

Book Review—The worlds Greatest Treasure Hunt

With the audacious title of “World’s Greatest Treasure Hunt” I simply had to explore this interesting book written by Canadian author Ron Shore. If you are fond of mysteries, played the Winnipeg Sun’s “Search for Gold” contests, like puzzles, or are a history buff, this is definitely a book that you have to read! The book is a collection of 12 short stories that focus on famous hidden treasures. Pirates like Black beard and Henry Morgan, the story of the Holy Grail, D.B. Cooper and even Oak Island are featured in this book. The book is more than just captivating, well written stories. As the title implies, it truly is “The World’s Greatest Treasure Hunt” because there is a \$1 million dollar prize up for grabs as well as some unique smaller prizes.

Within each chapter a “code” is embedded that you need to decipher. There are also 20 questions at the end of every chapter that relate to each particular story. Some of the questions are in Morse Code or other codes or make reference to certain details in movies such as The Da Vinci Code, Pirates of the Caribbean, or National Treasure. There are many SuDoku puzzles, as well as the world’s first 3-D SuDoku. This book is definitely good spring break reading, perhaps an interesting challenge for your students, or a unique opportunity for you to go on a once in a lifetime treasure hunt. Everything is done online through your journal on the books’ website www.greathunt.com so you do not have to physically GO somewhere and start digging. Although I have completed many questions and tasks, I have not completed ALL the questions to a particular chapter. I have also not read of anyone else claiming a prize, so currently there are 13 prizes still up for grabs.

If you are interested in the book, I would recommend also getting the companion book, “Cracking the Code”. It has some hints, clues, and an amazing collection of ciphers and code breaking tips. This is an excellent resource on code creating/breaking which could be something really neat for your classroom and absolutely essential if you are trying for the million dollar prize. In the companion book you will find such things as substitution ciphers, the military phonetic alphabet, Navajo code talkers, Morse Code and even a code based on Fibonacci.

For those of you who are too cheap to buy your own copy and want to borrow it from the library, too bad! It is only available through the website mentioned earlier. Don’t let that stop you, because not only is it a great read and a great challenge, a portion of all sales go to help find a cure for breast cancer. For those of you who like to get rewarded for reading to the end of this book review, I am including a prize for one lucky treasure hunter. I have ONE leftover Christmas present from my students which I have not yet used, a Tim Horton’s gift card. (If you do not like Timmies, you can always re-gift it like I am doing.) I’ll mail this card out to the first person to email me what the book costs. Be sure to include the price for soft-cover edition, hard-cover edition, limited edition, personal fundraising edition, and the price of the companion book. Good luck, enjoy the read!

Book review by Ken Sidloski



Touch Quilt Project

Making lap quilts for those with Alzheimer’s disease

On February 17, 2011, a group of Home Economics teachers organized by The Manitoba Home Economics Teacher’s Association got together at Glenlawn Collegiate to make lap quilts for people with Alzheimer’s disease. The Touch Quilt Project is an initiative of the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba. It is sponsored by Blue Cross with funding from Manitoba Community Services Council. The purpose of Touch Quilts is to provide quilts to individuals living in personal care homes and to create a caring community throughout Manitoba that is responsive to the needs of people living with dementia.

MHETA provided the squares of fabric but the Touch Quilts group would provide a kit of squares for the quilt if you so desire. The purpose is to provide as much different textures on the quilt as possible. If you are interested in hosting an evening of quilt making or just want to make a quilt to donate you can contact touchquilts@alzheimer.mb.ca or phone 943-6622.



Maxine Chamish, Home Economics Teacher at John Henderson Junior High

TimBits

By Tim Breen

- Jen Schlag, our President, and her husband Brian are proud to announce the birth of their daughter, Khloe, on February 14th, 2011. Our Congratulations and best wishes go out to them!
- Teacher Merit Pay is a means of rewarding teachers, through salary increments, for how well their students do in their class. There are a lot of states in the US who are considering this or have even begun to use it as a means of rewarding teachers.
- Recently Canadian songwriters (SOCAN) have proposed a \$10 fee be added to your internet bill. Why? So that we can legally download as much music as we want without fear of reprisal. Interesting concept.

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RETTA RECORD

The official newsletter of the River East Transcona Teachers' Association
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President’s Message

Here is an article that I think will give a good perspective on Bargaining as we look towards our Arbitration dates in September 2011. We have taken this from the Manitoba Teachers’ Society. I wish you all a smooth semester and don’t hesitate to contact the office with any questions, concerns or updates!



Reprinted from the December 2010 MTS Newsletter—This is a Reprint

All but one of 38 local teacher associations will be negotiating new collective agreements for 2010/11 and there could be possible repercussions of the economic downturn that occurred in 2009, the first pause in growth since the early 1990s.

While Manitoba was one of the provinces least affected by the recent recession, it nonetheless impacted the Province of Manitoba’s fiscal position with deficits forecast not only for 2009-10 but also annually until 2013-14, according to the 2010-11 provincial budget.

Governments across the country have taken a tough stance at the bargaining table with public sector unions and in some instances have insisted on wage freezes for one or two years. In Manitoba, teachers are also facing a more difficult round of bargaining because of heightened economic uncertainty.

A less accommodating economy and a harder line by school divisions represent a potential threat to the steady progress that has been made by teachers in this province over the last decade and a half to restore the purchasing power of their salaries that has been lost to inflation over the last quarter of a century. Nevertheless, today a teacher still earns a salary in real dollars (dollars adjusted for inflation) that is lower than what a teacher would have earned at exactly the same class and level of experience back in 1983.

Local teacher association bargaining committees understand that making up for loss in purchasing power is an important priority for negotiations. It has taken many years to close the gap from the historic lows reached in the mid 1990s. Accepting a salary increase less than the rate of inflation always results in a real pay cut. As well, contrary to the myth that teachers have enjoyed generous salary increases relative to the Manitoba economy as a whole, when the facts are looked at objectively, it is obvious that salary increases for teachers have lagged behind other measures of income gain.

For example, while teacher salaries have nearly doubled (99 per cent) from 1983 to 1999, during the same period Gross Domestic Product increased by 231 per cent, while the average income of families grew 150 per cent.

One of the myths that our local bargaining committees have to contend with is that the private sector in this province has suffered tremendously and therefore teachers and other public sector workers ought to share in this burden. However, recent data from Statistics Canada show that in Manitoba the average increase in weekly earnings for 2009 was a healthy 2.8 per cent.

For example, bus manufacturer New Flyer, one of the largest private sector employers in Winnipeg, agreed to provide their employees wage increases of 3.5 per cent in each of 2010-11 and 2011-12. Furthermore, in May 2010 construction electricians (IBEW 2085) negotiated wage increases totalling 12 per cent over three years plus increases to other benefits.

Information provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) Labour Program indicates that in Manitoba for the first six months of 2010, wage settlements for bargaining units with 500 or more members have averaged 3.1 per cent, a slight improvement from the 2.9 per cent average increase for 2009.

In the public sector, Winnipeg Fire Fighters (IAFF 867) negotiated a two-year deal earlier this year with wage increases of four per cent in 2010 and 4.5 per cent in 2011.

While it is true that Manitoba's nurses recently agreed to take a wage freeze during the first two years of a 42-month collective agreement, when the total compensation package is calculated including a valuable pension improvement, it is clear that they achieved significant gains towards the end of the contract.

In the public schools, many education support bargaining units have negotiated wage settlements of at least 2.5 per cent in the period from 2010 to 2012, while several others have concluded settlements of 3 per cent. MTS believes the most important settlement of all for 2010/11 is the one achieved by teachers in Louis Riel which calls for a salary increase at end-rates of 3 per cent.

The reality of teacher bargaining is that it can take many meetings over a long period of time to reach a deal. And of course, a settlement at the bargaining table is not always possible. Teachers in Manitoba do not have the right to strike, so when an impasse is reached in negotiations, either party has the right to apply for interest arbitration as the final dispute resolution process. Teachers have not had to go to arbitration very often over the last decade, much of this due to the ability of their local bargaining committees to obtain real salary increases along with other significant improvements in benefits, working conditions and rights. However, teachers may very well be facing a different scenario in this current round of bargaining. Given the hardened environment they currently find themselves in, arbitration may indeed be inevitable for many of our local associations.

Teachers are asked to be patient with the bargaining and arbitration process and lend their support and confidence to bargaining committee.

RETTA Arbitration Dates:

Friday, September 23rd, Thursday, October 6th

Friday, October 7th, Monday, October 17th

Friday, October 28th, Monday, November 7th

Tuesday, November 8th

Best wishes, Jennifer Schlag, President

Acting President's Message

By Jennifer Levesque

Early in February the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) rejected the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) proposal for the continued funding of international programs. This will have a profound impact on a number of international programs such as Project Overseas.

The funding that CTF is seeking from CIDA is just over \$10 million for a five year period. This funding is supplemented by an additional \$6 million from CTF to carry out the many international programs in which CTF is involved.

CTF and provincial teacher organizations are respected worldwide for the programming and support provided to teachers in every part of the world. Some of our own members have been involved in Project Overseas, including myself, and speak of the profound impact the experience has had on their professional and personal lives.

CTF has established an online petition for teachers to sign in support of their international programs. Please take the time to sign it by going to the RETTA website at www.retta.ca where you will find a link to it under "Latest News".



IN MEMORIAM

On January 10, 2011 Robert (Bob) Land passed away at 72. Bob had been ever present in the River East Transcona Teachers' Association since amalgamation and prior to that in the Transcona-Springfield Teachers' Association.

Bob became a teacher when he was 16 years old. In those days he had the main criteria; he was old enough and had already been to university (albeit for one year). On a Letter of Authority, Bob taught in Vita and Gimli before moving to Tilston, where he met his wife, Sheilah. They soon started a family. While Sheilah taught, Bob completed his university education. Through night school and summer school, Bob completed 4 degrees during his career.

Humble beginnings stretched into a career of 48 years, bringing Bob to Morse Place School, Springfield Collegiate, Transcona Collegiate Institute, Murdoch MacKay Collegiate Institute and Miles MacDonell Collegiate. Bob became a Vice Principal, but never forgot his teaching roots.

Bob found his way into teacher politics in 1971. Bob started in Collective Bargaining and Employee Benefits, but through his career chaired every local executive committee and was President of the TSTA. Bob sat as a Council Rep for Miles MacDonell Collegiate until his retirement in 2008. After retirement, it was not unusual to come to Council and see Bob in his chair at the front table. His interest never waned and he was often called upon for advice. He was our Elder statesman.

It was during the 70's that Bob, during his first stint as Collective Bargaining Chair, that he and Trustee Sam Maslowski had an informal meeting and settled the contract, giving the teachers what they considered an equitable settlement of 13%.

Twice, Bob served provincially with the Manitoba Teachers' Society as an Executive Member. He chaired a number of committees and was especially proud of his work on the Status of Women in Education Standing Committee.

Bob always gave a good speech and always credited Shielah as his speechwriter. If you needed advice you went to Bob. He always came up with some angle or idea you never thought of. He was always a steady influence you could rely on. He would tell you what you needed to hear, not what you wanted to hear. Bob had an incredible memory and it was often called upon. He spoke his mind and stood his ground. He was an admired teacher advocate and a respected administrator.

Along with advice, Bob would pull out some pearls of wisdom when needed. He told me once, "When you dine with the devil, use a long spoon."

Another one he liked was "When you get into the mud and wrestle with pigs you'll both get dirty, but the pigs will like it."

Bob lived life with gusto. He loved a good meal, a scotch and convertibles.

Bob could be seen in the hallway talking with kids every day. He cared about kids and it came as no surprise to teachers when he would walk in their classrooms and start talking to them. He told one French Teacher that he didn't have to understand the language to tell that kids were engaged and learning, he could see it by their faces.

He was very proud of the Murdoch Motorsports Club and the Bob Land Scholarship is awarded to a deserving Miles MacDonell Collegiate student.

Bob was appreciative of the recognition he received from the School Division for his 25 years of service and when he received Life Membership from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. Bob considered himself lucky for having found his calling, enjoying his work and the many strong and passionate colleagues he met.

A husband, father, teacher, mentor, and friend, Bob leaves a rich legacy. For nearly 5 decades he enriched and inspired colleagues and students and in return he always said he was inspired by those he worked with and the many students he met along the way.

Understanding And Supporting Students With Dyslexia

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to attend the seminar "Tutoring People With Dyslexia" given by Susan Barton in Minneapolis in July 2010. I wish to thank RETTA for their support in making this possible. The following article describes dyslexia, explains the cause, lists the warning signs and offers classroom accommodations.

Five important points about dyslexia are:

1. It is inherited.
2. There is a brain difference.
3. Language is processed differently.
4. There are issues with directionality.

There are memory issues.

The Cause:

People with dyslexia have an inherited brain difference. The flaws of genes on chromosome 6 connected to phonemic awareness, on chromosome 15 connected to rapid naming and on chromosome 1 connected to visual memory of words contribute to dyslexia.

People with dyslexia have a larger right hemisphere compared to normal readers. That maybe why they often have significant strengths in areas controlled by the right side of the brain such as artistic, athletic and mechanical gifts, musical ability, creative problem solving skills and intuitive people skills.

They also have unusual "wiring". Neurons are found in unusual places in their brain and are not as neatly ordered as in non-dyslexic brains. The key areas in the brain for language and working memory involved in reading are connected differently than in people who are good readers and spellers. Poor reading fluency may be caused by these disorganized, meandering neurons in the brain.

Finally people with dyslexia experience a failure of the left hemisphere rear brain systems to function properly. They do not use the same part of the brain when reading as non-dyslexic readers. Good readers consistently activate the back of the brain and also to some extent the front of the brain. People with dyslexia inconsistently use the front of the brain to try to compensate for the under-activation of neural pathways in the back of the brain. This results in difficulty analyzing words and transforming letters into sounds.

If you would like more information contact Barbara at bhaddow@retsd.mb.ca

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