



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Congratulations to Ms Jennifer Lemieux, Teacher at St. Peter's. Jenn won the Advisor of the Year Award at the 38th annual Ontario Student Leadership Conference. Jenn has a long history of supporting students in their leadership endeavors at St. Peter's. She has always encouraged students to take the lead and organize and support various activities at the school. Well deserved Jenn!!!

The Christmas season is upon us and I ask as we prepare to spend time with our families and friends over the holidays that we consider those who are less fortunate than ourselves. I know that many schools do hamper drives or even adopt a family for the holidays, but I would ask that we think of those who do not have a place to go for the holidays. The Simcoe Muskoka Secondary Unit passed a motion at the last executive meeting to send a gift hamper to Youth Haven in Barrie. The youth that rely on the shelter on a daily basis are in need of many items. For example, donate/collect hygiene products - razors, shampoo, deodorant, toilet paper, tampons, tooth brushes and toothpaste. Donations of clothing - seasonal, work boots, shoes, jackets, school uniforms, new socks and underwear, are greatly appreciated. You can also donate gently used furniture such as: single beds, new single mattresses, gently used couches, large kitchen table and chairs, gently used blankets and linens, curtains, etc.

Please consider donating to Youth Haven this Christmas Season. Those who use the shelter may be students in our schools. You can also donate on line through Canadahelps and your donation is recognized as a charitable donation which will provide you with a tax receipt.

Maybe you have already set up your donations for this Christmas, but Youth Haven could use your support all year long. Consider hosting a fundraising event for your next project at your school or with your family. This is an effective way to raise awareness of youth homelessness in the Community.

Just a reminder that we will be moving to the OECTA ELHT benefits beginning on April 1, 2017. If you haven't done so already please make sure that your address on file at the Board is correct. The ELHT will be sending out a welcome package in late February, early March which will contain information about the benefit plan and how to enroll. Any benefits that have been supported by Sun Life will continue to be paid by Sun Life until April 1 at which time any remaining amount will be covered by the ELHT.

I will be organizing school visits in February and March to assist with the transition to the new benefits, but in the meantime if you have specific questions about the benefits you need to contact oectabenefits@catholicteachers.ca

Thank you to Denny and Mary de Oliveira who spear headed the Christmas Dinner and Dance. While we did not get enough participation to run the event we are hoping to offer other social events. If you have an idea - big or small - or want to organize an event please let me know. We will be looking to put out a survey in the new year to see what events would interest the teachers. Look for the survey and please provide feedback. Don't forget about the Movember Social on November 30th - no moustache required - at the Flying Monkeys in Barrie from 4-7 pm.

Have a safe and happy holiday with your family and friends. See you all in 2017!



Once again the Simcoe Muskoka Units are sponsoring a Movember event to support men's health - specifically prostate cancer and men's mental health. This year's event is being held on November 30th at the Flying Monkeys in Barrie from 4-7 p.m.

The month of November is dedicated to the growing or sprouting of moustaches on thousands of men's faces, in Canada and around the world.

Simcoe Muskoka's local team is "Bros and Sistas of Simcoe Muskoka", please go to the following website to see how you can sign up or other ways you can support this effort:

<http://mobro.co/oectasimcoemuskoka>

Hope to see everyone at The Flying Monkeys on November 30th! Come join the fun and judge the moustaches.

PENSION CORNER

The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan has simplified your Statement of Pension Benefits. You should review this document either on-line or the copy you receive in the mail for accuracy. Report any discrepancies to TPP immediately.

Your pension is one of the most valuable financial assets, with a variety of benefits to help you maximize your retirement. But what it probably comes down to for you is simply, "when can I retire, and how much will I retire with?"

Now you get your key pension and personal information at a glance, on the very first page of your statement. You can see what you've earned so far and look ahead to see what your future pension will be, if you're still teaching.

Your statement is a snapshot in time. For the most up-to-date experience create an online account through iAccess.

If you've turned 50, you'll no longer see your pension's commuted value (CV). Once you turn 50, you're eligible for a pension and no longer eligible to withdraw or transfer your CV.

Your projected pensions are based on today's salary. As you move through your career, your salary will likely increase, and so will the values of these projections.

You'll see a bridge benefit amount. This benefit ends the month after you turn 65, or earlier if you start a disability pension from CPP. By this time you'll likely be receiving a retirement pension from CPP, and that should make up for the difference in your monthly income once the bridge benefit ends.

Review, and update if necessary, your profile details, including your beneficiary

BOOKS OF LIFE

www.otffeo.on.ca/en/learning - for further links

Books of Life is an Aboriginal education awareness and literacy initiative of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, funded by the Aboriginal Education Office of the Government of Ontario. The project seeks to engage teachers in a greater understanding of First Nation, Metis and Inuit communities, so that they can confidently embed FNMI themes, topics and perspectives in their teaching.

During the 2011-12 school year, *Books of Life* brought together teachers in schools with high FNMI populations and those in schools with low FNMI populations. The teachers worked with their students to create books about their lives - exploring who they are, what they value, what they celebrate, and how all of our lives are shaped by our cultural and historical contexts.

BOOKS FOR LIFE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

The Language of the Circle and the Power of the Story - Storytelling has often been described as the most human of art forms. Far more powerful than data or facts, stories capture our imagination, inspire action and promote understanding. Telling one's own story is arguably the most effective way to share information about who we are, what are the experiences that have shaped us, what matters most to us. Stories promote listening; they help us understand one another and break down barriers among different peoples.

Getting Started - Careful planning at the front end of your *Books of Life* project will lead you to a successful endpoint. Here are some things to get you started on the right path.

Curriculum connections - Begin by considering all of the curriculum outcomes that you will cover in the course of creating books of life with your students. An excellent starting point is the Aboriginal Education Policy Framework and the Teachers' Tool Kit created by the Aboriginal Education Office. The Tool Kit provides excellent ideas and practical teaching strategies for bringing Aboriginal perspectives into elementary and secondary classrooms.

Creating an environment for story making - Regardless of the form your books of life end up taking or the topics and themes they may cover, you will want to start your students off by exposing them to the power of stories and storytelling. You can do this through an introductory unit on stories, focussed on FNMI myths and legends. If possible, you may want to invite local storytellers into your classroom to help inspire your students.

Finding partners - While creating stories and creative expressions about themselves will be worthwhile activity for your students, the real power of *Books of Life* lies in finding partner classrooms with

BOOKS FOR LIFE IN YOUR CLASSROOM (Con't)

Permissions, permissions, permissions - Make sure your principal is on board from the outset and that s/he is well aware of the project you are about to undertake. As soon as possible, write to the parents and guardians of your students to tell them about the project, to seek their permission. Find out your school's or board's protocol for getting permission for these activities and follow it.

Choosing a theme - What will your students create stories about? Regardless of whether your students will come together to create a single class book, work in small groups or work individually, you will want to decide on a theme that ties the project together. The grade, subject and curriculum expectations you are hoping to cover will have an impact on the choices you make. Below are some examples of themes that have worked well for teachers involved in

Books of Life to date:

- √ Alphabet Books
- √ What's in a name?
- √ Story maps and community mapping
- √ Food and other cultural celebrations

Choosing a format - It is up to you and your students to decide on the format of the books that you will create. Your books of life can be printed or digital, expository or creative, subject-specific or cross-curricular. Here are a few ideas:

- **Book making and book styles** - Your book may be more rustic, hand written, hand illustrated and hand bound with natural materials such as bark, grasses and feathers. Alternatively, you may want to produce a digitally laid out and commercially printed book. Publishing a printed book has never been easier. Companies such as Apple, Blurb, MyPublisher, provide templates for page layout and high quality book printing options, all at a fairly reasonable price.
- **Digital Storytelling** - Instead of printing your students' stories, you may choose instead to create digital stories for viewing on the computer. On the Macintosh - iMovie and on a PC - MovieMaker are both good string points for pulling together digital stories.
- **Other formats** - Collages, scrapbooks, comic strips, videos, paintings, dramatic performances and musical compositions can all tell stories about who we are and what is important to us.

Celebrating your final product with a book launch - Creating books of life will be a meaningful process for your students, and certainly one that they and you will want to celebrate. A book launch is an excellent way to celebrate the accomplishments of your students and to provide them with a memorable opportunity to publicly give voice to their narratives. Invite parents, guardians, and key members of your community - including local leaders - to be part of your final celebrations.

OECTA Young Authors award winner from 2016 was Samantha Money Penny from Jean Vanier Catholic High School. Congratulations to Samantha and her teacher Deanne Hachey for submitting her work.

The 2017 Young Authors Awards information has been sent to each OECTA Staff Representative. If you are interested in submitting student work to this competition please see complete rules and guidelines from your OECTA Staff Representative.

We will also make this information available on our website.

The purpose of the annual OECTA Young Authors Awards are to celebrate students' writing talents and their teachers' instructional talents.

There are three levels of competition: school, unit and provincial. The first place winners at each level advance to the next. Each level of competition consists of the following divisions (Grade 9-10 & Grade 11-12), and categories (Short Story, Poem, Play, Nonfiction). These divisions and categories are the same for both the French and English tracts.

For the **school level competition**, teachers must submit their entries to the OECTA staff association representative by **February 13, 2017**. There are no limits on the number of entries at the school level of competition.

Two copies of each individual entry must be submitted, accompanied by the entry form, completed and stapled to the front cover of the entry. The cover sheet must be signed by the teacher.

Each school may submit only one entry per category and division to the unit level of competition by February 20, 2017.

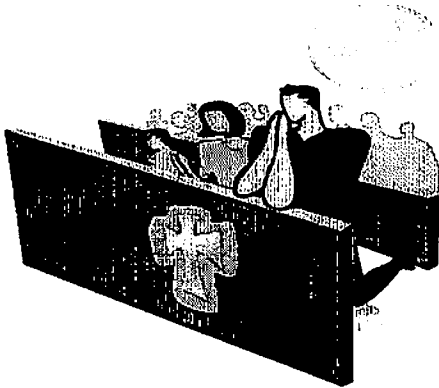
Each unit may submit only one entry per category and division to the provincial level of competition by March 24, 2017.

General Guidelines: No entry may exceed 3000 words; The teacher's signature is required for all school level entries; The OECTA staff representative's signature is required for entries that advance to the unit level of competition; All entries, except plays, must be the original work of a single author.

IN SYMPATHY WITH

Nicole Wolfe, Teacher at St. Peter's, on the passing of her father, Jim Baks.

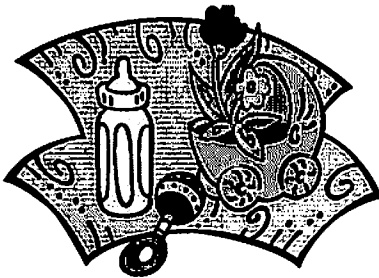
Theresa Noga-McArthur, Teacher at Holy Trinity, on the passing of her father, Eugene Noga.



CONGRATULATIONS TO!

Brad McKinnon, Teacher at St. Peter's, and his wife Kasia on the birth of their daughter, Sophia

Ria Diening, Teacher at St. Theresa's, and her husband Serge Lesperance on the birth of their daughter, Elora.



UPCOMING EVENTS

November 30 - Board Meeting @ 7pm
Board Office, Barrie

December 7 - Initial Board Meeting for 2017
Board Office, Barrie

December 13 - Unit Executive meeting
12:30 pm @ Michael & Marion's

December 23 - January 6 - Christmas Vacation

January 9 - Classes Reconvene

January 17 - Unit Executive meeting
12:30 pm at Unit Office, Barrie

January 18 - Board Meeting @ 7 pm
Board Office, Barrie

January 26 - February 1 - Semester 1 Final Examinations

February 2 & 3 - Professional Activity Days

February 14 - Unit Executive Meeting
12:30 pm @ Unit office, Barrie

February 20 - Family Day

March 1 - Board Meeting @ 7pm
Board Office, Barrie

March 2 - Staff Representatives Meeting
12:30 pm Unit office, Barrie

March 6 - Unit General Meeting
OECTA AGM delegates meeting
4:30 pm, Unit office, Barrie

March 10 - 13 - OECTA AGM
Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto

March 13 - 17 - March Break

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day

