

An aerial photograph of a large crowd gathered in a park. In the background, a large, ornate building with multiple domes and arched windows is visible. The park is filled with trees showing autumn foliage in shades of yellow and orange. The crowd is spread across a large open area, with some vehicles parked along the edges. The overall scene suggests a significant public event or rally.

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When inadvertent outcomes are a good thing

Sometimes a theme emerges whether we want it to or not



We occasionally receive inquiries and suggestions about dedicating a full issue of *Education Forum* to a single theme or topic. It's not an idea entirely without merit. There is, after all, no shortage of interesting and consequential topics that could be explored from a number of perspectives by different authors.

Nevertheless, over the course of my two years as editor of the magazine, I've become cautious about proposals for "theme issues." Part of that caution is rooted in a recognition that the routine challenges of planning and pulling together a magazine issue for publication can easily be amplified if the focus were to be restricted to a particular topic or theme. Concerns arise about not appealing to a wide enough audience, and there is always a risk that the subject matter of the features and articles within a "theme issue" might overlap too much, even for those readers who are passionately engaged with the particular topic. Also, to commit an entire issue of the magazine to a specific theme creates a risk that important and possibly pressing concerns that might be of more immediate interest to members and others would have to be set aside for a later issue and not presented in a

timely manner.

This issue of *Education Forum* was not planned as a theme issue. The topics for the features and articles came about, as they usually do, somewhat organically through ideas submitted by members or discussed by the editorial board. And yet, as the issue was coming together, it became apparent that a loose theme was evolving. In one way or another, to a greater or lesser degree, every story in this issue touches on the importance of activism.

At one end of the spectrum we have the seasoned perspective of David Moss, a former Director of the Communications/Political Action Department at Provincial Office, on activism in the Mike Harris era, and on what it took, from an organizational point of view, to build the resolve and solidarity required for Ontario educators to initiate what remains today the largest job action ever undertaken by education workers in North America. And on the other end of the spectrum is a compelling personal story from Linda Rodgers of District 32, Centre-Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario about her first foray into political activism, provoked by the Ford government's reckless actions affecting the Franco-Ontarian community.

There are also features and articles about paths to leadership within the Federation for female activists, about Federation members who have recently stepped forward to run in provincial or municipal elections, and about OSSTF/FEESO members who first attended the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) as teacher candidates, and who have since assumed active roles within the Federation. Larry Savage, of Brock University's Department of Labour Studies, writes about the growing influence of corporate interests on Canadian university campuses, and insists on

the importance of organized resistance through coalitions between student, faculty and support staff activists to counter the trend. And the feature by Vanessa Russell and Cheryl Mootoo, about their unique pilot program within the *EdVance* structure, describes a pedagogical response to the negative impacts of ill-advised government decisions; I would not hesitate to argue that this, too, is a form of activism.

It was not by design that these stories, all of them touching on activism of one form or another, have come together in this issue of *Education Forum*. But I also don't think it was entirely coincidence. I suspect, rather, that the current political climate in Ontario is changing the lens through which many educators and education workers see their relationship to the system of publicly-funded education in which they work. It's also my suspicion that, for many OSSTF/FEESO members, the Federation's stated goal of "protecting and enhancing public education" has taken on a fresh and poignant meaning in light of the Ford government's assault on all levels of education, from elementary schools through to post-secondary institutions. I would like to think that percolating through the diverse membership of this union is a renewed understanding that every one of us has a part to play in protecting the system that we have all had a part in building. That understanding, that recognition of the personal role each of us must play on behalf of our collective interest, is at the core of activism. If the stories that end up on the pages of *Education Forum* are a reflection of trends or prevalent concerns within OSSTF/FEESO, then the unintended theme that seems to have presented itself in the current issue is a good omen.

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Lorsque des résultats inattendus s'avèrent positifs

Parfois, un thème prend naissance bien malgré nous

Il arrive que l'on nous demande ou suggère de consacrer un numéro complet d'*Education Forum* à un thème ou sujet unique. Il ne s'agit pas d'une mauvaise idée en soi. Après tout, il n'y a pas de pénurie de sujets intéressants et importants qui pourraient être explorés à partir de plus d'une perspective, par des auteurs différents.

Quoi qu'il en soit, pendant mes deux années à titre de rédacteur en chef de notre revue, j'ai développé une certaine prudence lorsque vient le temps de suggérer des numéros thématiques. Cette prudence est en partie fondée sur le fait que les défis habituels de la planification et de la réalisation d'un numéro de revue, pour la publication, peuvent facilement s'amplifier si l'objet de celui-ci est limité à un seul sujet ou thème particulier. Des préoccupations surgissent en ce qui concerne un auditoire visé trop restreint et il y a toujours le risque que le sujet traité dans les articles sur une question thématique se chevauche trop, même pour les lecteurs passionnément engagés envers le sujet précis. De plus, le fait de consacrer un numéro complet de la revue à un thème particulier entraîne le risque que des préoccupations importantes et potentiellement pressantes qui pourraient intéresser davantage les membres doivent être repoussées à un numéro ultérieur et ne soient pas partagées en temps opportun.

Le numéro d'*Education Forum* ne devait pas, à l'origine, porter sur un sujet thématique. Les sujets choisis pour les articles se sont manifestés de la même façon, c'est-à-dire selon un processus quelque peu organique à partir d'idées présentées par les membres ou faisant l'objet de discussion par l'équipe de rédaction. Et pourtant, à mesure que le numéro prenait forme, un thème général se développait. D'une façon ou d'une autre, à des degrés variés, chaque article

du présent numéro touche l'importance du militantisme.

À une extrémité du spectre, nous avons la perspective éclairante de David Moss, ancien directeur du Secteur des communications/action politique au Bureau provincial, sur le militantisme au cours de l'ère Mike Harris, et ce qui a été requis, du point de vue organisationnel, pour bâtir la détermination et la solidarité requise chez les éducatrices et éducateurs de l'Ontario afin de lancer ce qui demeure aujourd'hui la plus importante action syndicale entreprise par les travailleurs de l'éducation en Amérique du Nord. Et à l'autre extrémité du spectre, un récit personnel captivant de Linda Rodgers, du District 32, sur ses balbutiements dans le militantisme politique, provoqués par les actions irresponsables du gouvernement Ford à l'endroit de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

Il contient également des articles sur le parcours vers le leadership au sein de la Fédération pour les militantes, sur les membres de la Fédération qui se sont récemment avancés pour se présenter aux élections provinciales ou municipales et sur les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO qui ont assisté pour la première fois à la Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP) à titre de candidats à l'enseignement, et qui ont depuis assumé des rôles actifs au sein de la Fédération. Larry Savage, du *Department of Labour Studies* à l'Université Brock, se prononce au sujet de l'influence grandissante des intérêts corporatifs sur les campus universitaires au Canada et insiste sur l'importance de la résistance concertée par le biais de coalitions entre les étudiants, le corps professoral et le personnel de soutien militants pour contrer cette tendance. Et aussi l'article de Vanessa Russell et de Cheryl Mootoo, au sujet de leur programme d'essai

unique au sein de la structure *EdVance*, décrit la réaction pédagogique aux impacts négatifs des décisions mal avisées du gouvernement; j'argumenterais sans hésiter qu'il s'agit là aussi d'une forme de militantisme.

Ce n'était pas d'un effort délibéré que ces articles, tous portant sur le militantisme d'une forme ou d'une autre, ont été réunis dans le présent numéro d'*Education Forum*. Cependant, je ne crois pas qu'il s'agisse complètement d'une coïncidence. Je crois plutôt que le climat politique actuel en Ontario teinte la perception des éducatrices et éducateurs et des travailleurs de l'éducation en ce qui concerne leur relation avec le système d'éducation publique dans lequel ils travaillent. Je soupçonne également que, pour de nombreux membres d'OSSTF/FEESO, le but énoncé de la Fédération de « protéger et d'améliorer l'éducation publique » vient de prendre un sens nouveau et saisissant à la lumière de l'agression du gouvernement Ford sur les niveaux d'éducation, à partir des écoles élémentaires jusqu'aux établissements postsecondaires. J'aimerais croire qu'au sein de l'ensemble diversifié des membres de notre Fédération se trouve une compréhension renouvelée que nous avons tous un rôle à jouer dans la protection de ce système que nous avons tous contribué à bâtir. Cette compréhension, cette reconnaissance du rôle personnel que nous devons tous jouer au nom de notre intérêt collectif, est au centre du militantisme. Si les articles qui finissent par se trouver sur les pages d'*Education Forum* miroitent les tendances ou les principales préoccupations au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO, alors le thème involontaire, qui semble s'être présenté dans le présent numéro, est de bon augure.

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Growing corporate influence on campuses

Bad news for both students and university workers



Big business is actively fostering closer relationships with Canadian universities in an effort to reorient post-secondary learning and research towards serving private business interests rather than the public good.

This trend is worrisome for university workers, students, and those segments of society who believe that the primary goal of a university should be to educate citizens rather than serve the research and labour market needs of corporate interests.

From increased reliance on corporate fundraising and branding, to shifts favouring revenue-generating programs and activities, to compensation practices for senior administration that mirror those in the private sector, to union avoidance schemes disguised as routine organizational restructuring, the signs of the corporatized university are evident on virtually every university campus.

Canada's universities are increasingly

operating as if they are private, for-profit, institutions. Provincial governments, business leaders, and market-oriented university administrators are working in tandem to facilitate and entrench these changes, often ignoring concerns raised by faculty, staff, and students about how corporate restructuring in the university is undermining both students' learning conditions and employees' working conditions.

Over the course of the last few decades, Canada's public universities have become increasingly reliant on corporate funding. While the corporate branding of campus classrooms or buildings, in exchange for a cash donation, is the most outward sign of corporatization on campus (on my own campus, students routinely cross the Canadian Tire bridge on their way to Scotia Bank hall), it's the inward processes of corporatization, shielded from public view, that are wreaking the most havoc as corporate

influence seeps into virtually every aspect of university life.

Corporatization and labour relations

Corporatization also involves introducing private sector labour relations practices that value the bottom line above all else. As a result, we've seen an explosion of precarious work on campuses and the replacement of unionized permanent, secure, and full-time positions with temporary jobs and contracted-out work, often under the guise of organizational restructuring. Corporatization has also fuelled the aggressive pursuit of concessions in collective bargaining in an effort to reduce workers' power and influence in the workplace. Dismantling collective agreements is key for university administrations since these legal contracts, which outline terms and conditions of work, often present roadblocks for those intent on reshaping universities along corporate lines.

Artwork: Kristina Ferorelli

The right-wing populist Ford government's stated objective to establish more centralized control over collective bargaining in the broader public sector may accelerate these trends as part of a larger strategy to reduce unions' bargaining power and more easily facilitate corporatization of our campuses. Moreover, the fact that business people now outnumber faculty, staff, and students on many universities' governing bodies will make it more difficult to undo the damage that has already been done.

Students are not clients

Those of us who work in universities, owe it to our students and co-workers to resist the corporatization of our campuses. On a per-student basis, Ontario's university funding levels are 35 per cent lower than the combined average of their provincial counterparts. This chronic level of underfunding has generated a climate of austerity at Ontario's universities, undermining the quality of education and providing an opening for business interests to help close the gap, with expectations that their corporate gifts will come with strings attached.

But while corporate leaders try to reorganize our universities to suit their own needs, we must continually remind ourselves that students are not clients and that universities are much more than job-training facilities. Ideally, a university education should enhance students' critical-thinking skills and develop capacities for engaged and meaningful social citizenship. In the corporatized university, however, these goals

are downplayed or altogether ignored in favour of teaching and research agendas that directly serve corporate interests.

Corporatization is also partly responsible for shifting university resources away from the core educational mission of the university towards the expansion of corporate-focused university administrative apparatuses that facilitate these processes. Equally troubling, we see the rise of exclusive partnerships between businesses and universities that threaten to undermine institutional independence by giving corporations influence over university hiring and spending priorities, especially as they relate to teaching and research.

Cross-campus coalitions are key

In order to reverse the tide of corporatization on university campuses, students, faculty, and staff must work together to resist and dismantle structures, processes, and initiatives designed to reorient universities towards the wants and needs of big business. This is no easy task and requires cross-campus coalition building that unites faculty, staff, and students in common opposition to the corporatized university model.

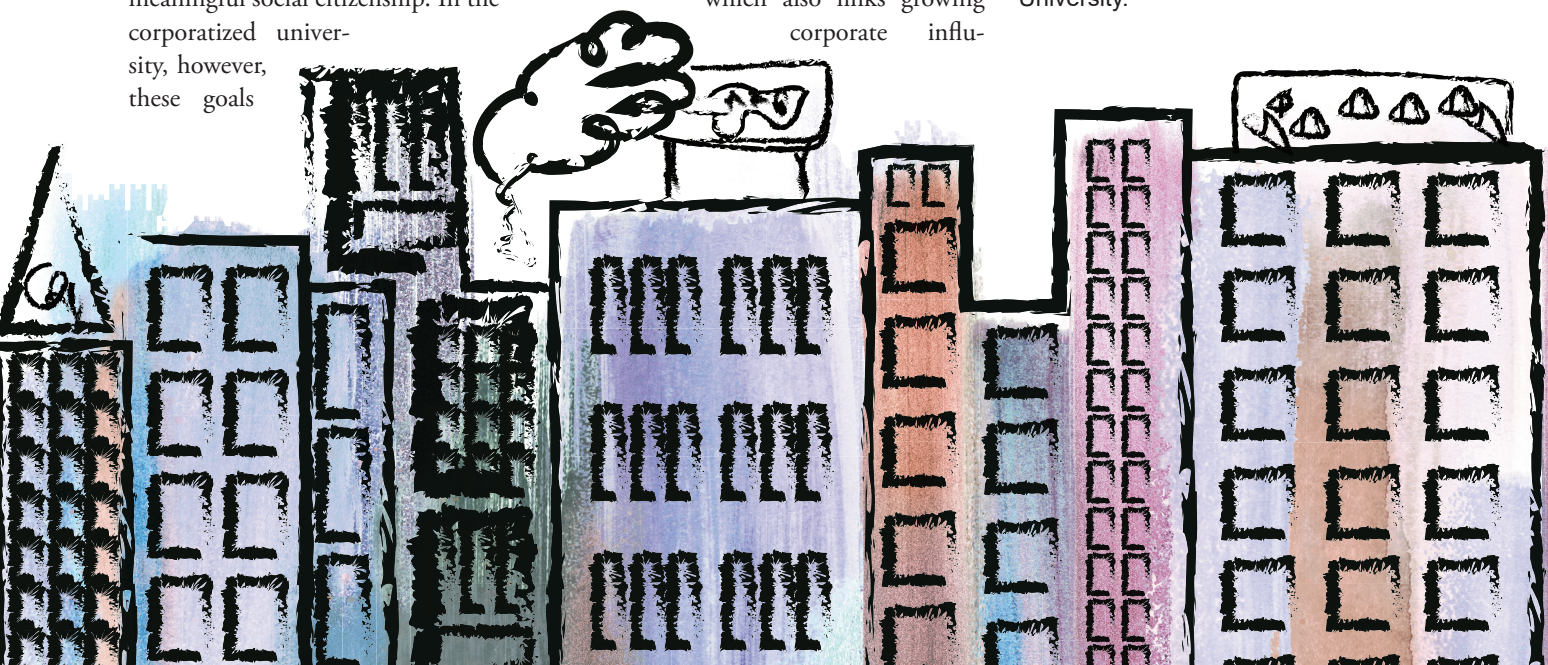
In part, that means working together to expose and challenge the composition of university governance structures where the business community is afforded the lion's share of voting positions. Governance has been a key focus of the Canadian Federation of Students' anti-corporatization campaign, which also links growing corporate influ-

ence on universities to increased tuition fees and the loss of student spaces on campus.

While university administrators certainly play an important role in fostering corporatization on campus, they are often responding to the policy preferences of provincial governments. That's why faculty, staff, and students challenging growing corporate influence on university campuses also need to act politically, outside of the university community, to oppose right-wing governments and politicians, like Ford, who encourage corporatization, oversee cuts to the university system, and prioritize tax cuts for wealthy individuals and corporations over investments in public post-secondary education.

Coalition building can be difficult, partly because it requires different groups to overcome their divisions and work together towards a common goal. As much as faculty, students, and staff at universities have different kinds of needs and priorities, they also share a lot in common. Focusing on what unites us—like support for the preservation and expansion of quality public post-secondary education—is key to rallying people around an alternate vision of the university and ultimately providing the base from which to effectively challenge the continued corporatization of Canadian universities.

Larry Savage is a Professor in the Department of Labour Studies at Brock University.



Taking it to the streets

Discovering the power of political action



(l-r) Marie-Claude Desrosiers, Diane Brochu and Linda Rodgers, District 32, Centre-Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario, Unité 64

December 1, 2018 marked an important date for francophones across the province of Ontario. It was a day on which thousands of Franco-Ontarians stood in unison to deliver a message to the premier of Ontario. They were protesting the government's decision to eliminate the independent Office of the French Language Services Commissioner, and the further announcement that plans for Ontario's long-awaited first officially Francophone university were being shelved. December 1 was also an important day for me personally. It will be forever etched in my mind as the day I took my first steps in the direction of political activism.

This year, OSSTF/FEESO is commemorating a century of defending the rights of education workers, and our history shows that inclusiveness is one of the hallmarks of the Federation.

Over the course of those 100 years,

OSSTF/FEESO has adjusted its sails many times to maintain a culture of progressive thinking that embraces the organization's diverse membership. Federation leaders and members continually defend the rights of equity-seeking groups, including persons of colour, persons with disabilities, as well as Indigenous, Francophone and LGBTQ members. As a Franco-Ontarian, who has been educated in French and who continues to work in the francophone education system, I empathize with the many challenges faced by minority groups and can certainly appreciate OSSTF/FEESO's efforts to level the playing field for all equity seeking bodies.

Even though I hold principles of equity in high regard, the notion of taking to the streets to demonstrate for just causes simply wasn't in my DNA. I just did not view myself as a picket line or political rally kind of person, until

the affronts proposed by Premier Ford against the Franco-Ontarian community really got me fired up. In the face of those affronts, I felt compelled to lend my voice to the thousands of other francophone voices across Ontario and Canada who chose to stand united to send a strong message to the Premier.

On December 1 2018, I joined OSSTF/FEESO members, families, and various other union partisans to gather outside Doug Ford's Etobicoke office. On this day, it did not matter if it was your first rally or your 50th. It mattered not if you spoke English or French, nor was cultural identity, age or gender a determining factor in every person's ability to demonstrate conviction and passion through a willingness to stand up be heard when rights are being taken away.

Donning the signature green and white colours of the Ontario franco-

Photo: Provided by member

As I stood surrounded by hundreds of fellow Franco-Ontarians, I recalled the lessons of my youth and felt a profound connection to the story of some very courageous francophone educators who took their political activism to the extreme.

phone flag, some demonstrators brandished signs imploring the Premier to revisit Canada's history. This was not the first time Franco-Ontarians have felt duty-bound to take on the government and defend the right to educate their children in their own language.

As I stood surrounded by hundreds of fellow Franco-Ontarians, I recalled the lessons of my youth and felt a profound connection to the story of some very courageous francophone educators who took their political activism to the extreme. In 1912, Regulation 17 was passed making it illegal to teach or even speak French in Ontario schools. Of course, the entire Franco-Ontarian community rose against this provincial law banning French instruction, and everywhere in the province female teachers continued to teach in French. A momentous standoff, known as the Battle of the Hatpins, ensued in 1916 when mothers and educators rallied against Regulation 17 in an effort to reclaim the right to teach in French. The impasse took place in the city of Ottawa where teachers Diane and Béatrice Desloges, accompanied by 19 mothers, commandeered their school. As the Desloges sisters taught in French at the risk of losing their salary and teaching certificates, the other women stood guard at the doors of the Guigues school armed with their imposing hatpins. After weeks of resistance, the government sent 30 police officers armed with batons to force out the women and children. The police were met with cast iron pans and rolling pins.

The actions of those audacious women inspired others to continue the battle, including Florence Quesnel in Green Valley, Jeanne Lajoie in Pembroke and Anne-Marie Lemelin from my home town of Welland. On February 3, 1916, the resistance escalated when 122 teachers went on strike and forced the closure of 17 schools, marking the start of a battle that lasted 11 more years. Regulation 17 was finally repealed in 1927.

When reflecting on the December 1 rally, parallels between this fight and

the struggles of the past are not lost on me; it's not hard to see why my Francophone compatriots would react so fiercely to the slights handed down by our current Premier. Our ancestors had fought courageously to regain the right to educate their children in French and, come hell or high water, their progeny would do the same.

Our union leaders have warned that troublesome days may be ahead with the Ford government at the helm. Political activism may, out of necessity, play an important role over the next three years. If and when our working conditions come under attack, it will be imperative that OSSTF/FEESO members stand united, just as our predecessors did in 1997 in response to the draconian measures of then-premier Mike Harris, and through countless other battles in our history.

I dare not surmise if or how the current premier might next insult the integrity of the proud francophone people of this province, but what I can say with assurance about those who attended the rallies in early December is that Franco-Ontarian people have fiery convictions that have been cultivated over generations. They will defend their culture, they will conserve their language and they will fight for their rights. And just as I am proud to call myself a Franco-Ontarian, I am equally appreciative to be a member of OSSTF/FEESO. For one hundred years, the dedication with which the Federation has defended the rights of its members has equalled the passion and resolve manifested by my francophone comrades, past and present, who have fought for, and who continue to defend, the interests of their kin. When it becomes necessary to defend our working conditions and fight for the quality of public education in Ontario, we must all stand up for each other to protect what we have gained and safeguard the future of our children.

Linda Rodgers is an Educational Assistant in District 32, Centre-Sud-Ouest de l'Ontario, Unité 64–OCT/Ed Asst/PSSP.

Stepping up

OSSTF/FEESO members put their names forward



Editor's note: In the Fall 2018 issue of Education Forum, Katrina Sale (District 16, York Region) wrote about her experience as a candidate in the June 2018 provincial election. This article profiles a number of additional OSSTF/FEESO members from around the province who ran in last year's provincial or municipal elections.

There are a lot of interesting things going on with the current political situation in the United States right now. To say it has been a couple of years of whirlwind, increasingly unbelievable, maddening, frustrating politics would be to put it mildly. As Americans grapple with politicians embracing alternative facts in alternative realities, Ontarians are wondering just how much the Ontario government under Doug Ford might draw from Trumpism.

Following politics, with its increasing negativity, can be exhausting. As lies, obfuscation and unilateral decisions become more prominent, the old sentiments—"Why should I vote or engage with campaigns when nothing I say will matter, nothing will change. All politicians lie. No one is ever telling the truth,"—are amplified.

As an antidote, a very different message emerged from a number of ridings across the province where some hope and inspiration can be found. In all corners of Ontario, current and former OSSTF/FEESO members and leaders entered elections as provincial, municipal and trustee candidates. Common to their histories as education workers is an appreciation for the value of supporting youth, enhancing public education, and understanding diversity and equity. Their efforts are inspiring.

There is no better example than Michele McCleave-Kennedy, an education

worker and a former Bargaining Unit and District Vice President. She is currently President of the Sault Ste. Marie and District Labour Council as well as an Ontario Federation of Labour Vice-President. Michele ran her first two elections ever in 2018, first as a provincial candidate for the New Democrat Party (NDP), and then as a municipal candidate in Sault Ste. Marie.

"I had no intention of running. When I came down [to Toronto] to participate in a Lobby Day, Communications and Political Action Committee (CPAC) colleagues were encouraging me, 'you should run! You should run!'" While she doubted herself at first, Michele eventually realized the power her voice has. "If it wasn't for the training from OSSTF/FEESO I wouldn't have run," she contends. Developing and delivering the Violence in the Workplace Workshop "helped me to learn to speak in front of people and gave me confidence to run."

Artwork: Ronda Allan

CPAC brings OSSTF/FEESO members from across the province together to focus on, among other things, broad political action and communication with both members and the public.

Michele describes the underlying motivation for her work as a desire to create positive change. “Things need to change. I’m stepping up. You can’t expect someone else to do it if you’re not willing to do it...Nothing’s going to change if you don’t change it.... Maybe I won’t ever get elected, but you know what, something’s gonna change... it doesn’t happen fast.” As a permanently injured education worker, she is dedicated to preventing injury to any worker anywhere.

In Thunder Bay, Sue Doughty-Smith, a former member of the OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Executive, won her race for School Trustee with the Lakehead District School Board. Her main campaign message was about protecting public education and leveraging her relationships and knowledge of “how the system really works” when she is making decisions.

Former teacher and OSSTF/FEESO member Desmond O’Connor won a seat on Cochrane Town Council. A Cree from Fort Albany First Nation and an Indigenous Student Advisor, Desmond is a prominent name invested in the furthering of opportunities for youth in his community.

In Central Ontario, a highly respected long-time OSSTF/FEESO member Diane Bal-

lantyne ran as the NDP candidate for Wellington—Halton Hills. Although she was unsuccessful, she leveraged her provincial campaign right into the municipal election, where she won a seat as a County Councillor for Wellington. Diane, who also sits on the board of the Ontario College of Teachers, focused on the priorities of affordable housing, livable communities for young families, the development of well-paying industry jobs and long-term planning for accessibility to services.

Another winning municipal candidate now sitting on Lakeshore Council is the 25-year-old Kelsey Santarossa, whose message and success is particularly inspiring for young women. Kelsey learned to use her age to her benefit and credited her success to the most basic of political strategies: door knocking. “It was all about knocking on doors,” says Kelsey. “I was going every night after the day job, all day on weekends. Just to make sure our feet were really on the ground.”

Another young woman, Katrina Sale, who shared her election experiences in a story ‘Deciding to run’ in the Fall 2018 issue of *Education Forum*, is yet another example of a young member becoming politically active in her community and giving back to OSSTF/FEESO members through her encouraging account of her decision to become more deeply involved. In her story, she traces the beginning of her provincial candidacy for the NDP back to a regional meeting held by CPAC

FEESO member, Jill is now the NDP MPP for the riding of Toronto—St. Paul’s. Speaking in November at the 2018 CPAC Conference panel on women’s experiences in politics, Andrew described her political origins and noted that anger can be a powerful impetus for getting involved. Andrew said you are ready to get into politics if “you have an issue keeping you up at night.” She had a few—body image, LGBTQ issues, discrimination and protecting racialized minorities.

The idea of being a candidate may be too hefty an ask for many, even those crazy enough to imagine being a politician. But it’s a path that many have followed, and seasoned candidates like Teacher Bargaining Unit President Glen Hodgson, who has run in six federal elections for the Green Party, are ready and available to lend insight. Along with the myriad of opportunities for political action provided locally by Bargaining Units and more widely on a provincial level by OSSTF/FEESO, it is time more members stood up and presented themselves as the qualified passionate professionals they are—ready to run, govern and make a difference.

It certainly will not be easy, but as Glen says, “We could either sit on the sidelines or actually do something...we are all examples for children and other people. When you are involved, recognize that you are teaching other people that these issues are priorities.... Once you get involved in political action you start to feel more empowered.”

Both Glen and Michele have a similar message to anyone on the precipice of electoral politics. “Know that you can do it. Roll with it. Expect the unexpected,” Michelle offered. Glen advice: “Go for it. Find your thing. It doesn’t have to be in a certain area. What is it that gets you going? Find your passion then go for it, get out there, get involved. There will always be detractors but you’ll find allies too. Have faith that what you do matters. You can make a difference.”

Rose LePage is an Early Childhood Educator in District 4, Near North.



Choosing the path

The road from teacher candidate to Federation activist



For OSSTF/FEESO's teaching members, the time we spend as teacher candidates is an important introduction to the daily routines of life in the classroom. If we are lucky, we gain insight into how our collective agreements shape the tone in our workplaces, and how multifaceted roles help to enhance public education. Some teacher candidates are fortunate enough to participate in their faculty's TEAC (Teacher Education Advisory Committee) and TELC (Teacher Education Liaison Committee). Through these fora, members gain insights into enrolment and accreditation, and into trends and emerging challenges in public education. Through participation in TELC, many teacher candidates over the years have also gained a unique perspective about the ways in which public education and the labour movement intersect. Indeed, this has been an exciting opportunity for some associate members to

make a foray into the exciting world of OSSTF/FEESO!

Faculty TEACs comprise a variety of stakeholders: Faculty representation consists of the Dean and/or Associate Dean and the Practicum Coordinator. Each teaching affiliate—OSSTF/FEESO, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)—has a representative who attends the quarterly meetings to offer their perspectives, and act as a two-way conduit between TELC and their federation's FEWG (Faculty of Education Advisory Work Group). Student representatives from each of the two years in the teacher education program ensure the student voice is heard.

One of the OSSTF/FEESO teacher candidate representatives is invited to our Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA)! Not every student who participates in TELC will gov-

ern their career according to the mantra "bread and roses for all," but many past TELC have become strong activists within OSSTF/FEESO. Here are a few details about some of these members:

Shelley Page—UWO Class of 1985

Shelley Page attended her first AMPA as a teacher candidate in 1985 and addressed the Assembly on behalf of her cohort. In District 13, Durham, Shelley served as District President for two four-year blocks. In that time she was the architect of many iterations of a collective agreement that saw unprecedented improvements for OSSTF/FEESO members. Shelley was hired to Provincial Office in 2010, and as a member of the Protective Services Division she has continued to fight for members across Ontario in our Districts and at the bargaining table.

Esther Uhm—OISE Class of 1999

As a secondary student at East York

Photos: OSSTF/FEESO archives

Collegiate in Toronto, Esther was elected Senior Vice-President of her Student Council, and created the East York Chinese Connection, where she served as president. This was an exceptional initiative that taught students about aspects of Chinese culture while creating a strong understanding of diversity within a multicultural student population. Esther is now the Assistant Curriculum Leader of Library and Learning Resources at Central Technical School in Toronto. As a teacher candidate, Esther had the honour of addressing AMPA. Her work as an OSSTF/FEESO representative has continued to evolve since then, and she has served as a branch president, and as both a committee and a council member.

Jason Witty—UWO Class of 2000

Jason graduated from the University of Western Ontario's teacher education program in 2000, earning Intermediate/Senior qualifications in both computer science and Individual and Society. He has since earned his Specialist in Contemporary Studies, and his Part 1 in Co-op education. Jason attended his first AMPA as a teacher candidate in 2000, where he had the distinction of addressing the meeting. This was a daunting task, scheduled as it was mere hours after the Assembly had dramatically shunned Janet Ecker, who was then Mike Harris's Minister of Education. Jason understood the power of a union's collective voice, and has become increasingly involved in OSSTF/FEESO since then. He has served as an executive member with District 11, Thames Valley, for over 14 years, and attends Provincial Council as a Teacher Bargaining Unit representative.

Rob Adlam—U of W Class of 2001

Rob's first AMPA was in 2001 as a teacher candidate. It was an election year at AMPA and Rob, seeing our democracy in action, was engaged from the start. He has since served in many capacities in OSSTF/FEESO. Rob has served as both branch president and collective bargaining committee representative, and is entering his tenth year as



AMPA 2019 Faculty of Ed students (l-r) Jared Kirsh; Lucas Johnston-Flanagan; Steve Hoang; Shannen Oxley; Patricia Park; Ryan Furlong; Terry Dang; Mike Metz; Jake DePodesta and Alejandro Orozco

Greater Essex Teacher Bargaining Unit Treasurer. His work has led him to participate in two rounds of local negotiations as a table team member, and he is currently serving as interim Contract Maintenance Officer for his District's Teacher Bargaining Unit.

Peter Bates—UWO Class of 2002

Peter attended his first AMPA as a teacher candidate from the University of Western Ontario in 2002. Like many of us, he quickly became familiar with the names and Districts of activist members who spoke passionately to motions at the mics. Peter was hooked, and he was simply blown away by the full range of activities the Federation undertakes, especially the commitment to social justice and to professional development for our members. Perhaps most inspiring was the annual Marion Drysdale Award video (now called the Student Achievement Awards in honour of Marion Drysdale). This was especially engaging for Peter as an aspiring visual arts teacher. Peter has taught both in District 5A, Northern Shield and District 11, Thames Valley, and has worked as a time-release officer in Thames Valley. He was hired to Provincial Office in 2016 as a member of the Educational Services Department.

Jenny Chen—OISE Class of 2003

Jenny attended her first AMPA as a teacher candidate in 2003. In 2004, she began work as a Social Sciences, Law, and History teacher at Riverdale Collegiate Institute, where she stayed until assuming a time-release position as Executive Officer with the Toronto Teachers' Bargaining Unit. She was also on the writing team for the Federation's

"Confronting Poverty: An Action-Based Approach to Addressing Class Bias" Workshop. Jenny was hired to Provincial Office in 2018 as a member of the Educational Services Department, where she continues to build engaging training and professional development for members.

Erin Cannon—Queen's University Class of 2016

Erin participated in her Teacher Education Liaison Committee as a secondary representative for OECTA where she had the opportunity to attend their AGM. She is now a proud member of OSSTF/FEESO in District 5A, Northern Shield, and is very much engaged in their activities at her branch.

Marie Vaduva—OISE Class of 2018

Marie attended AMPA 2018 as a teacher candidate. She found the opportunity to hear Farrah Khan address the assembly incredibly moving. Marie was struck by our Assembly's devotion to ensuring an equitable workplace, and she is thrilled to be working as a music and French teacher with the Peel District School Board.

With each new graduating class of educators in Ontario, OSSTF/FEESO continues to identify future leaders for our organization. As we celebrated our Federation's 100th year at AMPA 2019, we were once again joined by a group of future members eager to learn about our practices and to be inspired by our common commitment to enhancing and defending publicly-funded education.

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

celebrate PRIDE

OSSTF/FEESO WILL BE MARCHING IN THE PRIDE TORONTO PARADE
ON JUNE 22-24, 2019. THIS LIST OF LGBTQ2SI PRIDE EVENTS ACROSS
ONTARIO IS ACCURATE AT THE TIME OF PRINTING.
PLEASE CHECK YOUR LOCAL LISTINGS FOR THE MOST CURRENT UPDATES.

- MAY 23-26** Elliot Lake Pride www.elpride.ca
MAY 22-JUN. 2 Tri-Pride Kitchener Waterloo Cambridge www.tri-pride.ca
MAY 25 Haldimand-Norfolk Pride Dunnville [Facebook Group](#)
MAY 27-JUN. 2 Pride Durham www.pridedurham.org
MAY 31-JUN. 9 Guelph Pride www.guelphpride.com
JUN.1 Dundas & Grenville Pride [Facebook Group](#)
JUN. 1-JUN. 8 Pride Niagara www.prideniagara.com
JUN. 3-JUN. 8 Timmins Pride www.timminspride.com
JUN. 3-JUN. 9 Brockville Pride www.brockvillepride.ca
JUN. 5-JUN. 16 Thunder Pride www.thunderpride.ca
JUN. 7-JUN. 15 Pembroke Pride www.pembrokepride.com
JUN. 9-JUN. 15 Brantford Pride www.brantfordpride.ca
JUN. 15 Hamilton Pride www.pridehamilton.ca
JUN. 15 Kingston Pride www.kingstonpride.ca
JUN. 15-JUN. 22 Oxford County Pride [Facebook Group](#)
JUN. 21-23 Kenora Pride www.kenorapride.ca
JUN. 22-24 Pride Toronto www.pridetoronto.com
JUN. 22 Kincardine Pride [Facebook Group](#)
JUN. 29 Dryden Pride [Facebook Group](#)
TBA Barrie Pride www.barriepride.ca
TBA Belleville Pride www.bellevillepride.ca
TBA Stratford Pride [Facebook Group](#)
TBA York Pride www.yorkpridefest.com
JUL. 5-7 Cornwall Pride [Facebook Group](#)
JUL. 8-14 Sudbury Pride www.sudburypride.com
JUL. 13 Kawartha Lakes Pride [Facebook Group](#)
JUL. 18-28 Pride London www.pridelondon.ca
JUL. 19-28 Muskoka Pride www.muskokapride.com
JUL. 21 North Bay Pride fiertenorthbaypride.nationbuilder.com
JUL. 29-AUG. 11 Simcoe County Pride www.simcoepride.com
TBA Peel Pride www.peelpride.ca
AUG. 6-11 Windsor-Essex Pride Festival www.wepridefest.com
AUG. 17 Pride Chatham-Kent www.ckpride.com
AUG. 18-25 Capital Pride Ottawa www.capitalpride.ca
AUG. 19-25 Minden Pride [Facebook Group](#)
SEP. 13-22 Peterborough Pride www.peterboroughpride.ca
TBA Sault Pridefest [Facebook Group](#)



OSSTF/FEESO

TEACHER INNOVATION

by Vanessa Russell and Cheryl Mootoo

AN EQUITABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.¹

When Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative Party defeated the NDP in 1995, the Ontario social safety net was dismantled through legislative reforms and deep budgetary cuts. With the introduction of Bill 34, the *Education Amendment Act* (1996) and its ugly sibling Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act* (1997), more than 70 per cent of *Adult Education* courses were cancelled overnight². In the years since, school boards wanting to continue to offer adult education were in a quandary. At the same time, a hyper-vigilance continues to grow around credit accumulation and graduation rates. In its wake, a new program was birthed at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) capitalizing on an important population still eligible for full student funding—older adolescents not yet 21 years of age. Although fraught with complications and structural problems, this is a potentially creative alternative to giving up on adult education altogether. The *EdVance* program and its other iterations across the province are important because they make possible the funding required to keep school buildings that house adult programs operating.

As colleagues, our paths crossed for

the first time when we were both teaching in an *EdVance* school. Both of us have moved on, however, and are no longer teaching there. This school is one of five *EdVance* programs. It offers secondary students (18–20) in years 5–7 an accelerated program to complete their OSSD where, theoretically, they can receive 12 credits per year (three 90 versus 110-hour credits per “quadmester”). Unfortunately, our experience was that very few students reached this goal.

Initially, *EdVance* provided an alternate secondary school setting where students who had not graduated but had aged out of the regular public school system could receive credits quickly. Currently, *EdVance* has evolved into a program which tries to accommodate both students who are newcomers requiring Canadian secondary accreditation and ESL support as well as students who need to finish or upgrade core curriculum credits for post-secondary. Although many of us don’t think about adult education within public schools, we should. Currently, many adult students and their schooled lives are an important piece of an equity puzzle that powerfully uncovers systemic injustice in elementary and secondary schools here in Ontario. Since

age is an important social category in adult students, these systemic issues are imprinted upon adults for longer periods, creating deep wounds.

Our school receives a diversity of students, many with gaps in their learning and achievement levels. A significant challenge for *EdVance* programs is student disengagement. This is evident through inconsistent attendance and work completion, resulting in low credit accumulation and student retention. For each consecutive year, there is a “direct relationship of increasing years in school and increasing dropout rate”³. For us, this statistic is devastating and undermines the student’s ability to reach their full potential. There are obvious ethical considerations in bringing together an accelerated curriculum and a transient, constantly shifting student population. Full funding comes only with students taking two or more courses per quad-semester. Consequently, some students may be pushed to take more credits than they can handle.

Our students, as young adults are expected to self-manage their time, personal and family responsibilities, and employment, as well as their education goals. Some have jobs, some are young parents, others are dealing with challenging family matters. Others have physical and mental health issues, or substance abuse and addiction issues. And while the *EdVance* program provides a second chance for students beyond year four to complete their high school education, the current structure can be a barrier for struggling students. The accelerated program leaves little time to accumulate knowledge in a meaningful way. An early start and long class periods, add additional stress. Each class is two hours long with no breaks. A brief 40-minute lunch is all that breaks up the day. Many arrive late, and others leave early for work and personal commitments, or because they are unable to maintain their focus for the entire day. Individual siloed subjects can add to the workload and limit the integration of knowledge. As a result of these cascading factors, students can become demotivated and disengaged.



CREDIT FACTORY

Teachers everywhere, but particularly within *EdVance* settings where the majority of our students have not graduated by year four of secondary school, feel enormous pressure for students to earn credits and graduate. This is not in itself a bad thing. However, when it becomes the sole definition of student success and the actions to get there are by any means necessary, we believe that most importantly students—but also teachers—are harmed in the process.⁴

A nine-week credit delivery model allows little time for deep reflection for teachers as well as for students, but for those students who have learning difficulties, the pace becomes much too fast. The teachers’ efforts to cover the curriculum become “a mile wide and an inch deep,” only scratching the surface of difficult and complex issues. Collectively, these issues exacerbate student disengagement and absenteeism. Accelerated credit delivery at the expense of rich pedagogical approaches, with the sole objective of credit accumulation, has become known as a “*credit factory*” by almost all of our colleagues within our own school and across the other *EdVance* programs.

It is a misrepresentation to paint a picture of *EdVance* solely as a site of struggle for students. Many colleagues agree that *victory lappers* do extremely well. These students have finished all or most of their credits and come back for an extra year to upgrade or take specific courses for post-secondary studies. But, many of these *victory lappers* have experienced their own struggles—mental health issues, addiction, and poverty. In many cases, they too have found it necessary to take time from school to deal a wide variety of crises. Upon their return, some have crashed and burned in the mainstream system or in post-secondary.

creative



EXPLORING A NEW APPROACH

As classroom teachers, both of us experienced the negative impact of teaching students within the *EdVance* accelerated program. While the program has evolved to include more variety of courses as the shift in the demographic changes, the fundamental structure of the accelerated program has not changed to address student success or student needs in a meaningful way. This truncated program not only makes it impossible for teachers to cover the Ministry curriculum in its entirety, but also impedes the ability of students to process the curricular content in order to gain an authentic learning experience. Credit accumulation, graduation rates, absenteeism, and dropout rates continue to be challenging.

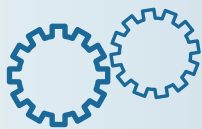
Now in existence for more than 10 years, *EdVance* is long overdue for a critical review. What began as an acknowledgment between the two of us, and many of our colleagues, that something was not working, turned into an action project based on what might be done to address some of the systemic issues within the program. We were quick to define the limitations of *EdVance*, but proposing an alternate solution would take some time to explore. To initiate this exploration, we had the opportunity to apply for and receive funding to run a classroom-based inquiry through a TDSB and Ministry partnership sponsoring the Teacher Leadership and Learning Program (TLLP). In our proposal, we outlined a pilot program to function within the *EdVance* structure. Our focus was to re-engage students at risk; those who had fallen through the cracks, who had passed through elementary and aged out of secondary without successfully graduating. We called our project: *A Transdisciplinary Pilot Project: Re-engagement through Multimedia Arts and Social Justice Education*.

One aspect we sought to change was the pace and schedule of the program within the subject areas we were teaching. Within the confines of the quadmester timetable, we extended the period of study over two

periods of the day. This was to allow more processing time and provide opportunities for students and teachers to develop community within the classroom. The first hour of the day was dedicated to a 'conversation cafe' where we shared and exchanged ideas. This was followed by a lesson on specific concepts and related collaborative and individual activities. The latter part of the day was dedicated to skill development and projects. We co-created and team-taught curriculum and assessment strategies. For four hours each day, both of us shared space with each other, our students in the classroom and communities outside the school.

Course content followed an integrated curriculum. Subject integration is not new to education. Many pedagogical practices, in fact, embed interdisciplinary approaches. However, few models exist at the secondary level as subjects are typically siloed and taught independently. In the pilot, our approach was to break-down the siloed subjects using curriculum from Social Sciences (with an equity and gender studies focus) and Visual Arts (with a media arts and technology focus). More than being interdisciplinary where the curriculum is organized around common learnings across disciplines, we sought to explore a transdisciplinary approach to restructure the curriculum to meet student concerns and questions within a project-based learning model. Its underlying purpose was to reduce the duplication of skills and concepts and increase relevance and motivation for the learner—to give students the opportunity to *work smarter, not harder*. This approach to knowledge integration is becoming increasingly relevant in today's world of global competencies and echoed in other curricular approaches and programs elsewhere. British Columbia is rolling out an integrated curriculum across all grade levels. And at the post-secondary level, the University of Waterloo offers a degree in Knowledge Integration.⁵ Finland's emphasis on phenomenon-based learning where subjects are more topic based speaks to this innovative approach as well.⁶

education



FOR A BRIEF MOMENT IN TIME: MASHUP REMIX

We initiated our pilot in the winter of 2016 and implemented through to June of that year. To align with our transdisciplinary approach, we retitled the project *MASHUP REMix*—a spin-off from the music industry that fuses two separate genres of music together. *MASHUP REMix* was established as an alternative program within the *EdVance* structure with the intent to mash subjects together to gain new insights into community, arts and culture. To pique the interest of students, we introduced a series of bundled courses designed to integrate perceptions of identity, equity and social justice with creative digital media art projects.⁷ It was a significant interruption in the regular programming, but too short lived to create the substantive changes we had hoped for. However, there were some transformative moments we can share—those of our own learnings, those of our students' learnings and those of our perspectives and actions as we move forward in our own pedagogical journey. Most importantly, for a brief moment in time, there was a robust community of learners who became willing and able to work across difference in a safe and connected learning environment. Some of the students who joined the program were those who had not been successful in *EdVance* and were now achieving credits. Others who felt marginalized gained inner power and confidence. This shift in student engagement was due in part to the restructuring of the program that gave more time to scaffold concepts and explore ideas. The intertwined content of equity and the arts also provided a unique platform for students to see themselves and the world around them in different contexts and creatively express their perceptions and ideas.



EXAMINING IDENTITY

Student engagement became evident through the projects they created. We developed one project entitled *Duelling Identities*. At its core, we wanted students to analyze some of the substantive themes related to identity that we had covered throughout the course. These themes included the overlapping and sometimes contradictory social identity categories of our own and others' perceptions of us (race, social class, gender, sexuality, ability, power, privilege, stereotypes and oppression), both individual and systemic. The project involved students having to articulate how they see themselves (self-perception) and how the world sees them (society's perception). Through image manipulation, students merged composite digital self-portraits to create a narrative of their paradoxical identities. The results were as unique as each student. One South-Asian female student, who was experiencing extreme anxiety and was self-conscious about her appearance, created a bold statement about herself. She chose a close-up of her face with her hands relaxed behind her head and the word *Beautiful* inscribed in the background. A Black male student who had multiple learning disabilities had not only faced severe racism and ableism at school, but one of his parents also had very low expectations of him. His final product depicted a composite of two images: the first is an image of himself sitting crossed legged on the ground looking down and the second, a close-up of his eye reflecting a mirror image of himself. He describes his hope, dreams and despair in his artist statement. A Black Muslim male student wrote an artist statement uncovering various stereotypes that equate Muslims with terrorism. His final product was a muted image of himself in prayer with the words peace and love in soft blue/grey colours. The dichotomy expressed in this photo was powerful. And finally, another student, a working class White male, began our program living under house arrest. He battled various addictions while at our school but became clean and sober during his time at MASHUP. His final product depicted the good boy/bad boy dichotomy—prison bars, a reversed baseball hat on the top of his head, running playfully down the school hallway. Although they did not find the project easy, they gave us very positive feedback about how they felt about what they had accomplished—and what they learned through the process.

idea



INTERRUPTING THE STATUS QUO

Part of our expectations in developing and implementing this pilot was to have the opportunity to create transformation within the system, and in doing so, offer an alternative path for students at risk within an *EdVance* setting. However, we found this to be very challenging. Knowledge mobilization ground to a halt with lack of support from the system, and few opportunities to share our discoveries. The *EdVance* program today stands as it did initially, dealing with the same systemic challenges. As disappointing as this is, it speaks to the difficulty of innovating from within. There are too many competing interests at play—the funding formula, narrow definitions of student success, restrictive curriculum guidelines that reinforce siloed subjects, discursive school practices, and post-secondary admission policies—all of which play into maintaining the status quo. There appears to be no clear mandate or vision for Adult Education on the horizon. The work of Henri Giroux (1988)⁸ *Teachers as Intellectuals* resounds loudly in our ears when we think about the often shirked ethical responsibility of the schooling system to create opportunities for teacher innovation and leadership. It was in the precious space of our pilot project that we came to understand deeply the concept of *transdisciplinary* in an organic, kind of “aha” moment right smack dab in the middle of the classroom. It was a truly embodied experience. Over the course of working together, the arts and social sciences as fields of education were no longer separate for us. It was and still is impossible for one not to inform the other—not in our pedagogical approaches as teachers and not in the process of learning and the completion of final projects of our students.



HOPE MOVING FORWARD

We are extremely grateful for the opportunity we had to work together in the creation, implementation and evaluation of this pilot. It truly felt like a revolutionary act in the face of many barriers—some intentional and some accidental. Our hope is for more teachers to create similar avenues for themselves to experience team-teaching and the co-creation of integrated curriculum and assessment as a means to address students’ needs. Teaching, as we know, is a courageous act. We hope that more teachers make the decision to take on something different to explore new ideas and inquiries in pursuit of professional knowledge and personal fulfillment. We did not wait to be given permission to initiate our inquiry. We took the bull by the horns and did what was necessary to make it so. We followed in the footsteps of many teacher-activists who went before us. Our hope is that our colleagues will be inspired to do the same.

Vanessa Russell and **Cheryl Mootoo** are teachers in District 12, Toronto.

design



- ¹ For more details about our pilot project proposal and rationale please refer to the following reference: Russell, V. & Mootoo, C. (2017). Credit factory or alternative education for adults? Student re-engagement through multimedia arts and social justice education, a transdisciplinary pilot project. In N. Bascia, E. Fine, and M. Levin (Eds.) *Alternative schooling: Canadian stories of democracy within bureaucracy* (pp. 213-226). Toronto, ON, Palgrave.
- ² Questions and Answers on Adult Education. (n.d.). Retrieved September 30, 2016, from fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_schugurensky/faqs/qa14.html
- ³ Toronto District School Board Facts: Student Success Indicators Year 4 (Grade 12) Student Outcomes Issue 4, June 2013. www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Research/SSIYear4Outcomes201112.pdf
- ⁴ Vanessa interviewed several teachers across three of the *EdVance* programs. She also facilitated a roundtable discussion with teaching colleagues in our school about student absenteeism as part of her Student Success portfolio in the Guidance Department (Spring, 2016).
- ⁵ University of Waterloo Knowledge Integration program, uwaterloo.ca/knowledge-integration
- ⁶ For more information on Phenomenal Based Learning, watch *The Finland Phenomenon*, by documentary filmmaker Robert A. Compton
- ⁷ Descriptions of the pilot are taken from our MASHUP REMix program poster that was produced to inform students about the program.
- ⁸ Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. Granby, Mass: Bergin & Garvey



LEARNING FROM THE HARRIS YEARS

IN PERILOUS TIMES, THE PAST OFFERS VALUABLE LESSONS

Editor's note: In November 2018, David Moss, former Director of OSSTF/FEESO's Communications/Political Action Department, delivered an address to local leaders who were gathered in Toronto to develop strategies to counter the anticipated actions of the Ford government. The following has been excerpted from Mr. Moss's remarks.

The last 100 years have seen generations of OSSTF/FEESO members and leaders faced with daunting challenges as they strived to protect public education from governments of all political stripes. The new generation of OSSTF/FEESO leaders, represented by you here today, may soon be challenged again.

Let's travel back to June 8, 1995. Mike Harris leads the Ontario Conservatives to a majority government under the slogan
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APPRENDRE DES ANNÉES HARRIS

EN DES TEMPS DIFFICILES, LE PASSÉ OFFRE DE PRÉCIEUSES LEÇONS

Note du rédacteur : En novembre 2018, David Moss, ancien directeur du Secteur des communications/action politique d'OSSTF/FEESO, a prononcé un discours devant des dirigeants locaux qui étaient réunis à Toronto dans le but d'élaborer des stratégies visant à contrer les mesures anticipées du gouvernement Ford. Nous présentons ici des extraits du discours de David Moss.

Les 100 dernières années ont connu des générations de membres et de dirigeants d'OSSTF/FEESO qui ont fait face à des défis de taille alors qu'ils s'évertuaient à protéger l'éducation publique contre des gouvernements de toutes les allégeances politiques. La nouvelle génération de dirigeants d'OSSTF/FEESO, que vous représentez aujourd'hui, sera peut-être de nouveau mise au défi.

Transportons-nous au 8 juin 1995. Mike Harris mène les Conservateurs à un gou-
/suite à la page 25



Photos: Bill 160 Protests, 1997 (OSSTF/FEESO archives)

/continued from page 23

“The Common Sense Revolution.” Flash forward to June 7, 2018. Doug Ford leads the Ontario Conservatives to a majority government with his slogan “For the People.”

Harris promised he would pay for his “Revolution” by finding billions of dollars in government efficiencies and eliminating government waste. Doug Ford promises to finance his extremely vague plan “For the People” by finding six billion dollars in government efficiencies and eliminating government waste.

Are we about to relive history? Are there any comparisons we can already make?

Where will Doug Ford and his government find their six billion dollars in efficiencies? Well, the two largest budget lines are health care and education. How will government efficiencies affect OSSTF/FEESO members in schools boards and universities? You have already seen 100 million dollars of approved funding for school repairs vanish as one of the first cuts announced by the

government. Just last week another 200 million dollars approved for new university campuses in Markham, Milton and Brantford was cancelled by the government. Three hundred million dollars is a lot of money but it is a long way from 6 billion. What other cuts does Doug Ford have in mind for the education sector?

I personally have no idea, but history shows us that you, as leaders in OSSTF/FEESO, probably will need to make difficult decisions perhaps sooner rather than later. To make those tough decisions you will need facts; you need to monitor and research all the government actions; you will need to develop communication strategies to counter government spin and rhetoric; and, you need to prepare your membership so they are ready to act with you if and when push comes to shove! My focus today is to help you relate historical success to your current preparations.

Let’s revisit 1995. What can we learn from OSSTF/FEESO’s actions then that may be applicable for you now? Harris was elected in June 1995 and on Oc-

tober 28, 1997 teachers and education workers in every public and Catholic school—elementary, secondary, English and French speaking school—shut down their workplaces in this province for two weeks. Members walked out to protest the government’s attacks on publicly-funded education and on their collective bargaining rights. They didn’t take that action on the spur of the moment. They took that action after two years of OSSTF/FEESO preparation and membership activation. They walked out knowing they would lose salary and benefits while on the street, and not knowing how long they would be on the street. And, they did so knowing there was no strike pay from the union. Most of all they did so, because they believed that such collective action was necessary to protect the values they believed in—the supreme importance of a fully funded public education system and the paramount importance of collective bargaining to protect not just their working conditions but the learning conditions

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/suite de la page 23

vernement majoritaire sous le slogan la « Révolution du bon sens ». Revenons au 7 juin 2018. Doug Ford mène les Conservateurs de l'Ontario à un gouvernement majoritaire sous son slogan « Pour le peuple ».

Mike Harris avait promis de payer sa « Révolution » en dénichant des milliards de dollars en efficacités au sein du gouvernement et en y éliminant le gaspillage. Doug Ford promet de financer son plan extrêmement vague nommé « Pour le peuple » en trouvant six milliards de dollars en efficacités au sein du gouvernement et en y éliminant le gaspillage.

Sommes-nous sur le point de voir l'histoire se répéter? Pouvons-nous déjà faire des comparaisons?

Où Doug Ford et son gouvernement trouveront-ils leurs six milliards de dollars en efficacités? Eh bien, les deux plus importantes lignes budgétaires sont les soins de santé et l'éducation. Dans quelle mesure les efficacités gouvernementales toucheront-elles les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO dans les conseils scolaires et les universités? Vous avez déjà été témoin de l'annulation d'un financement approuvé de 100 millions de dollars qui devait servir à réparer des écoles, dans le cadre des premières restrictions annoncées par le gouvernement. La semaine dernière, un autre financement, celui-là de l'ordre de 200 millions de dollars, destiné à la construction de nouveaux campus universitaires à Markham, Milton et Brantford a été annulé. La somme de 300 millions de dollars est énorme, mais on est toujours loin de six milliards. Quelles autres contraintes sont dans le point de mire de Doug Ford dans le domaine de l'éducation?

Personnellement, je n'en ai aucune idée, mais l'histoire nous indique que vous, à titre de dirigeants d'OSSTF/FEESO, aurez vraisemblablement à prendre des décisions difficiles dans un proche avenir. Afin de prendre ces décisions difficiles, il vous faudra les faits. Vous devrez surveiller toutes les actions du gouvernement et effectuer des recherches sur celles-ci. Vous devrez élaborer des stratégies de communication dans le

but de contrer les tactiques et interprétations tendancieuses du gouvernement et vous devrez préparer vos membres afin qu'ils soient prêts lorsque viendra le moment de passer à l'action! Mon but aujourd'hui est de vous aider à faire le lien entre les succès historiques et vos préparations actuelles.

Retournons en 1995. Que pouvons-nous retenir des actions d'OSSTF/FEESO à l'époque, que nous pourrions appliquer maintenant? Mike Harris a été élu en juin 1995 et le 28 octobre 1997, le personnel enseignant et les travailleurs de l'éducation dans toutes les écoles publiques, catholiques, élémentaires, secondaires, de langue anglaise et de langue française, ont fermé les portes de leur lieu de travail en Ontario pendant deux semaines. Les membres ont débrayé en guise de protestation contre les attaques du gouvernement sur l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics et sur leurs droits de négociation collective. Ces actions n'ont pas été prises sur un coup de tête. Elles ont nécessité deux ans de préparation et d'activation des membres par OSSTF/FEESO. Ils sont sortis en sachant qu'ils perdraient leurs salaires et leurs avantages sociaux pendant cette période sur la rue et sans savoir combien de temps ils le resteraient. Ils l'ont fait sachant qu'ils ne recevraient pas d'indemnités de grève du syndicat. Surtout, ils ont choisi de le faire parce qu'ils croyaient qu'une telle action col-

lective était nécessaire pour protéger les valeurs auxquelles ils croyaient : l'importance suprême d'un système d'éducation publique entièrement financé à même les deniers publics et l'importance primordiale de la négociation collective afin de protéger non seulement leurs conditions de travail, mais également les conditions d'apprentissage de leurs élèves.

Pendant la période de deux ans qui a précédé cette manifestation, les dirigeants de la Fédération ont maintenu une communication avec le gouvernement. Cela était loin d'être une tâche facile! Les réunions en compagnie des fonctionnaires du Ministère étaient essentielles alors que nous commençons à établir les grandes lignes du programme de Mike Harris en ce qui concerne l'éducation. Ce sont des fonctionnaires du Ministère qui ont divulgué le discours tristement célèbre du ministre de l'Éducation Snobelen, déclarant que le gouvernement se devait de fabriquer une crise dans le domaine de l'éducation pour apporter les changements qu'il souhaitait. Cette vidéo de piètre qualité s'est avérée un outil inestimable dans notre campagne visant à exposer les véritables motifs du gouvernement à nos membres et au grand public.

Aujourd'hui, votre défi est unique en son genre. Vous avez une nouvelle génération de membres qui n'ont aucun souvenir de cette manifestation ou

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of their students.

During that two-year lead up to the protest, Federation leadership maintained open lines of dialogue with the government. This was no easy task! Meetings with ministry officials were invaluable as we began to map out the Harris agenda with respect to education. It was ministry officials who leaked the infamous speech by Education Minister Snobelen, telling them the government would have to create a crisis in education to make the changes they wanted. That grainy video became an invaluable tool in our campaign to expose the true motives of the government to our membership and the public at large.

Today, you face a unique challenge. You have a new generation of members with no recollection of that protest or the reasons for it. Their collective agreements have been negotiated far from their local worksites at central tables. Your membership is busy going about their daily work while Doug Ford looks for ways to find a minimum six billion dollars in budget cuts.

Even with all the negative decisions Ford has already made, if you simply called on your members today to do what teacher and educational workers did in October 1997, would they follow you? Believe me, the members of OSSTF/FEESO in 1997 did not walk out of their worksites simply because the union told them to do it.

So, how in two years did we convince our membership that they should make this personal principled sacrifice? The simple answer was leadership, local member education and planning. But providing that leadership, educating members about government actions and developing an effective action plan was anything but simple. And I can assure you it will not be simple now. However, the success of any action plan you develop will require that your membership, not just Federation leadership, has ownership of that action.

I remember those 1997 challenges—a new government initiative almost every day much like you are seeing from Ford. Programs were cancelled and workers were attacked through legislation.

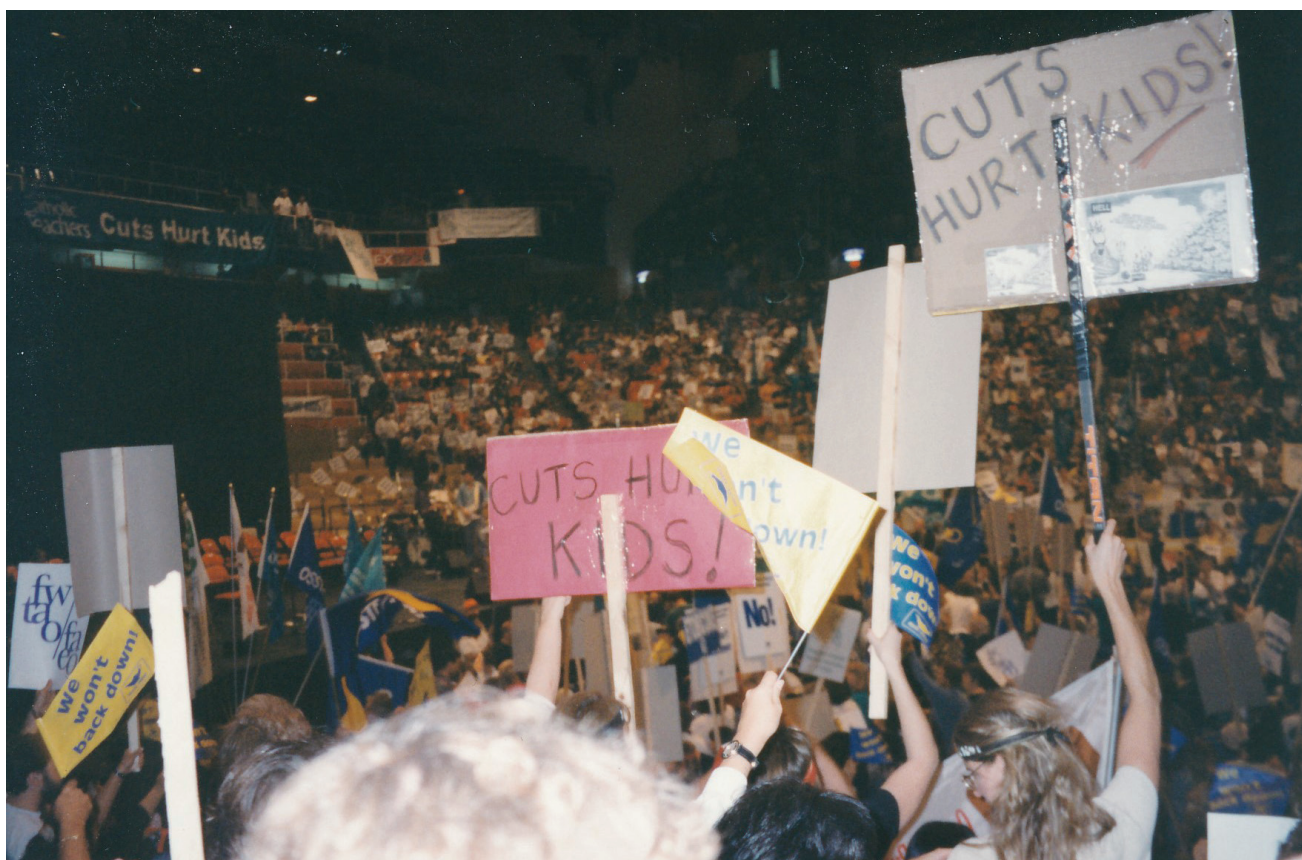
The first thing we had to learn was that not every government action could be our line in the sand. This wasn't easy, as every single decision they announced, just like today, had negative implications for our membership. Our provincial leadership and our local leadership learned quickly that they could not lead the fight on every issue. To use an analogy that I think sums up our choices at that time: like the dog backed into a corner we had to learn to avoid biting when a growl would do.

We needed the two years to develop our strategies. We needed the time to do the research necessary on the likely actions the government might take, and, we needed that time to educate and prepare our membership. We tried to use every government action and piece of legislation as a learning tool. I have no doubt Ford will continue to give you lots of opportunity to react to terrible legislation.

In January of 1997, Harris passed Bill 103, *City of Toronto Act*, amalgamating the existing six school boards in Toronto

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Photo: Bill 160 Protest, Maple Leaf Gardens, 1997 (OSSTF/FEESO archives)



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des raisons qui l'ont précipitée. Leurs conventions collectives ont été négociées loin de leur lieu de travail, à des tables centrales. Vos membres s'affairent à vaquer à leurs tâches quotidiennes, alors que Doug Ford cherche des façons de trouver au moins six milliards de dollars en restrictions budgétaires.

Même à la lumière de toutes les décisions négatives que Doug Ford a déjà prises, si aujourd'hui vous demandiez à vos membres d'imiter les actions des enseignants et travailleurs de l'éducation d'octobre 1997, le feraient-ils? Croyez-moi, les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO en 1997 n'ont pas débrayé de leur lieu de travail simplement à la demande de leur syndicat.

Alors, comment avons-nous réussi, en l'espace de deux ans, à convaincre nos membres de faire ce sacrifice personnel de principe? La réponse simple était les dirigeants, l'éducation des membres locaux et la planification. Cependant, la prestation de cette direction, l'éducation des membres au sujet des actions du gouvernement et l'élaboration d'un plan d'action efficace étaient loin d'être une tâche facile. Et je peux vous assurer que ce ne sera pas facile de nos jours. Toutefois, la réussite de tout plan d'action nécessite que vos membres, et non seulement les dirigeants de la Fédération se l'approprient.

Je me souviens de ces défis en 1997 : une nouvelle initiative gouvernementale presque tous les jours, tout comme le fait Doug Ford. Des programmes ont été annulés et des travailleurs ont été victimes de projets de loi.

La première chose qu'il nous a fallu apprendre était que nous ne pouvions pas nous prononcer de façon irréversible à chaque mesure du gouvernement. Cela n'a pas été facile, puisque toutes les décisions annoncées, comme c'est le cas de nos jours, avaient des répercussions négatives sur nos membres. Nos dirigeants provinciaux et locaux se sont rapidement rendu compte qu'ils ne pouvaient pas mener un combat contre chaque question. Si on peut emprunter une analogie qui, selon moi, résume bien nos choix à cette époque : comme un chien acculé

au mur, nous devons éviter de mordre lorsqu'il suffisait de grogner.

Nous avions besoin des deux ans pour élaborer nos stratégies. Nous avions besoin du temps pour faire les recherches nécessaires sur les actions que le gouvernement allait vraisemblablement prendre et il nous fallait ce temps pour renseigner et préparer nos membres. Nous avons essayé d'utiliser chaque mesure du gouvernement et projet de loi comme outil d'apprentissage. Je n'ai aucun doute que Doug Ford continuera de vous fournir maintes occasions de réagir à de terribles projets de loi.

En janvier 1997, Mike Harris a présenté le Projet de loi 103, la *Loi sur la cité de Toronto*, fusionnant les six conseils scolaires existants à Toronto pour former le *Toronto District School Board (TDSB)* que nous connaissons maintenant. Il s'agissait d'une des premières actions que le gouvernement a justifiées en proclamant que la population de l'Ontario allait devoir « en faire plus avec moins ». Cela allait devenir le leitmotiv du gouvernement, que nous avons contré par la réplique « on n'obtient jamais plus pour moins, on obtient moins pour moins ». Nous avons attaqué le Projet de loi 103 en avançant qu'il mènerait à moins de redevabilité de la part des conseillers scolaires et moins d'occasions pour les parents d'avoir leur mot à dire dans l'éducation de leurs enfants. C'était là le message envoyé à nos membres, non seulement à Toronto, mais partout en province, et ils ont rapidement commencé à comprendre que cette action entreprise par le gouvernement les touchait directement. Alors nous avons grogné très fort, sans pour autant mordre. Ce n'était pas là l'enjeu pour lequel nos membres étaient prêts à se sacrifier.

Cependant, cet enjeu allait venir. En travaillant collectivement, les dirigeants locaux, l'Exécutif provincial et le personnel du Bureau provincial ont élaboré un plan d'action qui allait être présenté à la Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP) en mars 1997. Les délégués ont approuvé la proposition d'une sanction provinciale si le gouvernement tentait de restreindre les droits de négociation collective. Aucune mention n'a

été faite de la forme que cette sanction allait prendre. C'était un énoncé de principe, appuyé par les délégués lors de la RAAP. Ce grognement public retentissant a retenu l'attention des médias. Le message : la « Révolution du bon sens » de Mike Harris était bien mal en point.

Nous aurions pu faire du vote de la RAAP l'élément déclencheur de l'éventuelle manifestation en octobre. Cependant, les membres ne s'étaient toujours pas approprié la décision qui allait les toucher directement. En avril et en mai, des réunions générales des membres ont été tenues dans chaque district afin d'expliquer le plan d'action provincial et répondre à leurs questions et préoccupations.

À la fin de mai, nos membres grognaient très fort alors que tous les membres ont approuvé le plan d'action, tel qu'adopté à la RAAP, à raison d'une majorité de 84,2 pour cent. Les membres commençaient à s'approprier le plan de la Fédération. Leur grognement a capté l'attention. Un battage médiatique a pris naissance, mais le gouvernement est quand même allé de l'avant.

En même temps, nous avons trouvé d'autres façons de mobiliser nos membres. Nous avons donné notre appui aux autres groupes qui étaient directement touchés par les actions du gouvernement. Quand le Syndicat des employés et employées de la fonction publique de l'Ontario (SEFPO) a été forcé de déclencher la grève, nous nous sommes joints à eux sur les lignes de piquetage. Quand Mike Harris a commencé à sabrer les emplois des infirmières, les comparant à des fabricantes de cerceaux (*Hula Hoop*) désuètes, nous nous sommes portés à leur défense. Alors que tout cela se passait, nous communiquions à nos membres pourquoi, eux aussi, ils devraient se préoccuper de ces actions.

Nous avons appuyé les journées d'action de la Fédération du travail de l'Ontario (FTO) à London, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Thunder Bay, Peterborough, Toronto et St. Catharines. Nous avons encouragé les membres locaux dans chacun des conseils scolaires

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into the current Toronto District School Board (TDSB). This was one of the first actions they justified by proclaiming that Ontarians had to learn to do “more with less.” This would become the government’s mantra. We countered this narrative with the line “you don’t get more for less, you get less with less.” We attacked Bill 103, arguing that it would lead to less accountability for trustees and less opportunity for parents to have input into their children’s education. This was the message we sent to our members, not just in Toronto, but across the province, and they quickly began to understand that this action by the government impacted them directly. So we growled very loudly but did not bite. This was not the issue our members were ready to make that personal sacrifice for. But that issue would come. Working collectively, local leaders, the Provincial Executive and Provincial Office staff developed an Action Plan to take to the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA) in March 1997. The delegates approved a motion for a provincial sanction if

the government moved to restrict collective bargaining rights. There was no mention what form the sanction would take. It was a statement of principle, supported by the delegates at AMPA. This very loud public growling got the attention of the media. The message—all was not well in Harris’s “Common Sense Revolution.”

We could have left the vote at AMPA as the trigger for the eventual protest in October. But, the membership still did not have ownership of the decision that would affect them directly. In April and May general meetings were held with the membership in every District to explain the provincial action plan and answer their questions and concerns.

At the end of May our members growled very loudly when an all member vote endorsed the action plan, as passed at AMPA, with 84.2 per cent in favour. The members were beginning to take ownership of the Federation’s plan. Their growl was heard. The media was buzzing, but the government ploughed ahead.

At the same time, we found other

means to rally our members. We supported other groups directly affected by government actions. When the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) was forced to strike we supported them on picket lines. When Harris began cutting the jobs of nurses, who he compared to obsolete hula hoop makers, we came to their defense. All the time this was happening, we communicated to our members why they, too, should be concerned with these actions.

We supported the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Days of Action in London, Hamilton, Kitchener–Waterloo, Thunder Bay, Peterborough, Toronto and St. Catharines. We encouraged local membership in each of the boards in the designated cities to support the Day of Action and walk off their jobs for one day. They did so in record numbers. Public rallies were held in these communities on a Saturday and we bused members to them by the thousands. We supported our labour friends when they took the lead on issues impacting their membership.

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Photos: Bill 160 Protests, 1997 (OSSTF/FEESO archives)





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des villes désignées à encourager la journée d'action en délaissant leur poste pendant une journée. Ils ont répondu à l'appel en nombres record. Des manifestations publiques ont eu lieu dans ces communautés un samedi et nous avons nolisé des autobus pour y faire assister nos membres par milliers. Nous avons appuyé nos alliés syndicaux quand ils ont montré la voie sur des questions qui touchaient leurs membres.

Notre stratégie de préparation était fondée sur un principe simple : ***au moment où vous avez besoin d'un ami, il est trop tard pour en chercher un.*** Nous avons incité nos membres à siéger au sein des conseils du travail et à chercher activement des alliés. Nous avons encouragé les dirigeants locaux à rencontrer les médias locaux et à forger des relations positives avec ceux-ci. Nous avons exercé une pression auprès des députés provinciaux en visant particulièrement les députés du gouvernement. Nous tenions à ce qu'ils sachent que nous les avions à l'œil, que nous avions des préoccupations et que nous nous préparions.

Alors, de juin 1995 à octobre 1997, nous avons beaucoup « grogné », sans toutefois « mordre ». Dans le cadre de notre Plan d'action, nous avons mis sur

pied notre structure locale en préparation pour l'action. Nous avons des comités des communications/action politique actifs dans chaque district. Les dirigeants locaux ont renseigné les médias locaux et les dirigeants provinciaux se sont efforcés de forger des contacts positifs parmi les médias provinciaux.

Au milieu des années 90, bien entendu, les communications du Bureau provincial aux dirigeants locaux et aux membres étaient très différentes. Il n'y avait pas de courriels ni de médias sociaux. Les communications urgentes aux dirigeants locaux se faisaient par télécopieur. Les bulletins provinciaux et locaux étaient toujours des exemplaires imprimés livrés aux lieux de travail. Très peu de gens avaient un téléphone cellulaire et bon nombre de districts n'avaient pas de libération de leurs tâches pour assister à des activités syndicales.

Vous jouissez d'un immense avantage de nos jours grâce à la technologie à votre disposition et à des agents en libération syndicale pour garder vos membres à l'affût des nouvelles et pour diffuser votre message au grand public. Mon conseil est simple. Faites-en usage! Préparez-vous dès maintenant, et non plus tard.

En octobre 1997, le moment de

« mordre » était finalement arrivé. Le gouvernement a introduit le Projet de loi 160, la *Loi sur l'amélioration de la qualité de l'éducation*, qui, bien entendu, était conçue pour faire justement le contraire. Elle éliminait le droit des conseils scolaires à percevoir des taxes pour le financement de l'éducation et transférait celui-ci au gouvernement provincial. Elle a donné lieu à la formule de financement défectueuse qui nous cause toujours des ennuis à ce jour.

Heureusement, tous les affiliés d'enseignants appuyaient le besoin de passer à l'action en ce qui concerne le Projet de loi 160. Cependant, les affiliés ne se sont pas tous préparés de la même façon. Les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO avaient déjà appuyé l'action par l'intermédiaire d'un vote de tous les membres. D'autres affiliés n'ont pas procédé à un tel vote et ce modèle de prise de décisions du sommet à la base est venu les hanter jusqu'à la fin de la manifestation.

En septembre et début d'octobre 1997, des manifestations et des séances d'information ont été tenues par tous les affiliés partout dans la province. Environ 85 pour cent des membres de tous les affiliés se sont présentés pour manifester.

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Our preparation strategy was based on this simple belief: *when you need a friend it is too late to look for one*. We pushed for our members to join Labour Councils and actively seek out allies. We encouraged local leaders to meet with and establish positive relationships with local media outlets. We lobbied all MPPs with a particular emphasis on government members. We wanted them to know we were watching, we had valid concerns, and we were getting ready.

So, from June 1995 until October 1997 we “growled” a lot but we didn’t “bite.” As part of our Action Plan, we built our local structure in preparation for action. We had active Communications and Political Action committees (CPAC) in every District. Local leadership educated local media and the provincial leadership worked on establishing positive contacts with provincial media.

In the mid-nineties, of course, communications from Provincial Office to local leaders and the membership was very different. There was no email and no social media. Urgent communications to local leadership was by a fax. Provincial newsletters and local newsletters were always paper hard copies delivered to worksites. Very few people had cell phones, and many Districts had no local time release for union business. You have a tremendous advantage today with the technology available to you and local time release officers to keep your membership informed, and to get your message out to the public at large. My advice is simple. Use it! Do that prep now-not later.

In October 1997, it finally *was* our time to “bite.” The government introduced Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, which of course was designed to do just the opposite. It removed the right of school boards to tax for education funding and transferred funding for education to the province. It introduced the flawed funding formula that you still struggle with to this day.

Fortunately, all teacher affiliates were onside with the need to take action on

Bill 160. But not all affiliates had prepared the same way. OSSTF/FEESO members had already endorsed the action through the all member vote. Other affiliates did not take such a vote and that top down model of decision making haunted them right to the end of the protest.

During September and early October 1997, all-affiliate rallies and information sessions were held across the province. An estimated 85 per cent of members in all affiliates turned out to show their support. These rallies culminated on October 7 when 24,000 teachers, education workers, and parents jammed Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto with chants of “we won’t back down” with thousands more, unable to get in, echoing the chants outside on the streets. The loudest growl I’ve ever heard.

When the call came on Friday, October 25, that—barring a last minute truce with the government over the weekend—the protest would begin on Monday, October 28, all our preparation paid off. The picket signs were in place, gathering places for members away from their worksites were in place, and most importantly, our members were ready. On Monday morning, bright and early, they appeared on mass at every publicly-funded education worksite across the province. The local, provincial, and yes, the national media were in shock. The unions had done it, they had shut down public education in Ontario. For two weeks, often in snowy blustery weather, our members stood shoulder to shoulder to protect public education. It was truly the proudest two weeks of my 44 years with OSSTF/FEESO. I still proudly wear the pin today given to every OSSTF/FEESO who participated in the protest.

This unprecedented event took place because our members knew what the issues were. It was *their* fight. They knew they were defending public education and their own rights as educational workers. When they were interviewed on picket lines across the province they spoke eloquently and passionately. They were our best spokespersons. When they returned to work after two weeks, poll-

ing indicated that 64 per cent of the public supported them and believed Bill 160 should be withdrawn. Imagine *gaining* support when you’ve closed schools for two weeks!

Did we get rid of Bill 160? Sadly, no. But the Harris government did back away from some of the most contentious elements of the legislation, and that was a victory. Did we improve our standing with parents and the public at-large? Yes. Did our members walk taller and prouder? Absolutely. If our membership had not taken ownership of our action, it would never have materialized. That ownership, from the bottom up and not from the top down, was crucial. As it was in 1995, now is the time for the leaders of this Federation to ensure the members are aware of the political climate. Start “growling.” Start that dialogue between the leadership and the members that will lay the groundwork for fighting whatever Ford sends your way. Ensure that members understand the effects of the government’s cancellation of the labour reforms passed by the previous government, and the effects on their students and parents of scrapping 15-dollar minimum wage. Support local environmental groups fighting the Doug Ford inaction on climate change. Get your local CPAC fully mobilized. Lobby your MPP. Start cultivating positive relationships with local media. This must become your priority now, not later. Decide how you can use those social media platforms to get your message out and do it!

I believe what we were able to accomplish in 1997 was specifically because we laid the groundwork first. Any success we achieved was only possible with the total buy-in and support of our members.

And, if and when you are forced to take action, I can assure you that I, and many of that generation of OSSTF/FEESO members who chose to “bite” in 1997, will stand with you.

David Moss is a retired OSSTF/FEESO member and was the Director of Communications/Political Action Department 2002–2005.

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ter leur soutien. Ces manifestations ont connu leur apogée le 7 octobre, alors que 24 000 enseignantes et enseignants, travailleurs de l'éducation et parents se sont entassés dans le *Maple Leaf Gardens* à Toronto en scandant « Nous n'abandonnerons pas », accompagnés de milliers d'autres, incapables d'entrer, qui donnaient la réplique de ces cris sur la rue. Le grognement le plus fort que j'ai entendu de ma vie.

Lorsque l'appel est venu le vendredi 25 octobre indiquant que, moyennant une trêve de dernière minute avec le gouvernement au cours de la fin de semaine, la manifestation allait débiter le lundi 28 octobre, tous nos préparatifs se sont avérés fructueux. Les piquets de grève étaient en place, des lieux de rassemblement pour les membres hors de leur lieu de travail étaient prévus, et surtout, nos membres étaient prêts. Dès la première heure, le lundi matin, ils se sont présentés en masse à tous les lieux de travail en éducation financés à même les deniers publics partout dans la province. Les médias locaux, provinciaux et, oui, nationaux étaient sous le choc. Les syndicats avaient réussi à paralyser l'éducation publique en Ontario. Pendant deux semaines, souvent par des temps hivernaux cruels, nos membres se sont tenus côte à côte pour protéger l'éducation publique. Ce fut sans équivoque les deux semaines qui ont provoqué chez moi la plus grande fierté de mes 44 années au sein d'OSSTF/FEESO. Je porte toujours fièrement l'épinglette offerte à tous les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO qui

ont participé à la manifestation.

Cet événement sans précédent a eu lieu parce que nos membres connaissaient les enjeux. C'était *leur* combat. Ils savaient qu'ils se portaient à la défense de l'éducation publique et de leurs propres droits à titre de travailleurs de l'éducation. Lorsqu'on leur posait des questions sur les lignes de piquetage partout dans la province, ils parlaient avec éloquence et passion. Ils étaient nos meilleurs porte-parole. Quand ils sont retournés au travail au terme de deux semaines, les sondages indiquaient que 64 pour cent du public était derrière eux et croyaient que le Projet de loi 160 devait être retiré. Imaginez le fait de *gagner* un soutien lorsque vous avez fermé les écoles pendant deux semaines!

Avons-nous complètement abrogé le Projet de loi 160? Malheureusement, non. Cependant, le gouvernement de Mike Harris est revenu sur certains des éléments les plus controversés du projet de loi et c'était là une victoire. Avons-nous amélioré notre position auprès des parents et du grand public? Oui. Nos membres ont-ils ressenti une grande fierté? Absolument. Si nos membres ne s'étaient pas approprié notre action, celle-ci ne se serait jamais concrétisée. Cette appropriation, de la base vers le sommet, et non l'inverse, était cruciale.

Tout comme en 1995, il est maintenant le temps pour les dirigeants de notre Fédération de s'assurer que les membres sont au courant du climat politique. Commencez à « grogner ». Lancez ce dialogue entre les dirigeants et les membres qui jettera les bases d'une lutte

contre quoi que ce soit en provenance du gouvernement Ford. Assurez-vous que les membres comprennent les effets de l'annulation par le gouvernement des réformes de la main-d'œuvre instaurées par le gouvernement précédent et les effets de l'annulation du salaire minimum à 15 \$ sur leurs élèves et les parents. Appuyez les groupes environnementaux locaux qui luttent contre l'inaction de Doug Ford en matière de changements climatiques. Mobilisez complètement votre comité des communications/action politique local. Exercez une pression sur votre député provincial. Commencez à cultiver des relations positives avec les médias locaux. Vous devez en faire une priorité dès maintenant, et non plus tard. Décidez comment vous pouvez utiliser ces plateformes de médias sociaux pour diffuser votre message et faites-le!

Je crois que ce que nous avons été en mesure d'accomplir en 1997 a été possible précisément parce que nous avons d'abord préparé le terrain.

Toute réussite accomplie n'a été possible que grâce à une adhésion totale de nos membres.

Et, si et quand vous êtes obligé de passer à l'action, je peux vous assurer que bon nombre de cette génération de membres d'OSSTF/FEESO qui ont choisi de mordre en 1997, dont je fais partie, seront là pour vous épauler.

David Moss est membre retraité d'OSSTF/FEESO et a été directeur du Secteur des communications/action politique de 2002 à 2005.

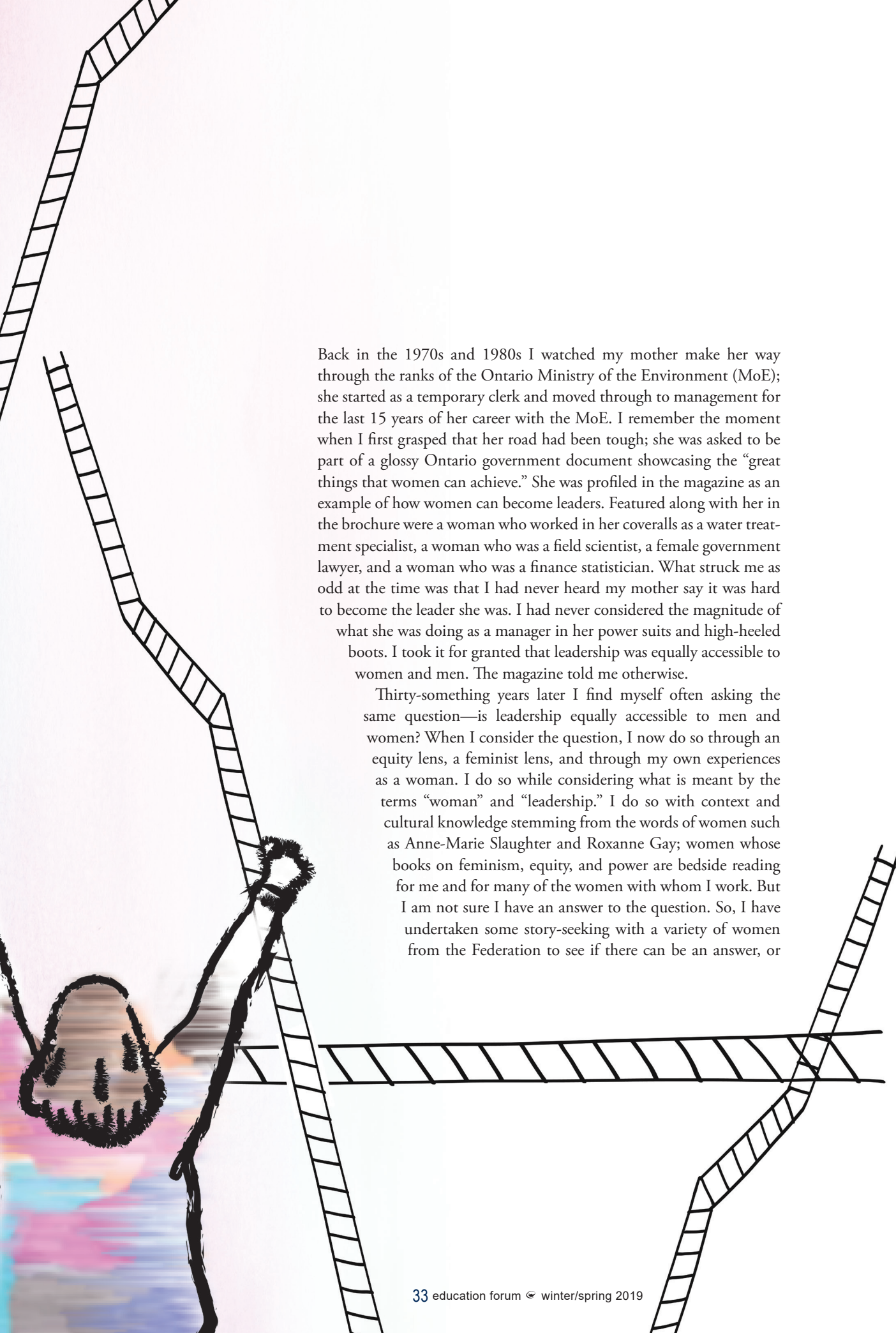


I HAVE POTENTIAL

WOMEN'S ROADS TO AND FROM LEADERSHIP IN OSSTF/FEESO

BY TRACEY GERMA



An abstract line drawing in black ink on a white background. It features several parallel diagonal lines that resemble a ladder or a series of steps. A thick, dark, scribbled line represents a figure climbing or moving along these lines. The figure has a circular head with some internal detail and a long, trailing tail or appendage. The drawing is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping the text area.

Back in the 1970s and 1980s I watched my mother make her way through the ranks of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MoE); she started as a temporary clerk and moved through to management for the last 15 years of her career with the MoE. I remember the moment when I first grasped that her road had been tough; she was asked to be part of a glossy Ontario government document showcasing the “great things that women can achieve.” She was profiled in the magazine as an example of how women can become leaders. Featured along with her in the brochure were a woman who worked in her coveralls as a water treatment specialist, a woman who was a field scientist, a female government lawyer, and a woman who was a finance statistician. What struck me as odd at the time was that I had never heard my mother say it was hard to become the leader she was. I had never considered the magnitude of what she was doing as a manager in her power suits and high-heeled boots. I took it for granted that leadership was equally accessible to women and men. The magazine told me otherwise.

Thirty-something years later I find myself often asking the same question—is leadership equally accessible to men and women? When I consider the question, I now do so through an equity lens, a feminist lens, and through my own experiences as a woman. I do so while considering what is meant by the terms “woman” and “leadership.” I do so with context and cultural knowledge stemming from the words of women such as Anne-Marie Slaughter and Roxanne Gay; women whose books on feminism, equity, and power are bedside reading for me and for many of the women with whom I work. But I am not sure I have an answer to the question. So, I have undertaken some story-seeking with a variety of women from the Federation to see if there can be an answer, or



maybe several answers. What follows is a brief attempt to synthesize their ideas and mine, and to maybe scratch the surface of the question—how has our own organization supported leadership for women and what are our areas of growth? We are lucky enough to belong to a union that embraces equity, creates mentorship programs for women, and seeks to improve its practice. We have strategies in place to encourage leadership, but we are not perfect. This article will also hopefully open up further discussions about other voices that are missing in our various forms of leadership, about how we define leadership, and what we want our leadership to look like. Let it be a discussion point and let it be a story-telling moment.

As I expected, the stories of the women interviewed varied, and while their experiences were all different, there was a common message that emerged in the stories of leaders that I collected; we have more to do and we cannot do it alone. So, I will start the story at the end by stealing one of Roxanne Gay's points from her essay "How to Be Friends with Another Woman," which appears in her collection *Bad Feminist* (2014): "5B: If you and your friend(s) are in the same field and you can collaborate or help each other, do this without shame. It's not your fault your friends are awesome" (p48). This was the message I heard loud and clear—for all of the respondents, mentorship, or "femtorship" as a few called it, really matters. For them, leadership came because people at various levels of this organization, often at the Provincial Office level, reached out to them and told them they had something to offer, told them they had potential. I lend my voice to this experience, completely. My best growth and my best opportunities have come when others in this organization have helped me see my strengths, guided me through overcoming my own weaknesses, and showed me how to navigate possible barriers to my own next steps.

When answering my question about what they have gained by being a leader in OSSTF/FEESO, overwhelmingly the answer was a sense of self confidence

coupled with a richer appreciation for the educational team. The barriers that some women felt they had to overcome were often "well worth the pain" as the chance to be creative, to work with like-minded folks, and to gain a variety of experiences made all the difference. For some, the sense of self-identity, comradery and family were also key benefits. The safety we feel when we are able to find our people and to share in our own challenges was palpable in the answers I received. For some of the participants, the power of the Federation goes deeper, as it has given them their own level of pride coupled with an empowerment that has moved into their private lives. For some of us, this means the Federation has been a lifeline helping us make it through life's greatest challenges.

Conversely, it has not all been the story of success and a celebration of our excellence as women. For many there was also a corollary between the work we do as leaders and the personal and professional sacrifices we have had to make. From sacrificing personal time with family, and suffering health challenges, and even the end of relationships, many have identified the challenges we face as daunting. Being a leader, taking the path to leadership, can often mean hours and hours of volunteer time, time away from children and partners, travelling with kids to meetings on weekends, all accompanied by a level of guilt for not being there for everyone. And while this is not unique to women in the Federation, it is a gendered reality, as more often than not the realities of child rearing fall largely to us. The choice we face between family and the Federation is not unique to our organization; it is a societal divide that will not be solved overnight. However, without naming it and striving to redefine what we see leadership to be, it will remain.

Additionally, many of us pay a professional price as we pursue leadership roles. Balancing our non-Federation professional work with our desire to be recognized in the organization can come at the cost of our own work advances. In all job classes, when we give more to the volunteer activities required of Fed-

eration leaders, there follows a loss of time and energy to become a leader in our given profession. Sometimes, this leads to a self-imposed road block—do I give my time to becoming a leader in my professional role or do I give my time to become a leader in OSSTF/FEESO? One answer suggested by a couple of participants is to provide greater opportunities for our leaders-in-waiting to try out higher levels of local and provincial leadership, outside the realm of volunteerism...a job share, a job trial. This could remove the barrier we feel when we have to choose between advancement in our job or advancement in our union. Until we move to a release position, firmly situating ourselves in Federation leadership, we risk limiting our own growth. It is yet another choice we face—professional growth or the road to leadership.

Perhaps the hardest part of the story telling for me is the part where I explore the barriers some of us have faced to leadership. In a couple of cases, the women were able to say they faced few barriers to their own growth as leaders, but in those cases there was a common element—support from family, friends, colleagues, and the organization. We cannot do it alone, that is for certain. But for the majority of respondents, their experiences included a variety of challenges that at times stymied their growth, impacted their road to leadership, and demoralized them personally and professionally. Stories of being blocked by male colleagues, stories about having ideas ignored at meetings (only to then have a male colleague posit the same idea and have it embraced fully), and stories of being denied information about opportunities with the Federation were common. The message was that if you want to be a leader, you have to play the game with the boys—some spoke of finding our social model of evening meals and networking suites to be limiting, especially for those with family, personal health, or other professional responsibilities. For these women, the limited access to the social side of the Federation means not getting the chance to meet the very mentors/femtors who could be instrumental in their growth

as leaders. In some instances, there is a sense of invisibility as a member in the organization; a sense that as women, there isn't a place that actively shines a spotlight on us. There was agreement among many of the women with whom I spoke that this is beyond just our organization. The nature of leadership in organized labour, as with so many of our structures, is dominated by old practices that do not always embrace women's realities. The organizational structures are at the root of the problem; greater flexibility to meet personal and professional needs is required.

Beyond the structures of the organization, perhaps lies the cruelest of the challenges we face—our own sense of self-worth and readiness. For many of us, the voice in our head says that someone else is better suited to the role, someone else deserves it more, someone else has given more to the Federation. Fear is a powerful tool in our self-destruction; Anne-Marie Slaughter, in her 2015 book *Unfinished Business: Women, Men, Work, Family*, notes that “fear can be a major obstacle holding women back. Banishing those doubts, however, can promote a virtuous circle: you assume you can juggle work and family, you step forward, you succeed professionally, and then you're in a better position to ask for what you need and to make changes that could benefit others” (p18). The “virtuous circle” needs to be embraced.

I recently attended a TEDx Women event at the University of Ottawa where one of the keynote presenters told her own story of overcoming not believing in herself enough and being inundated with self-doubt. I know this mantra too well and lived it long enough—that day I was able to speak with the presenter and told her how powerful I found her admission and how inspiring her proclamations “I can and I will” were for me. This moment of acceptance of what we have to offer to others cannot be forced, it cannot be mandated through a policy motion at the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA). However, it can be a focus of our organization, to work to teach empowerment, to con-

tinue to support deep and meaningful mentorships, and to provide spaces for us to question and challenge our own biases. For all of the respondents, there was a sense of personal responsibility in the choices they made in pursuing their own leadership story.

But where does this all lead us? OSSTF/FEESO has structures in place—the Equity Mentorship Program, the Pathways documents created by our Status of Women Committee, the continued work of our Human Rights Committee—these, along with the daily support many of our leaders provide to other aspiring leaders must be applauded. Of course, the stories here are those of only a handful of voices, and they do not consider the ways in which job class, race, ability, and sexual orientation may intersect with our experiences, often further limiting access to opportunity. For some of the respondents, this is a lived reality; being part of what we deem an Equity Seeking group in our organization means there is increased work to be done when seeking leadership roles. The stories remind us is that there is no one road to leadership and that we have more roads to pave to help diversify the face of the Federation. Roxanne Gay reminds us that “the rules are always different for girls, no matter who they are and what they do” (p315). The women who took part in the research for this article reminded me that the rules out there are different, and that often the rules we set for ourselves are quite different. But while we are in a time much removed from the velvet and wide-lapel suits of my mother's image as an Accounts Payable Manager in the Ministry of the Environment, we still have ways to grow and questions to ask about what leads women to leadership in OSSTF/FEESO.

When she authored this article, **Tracey Germa** was the 1st Vice-President of the Teacher Bargaining Unit in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge, and a member of the provincial Communications and Political Action Committee. She is now an Executive Assistant at Provincial Office.

Camp Kawartha

Outdoor and environmental education



While Ontarians endure the sub-zero temperatures of winter, it is hard to imagine the days to come of warmth and sunshine. But alas, those days do arrive and ideas of camp and being in the outdoors become within reach.

At Camp Kawartha however, other than the warmth, this experience does not have to be a distant idea. Open year-round with two facility locations, its operations include summer camp programs, curriculum-linked education programs, corporate team building programs and facility rentals to a wide variety of users.

The camp is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of the highest standard of programming, with a particular focus on outdoor environmental awareness, outdoor and environmental education and stewardship that includes leadership training programs for 15–17-year-olds.

Camp Kawartha offers students three exciting avenues for adventures to learn about the natural world; summer camp; an outdoor education centre and an environmental education centre.

The summer camp offers a variety of day and overnight camp for students aged 4–17. It has developed programs that build leadership, promotes self-esteem and self-confidence and fosters a sense of community and environmental awareness.

Sessions for older campers 14–17, who are seeking adventure-based experiences or who would like to develop leadership skills can experience a physically demanding two-week wilderness canoe trip led by experienced staff through the Algonquin or Killarney Park.

Students 14–16 may choose a two-week session of challenge and adventure. Working with fellow campers in a non-competitive, supportive environment, rock climbing, white water kayaking, caving, mountain biking, high and low ropes, canoeing, initiative tasks and more.

The Outdoor Education Centre offers over 50 high quality, experiential-based Ontario curriculum-linked programs to elementary and high school students. These programs taught in multiple seasons, fall in five broad categories; environmental science; environmental arts; Canadian history; adventure and leadership and physical education and recreation.

The educational staff provide an in-depth list of available teachings that pinpoints the best curriculum fit by grade,

such as Habitat Enhancement or A Day in the Life of a Voyageur for Grades 9–12; Biodiversity for Grades 9 and 11; Maps and Mapping for Grades 11 and 12; and A Day in the Life of a Voyageur or Archery, Atlatl and Axe Throwing for Grades 9–12. The programs even include a wide variety of winter activities including snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

Camp Kawartha's Environmental Education Centre, situated on Trent University's 200 acre wildlife sanctuary lands in Peterborough, serves as a training ground for future teachers in strategies for effective environmental education and alternative, sustainable living.

The several environmental education programs it offers throughout the seasons may target students taking Grade 9 Geography; Grade 9 and 10 Science; Grade 11 Biology or Environmental Science and Grade 12 Environmental Resource Management.

To book a class trip or for more detailed information on what Camp Kawartha has to offer, visit campkawartha.ca or call 705-652-3860.

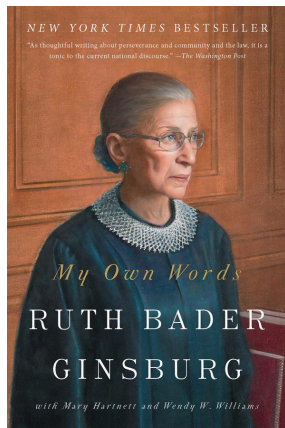




Photos: Courtesy of Camp Kawartha Outdoor Education Centre

Top picks

Reviews



My Own Words

By Ruth Bader Ginsburg

(contributions by Mary Hartnett and Wendy W. Williams)

Simon & Schuster (August 2018)

400 pages, Kindle \$8.39, HC \$20.40,

PB \$12.19, Audio CD \$29.35

Reviewed by Nanci Henderson

While walking the streets of New York City's Upper West Side this past fall, I happened upon a vibrant, independent bookstore called Book Culture. As I enjoyed perusing the stacks and petting the local dogs who were leashed to their soy candle sniffing owners, it became clear that I was in the right kind of bookstore, with its mix of fun mugs proclaiming "I like big books and I don't know why," as well as a menagerie of Ruth Bader Ginsburg literature and memorabilia. Ruth Bader Ginsburg is probably the only American Supreme Court Justice with gum, calendars and an adult colouring book sporting her visage. She has a cult-like following akin to pop icons. However, her pedigree was forged by decades of legal activism reaching back to the early seventies when she headed up the American Civil Liberties Union's Women's Rights Project. She was not the first fe-

male American Supreme Court Justice, but her name calls to the fore seminal gender equality cases related to estates, pay equity, and pension discrimination. She was also active in using the Constitution to expand abortion laws and to quash "male only" admissions policies in American educational institutions. Prior to Ginsburg, all these practices were legal and flagrant.

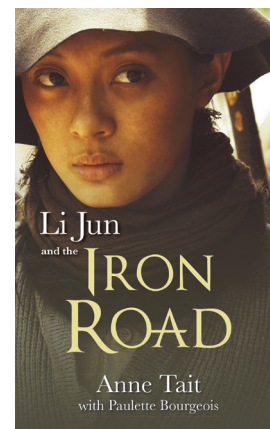
My Own Words by Ruth Bader Ginsburg, with contributions by Mary Hartnett and Wendy W. Williams, contains selections of Ginsburg's publications reaching back to the 1970s and forward to 2016. It chronicles, in a quasi-chronological, but thematic manner, areas of her legal activism from advocating for the elimination of gender discrimination to more recent briefs dissenting Supreme Court majority rulings. This book is divided into five sections, each with an introduction that provides background to Ginsburg's work. The introductions are somewhat redundant, but furnish non-specialists and international readers with necessary context. Energy, within this 400-page collection, bounds out of Ginsburg's concise and pointedly written arguments, speeches, and statements. She writes dissents with a keen historical awareness and a nod to posterity.

The appointment of a U.S. Supreme Court judge affects the interpretation of the American Constitution for decades and in some cases half a century. By comparison, Canadian justices have a mandatory retirement age of seventy-five. Some could argue that the current U.S. President is attempting to gerrymander the unelected third branch of the federal government by appointing highly partisan justices like Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh. These judges have a long history of ruling in favour of corporations and against progressive values. Ginsburg, at almost 86, holds an important position on the bench as a progressive. The national preoccupation with Ginsburg's health taps into a well-founded fear. When Justice Antonin Scalia died in 2016, the Republican Congress stonewalled President Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland. This

provided the next President with a highly important ideological opportunity. Behold Gorsuch.

My Own Words is not a Ginsburg biography per se, but it is an excellent way for readers interested in Ginsburg to also dip their toes into the compelling and dirty waters of American constitutional history. Yes, the book dabbles in biography, but more importantly it is a well-timed reminder of how hard people like Ginsburg have worked, fighting to have equality and human rights recognized legally. The warnings in this book remind those of us north of the 49th parallel of the sanctity of the Supreme Court at a time when a neophyte and ravenous Ontario Premier threatens to invoke the 'notwithstanding clause' of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in order to muscle his ideology through Ontario schools.

Nanci Henderson is the Head of Special Education at Elmira District Secondary School.



Li Jun and the Iron Road

By Anne Tait with Paulette Bourgeois

Dundurn (November 2015)

184 pages, Paperback \$10.99,

Kindle \$8.09, Ebook (EPUB) \$8.99,

Ebook (PDF) \$10.99

Reviewed by Larry French

Pierre Berton has given us the *National Dream* and *The Last Spike* to celebrate the construction of our nation binding railway in the 1880s. With *Li Jun and*

the Iron Road, Anne Tait shows us the project from the perspective of an unlikely heroine, ‘Little Tiger,’ a spunky Chinese teenager who disguises herself as a boy to get to Canada to reunite with her long-lost father.

We follow Li Jun from her village in China to servitude in Hong Kong, then to a job in a fireworks factory where she develops expertise with explosives. When she sees a poster advertising for Chinese workers to join the construction crew building the railroad through the Rocky Mountains in British Columbia, Li Jun inveigles a meeting with James, the son of the railway owner, saves him from death when attacked by a brutal anti-recruitment enforcer, delivers workers when the situation seems hopeless, then sails to Canada with them.

Anne Tait renders skillfully the multiple twists and turns of Li Jun’s story. Our heroine uncovers payroll padding, survives attempts on her life by the crooks and highly dangerous blasting assignments on the sheer rock faces. She even enjoys a tender romance with James. The ending, an emotional reconciliation with her father as he is dying and her decision about her future, is engagingly realistic, spurning the ‘lived happily ever after’ trope. In a sobering reminder of the human cost of the construction of the railroad, Tait’s book is dedicated ‘To the thousands of Chinese workers who died building our railway—three for every mile of track they laid.’

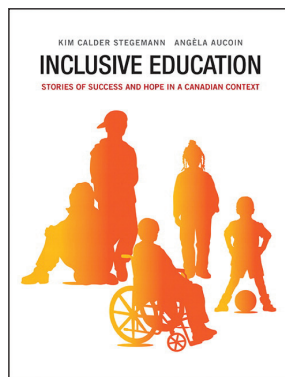
In mid-November at the TIFF Bell Lightbox, I had the pleasure of joining four hundred ESL students for a REEL Canada showing of ‘Iron Road,’ the film that Tait produced and that inspired her book. The students were highly enthusiastic; their appreciative comments in tentative English were a delight to hear. Anne Tait convinced Peter O’Toole (‘he owed me one’) and Sam Neill to take feature roles.

One of REEL Canada’s missions is to introduce Canadian students, including newcomers, to Canadian films. The combination of the novel *Li Jun and the Iron Road* with the film ‘Iron Road’ is a powerful teaching tool for teachers of English, History, Film Studies and Eng-

lish Second Language.

‘Iron Road,’ feature film, 99 minutes, PG, Director David Wu, with Peter O’Toole, Sam Neill, Sun Li and Luke Macfarlane. www.reelcanada.ca/films/iron-road.

Larry French is a retired OSSTF/FEESO member and former Director of the External Policy Department at Provincial Office.



Inclusive Education: Stories of Success and Hope in a Canadian Context

By Kim Calder Stegemann and Angela AuCoin

Pearson Canada; 1 edition (January 2, 2017)

240 pages, Paperback \$23.96

Reviewed by Kim Manning

Inclusion...uh-oh, there’s that word again. Classroom teachers, education assistants and administrators, as caring and compassionate professionals, work hard to meet the diverse learning and personal needs of the wide range of students we meet in our classrooms every day. We are inclusive in our practices. However, the practical implications of the “policy of inclusion” are not always obvious.

In my province of British Columbia curriculum revisionists have promoted inclusion as the rationale for requiring all Grade 12 students to enrol in a single Grade 12 academic-oriented English course. Until now a second choice, Communications 12 (less academically oriented) has been offered. If inclusion

means that all students will take English 12, why not also Calculus 12 or Chemistry 12?

Inclusion has also been the rationale offered by some who have “fully integrated” a student with identified emotional issues (including punching and biting her peers) in a so-called regular classroom.

In those and other contexts a useful resource is available. *Inclusive Education: Stories of Success and Hope in a Canadian Context* by Kim Calder Stegemann and Angela AuCoin (Pearson, 2018) is a concise text that while written in textbook format (with chapter questions at the end of each chapter) and certainly appropriate for teacher education programs, offers a lot to recommend it to all of us in the education field.

- It is written by Canadians about the Canadian context.
- It is succinct and clearly written. It avoids “edu-speak” and, for example, reviews the history of treatment of people with special needs—from the Middle Ages to today—in 1.5 pages.
- The book covers a wide range of inclusive education topics (Universal Design for Learning, Response to Intervention, Autism Spectrum, Behaviour Reduction Protocols, etc.) in both elementary and secondary settings through case studies involving teachers, education assistants, parents, and students. In that way it avoids being an “ivory tower” prescription, and instead relies upon actual school-based examples.
- At the end of each chapter the book offers “Useful Websites.”

Finally, and perhaps the most refreshing conclusion is that the authors contend that “inclusive education is about removing barriers to school success for all of our children in their neighbourhood or community school. Inclusive education is not just a meshing of general and special education systems. It is about creating something new.”

Kim Manning is a teacher in British Columbia and a member of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF).

Our history prepares us

Taking cues from the past in the face of current challenges



OSSTF/FEESO was brought into being in 1919 by leaders and activists who were already setting a high standard for members to emulate over the ensuing century. Our first president, William Michell, was not only a respected teacher and principal, but also a celebrated hero of the First World War. When he returned from defending his country on the battlefields of Europe, he turned his attention to defending the rights of his fellow educators and the integrity of publicly-funded education. He understood that the kind of country he was willing to go to battle for, and possibly to die for, was also the kind of country that can only live up to its potential when education is a public priority.

Like William Michell, OSSTF/FEESO members have always understood the crucial role education plays in a prosperous and just society. Over the years they have been called upon many times to stand together and defend not just each other's interests, but the interests of their students and the integrity of the public education system itself whenever governments have taken steps to undermine it.

Many of those battles have been fought at the local level, but some have involved province-wide actions that tapped the resolve and the solidarity of the entire membership. When our right to strike was threatened in 1973, and again when our pensions were under threat in 1989, thousands of educators rallied in demonstrations of solidarity so impressive that the governments of the day backed away from their ill-conceived plans and worked with us to resolve those situations. And in 1997 our members were among the more than 126,000 education workers who walked out of their workplaces and shut down the entire education system for two full weeks to protest Mike Harris's Bill 160.

Whether we like it or not, our history tells us that every now and then the battle to defend public education has to be waged within Queen's Park or on its lawns, out front of our worksites and in the streets. And now, unfortunately, the Ford government appears determined to present us with just such a moment.

On March 15—perhaps the bleakest day in Ontario education history—the government announced that over \$700 million will be slashed from the province's secondary school budget, and at least 25 per cent of our teacher positions will be eliminated over four years. We know, because the government is attacking the *average* class size, that some classes could easily balloon to 40 or 45 students if there is going to be the continuation of any smaller programs. A total of 34,000 classes will be cut across the province. It is not yet clear what impact this announcement will have on support staff jobs, but we do know that when school boards see funding lines cut, support staff positions are often jeopardized.

We have been attempting sincerely, since their election, to reach out to this government to provide them with meaningful advice about how to improve the education system. The Minister of Education, however, has seen fit to meet with me only once, for 30 minutes, back in October, despite the radical and destructive changes she's proposing.

We are, of course, working on many other fronts, and we will leave no stone unturned in our efforts to defend our members and the education system in which they work.

But, in the end, the union is not the leadership at Provincial Office or even at the local level. The union is, in fact, the collective body of members, working in solidarity with one another to defend each other's interests. An active and engaged membership is our greatest defense against these outrageous government attacks on our work.

As we resist this latest round of assaults on Ontario's education system, we need to remember that no one can guarantee us victory. But to refuse to fight—to capitulate to this effort to cheapen and demean education—would be unworthy of us as educators who care for the well-being of our students and our colleagues. Our goal will always remain to win everything we can by resisting.

I urge all OSSTF/FEESO members to stay informed and engaged in the coming weeks and months. We have faced tough times in the past and we will again. But when this current storm passes, we must be in a position to say we did everything we could to defend our students and ourselves from these latest barbarians at our schools' gates.

Harvey Bischof,
OSSTF/FEESO President

Notre histoire nous prépare

Fort de l'expérience du passé face aux défis actuels

OSSTF/FEESO a vu le jour en 1919, grâce à des dirigeants et militants qui avaient déjà établi des normes élevées et, au cours du siècle qui a suivi, ont servi de modèle pour les membres. Notre premier président, William Michell, était non seulement un enseignant et directeur d'école respecté, mais bien un héros décoré de la Première Guerre mondiale. À son retour des champs de bataille de l'Europe, il a concentré ses efforts à la défense des droits de ses collègues en éducation et de l'intégrité de l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics. Il comprenait que le genre de pays qu'il avait accepté de défendre au combat, au risque d'y laisser sa vie, était également le genre de pays qui ne peut atteindre son potentiel que lorsque l'éducation est une priorité publique.

Tout comme William Michell, les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO ont toujours compris le rôle essentiel de l'éducation au sein d'une société prospère et juste. Au fil des ans, on a souvent fait appel à eux pour se mobiliser et défendre non seulement leurs intérêts communs, mais également les intérêts des élèves et l'intégrité du système d'éducation dans son ensemble, lorsque les gouvernements avaient entrepris des démarches pour le discréditer.

Bon nombre de ces conflits ont été menés au palier local, mais certains d'entre eux ont nécessité des actions provinciales alimentées par la détermination et la solidarité de tous les membres. Lorsque notre droit de grève a été menacé en 1973, et encore lorsque nos pensions ont été la cible en 1989, des milliers d'éducateurs se sont mobilisés dans la cadre de manifestations de solidarité à ce point impressionnantes que les gouvernements de l'époque sont revenus sur leurs plans mal conçus et ont collaboré avec nous

dans le but de résoudre ces différends. Et en 1997, nos membres étaient parmi les 126 000 travailleurs de l'éducation qui ont débrayé de leur lieu de travail et ont freiné le système d'éducation au complet pendant deux semaines pour manifester contre la *Loi 160* de Mike Harris.

Que nous le voulions ou non, notre histoire dicte qu'il devient nécessaire de temps à autre de mener le combat pour défendre l'éducation publique à Queen's Park ou sur son terrain, à l'extérieur de nos lieux de travail et dans les rues. Et maintenant, malheureusement, le gouvernement Ford semble déterminé à nous offrir un tel événement.

Le 15 mars – peut-être la journée la plus sombre de l'histoire de l'éducation en Ontario – le gouvernement a annoncé son intention de sabrer le budget des écoles secondaires en Ontario, à raison de 700 millions de dollars et d'éliminer au moins 25 pour cent des postes en enseignement sur une période de quatre ans. Nous savons que, puisque le gouvernement s'attaque à l'effectif *moyen* des classes, certaines de celles-ci pourraient facilement gonfler à 40 ou 45 élèves, advenant le maintien de tous les petits programmes. Au total, 34 000 classes seront éliminées dans la province. Les répercussions de cette annonce sur les postes du personnel de soutien demeurent incertaines, mais nous savons que lorsque les conseils scolaires voient leur financement réduit, les postes du personnel de soutien sont souvent compromis.

Nous avons tenté sincèrement de tendre la main à ce gouvernement depuis son entrée au pouvoir et de lui fournir des conseils judicieux quant à la façon d'améliorer le système d'éducation. La ministre de l'Éducation a toutefois daigné me rencontrer qu'une seule fois, pour 30 minutes en octobre, malgré les

changements radicaux et destructeurs qu'elle propose.

Bien entendu, nous œuvrons sur de nombreux autres fronts et nous ne négligeons aucune piste dans nos efforts pour défendre nos membres et le système d'éducation dans lequel ils travaillent.

Tout compte fait, cependant, notre syndicat n'est pas les dirigeants au Bureau provincial ou même au niveau local. En fait, le syndicat est l'ensemble collectif des membres qui travaille de façon solidaire pour défendre leurs intérêts réciproques. Un groupe de membres actifs et engagés est notre meilleure défense contre les attaques outrageuses du gouvernement à l'endroit de notre travail.

Alors que nous tenons bon devant cette plus récente ronde d'agressions sur le système d'éducation de l'Ontario, il faut se rappeler que personne n'est en mesure de nous garantir la victoire. Cependant, le refus de se battre, d'abdiquer devant cet effort visant à affaiblir et dénigrer l'éducation, constituerait un geste abject de notre part à titre d'éducateurs qui se soucient du bien-être de nos élèves et de nos collègues. Notre but demeurera toujours de gagner tout ce que nous pouvons au moyen de la résistance.

J'insiste auprès de tous les membres d'OSSTF/FEESO de rester à l'affût des plus récents renseignements et de demeurer engagés au cours des prochaines semaines et des prochains mois. Nous avons fait face à des périodes difficiles par le passé et nous le ferons encore. Cependant, lorsque la présente tempête sera passée, il faut que nous puissions dire que nous avons tout fait pour défendre nos élèves et nous-mêmes contre les plus récents barbares aux portes de nos écoles.

Harvey Bischof,
président d'OSSTF/FEESO

Events

Conferences,
PD opportunities and
other items of interest

June 2–4, 2019

**ECNO Conference
(Educational Computing Network
of Ontario)**

Nottawasga Inn, Alliston, ON

The theme of this year's Conference, "*ECNO 2019—Shake IT Up!—Secouer le cocotier!*" speaks to the fact that information technology is here to stay and is becoming more and more relevant as time passes. It also gives the message that we are prepared for the ever-changing challenges that are inherent with new and emerging technologies and ties in to the 20 years that ECNO has been fostering sharing, collaboration and the value and benefits that ECNO ensures by being a member. For more information visit: www.ecnoconference.com.

JUNE 6, 2019

**Leadership In Stem Education
Mohawk College, Hamilton, ON**

STEM education is an increasingly important focus in Ontario schools. Whatever the pathway and career destination, students need a strong STEM foundation to ensure they are ready for their future. On June 6th at Mohawk College in Hamilton, education leaders, administrators, stakeholders and community partners from across the province will come together to share ideas, inspiration, and innovative initiatives in support of high quality STEM education at the board and system level. Hosted by Science Education Leaders of Ontario. For more information, please visit: www.sccao.ca.

June 17, 2019

**Accounting for Quality in the Early
Childhood Workforce:**

**The 16th 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 Institute strives to offer timely information to inform early childhood research, policy and practice. As Canada embarks on a new early years strategy, the Institute examines the importance of the early childhood workforce and the infrastructure necessary to support educators working in an increasingly challenging and diverse sector. For more information, visit www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/Events/2019_Events/Summer_Institute_2019.html.

September 20–22, 2019

**Council of Outdoor Educators of
Ontario (COEO)**

Annual Fall Conference 2019

**Camp Couchiching, Longford Mills,
ON**

The Council of Outdoor Educators of Ontario (COEO) is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that promotes safe and high quality outdoor education experiences for people of all ages. It also acts as a professional body for outdoor educators in the province of Ontario.

Complete details about this year's conference details will be available soon. For further information contact conference@coeo.org or check www.coeo.org.

November 29–30, 2019

**Ontario Council for Exceptional
Children (OCEC) Conference 2019
Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton
Centre Hotel**

Toronto, ON

The Council for Exceptional Children provides a variety of services for individuals with special needs and those

who work with them. The Council advocates for appropriate government policies, and establish standards for professionals and paraprofessionals. The details of this year's conference have yet to be announced. To check for details when they become available, visit: www.cecontario.ca

November 30–December 2, 2019

"Transformations":

**2019 Higher Education Summit
Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel
Toronto, ON**

Hosted by Colleges Ontario, the Higher Education Summit explores the major issues of the day and the challenges facing educators, governments, business leaders and others. Highlights include featured remarks from world-renowned leaders and educators, and networking opportunities at the most senior level. Learn, grow and transform with this year's incredible line-up of speakers, including Harvard professor, two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and experimental psychologist Steven Pinker, who explores whether: "This bleak assessment of the state of the world is wrong." For more information please visit: www.highereducationsummit.ca.

December 5–6, 2019

**TESL Ontario Annual Conference
Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton
Centre
Toronto, ON**

The annual meeting of the Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario. This year's conference theme is "Cultivating Innovation and Inclusion." Learn from knowledgeable teachers, researchers, technology experts and ESL professionals in many different language training sectors. The TESL Ontario conference will arm participants with the knowledge and skills to become successful ESL professionals. Features will include: more than 100 educational sessions, keynote presentations, a panel discussion and numerous networking opportunities. For more information, please visit: www.teslontario.org/conference.

A close-up photograph of two women with long dark hair, smiling warmly and embracing each other. The woman in the foreground has her eyes closed and a joyful expression, while the woman behind her is also smiling. They are wearing a black and white striped top. The background is bright and out of focus.

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