

NOVEMBER 2024 ISSUE

Catholic Teacher

MAGAZINE of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association

CONNECTING THROUGH STORY

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL
FINDING OUR SPIRITS
GATHERING OF SIXTIES
SCOOP SURVIVORS

A CONVERSATION
WITH FIRST
NATION'S ARTIST
JEFFREY TERESINSKI

INCREASING DISABILITY
AWARENESS





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Lungs are for Life! is funded by the Government of Ontario



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to the first issue of *Catholic Teacher* for the 2024-25 school year!

By now you are settled into your classrooms, surrounded by fresh faces, hopeful challenges, and faith in the year ahead.

As Catholic teachers, our commitment to advocacy and social justice issues is at the core of who we are. This commitment is keenly tied to the work of our Association and is reflected across all our efforts from collective bargaining to galvanizing the support and unity of our members in the lead-up to the next provincial election.

It has been six long years of Doug Ford and his Conservative government being in power. That is six years of attempts to dismantle our world-class publicly funded education system. Six years of budget shortfalls, mishandling the reopening of schools through the COVID-19 pandemic, and false accusations that school boards and teachers are indoctrinating students. Six years of criticizing and disrespecting Catholic teachers, rather than uplifting and supporting the individuals who foster the future of our province.

This has resulted in more than 40,000 Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) certified teachers not teaching, and a teacher recruitment and retention crisis that is disrupting stability in schools every day.

This experience is not unique to education. The Ford Conservative government has been underfunding and driving our public services into states of crisis as part of a purposeful plan to privatize our province. This is Doug Ford's model of greed and profit over prioritizing people and the public good, reflecting an ideologically driven approach to reduce funding and revenue, while selling out government's role and accountability to people. The Ford government is targeting female professions, especially teachers and nurses. Disrespecting, devaluing, and undermining our professionalism in an attempt to silence our voices.

This government is committed to turning our sick, elderly, and children over to corporate control while wasting your tax dollars to pad the profits of insiders. This move toward failed US-style, privatized, for-profit systems, largely through backroom deals, is hurting our communities, education, health care, teachers, nurses, and so many more. This model wastes our taxes because it pretends to do more with less, perpetuating a pattern of neglect for our schools, our communities, and our publicly funded services.

World-class education systems are public and properly funded, where teachers are respected. Ontario needs a government that respects teachers. A government that aspires to provide a great education system for our students and the future of this province. Ontario's students deserve better. We all deserve better. But the reality is that if we do not change the government, we will not be able to address these issues.

To realize the best possible schools for our members and the students that we teach, we need to elect a government that shares these values. This election is the first step in our next round of bargaining, and we must continue to mobilize in this direction, or the Ford government will continue to erode the world-class education system they inherited six years ago.

We have our work cut out for us and we cannot do this alone. We need your help, the help of all members. Together, we need to take action, because this election is going to come fast, and it will be close. We cannot allow ourselves to be paralyzed by negative and divisive campaigns that serve to distract people from the corporate agenda and those who fund it. We cannot allow ourselves to be paralyzed by negative campaigns and those who seek to undermine the hopeful future of our province.

We must choose hope over complacency. Hope over inaction. For teachers to use their voice, I am calling on each of you to choose hope and to help us power change both in the days leading up to this potential snap provincial election, and on Election Day. This is part of my hope for the future of our Association, our members, the teachers in our province, and the students that we teach.

We have a proud history, and so much to fight for. Together, we can lead with hope as we continue to defend publicly funded Catholic education and build a better future for Ontario and our students.

In solidarity,

René Jansen in de Wal
President

ONTARIO ENGLISH
**Catholic
Teachers**
ASSOCIATION

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

If you would like to connect with us to share your thoughts, ideas, or concerns, please reach out to us at publicaffairs@catholicteachers.ca.

There is no voice more important than a member's voice.

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Cover: Art created by Jeffrey Teresinski, of the Crane Clan from Baawaating (Sault Ste. Marie).

UP FRONT

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AWARDS

The communications and activities of local OECTA units are integral to the engagement of members within the Association. The Member Engagement Awards program honours OECTA units for their unique and innovative approaches to engaging members, creating inclusive spaces, and celebrating our amazing Catholic teachers.

There are three award categories: best practices in member engagement, innovation in engaging Indigenous and equity-deserving members, and outstanding promotion of Catholic teachers and the value of Catholic education.

This year, submissions are encouraged for activities that specifically address meeting the needs of members with disabilities. Activities undertaken by local units from January 1 to December 31, 2024, are eligible. **The deadline to nominate is January 17.** Winners will be announced at AGM 2025.



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AWARDS

- Best Practices in Member Engagement
- Innovation in Engaging Indigenous and Equity-deserving Members
- Outstanding Promotion of Catholic Teachers and the Value of Catholic Education

Click **HERE**
to learn more and nominate.

ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic Teachers
ASSOCIATION

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

- 16 International Day for Tolerance
- 17-23 Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week
- 20 Transgender Day of Remembrance
- 20 World Children's Day
- 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- 25- Dec 10 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence

DECEMBER

- 1-24 Advent
- 3 International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 6 National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
- 10 Human Rights Day
- 18 International Migrants Day

CHRISTMAS BREAK

Provincial Office Closure

December 23 to January 3



- 25 Christmas Day

UP FRONT

DOCUMENTARY FILM – *PLASTIC PEOPLE: THE HIDDEN CRISIS OF MICROPLASTICS*

The producers of the documentary *Plastic People: The Hidden Crisis of Microplastics* are excited to share an interdisciplinary curriculum guide (Grades 7 to 12 and post-secondary) to accompany their landmark documentary, and are waiving the film licensing fee so that Canadian teachers can easily use the lessons in their classrooms.

The feature film had its world premiere at the prestigious SXSW Film Festival in March, and was also screened for delegates at the 2024 United Nations Plastic Treaty negotiations in Ottawa this April. In his *Variety* review, film critic Owen Gleiberman described *Plastic People* as “one of those essential state-of-our-world documentaries.”

Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer.

Click [HERE](#) to access the teachers and educators toolkit.

STREAM THOUSANDS OF GREAT CANADIAN FILMS IN YOUR CLASSROOM!

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) offers teachers access to hundreds of study guides, interactive lessons, and curated playlists. For more than 80 years, the NFB has been sharing Canadian stories, with a focus on giving voice to underrepresented communities. The NFB's massive catalogue of films and teaching resources reflects the diversity of our classrooms.

Explore playlists tailored to suit all grade levels, focused on promoting diversity, inclusion, global citizenship, and environmental sustainability. Discover the NFB's incredible collection of Indigenous-made films, one of the largest in the world, offering an authentic lens to teach about Truth and Reconciliation, history, and the dark legacy of colonialism still effecting communities today.

Leverage the power of film and storytelling to enrich learning in your classroom. Visit [NFB.ca/Education](https://www.nfb.ca/education) today and discover a new Canadian film! For education subscriptions, please email info@nfb.ca.

Click [HERE](#) to visit the NFB's Education website to learn more.

EDUCATIONAL COMPUTING ORGANIZATION OF ONTARIO

Established in 1979, the Educational Computing Organization of Ontario (ECOO) is a non-profit organization that facilitates the integration of new computing technology into the education curriculum. Their vision is to empower and support teachers and educators in the pedagogically sound adoption and use of technology in learning.

The ECOO is a subject association for all teachers, since we all use technology in our everyday practice. A nominal annual membership fee of \$25 provides access to an online repository of over 250 session recordings and resources from the ECOO online conference and other events. Members can also attend workshops hosted throughout the year for free and receive a registration discount to ECOO face-to-face camp events and the annual conference, which includes great door prizes, such as laptops, Chromebooks, robots, software, and books.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more and join ECOO.

beginning teachers
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in Their First 10 Years
of Teaching

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rise
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a book? Send us your work
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in our magazine!

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publicaffairs@catholicteachers.ca

CLASSIFIED AD

Concerned about smartphone usage? Join us at the Rise Up Conference on Saturday, November 16, 2024, to delve into mindful technology use. Prohibiting cell phones in schools is a beginning; we must do more. em-Power.ed

Attendees can win a \$1,500 Smart TV package. For more information, visit empoweredword.ca.

Acceptance of advertisements in Catholic Teacher neither endorses nor warrants any products or services. We welcome ads for teacher resources, travel, and teaching overseas. Personal ads are not accepted. Rate: \$50 for the first 25 words and \$3 per word thereafter.

Events

/ National Day for Truth and Reconciliation donations

In the lead-up to this year's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Provincial Executive approved significant donations to organizations working towards reconciliation and Indigenous empowerment.

\$10,000 was donated to each of the following organizations:

- Indigenous Youth Roots (formerly Canadian Roots Exchange)
- Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund
- Indspire
- Legacy of Hope
- Northern Bridge Community Partnership
- True North Aid

These contributions reflect the Association's commitment to addressing the ongoing impacts of residential schools and advancing Indigenous-led healing initiatives. By continuing to support these vital organizations and movements, the Association advances truth, reconciliation, and justice for Indigenous communities across the country.

/ Indigenous Legacy Gathering and Spirit Garden opening

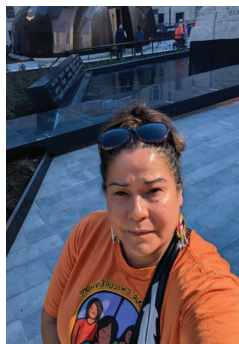
In September, Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto hosted the **Indigenous Legacy Gathering**, a celebration of Indigenous culture through storytelling, music, dance, and art. The gathering also featured workshops and performances that highlighted the cultural richness of Indigenous Peoples, offering both education and engagement for the public. A key highlight of this year's gathering was the opening of the **Spirit Garden**, a space created in response to **the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #82**, which calls for the establishment of Residential School Monuments across Canada. Located right outside of City Hall, the Spirit Garden is designed to serve as a place of healing, learning, and cultural celebration for all. This important public space honours residential school survivors and those who never returned, creating a lasting symbol of reconciliation in the city. Catholic teachers and members of the Provincial Executive were in attendance, proud to support an annual event that fosters education, dialogue, and healing within our communities.

"It encompasses many meanings for me. Being there with family, meeting new family, listening to stories, singing and drumming with my grandson... with my birth mother. This is how healing begins!"

- Sharon Giroux, OECTA Vice-President of Equity

"Attending the Indigenous Legacy Gathering was a moving experience. The Spirit Garden is a powerful tribute to residential school survivors. The space invites reflection and learning, truly a must-see for everyone on the path of Truth and Reconciliation."

- René Jansen in de Wal, OECTA President



Sharon Giroux,
OECTA Vice-President
of Equity



L. Chris Cowley, OECTA First-Vice President
R. René Jansen in de Wal, OECTA President



2024-25 DAB Members (L to R) – Front: Caroline Chikoore, AIDE Lead; Mary-Ellen Kavanaugh; Sharon Giroux, OECTA Vice-President of Equity; Therese Estacion; Tesa Fiddler; Kathleen Brennan. **Back:** Aileen Santiago; Riva Gewarges; Allison Parsons; Josh Charpentier; Jeffrey Goulet.

/ 2024-25 Diversity Advisory Board

Diversity Advisory Board (DAB) members play an advisory role, providing critical feedback to the Provincial Executive on the specific needs and challenges faced by their respective communities. By reporting on barriers to engagement and involvement, they help identify areas where the organization can improve its inclusivity efforts. Through its work, the DAB remains committed to fostering a more inclusive environment, ensuring that accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and equity continue to be core pillars of the Association’s growth and governance.

The DAB was expanded following the passage of a resolution at AGM 2024 that allowed for two representatives from each identified group to sit on the board. There are now 10 members on the DAB – two members representing each of the Association’s identified Indigenous and equity-deserving groups: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; 2SLGBTQIA+; racialized; Black; and members with a disability. Each member serves a two-year term, with half the board elected each year.

/ Grassy Narrows River Run

In September, members of the Grassy Narrows First Nation and their allies gathered in Toronto to lead the [River Run march to Queen’s Park](#). Many Catholic teachers were in attendance.

The march is a call for justice in the ongoing fight against mercury poisoning that has impacted more than 90 per cent of the Grassy Narrows population. The marchers, led by about 100 Grassy Narrows members, carried powerful demands: full compensation for mercury victims, the cessation of industrial threats to their land, and increased support for remediation efforts. The demonstration was the culmination of River Run 2024, a grassroots movement advocating for mercury justice.

The Association made a \$2,000 donation to support this year’s march, reinforcing Catholic teachers’ support for Grassy Narrows First Nation and their fight for mercury justice. Together, we amplify the call for action and demand justice for the people of Grassy Narrows.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about how you can help.



/ Common Good conference

In October, nearly 150 Catholic teachers gathered for the Association's biennial Educating for the Common Good conference. Participants engaged in a number of workshops on topics, such as mental health and wellness, artificial intelligence, teachers' duty of care, AIDE and Catholicism, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, culturally relevant pedagogy, and Catholic social teaching. The underlying theme across all the lessons and learnings was the importance of social justice.

Participants also heard from three excellent keynote speakers. **Jesse Wente** is a well-known film critic, broadcaster, author, and current Chair of the Board of Directors for the Canada Council for the Arts. He is Ojibwe, and his family comes from Chicago and the Serpent River First Nation in Ontario. Jesse spoke about what Truth and Reconciliation really means – what it will take for Canada to address the truth of what has been done to Indigenous Peoples, and how “right relations” is the best path forward towards reconciliation.

Ingrid Palmer is a visually impaired, gender-nonconforming Black woman who's formative years were marked by discrimination and adversity. Ingrid shared her experience growing up in foster care, and how she learned firsthand that vulnerable people often face indifference rather than humanitarianism. She shared her commitment to a life of service and inspired participants to foster connections between disparate communities so everyone can feel a sense of place and belonging.

Ross Johnston is the National Film Board (NFB) of Canada's Education Manager. Ross spoke about the breadth and value of the NFB's educational films to enhance curriculum delivery. Participants were treated to their own 'film festival' as Ross screened a few films centered around equity-deserving groups and walked through their accompanying educational resources, demonstrating how Catholic teachers can integrate NFB resources into their classrooms.

Click [HERE](#) to visit the NFB's Education website to learn more.



/ Vice-President of Equity Training

Local OECTA units across the province have started to incorporate a role equivalent to that of vice-president of equity. As of October, 34 units have incorporated this position onto their local unit executive. This new role is crucial in advancing the principles of parity, diversity, and inclusion within our local units, and our Association more broadly. Their duties include assisting the unit president in their role, and leading efforts to foster human rights, accessibility, inclusion, and justice.

This year's training session for vice-presidents of equity emphasized leadership development and provided practical tools to tackle issues of oppression, promote inclusivity, and foster equity. One of the foundational elements of this training was understanding systems of oppression and how they function within institutions. Vice-presidents of equity were educated on the Association's legal accountabilities and responsibilities regarding equity and anti-oppression work, helping them institutionalize desired practices and behaviours within OECTA. They heard about how we can effect change through the sharing of our stories, and practiced effective storytelling techniques. They also engaged in discussions on strategies related to transformative leadership and allyship, political activism, communication and engagement; and self-care and psychological safety.



Save the date / APRIL 3 to 4

Click [HERE](#) to learn more and apply.



/ Celebrating back to school as we encourage Ontarians to “Know More”

Since launching in 2019, the **Know More** campaign has provided a platform for the Association to engage parents, families, students, teachers, other educators, and all Ontarians. Over the years, we have continued to amplify the voices of Catholic teachers and those in our communities, raising awareness about the critical issues facing our schools, offering opportunities for supporters to engage in advocacy efforts, and calling on the Ford Conservative government to build on the success of Ontario’s publicly funded education system by providing the supports and resources that students and teachers need.

As the political, social, and media landscapes continue to evolve, so too does the campaign. As part of this adaptive and innovative approach, the Association launched a campaign in late August to celebrate the start of the new school year. Back to school is a time of joy and excitement for everyone – from students to parents to teachers – and we wanted to celebrate what we love about school and what makes our publicly funded education system so special.

The campaign advertising, which ran on social media platforms until the first week of October, reached two million Ontarians with more than six million impressions. All the ads featured images of Catholic teachers and students paired with the tagline: “School is _____,” with the blank space filled with positive, aspirational messages like “fun,” “rewarding,” and “joyful.”



The advertising strategy was specifically tailored to reach parents and grandparents of students in the publicly funded education system, as well as critical demographics in key regions across the province, as we lay the groundwork for the next phase of the campaign in preparation for a potential snap provincial election.

The Association also invited Catholic teachers, students, parents, and our

wider communities, through our **Know More** supporters list, to add their voices to the campaign by sharing what school means to them in a video message. The videos we received were passionate and heartfelt, truly encapsulating how our education communities make our schools world class.

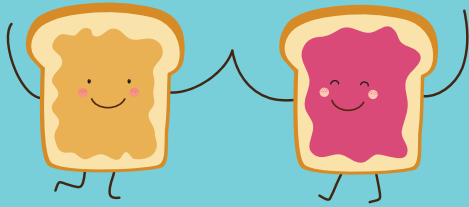
Click **HERE** to watch and share some of the amazing responses we received from our “What School Means to You” video callout. See what school means to Ontarians – why it is a place to grow, learn, connect, have fun, and so much more.



As our **Know More** campaign continues to grow, and as we prepare for a potential snap provincial election, watch for the next phase of our campaign as well as exciting new ways to get involved. Join us as we champion the message that Ontario’s students and teachers deserve better.

Click **HERE** to visit **KnowMore.ca** and join the campaign!

Some things just go well together!



Peanut Butter + Jelly



Cream + Sugar



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Thinking of furthering your professional learning with an **OECTA AQ Course?**

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Click [HERE](#) to learn more about OECTA AQ Courses.

MEET THE ARTIST

A Q&A with First Nations artist Jeffrey Teresinski

BY EDEN DEBEBE



» Tell us a bit about yourself, and your journey as an artist.

My traditional name is Manidoo Giizhig Zhezhoobii'ang, or The Time of Day the Creator Paints the Sky, and I am a member of the Crane Clan from Baawaating (Sault Ste. Marie). Cranes are called Adjijaak, or Echo Makers in Anishinaabemowin, and have been given the gift of leadership because their voice carries so well.

Our traditional names are not like our English names. While both have symbolic meaning within their own rites, our names do not come immediately and have both positive and negative personas. Community members observe the child, study their traits, and the natural path that they are on before a name is given. Such is the case for my name; my journey both as an Indigenous person and artist is reflected in my traditional name. There are times when the Creator paints something as dynamic and humbling as a storm in the sky, and at other times, as calming and beautiful as the colours in a setting or rising sun.

It is also ironic that I was born into the Crane Clan as I am on the autism spectrum and struggle daily to communicate and interact with people. My inability to communicate saw me placed in remedial classes in elementary school, but I was excelling in the advanced classes by high school – much to the surprise of some teachers and my guidance counsellor. However, it is through my art that I find my voice and paint the world as I see it, or see what it could be. Sometimes that message may be like a storm or medicine – direct, revealing, and a tough pill to swallow – but there is a lesson in it for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

I started drawing at a very early age. I have fond memories of being encouraged to draw by my Indigenous family members who would gift me with markers, pencils, and paint. But my Indigeneity was not always known to me because of my mixed ancestry and not having the stereotypical appearance of an Indigenous person portrayed by Hollywood. I only became aware of my Indigenous ancestry when I was in high school, sometime around my first visit to a sweat lodge in our World Religions class, and through my natural draw to Indigenous art. It was as if the images were speaking to me. It was from that moment I really began my journey, studying our stories, researching my lineage, and studying the Woodland masters like Cecil Young Fox, Carl Ray, and especially Norval Morrisseau. It wasn't always an easy path, there were times when storms were painted and I've had some teachers in high school and in university who tried to discourage me from identifying as Indigenous or pursuing any Indigenous subject matter, but I was resilient. I had others whom encouraged my talent, like Mrs. Yeo and Mrs. Sambol at St. Basil Secondary – both of whom are now retired, but still have an impact on me.

In university, I met a Penobscot Elder and practitioner, Dr. Blais, PhD. We eventually adopted each other, and he began to teach me not only Traditional ways, but also Christian Theology. He was a strong influence after my maternal grandfather had made the journey and helped me understand the artistic visions and dreams I was having. My artwork developed so much under his tutelage, for which I am eternally grateful.

» What do you hope Catholic teachers take away from this piece?

Our Lord said, "Anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Luke 18:17).

I hope that Catholic teachers take this message above all else. Amongst our calls to evangelize, or the sombre call to repentance and reconciliation, we've forgotten that Christ's message here was one of innocence and play; both missionaries and settlers forgot this when teaching us Indigenous the Word, particularly during the era of residential schools. They did not understand that many Indigenous peoples did not have a concept for work. Rather, we understood work – and by extension, learning – as play. Our trickster stories about Nanabozhoo or Aandeg (Raven/Crow), taught us life's lessons through tricks and play; and it is also through humour and play that we heal.

Thus, we need to be reminded that we are all children in the eyes of God, but especially remember that little children should be free to laugh and play in the streets (Zechariah 8:5). After all, Scripture tells us that, “What ever you do, do for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) and, “Praise him with tambourine and dance...” (Psalm 150:4). Just because we Indigenous danced and drummed for our Creator as play and prayer, did not, and does not, make us pagan or unclean. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ [...] On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor” (1 Corinthians 12:21-23).

That is Divine Humour, and dare I say, Wisdom.

» Why did you choose the title *Debi’miinigoowizi* for this piece?

After some prayer, I decided to call the artwork *Debi’miinigoowizi*, meaning s/he receives a good gift. It is not only inspired by the Anishinaabeg origin story of the butterfly, but it is also a subtle reference to Matthew 7:11: “if you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him.”

The gift of the butterfly – and symbolically reconciliation – is truly a good gift that brings both joy and healing to an otherwise traumatic experience which separated us from one another and with the Creator/God. But, like the butterfly, always flying out of the child’s reach, we must be persistent and continue to ask and work towards reconciliation.

» Tell us more about the story of your great-grandmother and how it informed the choices you made in this piece, and your life.

My maternal great-grandmother, Philemon Gogeosh, passed 10-months to the day I was born, so unfortunately, I only know of her from the stories that my mother has shared from the time she was raised by her grandmother. It’s ironic that it’s so close to the nine months it takes for a child to be born, isn’t it?

In one of those stories, I learned that my great-grandmother was a residential school survivor, in our hometown of Sault Ste. Marie. The residential school is now the location of Algoma University. I remember walking in there in high school one year and feeling uneasy not knowing the history of the building.

Anyway, you can feel the trauma in those stories recalled by my mother, particularly how my great-grandmother, being the daughter of a hereditary chief, was initially shielded by the residential school system. She had been hidden in Garden River Indian Reservation by a community member named Mammon, but alas, she was found, taken by agents and brought to the school. That experience instilled great fear in my great-grandmother, such that she would tell my mom to hide at just the knock at the door, saying, “They take children away and hurt them: hide.” Needless to say, there was a huge

culture loss between the generations as my great-grandmother would advise my mother not to tell anyone she was Indigenous. Even so, amongst all that trauma, she was a devout Roman Catholic, knowing not to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water.

It was not until I was in high school that I became aware of my ancestry through my great-grandmother. I remember at that time we did a section in our religion class on world religions when select students from my class were invited to join another to visit a sweat lodge: kind of like Truth and Reconciliation before there was an observance of it. I was fortunate to be one of the lucky students to attend. It was both a sombre and joyous occasion as I was about to experience a part of my newly discovered heritage, but I also quickly became the token Indigenous student with everyone asking me questions I could not answer. After that, I devoted my energy to learn our traditions and reclaim status for many family members because of my genealogical research. It was through this research that my own healing journey began, and I used it also to connect with my great-grandmother; and because of her devoutness towards our Lord and the Theotokos, I see the synchronicity in both Indigenous Spirituality and Christianity and try to incorporate these teachings into my artwork.

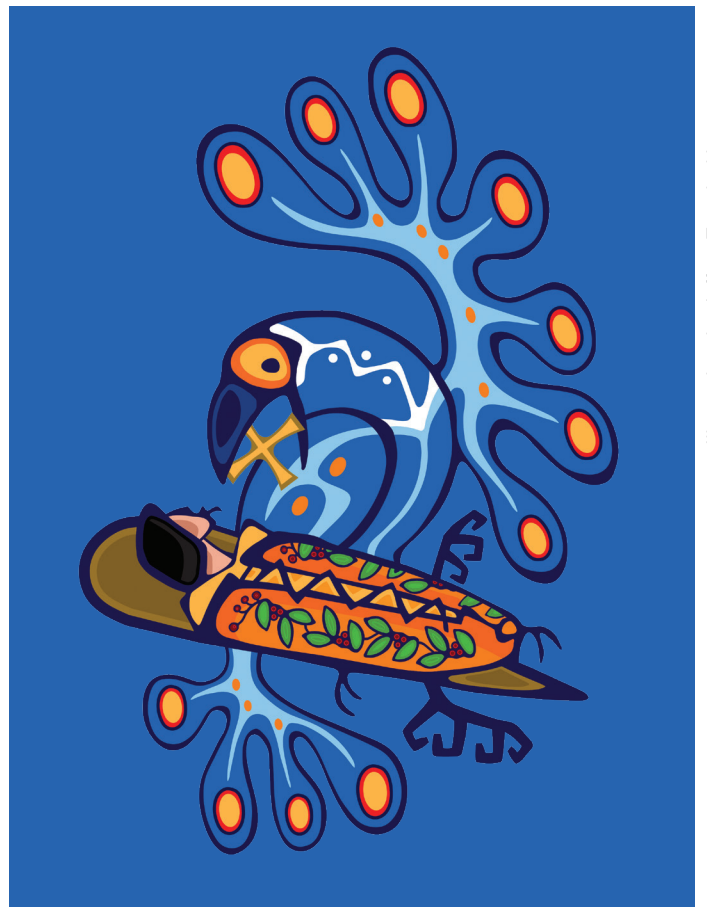


Illustration: by Jeffrey Teresinski.

Eden Debebe is a Communications Specialist in the Government Relations and Public Affairs department at OECTA Provincial Office.

Understand the art

Learn more about the significance of each part of this artwork, as explained by artist Jeffrey Teresinski.

Child

Let me first preface this with a story about the origins of the butterfly according to the Anishinaabeg. At one point the Anishinaabeg were a sick people, because everything we needed was provided to us, such that the children became stagnant, weak, and could not walk. The Creator, having love for the Anishinaabeg, took pity on them, saying, "I will create something to make their legs strong so that they will grow and prosper once again." So, the Creator took colour from the rainbow, among other things, and made the butterfly. Butterflies danced around the children, and with joy the children would soon reach out their hands to grab the pretty creation – but the butterflies always stayed out of reach. The children then began to stand up and reach out. They would fall and get back up again, but still the butterflies were out of reach. Then the children would begin to walk, chasing the butterflies until they became stronger and stronger.

I hope this piece conveys this message as well as one of transformation and healing, following our efforts to observe and pursue Truth and Reconciliation. It kind of parallels the children's book *Nanabosho and the Butterflies*, which tells the story of a grandmother explaining to her grandchildren her residential school experience and how the appearance of a butterfly brought her hope and happiness.



Cruciform

In my piece, you see the cruciform carried by Raven in his mouth. This recalls the story of how Raven stole the sun and brought light [wisdom] to the world. Of course, you have Christ symbolized through the Cross, but in Anishinaabe tradition the cruciform symbolizes many things including the Morning Star and the butterfly. Much like Christ, who transfigured into light on the mountain, or into the Glory of the Resurrection, so too does a caterpillar transfigure into a butterfly. Or when Raven stole the sun, he transformed from a white bird into a black bird, burned by the Glory of the Light.

Raven

Raven is a universal trickster amongst Indigenous Peoples. He teaches through folly and either transforms himself, or the character he interacts with is transformed. But there is also a common conception that Raven keeps one eye forward and another eye back so that his path remains true and straight. So, the artwork captures the moment Raven brings the healing story of the butterfly to the child in the cradle board while his eye looks back. We then understand that even though we hit a bump on our path because of the residential school policy, our path must be kept straight for us to heal and grow strong once again.



Cradle

Indigenous mothers would use cradleboards, or *dakonaagan* in Ojibwe, to hold their infants. These were important pieces, often passed down from generation to generation, and its construction was a community effort. The mother and her female relatives would be responsible for the cradle bag while the husband and close male relatives made the carrying board.

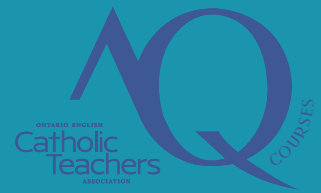


Mothers would sometimes lean the cradle board against a tree or hang them from its branches while they tended to the crops, thereby keeping their newborns comfortable and safe from predators. During travel, mothers would either carry the cradles like a backpack, but in some historical paintings, you will also see cradle boards strung from a mother's forehead, symbolically connecting the mother and child's thoughts and spirits. And, though not depicted here, there would be a wooden bow or band that would protrude from the cradle board – the Navajo fittingly call this curved part "rainbow." This was an important feature because, should the mother trip and fall, or the cradle ever tip or fall from the tree, the bow would prevent the child from injury, particularly head trauma. Mothers would also hang beads, feathers, or animal effigies from this part to protect and/or entertain children, much like the floating butterfly in the story.

By now everyone knows of Phyllis Webstad and her orange shirt, which has since been adopted as the colour we use to observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. As such, it was fitting to render the cradle board in orange. However, though the path to reconciliation is bright as the orange of the cradle board, or the golden yellow of the cross, it is tempered by the blue of Raven, who was burned by the light as a reminder to all of us that intent requires action, and actions have results. Reconciliation requires not only asking for forgiveness, but also change and forgiveness on our part.

The cradle is decorated in leaves, florals, and berries. On many of the Anishinaabeg's traditional regalia you will find these alongside the maple leaf, which is an Anishinaabeg symbol for healing.

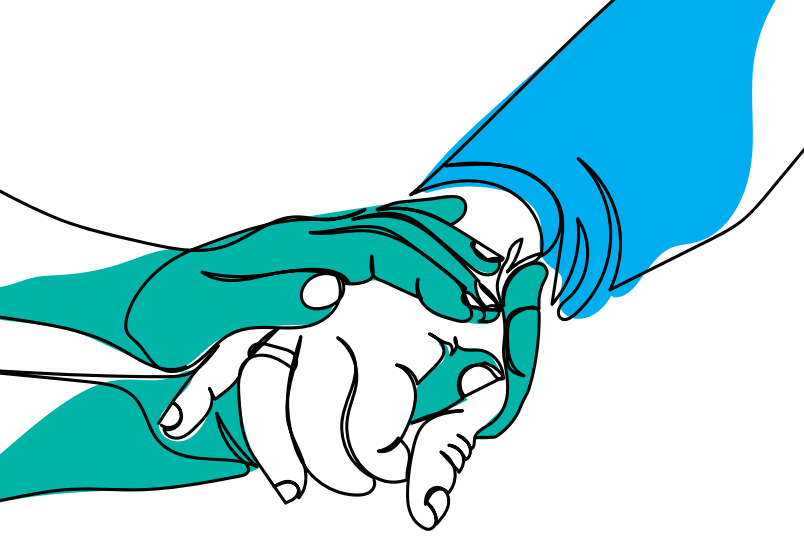
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Increasing Disability Awareness

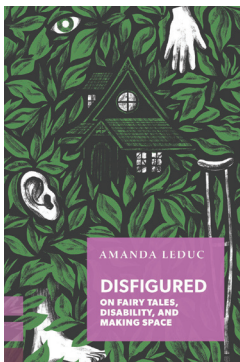
BY THERESE ESTACION

The Terry Fox Run is a momentous event that takes place every September. Classrooms across Ontario wear Terry Fox Marathon shirts and learn about his heroic fight against cancer. No doubt, Terry Fox is a cultural icon that unifies our hearts every fall. However, the fact that he was an above-knee amputee (ABK) is rarely discussed. Our celebrations of Terry Fox could provide an excellent opportunity for disability awareness, not just for fundraising. I often wonder why disability as a topic is so taboo. Perhaps it is because many people do not feel comfortable talking about someone’s disability. It is still seen as a “bad word,” a put down historically used to degenerate and shun. Only recently has staunch advocacy and education by disabled advocates across North America changed how wider society views this topic.

For me, as someone who was born able-bodied and became disabled in 2016 due to an illness, the world of accessibility and disability justice is still something I am constantly learning about. In the hopes of promoting conversation and disability awareness, here are some resources you might be interested in exploring.

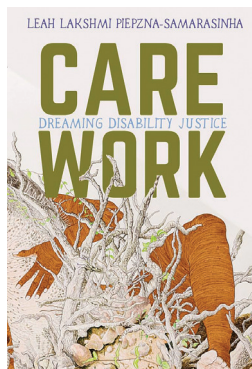
Disfigured: On Fairytales, Disability and Making Space By Amanda Leduc (book)

Written by disabled author Amanda Leduc, this book explores the history of disability justice and ableism through the use of fairytales. It is an accessible book that introduces the reader to the various ways disability has been conceptualized across time and space. An audiobook version of the book is also available.



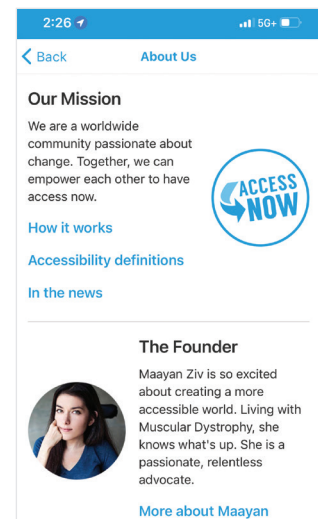
Care work: Dreaming Disability Justice By Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (book)

A beautifully written book that explores care, community, disability justice, and the potentiality of Crip futures. Part memoir, part archival knowledge, this book is essential. Leah writes with clarity and intimacy, always keeping intersectionality at the forefront. An audiobook version of the book is available.



Access Now Created by Maayan Ziv (app)

A free downloadable app that anyone can use to search for accessible spaces across Canada. The app specifies the accessibility of venues using the method of crowdsourcing.



“Disability Visibility Project”

Hosted by Alice Wong (podcast)

A great introduction to disability culture. The podcast covers topics that span across the disability justice landscape, including politics, culture, and media. The podcast’s companion anthology, “Disability Visibility: First Person Stories From the 21st Century” compiles essays and personal narratives from various American disability advocates. It is a staple in any library. An audiobook version is also available.

Click [HERE](#) to listen to the podcast.**“Postcards From” – on Accessible Media Inc** (short form videos)

A wonderful travel show currently hosted by Christa Couture, who visits different cities across the country to explore its sights, tastes, and sounds. The show is a blend of disability advocacy, entertainment, insight, and adventure. (Hint hint: I had the pleasure and unbelievable opportunity of hosting season five!) Accessible Media Inc. is a great place to start if you are looking for entertainment with closed captioning and visual descriptions.

Click [HERE](#) to watch the videos.**“You Can’t Ask That”**

CBC Gem (short form videos)

“You Can’t Ask That” asks the misunderstood, judged, or stigmatised people in society, the questions you have always wanted to know the answers to. It is about breaking down stereotypes and offering genuine insight into the lives of people who live with labels.

Click [HERE](#) to watch the videos.**“I Am Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much”**

By Stella Young (Ted Talk video)

Stella Young is a comedian and journalist who happens to go about her day in a wheelchair – a fact that does not, she would like to make clear, automatically turn her into a noble inspiration to all humanity. In this very funny talk, Young breaks down society’s habit of turning disabled people into “inspiration porn.”

Click [HERE](#) to watch the video.**“Why I Work to Remove Barriers For Students with Disabilities”**

By Harben Girma (Ted Talk video)

The first Deafblind person to graduate from Harvard Law School, Haben Girma advocates for equal opportunities for people with disabilities. Haben is a talented storyteller who helps people frame difference as an asset. She resisted society’s low expectations, choosing to create her own pioneering story. Because of her disability rights advocacy she has been honored by President Barack Obama, President Bill Clinton, and many others.

Click [HERE](#) to watch the video.**“Curating Access: Vital Cultural Aesthetics”**

With Sean Lee and Kristina McMullin (video)

Sean Lee and Kristina McMullin of Tangled Art + Disability (Canada’s first Disability Art gallery with a fully disability-identified staff) in a presentation on the emergence and swell of the Deaf and Disability Arts sector in Canada, and what it looks like to not only curate disability arts, but to develop the cultural aesthetics of access.

Click [HERE](#) to watch the video.**Follow on Instagram**
[@spencer2thewest](#)

A disabled advocate from Toronto, Spencer West has an Instagram account where he shares quick, fun, and informative videos regarding accessibility and ableism. Spencer uses his own life experiences to connect with viewers in often comedic, yet profound ways.

Follow on Instagram
[@crutches_and_spice](#)

Disability advocate Imani Barbarin’s Instagram account is a place to learn more about radical disability activism and key concepts in the disability justice world.

Follow on Instagram
[@courtneyjilmour](#)

Comedian, triple amputee, Canada’s Got Talent finalist, and Juno nominee for Comedy Album of the Year for *Wonder Woman*.

Follow on Instagram [@tinafriml](#)

Stand-up comedian with Cerebral Palsy who talks about her disability as part of her act, just as she does any other topic worth ripping into.

Therese Estacion is a member of the Wellington Unit and the OECTA Diversity Advisory Board, representing members with disabilities.

Finding Our Spirits First International Gathering



What is the Sixties Scoop?

The Sixties Scoop refers to a period when federal and provincial policies enabled child welfare authorities to take Indigenous children from their families and communities for placement in foster care and adoptive homes. In most cases, these “scooped” children were adopted by non-Indigenous families away from their communities and homes. Like the residential school system, the intent was to remove Indigenous children from their families, culture, languages, traditions, and their Indigenous identity.

Despite its name, the Sixties Scoop started as early as the 1950s and continued well into the 1990s.

I felt I needed to start with this definition because many people still do not know about the Sixties Scoop. I started learning about this history as an Indigenous student in college many years ago, while learning about Residential Schools. At the time, I had no idea how much the Sixties Scoop had affected me, my parents, my kids, our family. There was no talk about any of this history while growing up, which is why I wanted to write about it. As educators, we must move forward with our own learning of this history. It was not taught to us, but we need to address these topics moving forward.

Every one of us has different lived experiences and therefore different stories. I have read stories of “scoopers” adopted into families on farms and being raised as farm hands, not family.

Some were adopted into homes and abused. Some have stories about being bounced around through several foster homes before aging out of the system, left to navigate life on their own. Many were moved across Canada, or out of the country altogether. It is important to understand that every story is unique, but has the commonality of loss of family, language, culture, tradition, and our identity.

I reconnected with my biological family while in my second year away at college. We were doing placements, and I was working with the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program in the Flour Mill/Donovan area of Sudbury. Part of the reason I chose to go to school there was my longing to learn more about who I am and where I am from. A close friend working in the area at the time was also from Manitoulin Island, where I am from. She knew my story, family history, and invited me out for lunch one day for the chance to run into my birth mother. Against all odds, she was there that day. I was nervous and did not want to scare her so all I could do was talk and laugh loudly to get her to notice me. It did not take long for her to come over, saying she recognized me right away. I recently lost that close friend this past summer. I honour her memory and will be forever thankful for her reconnecting me with my biological family. She will forever be a part of my story.

Shortly after I met my birth mother, we found out she was pregnant with my youngest brother. As an Indigenous mother who had been flagged in systems, she was frequently moving



across the province to avoid child protection services – to keep her children with her. I have one sister and eight brothers in total. During that time I also reconnected with my biological father, who sadly passed away a year ago this past December. I share this part of my story because many of my “scooped” friends are still looking for their family. Unfortunately, the intent was for all of us to forget about who we are, to move on fully absorbed into mainstream society.

As far as I knew, there were approximately 25,000 Sixties Scoop survivors across Canada. I have since learned that there are approximately 125,000, which leads me to wonder what happened to the other 100,000? Where did they all go? How many more have been lost and forgotten? I am grateful to be reconnected with my family, to know who I am, where I am from, and to be able to share that information with my kids. My daughter has been researching her family history and I am encouraging her to document all of it for our future generations.

Click [HERE](#) to access the Map Your Story tool from the Sixties Scoop Network.

I was invited to participate in the *Finding Our Spirits* First International Gathering. Hosted by Anish Healing Centre Inc and The Southern Chiefs’ organization, the event brought together Sixties Scoop survivors to talk, connect, learn, and heal. I was nervous about the journey I was about to embark on, but at the same time excited to be in a room full of 300 people I didn’t know – but had so many things in common with.

Over the course of the two-day gathering, I had the chance to participate in a large array of presentations, workshops, and cultural practices. Our MC at this event was the amazingly talented Kim Wheeler, a writer and multi-media producer. Our Elders Robert and Mary Maytwayashing were on site to give cultural teachings and protocol throughout the gathering and shared some beautiful teachings with us.

So much of what I learned at the gathering will stay with me forever. Sharon Gladue’s presentation explored life after the Sixties Scoop and the lasting impacts. She brought interesting information on the challenges we face as Sixties Scoop survivors, the support we need, and how sharing our stories is so very important. Her presentation empowered me to keep sharing my story and to continue writing about my experiences.

Sacred Tree’s presentation united the room through story and song. We held hands while listening and dancing, gathered as one. Our first evening we were given the beautiful Star Blanket Teachings and gifted with our own blankets in a Blanketing Ceremony. We were all welcomed home.

This moment was a very emotional one for many of us. It made us feel connected and like we belong.

We had a screening of *The Lost Moccasin* and a presentation by its star Bradford Bilodeau, who opened with a moving poem by his 13-year-old son on the Sixties Scoop – the room was in tears! We collected all our tissues in bags and added them to the Sacred Fire at the end of the day.

Click [HERE](#) to watch *The Lost Moccasin*, produced through NSI IndigiDocs.

I am still exploring the various materials presented over the two-day gathering. I am finding new ways to connect with other survivors and learning to use the word “thrivor.” I now have friends from across Turtle Island and beyond that I look forward to seeing again. I hope to find new opportunities to share my journey, to attend more gatherings like this one. I see how important it is for me to work on my Spirit, take care of myself, and continue to explore in my healing. I will continue to seek and find answers about tens of thousands of survivors whose stories we don’t know. Leaving the gathering I felt a range of emotions, but above all else I felt welcomed home. I now know I belong to this community. We all have our own unique story, and we share a common history. The group I connected with will forever be a part of me.

Sharon Giroux is a member of the St. Clair Elementary Unit and is the Vice-President of Equity on the OECTA Provincial Executive.



The same, but *dif*

BY MICHELLE DESPAULT

A few months ago, I had the privilege of being part of a film project where Black, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, and Catholic teachers with disabilities shared their experiences and insights to assist other teachers in understanding how to teach and reach students who similarly identify. I was touched by the trust and vulnerability they displayed, and on many occasions felt a “mic drop” moment in what was shared.

I believe that we are all on a life-long journey of learning. I personally love to engage in new learning opportunities, whether they be formal, through courses, workshops, or books – or more informal, through lessons learned from interacting with others. I was excited by the learning opportunities this video series would provide, and yet I was unprepared for how the experience

would lead me to re-examine what I thought I knew about myself.

One of those moments came when a participant said, “Black is not a bad word,” and encouraged people to use the word Black in recognizing certain peoples’ identities. In that moment I got to acknowledge and confront my own hesitation in using the word.

I grew up in Scarborough in the late 1970s and 1980s. At that time, it was one of the more diverse suburbs of Toronto, though not as diverse as it is today. My elementary classrooms were mostly filled with white students with large variations in socio-economic status, but we also had linguistic, ethnic, and racial diversity. While diversity existed within my classes and schools, it was never something we spoke about, recognized, or celebrated. It was simply accepted.

I grew up thinking that this was how we all got along in our multicultural

“melting pot” – we accepted that we were all different, loved each other as we were, then acted like we were all the same. We never discussed race or how our different skin colours or ethnic backgrounds impacted us differently as we engaged in society. I remember being told it was rude to point out that someone had Black skin or other identifiable differences. We did not want people to feel that they were different, and it was not okay to treat people differently. We wanted everyone to be the same, to be included, to belong – to be equal. In essence, we were being conditioned to be “colour blind,” so we would not have to deal with the implications of what our differences really meant.

It was not until I was 17 years old, and having discussions with friends who had received their driver’s licenses that past year, that I started to understand exactly how our differences made a difference. These kids had only been driving for a



fundamental to moving forward in the equity work we are doing as a union, in our schools, and in our society more broadly. It is how we move past the assumptions that we all have the same opportunities and start to break down the barriers that hold others back.

I am grateful that the Association is taking on this work and providing opportunities for myself and others to learn and grow. While it can be very uncomfortable to sit with the reality of how our thoughts, actions, and inaction may have contributed to disparities and inequities among us, as another participant said, “There can be no growth without discomfort.”

It is admittedly difficult for me to write this article, but if I cannot acknowledge my participation in systems that have worked to discriminate and hold others back, how can I work to dismantle those systems?

A heartfelt thank you to the participants who took part in the Learning from Diverse Voices video series. Your bravery and vulnerability in sharing your perspectives and experiences have provided a valuable opportunity for people to reflect and move forward in their own learning and understanding.

Click [HERE](#) to access the Learning From Diverse Voices video series.

Michelle Despault is Director of Member Communications and Public Affairs in the Government Relations and Public Affairs department at OECTA Provincial Office.

year, but a few of my Black friends were already talking about being stopped by the police, often for no other reason than to be asked whose car they were driving. My white friends never experienced this, which is what I thought was the norm for everyone.

At that age, I did not understand systemic racism and I did not understand that we were not all equal. By not acknowledging our differences, I was masking any ability to come to that realization. In essence, not acknowledging someone as being Black was treating it as a bad word.

As I look back now, I think many of us could not reconcile the idea that we could be the same, but also be different; and we certainly did not have an understanding of equity as we do today. I also realize now that while being “colour blind” may not have been overtly racist behaviour, it was definitely not anti-racist behaviour. It also did not provide a

solid foundation for allyship and action. We are all the same in our shared humanity, but we are all unique. We are the same, but different.

By not acknowledging and embracing something like skin colour, gender identity, or disabilities, we diminish or negate the impact these realities have on someone’s life. We are all different in so many ways – but there are some differences that lead to dramatically different experiences of life. Experiences that we cannot all understand or know. Experiences that shape us into the people we are, and who we are continuing to become.

It is only by recognizing our differences that we can begin to understand the vast human experience, and it is by celebrating our differences that we can truly connect with one another.

Embracing discomfort and learning more about our differences is

To whom do I report?

BY BRUNO MUZZI

Since last Spring, the Counselling and Member Services department at OECTA Provincial Office has dealt with several cases where Catholic teachers have made missteps with respect to their reporting obligations when they have been either charged by the police or convicted in the courts.

When it comes to your employment as teachers, you should recall that you have two relationships: one with your employer and one with your professional regulatory body, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT).

The Ontario College of Teachers

Teachers have specific reporting obligations to the OCT when charged or convicted of a criminal offense. These obligations arise from the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*.

Under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act* (sections 51.1 and 51.2), you are required to report if you have been charged with an offence, and again if you have been found guilty of an offence. If you are charged, the report must include any information concerning any conditions/restrictions imposed or agreed to by you, including every bail condition. Whether charged or convicted, you must report to the OCT as soon as reasonably possible.

Should you fail to report to the OCT, that failure may be considered professional misconduct resulting in disciplinary action being imposed on you by the OCT.



This is a self-reporting form that you must complete and submit to your employer every year. The declaration asks whether you have been convicted of any offenses under the *Criminal Code* or other federal statutes in the previous year. If you have no new offenses to report, you simply declare that no new offenses have occurred since the previous year. Failure to complete this annual declaration can result in you being suspended from your duties until compliance is achieved.

Note that under Regulation 521, you are not legally required to inform your school board if you have been criminally charged, but not convicted.

If you are charged by the police *after* making your offence declaration, you must report the charge to the OCT. In regards to reporting to your employer, you should contact your local OECTA unit office for advice.

While there is no specific legislation that mandates you to report charges to your employer, the collective agreement (local terms), and/or school board policies may require you to disclose charges that could impact your ability to perform your duties or involve students' safety or well-being. In consultation with Staff Officers and legal counsel at Provincial Office, advice will be given as to how to proceed. The contextual analysis will include an examination of whether the allegations are somehow related to child abuse, assault, criminal activity involving vulnerable persons, cause harm to the school board's reputation, or causes other school board employees to be unwilling or unable to work with you.

Employer: Catholic District School Boards

Under the *Education Act* and Regulation 521, Ontario teachers must adhere to specific obligations. These obligations are public policy enacted to protect students and ensure that teachers working in schools are suitable for working with children and vulnerable persons.

When you are first hired by an Ontario school board (or any other educational employer, such as a private school), you must provide a criminal background check. In each of the following years, by September 1, you must provide an offence declaration. An offence declaration is a written declaration you sign, listing all of your convictions for offences under the *Criminal Code* up to the date of the declaration, for which a pardon under the *Criminal Records Act* has not been issued or granted.

Regardless of the circumstances or allegations, OECTA representatives and legal counsel are available to provide you with the best advice and representation where needed.

Bruno Muzzi is Department Head in the Counselling and Member Services department at OECTA Provincial Office.

A fishing tale

BY SIMON DALLIMORE

It was a beautiful summer morning. A light fog slowly moved over the calm, glass-like surface of the water. A few birds were welcoming the sun as it slowly started its morning climb. The air was cool, but it had the promise of a hot summer day ahead.

It was 5:30 in the morning, far too early to be getting up while on vacation, but the perfect time to head out onto the lake for some early morning fishing. My partner Kim and I were visiting friends for a couple of days, and I only had two possible mornings to go fishing. I call it fishing, but it is more about spending some time with a good friend to get caught up on each other's lives. There is always a flask of coffee, a cribbage board, and a chance to chat. On occasion, we actually catch a fish, which we always release back to the lake.

That day was like any other day we have gone fishing. My friend had the boat ready, and I joined him at the dock with coffee and cards in hand. We slowly made our way out of the little bay where the cottage was nestled on the shore and headed out to what my friend thought was going to be a good fishing spot.

It turned out that the spot he had chosen was just like every other spot. It was a great place to sit back, chat, and watch the morning mist burn off the lake – but a terrible spot for catching fish.

We made the decision to try a different spot on the lake. My friend went to start the boat, but we were greeted by a sound

no boater wants to hear. The motor would not start! Here we were, at six in the morning, no one else on the lake, no fish, and a boat that would not start.

We considered our options. We could call the cottage, but we had the only boat (and we would wake up our spouses who understood the concept of sleeping in while on vacation). We could wait for someone to come along, or we could paddle.

We decided to try paddling. That quickly proved to be a challenge for two people with shoulder injuries. We did manage to find our way to a different spot on the lake, so we cast our lines again and decided to wait.

Still no fish, and no other boaters. We tried paddling a little more and slowly made our way into the current that was starting to appear as the lake woke up for the day. We stopped for a while, tried a little more fishing, and laughed about our situation. We had hoped that the current would move us back towards the cottage, but it did not. My friend tried turning the key a few more times to no avail.

It would have been easy to get angry at the situation, or to panic, but my friend and I decided to sit back and enjoy the morning, having faith that a solution would present itself at some point. Anger or panic would not solve anything, and could make things worse. We kept coming up with different ideas, some more creative than others, but other than paddling and waiting for another boat to tow us back, all we could do was chat, laugh, and try to catch some fish.



I am reminded in times like this of the message in James 1. In his letter, James talks about faith. He reminds us that we are going to face trials and tribulations. Now I assume that James was not writing about a fishing trip gone wrong, but I still think that his message applies. In particular, I think of James 1:19, where he reminds us that we, “should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”

In so many situations our first instinct, especially if we are under stress, is to get angry. A lot of times it is better to stop and listen. Listen to the person in front of us, listen to the situation, or listen to our inner voice.

The first couple months of school are usually exciting. Everything feels new, the year stretches out in front of us, and we are all learning to get to know each other. As the year progresses, the stresses of the school year continue to pile up, along with the stresses we face daily in our personal lives. That stress can make us forget James’ wise words, and we do become quick to anger. We might lash out at our students, our colleagues, our friends, or our families.

If we stop and look around us, we might lose some of that stress or anxiety. If we take time to stop and listen, we might hear the concern in another person’s voice. If we take a step back and are slow to speak, we might find another path forward that is better for everyone. Often, offering a silent prayer helps us to take a step back (which I think is God’s way of helping us to follow James’ advice).

I know that this is not always easy to do, and is not the solution for all problems. Perhaps this is one thing that we can keep in mind to help us in certain situations. Maybe it will allow us to take stock of what we need and when we might need to reach out for help.

My friend and I eventually found our way back to the cottage. We ended up paddling most of the way before we met someone in a boat who graciously stopped to offer help. It was a short tow ride into the dock. We did not catch a single fish (not even a nibble), but we ended up enjoying the morning on the lake just floating and chatting, and we had a good “fish tale”!

Simon Dallimore is a Staff Officer in the Counselling and Member Services department at OECTA Provincial Office.

Photo: Provided by Simon Dallimore.

OECTA'S PROVINCIAL LTD PLAN

What you need to know about cancelling your long-term disability coverage

By Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan

Most members are in a highly-vulnerable financial position when they are confronted with a loss of income during a lengthy or permanent disability. The OECTA provincial long-term disability (LTD) insurance plan provides a safety net that will replace a percentage of your salary and provide pension plan protection if you are unable to work because of an illness or injury.

That being said, it is possible to terminate your LTD coverage, in which case you will no longer have premiums deducted from your pay.

Three scenarios

There are three scenarios in which you might be able to cancel your LTD insurance:

Scenario 1 60 per cent unreduced service pension	Scenario 2 Upcoming retirement	Scenario 3 Age 65
<p>You are eligible for a 60 per cent unreduced service pension now.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>You are eligible for a 60 per cent unreduced service pension within the later of the next 110 working days or expiration of sick leave, and in no event more than 24 months.</p>	<p>Your board-approved retirement date is within the next 110 working days.</p>	<p>You have reached the end of the month in which you turned age 65.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>You will reach the end of the month in which you turn age 65, within the later of the next 110 working days or expiration of sick leave, and in no event more than 24 months.</p>

- 1 You are eligible for a 60 per cent unreduced service pension or will be, within the later of either: the next 110 working days, or the expiration of your sick leave credits.
 - To qualify for an unreduced pension you must have reached the “85 factor,” meaning your age and years of qualifying service add up to 85.
 - To qualify for a 60 per cent unreduced pension, you must meet the above criteria with 30 years of credited service.
- 2 You have reached the end of the month in which you turned 65, or you will reach the end of the month in which you will turn 65, within the later of either: the next 110 working days, or the expiration of your sick leave credits.
- 3 Your retirement date is within the next 110 working days, and you have notified both the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan and your school board.

Eligible until retirement

You should know that you are not required to terminate your LTD coverage simply because you have notified your board of your intention to retire. You are still eligible for coverage up to the date of your retirement, and you have the right to make a claim if you become disabled prior to this date. If approved, LTD benefits would be payable until: you recover, you become eligible for a 60 per cent unreduced service pension, or you reach the end of the month following your 65th birthday (as long as you were not receiving Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan benefits).

You might have sound reasons for cancelling your LTD coverage and discontinuing your premium payments, but you should carefully consider your options. Please note that, if you terminate your LTD in Scenario 2 and become disabled before retirement, you **will not** be eligible for LTD. You likely do not want to be in a situation where you are unable to work and are not receiving sufficient income. Also note that coverage cannot be cancelled retroactively.

If you wish to terminate your LTD coverage, you should complete an Application for Coverage Termination. Submit the completed application to your local OECTA unit office at least

two months prior to the desired cancellation date to ensure the board stops deducting LTD premiums on time. Be sure to include the required supporting documentation. Your LTD benefits plan is sponsored by OECTA Provincial and administered by the Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP). Please do not call your school board for assistance; direct any questions to your local OECTA unit office.

What is OTIP?

The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) is a not-for-profit insurance advocate that is part of the education community. OTIP is governed, led, and inspired by the four education affiliates and their local leaders. OTIP's products and services include a full range of group and individual insurance from your group benefit plans and long-term disability coverage to individual insurance products, such as your home and auto coverage.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about OTIP coverage.

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We The People

BY GIAN MARCON

As the election cycle in the United States winds down, and amid speculation on when voters in Ontario will be casting their ballots in upcoming provincial and a national elections, we hear politicians often referring to the electorate by the collective term “the people.” Whether they claim to represent the interests of ‘the people’, or whether they purport to understand and share a lived experience with prospective voters, the messaging is underpinned by a patronizing cynicism that lumps a diverse collective into a simplistic amalgam.

It is a top-down paternalism that assumes what “the people” need or want by attempting to convince them that “the people” are being heard and represented accordingly. We hear politicians cite anecdotal stories from which they extrapolate a fabricated mass issue that is of critical importance to “the people.” They claim to hear from “the people,” but conveniently filter whatever they may hear to suit their own desired messaging.

Moreover, the generalized term “the people” has been co-opted by those of all political stripes to pander to what they think “the people” want to hear. The result is that politicians who are independently wealthy try to court the electorate with folksy overtures meant to create a false affinity with the concerns of the citizens whose interests they do not share.

It is essentially a classic subversion of populism, as the needs of “the people” are fronted as a facade to gain support. Once their political goals are achieved, the political victors proceed to secure the

ability to further entrench elements that promote the economic interests of the elite.

As I reflected on this last week, I was prompted to pull down my well-worn copy of Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* and re-read some key passages.

Since its publication in 1980, *A People’s History of the United States* has sold more than two million copies and has become one of the most popular, thought-provoking treatises written about American history. The appeal of the book for many continues to be Zinn’s “flipping of the script” and breaking from what was, up until then, a top-down view of history. In essence, he would concur with Winston Churchill’s much quoted assertion that, “history is written by the victors.”

Given their very different political leanings it is ironic that both Churchill and Zinn would agree that our understanding of history is not complete or objective, but tends to favour the version of events of those in power. In this context, one can see how seminal Zinn’s work was in giving rise to a new genre of “people-centred” histories. By inverting the traditional approach where the rich and powerful – through the institutions that they control – were the central drivers in the direction of society, Zinn changed the game. Instead of history told from above, Zinn promoted an approach truly from the perspective of “the people.”

For Zinn, his real-life experiences informed his perspective, as he lived among “the

people.” He was also unapologetic about his views. He bluntly stated in his autobiography *You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train* that he could not, “... pretend to an objectivity that was neither possible nor desirable.” He consistently, and subjectively, related events and experiences within the social movements of his time through a lens that resulted in his own personal people-centred version of history. By freely admitting his bias, Zinn did not court the affinity of his contemporaries, but rather reflected it. Individuals exposed to his work were drawn to it because it authentically represented their reality. “The people” shared his views because he spoke from within the circle inhabited by them. The process was organic.

Compare that to an outsider politician telling you that they, “feel your pain”, “know what you want,” or that they “hear you.” Merely stating that, “I am one of you” or “we share the same values” does not make it so. It rings hollow, for as the old adage states, “do not tell me you care – show me that you do.”

So, when we hear politicians who refer to “the people” we should not assume they are addressing us in any real sense. To them we are merely a vehicle to be manipulated to further their own interests. In a culture where the politics of negativism feeds on scapegoating and turning “the people” against each other, it is more productive to seek out substantive, positive visions that truly and authentically reflect the fundamental needs of “the people.”

Gian Marcon is a retired Catholic teacher and former Staff Officer at OECTA Provincial Office.



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