

interaction



January 14, 2011
Volume 13, No. 1

A Message from the President

Colleagues,

I had barely found my way to my desk when staff at OTF started passionately bombarding me with the activities for the President and OTF for the fall term—conferences, symposia, Ministry meetings, faculty days, public outreach and special events.

Though I have spent several years as a member of the OTF Board of Governors, it took my breath away to learn about the vast array of work that the OTF staff regularly undertakes in the support of the profession and the level of advocacy delivered in the promotion of teachers. In addition to many special projects, the day-to-day working of any organization depends on the efficiency, skill and dedication of the Secretariat and Support



Staff at OTF—a total of just 22 people including me. You can see a photograph of this small, but mighty band at http://www.otffeo.on.ca/english/about_staff.php.

I invite you to read about some of the wonderfully successful work at OTF these past four months and what we have in store in the near future.

Yours in education,
Rian McLaughlin
President

EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

OTF and the Affiliates are organizing an education symposium entitled **CC⁴** or C to the fourth power for the 21st Century. The four Cs are Creativity, Critical Thinking, Citizenship and Community.

The focus of the symposium is on the way forward in education. We want to spark conversation about education policy and accountability moving beyond standardized testing. We want education leaders and stakeholders to envision an era when the needs of the whole student are front and centre; a time when teacher professionalism is respected and encouraged.

We are thrilled to have several prominent keynote speakers. **Diane Ravitch**, author of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, **Dennis Shirley**, co-author of *The Fourth Way*, and **Tom Wujec**, author of *Return on Imagination* will lead and inspire the participants. We anticipate the audience will be buzzing. We are inviting participants not only from Ontario, but also from across Canada and the United States.

Stay tuned to the OTF website for more details about this exciting undertaking in the next few weeks.

PARRY SOUND CAMPGROUND

One of OTF's hidden gems is the Parry Sound campground which it owns and operates. The camp is available to all OTF members and education workers in publicly funded schools. Situated on picturesque Quinn Lake, it offers opportunities to get back to nature and enjoy summer activities. The campground opens on May 1, weather permitting, to Thanksgiving every year.



TEACHER SPECIAL EDUCATION GATEWAY WEBSITE LAUNCHED

In the Fall of 2009, OTF embarked on the development of a web-based resource for teachers on special education with funding from the Ministry of Education.

After extensive time and research, OTF was able to create this amazing repository of All Things Special Education Related. This free and easy-to-use resource is especially helpful for non-specialist teachers, as well as support staff and parents.

We encourage you to bookmark this website as one of your favourites www.teachspiced.ca because once you visit, you will be coming back often.

PHILANTHROPY AT OTF

OTF International Assistance

OTF's very active International Assistance Program funds programs overseas through an application and peer review process. Our history in this area is an admirable one. You can read about this program at http://www.otffeo.on.ca/english/init_assist.php From time to time, we also receive requests for support for particular projects that are closer to home and are aimed at improving conditions for children and youth. While we do not have the resources to respond positively to all of those who approach us, we do support many important initiatives and organizations.

Art for Aids

In the summer of 2010, the OTF Executive committed to supporting Art for Aids International, a non-profit organization dedicated to raising funds and awareness for those most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. At the same time, the project engages students in the visual arts. Read more about the organization at www.artforaidsinternational.org.

OTF's role in this sponsorship is to offer financial support and facilitate twinning Ontario schools with schools in South Africa. We are arranging with schools in Moosonee to participate this year. The twinned schools participate in Art workshops and create joint portfolios with student colleagues in South Africa. The resulting artwork can then be used as fundraising tools.

Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Literacy Camps

In October 2010, the Executive renewed its commitment to the Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Literacy Camps. For the past five years, OTF has founded a summer literacy program in Fort Hope. The entire project is managed by Frontier College.

We are proud to be extending our sponsorship for an additional five years. This past summer, there were a total of 37 camps across Ontario in 25 First Nations communities reaching a total of 2,228 young people.

Our President Rian McLaughlin has also had meetings with Lieutenant Governor David Onley and Grand Chief Stan Beardy to encourage their support in raising awareness of children's mental health issues.

Shannen's Dream and Heartspeak

You may be familiar with the inspiring and tragic story of Shannen Koostachin, a 15-year-old Cree youth who was the student driving force behind the struggle to build a healthy school for the Attawapiskat children. Sadly, Shannen lost her life this past summer in a car accident. Her inspiring story has been chosen by Heartspeak, a registered charitable organization that provides support for youth, parents, and educators related to the challenges facing youth today as the subject for a documentary film. OTF is making a donation in support of Heartspeak's work to detail Shannen's short life and her passion to bring social justice to her community and peers.

OTIP TEACHING AWARDS

The seventh annual OTIP Teaching Awards were presented in Toronto on September 30, 2010. Each year, this ceremony is held on the closest Thursday before World Teachers' Day to honour three special teachers.

This year, the OTIP Awards recognized an elementary teacher who makes learning fun, a secondary teacher who connects her students to their natural environment and a beginning teacher who brings history to life every day in his classroom. They were:

ELEMENTARY TEACHER

Alice Désormeaux

St. Anne Separate School
Hanmer

SECONDARY TEACHER

Colleen Drew-Baehre

North Hastings High School
Bancroft

BEGINNING TEACHER

Matthew Biggley

Vincent Massey
Secondary School
Windsor

We also presented the *Toronto Star* Teacher Award and the TFO Prix d'enseignement. These awards went to **Bernadette Taylor-Dolha** of Baythorn Public School in York District School Board and **Gilberte Bissonnette**, a teacher at l'école Le Carrefour in Ottawa.

You can read more about the 2010 winners or see short videos of them in action at www.teachingawards.ca.

NOMINATIONS ARE NOW OPEN FOR THE 2011 AWARDS AT THE SAME WEBSITE. PERMANENT AND OCCASIONAL TEACHERS ARE ELIGIBLE, SO CONSIDER NOMINATING A COLLEAGUE TODAY.



L to R: Matthew Biggley, Beginning Teacher Winner; OTF President Rian McLaughlin; OTIP CEO Randy McGlynn; Alice Désormeaux, Elementary Teacher Winner; and Colleen Drew-Baehre, Secondary Teacher Winner.

OTF PD PROJECT

OTF is deeply involved in providing professional development activities appealing to all teachers. This work is funded by a grant received from the Ministry of Education several years ago. Thousands of teachers have participated in our Summer Programs that are offered across the province on a variety of professional issues. Planning is well underway for Summer 2011, but the fall provided some very interesting opportunities for teachers.

CRITICAL THINKING: DEVELOPING CURRICULUM TO NURTURE CRITICALLY THOUGHTFUL LEARNERS CONFERENCE

In reaction to the recent emphasis on literacy and numeracy in education policy in Ontario, teachers have been asking for tools to help them broaden the learning experiences for their students—especially in the area of critical thinking skills.

OTF has offered several versions of this critical thinking workshop in partnership with The Critical Thinking Consortium led by OISE Professor Garfield Gini-Newman. On October 29-30, 330 teachers were introduced to this method for challenging students to a deeper level of thinking. Designed to meet the needs of all teachers and learners across every subject at every grade level, this workshop brings together teachers from every Affiliate to work together.

This activity is one of our most heavily subscribed. At this year's event, teachers were introduced to the Critical Thinking Framework and provided with effective strategies to improve their classroom practice. For the first time, we had a substantial number of AEFO members in attendance; as a result, OTF brought in a French-speaking facilitator to deliver the identical program in French.

Teachers are provided with continuing support after the workshop is over through online web conferencing. Don't miss your opportunity to participate in this popular professional learning activity when we offer it again in 2011.



when violence

becomes entertaining...

Recapturing childhood and adolescence from the toxic influence of media

Every teacher knows the big role that media plays in the lives of students. One major concern is students' increasing exposure to violence. This conference, held in October in Toronto, explored violence prevention strategies and

programs available to teachers to help their students navigate these choppy waters as well as raising awareness of subtle forms of violence in all forms of media.

More than 350 educators attended the two-day conference with expenses subsidized by OTF. Highlights included keynote addresses from well-known experts including Lt. Col. David Grossman and Craig Anderson as well as a panel discussion moderated by CBC's Wendy Mesley.

Delegates also received copies of PPSBA's media violence classroom resources as well personal copies of the latest Safe@School resource developed by OTF in partnership with the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA). Every school in the province—elementary and secondary—has received these resources and you can find out more at the website www.safeatschool.ca.



Planet in Focus (PIF) is OTF's partner in offering schools and their communities the opportunity to host their own environmental film festival. This year, we are supporting nine film festivals. Congratulations to the teams:

Holly Dougall, AEFO
École secondaire l'Essor
CSDECSO

Tyanna Hunt, AEFO
École secondaire publique L'Héritage
CEPEO

Sheila Koop, ETFO
Kimberley Stanson, ETFO
Waverley Drive Public School
Upper Grand DSB

Allison Hall, ETFO
Brian W. Fleming Public School
Peel DSB

Matt Kavanagh, OECTA
Pierre Tacchino, OECTA
Theresa of Lisieux CHS
St. Justin Martyr
York CDSB

Cheryl Wootton-Ranger, OECTA
St. Joseph-Scollar Hall
Nipissing-Parry Sound CDSB

Rebecca Voll, OSSTF
Central Technical School
Toronto DSB

Grant Elliott, OSSTF
CDCI East
Kawartha Pine Ridge Bd. of Ed.

Jeff Overeem, OSSTF
Dave Baughman, OECTA
College Avenue Secondary School
Thames Valley DSB
St. Mary's Catholic School
London CDSB

All of OTF's PD activities and offerings can be found on our website. You can access our PD website directly at: <http://www.otffeo.on.ca/english/professional.php>



PENSION MATTERS

Sustainability Working Group Report

A part of the agreement in filing the last funding valuation of the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP) was to establish the Sustainability Working Group to examine ways to keep the OTPP secure and affordable for all members into the future. Representatives from OTF, the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, worked diligently for about 18 months issuing their report this last September.

An important result of this work was the creation of a more formalized process for consultation between the Partners and the Plan.

You can find the report at www.fundingyourpension.com, a valuable source of usable information about your Pension Plan. Take some time and visit.

OTF PD (Continued from page 3)

COLLABORATIVE TEACHER LEARNING

It's About Time uses a problem-based learning model that provides time for teacher professional learning. This project supports teams of up to four teachers per team. Each teacher is supported by three days of release time. OTF received 30 submissions for Phase IV. The evaluations from teachers who have participated in Phases I, II and III are very positive and we continually receive emails and phone calls from delighted and appreciative teachers thanking OTF for the time and opportunity to direct their own learning. Here is a sample:

*"As I reached my final class of the year I reflected back and felt very proud of all that I had learned and accomplished throughout the year. So much of which, would not have been possible without collaboration with my peers. My students have watched me grow throughout the year and have been inspired and challenged to grow as well. Parents, students and colleagues all admired the websites and resources I prepared as a result of my involvement in this PD opportunity. I was even more pleased to know that students at other schools were benefitting from the resources I was providing to my students. Thanks again for this awesome opportunity.
Sincerely,
Gillian"*



OTF co-ordinates the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) which is a professional learning opportunity for experienced classroom teachers funded by the Ministry of Education.

The TLLP funds juried proposals from classroom teachers who seek to undertake professional development and leadership enhancement experiences. The goal is to provide an opportunity for teachers to engage in advanced professional learning and to share their learning with others. The TLLP Summit is the annual culmination of the program bringing the participants together to share their learning by displaying their projects and interacting with colleagues from across the province and from all Affiliates. This November, 118 participants presented 71 projects.

ARTS



Federation has become increasingly concerned that the emphasis on literacy and numeracy by the Ministry of Education has put excessive pressure on curriculum. This pressure has been demonstrated by a narrowing of curriculum at the expense of the Arts. We continue to bring this message to the Ministry. In 2010, it responded to our concerns by providing some funding for Arts education professional development for teachers. OTF put this funding to use supporting two engaging projects:

Teacher Subsidies

OTF invited all members to apply for a subsidy towards professional learning opportunities in the Arts to support the implementation of the revised Ontario Curriculum: The Arts Grades 1-8 and The Arts Grades 9-12. Eligible activities included arts-related AQ courses, arts-related subject association annual conferences, arts-related conferences and workshops and board-based arts professional development. We received almost 2,500 applications

and more than 1,100 of those have been completed.

Spirit Horse – Roseneath Theatre's Northern Ontario Tour

OTF supported a major Arts professional development initiative from ETFO and OECTA that made Dance, Drama, Music and the Visual Arts come alive in classrooms across the North. The focal point was Roseneath Theatre's award-winning production of *Spirit Horse*, a play about two First Nations youth who are caught between two worlds—the traditional ways and the modern ways of the city. The play addresses issues of racism, stereotyping and discrimination directly.

The OTF Executive travelled to Marathon on October 21 to take part in the launch of the tour. Eighty schools in 33 communities were included in the tour. The media coverage was extensive and the tour was well received by teachers, students, parents, and communities.