

The WTA NEWS

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## Change and The Manitoba Teachers' Society

By: Dave Najduch, WTA President

This last month has seen some important occurrences in the world of MTS and teacher politics. The first is the appointment of the new General Secretary (G.S.) of the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the second is linked to a motion passed by the Louis Riel Teachers' Association (LRTA).

On May 1st the MTS President, Pat Isaak, sent an e-mail to all presidents indicating that the Provincial Executive has appointed Ken Pearce as the new General Secretary of The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Ken's most recent Society involvement is as one of the two independent co-chairs of the MTS Annual General Meeting. During his time in the chair, Ken has developed a strong reputation for integrity, fairness and a clear understanding of the rules and procedures of the Society. Ken has served as the Chair of the Council of School Leaders this past year and prior to that was the Principal of Stonewall Collegiate. Mr. Pearce has also been the President of the Teachers' Society, served on a wide range of MTS committees and the Provincial Executive. He brings a lot of Society experience and knowledge to the table.

For those who have been observing the General Secretary selection process with a great deal of interest over these past few months, Ken has the potential to be the right person, in the right place, at the right time. He brings to the table little to no political baggage, has a strong level of support and a positive reputation. Having said all of this, he will most definitely face an uphill challenge.

April of this year saw another very interesting political happening at the Annual General Assembly of the LRTA. The following motion was passed by a strong majority of those LRTA members in attendance at the meeting:

Be it resolved that the LRTA Executive strike an ad hoc committee to explore the feasibility of disassociating the LRTA with MTS, and further, that a written report from this committee be presented at the 2010 AGA.

To my knowledge, this is the first time a local teachers' association has formally started any kind of process that could look at taking themselves out of The Manitoba Teachers' Society. This is only an ad hoc committee, and it is only looking at the feasibility of disassociation, but it is still a very big step for any Association to undertake.

I believe, the LRTA motion helps put into context some of the issues I have been addressing over the past months in the WTA newsletter. This is the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Manitoba

Teachers Society, and I feel the organization is at a crossroad. For the Society to thrive into the future, some major changes will need to occur. It has been said by some, that much of what has been talked about by me is linked to a personal agenda and it does not reflect the big picture at the level of the Provincial Executive and the Society. Based on the LTRA motion, it would seem that the MTS has problems that go far beyond those linked directly to The Winnipeg Teachers' Association, or me.

As a final sidebar note about MTS and staffing, bringing Ken Pearce in as the G.S. might be a large step forward in addressing many of the ongoing concerns that are being talked about. The next step in rebuilding confidence in the Society is tied to the hiring of two new staff officers this month. In my opinion, these individuals need to be skilled, knowledgeable and team players. As is the case with Mr. Pearce, they need to have little to no political baggage and come to the table with the confidence of the broader membership. These people exist and I hope are being interviewed. If individuals are hired who do not have these attributes, then the positives that are linked to the hiring of Ken may simply be wiped out by the hiring of the wrong people, at the wrong time, and place.

The next few weeks will tell.

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## A Presidential Tour of a Different Sort

By: Joan Fransen, WTA Vice-President

For the last number of years the President and Vice-President of the WTA have toured schools in order to meet members. These visits have given members the chance to connect with WTA leaders, to hear about services available to them, and generally, to catch up on the issues. I know, for me, these visits have been a highlight—something to which I look forward.

With the exception of one or two locations, we have visited all locations where we have members. In fact, I believe we have met with some groups for the first time. All told, by the end of May we will have made 94 visits with more than 1200 members in total. Thank you to council representatives for welcoming us and making arrangements for us to meet with you.

At times the "Road Show" has served two groups simultaneously. That is, in order to accommodate school staff and WTA schedules, Dave and I have parted ways, each attending a separate meeting. This flexibility has been important in helping us to reach the goal of visiting our members.

It's important for you to have the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. We are a collective and work for your benefit. By participating, you provide us with information necessary for making improvements in the services available to you. This is one venue for members' voices to be heard.

As chair of the negotiations committee it has been helpful for me to receive feedback regarding the collective agreement. Some items of concern introduced at school visits have led to proposals for negotiation. As we actively approach negotiations, school visits have given us the occasion to introduce parts of the package—both for affirmation and response.

Our visits often lead to follow-up phone calls to the office. We are happy to hear from you and look forward to opportunities where we can provide information and/or assistance.

As we make plans for next year, we are beginning to schedule visits. As in the past, in the months prior to your school's visit, your council representative and administrator will receive a letter. We encourage you to make note of the date as it's announced and come ready to share your views.

## Reminder...

*Please remember that the staff vacancy bulletins will start to appear online and in print in May. They are available for teachers to read when they wish, however you still must adhere to the timelines provided.*

### QUOTE OF THE MONTH

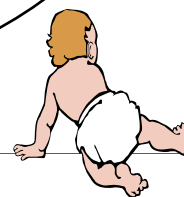
*The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.*

*- Bertrand Russell*

*(On second thought, the good life starts only when you stop wanting a better one.)*

### Manulife Extended Travel Coverage

Please be advised that for WTA members who are anticipating extended periods of travel (i.e. those individuals who are going on Deferred Salary Leave Plan (DSLPP)) Manulife will only cover the extended travel if individuals have the *prior* approval of Manitoba Health to extend provincial health coverage for the length of their travel. If you do not obtain Manitoba Health's approval for the full duration of your travel you *will not* have Manulife's extended travel coverage for that portion for which provincial coverage does not exist. In this event, we suggest the purchase of individual travel insurance.



### REMINDER

If you are contemplating maternity leave during the summer months and need more information please contact either Henry Shyka or Nancy Kerr - 888-7961 regarding Employment Insurance (EI) benefits.

Electoral Units not represented at the April Council meeting:

Adult EAL, Andrew Mynarski, Champlain, COTE, David Livingstone, Elmwood, George V, Glenelm, Grosvenor, Interdivisional Student Services, Isaac Brock, J. B. Mitchell, John M. King, Lab Assistants, LaVerendrye, Lord Selkirk, Luxton, Machray, Montrose, Mulvey, Norquay, Pinkham, Ralph Brown, Rockwood, Support Services, William Whyte

**Deadline for submission of articles for the June newsletter is:**

**May 27th, 2009**

*The views expressed in articles in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Association*

The WTTA NEWS

# *The Winnipeg Teachers' Association*

## *Retirement Reception*

### *2009*

Wednesday, June 10th, 2009

7:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Shaarey Zedek Synagogue

561 Wellington Crescent

Doors Open – 6:45 PM

Presentations – 7:45 PM

Door Donation – \$15.00

*This celebration is to honour ALL retiring members of the WTA and is open to everyone.*

**For further information call**

**Tina Garton, Tec Voc**

Additional parking available at:

St. Mary's Academy

Unitarian Church

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer



## How about serving on a WTA Committee?

The WTA Committee Chairs are always looking for members to serve on various committees. Your Council Rep. has all the committee reports for 2008/2009. They may also be viewed online at [wta.mb.ca](http://wta.mb.ca) In your review of this year's committee reports you may find something of interest to which you could devote some time and energy. New ideas and creative thinking are required in all aspects of the work of the Association. This is a rewarding way to "give back" to your profession. If you would like to serve on a committee please fill in the form below and FAX it to the WTA office - 837-9698.

**Committee:**

AGM	Christine Lachance, St. John's High School
Finance	Jennie Matteis, Grant Park High School
Reception	Tina Garton, Tec Voc High School
Teacher Welfare	Terry Willerton, Tec Voc High School
Group Benefits	Shahram Hakimelahi, Montrose School
Distinguished Service Award	WTA Office
Executive Nominating & Elections	TBD
Monitoring (School Board Meetings)	Tracy Fyfe, Tec Voc High School
Workplace Safety & Health	Melinda Guenther-Balodis, Lord Selkirk School
Substitutes	Iyvan Michalchyshyn, Andrew Mynarski School



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**SERVING ON WTA COMMITTEE(S)**

**FAX: To the WTA Office - 837-9698**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ School Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to serve on the following committees: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature

## *CAPSLE 2009—Tower or Bridge*

By: Jennie Matteis, WTA AGM Committee Chair

I had the pleasure and privilege to attend the 2009 CAPSLE Conference in Toronto. The theme this year was “Tower or Bridge.” The sessions were both very interesting as well as informative. There were 32 sessions in total and I attended five of these. The topics of the sessions I attended related to Special Education. All the sessions had an Ontario perspective, being held in Ontario, it was no surprise.

The session that stood out for me was the session entitled “Challenges in Disciplining Students with Special Needs.” The presenter was Ms Brenda Bowley from Ontario. She is a lawyer from Hicks Morley Hamilton Stewart Storie LLP. The presentation dealt with the human rights issues which educators must deal with when considering disciplining Special Needs students. Ms Bowley provided an overview to be presented:

1. How do Human Rights principles apply?
2. How does Ontario legislation take these principles into account?
3. Review of case laws.

The human rights principle is the same across Canada. It provided for that equal treatment in services without discrimination on the basis of disability. However, if you expect that students with disabilities be treated in the same way in a regular classroom then it would be discrimination in itself.

Ms Bowley went on to discuss the purpose of discipline. In Ontario the purpose of discipline is to change student’s behavior. I believe that is the same everywhere. However, we have to keep in mind that some Special Needs students may not understand the reason for the discipline, or if they cannot change the conduct is it discriminatory. Therefore, we have to find “accommodations”. Our obligations require finding a different way to change the student’s behavior.

In Ontario the school boards have looked at two ways to take the human rights principle into account. One is mitigating factors. Some of the factors that are looked at are: does the student have the ability to control his/her actions? Does the student understand the foreseeable consequences of his/her actions or does the student’s presence in the school create an unacceptable danger to the safety or wellbeing of any person? Other considerations factor the student’s disability. Does the student really understand his/her behavior, will he/she understand why he/she really benefits from the suspension or expulsion and how would it affect the student ongoing education?

Finally, is the case of a student for whom an individual education plan (IEP) has been developed. Was the behavior a manifestation of disabilities identified in the students IEP and had an appropriate individualized accommodation has been provided?

Finally, there were three case laws reviewed and discussed. This session was very informative and eye-opening.

I would like to thank the WTA for providing an excellent opportunity for me to attend this year’s CAPSLE Conference.

## **REPORT ON CAPSLE 2009**

### ***Cyber Bullying***

By: Tracy Fyfe, WTA Secretary

“CAPSLE” , is a journey into another realm of teaching that most of us face everyday but do not put much conscious thought into the legal side of education. This includes the rights and responsibilities of teachers, students, parents, administrators, school boards and the public. Followed by all the implications of everyone’s actions on a daily basis.

The session that was of most interest to me focused on cyberbullying . “Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.” - Bill Besey. In an ever changing world the use of technology in our lives increases more and more each day. Our students are masters in this area, including creating their own language which constantly changes depending on their needs. Walk down any hallway, at any high school and you will see a cell phone in someone’s hand, ask the student’s about their home page, MSN, how to twitter, what they have recently posted on Facebook. The list goes on and on.

As much as technology has enhanced our lives, it has also created a whole new way that student’s can bully one another as well as teachers. In fact it has made it even easier to do so. The cyber world has taken out the fear factor that some may have had. This is a faceless way to communicate, where you can write anything you want and not have to see the expressions on someone’s face. Often this cyberworld lets people lose all of their inhibitions and gives them free reign to hurt others without the instant consequence of seeing someone’s reaction to their words.

The following are forms of cyberbullying which are considered criminal acts cited by the Canadian Teachers’ Federation:

- ◇ Communicating repeatedly with someone if the communication causes someone to fear for their own safety or other’s safety.
- ◇ Publishing a defamatory libel-something that is designed to insult a person or likely to hurt a person’s reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.
- ◇ Spreading hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability may be a violation of the Canadian Human Rights Act and/or provincial/territorial human rights legislation.

If you feel you have been a victim or have a question as to whether there has been inappropriate communication, call the police. As well you may need to contact the Internet service providers and mobile communications service provider in addressing the inappropriate communication. This is a real issue and needs to be taken seriously. Teachers have been victims of cyberbullying across Canada and they need to know there is legal action that can prevent this from happening.

For more information visit the following websites:

[www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca)  
[www.cyberbullying.ca](http://www.cyberbullying.ca)  
[www.ctf-fce.ca](http://www.ctf-fce.ca)

## ***REPORT ON CAPSLE 2009***

By: Melinda Guenther-Balodis, WTA Workplace Safety & Health Committee Chair

I recently attended my first CAPSLE Conference in Toronto, April 26th to 28th. The keynote speaker on the first morning was a very positive and forward-thinking woman named Dr. Avis Glaze. Dr. Glaze chose to focus on the successes occurring in education. She encouraged us to look to the “school context” instead of focusing on the “home context”. She stated that, “Education is the ultimate tool of empowerment” for our young people, and that “we must educate their hearts as well as their minds.” Dr. Glaze also encouraged us to focus on teaching character development in our schools. She said, “Countries don’t become civil, because they are rich. They become rich because they are civilized.”

Dr. Glaze shared that she is especially concerned about boys in education and stressed that they need mentors in their lives. When she said, “Minorities will become majorities, and majorities will become minorities” she used young white boys as an example of how this change has taken place. That quote really struck a chord with me, and I have noticed examples of it ever since hearing her words. The demographics have changed greatly in our classrooms in the past twenty years. We have growing numbers of children with special needs. We have more single parent homes. We have children from a wide variety of cultures, and for many of them, English is not the primary language spoken at home. As these changes occur within our classrooms, educators struggle to accommodate the varied needs. Dr. Glaze emphasized, that all children can achieve success, but the proper supports for the students and their teachers must be in place.

Nancy Hinds and Kelly Shields from the B.C. Teachers’ Federation led the first breakout session I attended. Their presentation outlined three programs that are offered for teachers who are in crisis. The mediation services offered by B.C.T.F. are available to teachers, support staff and other members of the school community. A peer support program is available to teachers who have either self-identified as needing support with their teaching assignment or are on an assistance plan mandated by their employer. Group facilitation is also available. A cadre of respected and trained teachers deliver the programs. The presenters stressed that confidentiality is key to the programs success. I especially saw potential in a peer support program. I believe the program could be successful when the teacher receiving support has self-identified as needing assistance. For peer support to be of value, if an employer mandates a teacher support program, great deal of trust would need to exist between peers.

Another interesting session I attended was entitled: “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”: Child Protection Legislation and the Duty to Report. Stefanie Tuff, from the Newfoundland Teachers’ Association led the session. The legislation is good, when used to protect vulnerable children. Ms Tuff shared several examples of educators reporting a situation where a child might be in need of protection, and some of the consequences for those educators, within the communities they lived and worked in. We have a legal obligation to do what is best for our students, but that obligation can make us unpopular within our communities, and support is not always available. This portion of the presentation was the ugly. Some examples she gave were about educators unduly accused of harming children. Even though the charges were dropped in these examples, the accused individuals were devastated and suffered tremendous hardship. Some were not able to return to work again: This was the ugly part.

## **REPORT ON CAPSLE 2009** *cont'd.*

The session about Risk Management Strategies, presented by Teresa Drijber and Bruce Hutchison, who act on behalf of insurers, focused on creating a safer environment in schools. They stated that the evolution of standard, in terms of liability, has increased greatly, which impacts risk analysis in every situation that comes to them. Here is the Risk Management Strategy Ms Drijber and Mr. Hutchinson presented:

1. Identify the risk.
2. Identify risk management strategies.
3. Select and implement risk management strategies.
4. Monitor results and make improvements.

These strategies can be implemented if planning a field trip, art project, physical activity, etc. The question to ask after looking at each of the four steps is, "Does the risk match the educational value of the activity?" If it does not, then the activity should not take place, in terms of risk. The presenters stressed that supervision is always key, and that adult presence is a deterrent. Social contact between the educator and students is most important.

The common thread throughout the conference, entitled Law in Education: Tower or Bridge, was that educators are the bridges. We are the people who provide safe, caring communities for our young people and their families. We will continue to face challenges in our roles, but we need support and there never seems to be enough. That support can come in many forms: peers, finances, support staff, social support programs, law enforcement agencies, and there may be others. Our role is to build bridges with all of these groups. At the conference it was encouraging to hear all presenters, including lawyers, union representatives, school trustees, parents, senior administration, professors and teachers, show their support for the public education system, and especially for the teachers who continue to advocate for youth, despite the many challenges.

I would like to thank The Winnipeg Teachers' Association for giving me the opportunity to attend the CAPSLE Conference.

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***Please note that the WTA will only be providing a limited number of printed copies of the WTA Newsletter in the fall.***

***The newsletter is available on the WTA's website at: [www.mb.ca](http://www.mb.ca)***