

ETFO

SPRING 2012
VOL. 14 - NO. 3

Voice



Waabgon Gamig: Excellence in Early Childhood Education

Collective Bargaining 2012
Lessons from Wisconsin



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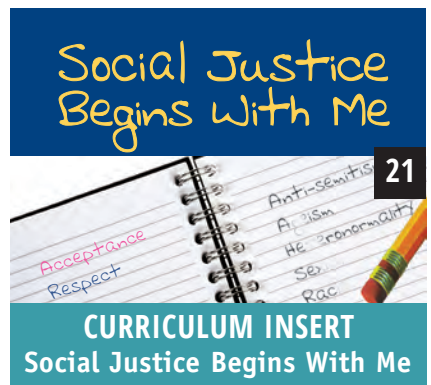
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ON OUR COVER: Students in their classroom at Waabgon Gamig First Nation School
Photo: Janice McDonald-Zavarce

Meeting Challenges

As we go to press, the recently released Drummond report is at the top of many teachers' minds. Austerity and cuts to the public sector have come to dominate the discussion of the future of Ontario. With this issue, we shift the conversation back to consider the importance of strong communities, healthy classrooms, and social responsibility.

With Earth Day (April 22) and National Aboriginal Day (June 21) just around the corner, we take pause to consider our commitment to supporting First Nations communities and our environment.

Our cover story focusses on the success of Waabgon Gamig First Nation School on Georgina Island in York Region (p.16). Having recently won several awards for teaching excellence at the school, elementary teacher Tanya Leary reflects on some of the strategies teachers used to achieve their success. In his column on supporting First Nations communities in Ontario, President Sam Hammond expands on ETFO's long-standing commitment to First Nations and our desire to support Aboriginal communities in overcoming the challenges many are facing.

The other major theme of this issue is collective bargaining, which Jim White addresses in detail in his column *Bargaining 2012* (p.11). This column expands on the bargaining goals for teacher locals, occasional teacher locals, and ESP/PSP and DECE locals that were listed in the previous issue of *Voice*. In a related article, *The Importance of Strong Unions: Lessons from Wisconsin*, Vivian McCaffrey reflects on the success Wisconsin teachers had defending their collective bargaining rights and working on a grassroots campaign that proved strong unions bring strong results for all. It is this collective strength that Gene Lewis reflects on in his column, *Bargaining for a Bright Future*, writing "our goal, as we go into this next round of bargaining, is to maintain good jobs and good learning conditions today and into the future."

These features along with our regular columns are sure to make interesting spring reading. Check them out online, where you can simply click on the links and follow the stories.

As for me, I'm settling into *Voice* nicely. In the upcoming months I plan to work on refreshing the print magazine, developing the web-site, and creating more ways for you to engage with the articles in our pages. I'll keep you updated on all the details!



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Sam Hammond
ETFO President

Supporting First Nations Communities in Ontario

ETFO has a proud reputation of contributing internationally. When an earthquake strikes, we are there. At the same time we sometimes look less closely at how communities right here at home need our support. Nothing demonstrated this more than when the people of Attawapiskat cried out for help this past fall. The community was in desperate need of housing, education, and other basic necessities. The federal and provincial governments were dragging their heels in coming forward with an adequate response. In response to the crisis, ETFO donated \$5,000 directly to the Housing Crisis Fund at Attawapiskat, ensuring the much-needed funds would be received by the community and not redirected to a third party. But we knew that would not be enough.

At the November 2011 Executive meeting, we passed a motion to develop a comprehensive and sustainable ETFO campaign to support Aboriginal communities in Ontario. Our goals in establishing this campaign are to understand the issues and challenges confronting Aboriginal peoples at the national and provincial levels, with a special focus on education, and to determine ways in which we can support Aboriginal peoples in meeting those challenges.

As a member of the Executive, I am proud that ETFO is a long-time ally of First Nations communities. Our commitment is demonstrated through our support of the Lieutenant Governor's Summer Literacy Camps in remote and northern communities, our key sponsorship of the Right to Play Leadership Program for First Nations across Ontario, as well as our overall commitment to advocacy, leadership development, and educational resources.

An effort that is exemplary of this commitment and that began a few years ago is our support of *Shannen's Dream*. Over 10 years ago, the school in Attawapiskat, standing on diesel-contaminated ground, was shut down. Students attended classes in poorly maintained portables while the government did nothing. In 2007, Shannen Koostachin, a young person in the community, organized students across the country to get a new school for Attawapiskat and quality education for all children. In 2010, Shannen was killed in a car accident. Others committed to keeping her dream alive and *Shannen's Dream* was born. ETFO became one of the first supporters of *Shannen's Dream* and to this day continues to advocate for quality education for First Nations children on and off reserves.

Attawapiskat is only one of hundreds of remote communities where students lack quality education, decent housing, and opportunities for a bright future. A report released in early February reminded us again of the deplorable state of education in our First Nations communities. ETFO will continue to work to change that.

Supporting young people and helping them grow are what teachers do every day in their classrooms. By supporting Aboriginal communities in their struggles, we extend that work into the broader community and help create a climate of mutual care, respect, and collaboration. We are fighting for a future when all young Canadians—no matter where they live—will have the same fundamental right to education that they need to reach their full potential.

What we do every day in our classrooms is key. We move forward when we move together, each taking another by the hand.



FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

GENE LEWIS

ETFO General Secretary

Bargaining for a Bright Future

ETFO collective agreements expire at the end of August 2012 and bargaining for new agreements is about to begin. As we move into active bargaining, members can expect to be challenged about what we are asking for in our next contract.

In this climate of economic uncertainty, there is a great deal of fear and confusion about what is needed for the economy to recover. Most often what we hear is austerity, cuts to government spending, cutbacks in public services, lower wages and benefits for public sector workers. However, both in the long and the short term, investing in vital areas of the public sector makes financial sense. As Douglas Porter Chief Economist BMO/Nesbitt Burns said, “Governments shouldn’t be aggressively cutting spending when the economy is gasping for air ... That’s certainly the wrong prescription.”

Unfortunately with the attack on the public sector has come an attack on unions. I don’t need to tell you why unions matter, and not only to their members. Unions contribute to the wealth and prosperity of society overall and are the reason most of us have workplace rights today. No country, as noted in a recent Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives article, has ever achieved widespread prosperity and created a large middle class without unions.

People fare better when they join together in a common interest. ETFO members should never apologize for having good working conditions. What we need is to raise others up so that they have good working conditions as well. In a climate where corporations have made tremendous profits while people have lost their jobs and homes, it is important not to internalize the rhetoric that there is not enough. There is enough. The real issue is who gets what there is, a revenue not a spending question that raises the issue of corporate tax cuts.

As educators we face an important question. How do we want our kids to grow up? What is the greatest impact we can have on ensuring they have a bright future, one in which all have good working conditions and democratic and social rights and freedoms are valued. It is essential that we focus on our desire to raise each other up, instead of pulling each other down.

Our goal, as we go into this round of bargaining is to maintain good jobs and good learning conditions today and into the future. Let’s create healthy, constructive learning environments for our students. Let’s use our collective strength for our members, our students, and the future. Our solidarity makes it possible.

YOUR FEDERATION



...and still we rise



Four hundred women took part in this year's *...and still we rise* Conference, which saw inspirational keynotes, leadership presentations, and workshops on the theme *Dare to Dream*. Pictured above, keynote speaker Mariatu Kamara, a survivor of the brutal decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone and author of *The Bite of the Mango*.

London Day of Action against Caterpillar Inc.

On January 21st, provincial Executive members and staff joined ETFO local officers and members from across the province to support locked out CAW Local 27 members who built locomotives at the Electro-Motive Canada plant in London, Ontario. Caterpillar Inc. stopped production and locked out its workers on New Year's Day, 2012.



Photo credit: Vivian McGaffrey

S. Hammond, M. Leis, S. Swackhammer, R. Rivait, P. Mack and G. Lewis (above)

M. Skrinda, D. Howey, C. Judson (top right)

L. Hammond, R. McLaughlin, P. Walker (bottom right)

Collective Bargaining Conference

More than 350 members participated in Part II of ETFO's collective bargaining training in February. With a theme of developing strategies for motivating members, the second conference focused on providing local leaders with the knowledge and tools to engage members in supporting provincial and local bargaining goals. Collective Bargaining Coordinator Jim White outlines ETFO's bargaining goals in detail in this issue. Turn to page 11 for the whole story and stay in touch by visiting www.controlyourfuture.ca, subscribing to the e-newsletter at etfo.ca, and following us on twitter @ETF0/FEE0.



Representative Council Meeting

On February 29 and March 1 over 150 ETFO leaders gathered for the winter Representative Council meeting. They were joined by more than 40 Union School participants. Much of the meeting was taken with discussions of ETFO's decision to withdraw from bargaining discussions with the government.

Dr. Carys Massarella, a transgender physician from Hamilton, spoke to the council about the issues facing transgender adults and gender independent children. She said the two most important things ETFO members can do is recognize that there is nothing wrong with gender independent children and give them a safe place to be children. Dr. Massarella recommended three books: *gender born, gender made*, Diane Ehrensaft; *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*, Stephanie A. Brill and Rachel Pepper; and *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism For Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals*, Mildred L. Brown, Chloe Ann Rounsley.

Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse presenting ETFO's donation to Chief of Attawapiskat Theresa Spence.

Attawapiskat

On December 20, 2011 ETFO donated \$5,000 to assist with the crisis in Attawapiskat First Nation, as part of a longstanding commitment to the people of that community. "We support the fundamental right of all children to a good education and a safe and healthy environment," said ETFO President Sam Hammond in a letter to Band Chief Theresa Spence.

Photo credit: Chiefs of Ontario

The Importance of Strong Unions: Lessons from Wisconsin

By Vivian McCaffrey



When Mary Bell became the president of the Wisconsin teachers' union in 2007, she didn't envisage she'd be leading a grassroots battle against a government assault on public sector unions. Wisconsin workers had some cause to be complacent about their bargaining rights. "We've had collective bargaining for public employees in Wisconsin for over 50 years. We had the first collective bargaining law in the States. No one expected that in four days they could wipe it out," said Bell, referring to a series of initiatives imposed by the state government.

ETFO invited Bell, an educator for 33 years, to address a November collective bargaining training session for locals. Public sector workers in Ontario haven't experienced the same level of attack on their rights as their American counterparts, but we are facing a similar political climate, with government targeting public sector salaries and wages as the primary source of deficit reduction. Bell's presentation to ETFO reinforced the importance of doing what we can as a union to avoid the politics of division south of the border.

Wisconsin government guts union contracts

Wisconsin has joined a number of Republican-led state governments to cut expenditures and gut public sector contracts. In March

2011, the state passed legislation that restricts public sector unions from bargaining anything beyond salary, and mandates that salary increases cannot exceed inflation. Wisconsin teachers now also pay a greater cost of their benefits and have lost their 180 minutes of preparation time.

In addition, the legislation requires the union's 425 districts to hold recertification votes every year to maintain bargaining rights and to collect member dues directly rather than receiving them through the time-honoured dues check-off process administered by the employer. "I can now, as an employee of the public schools in my district, have my health club fees deducted from my salary, but I can't have my union dues deducted," Bell commented. These government initiatives "had nothing to do with balancing the budget; they were a direct attack on unions. And you need to be watching," she cautioned.

Wisconsin did not stop at attacking union contracts. "The elected officials in my state just got \$1.6 billion out of public schools. At the same time, they gave just about as much in corporate tax breaks." The state has also expanded the support for voucher education and funding for private schools in spite of the evidence that it is poor public policy. "We in Wisconsin have the longest-standing voucher program in the U.S. and for 20 years it has failed miserably because, guess what, educating poor kids is not easy," said Bell. In December, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker signed into law a bill that allows standardized test scores to be used to evaluate teachers and as a rationale to discipline or fire a teacher. The bill also enables school districts to opt out of the grades two and three class-size reduction program.

We've had collective bargaining for public employees in Wisconsin for over 50 years. We had the first collective bargaining law in the States. No one expected that in four days they could wipe it out . . .

—Mary Bell - President of the Wisconsin Education Association Council



Public sector unions launch grassroots campaign

In the face of anti-union measures, the Wisconsin teachers' union, along with other state unions, turned its attention to mobilizing their members and reaching out to the community. "Workplace issues . . . won't get addressed without a contract or a union. Overall, we know that if our rights are threatened, the rights of working families and the open door to a better life for working families suffer as well," said Bell.

To connect to the community, the union created a campaign called "Speak Out for Wisconsin Schools." The campaign involved meetings where teachers and community members were invited to speak about what contributes to quality teachers and how school districts can be accountable for education. The union created a video of parents' testimonies and launched a Facebook page to promote broad public discussion.

Mass rallies and petitions

As the anti-union legislation worked its way through the legislature, union members and supporters staged mass protests. Rallies grew from 5,000 to 70,000 participants in less than a week. "The protests continued to grow beyond anything that had been seen even during the height of the Vietnam War," said Bell. Every lunch hour, 50 to



To connect to the community, the union created a campaign called "Speak Out for Wisconsin Schools."

125 people gathered in the Capitol rotunda to join hands and sing union songs.

The bill passed the Republican-dominated legislature, but the rallies laid the groundwork for a petition campaign to force a recall vote for the governor. Organizers had to collect 540,208 signatures (25 per cent of the 2.2 million votes cast during the 2010 gubernatorial election) by January 17. On January 18, organizers announced they had surpassed the target by collecting more than 1 million signatures. In response, Republican Party officials have indicated they are going to court to seek proof the signatures are valid. It is just the next step in a protracted ground war.

Lessons for Ontario

The political turmoil of the last several months has drawn attention to the importance of public sector jobs in sustaining a viable middle class. Grassroots mobilization against the retrenchment agenda has strengthened the relationship between unions and the community. For Mary Bell, a key lesson is the importance of solidarity in response to those who target unions as the cause of government deficits: "We figured out, as public employees, unionized labour, we are not the issue. We have to join together and fight in the ways that we can in order to reclaim our power, reclaim our state and our country, and reclaim a movement that really stands for middle-class working families."

For ETFO, the goal is to avoid the Wisconsin scenario of having to fight to regain what is lost through budget cuts and the assault on collective bargaining and union rights. The Wisconsin experience underlines the importance of the work ETFO does to build connections and alliances with the broader community on an ongoing basis, not just when we reach a crisis. ▣

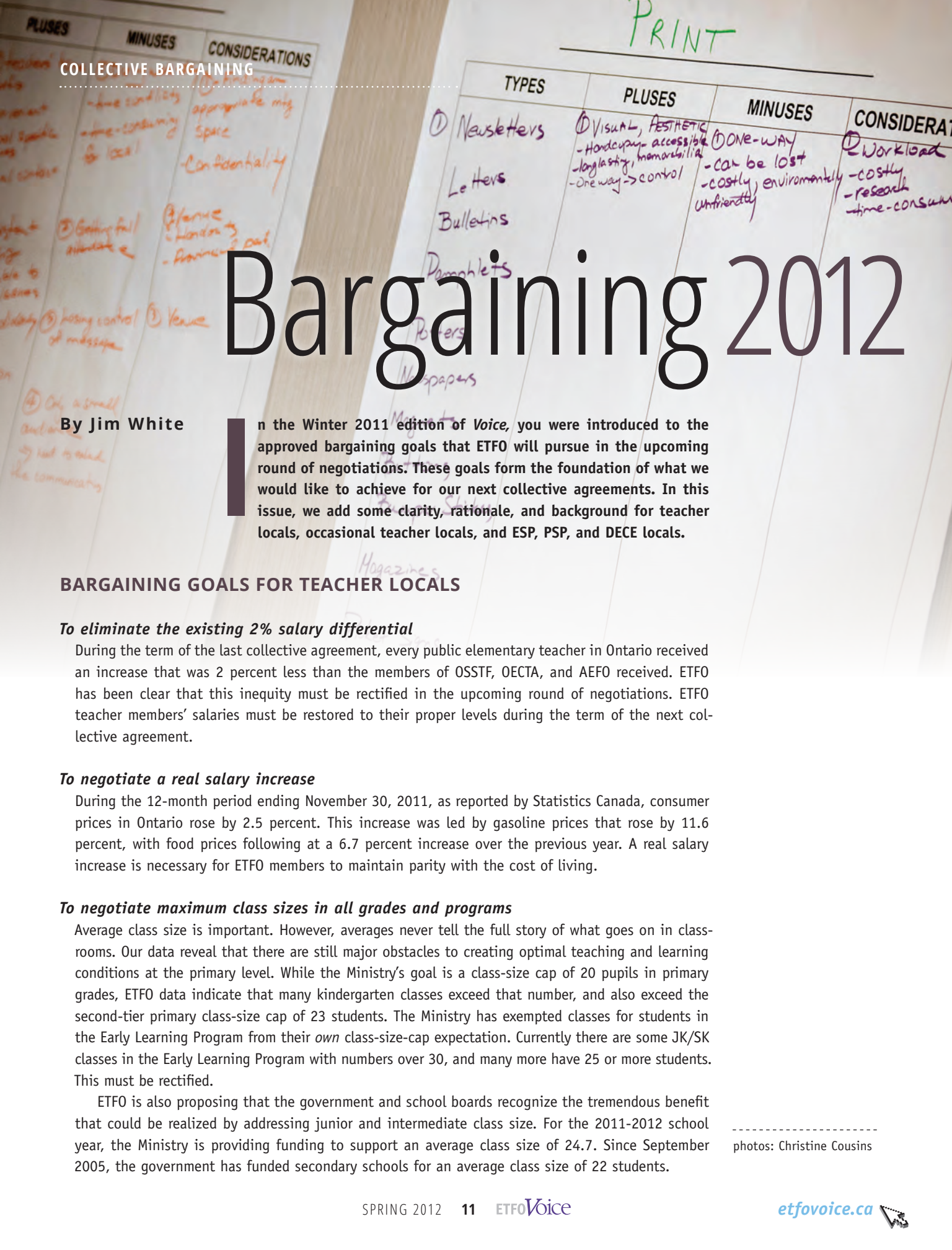
.....
Vivian McCaffrey is an executive staff member of ETFO Professional Services.

IMPACT OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION BILLS IN 2011

- Contract negotiations are limited to salary.
- Salary increase can't exceed inflation.
- Teachers lost 180 minutes of preparation time.
- Student test scores can now be used to evaluate, discipline, or fire a teacher.
- School districts can opt out of class-size reduction program.
- School districts no longer deduct union dues; dues must be collected by the union.
- Union's local units must hold annual recertification votes to maintain bargaining rights.
- A \$1.6 billion cut to education spending resulted in 1,655 fewer teachers, 765 fewer aides, and 776 fewer education support professionals.

PRINT

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



Bargaining 2012

By Jim White

In the Winter 2011 edition of *Voice*, you were introduced to the approved bargaining goals that ETFO will pursue in the upcoming round of negotiations. These goals form the foundation of what we would like to achieve for our next collective agreements. In this issue, we add some clarity, rationale, and background for teacher locals, occasional teacher locals, and ESP, PSP, and DECE locals.

BARGAINING GOALS FOR TEACHER LOCALS

To eliminate the existing 2% salary differential

During the term of the last collective agreement, every public elementary teacher in Ontario received an increase that was 2 percent less than the members of OSSTF, OECTA, and AEF0 received. ETFO has been clear that this inequity must be rectified in the upcoming round of negotiations. ETFO teacher members' salaries must be restored to their proper levels during the term of the next collective agreement.

To negotiate a real salary increase

During the 12-month period ending November 30, 2011, as reported by Statistics Canada, consumer prices in Ontario rose by 2.5 percent. This increase was led by gasoline prices that rose by 11.6 percent, with food prices following at a 6.7 percent increase over the previous year. A real salary increase is necessary for ETFO members to maintain parity with the cost of living.

To negotiate maximum class sizes in all grades and programs

Average class size is important. However, averages never tell the full story of what goes on in classrooms. Our data reveal that there are still major obstacles to creating optimal teaching and learning conditions at the primary level. While the Ministry's goal is a class-size cap of 20 pupils in primary grades, ETFO data indicate that many kindergarten classes exceed that number, and also exceed the second-tier primary class-size cap of 23 students. The Ministry has exempted classes for students in the Early Learning Program from their own class-size-cap expectation. Currently there are some JK/SK classes in the Early Learning Program with numbers over 30, and many more have 25 or more students. This must be rectified.

ETFO is also proposing that the government and school boards recognize the tremendous benefit that could be realized by addressing junior and intermediate class size. For the 2011-2012 school year, the Ministry is providing funding to support an average class size of 24.7. Since September 2005, the government has funded secondary schools for an average class size of 22 students.

photos: Christine Cousins



To negotiate improved preparation time

Meaningful gains have been made in preparation time provisions since 2004. Before that year, most collective agreements provided for a *maximum* of 160 minutes of preparation time per week. Several locals had less. This school year, every ETFO teacher member in Ontario receives 230 minutes of preparation time per 5-day cycle to be used for professional purposes at the sole discretion of the teacher. Secondary teachers receive 375 minutes of scheduled preparation time per week. With the added work load created by Ministry and board-level initiatives, prep time is increasingly important for delivering quality education.

To negotiate limits on teacher workload

It is fair to say that the steady stream of new school board and Ministry initiatives, in addition to the administrative duties being downloaded onto teachers, are major sources of stress for elementary teachers in schools today. Additionally, in recent years, assessment has become far more complex and far more time-consuming. Increasingly, the work of teachers has become numbers-driven, and not only with respect to EQAO scores.

Although the form that it takes is very different, similar pressure is being applied to teachers in the secondary panel. However, besides having significantly more weekly preparation time than their elementary colleagues, secondary teachers have additional paid time that they may use for assessment. This is time that all teachers need and deserve. Boards can no longer expect us to give up significant amounts of our personal time in order to implement the newest initiative or assessment instrument.

To negotiate benefit improvements

Benefit plans for ETFO members vary significantly from local to local across the province. For example, your local may have unlimited coverage for physiotherapy treatments while

another local may have a limit on coverage or no coverage at all. Conversely, that same local may have significantly better vision care provisions than in your collective agreement. There are some locals where the collective agreement does not provide for the board to pay 100 percent of the premiums for benefit coverage. This requires members to pay out of pocket for a portion of the premium charges, directly reducing their compensation. Enhancing benefit coverage positively affects the well-being of teachers and their families.

To negotiate improved pregnancy and parental entitlements

Teachers currently suffer a financial penalty when a child is born or adopted. Employment Insurance benefits, for those teachers who qualify, provide only a portion of pre-leave income, and no income for the mandatory two-week waiting period before benefits commence. This shortfall can be—and should be—made up through the negotiated provisions of the collective agreement. Such payments to supplement Employment Insurance benefits are known as “top-up” payments.

At present, all ETFO teacher collective agreements provide for at least some additional payment for the first few weeks of a pregnancy or parental leave, but none of these fully replaces the pre-leave income for the duration of the leave.

These low levels of top-up payments for teachers have not kept pace with benefits enjoyed by other comparable groups of employees. After much hard bargaining over decades, teachers still remain well behind many of their counterparts in other parts of the public sector. Any number of collective agreements covering nurses, other health care workers, police officers, municipal employees, university and college employees, civil servants, and others provide more comprehensive benefits than those currently available to teachers.



To negotiate language that ensures that vice-principals and principals do not engage in bargaining unit work

Over the past several years, more than 400 full-time equivalent teaching positions *each year* have been filled by school administrators. That takes 400 jobs away from teachers per year. The money for these positions comes out of the funding formula line that supports classroom teaching.

In the face of declining enrolment in Ontario, and a wave of newly graduated young teachers unable to practise in their field, this must concern us all.

To negotiate experience credit to include all occasional teacher work

When a teacher is hired, she or he is placed at a given point on the salary grid according to qualifications and experience. Placement with respect to qualifications depends on a rating from the Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO). Placement with respect to teaching experience, however, is dependent on the specific wording of the collective agreement. There is considerable variation across the province in the methods school boards use to determine this, which in itself is a problem. Ontario teachers should be free to change employers without jeopardizing their salary entitlement.

Though it is not always the case, for the most part teacher collective agreements recognize the work that a teacher has completed in long-term occasional teaching positions, and factor that in when determining where to place the teacher on the salary grid. Much less common, however, is the recognition of casual (daily) teaching experience that a teacher has completed. Where such provisions do exist, there is a formula to determine how much experience credit should be awarded for a given number of occasional days taught.

Teachers work hard to achieve their credentials and their teaching work—all of their teaching work—should be fully recognized. It is a question of professional recognition and respect.

BARGAINING GOALS FOR OCCASIONAL TEACHER LOCALS

To negotiate a real salary increase

Occasional teachers face the same pressures as regularly contracted teachers when it comes to keeping up with the cost of living. For many OTs, not knowing each morning whether there will be work adds financial uncertainty. A real salary increase is necessary in order to ensure that occasional teachers' salaries do not fall behind the cost of living.

To negotiate paid professional learning

The expectations placed on occasional teachers are not dissimilar to those placed on contract teachers. This is particularly true for those who are in long-term assignments. It is reasonable to expect school boards to professionally train all of their employees, including occasional teachers, to help them meet these expectations. It is also reasonable to expect school boards to pay occasional teachers for the time during which this professional learning occurs.

To negotiate capped lists

Occasional teachers are a diverse group. Some are newly minted teachers just out of the faculties of education. Some are retirees supplementing their pensions. Some are career occasional teachers for whom the flexibility of the work fits well with other commitments. Some are educators who aspire to permanent, full-time teaching jobs.

One thing they all share, however, is their vital role in keeping the education system functioning. While job security may not be the first thing many people think of in connection with occasional teaching, it is as important a collective bargaining issue for occasional teachers as it is for all other school board employees. Occasional teachers attempt to improve their job security through capped lists that put a limit on the number of occasional teachers on the hiring list.



To negotiate language to provide priority hiring for permanent positions and LTO assignments

Job security also means that occasional teachers who decide to pursue permanent teaching employment have a reasonable chance in the hiring process. Unlike outside applicants, these long-service employees have already demonstrated their teaching abilities inside the school board. This should count when boards are seeking qualified applicants for vacant positions, whether long-term occasional or permanent teaching positions.

To negotiate benefit improvements

Occasional teacher collective agreements vary considerably when it comes to access to benefits. While long-term occasional teachers often have benefit coverage equal to that of teachers, they sometimes don't have coverage until a certain time threshold has been crossed—often waiting 60 or 90 days. Other occasional teachers have additional salary provided in lieu of benefits. Improving both the access to benefits and the level of coverage or compensation are important issues for occasional teacher members.

To negotiate experience credit to include all occasional teacher work

As noted above, having *all* teaching experience count toward experience credit is reasonable and appropriate. This applies not only when procuring that first permanent contract position but also when an occasional teacher is hired for a long-term occasional position. LTO teachers are expected to carry out the duties and have the same expectations as other teacher members on staff. Their previous teaching work is invaluable in providing the background, knowledge, and experience to do a good job and should count for salary purposes.

BARGAINING GOALS FOR ESP/PSP LOCALS AND DECE LOCALS

To negotiate a real salary increase


Education support personnel (ESP), professional support personnel (PSP), and designated early childhood educator (DECE) members are those who provide specialized service and assistance to children in the classroom. They deserve a real salary increase that recognizes the important and significant work they do.

To negotiate benefit improvements

As with teacher benefits, packages that cover ESP, PSP, and DECE members vary from local to local. The members in each of these locals would be aided by improvements to the individual components of the existing benefit coverage. There are also some situations where, similar to the teacher collective agreement, less than 100 percent of the premium cost is the responsibility of the school board. These circumstances must be improved.

To guarantee and improve working conditions

ETF0's ESP, PSP and DECE members face different yet significant workload and working condition challenges. For example, despite having significant responsibilities, many of our ESP, PSP and DECE members do not have provisions for regularly scheduled preparation time. With no caps on supervision time nor a limit on the number of student contacts, many of our members who are paid on an hourly basis are undertaking their responsibilities after the regularly scheduled hours for which compensation is provided. This is not acceptable.

You are encouraged to stay aware and informed as collective bargaining unfolds over the coming months. There are many avenues by which information will flow your way and you can "control your future" by reading newsletters, participating in meetings, and following updates at www.controlyourfuture.ca. 

.....
Jim White is the coordinator of Protective Services at ETF0.

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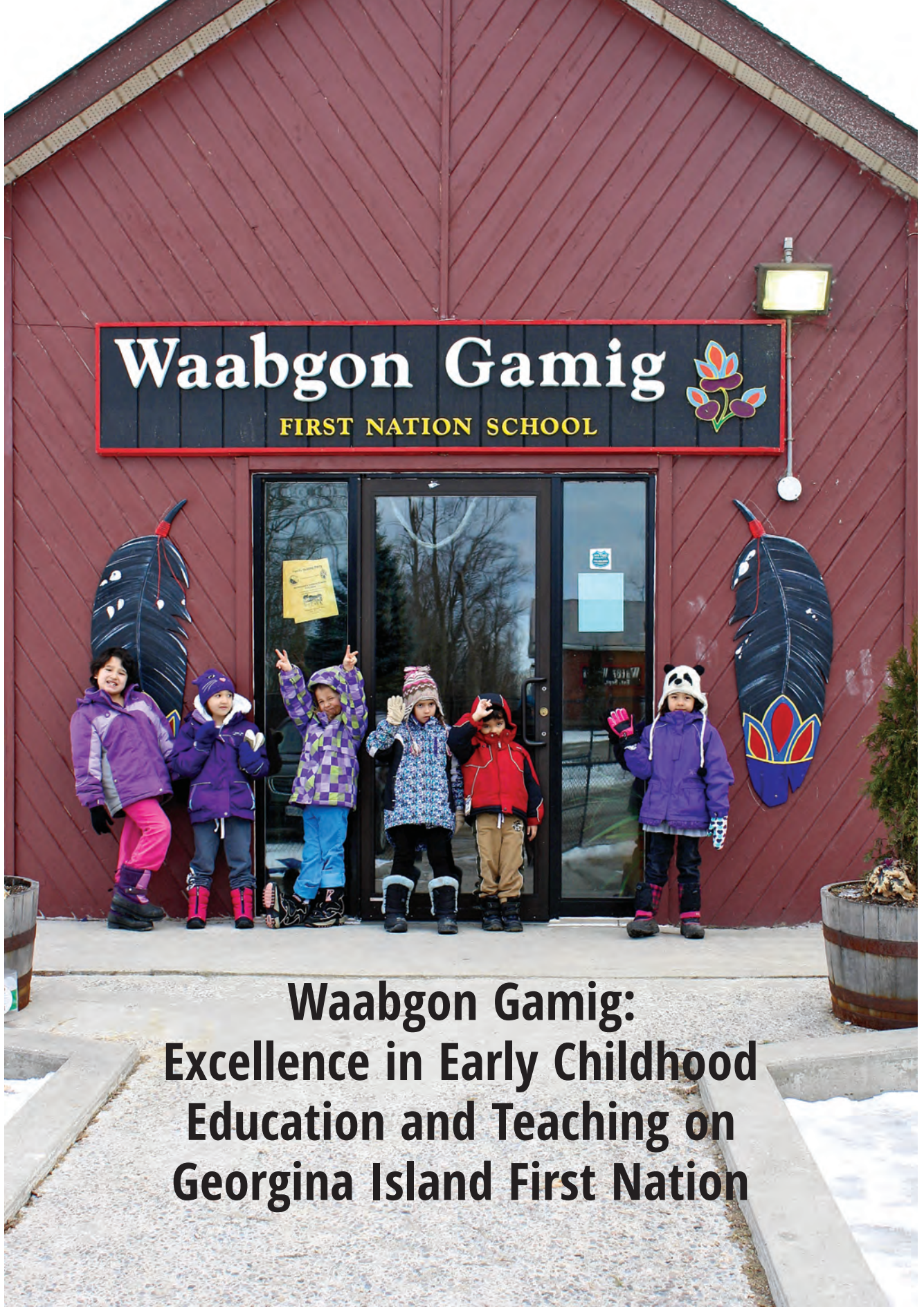


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**Waabgon Gamig:
Excellence in Early Childhood
Education and Teaching on
Georgina Island First Nation**

By Tanya Leary

Four years ago, the Georgina Island Indian Day School, located within the York Region District School Board, officially became the Waabgon Gamig First Nation School. *Waabgon Gamig* means “Blossoming House,” and the school has indeed seen the majority of its students blossom. Outstanding student life, multi-literacy approaches, collective and cultural norms, professional practice, and a special program called the Junior Kindergarten Transition Program could be the reasons behind the success realized by the students in this tiny First Nation.

The little red two-room schoolhouse is located on the main road of Georgina Island, which is in the middle of Lake Simcoe and accessible only by ferry, airboat, or ice road. The school is joined to the public library, which makes it a centre of community life. It employs two teachers (seconded from York Region District Board), a team leader, a child and youth worker, an educational assistant, a Native-language teacher and a part-time secretary.

Georgina Island has a population of approximately 250 residents, and was established by the federal government in the late 1800s. There are 23 students in the entire school, which houses two multigrade classrooms: the first a grade SK-2 and the second a grade 3-5. Just a few metres down the road from the school is the Niigaan Naabiwag Child Care Centre. This is where many students begin their developmental journey, ending up in the full-day, every-day senior kindergarten early learning program.

The daycare and the kindergarten classrooms are two places where the educational magic happens. For the past four years, students in the Junior Kindergarten Transition Program have achieved so much, both socially and academically.

On Monday morning, the students of Waabgon Gamig First Nation School begin their week

together in a circle. A smudge bowl burning sage and an eagle feather set the tone for the day, clearing any negative energy. Students hear the daily announcements and sing “O Canada” in English, French, or Ojibwe. Then they make their way to their classrooms, where the emphasis is on building a community of respectful learners. Having cultural content embedded within the curriculum allows students to see a reflection of their identity, one they can be proud of. Their pride of heritage is apparent in the hand-drumming songs, hoop-dancing teachings, Traditional Arts and Ecological Knowledge program, and perhaps most importantly the Native Language program, which begins at the child care centre and continues into high school and university studies. The mother tongue of the Chippewas of Georgina Island is Anishnaabemowin, the Ojibwe language.

The motto for learning is “Raise the expectations, and they will succeed.” Students have access to technology, highly trained teachers, individualized programs, and experience a calm and warm approach to learning and behaviour expectations. Because First Nations students on reserves in Canada receive an amount that is only half of the provincial standard, the education manager must find additional funding and resources to enhance the learning environment.

Technology, culture, and best practices are also supported through initiatives highlighted in the First Nation Student Success Program (FNSSP). This is a three-year program funded by



Outstanding student life, multi-literacy approaches, collective and cultural norms, professional practice, and a special program called the Junior Kindergarten Transition Program could be the reasons behind the increasing academic success of the students in this tiny First Nation.



Along with a host of strategies that involve parents such as “lunch and learns,” literacy dinner nights, and welcome sessions, teachers also invite parents on field trips and to school assemblies.

Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Canada in 2010. The band education manager and the FNSSP team leader are responsible for collecting data that tracks student progress.

While this data, coupled with teacher observation and evaluation, does inform teaching practice, Waabgon Gamig has a strategy that involves much more. Waabgon Gamig staff have invested time and resources into quality early literacy resources, considerable amounts of professional development, and flexible scheduling that meets students’ needs. They have also benefited from training opportunities such as ETFO’s Aboriginal Women in Education Bursaries and the Dreamcatcher Fund, sponsored by Grand River Enterprises Six Nations Limited. The latter fund assisted the school’s kindergarten teacher to attend the Harvard University Summer Learning Institute for two summers.

All of these supports have contributed to the ultimate success of students, especially kindergarten students. So how does it all begin?

The Junior Kindergarten Transition Program

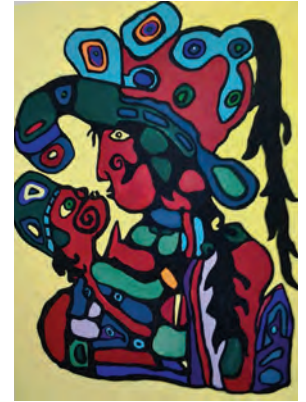
The Junior Kindergarten Transition Program was developed by York Early Years, the Niigaan Naabiwag Child Care Centre, and school staff after numerous attempts at a balanced kindergarten program. The ultimate program goals are intended to provide students with a seamless transition from daycare to school, and

to provide them with social and academic learning skills that prepare them for a fantastic educational career.

Initially, students in the Junior Kindergarten Transition Program are at the daycare for the full day. In the first term, the Waabgon Gamig kindergarten teacher visits weekly, and the students receive daily focused literacy and numeracy instruction from early childhood educators. After a few months, students begin to go to the school weekly, visiting the classroom, lunchroom, and library. Students transition into the classroom by engaging in learning through play centres, listening to stories read to them by their peers who are already reading, and engaging in small-group critical literacy lessons with the kindergarten teacher. Often the early childhood educator stays in the classroom to ensure children continue to feel comfortable in their new learning environment. In the third term, students are dropped off at the school in the morning by the daycare staff for the literacy and numeracy block and lunch. They later return and continue programming at the child care centre. In June, parents are transitioned into kindergarten routines, being asked to drop their children off at the school once a week. In August, students graduate from daycare to senior kindergarten, and a community celebration is held. September sees the children attending senior kindergarten all day, every day at the school.

The ECE staff and the teacher have time to plan together. They share information about students and ideas about engaging parents and arranging field trips that enhance the learning experience. Along with a host of strategies that involve parents such as “lunch and learns,” literacy dinner nights, and welcome sessions, teachers also invite parents on field trips and to school assemblies. With these strategies, Waabgon Gamig has noticed a significant increase in parental participation.

These strategies are also influential in creating a common language for literacy and learning that is shared by the home, daycare, and school. This means that the language used in




teaching children how to read or how to print numbers is consistent and creates a solid and familiar foundation for learning.

Here's an example: Imagine you are four years old and learning how to print letters in the alphabet. You are at home, and your mom says to you, let's print the letter A: "Start at the bottom, make an upside down V, with a stick in the middle." You go to daycare, and your teacher says, "Let's print the letter A. Start at the top, make a stick slanted down this way, and a stick slanted down this way, and put a stick through the middle." When you get to school, your teacher says, "Let's print the letter A." She sings a song, does an action, and then tells you, "All letters, including A, can be made with four simple lines; Big curve, little curve, big line, and little line. To make an A, you start at the top, draw a big line down, go back to the top, draw a big line down, and draw a little line in the middle."

Confused yet? This is why Waabgon Gamig's kindergarten teacher and early childhood educators have taken significant training to ensure their students, parents, family members, and staff have a common language on printing letters, making letter sounds, reading and writing skills, employing math strategies, and asking questions of the children that promote critical thinking.

The proof of success is evident in many disciplines, but perhaps most in the literacy results.

Ultimately, Waabgon Gamig shares a common goal with educators across the globe: student success. The staff also hopes that other daycare providers, early childhood educators, parents, and kindergarten teachers have the opportunity to build relationships to develop a shared approach. The success of this program is a result of trial and error, constant revision, positive feedback, and continued support. On October 5, 2011, World Teachers' Day, this program and the staff received both a Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence and a Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education. What an exciting and rewarding way to begin another year, and what a milestone for an "Indian Day School."

For further information, including a detailed view and long-range plans of the Junior Kindergarten Transition Program, visit the Waabgon First Nation School website or contact the kindergarten teacher directly at www.waabgongamig.ca. You can also view the program video at the following links: Part 1 [youtube.com/watch?v=E2iUcnvp0sU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2iUcnvp0sU); Part 2 [youtube.com/watch?v=dZ-K5h_oFME](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZ-K5h_oFME). 

Students transition into the classroom by engaging in learning through play centres, listening to stories read to them by their peers who are already reading, and engaging in small-group critical literacy lessons with the kindergarten teacher.

Tanya Leary is the kindergarten/primary teacher at Waabgon Gamig First Nation School and a member of the York Region local. She is nominated for the 2012 Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence.

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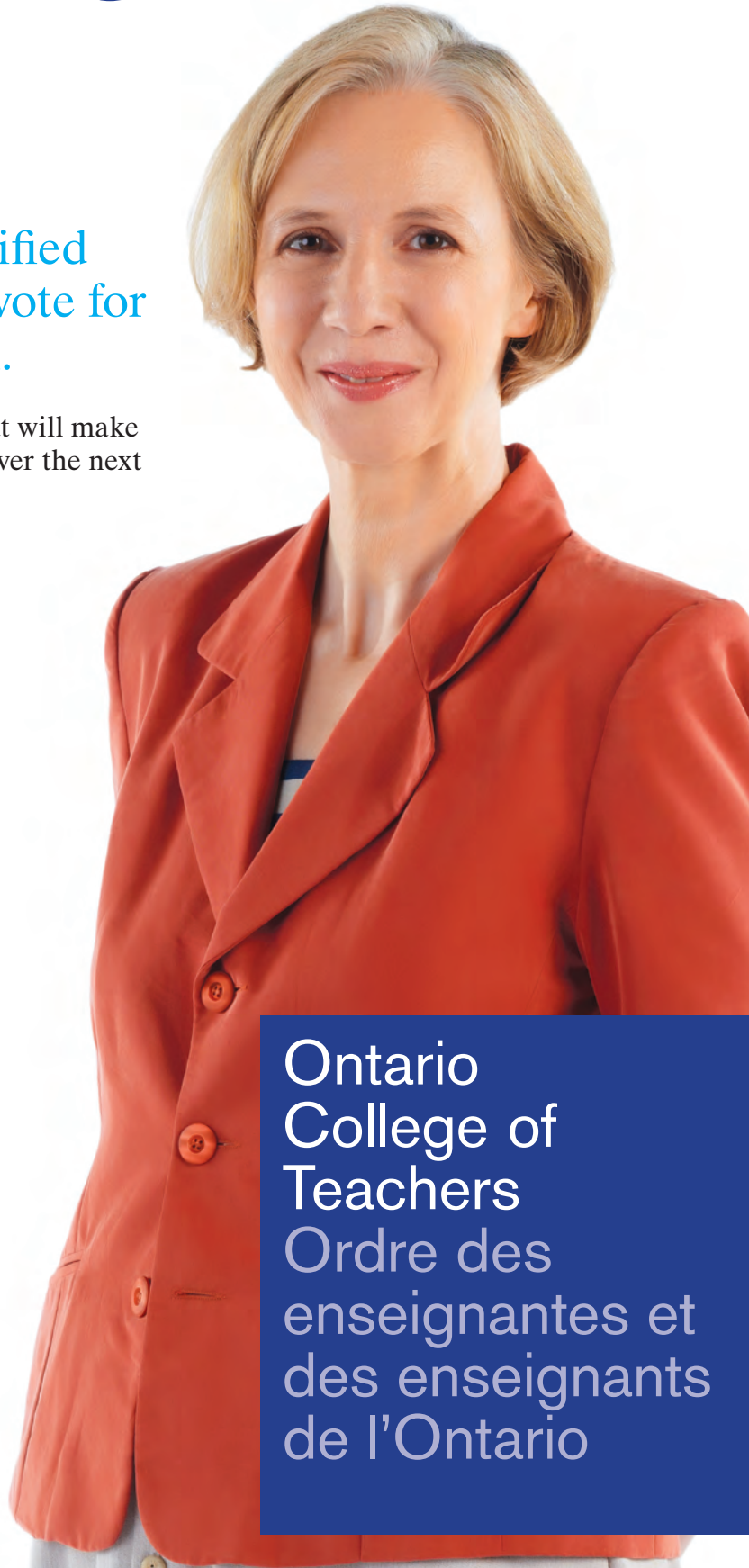


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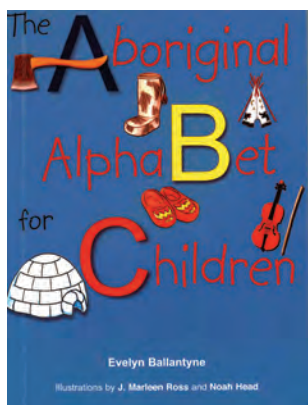


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DIVISION	Primary	GRADE	One	MONTH	March	THEME	Untie the Knots of Prejudice
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BOOK TITLE:
The Aboriginal Alphabet for Children

AUTHOR:
Evelyn Ballantyne
ILLUSTRATORS:
J. Marleen Ross and Noah Head

PUBLISHER: Pemmican Publications Inc., 2001
ISBN-13: 978-1894717137

SYNOPSIS
This is a fun and enriching way to learn the alphabet. The full-colour illustrations that accompany each letter are of traditional artifacts and cultural notes.

Big Idea / Objective / Character Development Connection

Cultural Awareness; Environment; Respect; Empathy

Suggested Activities and Culminating Tasks

- ▶ As you read the book, stop and talk about the various kinds of homes, clothing, means of transportation, tools, and sacred activities and objects on each page. How are each of the items related to the places the people live? What do students think the weather is like there? What do students think their culture is like?
- ▶ Have students retell information from the book after you have read it to them. Encourage them to use illustrations as prompts or to create picture prompts. Students will retell the story with their reading buddies.
- ▶ Create a shared writing experience in which students incorporate new vocabulary (from the text) and familiar vocabulary in order to complete a class Alphabet Big Book.
- ▶ Have students look carefully at the illustrations to find two- and three-dimensional objects. Ask students to create models and replicas, and display them with a sentence to label/describe them.
- ▶ Use the illustrations and text to look at and talk about changes in weather, climate, clothing, and times for hunting and gathering.
- ▶ The letter X is a stretch in the book. Christmas was introduced by people who came from Europe, not by Aboriginal people.

Extensions

- ▶ Invite elders of students in your class to help create ABC books that have cultural connections reflective of their families. If possible, have them make dual language or multilingual books. Invite the elders and students to read the books to the class or other classes.

Community Engagement / Related Resources

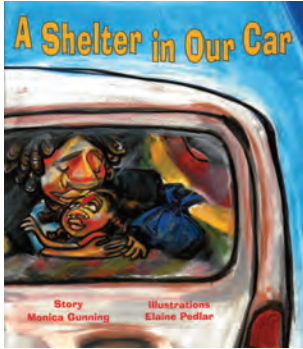
Invite reading buddies or family volunteers to go to an Aboriginal museum to look for items that are in the book and extensions to the book. Which items in the book and the museum are spiritual in nature, or practice? If picture taking is allowed, you could use the photos in book-making activities or to create slide shows or other displays.

MINISTRY EXPECTATIONS
English Language
Reading
1e4, 1e15, 1e16, 1e29
Writing
1e48

CURRICULUM CONNECTION EXPECTATIONS
Mathematics
1m43, 1m52
Science and Technology
1s20

MATERIALS
- Picture book listed above
- Attribute and pattern blocks
- Three-dimensional solids
- Paper
- Crayons/markers

DIVISION Junior **GRADE** Five **MONTH** December **THEME** Building Supportive Communities



BOOK TITLE:
A Shelter in Our Car

AUTHOR:
Monica Gunning
ILLUSTRATOR: Elaine Pedlar
PUBLISHER: Children's Book Press, 2004
ISBN-13: 978-0892391899

Big Idea / Objective / Character Development Connection

Perseverance; Caring; Courage; Optimism; Community

Suggested Activities and Culminating Tasks

Before Reading

- ▶ Make a list of challenges that families might experience when moving to a new country. These could be ideas or students' own experiences.
- ▶ Make a list of stereotypes and slang terms related to homelessness (e.g., *bum*, *lazy*, *hobo*, *drunk*, etc.) Remind students that the exercise is not meant to reinforce these, but rather to show the pervasive, hurtful, powerful impact of words and stereotypes and to discuss why these words are so readily available in their schema.

After Reading

- ▶ Have students revisit their list of stereotypes and slang. Do any of these apply to Zettie and her mom? What does this disconnect tell us about the issue of homelessness?
- ▶ What kinds of daily challenges did Zettie and her mom face because of their not having a home? How did they feel about these challenges?
- ▶ Read aloud the "Homelessness in America" note on the last page. Have students write a reflection on what they have learned about homelessness.
- ▶ Ask students if they would want to be friends with Zettie. List characteristics of Zettie that they can infer by reading this story to support a yes and refute a no answer (challenge student perceptions and judgments).

Extensions

- ▶ Have students research community organizations that support the homeless. In pairs or small groups, have students create a report and presentation about one organization they find and its work.
- ▶ Investigate the roles that racism and gender discrimination play in unemployment and in salary inequity. How much money do women make in comparison to men? What is the situation for racialized women?

MINISTRY EXPECTATIONS
English Language
Oral Communication
5e5, 5e8, 5e10, 5e16
Reading
5e29, 5e30, 5e31, 5e34

CURRICULUM CONNECTION EXPECTATIONS
Health and Physical Education
5p33, 5p42

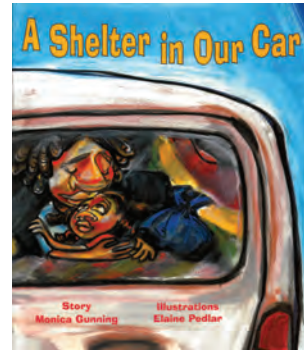
MATERIALS
- Picture book listed above
- Journals
- Internet access

Community Engagement / Related Resources

After the student presentations, hold a class vote and select one organization to support. Contact the organization to find out what kind of support it may need. Students may be able to volunteer or hold a fundraiser to support their chosen organization.

This YouTube video, entitled “Homelessness in Canada: Take Action Now”, was created to raise awareness about homelessness in Canada.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7jcnjabjwk&feature=related>

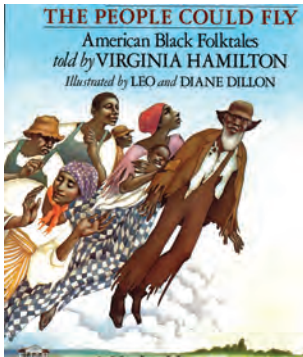


SYNOPSIS

After Zettie’s father died, she and her mother left Jamaica searching for a better life in the United States. Zettie and her mom are both going to school, and her mom tries her best to find work, but until then, they live an uncertain life in their car, dreaming of a new home. A realistic portrait of homelessness in an American city, this story brings to light the challenges of many new and established Americans in creating a better life for themselves and their families. Despite their challenges, it is their love and determination that shines through.



DIVISION Intermediate **GRADE** Seven **MONTH** December **THEME** Building Supportive Communities



BOOK TITLE:
The People Could Fly:
American Black Folktales

AUTHOR: Virginia Hamilton
ILLUSTRATOR: Leo and Diane Dillon
PUBLISHER: Random House Children's Books, 1994
ISBN-13: 978-0394869254

SYNOPSIS

The well-known author retells 24 black American folktales, including animal tales, supernatural tales, fanciful and cautionary tales, and slave tales of freedom.

Big Idea / Objective / Character Development Connection

Respect; Caring; Integrity; Perseverance

Suggested Activities and Culminating Tasks

- ▶ Brainstorm African-Americans' specific contributions to life and society in North America.
- ▶ Have students research one of the characters described in the folktales and present their findings to the class.
- ▶ Why are folktales important for social justice for all people? Have students write a journal entry.
- ▶ What importance does the theme of flying play in the different folktales? What do flying and freedom have in common? Have students create a journal entry about the power of flying in the role of a character in one of the folktales.
- ▶ Have small groups of students choose a folktale to learn and perform as a play for younger students.
- ▶ Use Check a Book for Bias Bookmark six (see the Teacher Resource Guide).

Extensions

- ▶ Have students communicate their thoughts and feelings about one of the illustrations using an art form of their choice (e.g., visual arts, drama, or dance).

Community Engagement / Related Resources

Go to the Black History in Canada Education Guide. Explore seminal events and personalities in Black Canadian history through engaging discussion and interactive activities.
<http://www.blackhistorycanada.ca/education.php>

MINISTRY EXPECTATIONS
English Language
Reading
 7e26, 7e27, 7e37
Writing
 7e49, 7e57, 7e58, 7e61

CURRICULUM CONNECTION EXPECTATIONS
The Arts
 7a54, 7a56, 7a64

MATERIALS
 - Picture book listed above
 - Internet access
 - Journals
 - Check a Book for Bias Bookmark six
 - Art supplies

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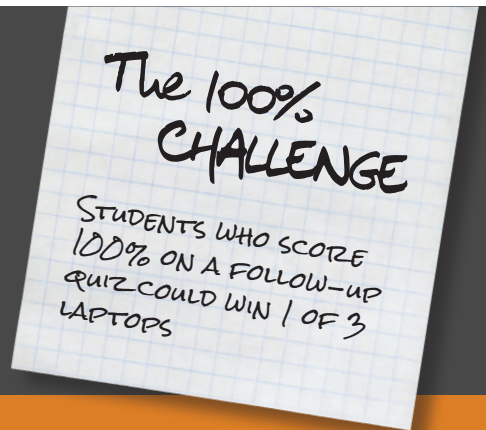
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"I found the course extremely well laid out and totally relevant to my teaching practice. I was very impressed by the practical nature of the assignments ... this is the first course that I have taken in a long time where I actually feel as though I have gained significant professional knowledge."

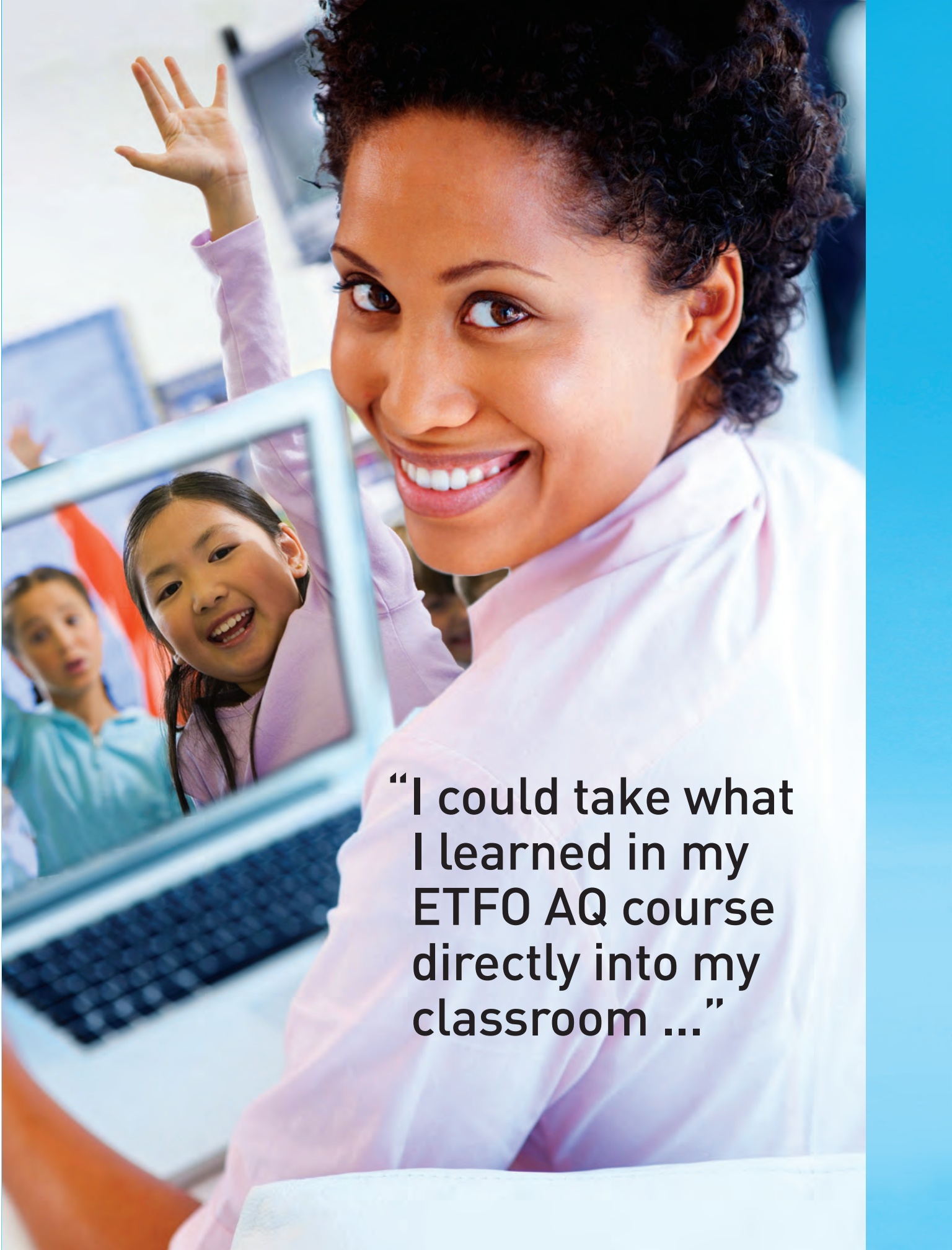
"I have to tell you that I have taken other AQ courses with two universities before and this is by far the best I've ever taken ... I was hesitant to take an online course, but I'm so glad I did. From now on I will be taking all of my AQ courses with ETFO!"

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Summer Academy 2012

Check out the ETFO Summer Academy website and register for one of over 40 courses being offered across the province this July and August. These three-day, dynamic courses are an excellent learning opportunity for new and experienced teachers.

This summer a wide range of courses are being offered with a focus on grade-specific sessions, assessment, literacy and numeracy, and a variety of other learning areas to meet your professional needs.

Each course provides participants with many practical strategies to enhance programs and time to collaborate and network with colleagues.

We hope you join us for three days of motivating, energizing, active learning! For further information and registration check the website www.etfo.ca in the middle of May.

As an occasional teacher, this course and the knowledge I have gained has helped me in my own learning and what I need to know and do when I have my own classroom.

I am walking out with many great new ideas and feeling more comfortable with my level of knowledge and skill in assessing my students. This course was just what I needed!

This is one of the most practical and beneficial workshops I have taken. The presenters showed me that teaching is not just something to be shared but rather to be embraced whole-heartedly.





MARCH 8 International Women's Day

By Carol Zavitz

Each year on March 8, International Women's Day (IWD), we celebrate the ongoing struggle of women to achieve legal and economic equality and freedom from violence. The astonishing positive transformations in women's lives in the last four decades, the gains of rights, freedoms, and possibilities for some women in some parts of the world, are cause for rejoicing. The profound oppression of women in other parts of the world remind us all that the need for women's activism is undiminished.

International Women's Day has its roots in the international labour, socialist, and peace movements that were so powerful early in the twentieth century. IWD is a national holiday in many countries. The United Nations began celebrating IWD on March 8 in 1975, during International Women's Year.

Like Labour Day, International Women's Day provides a focus for necessary activism on several issues: equal pay, political representation, child care, economic justice, violence against women.

The safety of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada is an urgent issue. Statistics consistently show that Aboriginal women face much higher levels of violence than all other women in Canada. The Native Women's Association

of Canada has documented more than 600 cases of Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or who remain missing.

This violence has touched the lives of almost every First Nations, Inuit and Métis family and community. And it has moved Canadians from all walks of life to demand action. Violence against Aboriginal women and girls is a national issue, one that must concern us all.

We welcome the investigation into this tragedy, and call on federal and provincial governments to take effective action to keep all women in Canada safe.

For more information on International Women's Day:

- www.internationalwomensday.com is the global hub for sharing International Women's Day news, events and resources. Its theme for 2012 is "Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures." Follow IWD on Twitter: 8 March 2012 @womensday.
- Status of Women Canada (www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/dates/iwd-jif/index-eng.html) produces material (posters, fact sheets) and an organizers' handbook for IWD activities. The theme for 2012 is Strong Women, Strong Canada—Women in Rural, Remote and Northern Communities: Key to Canada's Economic Prosperity. 

For more information about Canada's missing and murdered Aboriginal women, check out these Web links:

Stolen Sisters – Amnesty International Canada

www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/resources/amr2000304.pdf

Outlines the objectification of Aboriginal women in Canada and introduces the public to Indigenous women's experience of violence through narrative and statistical information.

Project of Heart – Residential Schools

<http://projectofheart.ca>

<http://poh-curriculum.wikispaces.com>

http://poh-curriculum.wikispaces.com/file/detail/Residential_Schoolshandout2.pdf

Artistic tools and projects used to connect non-Aboriginal students to the experiences of Canada's Indigenous people and the residential school system—including resources for teachers, on themes of art, math, science, history and social issues.

No More Silence

<http://nomoresilence-nomoresilence.blogspot.com/>

A group committed to developing an international network to support the work of activists, academics, researchers, agencies, and communities to stop the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women.

First Nations Women Rising

http://ourtimes.ca/Features/article_143.php

Article by Janet Nicol in *Our Times* magazine.

Carol Zavitz is an executive staff member of EFTO Equity and Women's Services.

Practicing Caution: Guidelines for electronic communications

By Susan Thede

The opportunities to use social media and electronic communication for pedagogical purposes are expanding every day. Social media offer teachers exciting new ways to engage with students, parents, and the wider school community. Embracing these new opportunities makes pedagogical sense; however, the expectations on educators dictate that we do so with proper safeguards and a vigilant eye to maintaining the standards of our profession.

When considering using social media to communicate with students, parents, or others in the school community, it is important to remember that the technology does not change the role of teachers or their professional obligations. The principles that have traditionally governed how teachers communicate with the school community have not changed: professionalism, accountability, and boundaries continue to apply. Always remember that material posted online, whether via email, Facebook, blogging, Twitter or other media, is never truly erased. If you would not utter a phrase or raise a particular topic in your classroom, or in the presence of your principal or a parent, then do not communicate it by electronic means. When using social media, exercise caution and restraint and remain aware.

Of the range of uses of social media and electronic communication in school environments, at least three scenarios have pitfalls that demand teachers exercise caution: teachers communicating with individual students, parents, or the wider school community through Facebook or other social media; teachers being careless about their personal use of social networking sites or what is posted about them; and teachers failing to

recognize social networking websites as an arena for potential cyber-bullying.

Social networks and email as a means of communicating with the school community

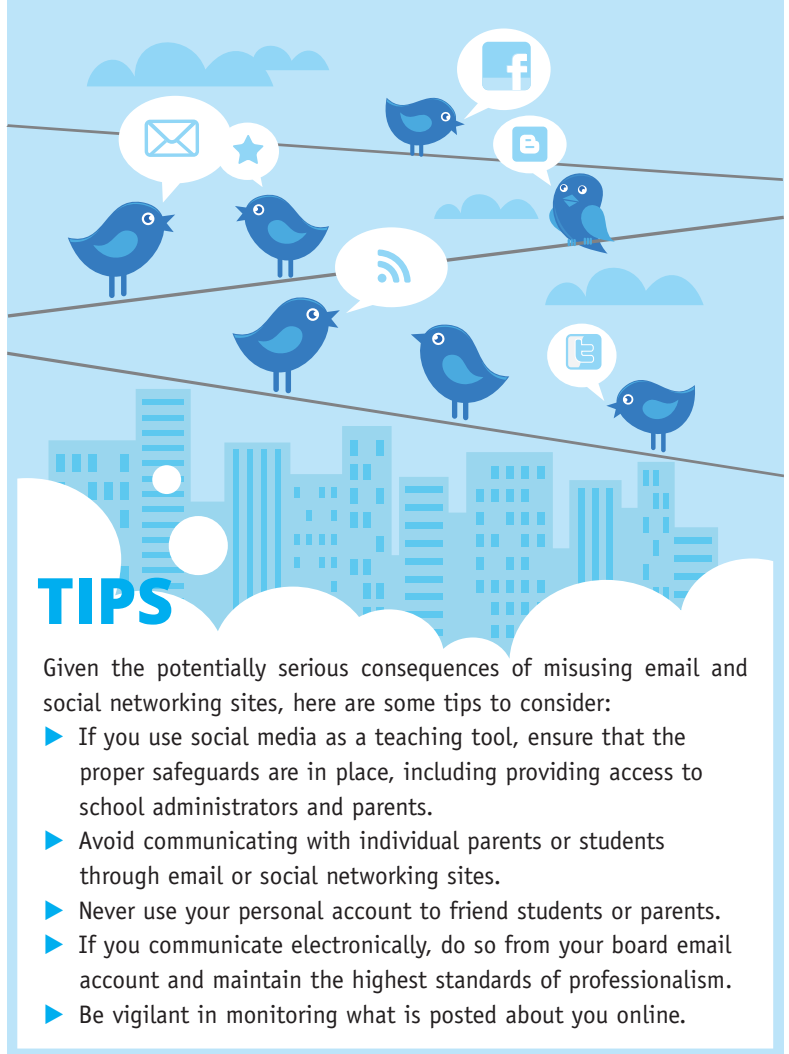
Social media and electronic communication provide innovative and exciting options for teaching. They also have the potential to blur professional boundaries and expose teachers to a number of risks. ETFO continues to support electronic communication and social media as a teaching tool, but cautions that their use must be consistent with the highest standards of professional conduct.

Email, for better or worse, tends to promote a casual conversation style that can blur the boundaries between student and teacher. Its use by teachers is also often perceived with suspicion by parents and administrators. ETFO recommends against individual email communications with students. Emails to an entire class in relation to specific classroom projects may be appropriate in certain situations; however, teachers should use their professional email address exclusively and maintain a professional tone throughout the communication.

For communications with parents, ETFO recommends face-to-face meetings or telephone conversations to discuss any issues that students may be facing. When emailing, teachers should use their school email accounts, and only during regular business hours. Sending emails late at night can give rise to the unrealistic expectation that teachers are available to parents at any time of day.

Social media sites have the potential to provide a number of exciting and innovative ways for teachers to interact with their classes and

For related articles on social and digital media use go to *ecomunications.etfo.net* or contact staff in Professional Relations (PRS) at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836.



TIPS

Given the potentially serious consequences of misusing email and social networking sites, here are some tips to consider:

- ▶ If you use social media as a teaching tool, ensure that the proper safeguards are in place, including providing access to school administrators and parents.
- ▶ Avoid communicating with individual parents or students through email or social networking sites.
- ▶ Never use your personal account to friend students or parents.
- ▶ If you communicate electronically, do so from your board email account and maintain the highest standards of professionalism.
- ▶ Be vigilant in monitoring what is posted about you online.

the wider school community. They can encourage group discussions, facilitate collaborative projects, and provide peer-to-peer support. Social media sites also provide opportunities for teachers to communicate effectively and efficiently with groups of parents and students.

In contrast, communicating with individuals through social networking sites tends toward an even more casual style than email and does not meet the standards of professionalism expected of teachers. ETFO recommends that a teacher who wants to use a social network for a school-related project should ensure that any communication that occurs over the site is also accessible to school administrators and parents. Transparency will go a long way toward ensuring that professional standards are maintained and inappropriate conduct is minimized.

ETFO supports social networking sites as a teaching tool, but cautions that their use is rife with potential serious consequences. ETFO strongly recommends that teachers who want to use social media in the classroom consult first with their school administrator, and that they create an account that will be used exclusively for pedagogical purposes and that is unconnected to their personal information.

Careless or inappropriate personal use of social networking sites

In addition to the problems that may be caused by communicating through social networking sites, teachers can get into trouble if they are careless in their personal use of these sites. Teachers must always be very cautious about what they post and what is posted about them, notwithstanding that ETFO supports strong protections for teachers' privacy.


Teachers should manage their privacy settings so that only those whom they personally approve have access to their page. They should

also request that their friends not post photos or other material that could reflect badly on them.

Teachers must be alert to students posting material about them online. ETFO strongly recommends that teachers carry out regular Google searches on themselves to ensure no harmful material is being posted. There has been an increase in incidents of teachers having unfounded allegations against them posted online. In one instance, a student set up a Facebook account in a teacher's name and posted offensive comments. When such material is found, teachers should immediately report it to their principal and ETFO.

Teachers should never invite students or parents to be their friends on their personal Facebook page or similar sites and never accept an offer of friendship from a student or parent on Facebook. Doing so blurs the boundaries between teacher and student and can lead to discipline by the school board and/or the College of Teachers.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying falls within the Ministry of Education definition of bullying. ETFO does not support teachers going online to supervise their students' Facebook pages, but teachers do need to be aware that the possibility for cyberbullying is very real and report any incidents they come across to their administrators. 

Susan Thede is an executive staff member of ETFO Protective Services.

Part of the Digital Revolution

By Dr. Anne Rodrigue

Staff at ETFO Professional Services (PFS) are constantly challenged to envision the future of teacher professional learning, understand evolving professional learning needs, and design and deliver programming that respects the principles of both effective adult learning and teacher professional learning. Effective professional learning is grounded in knowledge about teaching, engages teachers in networking and sharing, and respects the ages and stages of teachers' growth.

It is clear as classrooms change, that teachers are increasingly committed to using media and digital technology both in their own professional lives and to engage students. Teachers are streaming and downloading video, using interactive whiteboards, and accessing digital resources such as interactive lesson plans, e-books, websites, multimedia collections, blogs, photo sharing websites, and online libraries.

In this context, I'd like to outline some of ETFO's PFS programs and services that help teachers integrate media and digital technology into their professional lives.

E-learning

Let's start by defining e-learning. A definition developed by the Canadian Council for Learning (CCL) states, "E-learning is the development of knowledge and skills through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to support interactions for learning—interactions with content, with learning activities and tools, and with other people."

In PFS, when we talk about e-learning, we immediately think of our online *Additional Qualifications (AQ)* courses. Two years ago, ETFO decided to introduce online courses for AQ

credit. In 2011, 5,000 teachers took our AQ courses online. This year, we hope to provide e-learning to 7,000 teachers. ETFO has also added Destination AQ courses, a blended model of teacher learning that includes 60 credit hours online and a 40-hour face-to-face component delivered in exciting international locales such as Greece, France, Italy, and Spain.

Online Learning Communities

On the ETFO website, under Team Sites, is a list of ETFO online learning communities that facilitate teacher collaboration, learning, and sharing on a specific topic or area etfo.ca/teamsites/pages/default.aspx. On the Collaborative Coaching team site, five teams of teachers completed collaborative curriculum projects and posted them, along with a guide for teachers who wish to engage in collaborative coaching initiatives.

The ETFO e-book *Educating for Global Citizenship* was the product of an online community that included ETFO staff, Dr. Mark Evans, Dr. Kathryn Broad, and their graduate students from OISE, along with ETFO members. The e-book includes individual and group units, modified by curriculum inquiry and peer review, and provides many links to global education resources for elementary classrooms.

Another online community produced an e-book titled *Teaching for Deep Understanding—An ETFO Curriculum Learning Resource Compilation* that will soon be available on the ETFO website. This book contains learning resources on science, social studies, and math that focus on student inquiry.

On a related site, you can also find Early Learning Central, an expansion of ETFO's kindergarten blog, *1000 Moments of Learning*, designed to cover learning in all of the primary grades. Teachers can read blogs, add comments, view lists

On the ETFO website is a list of ETFO online learning communities that facilitate teacher collaboration, learning, and sharing.



of resources, and more. In addition, the *Reflections on Practice* (ROP) team site is an interactive space where teams of critical thinkers work with facilitators to produce action research studies. These studies are then written, published, and presented on the website for new participants to use as models. ROP was the first ETFO blended community of practice and is now in its eighth year.

ETFO online communities have generated much interest in the field and have influenced the design of the Ministry's *Teachers Learning and Leadership Program* website, among others. Staff have been approached by university researchers and other organizations to share our ideas on how to design, deliver, and facilitate online collaboration among teachers, and have presented at numerous local, national, and international conferences on this topic.

Digital Media and Instructional Resources

ETFO has produced downloadable lesson plans by educators engaged in the *Innoteach* online community. Follow the *Innoteach* link to see videos of teachers sharing innovative practices in technology that improve student learning. Our newest digital resource, *The Heart and Art of Teaching and Learning: Practical Ideas and Resources for Beginning Teachers*, has an accompanying blog where teachers share their experiences of a new teaching assignment: building inclusion, communicating with parents, managing the classroom, meeting the diverse learning needs of students, and managing their own professional learning and growth. Go to heartandart.ca to interact with other educators, ask questions, and join in the learning journey.


PFS staff also work with colleagues in Collective Bargaining and Professional Relations to deliver Union School, another blended community that trains presidents and local leaders in the ETFO brand of unionism.

ETFO members wrote collaboratively online to produce *Learning Together: A Teacher's Guide to Combined Grades*.

Learning New Technologies

Many teachers have indicated that they want to use interactive technologies, but need to improve their skill set and comfort level before bringing these tools into the classroom. The *Presenters on the Road* program offers workshops to locals on many aspects of technology, including Web 2.0 tools, social media, digital storytelling, and others.

Last year ETFO conducted online training, using Adobe Connect, for volunteers for the *Ultimate Block Party*. In the fall of 2011, new presenters for *Presenters on the Road* participated via Adobe Connect and conference call links in two interactive e-training sessions with 18 participants.

It is evident from the descriptions of PFS programs listed above that PFS is engaged in new models of professional learning and resource delivery. We are collaboratively creating, disseminating knowledge, constantly moving forward, and innovating. The times they are a-changin' but our mission stays the same! Time, space, costs, and access are no longer deterrents to quality professional learning. 



Teachers are streaming and downloading video, using interactive whiteboards, and accessing digital resources such as interactive lesson plans, e-books, websites, multimedia collections, blogs, photo sharing websites, and online libraries.

Anne Rodrigue is the coordinator of Professional Services at ETFO.



Celebrating Young Heritage Leaders

Are there students at your school helping to protect built, cultural or natural heritage? Schools and communities can nominate hard-working, dedicated individuals and groups of young volunteers for recognition through the Ontario Heritage Trust's Young Heritage Leaders program. The top individual nominee is eligible for a \$2,000 post-secondary scholarship.

The annual nomination deadline is **June 30**.

To learn more, call 416-314-0448 or visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca.

Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life are proud sponsors of Young Heritage Leaders, a program that fosters a sense of local pride, community involvement and volunteerism.



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Environment Matters

By Sue Continelli

While environmental education is always a priority, Earth Day (April 22) presents an opportunity to highlight the environment as an important global issue. ETFO's *Teaching Green* is an after-school workshop designed to provide practical strategies, resources, and curriculum connections that support environmental education and sustainable practices in the classroom and the community. As an organization, ETFO is committed to caring for and protecting the environment. This workshop meets an immediate need for members across the province.

In the spring of 2010, a team of ETFO members from a number of locals developed this workshop to strike a creative balance between resource orientation and active participation. Promoting teacher confidence in environmental education, *Teaching Green* covers a variety of topics related to sustainability and community involvement. As one team member noted, "We wanted activities that could be used with our students the very next day and that would assist them in understanding that their actions could make a difference." The *Teaching Green* curriculum fits well with the arts, language, geography, history, and media literacy.

The goals of the workshop are

- to help teachers gain a deeper understanding of the importance of environmental education and sustainable practices connected to the classroom and the community
- to effectively integrate environmental education through cross-curricular connections
- to engage in dynamic professional learning that provides networking opportunities and highlights the need for an integrated approach to environmental education
- to explore strategies to turn ideas into action in the classroom, the schoolyard, and the local community.


The workshops have been popular and well received by members and locals. One member noted that "the *Teaching Green* workshop offers an incredible opportunity for students and teachers to work together

.....
Sue Continelli is a member of the Ottawa-Carleton Teacher Local.

"Involve children in change; it is everyone's responsibility to protect the earth."



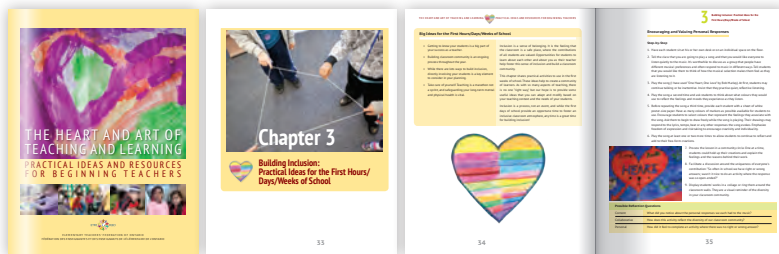
to investigate the *why* behind environmental education. It engages workshop participants to think about their own personal reasons for pursuing this topic, so they feel they are stewards of the environment and agents of change."

ETFO has always been responsive to professional needs and understands the issues that matter most to our members. *Teaching Green* is more than just providing resources and ideas to cover curriculum expectations—it is another example of how we strive to make a difference in the lives of our members and the students they teach. 

Embracing The Heart and Art of Teaching and Learning

By Joanne Languay

ETFO's newest resource book, *The Heart and Art of Teaching and Learning: Practical Ideas and Resources for Beginning Teachers*, was released at the 2011 Annual Meeting. Our goal in writing this book for beginning teachers was not only to provide a practical resource for the many "firsts" they will encounter, but also to encourage and enhance teachers' personal learning journey.



This resource provides beginning teachers, and teachers experiencing a change in assignment, practical tips on setting up their own classrooms, classroom management, building inclusion, working with parents, occasional teaching, meeting diverse learning needs, and continuing their professional learning and growth.


This resource will also be released as the first ever ETFO e-book. It will be available for all models of e-reader, including the iPad.

ETFO invites you to visit the accompanying website/blog at heartandart.ca to continue the learning journey and to interact with other educators who are living the heart and art of teaching and learning with students. Here you can "Connect," "Collaborate," and "Inspire."

The regular bloggers, who are all ETFO members, represent a wide range of teaching roles and experience. Samantha is an occasional teacher who

just started an LTO assignment. Erin teaches core French on rotary. Roz, Sangeeta, and Tina have returned to classroom teaching after performing other roles in education. They are experiencing teaching in a similar way to new teachers. Alison is teaching a new grade in Primary, and Carmen is an experienced Junior/Intermediate teacher.

You are bound to find ideas in these regular columns, whether you are a new teacher, experiencing a new teaching assignment, or just looking for new strategies to set up your classroom, build inclusion, and meet the diverse learning needs of your students. For instance, in a recent blog post, Carmen Oliveira considered the importance of regular parent-teacher communication, and in another recent post Tina Ginglo discussed dance and drama resources from the Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE).

Visit this site often to follow our regular bloggers, connect with the beginning teacher community, and contribute your own thoughts and experiences. 

Joanne Languay is an executive staff member of ETFO Professional Services.

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Making Classroom Assessment Meaningful for the Occasional Teacher

By Joanne Meyers and Jason Johnston

Classroom assessment is a complex and challenging task for all teachers. Occasional teachers are partners in the daily assessment process and their observations and tracking of student learning play an important role.

The Ministry of Education's new policy, *Growing Success—Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools*, describes assessment as the process of collecting information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving curriculum expectations in a subject. *Growing Success* outlines three areas of assessment:

- **Assessment for learning** is the process of gathering and analyzing evidence to determine where individual students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how to support them in getting there. Assessment for learning is ongoing and monitors student progress. It involves meaningful feedback to students and differentiated instruction.
- **Assessment as learning** actively involves students in monitoring their own growth and progress. Students use meaningful feedback from teachers, peers, and self to develop next steps based on their strengths and needs.
- **Assessment of learning** is the gathering of evidence for the purpose of summarizing learning at given points in time. It involves making judgments about the quality of student achievement and is used to communicate to parents, students, and others. Assessment of learning usually takes place toward the end of a learning cycle.

Other terms that are important to understanding practical assessment are **strategies** and **tools**.

- **Strategies** are the tasks by which students show their learning and teachers assess student progress. Strategies can include written reports, oral presentations, responses to texts, etc.
- **Tools** are instruments that are used to classify and record assessment information, including anecdotal records, running records, observation checklists, rubrics, marking schemes, rating scales, and learning logs.


.....
Joanne Meyers and **Jason Johnston** are executive staff members of ETFO Professional Services.

Occasional teachers can be actively involved in the assessment process by focusing on assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning. While delivering daily programs, occasional teachers can make valuable observations about the strengths and needs of students. Short notes about student work can be helpful to students and classroom teachers. These observational notes and related feedback to students are also valuable in a variety of ways to occasional teachers. Carrying through with meaningful assessment in the absence of the homeroom teacher provides students with continuity of programming, and taking time to observe students completing tasks and sitting with them to provide feedback is an important way to make positive connections. Powerful feedback motivates learners to stay on task and apply their best efforts. When students are motivated and engaged they usually behave appropriately.

Assessment is a collaborative process that involves all stakeholders—students, peers, teachers, and parents. Teachers' professional judgment is critical in all areas of daily assessment. The *Growing Success* policy includes the following definition of professional judgment in its glossary:

Judgment that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgment involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction.

The ongoing daily assessments that all teachers plan and facilitate are by far the most meaningful for students, teachers, and parents. They are planned around differentiated instruction and meeting the needs of individual students. Occasional teachers support these priorities and are partners in this process. Their professional judgment is appreciated and supports the development of next steps for program planning and student growth.

Attached is a tear-out assessment tool that occasional teachers can use to track their observations of student learning. The assessment records of occasional teachers count in the collaboration process! 

Occasional Teacher Assessment Record

Purpose

- To monitor and track the learning of students as they work on classroom tasks.
- To leave information for the classroom teacher about the progress of the students.

Process

- During the class make short notes about the work of students based on the assigned task.
- The observations may be made about learning skills, strengths, or needs of a student.
- Note any feedback you have given to students during the time you are in the class.
- Leave the information for the classroom teacher.

Assessment Information

Date:

Student Name	Task	Observations/Feedback





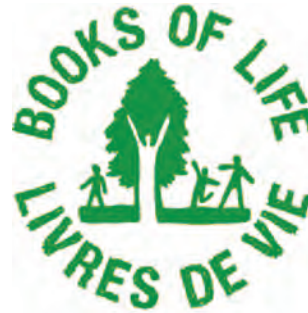
OTF REPORT

BY RIAN MCLAUGHLIN

The Aboriginal Education Project


Over the last two years, OTF has been enthusiastically working with the Aboriginal Education Office (AEO) of the Ministry of Education to increase teacher awareness of the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education Policy Framework. This initiative, which has been fully funded by the government, has three primary components. The first stage of the project was the development of a teacher resource entitled *Seeing Every Face, Hearing Every Voice*. This resource is currently being vetted with FNMI stakeholders through the AEO and is expected to be in final production late this spring and into our schools by fall 2012. The second phase was the development and delivery of summer workshops. The *Aboriginal Perspectives in Education* workshop series was offered in the summers of 2010 and 2011. The third and equally engaging piece of the project is currently underway!

Close to 100 teachers from across Ontario are participating in a year-long Aboriginal education awareness and literacy initiative called *Books of Life*. This third phase of the project began with an intensive two-and-a-half-day training session for project participants this past fall. Sensory awareness, storytelling, and book creation workshops were provided, and teachers developed ideas and strategies for building books and story bundles. Teachers were partnered with colleagues from across the province. Wherever possible, teachers from schools with few or no Aboriginal students were matched with those in schools with relatively high Aboriginal student populations. As well, teachers from the southern parts of the province were grouped with colleagues from the north, and rural and urban mixes were made where possible. Thirty-seven



ETFO members from Durham, Hastings and Prince Edward, Kawartha Pine Ridge, Lakehead, Ottawa-Carleton, Peel, Rainy River, Simcoe County, Toronto, Thames Valley, and Waterloo Region are all now back in their classrooms guiding their students in developing books about who they are, what they value, what they celebrate, and how all of our lives are shaped by our cultural and historical contexts.

In June 2012 when student books are finalized, participating classes will keep copies, exchange copies between partner teachers, and provide OTF with copies of their creations. Ultimately, it is our hope to showcase the books we receive at the Word on the Street festival in Toronto this September. Maureen Anglin, a coordinator with Frontier College, worked with OTF on the delivery of teacher training and says that participants now have a “deeper understanding of the role that Aboriginal storytelling can have in different teaching moments” and it is hoped that teachers will be able to “infuse this new knowledge in their classes.”

To keep up to date with the Aboriginal Education Project and the many other initiatives at OTF, mark otffeo.on.ca in your Favourites list on your Web browser and be watching for *Books of Life!* 

Rian McLaughlin is ETFO's representative at OTF.



CTF REPORT
BY PAUL TAILLEFER

Connecting First Nations and Public School Classrooms

In January, First Nations leaders met with Prime Minister Harper and senior cabinet ministers as part of the Crown-First Nations Gathering. The official website of the meeting read: “The Crown-First Nations Gathering is an opportunity to come together as partners—as our ancestors did at the time of treaty—to strengthen our relationship and set a path forward to give life to First Nations rights, build strong First Nations economies, boost First Nations education and foster healthy citizens and safe communities.”

While dialogue is extremely important at the national political level, we at the Canadian Teachers’ Federation believe that dialogue is equally important between teachers and students.

The 2010 *CTF Study of Aboriginal Teachers’ Professional Knowledge and Experience in Canadian Schools* informed us that Aboriginal teachers value the opportunity to teach Aboriginal culture and history, to foster responsible citizens, to challenge the negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people, to serve as role models, and to have a positive impact on children and youth. By positively acknowledging the lives, culture, and history of Aboriginal people, and by acknowledging the racism experienced by Aboriginal teachers and students, those involved in this twinning of cultures project will promote the creation of a caring citizenry and secure communities.

One of the Aboriginal teachers who took part in the CTF study noted:

As a former First Nations student and now a teacher, I’ve realized how ashamed I was of being Native. However, education has taught me that once you’ve learned about yourself and your culture, you become more accepting of yourself and others. Teaching has a way

of changing a person without them even knowing it ... and the effects are profound and everlasting. I still remember the teacher who “inspired” me to become more than I thought possible. If I can do that for others, that’s certainly a profession I want to be a part of.

This is why CTF, in partnership with the *Assembly of First Nations (AFN)*, is proud to introduce a pilot project, through its *Imagineaction* program, that attempts to bridge the distance between Aboriginal and public school classrooms and to offer a common virtual platform to share stories.

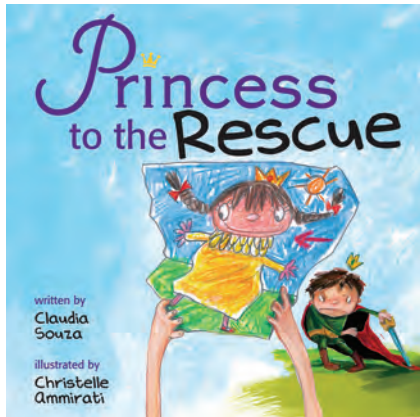


This pilot project offers the opportunity to enrich awareness and knowledge of First Nations culture for all students in Canada. It provides a link to bridge cultural distances, to increase understanding, and to motivate action. The pilot project offers the possibility of focusing on our respective communities and learning from one another, and of celebrating commonalities and respecting differences. Most importantly, this project offers a platform for reflection, critical thinking, leadership, action, creativity, and empowerment of the individual student.

I would like to commend the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario for championing Aboriginal education in Canada through their long-standing support of the Lieutenant Governor’s Summer Camps and Literacy Initiatives, raising issues such as the dire situation in Attawapiskat at the CTF Board, and developing resources for teachers that promote equity and social justice. We hope ETFO members will participate in this new program.

For more information on this pilot project: imagine-action.ca or email: info@imagine-action.ca

Paul Taillefer is CTF President for 2011-13. He is the former president of l’association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO.)



Princess to the Rescue

Claudia Souza

Illustrated by Christelle Ammirati

Toronto: Second Story Press, 2011

24 pages

\$15.95



Reviewed by Megan Nowiski and Kevin Parsons

Princess to the Rescue is a book about a princess who breaks stereotypes and gender roles to rescue princes. When the princess goes on a mission to save a prince, she is confronted with several challenges. She has to use creative problem-solving skills to overcome the obstacles she encounters. In her custom-made armour and low-heeled boots, she uses her thinking skills to tackle any problem. In one mission she uses a wind-up rabbit to lure snakes away from the prince who is trapped in the evil ogress's jewelry box. In another, she saves a prince who had been turned into a frog.

This book promoted a discussion in our classroom about gender stereotypes. Could a princess really save a prince? The kindergarten students, though young, had firmly engrained ideas that princes should save princesses and that it should not be the other way around. We used the book to talk about who can be a hero, and the kids learned that anyone can be heroic, that it does not matter if you are a boy or girl or how strong you are. This book was a guide to a very stimulating discussion. We would highly recommend it for any kindergarten or primary class. It is an excellent read-aloud for a teacher-librarian and a great springboard for a variety of topics, including gender roles, who can be a hero, problem solving, and character education.

Megan Nowiski is a member of the Ottawa-Carleton Teacher Local.

Kevin Parsons is an early childhood educator and a teacher candidate (2012).



The Little Yellow Bottle

Angèle Delaunois

Illustrated by Christine Delezenne

Toronto: Second Story Press, 2011

24 pages;

\$15.95



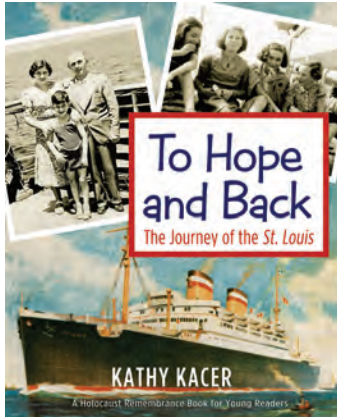
Reviewed by Janet Cottreau

The Little Yellow Bottle is an excellent look at the innocence of children living in war-torn countries and the brutal realities they face. This difficult topic is balanced with a story of friendship and inspiration.

The story is told through the eyes of Marwa, a young girl whose friend, Ahmad, is badly injured by a bomb they find in the woods. Playing soccer one day, she and Ahmad discover a little yellow bottle hidden in the grass. When it explodes, the lives of both kids change forever. The description of emotions and events is excellent and done in a fashion that children in early elementary (grade 2) and beyond could understand and discuss. This book would also be an effective tool in junior and intermediate classes. The illustrations have a unique style and are beautifully done.

Many curriculum links could be made with this book. First and foremost, it is ideal for discussion about war, children's rights, international issues, conflict, and the realities of life in communities around the world both now and in the past. This book could even be used in secondary school classes to give a personal look into the lives of children living through war. It would also be an excellent example for a visual arts class, with its illustrations that combine photo, drawings, watercolours, and collage. I would recommend this book as a great look into the realities of children in many countries around the world.

Janet Cottreau is a member of the Ottawa-Carleton Teacher Local.



To Hope and Back: The Journey of the St. Louis

Kathy Kacer

Toronto: Second Story Press, 2011

204 pages

\$14.95

Suitable for Junior/Intermediate



Reviewed by **Debbie Darling**

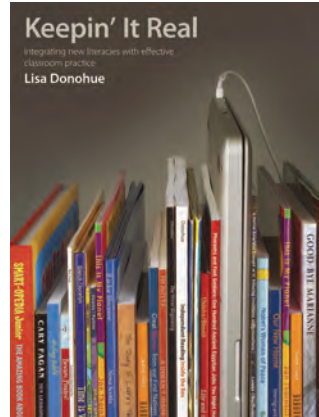
To Hope and Back chronicles the 1939 voyage of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany to Cuba on board the S.S. *St. Louis*, as it was experienced by two young passengers, Sol and Lisa, who survived to tell the tale.

Similar to *The Diary of Anne Frank* in its first-person narration, the story flows through the voices of these children. This technique enhances the immediacy of events, making them both informative and engaging. Sol and Lisa's innocence contrasts poignantly with our knowledge of the impending doom being planned for them and all Jewish people in Nazi Germany.

Chapters entitled "What the Captain Knew" are interspersed throughout the novel. They provide behind-the-scenes historical information about the political machinations among various nations, including Canada, whose decisions ultimately determined the fate of the S.S. *St. Louis'* Jewish passengers.

Based on historical research and on the first-hand recollections of the real-life Sol and Lisa, *To Hope and Back* offers an important dimension to our knowledge of the challenging and often fatal experiences suffered by Jewish people before and during the Second World War.

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Debbie Darling is a member of the Simcoe County OT Local.



Keepin' It Real: Integrating new literacies with effective classroom practice

Lisa Donohue

Toronto: Pembroke Publishers, 2010

96 pages

Suitable for Junior/Intermediate



Reviewed by **Jane Cliff**

Wikis, Blogs, Podcasts, Voice Threads, Prezi... the list goes on and on. Teachers who are overwhelmed in their attempts to understand how to use these digital tools will find authentic, creative, and engaging applications for them in *Keepin' It Real*. This book explores new approaches to interacting with subject matter by investigating four new literacies; digital, media, social, and critical, that the author argues are inextricably woven together with reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Lisa Donohue brings in the voices of teachers in junior and intermediate grades in "Evolution in Action" boxes that are embedded in the text to explain how teachers are reflecting on their practice and redefining the ways they do their jobs.

Each chapter includes activities that use technology as a tool, rather than a subject, highlighting specific ways in which students have integrated new technologies into their learning. Digital Task Cards at the end of each chapter provide teachers with specific activities linked to math, language, science, and social studies that tie nicely to the Ontario curriculum.

This resource carefully explains 14 of the more common digital tools and provides web addresses for additional information. In a discussion of social literacy, the author explores network etiquette and cyber-risks and offers strategies for teaching students about these risks.

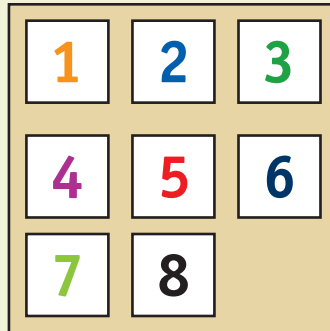
Donohue is convincing in her argument that students need to question the information they encounter and analyze, evaluate, and think for themselves. This book will serve as an important guide to teaching about our digital world in engaging ways.

.....
Jane Cliff is a member of the Peel Teacher Local.

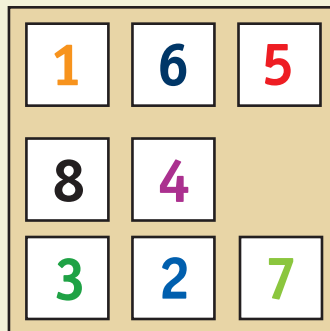
trivia BY PETER HARRISON

Moving Story

Last edition's Trivia told of Maria's favourite toy. It's a square box containing blocks on which are written all the numbers from 1 to 8 as above. She can slide the blocks around in the box—but not remove them. So, for example, she could move the 6 down into the space (one move), then the 5 to the right (one move) and so on . . .



Amazingly, in the smallest total number of moves possible, she managed to slide them to positions where, counting the space as 0, each of the three rows, and each of the three columns, and each of the two diagonals added up to the same total—and with the space back in the same column, as below.



What is the smallest number of sliding moves necessary?

Send your answers to ETF0voice@etfo.org with the word "Trivia" in the subject line. You may also mail your entry to The Editor, *ETF0 Voice*, at the address on the masthead. Three winners will be drawn from all correct entries received by April 20, 2012.

SOLUTION TO OUR LAST PUZZLE

The sequence of numbers is: **1,6,5,8,4,0,3,2,7.**

The winners for the Winter/December 2011 trivia puzzle are:

Jane Major, Thames Valley Teacher Local

Vicki Ryder, Avon Maitland OT Local

Elizabeth Trickey, York Region Teacher Local

Congratulations!

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