

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

T H E

# bulletin

Vol. 59/No. 2

November/December 2015



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TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY



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TEACHERS CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY



# *Up Front* from the President



*Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.*  
~ William Butler Yeats

When the idea of a President's Panel on the Status of Public Education

was first conceived we felt a little like Ray Kinsella, Kevin Costner's character, in *A Field of Dreams*. Our panel was very much an act of faith. We would build it, but would people take part.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step." And so we did.

We really weren't sure what the public appetite was for discussing the purpose of education, but we believed it was important to strike such a panel to determine what is important in a public education.

There are those who narrowly define "accountability" and "performance" in terms of test scores. Competition becomes the mantra and ranking in relation to other systems the determinant of an education system's success or failure. Test scores are easy to measure, and what can be measured in the business world counts.

However, Albert Einstein said, "Not everything that can be counted counts. Not

everything that counts can be counted." This is true for our schools. Our "Teachers Change Lives Every Day" public awareness campaign clearly demonstrates this. How do you measure the effect of a teacher on the life of a student? It cannot be reduced to a test score.

In many ways our panel attempted to measure the intangibles that matter in education. Throughout the 12 public sessions and over 60 amazing submissions, presenters spoke passionately about public education, the challenges facing it and what our schools need so they continue to light fires in our children.

Teachers expressed deep concern for their students and wanted the best for them. As one school counsellor put it, "I am not special, these kids are." Parents voiced both fears and hopes for their children. The fear that their children would fall through the cracks was balanced by their desire to see their children happy and successful. "I want him to hold a job and have meaning in his life," said one parent. Outside agencies not directly connected with the education system wanted our young to thrive after they finished school.

After every public session, opportunity for discussion was provided. Amazingly, people seized the opportunity to share their perspectives. Panel members were impressed by the richness, thoughtfulness and depth of the conversation which

occurred. If there was doubt that education mattered to those in attendance, these discussions removed it.

Just about all presenters recognized the need for adequate resourcing if schools are to meet the challenges asked of them. As one principal put it, "Every year I have to feed more mouths with the same pot of soup." It's obvious we will need to invest in a larger pot.

In James Joyce's *Ulysses* the titular character says, "I am a part of all that I have met." That is true for each of us on the panel and for those who made and heard the submissions. We learned much, and our understanding of our education system was enriched. The vision we heard for our education system is not one based on test scores but one that meets the needs of our young people so they can participate in the society they will both inherit and create.

Over the next several months we will use the submissions to write a report to continue the conversation we started with whomever forms the next government. We look forward to continuing the dialogue. I encourage each of you to lend your voice to the discussion.



The staff of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association would like to wish all teachers a safe, happy and joyous Holiday Season.



# THE bulletin

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## Expression of Interest

### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE SECOND LANGUAGES SPECIAL INTEREST COUNCIL?

If so, please complete the following and return by **December 23, 2015.**

Name: .....

School: .....

Email: .....

Please fax to 726-4302 or  
1-877-711-6582 (toll free)  
or email your information to  
mail@nlta.nl.ca



PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

# NEWS

## SPANIARD'S BAY

## Holy Redeemer and the Gary Churchill Memorial Scholarship

For the past 36 years the family of Gary Churchill (a member of the military who died while still serving) has sponsored an essay competition at Holy Redeemer School in Spaniard's Bay. Each year the grade 9 class visits Branch 9 (Corporal Matthew Brazil) where they are treated to lunch and various activities surrounding the theme of Remembrance. The focal point of the visit is when the students visit the Veteran's Lounge and are given a history lesson on many of the artifacts and other items donated by the families of the veterans who served in some capacity. "It is indeed a great learning experience for the students who gain inspiration for their essays," says Paul Sheppard, Teacher Sponsor at Holy Redeemer School. According to Mr. Dan Churchill (father of Gary Churchill), "words cannot express the support and commitment given by the administration and staff of Holy Redeemer School in making this scholarship a success."

As part of the Remembrance Day celebrations, the students of Holy Redeemer participate in a poster, poem and essay contest sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 9 in Spaniard's Bay. A winner from each category is selected from each grade level (K-9) and displayed at the annual Remembrance Day dinner held at the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 9. During the dinner on November 21, the first and second place essay winners from

grade 9 (centered on the theme of Remembrance) read their winning essays. Along with monetary rewards, the first and second place winners will have a plaque placed in the school and Legion that contains the previous winners of 35 years. The winning entries of the poster (Primary), poem and essay (Elementary and Intermediate) are sent to Provincial Command of the Royal Canadian Legion to be judged on a Provincial basis.

## SOUTH EAST BIGHT

## Students at St. Anne's School participate in Fire Prevention Week

Each year during Fire Prevention Week, volunteers from the South East Bight Volunteer Fire Department take the time to sponsor a poster contest to educate students at St. Anne's School on fire prevention issues in their homes, school and town. They take out the equipment and show the students how portable pumps provide fire security to the residents of South East Bight. "A huge thank you to our volunteers who keep us safe," says Elena Whyte, Sole Charge Administrator at St. Anne's School. "A big congratulations to all the children, all 11 of them, who made great posters and were exceptionally well behaved, taking turns, making rainbows, and having fun. Our theme of excitement, education and exploration are evident in everything we do."



Students at St. Anne's School learn about portable pumps during Fire Prevention Week.



Grade 9 students from Holy Redeemer School visit Royal Canadian Legion Branch 9. (Photo credit: Ron Fagan)

## ST. JOHN'S

## Edward Hancock receives CTF Special Recognition Award

This past July, the Canadian Teachers' Federation announced that Edward Hancock is this year's recipient of the CTF Special Recognition Award.



Ed began his first teaching position in 1973 and was actively involved in the NLTA at the local and provincial levels for all his teaching career. He became a local branch president at the end of his first year of teaching and was a member of the Association's Provincial Executive Council from 1976 to 1981 during which he served on or chaired a number of committees in addition to being a member of the NLTA Negotiating Team. For his service to the branches of NLTA, Ed received the NLTA's Bancroft Award in 1983.

Ed joined the staff of the NLTA in 1986 as an administrative staff officer. He was appointed as Executive Director in 2001 and retired from that position in July 2013. During his tenure with the NLTA Ed served as the Association's chief negotiator during contract negotiations and was involved with teacher pensions and group insurance. As Executive Director he advised the Provincial Executive on programs, policies and strategic issues and directed the operations of the NLTA staff. He presented papers and authored articles on a number of issues including Section 43 of the Criminal Code and the role of the NLTA in education reform in Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1990s.

Ed was also a strong advocate for the Canadian Teachers' Federation throughout his NLTA career and has been a tireless representative of, and advocate for, teachers, the teaching profession and public education. He participated in a number of regional, national and international conferences and presented papers at a number of national conferences and meetings. He served as a member of the Board of Directors and/or Executive of CTF, CAPTO and CAPSLE and as CAPSLE President in 2006-07.

The CTF Special Recognition Award was instituted in 1976 to recognize selected persons who have given meritorious service to education and/or the teaching profession at the interprovincial, national or international level.

Mr. Hancock was presented with his award at the NLTA Joint Council meeting held at the Capital Hotel in St. John's on November 27, 2015.

## A Unique Teaching Opportunity

As an experienced teacher, you are already dedicated to helping children achieve their potential in a warm and supportive environment. Would you like to combine your love of teaching with world travel and the chance to experience new cultures? If so, please consider this unique teaching opportunity.



Beginning in September 2016, our family will be taking a year off to travel. The main objectives will be to allow Michelle and Julianne (by then 9 and 11, pictured above) to develop their language skills while simultaneously broadening their understanding of the world.

The travel will consist of two trips of four months each. The first will be mostly spent at a language school in Guilin, China, where the girls will take their knowledge of Mandarin to the conversational level. Side trips will be taken to Hanoi and Chungking (the girls' birthplaces) as well as Hong Kong.

The second will involve a month of Spanish language training in Antigua, Guatemala, followed by three months of travelling in South and Central America:

- Overland trip from Santiago to Iguazu Falls
- Rio de Janeiro
- Manaus and a cruise up the Amazon
- The Galapagos Islands
- The Panama Canal
- Overland trip to Tegucigalpa
- Cuba

The children will be homeschooled during each trip, focusing on math, reading and writing skills. Other educational opportunities will be taken advantage of as they arise. Each trip will be followed by a two month period in Canada, which will consist of two weeks of time off and six weeks of home schooling in science. This would take place in Sudbury, Ontario.

Your tasks would be to provide most of the homeschooling (Grades 4 and 6). Duties would begin in late July of 2016 and end in late July of 2017. Benefits would include:

- All living expenses
- All travel expenses (a value of approximately \$50,000)
- Language courses during the girls' own classes, if desired
- A generous stipend

For the perfect person, this will be the perfect job.

**Please reply to [portray@vianet.ca](mailto:portray@vianet.ca) if interested.**

Dr. Ray Wiss, MD, CSPQ (EM), CFPC (EM)  
Department of Emergency Medicine  
Northern Ontario School of Medicine

## NEWFOUNDLAND &amp; LABRADOR

**NLTA Medal winner announced**

David Collins from Grand Falls-Windsor is the 2015 recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association Medal. David graduated from Memorial University at the Fall 2014 convocation with a Bachelor of Education Degree (Primary/Elementary). During his studies in the Faculty, David maintained an excellent academic record with an overall average of 86.5% in his Education courses and was on the Dean's List for 2013-14.



David Collins (centre) accepts his NLTA medal from Kirk Anderson, Dean of the Faculty of Education (left) and NLTA President James Dinn.

Prior to completing his B.Ed. degree, David worked for many years with children and teens as a children's/youth pastor. He also had extensive community involvement as a volunteer with many organizations such as the Training Wheels Family Resource Centre and the Green Bay Association of Community Living where he was involved with programs assisting both parents and children. David also found time to serve as coach for volleyball and badminton teams in local schools and to serve as a board member and volunteer with the IceCap Youth Centre in Springdale.

In May 2012, David began the Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary) program at Grenfell Campus, but after just two semesters he suffered a devastating and life-threatening stroke. It was a long and difficult road to recovery, but within a year, this determined young man was back in class. In the winter semester he completed his internship at Helen Tulk Elementary in Bishop's Falls and received an excellent rating from his cooperating teacher, Tenniel Vincent. After a final semester back at Grenfell, David completed his program and walked across the stage in October 2014 to receive his degree.

David humbly credits the support of his family, friends, classmates and professors for helping him finish his program. However, there is no doubt his

incredible determination, courage and perseverance played a fundamental role in his success. Rather than let his stroke and resulting disability discourage him, David reflects he was "fortunate enough to gain insight into what a student with a learning disability has to face". He is determined to be a teacher who supports his students and to be "an encourager to the student who faces every sort of obstacle imaginable".

David is most deserving of the NLTA Convocation Medal which was presented to him in May 2015 at the Grenfell Campus. He has demonstrated qualities, values and a tremendous dedication that will make him an exceptional teacher.

David wrote an article entitled "Insights into Teaching: How a Stroke at 38 Changed My Life", which was featured in the November/December 2014 issue of *The Bulletin*. He is currently a substitute teacher living in Grand Falls-Windsor.

The NLTA Medal is awarded annually to an Education student who, during his/her academic career, has made an outstanding contribution to the Faculty of Education and to the University. The recipient must be a graduating student and have a consistently good academic record in the professional courses required for the degree. The award is made by Memorial University on the recommendation of the Dean of Education.

**School Rep Seminars 2015**

The third in a series of NLTA School Rep Seminars took place this past fall to once again provide school reps with the information they need to carry out their important roles. Seminars were held in Clarenville on October 16-17, Deer Lake on October 23-24 and Plum Point on November 6-7. Some comments and images from this year's seminars follow.

- "A lot of useful information given out in a fun way! I could use this in my classroom."
- "Be nice if we could get this presentation to more teachers, especially newcomers."





- “Thanks so much. I have a newfound love for the NLTA.”
- “A+ presentation! Please continue the School Rep Seminars in the future and always encourage all school reps to attend... It is such a great learning experience and a great way to renew the knowledge/interest that you have in NLTA. Thanks.”



- “These sessions are extremely beneficial and really get people thinking about what your NLTA can do for you.”
- “Great team of presenters and attendees! Certainly encourages more communication and comfort in asking for help from NLTA.”



### VICTOR ALPHONSUS FARRELL, 1959-2015

It is with great sadness that the families of the late Alphonsus Farrell of Grand Falls-Windsor, NL announce his passing on Saturday, September 26, 2015 at St. Jacques Island, Fortune Bay, NL.

Phonse lived in the now resettled community of Bay Du Nord until he was 10 years old. Being the only child in the community at the time, he was homeschooled by his grandfather who had a major influence in his life. Values that Phonse held as a teacher were values that were passed on to him by his grandfather during that period in his life.

Phonse leaves to mourn his loving wife Donna, his mother Genevieve Farrell of Sydney, Nova Scotia, Uncle Alphonsus Farrell of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Aunt Patricia Hickey of St. Jacques, Newfoundland. Predeceased by stepdaughter Kerrie Lynn Fewer and special Uncle Gerald Farrell. Left with fond and loving memories are sister-in-laws; Jacqueline (Shen) Ellsworth, Catherine (Joseph) Penney, Marilyn (Bob) Shallow, Peggy (Don) Paul, brother-in-laws; Raymond Hiscock, Shawn Hiscock, Rick (Margie) Hiscock, also a large circle of nieces and nephews who loved him dearly. As well as a large circle of friends, and neighbors all over the Island. Funeral arrangements were entrusted to Jim Maidment of Central Funeral Homes.

Phonse's belief in the inherent value and the acknowledged potential of each child regardless of academic background or ability was reminiscent of his grandfather's philosophy. This philosophy was a belief that, in a community you have many people with different strengths and needs, but in the end, everyone was valued and brought a gift to the table.

(Submitted by Asher Cutting, Principal of Avoca Collegiate in Badger.)



Victor Alphonsus Farrell

### *In Memoriam Submission Guidelines*

Submissions to In Memoriam should be a **maximum of 250 to 300 words** and may contain a photo of the deceased. In Memoriams should be submitted within a timely manner – normally within the same school year (if possible) of the death of the teacher. Information may be included on where the deceased lived and taught, their education, accomplishments, community involvement and family information.

It is preferred that all submissions be e-mailed to Lesley-Ann Browne, Editor of *The Bulletin*, at labrowne@nlta.nl.ca. If submitting by mail, please address to: Editor, *The Bulletin*, Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, 3 Kenmount Road, St. John's, NL, A1B 1W1. Submissions may also be faxed to 726-4302 or toll-free at 1-877-711-6582. Please be sure to include a contact name, school or business name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address.

# CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



## NLTA AWARDS 2015-16

### SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD ALLAN BISHOP AWARD BANCROFT AWARD BARNES AWARD

Each year your Association honours several of its members with four prestigious awards. Please take a moment to read about them. If you feel that someone within your school qualifies for nomination for one of these awards for the

2015-16 school year, please contact your school representative who will forward the name and information on this person to your branch president or the appropriate special interest council president.

All nominations for the above Association awards must be completed online from [www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca) and submitted by the deadline indicated in order to be considered.

# CARING AND SHARING FOR THE JANEWAY

A project of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

**FEBRUARY 12, 2016**

## JANEWAY DAY 2016

Every year, Janeway Day in the schools provides an opportunity for students and teachers to help other children. **Since 1986** students and teachers have donated more than **\$1,044,453** to the Janeway.

Here's how to participate in Janeway Day 2015: Ask students and teachers to forego the equivalent of recess monies for one day. That's their donation to the Janeway.

All monies will be forwarded to the Janeway to help the children of Newfoundland and Labrador.



## *Panel on the Status of Public Education*

# The Incredible Journey

by STEVE BROOKS




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**“...the most persistently raised concern regarding the state of the public education system has to do with inadequate resourcing, especially with regards to inclusive education, class size and diversity, mental health and guidance.”**

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Having been a substitute teacher, teacher, school principal, school district administrator and an administrative officer with the NLTA, I have experienced many rewarding and personally enriching moments. On that list, I would have to include my most recent experience travelling with the Panel on the Status of Public Education. President Jim Dinn, Dean Kirk Anderson and Ms. Denise Pike are all extraordinary individuals who bring a broad range of experiences and knowledge of the Newfoundland and Labrador public education system to the table. I have found our long conversations about the educational system and our group reflections on the submissions we have received to date very interesting and enriching.

Our travels have taken us through St. Anthony, Corner Brook, Carbonear, Clarenville, Harbour Breton, Grand Falls-Windsor, Mount Pearl, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador City, Port aux Basques and St. John's. We have heard over sixty public presentations on a wide range of issues concerning our education system. During that time, many more parents, teachers, school councils and special interest groups have made online submissions as well. The Panel is now in the process of collating the information received and working with an independent researcher at Memorial, and will present a report and recommendations to government. The report will also be made public at that time.

The Panel has heard public presentations from parents, teachers, school councils, academics, special interest and community groups. Presentations have included good news stories along with cries for help. In fact, I have been very impressed with the number of parents and special interest groups who have com-

mended the teachers and support staffs in schools. As one agency put it, “It is the system that is the problem, not the people in the system that are the problem.” We have heard concerns from parents, mental health professionals and school councils about the increasing incidents of mental health issues in our schools and teacher fatigue, with specific references to the impact that continuous cuts to teacher allocations, administrative allocations, specialist teacher allocations and the increase in the class size caps set by government have had on the system.

While it is impossible to summarize all the public presentations in this small space, I do want to give readers an idea of the scope and depth of the ideas and concerns that have been brought forward. Without a doubt, the most persistently raised concern regarding the state of the public education system has to do with inadequate resourcing, especially with regards to inclusive education, class size and

(cont'd. on page 10)



Panel on the Status of Education I-r: Denise Pike, Kirk Anderson, James Dinn and Steve Brooks.



The Panel listen to presentations in Port aux Basques.

diversity, mental health and guidance. Parents, councils and community groups spoke about a two-tiered education system in which the social-emotional needs of students are only considered in a budgetary framework. One prominent social activist made the point that, "Allocations of support for students with new needs must be additional allocations, not taken from other children." Other groups talked about schools being a social good that bring long-term benefits to children, parents and communities and that they cannot simply be seen from a business model or narrow educational outcomes. Another advocate stated, "Placing children in classrooms without adequate supports is exclusionary because they do not feel as if they belong." Professionals in the field of health care and law enforcement commented on the rise in behavioural concerns, mental health issues and substance abuse, especially with younger children. A prominent member of one of the First Nations communities commented, "It is atrocious that there is not a guidance counsellor in every school." Representatives of the business community raised concerns over the decline in career guidance and workplace readiness.

Parents of children with special needs and special interest groups spoke about the long term societal cost of caring for adults with special needs when the opportunity exists to help those individuals as students and children. By failing to invest in adequate resourcing and programming for students with special needs the government is creating a future larger budgetary cost to the tax payers of the province. As one parent put it, "We must allocate to the need not the population." Likewise, a community leader noted that we either pay for the supports for these children now when it can make a huge difference or later when they are adults.

It has also become apparent through the Panel's meetings that there are a large number of special interest and community groups that want to work with schools. In fact, during one session a spon-

taneous discussion erupted on how schools used to be more integrated with their communities and that this provided many social advantages that cannot be measured in standardized tests. It has been expressed a number of times that school/community partnerships depend upon school administrators and guidance counsellors having the time to make this a priority in their schools.

The Panel has also heard numerous presentations regarding the need for more trained music, physical education, technology integration and librarian teachers. Surveys were introduced that indicated that over 90% of parents feel physical and health education are important, while only 70% are happy with the current delivery of those subjects. I was also interested to learn that studies show school systems with well-resourced libraries along with trained teacher-librarians also have higher student achievement results.

Other issues raised multiple times in different communities by parents, school councils, academics and community groups included:

- **Nutrition.** The need for provincially enforced school food guidelines. It was reported that in some cafeterias, healthy food options may appear on the menu but are either over-priced or unavailable for purchase.
- **Small schools.** It is believed that small schools are invisible to the policy makers. Councils raised concerns about internet bandwidth and poor CDLI connections. Likewise, the lack of access to essential services and programming such as guidance counsellors, speech-language pathologists along with occupational therapists and addiction counsellors through community health were noted. In fact, the Panel was informed by occupational therapists that if the Saskatchewan ratios, not the best in the country, were followed, there would be 20 occupational therapists assigned to schools in this province; currently there are none. A call was made for more work to be done on the development of good multi-aged curriculum documents.



NLTA President James Dinn speaks at a Panel presentation in Mount Pearl.



Music SIC President Kathy Conway-Ward delivers a presentation on the need for additional music teachers in the public education system.

- **Large Schools.** Parents expressed concern over the use of large schools for education and spoke about overcrowding, the overuse of portable classrooms and unsanitary cafeterias when double or triple lunch periods are scheduled. One school council observed that “Super-sized schools are not necessarily super schools.”

- **Technology Integration.** Teachers and school administrators raised concerns about the lack of funding available for replacing and repairing damaged and obsolete technology. Many in attendance at the meetings were surprised to learn that these costs were expected to be covered by the school and are not part of the maintenance budget.

- **School board elections.** It was raised at several meetings that the current school board trustees for the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District are government appointees and that may impact on their ability to operate independently. Several groups called for school board elections. The Panel was also informed that Newfoundland and Labrador has the largest average school board size, by student population, in the country. This was cited as a concern, since distant school boards are not connected to the communities they serve.

- **Curriculum.** The Panel heard many different points of view regarding the state of the current curriculum. Concern was raised that it does not properly address the realities of multi-aged classrooms. Others felt that the curriculum was narrowed by the importance placed upon criterion referenced testing – some subjects are becoming more important than others. With regards to high school, concerns were raised by the lack of flexibility in the curriculum, especially in smaller schools. The Other Required Credits (ORC) requirement was seen as too restrictive and prevented students from pursuing subject areas of interest. The math, social studies and science curriculum was also raised in a number of sessions, with a call for a return to a more traditional

instructional approach, along with more emphasis on financial literacy. Concerns were also raised by First Nations groups about the need for teachers to be able to speak fluently in the native tongue and a curriculum that respects First Nations culture. Apprenticeships, co-operative education, vocational and alternate school models were also endorsed.

- **Evaluation.** It was raised more than once by parents that they are concerned with the lowering of expectations when it comes to deadlines and missed evaluations. Individuals have commented that they feel this lowering of standards is having a negative impact on students’ regard for school and adversely affects their preparation for the world beyond the school doors.

- **Community schools.** This was a theme throughout several presentations that spoke about the important place schools have in the community and school as a public good. It was indicated that the degree to which a student feels comfortable within their school and with the relationships in the school and community positively impacts student achievement.



A member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary presents at the Panel on Public Education in St. John’s.

While this list by no means represents the full scope and depth of the public presentations, it does give a very good indication of the degree to which parents, teachers, school councils, academics and special interest groups have engaged in the consultative process. It was stated at one meeting how refreshing it was to have a full and open discussion regarding the state of public education in the province. I have come away from the process so far feeling that the general population has a very positive regard for teachers and others in the education system, but are concerned about the impact cutbacks and system design are having on education. It is clear that people care about the education system and are concerned about the lack of resources and vision.

.....  
Steve Brooks is Assistant Executive Director of the NLTA.



September 2015

# Funded Status of the Teachers' Pension Plan

by DON ASH

The information in this document is provided in accordance with the following resolution which was carried at the NLTA's 2009 BGM: *That the NLTA provide annually to the membership the estimated position of the funding of the Teachers' Pension Plan, such to include the estimated percentage of funding of the plan and the return on investments for the previous year.*

## Background

An actuarial valuation of the TPP is conducted every three years, as per legislative requirements. Such a valuation involves a detailed analysis of all the liabilities of the fund (i.e. the present value of pension benefits owing to every active and retired teacher, based on projected final average earnings) in comparison to the assets in the fund. This analysis requires a number of assumptions re future experience of the Plan; e.g. projected fund earnings on investments, inflation rates, salary increases, life expectancy rates, age of retirement, etc. The actuarial valuation then provides the "funded ratio" of the Plan, which is simply the Plan's assets expressed as a percentage of the total liabilities.

The regular triennial actuarial valuation of the TPP was last completed effective as at August 31, 2012. An actuarial valuation as at August 31, 2015 is currently underway by the plan's actuary, the results of which will be communicated to teachers when available. Between actuarial valuations, an estimate of the funded level of the Plan is possible from the year-end financial statements of the Consolidated Pension Fund. These statements are prepared by the Auditor General as at December 31 of each year, and include the value of the fund at December 31 and an estimate of the liabilities based on a projection from the previous actuarial valuation.

## Funded Status of the TPP

As at August 31, 2012, the funded status of the TPP was 52.5%. The return on investments net of expenses for the year ending August 31, 2012 was 3.8%.

As at December 31, 2014, the estimated funded status for the TPP was 63.7%. The return on investments for the year ending December 31, 2014, was 12.0%.

**Note: The funding ratio above does not reflect the changes to assets, liabilities, or actuarial assumptions as a result of the TPP Reform Agreement reached in April 2015.**

## Prior Years

The following tables summarize the historical funding level of the Teachers' Pension Plan and the investment performance of the Fund for the last few years.

Of particular note is the infusion of \$1.953 B into the Teachers' Pension Plan in 2006 which brought the funded ratio from 26.4% in August 2003 to 82.2% in August 2006. The market crash of 2008 and growing liabilities decreased the funding ratio to 64.3% by August 2009's valuation and the funded ratio further declined to 52.5% by August 2012's valuation.

Despite positive returns of 8.9% in 2009, 11.6% in 2010, 10.8% in 2012, 22.4% in 2013, and 12.0% in 2014, factors such as members living longer and a greater number of retirees than actives in the Plan have caused the liabilities to continue to grow resulting in an estimated funded ratio of 63.7% in December 2014.

It was within this backdrop that the TPP Reform Agreement was reached with Government in April 2015. That Agreement and the accompanying legislation, which came into effect September 1, 2015, are part of a plan which includes joint trusteeship and a funding policy designed to achieve 100% funding

over the next 30 years. The NLTA and Government are currently finalizing the formal Joint Sponsorship Agreement, which will include the Teachers' Pension Corporation framework. Legislation is then anticipated in the winter/spring session of the House of Assembly to establish the TPP Corporation.

In conclusion, the funded ratio is impacted by a large number of factors, not the least of which is investment performance. As pension liabilities are by their very nature long term, it is important to take

a long term view of funding performance, as teachers and government have taken in our TPP Reform Agreement.

Annual updates on funded ratio and investment performance will continue to be provided to teachers each year as per the BGM resolution.

.....  
Don Ash is Executive Director of the NLTA and NLTA Representative for the Pooled Pension Investment Committee.

### Teachers' Pension Plan – Funding Level

	Aug. 31, 2003 <sup>1</sup>	Aug. 31, 2006 <sup>1</sup>	Aug. 31, 2009 <sup>1</sup>	Aug. 31, 2012 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Market Value of Assets</b>	779,390,000	2,750,940,000	2,380,380,000	2,286,180,000
<b>Actuarial Liability</b>	2,952,440,000	3,344,950,000	3,702,190,000	4,354,640,000
<b>Unfunded Liability</b>	(2,173,050,000)	(594,010,000)	(1,321,810,000)	(2,068,460,000)
<b>Funded Ratio</b>	26.4%	82.2%	64.3%	52.5%

	Dec. 31, 2012 <sup>2</sup>	Dec. 31, 2013 <sup>2</sup>	Dec. 31, 2014 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Market Value of Assets</b>	2,408,298,000	2,828,233,000	2,964,850,000
<b>Actuarial Liability</b>	4,254,195,000 <sup>e</sup>	4,608,553,000 <sup>e</sup>	4,653,299,000 <sup>e</sup>
<b>Unfunded Liability</b>	(1,845,897,000) <sup>e</sup>	(1,780,320,000) <sup>e</sup>	(1,688,449,000) <sup>e</sup>
<b>Funded Ratio</b>	56.6%	61.4%	63.7%

<sup>1</sup>Source: TPP Actuarial Valuation

(Note: The next actuarial valuation of the TPP will be as of Aug. 31, 2015.)

<sup>2</sup>Source: Year-end Financial Statements – Consolidated Pension Fund

<sup>e</sup>Estimate

NL Pooled Pension Fund – Investment Performance							
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 (to Sept. 30)
-21.0%	8.9%	11.6%	-4.2%	10.8%	22.4%	12.0%	2.8%



# Substitute Teachers – Things to Know

by MIRIAM SHEPPARD

Substitute teachers are members of the NLTA and as such enjoy all the rights and privileges of membership. They are eligible to hold office within the Association, to be a delegate to the Biennial General Meeting and to seek advice and representation from the Association. Other topics substitutes should be aware of include:

## Group Insurance

As a substitute teacher, you are eligible for coverage under the NLTA Group Insurance Plan's substitute teacher program. In order to join, you need to apply to the plan within 31 days of your first teaching day in a given school year. For substitute teachers who apply later than this, their applications will be subject to evidence of insurability. In order to maintain coverage in the following school year, you will need to have taught for at least ten days the previous year and at least one day before November 30 of the following school year. Payment of premiums must be made via bank deductions. New substitute teachers are encouraged to contact the Association after their first day of employment to discuss group insurance coverage.

## Pension

All substitute teachers participate in the Government Money Purchase Pension Plan (GMPP). This plan is administered by Great West Life and the contribution rate is 5% of salary, matched by government. The GMPP is a defined contribution plan which is similar to an RRSP in that investments and earned interest determine the benefit level upon retirement. Substitute teachers who obtain replacement or permanent positions should consider transferring their GMPP service to the regular Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP), which is a defined benefit plan. Teachers in this position should contact the Pensions Division by email at [pensions@gov.nl.ca](mailto:pensions@gov.nl.ca), providing their name, address and social insurance number, to request a transfer of their funds from the GMPP to the TPP.

## Pay Scale

Substitute teachers are paid according to Schedule B of the Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements. However, when a substitute teacher replaces the same regular teacher for four or more days, as per Clause 49.02 (Clause 46.02 in Labrador West), the substitute teacher will be paid according to the regular teacher salary scale. If a paid holiday occurs during a substitute teacher's contract period, the teacher will receive pay for that holiday. For teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are three paid holidays: Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day and Victoria Day. A paid holiday is considered to occur during a contract period if the substitute teacher is working on the teaching day immediately before and after the holiday.

## EI Eligibility

For the purposes of Employment Insurance (EI), one full day of teaching is reported as eight hours of insurable employment. This has not changed despite changes last year to the NLESD pay stubs. The number of hours required in the qualifying period to be eligible for regular EI benefits varies from 420 - 700 for those who have been in the workforce for the past two years. Under existing EI regulations, 910 hours are required for those who are considered to be "new entrants" or "re-entrants" to the workforce. It is important for all teachers to be aware that, under existing EI regulations, teachers are often not eligible for regular EI benefits during the non-teaching periods (Christmas and Easter breaks, July and August) except under certain exceptions. Teachers who do receive regular EI benefits during the non-teaching periods must be actively seeking work in fields of employment other than teaching during those periods. If you are in receipt of regular EI benefits during the summer based on hours of employment accumulated as a teacher, you may become ineligible for benefits once you accept a contract for a teaching position that commences in September. You must

advise Service Canada immediately once you accept such a contract.

### Sick Leave

Substitute teachers who accumulate 50 days of substitute teaching during a school year and are unable to work during a contract period due to illness are entitled to access any paid sick leave they have accumulated. Once a teacher has 50 days of substituting service, he/she is also entitled to retroactive payment of sick leave back to their first teaching day of that school year for any days missed due to illness during a contract period. It is therefore very important for substitute teachers to maintain careful records of their teaching contracts and any days missed during a contract as a result of sickness. Teachers may only access sick leave they have accumulated through the formula outlined in Article 15 of the Provincial Collective Agreement (Article 27 of the Labrador West contract). For the purpose of accessing paid sick leave, an illness-related absence is considered to have occurred during a contract period if it happened after the teacher had commenced work during that contract period.

For more detailed information on these and other substitute teacher topics, please refer to the Provincial and Labrador West Collective Agreements, Infosheet #13 – Substitute Teacher Membership and Benefits, the NLTA Group Insurance Program, the Teachers' Guide to Employment Insurance, and the Substitute Teacher Information page, all of which can be found in the Publications section of the NLTA website ([www.nlta.nl.ca](http://www.nlta.nl.ca)).

*Miriam Sheppard is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA.*

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# *The Benefits of Having Long Term Disability Insurance* Before You “Opt Out”, Contact Us

by PERRY DOWNEY

**Q.** I opted out of the Long Term Disability Insurance in the past, can I re-apply?

**Q.** Why should I have LTD coverage? I heard that you have to be “next to dead” to receive the benefits.

**Q.** I am getting close to retiring. Should I opt out of my Long Term Disability Insurance?

These questions and comments and others regarding the Long Term Disability (LTD) coverage have often been asked and made by teachers over the years in staffrooms, during discussions with colleagues and as they approach their retirement. For some, answering these questions and taking action to opt out of coverage without first seeking additional information has sometimes proven to be very costly to the individual teacher and to their family. However, the answers to these questions are not a simple “yes” or “no” because there are other factors that must be considered when providing an answer and for individuals to consider when deciding what to do.

## **What is Long Term Disability Insurance?**

Long Term Disability (LTD) Insurance (formally called Salary Continuance) is an insurance that is intended to provide, as a benefit payment, a percentage of income to an insured member in the event that a diagnosed medical disability prevents the insured member from performing his/her duties as a teacher beyond the expiry of paid sick leave benefits.

Any new teacher under the age of 40 when first employed in a term, replacement or permanent contract would be automatically enrolled in this coverage. Any new teacher who is 40 years of age or older when first employed must apply for coverage and provide proof of medical insurability to the

underwriter of the policy. The underwriter is given the right to determine whether or not the teacher would be accepted for coverage based on the medical evidence provided. If you have any questions regarding your coverage, please contact our Plan Administrator, Johnson Inc. at 1-800-563-1528.

## **What do I need to do if I am off work on sick leave and getting close to exhausting my sick leave credits?**

LTD insurance does not automatically “kick in” or begin when an insured member exhausts their sick leave credits. Insured members **MUST** apply for the benefit and are strongly encouraged to request an application form from the NLTA Group Insurance Program Plan Administrator, Johnson Inc., within 30 to 60 days of exhausting their sick leave, or immediately for those who have fewer than 30 days of sick leave remaining. Members must also note that proof of medical disability must be provided from a specialist in the field of the diagnosis, if such a report is available. A referral from a family doctor or general practitioner to a specialist to obtain such a diagnosis and medical proof is strongly advisable.

When all sections of the application are completed and the necessary medical documentation has been provided, the insurance underwriter will complete a medical adjudication and determine whether or not benefits are payable as per the insurance policy. Detailed and conclusive medical information must be provided by a specialist to the underwriter during the application process confirming that the individual has a medical disability that will continue beyond the individual’s expiry of sick leave.

## **What level of benefits can I anticipate if I am approved for LTD?**

If an LTD claim is approved, the current amount of monthly benefit is 66% of gross monthly earnings,

up to a maximum of \$8,000 per month. However, if an insured member is entitled to receive income from other sources, such as Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) or Teacher Pension Plan Disability (TPPD), these amounts are deducted from the LTD benefit to help offset the cost to the LTD Plan. The total income from all sources cannot exceed 85% of net earnings on the date of expiration of sick leave. Note: The LTD benefit is non-taxable because the employer does not pay any portion of the premium, but CPPD and TPPD are taxed at source.

#### How long am I eligible to receive LTD benefits? "OWN" versus "ANY" Occupation

The maximum period for which benefits are payable to insured members who have been medically deemed to be totally disabled from performing the essential duties of their own teaching position is 24 months. Benefits payable beyond 24 months can be maintained until age 60 if a medical adjudication by the underwriter confirms a total disability from any occupation for which an insured member is or may become qualified by education, training, and/or experience.

#### If I were injured while working as a teacher, am I entitled to receive sick leave and LTD benefits?

Under the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act*, any injury sustained by a worker in the province during the performance of their job, where the employer and/or an attending physician becomes aware of the injury, MUST be reported to Worker's Compensation within 72 hours. For all "lost-time accident" injuries, except those sustained in a motor vehicle accident, the injured worker is disqualified from receiving paid sick leave and will receive compensation from the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission (WHSCC).

Given the current salary cap on which WHSCC benefits are calculated, most teachers will experience as much as a 45% to a 55% reduction in their "take home pay" while in receipt of a WHSCC benefit. This substantial reduction in take home pay often creates undue and unnecessary financial hardships on individuals and/or families.

However, as of September 2007, the Group Insurance Trustees introduced a "Worker's Compensation – LTD Top-up Benefit" provided under the LTD policy. As a result, if an insured member is injured on the job, the amount that they receive from WHSCC will be "topped-up" to 85% of their pre-injury net income. Pre-injury net income is

(cont'd. on page 18)

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determined as follows: Gross Income - (Income Tax + Canada Pension Plan premiums + Employment Insurance premiums). For many insured teachers who are at the top of their salary scale, this can mean that they will receive more financial assistance from their LTD insurance than they would from WHSCC.

**In addition to receiving my LTD benefits, am I also entitled to receive Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits?**

In accordance with the EI Regulations, Long Term Disability benefits are not considered a “source of income” since it is a private insurance for which only the member has paid premiums. Therefore, if you have sufficient insurable hours and earnings to qualify for EI Sickness Benefits, a teacher is entitled to receive both benefits at the same time. However, EI Sickness Benefits are only payable for up to 15 weeks “while school is in session”. This means that if a teacher qualifies to receive the EI Sickness Benefits, they are entitled to receive up to 75 school days of benefits. They would not be entitled to receive EI Sickness Benefits when school is closed for Christmas and Easter holidays or during the summer vacation period.

**In answer to the first question that was stated at the beginning of this article: I opted out of the Long Term Disability Insurance in the past, can I re-apply?**

YES. If you are a teacher who previously opted out of the Long Term Disability Insurance, we would strongly encourage you to re-apply in order to have insurance on your income beyond the expiration of paid sick leave, as well as for the added protection and benefits associated with an injury on the job. This is especially important for teachers who are at an early stage in their careers.

Any new teacher under age 40 who is hired into a permanent, term or replacement contract is automatically enrolled in the LTD policy. Anyone over the age of 40 who enters the profession for the first time in a permanent, term, or replacement contract must apply for coverage.

Applications are available by contacting the Plan Administrator, Johnson Inc. at 1-800-563-1528. Completed applications will be forwarded to the underwriter of the policy and approval or rejection of the application will be determined by medical staff based on medical evidence provided and/or requested.

Second question asked at the beginning: **Why should I have LTD coverage? I heard that you have to be “next to dead” to receive the benefits.**

As stated earlier in this article, LTD is an insurance that you pay to protect you and your family from financial hardship in the event that you are deemed to be medically disabled from your own occupation as a teacher by a specialist in the field of your diagnosed illness or injury. The medical evidence that is submitted to the underwriter to support your application is provided by your own medical specialist. Therefore, it is imperative that your medical specialist provide evidence that supports your disability. One does not have to be “next to dead” to receive the benefits. If there is sufficient medical proof of disability provided by the specialist, the claim is approved. If there is not sufficient medical proof to support a disability, the teacher will be notified in writing of the reason for the denial of their application and the teacher is strongly encouraged to forward the written notification of denial to their medical specialist for review and response.

**Third question asked at the beginning: I am getting close to retiring, should I opt out of my Long Term Disability Insurance?**

Given the impact that WHSCC has on the amount of income that an injured teacher would receive in benefits from Workers’ Compensation, we strongly advise ALL insured members to maintain their LTD coverage until they retire or until they reach age 60, whichever occurs first. LTD coverage and benefits cease at age 60. Also, a teacher who retires in June of any year will only pay LTD premiums to the end of June and will not have any further LTD premiums deducted from their summer holdback pay during July and August.

**I**f you wish to have more details regarding the coverage and benefits associated with the LTD policy or if you have any additional questions or inquiries, please feel free to contact Johnson Inc. at 1-800-563-1528.

*Perry Downey is an Administrative Officer with Programs and Services at the NLTA.*

# Clarence Riggs Memoirs of a Teaching Career

by ANDREW RIGGS

There's a letter of recommendation I had given to me. It was signed by Reverend Llewellyn Colley in 1936 – a letter of recommendation provided to my grandfather when he started teaching. This November he turned 100. Needless to say, the teaching profession has changed much over the years, but it is interesting to learn about the way it once was, so many years ago.

My grandfather, Clarence Riggs, was born in Bulls Cove, on the Burin Peninsula, in 1915. He told me of the beginnings of his career, attending Memorial College in 1931 and graduating with a First Grade Certificate. He started teaching in a one-room schoolhouse on Sagona Island, which was only accessible by boat, and his starting salary was \$25 a month. He then moved back to the Burin Peninsula teaching in places like Frenchman's Cove and Point-au-Gaul. His memories included walking across 'barrisways' to get to the one-room schoolhouses and playing games of soccer which they called 'football' in the European tradition. He remembers that these schoolhouses were heated by peat moss, which produced a fine white ash after burning.

After a stop in Burgeo, he taught in the town of Terra Nova, where he met his future wife (and my grandmother) in the train station. After they married, further teaching assignments brought him to Eastport, and further by boat to Wesleyville. He then had to walk to a one-room school in Pound Cove where he was provided with a teaching assistant. It was here in 1949 he remembered Confederation with Canada, and he noted that many of the residents couldn't read or write, nor remember where they were born or what age they were. He had to help residents fill in Old-Age Pension and Baby Bonus Forms. Payment for helping with these documents was usually fish or wild game. The first purchase people made from the incoming Canadian Government money was usually a large stove for their homes. The Gerald S. Doyle news was an

important part of local interest, and everyone listened to the radio. Generally, only a few people had one, so they had to gather in groups at homes that owned one. Replacement batteries for a radio cost \$8, which was an extraordinary sum of money for most people. Black and white televisions came much later. There were also many times people gathered just to tell funny stories and tall tales. Because of these experiences in rural settings, he believes that one of the reasons for the characteristic Newfoundland wit was that most of their entertainment was self-created.

He recalled that slate and chalk for students was before his time, and that the basic school supplies were paper 'scribblers', and remembered a book called 'hygiene', which stated that 'milk was the perfect food'.


After this, he had stints teaching in Cartwright and Northwest River in Labrador. It all concluded at where he lives today, the town of Glovertown, my grandmother's home community. He retired in 1972.

Andrew Riggs is an IRT Teacher at St. John Bosco School in St. John's.



Clarence Riggs

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# Compassion: a Motivator for Teacher Action

by JUDY BERANGER

Definitions of compassion abound throughout the literature. Such definitions extol the quality of caring and being supportive when someone is hurt or troubled – regardless of how one may think or feel about that person. Author Paul Gilbert describes “compassion” as a sensitivity to suffering with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent that suffering. It is not an uncommon circumstance to have someone act in a compassionate manner towards someone they do not love, or towards someone who may appear as quite unlovable. Ultimately, our own lived experience will determine how open we are to expressing compassion. Developing our ability to be compassionate includes working toward letting go of old hurts and sadness.

Compassion appears in many contexts. Four-year-old Timmy can teach us by example. His neighbor had recently lost his wife of fifty years and grieved daily. Tim noticed his neighbor crying and told his Mom he was going next door to help him. He went into the man’s yard, climbed up on his lap and just sat there. When he came home Timmy’s Mom asked him how he had helped their neighbor. “I just helped him cry” was his reply.

## How would you rate your school?

Researcher Deborah Orr reported that an online social psychology course, with its challenge to “spend 24 hours in the most compassionate way possible”, was rated as being the most popular course in the world in 2014! Teachers are often considered exemplary models for compassion and every school has compassion in action to some degree. On a scale of one to ten how would you rate your school? How do you handle rumors, gossip, disrespect, irate colleagues, irate parents, or irate students? Teacher wellness is at its best when compassion has positively influenced school culture. For those who are interested in reducing and even preventing conflict, growing the ability to be compassionate is one of the most dependable strategies. In the words of Goethe: “Treat people as though they were what they ought to be, and you help them

become what they are capable of being.”

Author Dacher Keltner says that compassion is an evolved part of human nature, rooted in our brain and biology, and ready to be cultivated for the greater good. Scientists tell us that the practice of compassion can change our brain and give us much more control over our thoughts and lives. The mind and body are an interconnected system: making positive choices in one area of your life will directly benefit other areas as well.

Do we treat ourselves with compassion? A vital ingredient in teacher well-being is self-compassion, a basic practice of treating ourselves with acceptance, kindness, and gentleness—much as we would treat another person for whom we care deeply. We are more likely to be compassionate with others if we are compassionate within our own self and family.

Murtha, a teacher for close to twenty years and typically a positive person, became negative and reactive, often angry and blaming other teachers, her administration, the school board, her students and life in general. Most of her colleagues started to avoid her while others were drawn to her like magnets. Sophia, one of her colleagues, felt real compassion for Murtha and asked her if anything was wrong. Sophia continued with her compassionate actions and only once stepped into the negativity, quickly pulling herself out. Murtha was insulting when Sophia pulled away but Sophia wouldn’t give up. Murtha eventually responded to Sophia’s compassionate manner explaining that a relationship in her life had gone sour, her dad was dying, her teenager was in trouble, a student was giving her a hard time, the principal was looking at her strangely, her reports weren’t ready and on it went. Murtha was also feeling guilty because she was aware that a couple of students were coming to school every day without lunch and she had been unresponsive to their plight.

Weaved in with compassion was Sophia’s ability to forgive and let go of Murtha’s hurtful comments. She remained compassionate without expectation. Sometimes the person who truly needs compassion

is the one who appears to be less deserving. Even Aesop's children's stories remind us that no matter how small – every act of kindness has value. Sophia's compassionate manner was a catalyst for Murtha to identify that she needed to seek supports.

### Principles of Compassion

Resiliency research by Wolpow et al, inspired the development of six principles for a compassionate approach. Put simply they include:

- 1) Always empower, never disempower;
- 2) Provide unconditional positive regard;
- 3) Maintain high expectations;
- 4) Check assumptions, observe and question;
- 5) Be a relationship coach;
- 6) Provide guided opportunities for participation.

I would suggest the addition of a seventh principle, namely:

- 7) Self-care and ongoing reflection on the effects of our actions and choices. This principle is an ethical responsibility and allows us to grow compassion and support other people while integrating the other principles into our daily actions. We move from expecting other people to respond first, to taking the initiative to be the one who responds regardless of the situation.

An example of compassion comes from a couple who wanted to rekindle their relationship through counselling. When asked for examples of behaviours that had worked for them in the past they identified expressions of compassion – a sense of knowing each other well enough to respect when either of them needed to be held or simply given some time and space. They came to appreciate again the importance of a smile, eye contact when speaking to each other, kind words, gentle touch and noticing the small but mighty acts of caring. They resolved to commit to continuing these compassionate actions, especially when things were tough. Author John Powell said it well: "It is an absolute certainty that no one can know his own beauty or perceive a sense of his own worth until it has been reflected back to him in the mirror of another loving, caring human being."

Researcher Kristin Neff asserts that mindfulness (the practice of paying attention to what happens inside and around you with a nonjudgmental attitude) and being aware of the shared suffering of others are both important components of self-compassion. Although it is difficult to separate which of these components is most important in wellbeing, all appear to help decrease self-criticism, increase a sense of connection with others, and promote better emotional responses. Self-compassion allows us the emotional courage to move into areas of deep suffering and pain. I witnessed this tremendous ability to be compassion-

ate through the courageous acts of my dear Father as he endured physical and emotional suffering during the many months leading up to his recent passing.

David Pollay, in *The Law of the Garbage Truck*, suggests that some people can be like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, anger, and disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they look for a place to dump it. If you let them, they'll dump it on you. A commitment to self-compassion requires a willingness to implement your own self-care strategies and seek support when facing the prospect of becoming someone else's garbage disposal site!

Author Samantha Gentrup suggests that when we are actively compassionate we:

- Promote and model courteous behavior.
- Provide encouragement, smile and mean it. Small gestures can have a strong effect on energy and mood.
- Cultivate a deep appreciation of others by taking time to get to know and understand them, asking carefully thought-out questions, and listening carefully.
- Be mindful of anyone who seems to be suffering in any way.
- Practice empathetic listening. Pay attention to nuances, nonverbal communication, and body language. Consider what is not said. Imagine that everyone you come in contact with couldn't hear your words. They could only understand the messages you wanted to convey through your actions – all non-verbal. How would you communicate your message? Would it change from the message of your words or would it be the same?
- Listen rather than interrupting with "good advice."

We all have strengths, much to learn, and a need to belong. Our ability to break an unhealthy habit or turn off an old tape can happen if we choose. Things change when we do.

In the words of Viktor Frankl: "We must never forget that we may find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation. For what then matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at its best, which is to transform a personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement. When we are no longer able to change a situation we are challenged to change ourselves."

It is a realistic and sometimes challenging goal to strive to live each day in the way we want to be remembered. Aldous Huxley, asked on his deathbed to sum up what he had learned in his eventful life, said, "It's embarrassing to tell you this, but it seems to come down mostly to just learning to be kinder."

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Judy Beranger is a Wellness and Employee Assistance Coordinator with the EAP for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Judy (ext. 265) or Gail Carroll (ext. 242).



# SITI 2015 Continues to Build Meaningful Connections

by DAVID GILL

Does technology influence us or do we influence technology? Do we develop technology to help elevate societal ills or is technology yet another value-laden means to control and influence the decisions individuals and organizations make on a daily basis? Are technologies merely neutral tools without the ability to influence the action of its users? These and many other questions seem to lie just below the surface of our decisions to utilize educational technologies in our individual classrooms and schools, but we seldom stop to think about the consequences of our choices when integrating them into our lessons. Beyond the familiar digital technologies we associate with shiny new devices and the latest apps, technology surrounds and enables almost every aspect of our modern existence. From the clothes we wear to protect us from the elements to the elaborate communication systems we have developed, we truly live a technology-enabled existence. But how can we, as teachers, begin to help our students decipher and understand our world in such a way that they can become technologically literate and find a voice while becoming leaders? The answer, TESIC believes, lies in one simple concept – community.

We often hear from various sources about the latest panacea for the problems plaguing our education system. Funny thing is, many times these perceived problems are elusively vague and hard to define in any meaningfully measurable way. Teachers on the other hand, know the day-to-day issues and problems of our system, more intimately than many external observers would sometimes care to admit. Like any endeavour, there will always be issues and problems, but one-shot cures, technological or otherwise, offer little in the way of genuine solutions as they are rarely based in the local context of schools and communities. So, if there is no single silver bullet for education, what are we left with? TESIC and its members believe we're left with a multitude of small silver bullets, approximately 6000 silver bullets affecting real change in the lives of

our students, schools and local communities every day. Connecting like-minded teachers through the concerted effort to build a stronger educational technology and technology education community in our province has been the mandate for TESIC over its long history and the SITI conferences are just the latest manifestation.

For the past two summers the Technology Special Interest Council (TESIC) of the NLTA has hosted a Summer Institute of Technology Integration (SITI) in partnership with Memorial University and various other educational and industry sponsors and supporters. As the institute has developed over the last two years, the community support behind it has also started to grow. With great feedback from our first iteration in the summer of 2014 the TESIC executive was determined to offer the institute again for the summer of 2015. As we had made many connections with partners, vendors, sponsors, participants and presenters the executive feared we would lose the momentum and spirit of collaboration that was evident in the first event if a second iteration was not offered. Within this context, planning for the second event literally started before the closing session for SITI 2014 was finished. But even the most thoroughly planned event can face unexpected challenges. In an ironic technological twist of events leading up to the opening sessions for SITI 2015, the misuse and interpretation of a technological system for monitoring water quality at Memorial University tested the strength of our community's resolve – a test that was passed with ease.

During the SITI 2015 social, on the night prior to the first sessions with everything set up and ready at the Faculty of Education, the executive was informed that water quality levels at the University had been found wanting. This caused a chain of events to unfold that quickly shut down the University for the next three days – leaving SITI 2015 without a venue! For many organizations this would not have ended well, but because of TESIC's network of partners we quickly found a new home. Through the Faculty

of Education's connections they were successful in brokering a new partnership between TESIC and the Marine Institute that saw SITI 2015 literally move venues in less than four hours the next morning, in such manner that many participants remarked that other than a short delay to the start, the transition was seamless. As one participant put it, "with all the obstacles TESIC faced (Memorial closing due to lead in the water and cancelled/delayed flights), I was thoroughly impressed at how well it was organized as well as how informed each TESIC personnel and volunteer was". Another participant also remarked, "I congratulate you for pulling off a major change of venue! What an amazing recovery and what a statement about the organizing group for this conference". This type of impression was in no small part the result of the immense collaborative effort of the greater TESIC community including our partners, sponsors, vendors, facilitators and volunteers.

So what did SITI 2015 look like on the freshly shifted ground? SITI 2015 was a three-day (July 31 – August 2, 2015) comprehensive professional development and learning opportunity that offered 37 individual sessions running concurrently in eight streams every day. Some topics covered included social media and education, digital game-based learning, 3D printing and design, assistive technologies, Google Apps for Education, and the integration of mobile educational technologies. These sessions were facilitated by a group of dedicated and skilled volunteers, including teachers from across our province, Department of Education and CDLI personnel, industry leaders and Apple Distinguished Educators. Not only was this conference an opportunity to brush up on new skills, but also a time of great networking for our community of like-minded educational leaders. As TESIC advertised SITI 2015 nationwide this year, we were also delighted to host participants from as far away as British Columbia and their voices only added to the conversation as

they remarked at the similar opportunities and challenges that we all face across the country. Regardless of where participants came from or what they taught, the message they gave the TESIC executive was very clear – support for the meaningful integration of technology is needed and SITI 2015 played its part in filling that need in a very professional manner.

As with all special interest councils, the executive members of TESIC are volunteers and put in countless hours of their own time organizing professional development opportunities and advocating on behalf of their membership. In the coming weeks, the current TESIC executive will be holding their final professional development and learning opportunity for this term, the bi-annual general meeting (BGM). This year the BGM will be held on December 3 and 4 in St. John's at the Capital Hotel and Faculty of Education. At this event TESIC will again host a full day of leading-edge sessions on educational technology and technology education and will end the day with the election of a new executive. This may sound cliché, but we all are the NLTA and we all are TESIC. Engaging in the process is the only way you can guarantee your voice is heard. How people engage in the process will be different for everyone and may change with time. One participant from SITI 2015 remarked, "I will attend this conference every year and hope to present in the future". Maybe this upcoming BGM is your time to facilitate a session, ask a question, run for an executive position or most important of all, vote. Regardless of your participation, TESIC hopes to see many of its members and new members at the BGM so we can continue to strengthen and build our community for the future together.

For a summary of events, sessions and sponsors from SITI 2015 please visit: <http://siti.tesic.org> and <https://sitimun2015.sched.org/>.

For more information on TESIC's upcoming BGM please visit [www.tesic.org](http://www.tesic.org) or <https://tesicbgmun2015.sched.org>.

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*David Gill is Vice-President of TESIC. He is currently the Assistant Professor of Technology Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland.*



**Jamie Roebottom** facilitating a session



Participants engaged in a Minecraft for Education session.



# From a Whisper to a Scream – Keeping the Conversation Going

by PATRICK HICKEY

The tides have been turning in Newfoundland and Labrador. Mental Health is no longer a taboo whispered behind cupped hands and stuck behind embarrassed lips. The momentum has been building, and the province is ready to end the stigma surrounding mental health, to educate ourselves on the matter, and to help those who need help getting access to appropriate services. This desire and need was ambitiously met by Holy Heart High School during the past school year, and I challenge you to identify and in some cases to continue meeting this need in your own schools.

In May of 2014, I began to realize just how many people around me were dealing with various mental health issues. I shamefully recognized, that these people who I cared about were suffering, and I was doing absolutely nothing to help them. I knew something had to be done. Boyd Perry answered my call.

One of two guidance counsellors in my high school, Mr. Perry welcomed me one sunny afternoon when I approached him, ‘needing to talk’. While he may have been expecting me to table some traditional academic or social conflicts I had been dealing with, his response when I brought forward the idea of attacking the stigma attached to mental health was admirable; “Yes”. All he said was “yes”. The series of events to unfold over the next year would never have been possible if Mr. Perry had not gotten behind the notion and began pushing it forward.

Once the support of the incredible staff and administration was secured within my school, nothing was impossible. Over the summer, planning began for a school-wide ‘P.D.’ day for students and staff alike. On November 5, *Wholly Heart* saw keynote presentations and dozens of mental health related workshops effectively transform Holy Heart into an open and supportive mental health commu-

nity over the course of one day. It was incredible. The event was put out there for students, and over 600 willingly attended the day. This just goes to show the degree to which students are ready to have this conversation!

The conclusion of a successful school-wide mental health event allowed our resilient planning committee to begin working towards a similar event, but this time on a provincial level. Our goal was to recreate our own event for students from across Newfoundland and Labrador, while equipping them

with the tools needed to start their own mental health related initiatives in their respective communities. The eventual materialization of this event would have never been possible without

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**“She told me that because of the awareness, education and action...she would never have to practice self-harm again.”**

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the remarkable contributions of Debbie Howse, Special Services/Student Success Department Head from Holy Heart High School.

It is important to note however, that a great deal of work was done along the way in between our school-wide day and our provincial event. Throughout the school year, mental health-based school groups were established in numerous high schools in St. John’s. These groups were then synergized under the entity of the Metro Youth Mental Health Committee. These school-based groups worked tirelessly through various initiatives including the #postitcampaign to name but one, all in an effort to de-stigmatize mental health. Simultaneously, the Community Coalition 4 Mental Health courageously began breaking down barriers for the greater public pertaining to mental health. Together, countless individuals and groups began to magnify mental health for the entire province to see.

Serendipitously, Holy Heart was able to provide the first ever provincial youth mental health conference – *Mental Health Matters* – to hundreds of students from over 30 high schools across



Debbie Howse, Special Services/Student Success Department Head at Holy Heart, speaks at the Mental Health Matters conference. (photo courtesy of Sally LeDrew)



Premier Paul Davis and Patrick Hickey at Mental Health Matters conference.  
(photo courtesy of Sally LeDrew)

Newfoundland and Labrador on April 24 and 25. This weekend in the spring of 2015 was remarkable. Attendance from Louise Bradley, the CEO of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the Honorable Premier Paul Davis, and the Honorable Steve Kent, Minister of Health, symbolized just how important the event was. Students engaged in a personal weekend of learning. They learned about their own mental health and the mental health of others. Through contact-based learning, students were inspired to bring a piece of the weekend back to their own communities, effectively growing the conversation on mental health and wellness to schools right across the province. The weekend was an overwhelming success and the results immediately began to convey themselves through various initiatives being hosted in other schools almost directly after the end of our conference.

What struck me as the most powerful moment of my high school career occurred last April. On the last night of the conference, as students from all across the province were decompressing after a full weekend, listening to Shanneyganock in the Holy Heart auditorium in St. John's, I took a step outside – a moment to decompress myself. After a year of planning from the incredible volunteers, students, staff and administration at Holy Heart, a vision had become a reality. A once distant thought had materialized. As I evaluated the progress we had made in breaking down the stigma regarding mental health, and helping those with mental health issues feel supported, I felt content. We had done well in meeting our goals. Logically, it was a success.

I didn't truly realize what all the work we had done meant until immediately after I took that moment to evaluate and decompress. I was able to begin meaningful reflection when a young girl who had participated in the conference approached me in the void and cold lobby. It was just she and I in

the lobby. As this girl approached me, she thanked me for the weekend my team and I had provided her with. She told me that because of the awareness, education and action that we had provided her and her peers, she would never have to practice self-harm again. She thanked me, and she told me that because of this, she knew she would never be hospitalized again. She said, "I know now, that I'm not alone".

It is so important to start, facilitate and grow conversations about mental health in our schools. This topic needs the efforts of students and staff alike. It is up to the leaders within our schools to raise awareness, educate others and be a supportive network for those struggling. Every student has a state of mental health, and in some cases starting a simple conversation can ultimately save lives.

Patrick Hickey is an 18-year-old student from St. John's. Graduating from Holy Heart High School in 2015, Patrick is currently studying Management & Organizational Studies at the University of Western Ontario as a 2015 Ralph M. Barford Loran Scholar. Patrick is more than willing to respond to any inquiries you may have and is available at [patrickhickey97@gmail.com](mailto:patrickhickey97@gmail.com).

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# My Fiji Experience

by MICHELE CRITCHLEY

In the early spring of 2015, I attended a professional development workshop on “health and wellness in the work place,” which had me contemplating my life in general. Something in my gut was telling me that I needed change, or at the very least, a new challenge that would encompass many areas of my life. Perhaps it was a combination of restlessness and the need for something completely different that started me on my journey, and what an amazing journey it was – all the way to beautiful Fiji in the south pacific to work as a volunteer!

During my quest for a challenge and love of travel, I found an organization online called Projects Abroad that offered professionals the ability to travel abroad and use their skills to help others, and there just happened to be a program (and a great need as it turned out) for speech-language pathologists in Fiji! I was immediately excited by the possibility of volunteering and just knew it would be an amazing experience. As a result, I happily spent most of my Easter vacation that year gathering the necessary documentation in order to travel there in August of 2015.

Once everything was booked, I was so utterly and completely excited! There were times I wondered if it was real, if I was actually going to Fiji, but it sunk in over time. My friends and colleagues were also very excited for me and thought it would be a life-changing experience. The more I thought about going there, the more it seemed to be exactly what I needed.

When early August finally came, I began to pack for my trip and prepare myself mentally for the long journey. I left August 5 from St John’s and first travelled to Montreal, then Los Angeles and finally Fiji. Because Fiji is 14.5 hours ahead of Newfoundland time, I didn’t arrive in Fiji until Friday morning; it was so strange to just lose an entire day! And needless to say, I was exhausted.

I was met at Fiji airport by a representative from Projects Abroad. After collecting my luggage, we took a taxi from Nadi airport to Lautoka, the town where I would be staying with my host family. It was only a 30-minute ride north of the airport. The family I stayed with were Indo-Fijian, native to Fiji (they are descendants of labourers brought over to work the sugar cane plantations in the late 1800s. Many of the Indians assumed residency in Fiji. They dominate the business and sugarcane industry of Fiji today and make up 44% of Fiji’s population). The mom, Pria, is a grade 1 teacher and the dad, Shainesh, works in finance. They have three girls: Shresta (age 11), Alvia (age 10), and Supria (age 6). They were a joy to be around and the two older girls were very helpful with the many questions I asked them about Fiji and their culture. Supria, the youngest, was all about asking me for chewing gum, which I gladly shared with her! Shresta and Alvia spent time with me outside the home as well. We went in to the business area of Lautoka (population of approximately 52,000) just to



Michele Critchley with students at the Lautoka School for Special Education.

explore and shop and on another evening we went to the movies.

Pria was a wonderful cook, preparing many traditional meals using curry, which I absolutely love! Rice is a part of the majority of meals, except breakfast, along with roti, an Indian flatbread, which Pria often made in the morning before going to work. Roti was the one thing I could not get enough of! It was simple, yet so versatile, and when it's warm, it paired well with butter (must be the Newfoundlander in me!). Desserts were not plentiful in the household, but Fijian sweets purchased at the grocery store were always available. These were quite high in sugar yet delicious; hence my indulgence in them!

The main reason for my journey was to volunteer at a local school to provide much needed support in the area of speech therapy. Lautoka School for Special Education had 88 students enrolled during the school year. As it was near the end of the semester with only one week remaining before a school break, many students were absent. Students ranged in age from 5 to 23 with eight teachers, three teacher aides, one male volunteer and some parent volunteers as well. One male teacher is deaf and has two hearing impaired students. He is somewhat verbal but uses mainly sign language to teach his students. Many of the staff also use sign language and take sign language courses when they are offered. There is also one visually impaired student at the school.

Having only one week at the school, I knew I would try my best to assess as many students as possible and then provide teachers with some professional development that would be useful to them after I left. I saw 12 students and completed a formal articulation assessment on each. The results showed that most students had moderate to severe articulation delays in the English language. In addition, some students had limited vocabularies as well and could not always provide the labels for things in the pictures. This is certainly not unusual, given the cultural differences between North America and Fiji (the standardized test was American).

Equipped with the assessment results, I developed a simple table for each teacher stating the names of students assessed in their classrooms and the speech sounds in need of practice. This was completed to help them select the speech sounds that most students had difficulty with, thereby providing a starting point for classroom intervention. Teachers providing classroom intervention you ask? Yes, it is the only way to provide the support these students desperately need.

Coming from 16 years of providing speech and language intervention, mainly in a one-on-one envi-

ronment, imagine my dilemma when I had to think outside of my comfort zone to provide strategies to teachers so they could provide in-class support. As a result, I held two teacher workshops after school to explain to teachers the steps involved in teaching one new speech sound, using that sound in words and eventually in conversation. I explained how this could possibly work in the classroom by showing them some activities and how to integrate speech sound practice into these activities.



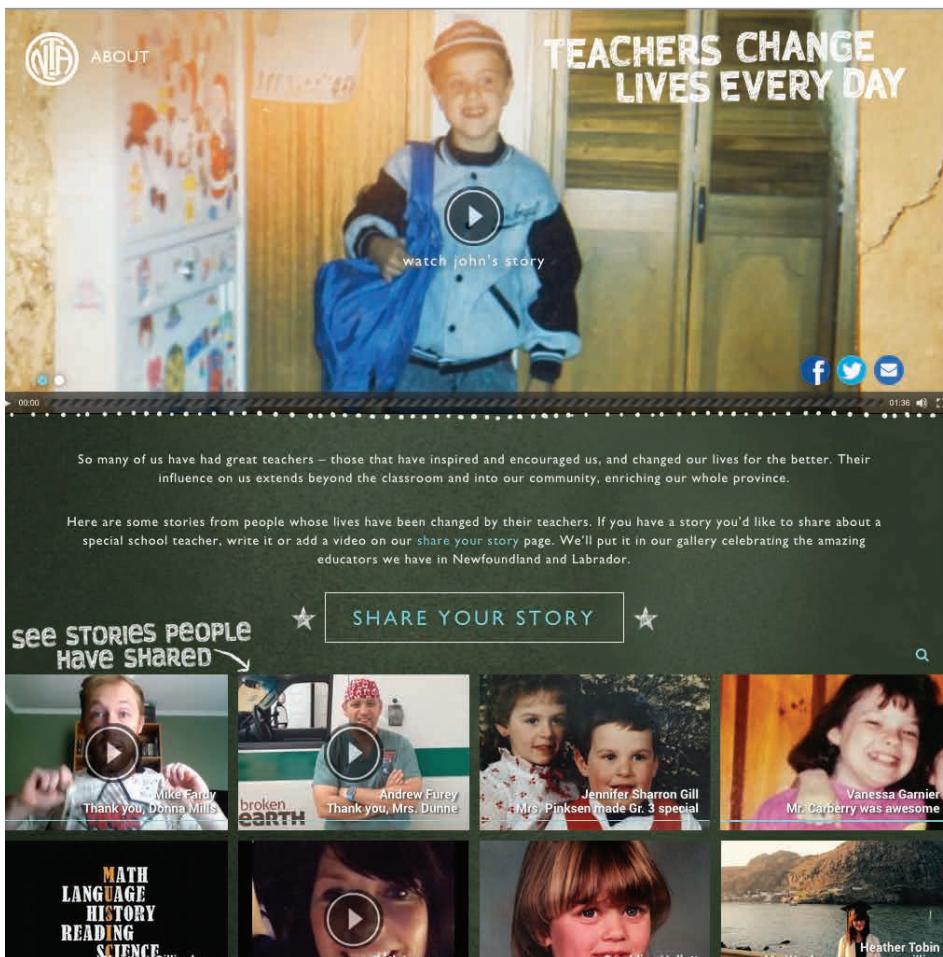
**Michele Critchley works with a student to complete a formal articulation assessment.**

One of the most challenging and disheartening things for me was realizing that schools in Fiji have no specialists to help support their students' needs. At Lautoka School for Special Education, there are no special education teachers, no itinerants for vision and hearing impaired students, no educational psychologists or guidance counsellors and of course, no speech-language pathologists. I soon realized how rich we are in resources, even though we often complain there aren't enough teachers and supports in place for our own students here in Newfoundland. We are blessed in so many ways.

My volunteer work experience in Fiji was a wonderful, yet eye-opening experience. I learned much about Fiji culture and lived with a kind family who welcomed me into their home. It was an experience that taught me so much about my own life, and I returned to Newfoundland with a heart full of gratitude.

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*Michele Critchley is a speech-language pathologist with the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District.*



## Dates to Remember

### December 2015

- Dec 3-4 Pre-Retirement Seminar, St. John's
- Dec. 5 Financial Information Seminar, St. John's
- Dec 17 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

### January 2016

- Jan 15 **Deadline:** 2016 Christmas Card Contest entries
- Jan 15 **Deadline:** Receipt of nominations for Barnes, Bancroft, Allan Bishop and Special Recognition Awards
- Jan 21 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications
- Jan 22-23 Provincial Executive Meeting

### February 2016

- Feb 12 Janeway Day in the Schools
- Feb 14-20 Education Week
- Feb 18 **Deadline:** PD Fund applications

## NLTA Christmas Hours

Please be advised that the NLTA building will be **CLOSED** from

**December 24<sup>th</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup> (inclusive)**

to allow staff to enjoy the holiday season.



## SAVE THE DATE

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## APPLYING FOR EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

The application for Educational Leave for the 2016-17 School Year is posted on the NLTA website at [www.nlta.nl.ca/forms](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/forms)

Application is made to the District.

Districts deadlines are as follows:

**NLESD: January 15, 2016**

**CSFP: January 15, 2016**