si je me suis rendu compte d'une chose pendant cette dernière année, c'est que certains des articles les plus convaincants d'*Education Forum* rédigés par des membres sont ceux qui ont une saveur plus personnelle. Je pense à des histoires qui reposent sur la propre expérience de l'auteur, possiblement sur l'expérience d'un problème particulier ou d'un défi auquel il a dû faire face dans la salle de classe, à une initiative communautaire qu'il ou que ses collègues ont entrepris, ou à un projet unique auquel ils ont participé. Un bon nombre d'articles récents me viennent à l'esprit. « *Talking with Teens about Hate* » de Kristine Klassen (District 25, Ottawa-Carleton), dans le numéro du printemps 2017, examine les discussions entre l'auteure et ses élèves suite à la fusillade dans une mosquée de la ville de Québec. Dans le même

numéro, Krista McCracken (District 35, Universités) nous donne « *Sharing, Healing and Learning* », sur le travail unique du Centre résidentiel scolaire de Shingwauk à l'Université d'Algoma où Krista est la chercheuse/conservatrice. « *Water Warriors* » de Diane Ballantyne (District 18, Upper Grand), dans le numéro de l'automne 2017, nous parle de membres d'OSSTF/FEESO et d'autres qui se sont impliqués dans la lutte contre les intérêts des entreprises privées pour la conservation des eaux souterraines dans le comté de Wellington. Et dans le présent numéro, Sue Melville (District 3, Rainbow) nous parle du parcours extraordinaire d'un élève qui est maintenant un puissant défenseur des droits de la communauté transgenre dans sa région.

Ce ne sont que quelques exemples d'articles captivants écrits du point de vue personnel de membres d'OSSTF/FEESO. Une Fédération qui représente 60 000 membres doit certainement avoir des centaines d'histoires fascinantes et nous aimerions en publier davantage. Mais le premier pas est de trouver où sont cachées ces histoires. Si vous croyez avoir une histoire unique qui serait pourvue d'intérêt pour le lectorat d'*Education Forum*, ou même si vous aimeriez essayer d'explorer une perspective moins personnelle comme un enjeu plus général relié à l'éducation, nous accordons toujours une grande importance à ajouter de nouvelles voix distinctes à notre revue. Pensez à communiquer avec nous pour discuter de vos idées.

Michael Young, rédacteur en chef
editor@education-forum.ca



PUBLIC EDUCATION it's for everyone



JUNE 7, 2018 IS THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION
MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT

Our full education platform is available on the OSSTF/FEESO website (osstf.on.ca)

Professional Student Services Personnel

School-based supports for educators and struggling students



Chris was 16 years old when I met him. He had a few credits, but he was far behind where he should have been at that point in his secondary school career. He was disengaged from school, often skipping classes, seeming not to care about his lack of progress, feeling no connection at all to the school. Showing little regard for others, he would walk brazenly through a gym class looking for his friend, take very long breaks to go to the washroom, or stroll casually into class after smoking pot behind the school.

Chris was referred to me for a psychoeducational assessment to determine why he was struggling. It turned out that he had a Mild Intellectual Disability and had been well-supported through his elementary years by the structure and accommodations available in that setting. As a result of the assessment, the school team was able to identify a placement for Chris in a

vocational program. He began to study a trade, and he thrived in that setting. Not only did he reengage with school, but returned to his home school to tell others about the program, enthusiastically suggesting that they, too, should get an assessment so they could transfer to his new school.

Michael is a 17-year-old student faced with an entirely different set of challenges. Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder at the more severe end of the continuum, he has not developed language and he communicates mostly through vocalizations and nonverbal methods. As you can imagine, this often leads to frustration as he struggles to clearly communicate his basic needs and feelings. When he does not feel understood, or when his needs are not being met, Michael tends to lash out physically at staff who are nearby.

To address the problem, Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP)

staff have provided expert advice and support to help the classroom teacher and educational assistants learn a variety of appropriate strategies to support Michael. For example, Psychoeducational Consultants provided training in ways for teachers and EAs to de-escalate tense situations, and to keep themselves, as well as Michael and his classmates, physically safe when he becomes frustrated and potentially violent. The school's Speech-Language Pathologist continues to consult with staff and review Michael's program in an ongoing effort to help improve his communication skills. Technology is also being utilized to help Michael communicate, and the school's Social Worker has helped connect his family to community resources.

These are only two examples of the thousands of situations across the province where PSSP staff have been able to provide crucial assistance to students

Artwork: Ronda Allan

who need it, as well as to the teachers and other staff who work with those students on a regular basis.

Within OSSTF/FEESO, the PSSP group is comprised of 38 job classes, all focussed on students who require help beyond what can be provided in the classroom. PSSP play a central role in supporting students with learning needs, mental health issues, challenging life events such as the death of a parent, difficulty with speech articulation, and a variety of other struggles. There are a number of ways in which these issues manifest for students, such as violence toward peers and school staff, absenteeism, withdrawal from social settings, homelessness, the emergence of psychiatric conditions, and academic difficulties. PSSP supports can be delivered directly to students, but often PSSP consult with educators to support them in helping students.

We frequently hear of the importance of early intervention for students with learning or social/emotional needs, and think of these services as something that's provided in elementary schools. While PSSP do provide a great deal of support to elementary students, they also play a major role in serving secondary students with a variety of needs.

Every school board has different procedures for accessing PSSP services. Teachers who are concerned about a student's progress with learning or their mental health, or who have a student who is specifically asking for help beyond what is currently available in the classroom, should speak to their administrators, a guidance counsellor, or a special education teacher about consulting with PSSP to access additional supports.

There are often cues, which teachers can watch for, that might indicate that a student is dealing with issues that would warrant support from PSSP.

Social/emotional issues

What to watch for: changes in engagement with school or extra curricular activities, seeming to be socially withdrawn, emotional reactions that are disproportionate to an event, cry-

ing easily, avoiding certain situations because of fear or anxiety, or difficulty concentrating. The appearance of physical marks on a student, or a tendency for the student to wear long sleeves and pants to hide such marks, are also strong indicators of social or emotional issues.

Students often connect well with their teachers and feel safe in disclosing personal information about struggles with mood, friendships, or family relationships. Teachers often direct those students to guidance counsellors for support, but students often require more in-depth, ongoing counselling than a guidance counsellor can provide. Some schools have child and youth workers or social workers, who are equipped to provide counselling supports, as part of their onsite staff. Most schools will have access to an itinerant social worker who may see a student once a week or so, for counselling supports, and may also facilitate further supports by linking students and families to community agencies.

Learning and communication difficulties

What to watch for: not accumulating credits, disengaged from school or, conversely, putting in a great deal of time and effort that does not lead to strong results, skipping classes, challenges with speaking clearly or at an appropriate volume, difficulty listening and following oral directions.

PSSP can provide various forms of assessment that will shed light on how a student learns and on the state of their language development, and can deliver recommendations for further support and accommodations. Educators can also benefit from consulting with PSSP around ways to support students' vocabulary development, or around programs to remediate lagging skills. PSSP often participate in transition-planning meetings for students with special needs who are moving schools, or who are transitioning to receiving adult services as they complete high school.

Violence in schools

In the forefront of many educators'

minds right now is the issue of violence in schools. PSSP can provide support around individual students who are exhibiting violent behaviour. They may be able to work with the student and their family to address the issues at the root of the behaviour, or they may work with educators to develop safety plans and provide training to help de-escalate violent situations safely. PSSP may also assume a broader role as part of a larger committee of school board employees, community stakeholders and police, looking at ways to address systemic and community-specific issues that are leading to violence, such as gangs. They can help institute programs at the secondary level to help reduce the incidence of violent acts. By identifying the issues at the secondary level, PSSP can also identify gaps that exist, and can partner with community agencies to fill those gaps for younger students, with the goal of preventing violence in years to come.

Professional development

PSSP are available to provide professional development opportunities to school staff on topics of interest. This may take the form of a lunch and learn session, or a more formal, in-depth session on a professional learning day. If there is a topic of common interest to a number of staff in a school, arrangements can be made through the Guidance Department, the Special Education Department or through an administrator to explore the possibility of inviting PSSP to make a presentation.

When a student's learning difficulties, behavioural problems or mental health challenges require more effort and attention or a different kind of expertise than a classroom educator is able to deliver, PSSP can frequently provide appropriate and effective supports that will significantly improve that student's chances for success.

Kate Davidson is a registered Psychological Associate and Psychoeducational Consultant in District 19, Peel, where she is also the president of the PSSP Bargaining Unit.

The attack on pensions

Retirement security must become a reality for all



When asked how things were going at a holiday get-together, a recently retired Ottawa teacher, quipped that retired life was like “winning the cash for life lottery.” He quickly clarified that it wasn’t a huge amount of money, but just a comfortable, regular cheque to rely on.

After more than three decades of full-time teaching including additional allowances, his pension is in fact better than most in Canada. But he is quick to explain that there really is no lottery. A strong Federation supporter, he recognizes that his pension is part of a hard won compensation package protected by his union. Pension contributions by employees are deferred wages. Contributions by employers are part of our compensation package.

What is perhaps most revealing is that, when asked if his quip could be quoted in a magazine article, the teacher agreed but declined permission to use his name. “People will take it the wrong

way. It’s a touchy subject.” His concerns say a lot about the state of pensions in Canada today.

In fact, we need to talk about pensions. We need to talk a lot. We cannot be complacent.

Because pensions are under attack. Particularly good pensions.

While career teachers—especially full time teachers who achieve their 85 factor—receive a very comfortable pension, this is not the norm in Canada. The average annual pension for the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) members retiring in 2011 was \$28,000, between 30 and 50 per cent of their pre-retirement salary.

According to Statistics Canada 38.1 per cent of all Canadian workers were covered by an employee pension plan in 2014. While plans were evenly split between the public and private sectors, public sector workers were significantly more likely to have defined benefit (DB)

plans, whereas private sector workers held 70 per cent of defined contribution (DC) plans, and that gap is growing. Unlike defined benefit plans like the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan (OTPP) or OMERS, which offer a guaranteed pension at retirement based on years of employment and level of income, defined contribution plans require individuals to choose how their money is invested, and to assume the risk for those investments. This means retirement pensions could vary considerably between employees who have made the very same contribution, based on economic conditions at the time of retirement. Irrespective of these facts, we have all heard politicians and commentators promoting the myth of the “gold-plated” pension plan. A recent Maclean’s editorial even went so far as to blame public sector pensions for ‘income inequity’ in Canada. The editorial highlighted recent rounds of collective bargaining, where both auto work-

Artwork: Ronda Allan

ers and postal workers faced the threat of two-tiered pensions—defined benefit plans for current workers and defined contribution plans for future members—with very different results. And it suggested that the Canadian public should now target the pensions of teachers, firefighters and bureaucrats.

In *The Third Rail: Confronting Our Pension Failures*, co-author Jim Leech, former head of the OTPP, recounts a Russian parable that mirrors the same perverse attitude toward equality as that encouraged by the Maclean's editorial. A farmer, whose best milker has died, is granted one wish by a golden fish. Rather than ask for another cow of comparable quality, the farmer instead asks for the neighbour's cow to be killed. Leech argues that the story is a useful analogy to the current pension debate in Canada. While many Canadians envy what they perceive as gold-plated pensions, some would rather remove retirement security from those who have it than demand better pensions for all.

It does seem, however, that most Canadians do understand the importance of protecting pensions. IPSOS Reid found that more than 90 per cent of Canadians polled agreed that “employers should live up to the commitments they have made to pensioners and employees,” and that “in developing a new pension framework, the federal government should ensure that companies honour the commitments made to pensioners and employees.” As a society we understand the importance of security and predictability in one's retirement years.

The Wealthy Barber author David Chilton popularized the concept of paying yourself first, and every financial advisor will argue that putting aside money each month is the best way to save for the future. In reality, few Canadians are able to, or choose to, save adequately for retirement when left to their own devices.

The beauty of workplace pension contributions is that they are compulsory and happen automatically. The labour movement is fighting hard to ensure that retirement security becomes an expectation, and a reality, for all Canadians. Re-

tirement security was a priority for the Canadian Labour Congress during the 2015 federal election, and union activists continue to work towards a system where no one retires in poverty after a lifetime of work.

The Trudeau government is less committed.

On the one hand, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) celebrated an agreement reached in June 2016 to enhance the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). The mandatory program will raise contributions of employees and employers over the next decade. The changes will benefit younger workers the most. In addition, mechanisms are being implemented to ensure that low-income earners are able to make the additional payments. These changes are important because the CPP covers all workers, whether they have a workplace pension or not. And it is portable for those who change jobs over their career.

On the other hand, Bill C-27, *An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act*, is seen by many as a huge threat to the pension system in Canada. Peter Whitaker, Central Region representative for the National Organization of Retired Postal Workers, believes that Bill C-27 is the most important issue facing unionized workers in Canada today, and that we need to join the discourse as quickly as possible, because big business, the finance industry and the banks are determined to eliminate defined benefit pension plans in Canada.

The legislation would provide federally regulated employers, including Canada Post, as well as rail, air transportation and telecommunication industries, with the possibility of modifying pension obligations through the introduction of targeted benefit pension plans. Like defined contribution plans, targeted benefit plans would shift the risk from employers towards employees. The CLC warns that “Bill C-27 would set an example across the country that other provinces would be invited to follow, giving private and public sector employers the green light to intensify attacks on DB plans in every jurisdiction.” In fact, the province of New Brunswick

has already accepted ‘shared risk’ pension plans. Manitoba and Nova Scotia are considering versions of targeted benefit plans too.

Workers must also be aware of the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (CCAA). Over the past several months, pensioners at Sears have been in the news, fighting to keep the pensions they had earned over the course of their careers. Currently, legislation and the courts favour shareholders over workers when a private company goes bankrupt. Sears employees and retirees are facing a 20 per cent cut in pensions. Private member bills from the Bloc Québécois and NDP aim to create federal legislation to classify pensioners as secured creditors. The Liberals have yet to announce a response. At the Ontario Federation of Labour convention in November 2017, Koskie Minsky LLP presented a workshop that outlined the problems at Sears. The central theme of their presentation was this: The creation and sustainment of defined benefit pensions is “almost entirely due to the trade union movement.”

OMERS and the OTPP are sustainable for the next seventy years, but employers and others are working hard to promote the myth of the unsustainable gold-plated pension plan. OSSTF/FEESO members must not only remain vigilant and ready to fend off attacks on our own pensions, but must also support the efforts of the broader labour movement to ensure that all Canadians have access to good pensions and financial security when they retire.

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



Navigating a post-truth world

News, fakery and the threat to democracy



In my teenage years, I remember reading the *National Enquirer*. Always appetizing, at least on the surface, it was full of big colourful pictures and juicy, sensationalized headlines about any number of celebrity tragedies, social conspiracies or political scandals. I was just learning to ‘consume’ news at this point, and I soon began to make better nutritional choices. I learned that reputable newspapers and broadcasters were available, and the truth never seemed difficult to find. This all happened in a time before the internet changed the way news is cooked up, packaged and then served like fast food to the average social media diner (often before an order is even placed). Media and reporting have been evolving at a pace that is difficult to keep up with, but if one were to examine the recent history of these changes, it may be fair to say that journalism is in its ‘Yellow’ period, i.e. journalism that is “based upon sensationalism and crude

exaggeration” (Oxford Dictionary).

Jump to 2010. The G20 protest in Toronto. I took part in the OSSTF/FEESO group that marched in that protest. I had the opportunity to chat with many different people from all kinds of backgrounds as we walked. One of the people I met was a ‘citizen’ reporter. The Internet in its current state was beginning to challenge the way information was presented, with average people out there capturing stories and presenting them on the web. Armed with digital cameras and web platforms, there were eyes on the ground everywhere at the G20. People were starting to look to other, non-traditional sources to supplement their news diets.

A recent article by Mike Wendling, of BBC Trending, attempts to capture the near history of the term “Fake News” and how it evolved to its current iteration. He recounts how BuzzFeed’s media editor Craig Silverman identified

a number of completely untrue news stories circulating in 2016 during the U.S. presidential election. These stories were written by a group of young people in Macedonia who were taking advantage of social media algorithms to generate profits through advertising hits. Social media algorithms are ostensibly designed to present users with content that they actually want to engage with. At that point in 2016, Facebook’s algorithms, which are constantly changing, would present users with news stories based on how often they had interacted with similar posts, how often they and others had hidden similar posts, and the level of engagement (clickthroughs, likes, shares, etc.) a post had received (AJ Agrawal for Forbes 2016).

When it came to political news stories in 2016, vast numbers of social media users, it seems, could not resist the provocative headlines and unlikely details of stories that supported their own po-

Artwork: Anna Zhyn

litical biases, even if those stories were almost entirely false. And people who reacted positively to this type of article found their Facebook feeds providing them more and more of the same. Consequently, some young Macedonians received a significant financial payoff for creating confusion and facilitating the mass distribution of false information during a presidential election.

From this point, it became clear that there was a susceptibility, and perhaps even a market share, to be exploited among some in the public. The term “Fake News” will soon have a formal dictionary definition: *false news stories,*

Together, post truth politics and fake news have contributed to a modern digital environment that is challenging to navigate, and this presents a number of problems, especially to young people.

Keith Sled, District 29, Hastings-Prince Edward has been teaching English for almost twenty years, and media for fifteen years. He has noticed that students enter the media course with varying levels of skills and abilities. Not everyone understands what advertising is and how it targets people. “Critical thinking skills are key to understanding targeting in ads and the echo chamber of social media.”

appropriate time and support. Sadly, when courses fall victim to declining enrollment, English Media is usually one of the first casualties. If educators are going to be the ones to teach young people how to be vigilant curators of their social media diet, there is a need to provide more support for students at all levels. It is difficult at best to separate fact from fiction when, along with credible sources of information, you are also bombarded with clickbait, fake news and post-truth rhetoric, all presented to you indiscriminately by algorithms designed to give you content that, according to your online history, you are interested in exploring. Online fact-checking resources like Factcheck.org, Snopes.com, and Politifact.com are seeing more and more traffic as discriminating consumers of information struggle to separate truth from fiction.

The very idea that people are actively producing misinformation for mass consumption demands that we consider Thomas Jefferson’s famous quote: “...wherever the people are well informed they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights...” If we passively allow ourselves to become uninformed or misinformed, we erode a key foundation of democracy.

While laws are beginning to appear in some countries to combat fake news, the first line of defense truly is education. We must build a bastion of critical thinking skills and we must learn to check ourselves and teach our students to do the same, as many of them have known no other source for information as vast, imposing and appetizing as the current social media environment.

Jason Bremner is a teacher at Centennial SS in District 29, Hastings-Prince Edward.



often of a sensational nature, created to be widely shared online for the purpose of generating ad revenue via web traffic or discrediting a public figure, political movement, company, etc. (dictionary.com).

And all of this has brought us to what many are calling the post-truth era of politics, an era in which some politicians have realized that, for many voters, verifiable facts have ceased to matter. An era in which even claims that are demonstrably false will be understood to be true if they are simply repeated often enough.

The English Media course seems to be a natural starting point to begin pushing back against fake news. While the units of study in the course have many learning outcomes that could be applied to study fake news and the bubble effect of social media on opinions and attitudes, there is a lot of work to be done in terms of curriculum and resource development. Traditionally, the course has not been taught with this focus in mind, but the tools of the course can be repurposed for the new job, with the



L'ÉDUCATION PUBLIQUE c'est pour tout le monde



LE 7 JUIN 2018, CE SONT LES ÉLECTIONS PROVINCIALES
EXERCEZ VOTRE DROIT DE VOTE

Notre programme complet en matière d'éducation est disponible sur le site Web d'OSSTF/FEESO (osstf.on.ca)



THE ELMIRA LIFE AND WORK SKILLS PROGRAM

Providing high school learning for Mennonite communities

by Janice Harper

If you travel around the countryside in Waterloo Region on a weekday, visiting the St. Jacobs Farmers' Market, stopping at pie stores and woodworking shops, you might wonder about all the teenage workers you encounter, and you may think, "Why aren't these kids in school?" The answer to that question might surprise you: They are in school.

Traditionally, conservative Mennonites stop attending school after Grade 8, leaving formal education at age 14. This is

permitted under Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL) regulations, because the students are participating in a supervised alternative learning experience, often on their own farms.

Perhaps you've had a glass of milk today, or had an apple chip at Starbucks. Maybe you put maple syrup on your pancakes this morning, or you'll use a clove or two of garlic when you prepare pork chops for dinner tonight. You may have warmed up under a quilt after a recent



Artwork: Ronda Allan

sleigh ride. Any one of these products may have been produced by conservative Mennonite teenagers.

Until the 1960s, most conservative Mennonite children attended small one- and two-room public schools in the Waterloo Region countryside. In the mid-1960s the Ministry of Education decided to close those schools and bus students to larger, centralized schools with more facilities, including gymnasiums. These changes had the effect of modernizing the experience of the students, and this was unacceptable for most conservative Mennonite families. It marked the end of their engagement with the public education system.

Sometimes known as the Plain people, conservative Mennonites choose to remain separate from modern society. There are many groups of conservative Mennonites, and while there are differences in specific practices, they are all Christian Anabaptists, named after Menno Simons, a Low Country theological leader from the 16th century.¹

Times, however, have changed since the 1960s, and so have the conservative Mennonite communities. By the early 2000s, even though they wanted to retain a way of life that did not conform to contemporary society, the communities had come to recognize that a high school education was becoming essential. Farms were now multi-million dollar businesses, agricultural land was expensive and scarce, and there was a growing demand for skilled tradespeople. But the community remained extremely reluctant to re-engage in the world of public education. They were afraid of losing their children to a world that did not reflect their quiet, rural, pacifist culture. But more than anything else, they valued the kind of education that could be gained through working. They valued the stewardship of time, and wanted their teenagers to 'learn from doing.' Their needs differed from those of mainstream students. These parents did not want too much 'sitting in the books,' and they did not want their teenagers to be active in the social life of the school, including organized sports and assemblies. They wanted limited access to technology and no sexual

education, and they did not want their teenagers to have to change for physical education classes. But they did want, for the first time ever, an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

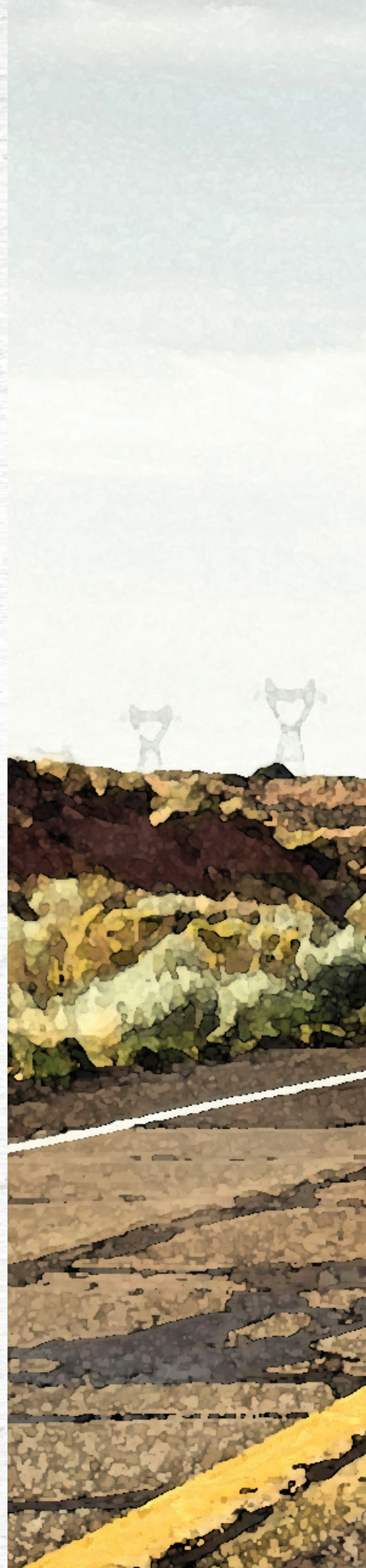
It was in response to this shift that the Elmira Life and Work Skills (ELAWS) program came into being. Through a long process of discussion between teachers, the Waterloo Region District School Board and the Mennonite communities, a timetable was crafted that could accommodate both the conservative Mennonite community and the public school board.

Jeff Martin, who, like several of the teachers, has Mennonite roots himself, is the coordinator of the program. "The program originated from a need in the community," he explains. "We had Mennonite families who saw the value of a high school education, yet at the same time wanted to mentor their children in the home, on the farm or in the workplace."

An alternative program, ELAWS offers a direct route to employment or to community college. All courses are at the applied level, a decision made by educators, together with the parents, as college is acceptable for practical career choices, such as being an electrician or a registered nursing assistant.

ELAWS now serves about 100 students from Grade 9 to 12. It is staffed by four full-time and several subject specialist teachers whose subjects might include, for example, green industries and accounting. Ken Reid teaches co-op, a variety of English courses, history, geography, career/civics and computers. He notes that he is able to meet ministry guidelines, while still choosing materials that honour the cultural reality of his students. For instance, he has every Grade 10 history student interview a parent or grandparent to gain their perspective on life before their church groups adopted the use of electricity or motor vehicles.

Martin, a qualified technology teacher, works closely with a parent council to make decisions, including course offerings and field trips. Over the years the program has moved from the Elmira District Secondary School to an







off-site location and back again, and from using paper-based Independent Learning Centre (ILC) booklets to the distribution of a laptop to every student. Every one of these decisions was discussed until there was mutual agreement among all the Mennonite groups and the school staff. The teachers have to learn to be accepting and to respect the values of the communities. This is particularly true in the case of 'hands on' courses, where it's essential to recognize the value placed on traditional, informal apprenticeships, where elders teach the young. At the same time, the community has had to adapt to current educational requirements. As a former guidance counsellor pointed out, "This is not a private school; we are an authentic credit-granting institution."

The students attend classes in separate portables and in segregated technology and family studies classes at Elmira District Secondary School. They come to school one or two days a week, and spend the rest of the time, beginning from Grade 9, working and accumulating Co-operative Education credits. All of the teachers in the program have their co-op qualifications and often help to find employment opportunities in the non-Mennonite world. For example, Martin and Reid have placed several boys in a plant that provides factory automation and robotic integrators. The teachers monitor the students in their barns and kitchens, in cabinet making, auto and welding shops, in restaurants, bakeries, and egg-grading stations, and yes, at the St. Jacobs Market and on Martin's Apple Farm.

By offering a Specialist High Skills Major in the Environment, ELAWS is able to offer safety instruction at no cost to the parents. "They really appreciate our ability to provide certification in chainsaw safety, working at heights, forklift management, safe food handling, first aid and CPR. These are all important skills for the employers, but they are not taught in their own communities," said Adam Hiller, who teaches co-op, several grades of math, computers, and financial literacy.

The ELAWS program is an ongoing example of how a public school system works to accommodate specific needs. It provides education for a group of people who have no history of participating in secondary schooling. Through meaningful compromise and collaboration between community leaders and educators, members of a previously under-educated population are able to achieve a common goal, an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Janice Harper is a teacher at the Elmira DSS in District 24, Waterloo.

i Krahn, Cornelius and Cornelius J. Dyck. "Menno Simons (1496-1561)." Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. 1990. Web. 13 Jan 2018. [gameo.org/index.php?title=Menno_Simons_\(1496-1561\)&oldid=145845](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Menno_Simons_(1496-1561)&oldid=145845).



OSSTF/FEESO Mandeville Gallery

Gallery space available at
Provincial Office for displaying
members' artwork.

Interested?
Contact: audrey.bourque@osstf.ca



OSSTF/FEESO est fier de lancer un nouveau **Programme provincial de mentorat en matière d'égalité** conçu pour appuyer les membres des Groupes à la recherche d'égalité qui souhaitent accroître leur participation au sein du leadership de la Fédération. C'est peut-être pour vous. Pour de plus amples renseignements, visitez www.osstf.on.ca/equity

OSSTF/FEESO is proud to introduce a new provincial **Equity Mentorship Program** designed to support OSSTF/FEESO members of Equity Seeking Groups who wish to increase their involvement in Federation leadership. This may be for you. For more information, go to www.osstf.on.ca/equity



CRISIS & TRAUMA
RESOURCE INSTITUTE

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS COMING TO
ONTARIO WINTER-SPRING 2018

Exceptional Training And Resources - Mental Health, Counselling And Violence Prevention

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Ottawa: March 5; Toronto: March 5; London: March 6; Thunder Bay: March 7

NARRATIVE THERAPY—Tools for Exploring Stories

Toronto: March 19; London: March 22; Ottawa: March 23

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY—Tools for Thinking Differently

Toronto: March 20; London: March 21; Ottawa: March 22; Thunder Bay: March 26

AUTISM—Strategies for Self-Regulation, Learning, and Challenging Behaviours

Ottawa: April 9-10; Mississauga: April 11-12

VICARIOUS TRAUMA—Strategies for Resilience

Ottawa: April 23; Toronto: April 26; London: April 30

WALKING THROUGH GRIEF

—Helping Others Deal with Loss

London: May 7-8; Toronto: May 9-10; Ottawa: May 14-15

ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL ILLNESS

—Working with Co-occurring Disorders

Mississauga: May 29

DE-ESCALATING POTENTIALLY VIOLENT SITUATIONS™

Mississauga: June 6

MOTIVATING CHANGE—Strategies for Approaching Resistance

Ottawa: June 18-19; Mississauga: June 20-21

BRIEF FOCUSED COUNSELLING SKILLS

—Strategies from Leading Frameworks

Toronto: July 17-18

LIVE STREAM WORKSHOPS



Participate in full-day, live
workshops from any
location.

For a list of workshops being
streamed in 2018, visit our
website at

www.ctrinstitute.com.

CTRI ALSO OFFERS:

LIVE WEBINARS
FREE RESOURCES
CONSULTING

ON-DEMAND WEBINARS
ASSESSMENT TOOLS
and more...



www.ctrinstitute.com 877.353.3205 info@ctrinstitute.com

VINCENT'S STORY

Supporting trans youth
in our schools

by Sue Melville

In the fall 2017 edition of *Education Forum*, I wrote a book review on *The Transgender Teen: A Handbook for Parents and Professionals Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Teens*. Following the publication of that review, I felt that much more needed to be said about the importance of supporting transgender and non-binary youth in our schools and worksites. To gain a better understanding of the issue, I reached out to Vincent Bolt, Education Manager at TG InnerSelves, a transgender social services program based in Sudbury, Ontario.

Vincent has a smile that could light up a room. I remember when that was not the case.

The first time I encountered Vincent he was a Grade 9 student at the school where I taught. I saw two girls sitting in the hallway across from my classroom. One girl was crying and the other was comforting her. I approached the girls, asked how I could help, and escorted them to the guidance office to make sure they received support. I did not know either student, and never did teach either of them during their years at that school.

It was about two years later that I next heard about the young person I had seen crying in the hallway. One of my colleagues, Ms. B., stood up at a staff meeting to tell us that one of our students had approached her for support in transitioning to a new identity. Ms. B. first explained that the student we had previously known by a female name preferred to be referred to as Vincent, and by male pronouns, because they now identified as transgender. She advised that Vincent was not comfortable using the traditional multi-stall student washrooms in our building, and had asked to use a single-use washroom instead. At that time, in the mid-2000s, the only single-use washrooms in our building were staff washrooms, and they all required a key for access. Our colleague stated explicitly that she was not asking for our blessing, but simply informing us that if we saw Vincent using a staff washroom, it should be treated as nothing out of the ordinary.

/continued on page 22

is struggling with depression.

name and pronouns are protected under

gender is a spectrum.

They

It's access to the b

the most important thing is to support

But many kids a

the necessary paperwork for a legal

But in that small ge

teacher to use my preferred name

I experience

not going to let a sign on a door dic

I was afraid every

And I realized, without a doubt, tha

de 9, I realized that I was still mis

Vincent has a s

did not feel safe in the school cafete

me out as bi, I was met with a lot

nder the Ontario Human Rights Code

a really struggled to accept this.

bathrooms, it's using their names and

the student in their transition.

don't have parental support,
so school is the only safe place when

I name change.

sture, she made a huge impact.

in the comments section of my midter

ed a lot of harassment in that job.

tate where my masculinity ends or k

time I went to the bathroom that som

at this is who I really was on the in

rable and really uncomfortable in m

mile that could light up a room.

I remember when that was not t

eria.

of hostility from teachers and from st

L'HISTOIRE DE VINCENT

Appuyer les jeunes trans
dans nos écoles

par Sue Melville

Dans le numéro de l'automne 2017 d'*Education Forum*, j'ai rédigé une critique littéraire intitulée « *The Transgender Teen: A Handbook for Parents and Professionals Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Teens* ». Après la parution de cette critique, j'avais le sentiment qu'il restait bien plus à dire sur l'importance de soutenir les jeunes transgenres et non binaires dans nos écoles et lieux de travail. Pour mieux comprendre le sujet, j'ai communiqué avec Vincent Bolt, directeur de l'éducation à *TG Innerseives*, un programme de services sociaux destinés aux transgenres et situé à Sudbury (Ontario).

Vincent a un sourire qui pourrait illuminer toute une pièce. Je me souviens de l'époque où ce n'était pas le cas.

La première fois que j'ai rencontré Vincent, il était en 9^e année à l'école où j'enseignais. En face de ma classe, j'ai remarqué deux filles assises dans le couloir. L'une d'elles pleurait et l'autre la réconfortait. Je me suis approchée d'elles, leur ai demandé ce que je pouvais faire pour les aider et je les ai conduites au bureau du conseiller en orientation pour m'assurer qu'elles reçoivent du soutien. Je ne connaissais ni l'une ni l'autre et je ne leur ai jamais enseigné pendant qu'elles ont fréquenté cette école.

C'était environ deux ans plus tard que j'ai entendu parler de la jeune personne que j'avais vu pleurer dans le couloir. Une de mes collègues, M^{me} B., s'est levée lors d'une réunion du personnel pour nous dire que l'un de nos élèves l'avait abordée pour lui demander de l'aide alors qu'elle faisait la transition vers une nouvelle identité. M^{me} B. a d'abord expliqué que l'élève que nous avions connu avec un prénom féminin préférait désormais se faire appeler Vincent et avec des pronoms masculins, parce qu'il s'identifiait à présent comme étant transgenre. Elle nous a avisés que Vincent n'était pas à l'aise d'utiliser les toilettes

/suite à la page 23

Artwork: Anna Zhyn

/continued from page 20

Five or six years later, I attended an event in Sudbury for students who participated in local Gay-Straight Alliances. One session involved a panel discussion on transgender issues, and Vincent was a participant. Not having seen him since his graduation, I was struck first and foremost by his beaming smile and positive aura. I remember listening to him speak during the panel discussion, and noticing how confident, secure in himself, and happy he seemed. I recall thinking that I had never, and I mean *never*, seen him smile during the years when he was a student at my school.

When Vincent and I sat down to talk, I asked him to tell me about life before and during his high school years. He told me that he was initially excited to start high school at Sudbury Secondary, because he had had a “really horrendous experience” at the last Catholic school he attended.

“When I came out as bi, I was met with a lot of hostility from teachers and from students,” Vincent recalled.

“Now I was very optimistic because I was finally at this point where I was in the public school system and at an art school, hoping that things would be a lot better. But in Grade 9, I realized that I was still miserable and really uncomfortable in my own skin. I was struggling with depression and had a hard time really understanding what was going on within myself. I did certainly make the right choice in terms of schools because I loved the program I was in. I was in the guitar program and I got along with most of my teachers. At the same time though, here I was in this really good program, at this really good school where I was allowed to be myself, but I was still so unhappy.”

Halfway through the year, Vincent began to understand his unhappiness. “It hit me that the reason I was so uncomfortable in my own skin, the reason I just couldn’t stand the sight of myself in the mirror, was that I was really a man, and living as a girl didn’t fit who I was. I had started Grade 9 wearing lots of makeup and wearing skirts. Midway through the year I started to change my

wardrobe over. I wore less makeup and I shaved off most of my hair.”

It took some time for Vincent to change over his wardrobe, because he didn’t have a job and he couldn’t talk to his parents about it. He started buying pants and clothing from the men’s section whenever he received money at Christmas or Easter.

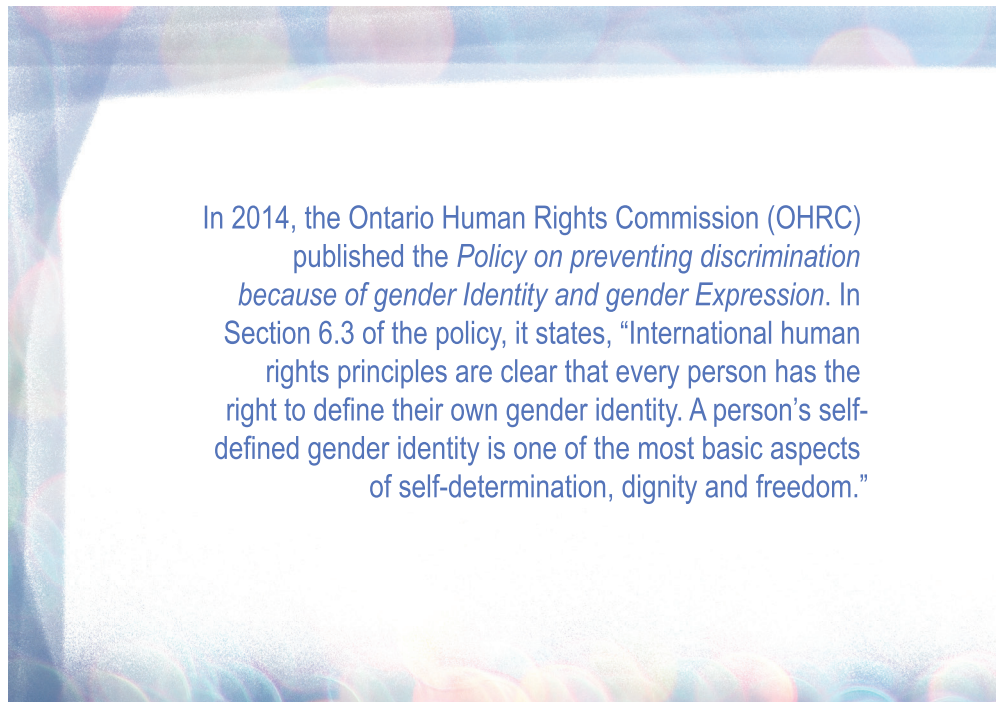
On his birthday that year, Vincent, along with his girlfriend Meghan and another friend, went to the park, where they took pictures of themselves.

“There’s one of me standing on top of the monkey bars. I’m wearing my dad’s

because we often went to one of their classrooms to eat lunch. We did not feel safe in the school cafeteria. If there was a place where we were going to be harassed, that’s where it would happen.”

In the summer before Grade 11, Vincent felt he had enough men’s clothing that he could present as male full time. That was when he decided to start living exclusively as a male. He was already using men’s washrooms whenever he was in public, and now hoped to avoid the women’s washroom at school.

I asked Vincent whether he was ever concerned about his own safety when



In 2014, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) published the *Policy on preventing discrimination because of gender Identity and gender Expression*. In Section 6.3 of the policy, it states, “International human rights principles are clear that every person has the right to define their own gender identity. A person’s self-defined gender identity is one of the most basic aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom.”

old leather jacket, I’m wearing pants, I have my hair up in a Mohawk and I’m wearing a t-shirt. I just look so cool. It’s one of my favourite pictures of myself because it was that first picture I had of me where I looked like a guy. And I realized, without a doubt, that this is who I really was on the inside.”

Although Vincent was in a committed lesbian relationship during the early high school years, he was not content. In Grade 10, he debated whether to come out as transgender at school, but was apprehensive because of the homophobia he had experienced while in a lesbian relationship. By Grade 11, he had made the decision. “I knew Ms. B. and Ms. M. were safe teachers for me to talk to

he used men’s public washrooms. He responded, “Every single time.”

“I was afraid every time I went to the bathroom that something would happen. I had experienced people making comments, I had been given dirty looks. I was escorted out by security. But for me, it was just something I had to do. I was not going to let a sign on a door dictate where my masculinity ends or begins. At that time, I did not have the legislative protection to use men’s washrooms. I was not read as male. I would be dressed in men’s clothing but people would just assume that I was a tomboy. I decided I’m just doing this anyway, I don’t care.”

/continued on page 24

/suite de la page 21

multiples traditionnelles destinées aux élèves de notre établissement et qu'il avait demandé d'utiliser plutôt une toilette privée. À cette époque, au milieu des années 2000, les seules toilettes privées dans notre bâtiment étaient celles du personnel et il fallait une clé pour y accéder. Notre collègue avait explicitement indiqué qu'elle ne cherchait pas à avoir notre aval, mais qu'elle nous informait tout simplement que si nous voyions Vincent utiliser les toilettes du personnel, nous ne devrions pas traiter ceci comme quelque chose

Lorsque Vincent et moi nous sommes assis pour parler, je lui ai demandé de me parler de sa vie avant et pendant les années d'école secondaire. Il m'a dit qu'au début il était impatient de fréquenter l'école secondaire à la *Sudbury Secondary*, parce qu'il avait vécu une «expérience vraiment épouvantable» à la dernière école catholique à laquelle il allait.

«Quand je me suis déclarée comme étant bi, les enseignants et les élèves m'ont accueilli avec beaucoup d'hostilité», Vincent se souvenait.

«Puis j'étais très optimiste parce

d'être moi-même, mais je continuais d'être vraiment malheureuse.»

En milieu d'année, Vincent a commencé à comprendre ce qui le rendait triste. «J'ai pris conscience que la raison pour laquelle j'étais si mal dans ma peau, la raison pour laquelle je ne supportais plus de me regarder dans un miroir était parce que j'étais réellement un homme et que de vivre en tant que femme ne convenait pas à la personne que j'étais. J'avais commencé la 9^e année en appliquant beaucoup de maquillage et en portant des jupes. Au milieu de l'année, j'ai commencé à remplacer les vêtements dont je disposais. J'ai commencé à porter moins de maquillage et j'ai rasé une bonne partie de mes cheveux.»

Vincent a mis du temps à remplacer totalement sa garde-robe, car il n'avait pas d'emploi et il ne pouvait en parler à ses parents. Il a commencé par s'acheter des pantalons et des vêtements dans les rayons pour hommes chaque fois qu'il recevait de l'argent soit à Noël ou à Pâques.

Le jour de son anniversaire cette année-là, Vincent, sa petite amie Meghan et un autre ami sont allés au parc pour prendre des photos d'eux-mêmes.

«Il y a une photo où je me tiens sur le dessus des barres de suspension. Je porte la vieille veste en cuir de mon père, un pantalon, un t-shirt et une coupe mohawk. J'ai l'air tellement bien. C'est l'une de mes photos préférées parce que c'était la première que j'avais de moi où je ressemblais à un garçon. J'ai réalisé, sans le moindre doute, que j'étais réellement au fond de moi.»

Bien que Vincent était engagé dans une relation lesbienne sérieuse dans les premières années du secondaire, il n'était pas satisfait. En 10^e année, il s'est posé la question à savoir s'il pouvait se déclarer transgenre à l'école, mais était inquiet en raison des expériences homophobes qu'il avait vécues alors qu'il entretenait une relation lesbienne. Arrivé en 11^e année, il avait pris la décision. «Je savais que M^{me} B. et M^{me} M. étaient des enseignantes avec qui je pouvais parler

/suite à la page 25

En 2014, la Commission ontarienne des droits de la personne (CODP) a publié la *Politique sur la prévention de la discrimination fondée sur l'identité sexuelle et l'expression de l'identité sexuelle*. L'article 6.3 de la politique stipule : « Les principes internationaux de droits de la personne indiquent clairement que chaque personne a le droit de définir sa propre identité sexuelle. L'auto-identification de son identité sexuelle est l'un des aspects les plus fondamentaux de l'autodétermination, de la dignité et de la liberté. »

sortant de l'ordinaire.

Cinq ou six ans plus tard, j'ai assisté à une activité à Sudbury avec des élèves qui faisaient partie d'alliances gai/hétéro locales. Une séance impliquait une table ronde sur les enjeux relatifs aux transgenres et Vincent était l'un des participants. Ne l'ayant pas vu depuis l'obtention de son diplôme, j'ai été d'abord et surtout surprise par son sourire radieux et son aura positive. Je me rappelle l'écouter durant la table ronde et remarquer combien il était confiant, sûr de lui et à quel point il avait l'air heureux. Je me rappelle avoir pensé que je ne l'avais jamais, je dis bien *jamais*, vu sourire pendant les années où il étudiait dans mon école.

que j'avais enfin atteint ce moment où j'avais rejoint le système scolaire public, dans une école d'arts en plus, ayant bon espoir que les choses s'amélioreraient énormément. Mais en 9^e année, je me suis rendu compte que j'étais encore malheureuse et que je n'étais vraiment pas bien dans ma peau. J'étais aux prises avec la dépression et avais de la difficulté à comprendre ce qui se produisait en moi. J'avais certes fait le bon choix du point de vue de l'école parce que j'adorais le programme dans lequel j'étais, celui de guitare et de plus je m'entendais bien avec la plupart de mes enseignants. Ce faisant, toutefois, je me trouvais dans ce super programme, dans cette école vraiment agréable où j'avais le droit

/continued from page 22

I asked Vincent to explain why it was so important to have freedom of choice when it came to the use of a washroom at school. “I couldn’t use the women’s washroom anymore. It was just too stressful and too painful for me. I felt like every time I went to the bathroom, I was stepping back, when everywhere else I was using men’s washrooms.”

For Vincent, the next logical step was to come out as transgender at school. “I needed that place where people knew me as Vincent, and used male pronouns. I needed that support. I needed it because I wasn’t getting it anywhere else. I was still living at home at the time and my parents did not know.”

During the first semester of Grade 11, Vincent built up the courage to come out to each of his teachers. One day, at the end of class, he went to each teacher and said, “I’m using Vincent as my name now and I’m using male pronouns.”

He described the reaction of one teacher in particular, who had a reputation for being very strict and sometimes came across as cold. “I liked her because

she was strict. People didn’t talk in her class and I could focus. I got along with her, but I wasn’t sure how she would take me coming out as trans. When I told her, her response was just, ‘alright Vincent,’ and just no change in expression. And she was the only teacher to use my preferred name in the comments section

Human rights protection for transgender and non-binary people has evolved since 1999, when the OHRC established that the ground of sex under human rights law could be interpreted to include the right of transgender people to be free from discrimination and harassment.

A year later, the OHRC released its original *Policy on discrimination and harassment because of gender identity*.

In 2012, Ontario added the grounds “gender identity” and “gender expression” to the Ontario Human Rights Code.

of my midterm report card. It’s funny because you never know who is going to support you. But in that small gesture, she made a huge impact.”

Vincent explained that the conversation with Ms. B. had been very liberating because it meant that he didn’t have to worry about being confronted when going to the bathroom. He was relieved of the burden of having to constantly explain himself whenever he started a new class or met a new teacher. In class, students heard teachers referring to Vincent by name or using male pronouns, and would occasionally ask why. Vincent’s teachers often deferred to him and gave him the option of explaining himself if he felt comfortable doing so. Vincent notes, “I did not experience any issues with students after I came out as trans. I did not experience any transphobia or any homophobia from Grade 11 onward at school.”

In the second half of Grade 11, Vincent started looking for work, and he was hoping to legally change his name before finding a job so that people would stop using his birth name. He would need his parents to agree to this, but things did not go well when he explained to them that he was transgender.

“They freaked out. It was not a positive experience. My dad was yelling at me, my mom was crying. My dad told

/continued on page 26

2018 SUMMER PROGRAMMES

TEACH ENGLISH TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

A rewarding experience working with students from all over the World! We are looking for ESL Teachers and Programme Directors for various locations across Ontario. If you think you fit the bill we want to hear from you!

Locations | Toronto, Lakefield and Rosseau

Accommodation | Live on or off campus

Duration | 3 to 7 week contracts

Leadership positions are available.

www.cisscanada.com | recruit@cisscanada.com



La protection des droits de la personne des transgenres et non binaires a évolué depuis 1999, moment où la CODP a établi que le motif qu'est le sexe en vertu des droits de la personne pourrait être interprété comme comprenant également le droit des transgenres de jouir d'un traitement exempt de discrimination et de harcèlement.

Un an plus tard, la CODP a publié sa première *Politique sur la discrimination et le harcèlement en raison de l'identité sexuelle*.

En 2012, l'Ontario a ajouté les motifs de « l'identité sexuelle » et de « l'expression sexuelle » au *Code des droits de la personne* de l'Ontario.

/suite de la page 23

en toute confiance parce que nous allions souvent prendre notre repas du midi dans leurs classes. Nous ne nous sentions pas en sécurité à la cafétéria de l'école. S'il y avait un endroit dans l'école où on se ferait harceler, c'était bien là!»

L'été précédant sa 11^e année, Vincent a décidé qu'il avait suffisamment de vêtements d'homme pour se présenter en tout temps comme étant un homme. C'est à ce moment qu'il a décidé de vivre exclusivement en tant qu'homme. Il utilisait déjà les toilettes des hommes quand il se retrouvait dans des endroits publics et espérait pouvoir à présent éviter de se servir des toilettes des femmes à l'école.

J'ai demandé à Vincent si à quelque moment que ce soit il avait craint pour sa sécurité alors qu'il utilisait les toilettes publiques des hommes. Il m'a répondu : « À chaque fois. »

« Chaque fois que j'allais aux toilettes, j'avais peur que quelque chose se produise. Des gens m'avaient fait des commentaires. On m'avait regardé de travers. Des gardiens de sécurité m'ont escorté à l'extérieur. Mais au fond de moi, c'était quelque chose que je me devais de faire. Je n'allais pas laisser une affiche sur une porte m'imposer où ma masculinité commence et où elle s'arrête. À cette époque, mon droit d'utiliser les toilettes des hommes n'était pas protégé

par la loi. On ne me considérait pas comme un homme. Je m'habillais en homme, mais les gens présumaient que j'étais un garçon manqué. J'ai décidé que je continuerais à le faire de toute façon, ça m'était égal. »

J'ai demandé à Vincent de m'expliquer pourquoi c'est si important d'avoir la liberté de choisir les toilettes qu'on veut utiliser à l'école. « Je ne pouvais plus aller dans les toilettes des femmes. Je trouvais cela trop stressant et trop pénible. J'avais l'impression que chaque fois que j'allais aux toilettes, je faisais machine arrière, surtout que partout ailleurs j'utilisais les toilettes des hommes. »

Pour Vincent, la prochaine étape logique était de s'identifier comme transgenre à l'école. « J'avais besoin d'un endroit où les gens me connaissent sous le nom de Vincent et s'adressaient à moi à l'aide de pronoms masculins. J'avais besoin de ce soutien. J'en avais besoin, parce que je ne le recevais nulle part ailleurs. Je vivais toujours chez mes parents, lesquels n'étaient pas au courant. »

Au cours du premier semestre de la 11^e année, Vincent s'est armé de courage et s'est révélé à chacun de ses enseignants. Un jour, à la fin de la classe, il s'est approché de chacun d'eux et leur a dit : « Je me sers dorénavant du prénom Vincent et de pronoms masculins. »

Il a décrit la réaction d'une enseignante

en particulier qui avait pour réputation d'être très stricte et qui donnait parfois l'impression d'être insensible. « Je l'aimais bien parce qu'elle était stricte. Les élèves ne bavardaient pas dans sa classe et ainsi je pouvais me concentrer. Je m'entendais bien avec elle, mais je n'étais pas certain de la manière dont elle réagirait à mon identification en tant que trans. Quand je lui ai dit, sa réponse a simplement été : « D'accord, Vincent » sans qu'elle ne change d'expression. C'est également la seule membre du personnel enseignant qui, dans les commentaires de mon bulletin de notes de milieu de semestre, s'est servie du nom que j'avais choisi. C'est drôle, car on ne sait jamais qui est la personne qui se rangera de ton côté. Mais par ce simple geste, elle a eu un impact considérable. »

Vincent m'a expliqué que sa conversation avec M^{me} B. avait été libératrice, parce que cela voulait dire qu'il n'avait pas à se faire de souci que quelqu'un le confronte en allant aux toilettes. Il s'était déchargé du fardeau d'avoir à expliquer constamment chaque fois qu'il commençait une nouvelle classe ou qu'il faisait la connaissance d'un nouvel enseignant. En classe, les élèves ont entendu les enseignants s'adresser à lui par le prénom Vincent ou par des pronoms masculins et à l'occasion certains d'entre eux demandaient pourquoi. Les enseignants de Vincent se tournaient souvent vers lui et lui donnaient l'option de donner une explication s'il se sentait à l'aise de le faire. Vincent remarque : « Je n'ai pas eu de problèmes avec les élèves après que je me sois identifié comme étant trans. Je n'ai pas été mis en présence de transphobie ou de tout type d'homophobie à l'école à partir de la 11^e année. »

Au second semestre de la 11^e année, Vincent a commencé à chercher du travail et espérait pouvoir changer légalement de nom avant de se trouver un emploi de manière à ce que les gens ne s'adressent plus à lui en utilisant son nom de naissance. Il devrait obtenir l'approbation de ses parents, mais les choses ne sont pas bien passées quand il leur a expliqué qu'il était transgenre.

/suite à la page 27

/continued from page 24

me I was ruining my life, that I'd never find a job and that I'd probably end up dead on some operating table. They really struggled to accept this. They would not call me Vincent and they would not use male pronouns."

Not long after coming out to his parents, Vincent was hired for his first job, at a fast food restaurant. He told one of the managers that he was in the process of changing his name, and he would really like to have Vincent on his name tag. "She looked at me and said, 'Why? That's a boy's name and you're a girl.' I told her that I'm transgender, and I'm transitioning from female to male. And she said, 'Well, you look like a girl.' That was incredibly hurtful. I experienced a lot of harassment in that job."

When he arrived home, he again implored his parents to sign the necessary paperwork for a legal name change. He told them, "I can't do this anymore. I need to have my name changed, they won't change my name tag. I want everyone to know me as Vincent at work and now, because you wouldn't sign those forms, I have to endure everyone calling me that name. Now I have to come out to everybody. Now is the best time to do it. It's my first job, I don't have credit cards, I don't have to worry about my

work history or my credit history. I don't even have my full license yet." Vincent's parents ultimately signed the forms.

He told me that the date June 1, 2006 is imprinted in his mind because that was the day when his change of name certificate came in. On his next shift, Vincent went into work brandishing his change of name certificate and carrying a big smile on his face. "I went up to the manager and said, my name is now legally Vincent, please change my name tag." Vincent acknowledges that the legal name change did not actually improve his situation at work, but it did mean that no new employees knew his old name. All of his pay stubs identified him as Vincent, and he was listed as Vincent on the work schedule. The legal name change also meant that all of his school documentation was officially changed as well.

I asked Vincent if he is ever just, "Vincent the man," or is he always "Vincent the transgender man?"

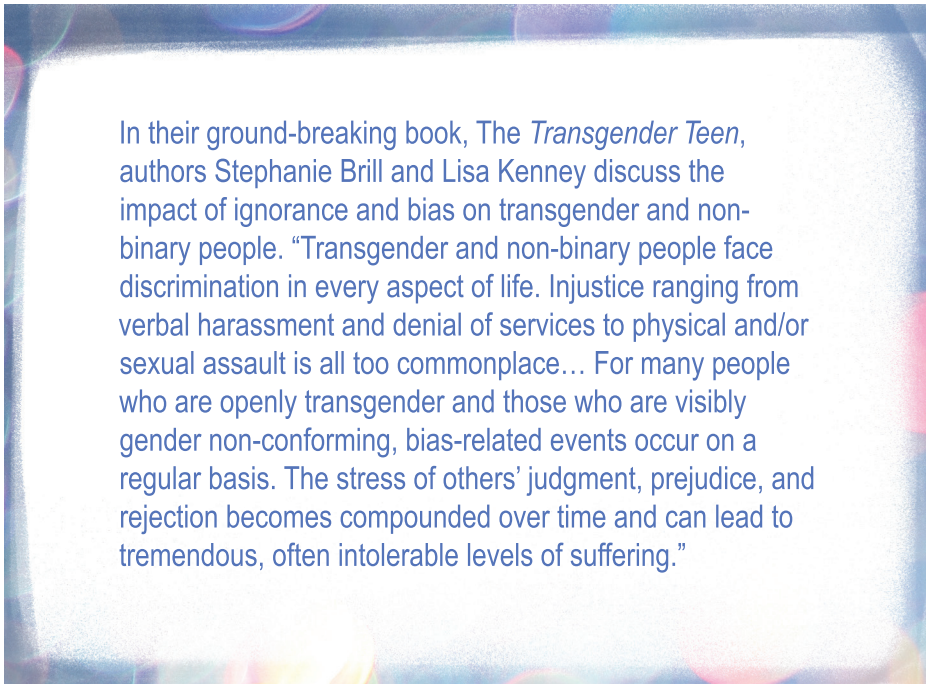
"I think in my case it's interesting because gender is a spectrum. It's not something that's just an either/or. It's not a binary, and it's not only a three-option checklist. It is very broad and even though I identify as male and I have male on all of my ID, I really identify strongly with the label trans. Whenever I

do have the option to list my gender, on forms or whatever, I say that I'm a trans male. It's because all of my experiences over the years give me a perspective that I would never have gained if I'd been assigned male at birth. I feel that I don't fall in that rigid male identity checkbox. And for me, for thirty-five hours a week, I am Vincent the education manager of a trans organization. During my work week I am working very much within the scope of somebody who is trans. Doing this kind of work, where I'm out doing presentations and talking about my experiences as a trans person, makes me feel like I'm professionally trans." Vincent smiles.

"This is a conversation that comes up in a lot of circles where you have service providers who are also trans, who are working with trans clients or who are doing work professionally that relates to their lived experience. When I'm at work, that's where that identity really comes into play. When I'm at home, I'm not watching *I Am Jazz* or *Transparent*. On my personal time, I am doing everything that has nothing to do with being trans or with LGBTQ cross identities. That's how I've found that balance. There are a lot of people who work in the field, who for 35 or 40 hours a week are completely immersed in LGBTQ-plus everything, and then they try to go to all the Prides or gay bars or community events on their personal time and they burn out. The way I balance the things that I can't really avoid, that are part of being queer and trans while doing this as my full-time job, is not making every hour of my life about my identity."

As we wrapped up our discussion, I asked Vincent for his advice to education workers about how best to support transgender and non-binary students in our schools. He told me that the most important thing is to support the student in their transition, and to ask them what they want. He stressed how important it is for staff to use the students' preferred name and pronouns, and for guidance counsellors to be able to help the student navigate resources in the community.

/continued on page 28



In their ground-breaking book, *The Transgender Teen*, authors Stephanie Brill and Lisa Kenney discuss the impact of ignorance and bias on transgender and non-binary people. "Transgender and non-binary people face discrimination in every aspect of life. Injustice ranging from verbal harassment and denial of services to physical and/or sexual assault is all too commonplace... For many people who are openly transgender and those who are visibly gender non-conforming, bias-related events occur on a regular basis. The stress of others' judgment, prejudice, and rejection becomes compounded over time and can lead to tremendous, often intolerable levels of suffering."

/suite de la page 25

« Ils ont paniqué. Cette expérience n'a pas été positive. Mon père me criait après et ma mère pleurait. Mon père m'a dit que je détruisais ma vie, que jamais je ne trouverais un emploi et que probablement je finirai mort sur une table d'opération. Ils ont vraiment eu beaucoup de mal à accepter ce fait. Ils ne m'appelaient pas Vincent et ne se servaient pas de pronoms masculins. »

Peu de temps après s'être déclaré à ses parents, Vincent a trouvé son premier emploi dans un restaurant rapide. Il a indiqué à l'une des gérantes qu'il faisait des démarches pour changer de nom et qu'il aimerait vraiment avoir Vincent sur son insigne. « Elle m'a regardé et m'a demandé pourquoi. C'est un nom de garçon et tu es une fille. » « Je lui ai dit que j'étais transgenre et que je faisais la transition de fille à garçon. À cela elle m'a répondu « Ben, t'as l'air d'une fille. » J'ai trouvé cela vraiment blessant. J'ai été victime de beaucoup de harcèlement à cet emploi. »

En arrivant à la maison, il a à nouveau imploré ses parents de signer les documents nécessaires pour demander un changement de nom légalement. Il leur a dit : « Cela ne peut plus durer. Je dois changer de nom, ils ne veulent pas changer mon insigne. Je veux que tout le monde au travail m'appelle Vincent et, parce que vous refusez de signer ces documents, je dois tolérer que tout le monde se serve de ce prénom lorsqu'ils s'adressent à moi. Il est temps pour moi de sortir du placard. C'est actuellement le meilleur moment d'agir. C'est mon premier boulot, je n'ai pas de carte de crédit, je n'ai ni à me soucier de mes antécédents de travail ni de mon dossier de crédit. Je n'ai même pas encore mon permis de conduire. » Les parents de Vincent ont fini par signer les documents.

Il m'a dit que le 1^{er} juin 2006 est à jamais imprimé dans sa mémoire, car c'est le jour où le certificat de son changement de nom est arrivé. Lors de son quart de travail suivant, Vincent s'est rendu au travail en brandissant son certificat de changement de nom, le sourire aux lèvres. « Je suis allé voir le gérant et lui ai

Dans leur ouvrage visionnaire (révolutionnaire/inédit), *The Transgender Teen*, les auteures Stephanie Brill et Lisa Kenney discutent des conséquences des préjugés et de la méconnaissance des gens par rapport aux personnes transgenres et non binaires. « Les personnes transgenres et non binaires font face à de la discrimination dans tous les aspects de leur vie. Les injustices allant du harcèlement verbal et du refus de les servir à des agressions physiques et (ou) sexuelles sont trop fréquentes... Pour plusieurs personnes qui ne se cachent pas d'être transgenres et celles qui sont visiblement non conformistes sur le plan du sexe, elles sont régulièrement victimes d'épreuves liées aux préjugés. Le stress imposé par le jugement des autres, les préjugés et le rejet s'aggravent avec le temps et peuvent mener à des niveaux épouvantables de souffrance, souvent intolérables. »

dit mon nom est officiellement Vincent, veuillez changer mon insigne. » Vincent reconnaît que le changement officiel de nom n'a pas réellement amélioré sa situation au travail, mais cela signifiait qu'aucun nouvel employé ne connaîtrait son ancien prénom. Toutes ses fiches de paie l'identifiaient comme étant Vincent de même que l'horaire de travail. Le changement de nom officiel a également eu pour conséquence que tous ses documents scolaires ont été également officiellement modifiés.

J'ai demandé à Vincent s'il est parfois juste « Vincent, l'homme » ou s'il est tout le temps « Vincent, l'homme transgenre. »

« Je pense qu'en ce qui me concerne, le genre correspond plus à un continuum. Ce n'est pas quelque chose qui est soit l'un ou l'autre. Ce n'est pas un système binaire et ce n'est pas seulement une liste de trois options. C'est bien plus large et même si je m'identifie en tant que mâle et que je porte un prénom masculin sur tous mes papiers d'identité, réellement je m'identifie fortement avec le dénominateur trans. Chaque fois que j'ai

l'occasion d'inscrire mon genre, sur des formulaires ou autres, je dis que je suis un homme trans. Ceci est dû au fait que toutes les expériences que j'ai vécues au fil des années m'offrent un point de vue que je n'aurais jamais eu si on m'avait assigné le sexe masculin à la naissance. J'ai le sentiment que je n'entre pas dans cette case stricte d'identité masculine. Pour moi, 35 heures par semaine je suis Vincent le gestionnaire éducatif d'une organisation trans. Durant ma semaine de travail, je travaille véritablement dans le domaine de quelqu'un qui est trans. En faisant ce genre de travail, quand je fais des présentations à l'extérieur et parle de mes expériences en tant que personne trans, cela me donne le sentiment que, professionnellement, je suis trans. » Vincent sourit.

« C'est le genre de conversation qui revient souvent dans de nombreux cercles au sein desquels plusieurs fournisseurs de service sont également trans, ou travaillent avec des clients trans ou font un travail ayant trait à l'expérience qu'ils ont vécue. Quand je suis au travail, c'est

/suite à la page 29

/continued from page 26

“When trans youth have full support from their parents and their family in their transition, the suicide risk and rate of suicidal behaviour decreases by 93 per cent. But many kids don’t have parental support, so school is the only place where they feel safe. In my case, for the first year and a half that I was out, school was that only place where I was supported. Ms. B. saved my life. She brought me to a youth group. She also brought me to the hospital when things had gone south and I was very suicidal. Be the person who listens to students when no one else is listening. The 70 minutes a day that a student spends in your classroom might be the only time and place where that student can be themselves and hear their name.”

Vincent often tells parents about the statistics around suicide. “I tell them that the difference between your child living and dying might be you. But let me be clear that the parents who are coming to me and listening to me represent only the tip of the iceberg. The parents who absolutely reject their children

are not coming in to see me. There isn’t even the option to have a conversation. Those are the kids who are at an incredibly high risk, and that’s when support in the schools becomes crucial. It’s access to the bathrooms, it’s using their names and pronouns in school. They need the staff to listen.”

Vincent points out that when a student is out at school but not at home,

TG InnerSelves provides education services in the form of workshops on trans inclusion for organizations and businesses who are seeking to develop trans inclusive policies. They also work with individuals seeking support during their transition, and address any questions or concerns regarding gender identity or gender expression. Services include running a Family Support Group and a Social Support Group. TG InnerSelves receives support from a number of local agencies and organizations in the Sudbury area. While funding technically covers clients aged 12–29, the program works with clients of all ages. The majority of their clients are youth.

educators sometimes have to deal with parents who are unsupportive. Teachers and staff may have no problem using a student’s preferred name and pronoun, but the unsupportive parents are sometimes infuriated by this. Vincent explains that the student’s name and pronouns are protected under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and are now protected federally. “That student has the right to their name and pronouns, regardless of what it says on the birth certificate. They are 100 per cent protected, and so is anyone who is using that name and pronoun in addressing that student. The caution is, don’t write the name or pronouns on assignments or report cards unless the student has said to do that. Ask the student because you just don’t know what the home situation is.”

I was profoundly moved by his story, and by his work. In a time where there was little protection under the law, this courageous teenager took risks, asked for help, and found a way to navigate an extraordinarily difficult path to adulthood. It wasn’t just the sun shining through his office window that made the room glow. Vincent’s joy at being able to be himself, to support others in their journeys, and to effect change was evident in his radiant smile.

Sue Melville is a teacher in District 3, Rainbow and is a member of the provincial Educational Services Committee.

The infographic for FeelingBetterNow features a light blue background with a stylized mountain range and trees at the bottom. At the top, the text 'FeelingBetterNow' is in a large, pink, sans-serif font, with the tagline 'Connecting Mental Health Problems to Solutions' in a smaller, pink font below it. Below this, the text 'Stressed, anxious or depressed?' is in a bold, teal font, followed by 'Go to: feelingbetternow.com/otip' in a smaller, teal font. A horizontal flowchart shows three steps: 'Assess your mental health' (with a gear icon), 'View your action plan' (with a document icon), and 'Access your self-care toolbox' (with a hand icon). Below this, a pink banner reads 'Resources in *Your Toolbox* include:'. Underneath the banner are three circular icons: a compass for 'Helping Yourself', a person meditating for 'Stress Reduction', and a hand holding a heart for 'Helping Others'. At the bottom, the website 'www.feelingbetternow.com/otip' is displayed in a teal font, with a small logo for 'OTIP RAEQ' to the right.

TG Innerselves offre des services éducatifs sous forme d'ateliers sur l'inclusion des trans qui sont destinés aux organismes et entreprises cherchant à élaborer des politiques qui incluent les personnes transgenres. Il travaille également avec des personnes cherchant à obtenir de l'aide durant leur transition et aborde toute question ou préoccupation concernant l'identité de genre ou l'expression de genre. Parmi les services offerts, on trouve l'organisation d'un groupe de soutien pour les familles et d'un groupe de soutien social. TG Innerselves reçoit de l'aide de plusieurs organisations et agences locales de la région de Sudbury. Bien que théoriquement le financement couvre les jeunes de 12 à 29 ans, le programme œuvre auprès d'une clientèle de tout âge. La majorité de leurs clients sont des jeunes.

/suite de la page 27

vraiment là où mon identité entre en jeu. Quand je suis à la maison, je ne regarde ni la série *I Am Jazz* ni *Transparent*. Dans mes moments libres, je fais des choses qui n'ont rien à voir avec le fait que je sois trans ou avec les identités multiples des LGBTQ. C'est comme cela que j'ai pu atteindre cet équilibre. Plusieurs personnes, qui travaillent dans le domaine de 35 à 40 heures par semaine, sont totalement absorbées par leur travail lié aux LGBTQ-plus tous les autres. De plus, ils essaient de participer à toutes les activités communautaires de la FIERTÉ ou de fréquenter les bars pour homosexuels pendant leur temps libre puis ils se retrouvent en épuisement professionnel. La manière dont j'équilibre les choses que je ne peux éviter, qui font partie de ma réalité homosexuelle et trans tout en le faisant comme emploi à temps plein, est de faire que chaque minute de ma vie ne tourne pas autour de mon identité.»

Alors que notre discussion touchait à sa fin, j'ai demandé à Vincent quels étaient les conseils qu'il pouvait donner aux travailleurs en éducation sur la manière de mieux soutenir les élèves transgenres et non binaires dans nos écoles. Il m'a dit que ce qui importait le plus était de soutenir les élèves dans leur transition et de leur demander ce dont ils ont besoin. Il a insisté sur l'importance que le personnel appelle les élèves par le nom et les pronoms

personnels qu'ils ont choisis et que les conseillers en orientation puissent aider les élèves à trouver les ressources dans la communauté.

«Lors de leur transition, lorsque les jeunes trans ont le soutien inconditionnel de leurs parents et de leur famille, le risque qu'ils se suicident et le taux de comportement suicidaire diminuent de 93 pour cent. Par contre, nombreux sont les jeunes qui n'ont pas le soutien de leurs parents, donc l'école est bien le seul endroit où ils se sentent en sécurité. Dans mon cas, les 18 premiers mois après m'être dévoilé, l'école était le seul lieu où on me soutenait. M^{me} B. m'a sauvé la vie. Elle m'a présenté à un groupe de jeunes. Elle m'a aussi conduit à l'hôpital un jour où les choses s'étaient mal passées et que j'étais suicidaire. Soyez la personne à l'écoute des élèves quand personne d'autre ne les écoute. Les 70 minutes que passe un élève dans votre classe sont peut-être le seul moment et le seul endroit où il peut être lui-même et se faire appeler par son nom.»

Vincent fait souvent référence aux statistiques de suicide aux parents à qui il parle. «Je leur dis que ce sont eux qui pourraient faire la différence entre avoir un enfant en vie et un enfant décédé. Mais ne vous méprenez pas, les parents qui viennent me voir et m'écouter sont seulement une minorité. Les parents qui rejettent totalement leur enfant ne me rendent pas visite. Il n'est même pas possible de leur parler. Ce sont ces

jeunes qui ont le plus de risque de se suicider, d'où l'importance capitale de les soutenir au sein des écoles. Cela se traduit par l'accès à des toilettes et en les appelant par le nom et les pronoms qu'ils ont choisis. Il faut que le personnel soit à leur écoute.»

Vincent fait remarquer que lorsqu'un élève s'est identifié à l'école, mais pas à la maison, les éducateurs ont parfois affaire à des parents hostiles. Les enseignants et le personnel pourront ne pas avoir de difficulté à utiliser le nom et les pronoms privilégiés par l'élève, mais souvent les parents qui s'opposent à l'identité sexuelle de leur enfant se sentent exaspérés. Vincent explique que ne pas s'adresser à un élève au moyen du nom ou du pronom de son choix constitue une infraction au *Code des droits de la personne de l'Ontario* et ceci en va de même à l'échelle fédérale. «Cet élève a le droit au nom et aux pronoms personnels de son choix, même si ceux-ci diffèrent de l'information de son certificat de naissance. L'élève est protégé à cent pour cent, de même que l'est toute personne utilisant ces nom et pronom lorsqu'elle s'adresse à l'élève. Là où il faut faire attention, c'est de ne pas inscrire le nom ou les pronoms sur des devoirs ou des bulletins scolaires à moins que l'élève ait demandé qu'on le fasse. Posez la question à l'élève, car vous ne savez pas quelle est la situation à la maison.»

Son histoire m'a profondément touchée de même que son travail. À une époque où il existait très peu de protection en vertu de la loi, cet adolescent a fait preuve de courage en prenant des risques, en demandant de l'aide et s'est frayé un chemin vers l'âge adulte dans des conditions particulièrement difficiles. Dans son bureau, ce n'était pas uniquement le soleil qui perçait par la fenêtre qui illuminait la pièce. La joie de Vincent de pouvoir être lui-même, aider les autres dans leur propre cheminement et induire le changement se voyait dans son sourire radieux.

Sue Melville est enseignante au District 3, Rainbow et membre du Comité provincial des services éducatifs.

Performance appraisal

☐ IS IT TIME TO DISCIPLINE THE





by Chantal Mancini

In December of 2017, teachers across Ontario learned that the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) was seeking to raise our \$150 annual fee by 20 per cent. Thanks to the collective pressure of our unions, the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the actions of individual teachers, this fee increase was voted down by the governing council. However, it has once again shone a spotlight on the shifting direction of the OCT, which increasingly ventures outside of the College's original mandate. This 'mandate creep,' a term coined by OTF in a 2014 research report on the OCT, has resulted in increasing bureaucracy and activities that are extraneous and unnecessary to the OCT's regulatory role. While at first glance this might seem surprising, upon closer examination of the origins of the OCT, its current 'expansion' is right in line with the current political climate surrounding education—one where governments, driven by neoliberal agendas¹, increasingly seek to control all aspects of schooling, including teachers themselves.

Artwork: Audrey Bourque

The Mike Harris Conservatives established the OCT in 1996 via Bill 31, the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*. It's important to note, however, that it wasn't Harris who came up with the original idea, and it wasn't teachers themselves who asked for the creation of a self-governing body. Jennifer Lamarche-Schmalz, a graduate student at the University of Western Ontario in 1997, documents the evolution of the creation of the OCT in her Master's thesis. She asserts that the original idea for the creation of the OCT came about in 1968, via a Royal Commission on Learning. She cites a resulting report by the OTF that concurs with the commission's notion of raising the professional status of teachers. The idea was raised again in 1980 but was this time opposed by teacher unions, who argued that the government was placing the perceived interests of the public before the professionalism of teachers. It made headlines again in 1995 via another Royal Commission on Learning created by the Bob Rae NDP government, but never came to fruition prior to the provincial election in the same year. Lamarche-Schmalz reveals that the new Harris government initially claimed that they had no desire to enact the ideas of their predecessors, but then suddenly created legislation, with no warning and no consultation with OTF or its affiliated unions. Part of her study was a documentary review to glean the government's perspective on the creation of the OCT. She found, to her admitted surprise, "little, if any, mention of the government's desire to further professionalize teaching."ⁱⁱ Instead, both the key government report and the Minister of Education's public addresses "made it clear that the government's position was one of public accountability."ⁱⁱⁱ Lamarche-Schmalz ultimately concluded that the purpose behind the creation of the OCT was not one that was intended to be beneficial to teachers, through the guise of raising 'professionalism.' Instead, it was another way the government could assert more control over teachers' work.

It is no coincidence that the Harris government enacted the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* at the same time they were legislating a variety of other education reforms, including the so-called *Education Quality Improvement Act* (Bill 160), which centralized education funding.^{iv} Both pieces of legislation shifted power to the government, through the Ministry of Education. The government could now not only control the funding of education, which gave it enormous power during contract negotiations, but it could also frame and control public discourse surrounding teacher pro-

fessionalism through the OCT.

In a 1996 brief to the Standing Committee on Social Development Concerning Bill 31: *College of Teachers Act*, 1995, OSSTF/FEESO provided a detailed and hard-hitting outline of Federation concerns. It pointed out the unprecedented powers given to the Minister of Education in the governance of the OCT; the fact that the investigative and disciplinary powers given to the OCT extended well beyond human rights and privacy legislation; the lack of due process for members facing discipline; and the shift of the power to determine teacher competence from school boards to the OCT. OSSTF/FEESO detailed very specific opposition to the legislation's attempt to have the OCT oversee teacher professional development. The brief contained descriptors such as "absurd," "Orwellian" and "police state."^v Despite similar presentations by other affiliates, and concerns raised by the OTF, the Conservatives went ahead with Bill 31 and addressed very few of the issues that had been raised.

Teachers have now lived with the OCT for over twenty years, and our annual fees have risen steadily. What benefits, exactly, are coming from those fees? The OCT states its mandate on its website:

The Ontario College of Teachers licenses, governs and regulates Ontario's teaching profession in the public interest. It sets standards of practice and ethical standards, conducts disciplinary hearing and accredits teacher education programs affecting its 235,000 members in publicly funded schools and institutions across Ontario. The College is the only self-regulatory body for teachers in Canada.^{vi}

Additionally, it lists its other roles, including the accreditation of teacher education programs, establishing and enforcing professional and ethical standards, and investigating complaints against OCT members. It claims that it does these things to inspire public confidence. It is governed by a council of thirty-seven individuals, fourteen who are appointed by the provincial government, and twenty-three who are elected. The latter twenty-three are certified teachers, and despite the fact that they are elected representatives, there is no

contact information for them on the OCT website. According to the OCT's own statistics, in the 2015 election, only 2.45 per cent of eligible voters cast ballots^{vii}, the second-lowest voter turnout in the OCT's history (in 2009, it was 2.16 per cent, despite a new online voting system with 24-hour access^{viii}). In addition, it has been very difficult for the OCT to drum up teacher interest in running for council positions. While the OCT describes itself as 'self-governing,' it's clear that it's not really teachers who are determining its governance, and the dismal statistics from past elections point to the fact that few teachers see the OCT as relevant to their everyday working lives. Rather, the OCT serves as a bureaucratic arm of the provincial government, one that disciplines teachers, and one that is increasingly being used to frame public discourse around teaching and teacher professionalism.

As predicted by OSSTF/FEESO two decades ago, the investigative and disciplinary processes used by the OCT have privacy and due process concerns. Every member's public page contains a 'name history'—which lays out members' marriage histories for the public to see, a privacy issue that particularly affects women. Members can wait for years for investigative processes to conclude while unproven and often devastating allegations remain publicly available for the entire time. School boards, knowing that they can refer even minor transgressions to the OCT for discipline, will settle union grievances but then refer an issue to the OCT anyway in order to circumvent the labour relations process, even though, in most cases, they have the choice not to. This can result in a member being disciplined twice for the same offense—first by their school board, then by the OCT. The same discretion is rarely applied to OCT members who are management, so the public is never made aware of these disciplinary cases. Finally, consider the following advice from the OCT:

Teachers are always on duty. You should be aware that teachers are expected to be professionals 24/7 and that the College has a duty to investigate if a complaint of alleged professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity is made against you.^{ix}

The implications of this statement are broad, and invoke the description of 'Orwellian' used in OSSTF/FEESO's 1996 brief on the OCT. Not only must teachers fear scrutiny from their employer, students, parents, any member of the public, and even colleagues at work, but they must fear continual surveillance of their private lives as well.

Ironically, teachers finance these investigative and disciplinary processes via their OCT fees, and pay for an organization that has incredible powers to impact their livelihoods.

Teachers have generally accepted this, particularly as the law gives them little choice. What they made clear in December, however, is that they aren't willing to fund the things that are clearly outside of the OCT's mandated purview. Research by OTF in 2014 captured some of these newer activities, which broadly spill into the arenas of teacher advocacy and professional development.^x In the case of advocacy, the OCT was never meant to represent or advocate for teachers. Its sole purpose is regulation. The OTF and affiliated education unions speak for teachers, a long-established role that they fulfill without conflict of interest. A body that regulates, investigates, and disciplines teachers on one hand cannot advocate for the profession on the other. These functions are fundamentally at odds. Teachers know that any claim to the contrary by the OCT is simply disingenuous, and they resent paying for public awareness campaigns that attempt to paint the OCT as an advocate for teachers. The same applies to the OCT's increasing involvement in the delivery of professional development. This was never the mandate of the OCT, yet the OCT continues to push for greater involvement in this regard, despite that this function is already well-served by the OTF, education affiliates, and other truly teacher-led bodies.

Beyond these two broad areas of 'mandate creep' are simply activities upon which the OCT wastes its financial and human resources, such as contests, prize giveaways, loyalty programs, or campaigns to have members 'like' the OCT on social media.^{xi} As OSSTF/FEESO recently pointed out:

There is no reason for a regulatory body to attend political fundraising dinners, or lobby the government, and it's a mystery how hosting golf tournaments or wine and cheese events helps the OCT to fulfill its regulatory mandate. Those concerns are only exacerbated by the proposed fee increase and the lack of transparency surrounding it.^{xii}

While many teachers and support staff work in ag-

ing buildings that are sweltering in the warmer months and cold in the winter, where toilets don't flush and windows don't open, and must work within budgets that barely cover the cost of essential classroom supplies, the OCT is housed in some of the most expensive real estate in Toronto, complete with polished marble floors. Teachers are keenly aware of the disconnect between the OCT and our daily working lives.

In addition, there is the often-infuriating content of the glossy OCT magazine, *Professionally Speaking*. In the back are the 'blue pages,' where the OCT provides the details about members facing discipline. Every issue has a story about a celebrity's 'remarkable teacher,' many of whom, ironically, would be putting themselves at risk of discipline by the OCT for their lauded teaching methods if they used them today. Much of the remainder of the magazine has become advertising, advice on what products teachers should buy for their classrooms (from their own funds, of course), information on contests and giveaways, or articles on teacher issues that the OCT pays writers who aren't teachers to produce. During the recent fee increase debate, OTF President Chris Cowley identified the latter as a common, and troubling, OCT practice. Take, for example, a featured article from the magazine's December 2017 edition entitled "The Benefits of Occasional Teaching." The writer—who, a Google search reveals, runs his own communications company, and is not a teacher—extolls the benefits of being a precarious worker. No matter that you're struggling to find work every day; you should just learn "Lesson #2: Go with the flow."^{xiii} No wonder so many copies of *Professionally Speaking* end up in the recycling bin.

It's relatively easy to dismiss what I've outlined above as simply a bureaucracy running amok and wasting our money. Instead, it's important to view the state of the OCT within a larger political context. From its beginnings, the OCT has been an agent of the government. It was imposed by the

government to give itself more power over teachers, couched in the guise of 'public accountability.' Teachers, after all, have historically been the resisters when it comes to governments imposing political agendas in education.^{xiv} In a neoliberal era—one where governments have become beholden to financial markets and have insisted on cuts to education spending—teachers and their unions stood in the way. Increasingly coercive legislation has been the primary tool of consecutive governments in dealing with resistance,^{xv} but it has not been their only strategy. The other is the erosion of teachers' power to define professionalism for themselves, to the point where definitions of professional judgment have to be negotiated by their unions at the bargaining table. Whereas teachers might view themselves as professionals who will defend public education, maintain academic standards, and critically assess government, Ministry and board initiatives, the government would prefer professionals who value obedience over advocacy. This is the type of professionalism that the OCT promotes. It not only defines what 'professional standards' are, it enforces them via disciplinary processes, and frames them for the public and for teachers. This form of professionalism makes it more and more difficult for teachers to resist, even when a government is blatantly infringing on their rights. What the recent fee-increase fiasco has revealed is just how far this goes. Much like a corporation looking to sell a product, the OCT is purposefully expending financial and human resources on communications experts, who are tasked with framing the 'message' for public consumption. We see this via the OCT's blogs, website, and written publications. It is bringing this message to politicians and others via fundraisers and other swanky events. There is no doubt that the OCT is pushing to deliver professional development because it is another vehicle for non-teacher-driven messaging.

The OCT needs to abandon its 'mandate creep' and stick to what it was created to do. Teachers

want their fees used to make real improvements in areas such as due process and real member service, not prize giveaways and golf tournaments. In order to see that this happens, teachers, and the organizations that democratically represent them, must keep the activities of the OCT continually on their radar, and must commit to action when action is required. The OTF and its affiliated unions must use their political clout to continually raise issues with the OCT and the provincial government. The fact that the recent fee increase was voted down is a

testament to what collective action can do. We must collectively resist the vision that the OCT is selling, and clearly express that it has no business using our own fees to compel us to buy into that vision.

Chantal Mancini is the former President for the Teachers' Unit in District 21, Hamilton-Wentworth. She is currently a PhD student in the School of Labour Studies at McMaster University, as well as the Vice-President External for CUPE 3906.

- i Duncan MacLellan, "Neoliberalism and Ontario Teachers' Unions: A 'Not-So' Common Sense Revolution", *Socialist Studies: The Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies*, 2009: 5 (1), p. 51-74.
- ii Jennifer Lamarche-Schmalz, "The Ontario College of Teachers: Self-Regulation or Control of Teachers?" (Master's Thesis), University of Western Ontario, 1997, p. 62.
- iii Ibid., p. 63.
- iv Joseph B. Rose, "The Assault on Teacher Bargaining in Ontario", *Relations Industrielles*, 2002: 571, p. 100-128.
- v OSSTF/FEESO, OSSTF Brief to the Standing Committee on Social Development Concerning Bill 31: The College of Teachers Act, 1995. 9 April 1996.
- vi Ontario College of Teachers, What is the mandate of the Ontario College of Teachers? Online at www.oct.ca/faqs/general-information-on-the-ontario-college-of-teachers/what-is-the-mandate-of-the-ontario-college-of-teachers
- vii Ontario College of Teachers, Seventh Council elected, April 9, 2015. Online at www.oct.ca/public/media/announcements/election-results
- viii OTF, "Course Correction: A Renewed Focus for the Ontario College of Teachers", OTF Research Report,

- January 2014. Online at www.otffeo.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/10/OCT-Paper-Course-Correction-Jan-2014.pdf
- ix Ontario College of Teachers, Complaints and discipline. Online at www.oct.ca/members/complaints-and-discipline
- x OTF, January 2014.
- xi Ibid.
- xii OSSTF/FEESO, "The OCT needs to check its priorities", *Update*, 2017-2018, 45 (3). Online at www.osstf.on.ca/en-CA/publications/update/2017-2018/45-03/the-oct-needs-to-check-its-priorities.aspx
- xiii Stuart Foxman, "The Benefits of Occasional Teaching," *Professionally Speaking*, December 2017, p. 32-37.
- xiv Andy Hanson, *Classroom Struggle: Teachers' Unions, Collective Bargaining, and Neoliberal Education Reform, Public Sector Unions in the Age of Austerity*, eds. Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), p. 103-112.
- xv Leo Panitch and Donald Schwartz, "The Continuing Assault on Public Sector Unions," *Public Sector Unions in the Age of Austerity*, eds. Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage, (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), p. 31-45.

The ReelEducation program

Bringing films about differently-abled persons into classrooms



One can only trust that society will reach a place where universal design will be the core of every development plan. And eventually, all living spaces will accommodate differently-abled people and allow the whole community to be able to enjoy their city, place of work or school without obstruction.

Younger people of today have been the most exposed to living in communities where differently-abled people are getting a fair chance at experiencing a full life. More and more they get the chance to share spaces that accommodate everyone.

Now in its third year, the ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto has been showcasing films that address topics such as inclusion, disability and accessibility. As the largest festival in Canada dedicated to showcasing Deaf and disability cultures, it has received an overwhelming number of requests from teachers and parents needing tailored tools to talk to kids about these sometimes tough topics.

In response to these requests, the Festival is launching the ReelEducation program in classrooms across Ontario. Starting on April 3, 2018, the ReelEducation program will offer teachers downloadable lesson plans and activities paired with eleven films from around the world to help students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 learn about and be exposed to different cultures.

These free resources are meant for educators and parents to teach students about inclusion, empathy, universal design, mental health and stereotypes,

as well as attitudinal and employment barriers. Each ReelEducation kit comes in an accessible format (films with open captioning) with a lesson plan that identifies the theme in each film.

More specifically, the films and lessons centre on the experiences and stories of people with disabilities, including people with Autism; developmental, mobility and visual disabilities; and people who identify as Deaf. The program encompasses eleven films from countries around the world, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Iraq, Australia, New Zealand, and the Netherlands.

ReelAbilities Toronto, with the support of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario and other sponsors, has partnered with the Rick Hansen Schools Program and Harmony Movement to develop the inaugural ReelEducation curriculum and connect with school boards, administrators, parents and teachers. For schools in the GTA, there will be an exciting field trip opportunity at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital in mid to late May, where ReelAbilities will bring together kids with and without disabilities to view the films and learn together.

If educators are interested in the program and would like to learn more, they can visit toronto.reelabilitieslegacy.org/reeducation and fill out a form so the ReelEducation team can get in touch.

To download the films and lesson plans or for more information on the ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto taking place from May 30 to June 4, 2018, visit toronto.reelabilities.org.



Stills from three of the several *ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto* films, that will be used as part of the *ReelEducation* program

◀ *The Interviewer.*
Film description: Thomas is a lawyer looking for more in life. During an interview at a prestigious law firm, he realized that his chance to make a difference in the world is closer and more unexpected than he could ever imagine.



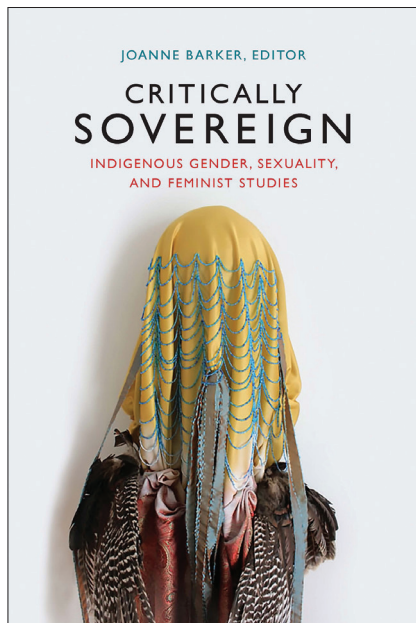
◀ *Adam's Bar Mitzvah.* Film description: "Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say." This short documentary follows Adam Wolfond as he prepares for his Bar Mitzvah and illuminates Judaism, identity, disability and community.



◀ *My Life in the City.* Film description: People with disabilities are often left out of conversations about city building. This film shares stories and ideas from adults with intellectual disabilities on urban spaces, development and a vision for the city of Toronto.

Top picks

Reviews



Critically Sovereign—Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies

By Joanne Barker (Editor)

Duke University Press (April 28, 2017)

288 pages, Paperback \$24.65; Cloth \$99.95; Kindle \$21.14

Reviewed by Tracey Germa

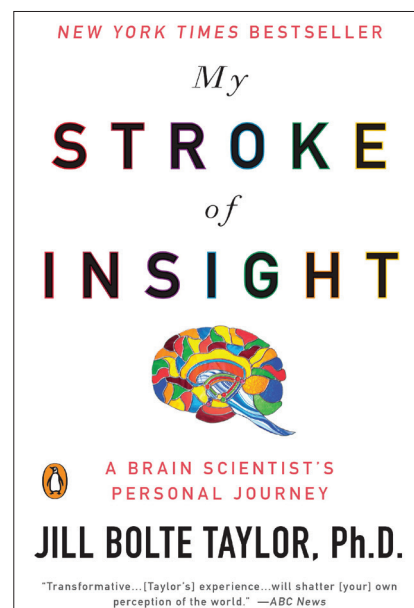
The collected essays in *Critically Sovereign* use the history of colonization to highlight Westernized concepts of gender, sexuality, and feminism in indigenous histories and identities. The works explore the complexities of LGBTQ, feminist, and gender equality from within traditions of indigenaity. By marking the correlations (and often the conflicts) between pre and post-colonial notions of gender, sexuality, indigenaity, and Nationhood, the authors deconstruct a variety of cultural pre-conceptions, practices, rules, and identities.

Barker's introduction positions the collection within a context of ongoing colonialism, while also suggesting that there is a difficult and sometimes absent connection of gender, sexuality, and

feminism in Critical Indigenous Studies (CIS). She also focuses the writings within a discussion of sovereignty, nationhood, and self-determination. While the subjects are diverse, within them all is a desire to examine indigenous histories from a new and focused perspective of gender, sexuality, and feminism. Pieces in the collection explore subjects such as: the social constructs of Hawaiian history and the pre-colonial acceptance of non-heteronormative relationships; the colonial practices that normalized patriarchy and heterosexuality among the Dine; how violence has continued to be a highly sexualized and gendered experience for indigenous populations; ways in which depictions and expectations of hyper-maleness have been constructed in post-colonial indigenous communities; and the historically sexualized eco-narrative of women in indigenous oral literature. Essays also explore how nationhood and forward-moving indigenous identities will need to continue to critically examine the conflicts between pre-colonial and post-colonial indigenous ways of being and believing.

The text is dense and aimed at grad-students with an ability to work in both feminist and indigenous frameworks. As an educational tool, *Critically Sovereign* would be best suited to individual research. An approach to connecting this collection to teaching or educational settings would be to consider the pieces as a tool to question the colonial lens through which so much feminist, gender, and sexuality work is seen. For those of us seeking to grow our equity work in educational settings, reading essays like those in this collection allow us to privilege-check our own approaches. The denseness of the material aside, each piece acts as a motivator for equity work and as a reminder that this work cannot be done in a vacuum, and can never be complete without an understanding of intersectionality.

Tracey Germa is the 1st Vice-President of the Teachers Bargaining Unit in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge and is a member of the provincial Communications and Political Action Committee.



My Stroke Of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey

By Jill Bolte Taylor

Penguin Books; 1 Reprint edition (May 12 2008)

193 pages, Paperback \$22.00;

eBook \$14.99

Reviewed by Nanci Henderson

Editor's note: While we normally publish reviews of current titles, this review considers a book that was published in 2006, but which may not have come to the attention of educators as a potentially valuable resource. That is the focus of this review.

In 2006, Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor's *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey* was published to great acclaim. In the 12 years since, it continues to be a "go to" guide for those touched by brain injury and for their supportive caregivers. The value of the book to the average reader is as an optimistic memoir of recovery written by a stroke survivor who is also a Harvard brain scientist or neuroanatomist. Within an expansive field of study, Bolte Taylor's book is elevated due to two valuable appendices that are excellent references for individuals supporting an individual with a brain injury. Appendix A is "Ten Assessment Questions," while Appendix B is "Forty

Things I Needed Most.”

Beyond the obvious audience, Bolte Taylor’s book is relevant to teachers, educational assistants, and all education workers who support neurologically diverse students. Her ability to articulate what was happening during her stroke is relevant for the coach who may be the first adult to attend to a student after they have sustained a concussion; or an office assistant communicating with a returning student newly diagnosed with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI); or a classroom teacher trying to determine why their IEPd student requires specific academic, environmental, and assessment accommodations. Bolte Taylor delineates how the right and left cerebral hemispheres operate, how the microcircuitry of brain cells and chemicals communicate, and the implications for an individual recovering from a brain injury. She describes the intensity with which the neurotypical operate and how lights, sounds, movements, and intense verbal input can drain a person who is healing from a brain injury for years post injury.

Among many suggestions, Bolte Taylor’s lists strategies highly relevant within the educational context. For instance, use multiple choice questions versus yes/no, break actions and tasks into smaller steps, clarify the next step, introduce concepts kinesthetically, make soft eye contact before engaging the individual verbally, and flex your tone, volume, and pace when speaking with a student with a brain injury, in order to make your communication clear and digestible.

Overall, Dr. Bolte Taylor shares a compelling experience without getting bogged down in too much neuroscience, but her ability to connect the experiences of someone recovering to the learning journey is still relevant 12 years after her initial publication, while also being a valuable read for anyone needing to understand stroke recovery too.

Nanci Henderson is the Vice President of the Occasional/Teacher Bargaining Unit in District 24, Waterloo.



Whose Global Village? Rethinking How Technology Shares Our World
By Ramesh Srinivasan
NYU Press (Feb. 28 2017)
272 pages, Hardcover \$41.32;
Kindle \$18.08
Reviewed by Dan Earle

Ramesh Srinivasan’s *Whose Global Village? Rethinking How Technology Shares Our World*, attempts to pull back the curtain on the powerful world of digital technologies, and boldly challenges everything you think you know about the design, implementation, and research and development that has fostered the “new technology revolution.” A revolution that has created a world dominated by a myth of “techno-inevitability” and a falsely inflated belief that social justice and advocacy can now be successful only through a reliance on digital technologies.

This book offers an incredibly vast review of numerous theories and research, and in a very succinct and direct way challenges everything technology corporations and institutions would have us believe about the “all-powerful” digital technology revolution. Srinivasan’s research points out that the “new technology revolution is neither global nor cross-cultural. It is primarily produced and

shaped by powerful corporations and institutions from Europe and North America, with various collaborators across the world.” Worse yet, upon careful critical analysis, Srinivasan points out the disastrous impacts of globalization and digital technology on the world’s most vulnerable and marginalized.

According to Srinivasan, digital technology has not created a global village. In fact, by moving away from the current norms of top-down, Western-centric systems of digital technology design and implementation—systems that have dominated the design and implementation of digital technology—he believes that new technologies can be developed that respect cultural diversity and ontology.

By adopting an approach that is based on collaborative ethnography, Srinivasan’s field research in India, in rural Australia, and in the Native American communities of San Diego found that the most marginalized groups of society could be empowered and benefit from digital technology that is created by them and based on their needs, instead of simply exploiting them culturally and economically.

Overall, *Whose Global Village? Rethinking How Technology Shapes Our World*, challenges everything we’ve come to blindly accept about technology, but at the same time offers an alternative vision that, if adopted, could actually result in a more inclusive, empowered, and just society that still includes technology. As education workers, this new lens/narrative cannot, and should not, be ignored, because it could revolutionize the way we think about, adopt, and implement digital technologies in our personal and professional lives, and in doing so, presents a means to work towards a world that will foster greater equity, diversity, and empowerment.

Dan Earle is a teacher in District 19, Peel and is the chair of the provincial Communications and Political Action Committee.

The message of #MeToo

It's time for a change in the culture, both within and outside of the workplace



Over the past few months, we have been witnessing an extraordinary shift in the public perception and understanding of sexual assault and sexual harassment. Inspired initially by the multiple allegations against film producer Harvey Weinstein that surfaced in October 2017, women around the world were soon using the social media hashtag #MeToo and describing their own experiences with sexual harassment and assault in their workplaces and in their communities. It quickly became disturbingly apparent that millions of women shared not only similar experiences of unwanted and unwelcome sexual attention from men, but also a common sense of frustration at the absence of effective recourse available to them through their employers, or through a justice system that, more often than not, seemed focused on judging the victims of sexual assault rather than the perpetrators.

In the ensuing weeks a growing list of high-profile men—actors and others in the film industry, well-known media personalities, prominent journalists and politicians—found themselves falling

from positions of power in the wake of revelations about their conduct toward women. The movement has even jolted the political landscape here in Ontario, and may play a significant role in the outcome of the June provincial election after the sudden resignation of Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown in the wake of allegations against him.

In just a matter of months, the Me Too phenomenon has come to be seen by many as a watershed moment and a seismic shift in the power dynamic between men and women, particularly in the workplace. It's important to remember though, that unlike movie stars or other women who come forward about men in high-profile positions, many women who have been victims of sexual harassment or assault in their workplaces still do not feel that they are in a position to take action. Notwithstanding nominal legislative protections against harassment, working women—especially working women who do not have the protection of a union—often fear dire consequences for speaking up.

It's also important to remember that, while all of this may seem to have happened quite suddenly, this is hardly a case of swift justice. The behaviours that have finally been exposed have been going on for years, sometimes for decades. To the extent that Me Too is a victory for women, it's a hard-fought victory that's been a long time coming, a victory against which most of the power structures in our society have actively conspired.

The labour movement has a long history of promoting and fighting on behalf of gender equity, and for almost a century OSSTF/FEESO has been at the forefront of that battle. At the Federation's second annual meeting in 1920, in fact, a motion was passed supporting the principle of equal pay for equal

work, and through the ensuing decades we have maintained a focus on the rights of women. Most recently, our provincial Status of Women Committee has developed the *Pathways to Leadership* resource to encourage and guide women who seek a more active role within the Federation at both the local and provincial level.

We have, for a number of years, paid specific attention to the issue of sexual harassment. In the early 1990s, OSSTF/FEESO launched *The Joke's Over*, a meticulously-researched resource to help educators address sexual harassment in our schools. In 2010 we followed up with *Still Not Laughing*, an updated resource and associated workshop offered by our Educational Services Department.

It's important for us to celebrate the work that we've done on behalf of gender equity, as well as our targeted efforts against sexual harassment. But while Me Too has shown us that significant victories are possible, it has also served as a dramatic illustration of the depth of the problem, and a reminder that unacceptable behaviour on the part of men towards women is still common in many workplaces and working relationships. We will always fight for better protections and policies, and for improved processes that remove the fear of reprisal when women come forward. But let's also hope that Me Too will be a catalyst for men to undertake an honest audit of their attitudes and behaviours towards the women with whom they work and socialize. Policies, procedures and other formal protections, however well-conceived, are still after-the-fact responses. A significant shift in the culture, both inside and outside of our workplaces, would be a far better solution.

Harvey Bischof,
OSSTF/FEESO President

Le message de #MeToo

Un changement de culture s'impose dans le milieu de travail et à l'extérieur

Depuis quelques mois, nous avons été témoins d'un changement extraordinaire de la perception et de la compréhension du public face à l'agression et au harcèlement sexuels. Initialement inspirées par les multiples allégations portées contre le cinéaste Harvey Weinstein, qui ont fait surface en octobre 2017, les femmes de partout dans le monde se sont mises à utiliser le mot-clic des médias sociaux #MeToo (#MoiAussi) pour décrire leurs propres expériences de harcèlement et d'agression sexuels dans leur lieu de travail et dans leurs communautés. Il est rapidement devenu apparent et inquiétant que des millions de femmes partageaient non seulement des expériences semblables d'attention sexuelle non désirée et importune de la part des hommes, mais aussi un sens de frustration commun quant à l'absence de recours efficace dont elles pourraient se prévaloir auprès de leurs employeurs ou d'un système judiciaire qui, au lieu de se concentrer à juger les victimes d'agression sexuelle, comme il semble le faire le plus souvent, jugerait plutôt les agresseurs.

Dans les semaines qui ont suivi, une liste grandissante d'hommes prestigieux, des acteurs et d'autres personnes de l'industrie cinématographique, des personnalités bien connues des médias, des journalistes et politiciens réputés, ont perdu leurs postes de pouvoir à la suite de révélations sur leur comportement envers les femmes. Le mouvement a même ébranlé la scène politique ici, en Ontario, et pourrait jouer un rôle important dans les résultats de l'élection provinciale en juin suite à la démission soudaine de Patrick Brown, chef du Parti conservateur, en raison d'allégations dirigées contre lui.

En quelques mois seulement, le phénomène *Me Too* en est arrivé à être considéré par plusieurs comme un tournant

et un virage à 180 degrés dans la dynamique du pouvoir entre les hommes et les femmes, et ce, particulièrement dans le milieu de travail. Cependant, il est important de se rappeler que, contrairement aux vedettes de cinéma et aux autres femmes qui portent des accusations contre des hommes occupant des postes d'importance, plusieurs femmes, qui ont été victimes de harcèlement ou d'agression sexuels dans leur milieu de travail, ne se sentent toujours pas en mesure d'agir. Nonobstant les protections législatives minimales contre le harcèlement sexuel, les femmes qui travaillent, surtout celles qui ne sont pas protégées par un syndicat, craignent de graves conséquences si elles dénoncent.

Il est également important de se rappeler que, même si tout ceci semble s'être produit si soudainement, ce n'est guère un cas de justice rapide. Les comportements qui ont finalement été exposés se produisent depuis des années, voire même des décennies. Dans la mesure où *Me Too* est une victoire pour les femmes, c'est une victoire durement acquise et attendue depuis longtemps, une victoire contre laquelle ont conspiré la majorité des structures du pouvoir de notre société.

Le mouvement syndical œuvre depuis longtemps à promouvoir et à se battre pour l'égalité des sexes et, depuis presque 100 ans, OSSTF/FEESO est aux premières lignes de cette lutte. Lors de la deuxième assemblée générale de la Fédération en 1920, une résolution a été adoptée appuyant le principe « à travail égal, salaire égal » et pendant les décennies qui ont suivi, nous avons continué de nous concentrer sur les droits des femmes. Tout récemment, notre Comité provincial sur le statut de la femme a développé la ressource « Parcours vers le leadership » (*Pathways to Leadership*) qui encourage et guide les femmes qui sou-

haitent jouer un rôle plus actif au sein de la Fédération, tant au niveau local que provincial.

Depuis plusieurs années, nous avons porté une attention particulière au problème du harcèlement sexuel. Au début des années 90, OSSTF/FEESO a lancé « On a fini de rire » (*The Joke is Over*), une ressource méticuleusement recherchée pour aider les éducatrices et éducateurs à aborder le harcèlement sexuel dans nos écoles. En 2010, nous donnions suite avec « On ne s'amuse toujours pas » (*Still Not Laughing*), une ressource mise à jour avec un atelier connexe offert par notre Secteur des services éducatifs.

Il est important pour nous de célébrer le travail accompli sur l'égalité entre les genres ainsi que nos efforts ciblés contre le harcèlement sexuel. Bien que *Me Too* nous démontre que des victoires importantes sont possibles, il a aussi servi d'illustration dramatique de l'ampleur du problème et de rappel que les comportements inacceptables de la part des hommes envers les femmes sont toujours monnaie courante dans plusieurs milieux et relations de travail. Nous lutterons toujours pour de meilleures protections et politiques ainsi que pour des processus améliorés qui dissipent la crainte de représailles pour les femmes qui dénoncent. Mais espérons aussi que *Me Too* deviendra un déclencheur qui encouragera les hommes à faire un examen honnête de leurs attitudes et de leurs comportements envers les femmes avec lesquelles ils travaillent et socialisent. Les politiques, les procédures et les autres protections formelles, aussi bien conçues qu'elles le soient, restent toujours des réponses après coup. Un changement de culture, autant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur de nos milieux de travail, serait une bien meilleure solution.

Harvey Bischof,
président d'OSSTF/FEESO

Events

Conferences,
PD opportunities and
other items of interest

April 10 and 11, 2018
8th Annual Summit on Education Technology
Hilton Toronto Airport Hotel, Toronto, ON

Technology is rapidly transforming the face of education. Schools and teachers need to implement and support new technologies or risk leaving their students behind. Discover how you can embrace these changes to enhance student engagement and boost academic performance. For more information, please visit www.educationtechnologysummit.com.

April 13 and 14, 2018
researchED Ontario 2018
Westin Toronto Airport Hotel (April 13)
Mississauga Secondary School (April 14)

The second ever researchED conference in Canada is sponsored by OSSTF/FEESO and will take place on April 13 and 14. ResearchED is a grassroots movement from the UK that encourages teachers and education workers to rely on evidence to inform their practices and to expect schools to implement only initiatives and programs that have been empirically proven to be effective. To that end, researchED brings together researchers and teachers and education workers to share data, studies and informed practices. For more information, please visit: researched.org.uk/event/researched-ontario-2018.

April 16 and 17, 2018
Autism Awareness Centre Ottawa Conference
Shaw Centre, Ottawa

"Building Social Relationships through

Evidence Based Social Skills Programming for Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder," presented by Scott Bellini, and *"Critical Mass, Purposeful Practice and ASD: Creating Independent Learners,"* presented by Brenda Smith Myles. Learn practical skills that can be immediately implemented into existing curriculum and training programs. For more information, www.autismawarenesscentre.com.

April 19-21, 2018
CIAAA Athletic Directors and School Coaching Conference
Hotel Saskatchewan, Regina

The third annual Canadian Athletic Administrators Association (CIAAA) Athletic Directors and School Coaching Conference will be held in Regina, Saskatchewan this year. The conference offers a mixture of content, networking, and social opportunities combining for a dynamic, customizable, Athletic-Director centered professional development experience. It's a great professional development opportunity for new, experienced and aspiring athletic directors, and teacher-coaches: www.ciaaa.ca.

April 22, 23 and 24, 2018
#LifeLongLearners
The Westin Prince, Toronto

The Ontario Cooperative Education Association will be hosting their annual spring conference in Toronto this April. For more information visit: www.ocea.on.ca.

May 10 - 13, 2018
The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators
Presents the Pulse Ontario Dance Conference
York University, Toronto, ON

Under the auspice of CODE, the Pulse Ontario Dance Conference was formed in 2006 as a three-day gathering with a mandate of bringing together stakeholders to bolster and advocate for dance education in the province of Ontario through enduring relationships between artists, youth, and educators. We

are looking forward to an exciting roster of dance classes, workshops, and performances in North American and Global Indigenous dance forms, urban dance forms and emerging dance aesthetics. For more information, visit: www.pulse-dance.ca/web/en/conference.shtml.

June 2, 2017
Balancing Access and Quality: The 15th Annual Summer Institute on Early Childhood Development
George Brown College, Waterfront Campus, Toronto

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 15th annual Summer Institute, the theme of which is "Balancing Access and Quality," will examine challenges in promoting quality while targeting expansion. Featured speakers include Sir Kevan Collins, head of the UK Education Endowment Foundation, providing evidenced-based evaluation of the policies and practices that work – and don't work – to improve children's outcomes, and Dr. Angela James, who draws on indigenous pedagogy to strengthen early years practice. For more information, visit www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/Events.

June 3–5, 2018
2018 ECNO Conference
Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston, ON

The theme of this year's conference, "ECNO 2018—Explore the Possibilities!" highlights the ever changing ICT landscape in Ontario education. We encourage students and teachers to investigate new technologies and to discover relationships between existing knowledge and new concepts. With new pedagogies that encourage information and communication technologies, we are providing an environment of endless possibilities! For more information visit: www.ecnoconference.com.

Education pays off.

Want to get ahead? Adding to your financial know-how is an important step in the right direction. We can help. We offer the educator-specific tips, tools and resources to help get you where you want to go. We believe learning is earning.

Educators
FINANCIAL GROUP

Visit The Learning Centre at educatorsfinancialgroup.ca
for helpful information today.

Get that sweet feeling back again!

OTIP makes choosing insurance easy.

Insurance renewing in the next 60 days?

Visit OTIPinsurance.com/OSSTFchoice or call 1-844-231-6847 to get a car or home insurance quote from OTIP. As a bonus, receive a \$25 gift card of your choice!*

For a little extra sweetness, there are 12 gift card options for you to choose from!



promo code:
choice



OTIP is a proud
partner of
Edvantage

*Restrictions apply. See details. You must speak with an OTIP broker on the telephone to be eligible for the \$25 gift card. Must be a resident of Ontario and a member of the education community. Valid on quotes for policies expiring in the next 60 days. Promotion ends August 31, 2018. Maximum of one gift card per household. Visit OTIPinsurance.com/OSSTFchoice for full terms and conditions. The merchants represented are not sponsors of the rewards or otherwise affiliated with this company. The logos and other identifying marks attached are trademarks of and owned by each represented company and/or its affiliates. Please visit each company's website for additional terms and conditions.