

The Voice

The Frontier Teacher's Association Newsletter

Volume 4, Issue 4
June / 2005

President's Message ***Robin Reed***

President's Message:

Another year is rapidly coming to an end and we are all looking forward to the summer break! We on the executive are just getting back from the AGM and are getting our students ready for their exams and year ends. After 30 years of teaching I still look forward to this time of year when there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

I'd like to reflect a bit on my year as President. I've said in the Voice that there are no foolish questions and I hope to that end I've met your expectations. By the time you see this we'll have met in liaison four times, had 10 executive meetings, and 4 Presidents' Council meetings. Negotiations are complete and the vote is in. We will now start on the opening package for the 2006-2007 collective agreement so if you have items that you want in the package forward them to Scott Miller in Gillam. Next year we'll be putting in the new definition of our boundaries.

To the members of the executive let me say that you are a great bunch to work with. Our meetings have been lively with much discussion and feed back which usually ends with consensus. The members have all taken their roles seriously and I feel they are a fine group. We have some vacancies on the executive which we hope to have filled but its up to you to let your name stand.

In closing I'd hope that your summer is truly great and that if you're travelling that your journeys are safe.

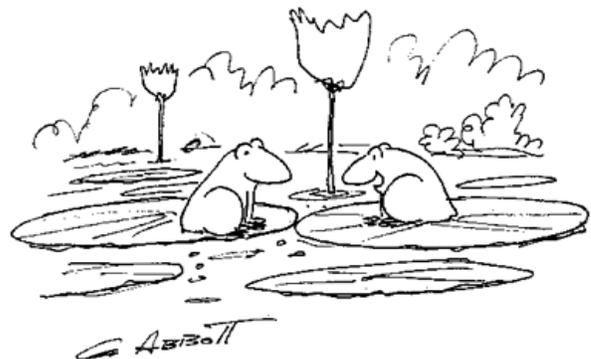
Benefits Update: By Heather Paul

In April the employee benefits committee for Frontier School Division met to review the benefit plans that have both teaching and non-teaching staff members. The benefits involved are our Basic Life insurance and Dental plan. These benefits are 50% funded by the Division.

Due to the good experience of our Basic Life Plan our rate will actually be reduced 7.1 % this year. As for dental the rate will increase by 2.0% which has been the standard increase in the last few years. Keep in mind that the employer takes on 50% of this increase.

For details of these benefit plans please contact Sue green or Debbie MacDonald at the Winnipeg office. Also in the near future, look on the Frontier website for teacher benefits information. Currently only the non -teaching benefits are posted.

As your Employee Benefits chair Please feel free to call me any time if you have questions regarding your health benefits, my number and email are on the last page of this publication.



"Great news honey, I got a job in the Biology Lab today!"

Election Results!

Nominations for the 2005 –2006 FTA election closed on April 4, 2005. Although most of your representatives were determined through acclamation there was one election for District Three representative. Heather Paul and Victoria Apetagon allowed their names to stand for the position. The race was tight and when the ballots were received and counted it was determined that Heather Paul was the successful candidate. As it stands, the 2005 – 2006 FTA Executive shall be as follows:

Table Officers:

President Wanipigow	Ms. Erin Williams
President-Designate Snow Lake	Mr. Dean Elliott
Treasurer Cranberry Portage	Mrs. Dodie Johnston
Vice-President	Vacant
Secretary Grand Rapids	Ms. Laurie Paterson
Past President Leaf Rapids	Mr. Robin Reed

Electoral District Representatives:

District One Gillam	Mr. Scott Miller
District Two Leaf Rapids	Mr. Tom Crawford
District Three Norway House	Ms. Heather Paul

District Four
Norway House Mr. Byron Apetagon

District Five
Cranberry Portage Mrs. Linda Smerch

District Six
Cormorant Mrs. EdieTurner

District Seven
Wanipigow Mr. Michael Ferchuk

District Eight **Vacant**

District Nine **Vacant**

District Ten **Vacant**

As you may have noticed there are four positions this year for which no one has allowed their name to stand. As per Article 6.06 of the Constitution, when a vacancy occurs the position can be appointed by the remaining executive members, keeping in mind the equality of electoral district representation. In the event that no replacement can be found for an electoral district representative an appointment from the membership at large shall be made.

Joining the FTA has been an immensely enjoyable experience for me. I have had many opportunities for excellent Professional Development and in addition to this I have met inspirational colleagues from across the Division as well as the Province of Manitoba. I have attended the Annual General Meeting of the Manitoba Teachers’ Society on four occasions and have had the opportunity to vote on issues that shape working conditions for all teachers in this province. If you have ever been interested in learning more about the FTA or would like to consider joining I strongly encourage you to contact me.

Erin Williams

The Right to Representation

Called into a meeting with disciplinary overtones? You get to choose who will represent you.

Case 1

A first-year teacher is called to a meeting to discuss his summative evaluation, part of which is a recommendation not to continue his contract. He asks to be accompanied by his local association president. He is told he can have a staff officer present but not the local president. The meeting is rescheduled for a time when a staff officer is available.

Case 2

A veteran teacher is called to a meeting with her superintendent, her assistant superintendent, the two principals she works with, and her immediate superior, the special education coordinator. She is not told the purpose of the meeting. When it becomes apparent that it is to reprimand her, she asks to have the meeting rescheduled for time when she can have a union representative present. She is denied. She is told if she leaves the meeting she will be disciplined for insubordination. The meeting goes ahead and she is attacked by all five representatives of the division.

In each of these cases, the teacher has had his or her right to representation violated. This happens more often than it should. The Labour Relations Act provides for a worker's right to

be represented by his or her union, and for the union's right to fulfil its duty of representation on the worksite. The Public Schools Act governs the termination of teachers' contracts and right to representation and due process in cases of termination after a year and a day on a permanent contract. It is illegal for a division to deny these statutory rights.

What are your rights and how do you ensure they are respected?

With regard to the first issue it is clear that the president of the local, as the elected leader of the local has standing as the union's representative at any and all meetings with union involvement, including individual personnel matters. If a teacher is in need of representation, it is up to the teacher who that representative will be: either the President, a staff officer, or both. (Divisions may suggest representation be limited to a single representative.) To deny the president the right to carry out his or her role as local association leader and union representative could be construed as an unfair labour practice—an infringement of not only the member's right to representation, but also the president's right to fulfil his or her role as the elected leader of the local.

How do you determine if you need a representative?

Ask the purpose of the meeting. A meeting to discuss routine school affairs or normal supervision issues such as the timing of the school play, a concern about a student,

assignment, scheduling, or a routine meeting about an evaluation would not usually require a union representative. If the purpose of the meeting has disciplinary overtones, such as reprimand or correction, you may want to ask for representation. If you are in doubt, call your local or MTS.

Principals may want to note it is in their interest to inform a teacher if a meeting will have disciplinary overtones and of his or her right to representation. If the results of the meeting are challenged in a grievance or an unfair labour complaint, the arbitrator will be looking at whether the teacher's rights were respected.

Consult your feelings. Do you feel comfortable meeting without a representative? Do you feel under threat? Have there been previous conflicts? Do you feel at professional risk?

If a meeting has disciplinary overtones or you feel unsafe ask for representation at the meeting. If that means rescheduling the meeting to a time when your representative can attend, that is a perfectly reasonable request. Representation could be your school rep, your local Association President, a staff officer from MTS, or a combination thereof. Remember it is your right to choose your representative(s). The Division's agent cannot for example say, "The president's available now so we'll go ahead with him; we won't wait for someone from MTS." That's not his or her call.

What should you do if you are refused representation?

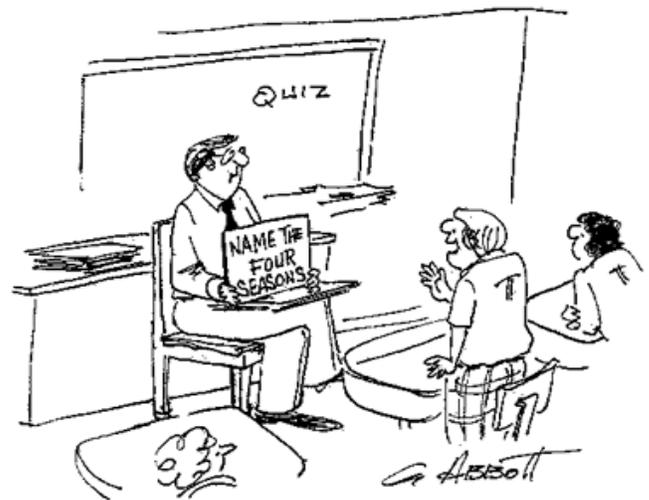
Reiterate your request: say, "I want it noted that I am requesting that this meeting be rescheduled for a time when my MTS staff officer (and/or the president) can be present." If you are ordered to participate in a meeting without representation say: "I will attend the meeting in order to avoid an accusation of insubordination, but I do so under protest." At

the meeting don't comment: say "I will listen respectfully to what you say and will make notes, but I will not be responding or commenting until I have my association president (or a staff officer, or both) present. I will be asking for another meeting with my representative present." Listen carefully and take notes. Call your local or MTS.

Your staff officer will likely suggest writing a follow up note that states a representative was requested and refused, the meeting was attended under protest, and a follow up meeting with representation is requested.

While most superintendents and principals understand a teacher's right to union representation, some do try to discourage such involvement. It takes courage to insist on your rights when they are being resisted by your employer, but the only way to discourage bullying is to insist respectfully that your rights under the Labour Relations Act and The Public Schools Act be respected.

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"Hockey, football, baseball and Frontier Games!"

Dear Robin Reed, President FTA,
 Frontier School Division Board of Trustees
 Gordon Shead, Chief Superintendent,
 Karen Crozier, Area 2 Superintendent,
 Blaine Klippenstein, Editor, FTA Voice

Dear Robin Reed, President FTA,

We are writing this letter to express our thoughts and feelings regarding the recent agreement-in-committee between Frontier School Division and Frontier Teachers' Association.

First, let us say that we shoulder some responsibility in regards to not having someone from our staff represent us to make our concerns known. In the future, we will have representation, so we are requesting that you keep us informed about future meetings and events as they pertain to the teaching staff. You may address all information and correspondence to our representative, Faye Guiboche, at the above address.

Having said this, we would like to express our dissatisfaction and disappointment in the area of retroactive pay. Since the "take over" by Frontier, our staff was led to believe that we would receive retroactive pay based on the Frontier salary grid. We trusted, in good faith, that the FTA negotiating committee would act on the best interest of all teachers in the division in all aspects of the agreement. It is extremely unfortunate that we feel that this has not occurred on this matter. We have received mixed messages from senior staff in Frontier on various occasions. In the fall of '02-'03 school year, we became Frontier staff in every way except in salary. We waited patiently and believed that all aspects of the collective agreement would be satisfactory to all members of the FTA.

We trust that such a misunderstanding will not occur again in the future. We would also like to acknowledge the time and effort, not to mention the stress, of all who took part in the negotiating task.

We thank you for time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Philomene Chartrand Teaching Staff

Letter in Response, Robin Reed

The process of negotiations is often long and hard. Both sides try to get the best deal for their respective groups. When we negotiate we try for the absolute best for the teachers. It is not possible for us to achieve everything we want and we then have to settle for less. That's bargaining.

To say that the FTA negotiating team doesn't have the best interests of the members is wrong. In each negotiation there are things that don't go our way. Sometimes it takes many rounds before headway is made. The FTA negotiating team felt that the best offer we could get was on the table and recommended the package which we all voted for. There are gains for all of us in this agreement. It will not satisfy all of us and no agreement ever will.



Here's an Avenue to Get Your Community's Story into the News Headlines!

My name is Stephanie Scott. I work with the CBC, and wanted to let you know the CBC has implemented the **Prairie Aboriginal Content Unit** this spring.

The content unit has a mandate/goal to increase Aboriginal stories broadcast within Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan as a starting place to grow from. My role as producer of the unit is to ensure this objective happens and continues to flourish in the future.

So, I'm putting out a call for stories in regard to First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples across this great land. I'm looking at story ideas from the Aboriginal youth perspective, success, challenge and stories that are tough to cover that may not have hit mainstream media.

If there are new solutions/advancements in any area that affect the Aboriginal population I want to hear from you.

Some topics:

Language	Culture
Youth	Population / Boom
Justice	Prison
Academic	Two Spirited
Warriors	Politics
Elders	

Please feel free to email me or call me at the numbers below with any suggestions!

I look forward to hearing from you or please pass this on to other people who may have some potential story ideas.

Stephanie Scott
CBC, Producer
Prairie Aboriginal Content Unit
Work: (204) 788-3629
Cell: (204) 795-0337

Workplace and Safety

All F.T.A. contact people in the schools should have received, or will be receiving, a current, and a well put together Handbook on the latest Workplace Health and Safety Regulations. This Handbook should be made aware to all staff members, and stored in a common area of the school for easy access. It is an excellent source of information for any W.P.H.& Safety concerns and procedures. This handbook was requested by Frontier Teachers ' Assoc. for all members to have as a resource from M.T.S. I am pleased to see it being circulated to the schools.

Submitted by Linda Smerch (W.P.H.& Safety Rep. for the F.T.A.)

Walking in Both Worlds Report

Blaine Klippenstein

I attended the Manitoba Teacher Society's annual conference, **Walking in Both Worlds / Creating Sacred Spaces: A Gathering on Aboriginal Education**, on April 28th and April 29th and I have to give MTS full credit for the excellent conference that they pulled together.

The first day began with Dr. Martin Brokenleg, a Lakota originally from Minnesota but now living in Vancouver. Dr. Brokenleg, a well-known psychologist and conference presenter, was articulate, informative and enlightening on presenting Lakota constructs and contrasting it with Western social construct. His anecdotal stories were humorous and exemplified a traditional way of teaching, using stories.

The second day featured Ms Blackstock from British Columbia. Her theme was essentially the affects of colonialism on North and South American Indigenous Peoples, of which education has played a significant role in colonizing Indigenous Peoples. This wasn't always an easy presentation to listen to because

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there is no doubt that 500 years of social and culture colonization, with education playing its part, has had a huge impact on many of the communities that we teach in.

I found her presentation to be informative, interesting and challenging. I could not help but notice a large number of people that stood in line to shake her hand and talk to her after her presentation.

There were many excellent workshops and presentations. The sessions included a wide variety of interests; everything from First Nations Music to workshops challenging the larger society's biases towards Aboriginal culture.

Another interesting note was the role that the Frontier School Division played in all aspects of the conference. The Moose Lake Square Dancers put on a number of excellent performances, The Frontier Fiddlers continue to inspire and the garner standing ovations, a number of Frontier Teachers were presenters and Cam Giavedoni presented a workshop on the creative work that is happening with the Frontier School Division Art Programming.

In my mind, 25 years ago a full conference with an Aboriginal Theme would have been unthinkable. Manitoba is moving forward in this respect, kudos to the Manitoba Teacher's Society for their good work on *Walking in Both Worlds*.

My last *The Voice*:

Well this is my last The Voice as the editor. Hope a few people read it. I wanted to do a few more articles, one was on the PBS documentary on Islam, but was simply too busy, however, I highly recommend it and you can order it from the F.S.D. library now that I've finally returned it. I wanted to also write

an article about my ride home from the last FTA meeting in Thompson where I bumped into an old friend, Crazy Horse, and gave him a ride back to Grand Rapids and he told me all about the Lance Runners, a group of young runners, and how they were running from Fox Lake to Winnipeg and then on to Ottawa. Check his website out at _____.
This run is witness to what schools (education) has imposed on Ithinuuk and Anishinapek, among many other peoples. The whole motive behind this run is healing, hard to argue with that.

If anybody wants the job as editor of The Voice, it's yours. There are 4 vacancies on the FTA and I'm sure that the first person that volunteers to edit The Voice will get it (I never did volunteer for it, I was talked into filling the last vacancy and then when I rather reluctantly came on board I was told that the only position that needed filling was editor of The Voice). I had a damn good laugh about that one. Support was excellent from all on the FTA Executive and the job is a lot easier than one might think. I just wish I would have had more time to put into it but then again I am a principal, adult ed. instructor, I travel to another adult ed centre one a week and I happen to be the fiddle instructor. Thank god I don't have family or a drinking problem.

We teachers work bloody hard and we should never let anyone tell us otherwise. FTA and MTS are Unions and if anyone thinks that Unions don't accomplish anything they should look into what teaching and working conditions were like in 1915. Four more vacancies and one Newsletter to run – think about it – it could be fun, or work, depends on your definition of fun I guess. Thanks to all who read The Voice.

Blaine Klippenstein

Robin Reed, President

Tel. 204-473-2385 (H)
 Tel. 204-473-2403 (W)
 Fax. 204-473-8632
 E-mail: cabinbay15@yahoo.ca

Erin Williams, President-Designate

Tel. 204-363-7533 (H)
 Tel. 204-363-7253(W)
 Fax. 204-363-7293
 E-mail: ewilliams22@hotmail.com

Sean Irving, Vice-President

Tel. 204-349-3068 (H)
 Tel. 204-349-2295 (W)
 Fax. 204-349-3029 (secure)
 E-mail: irving_fta@yahoo.ca

Dodie Johnston, Treasurer

Tel. 204-472-3072 (H)
 Tel. 204-472-3431 (W)
 Fax. 204-472-3191
 E-mail: mcjj@mts.net

Dean Elliott, Past President

Tel. 204-358-9143 (H)
 Tel. 204-358-2281 (W)
 Fax. 204-358-2116
 E-mail: dellio@frontiersd.mb.ca

Scott Miller, Collective Bargaining

Tel. 204-652-2316 (H)
 Tel. 204-652-2193 (W)
 Fax. 204-652-2150
 E-mail: njmiller@mb.sympatico.ca

Byron Apetagon, Archival

Tel. 204-359-4587 (H)
 Tel. 204-359-6757 (W)
 Fax. 204-359-6897
 E-mail: aries_eclipse23@msn.com

Heather Paul, Employee Benefits

Tel. 204-359-6698 (H)
 Tel. 204-359-6781 (W)
 Fax. 204-359-6897
 E-mail: hep@mts.net

Linda Smerch, Workplace Health & Safety

Tel. 204-472-3388 (H)
 Tel. 204-472-3250 (W)
 Fax. 204-472-3622
 E-mail: lsmerch@mb.sympatico.ca

Laurie Paterson, Secretary

Tel. 204-639-2527 (H)
 Tel. 204-639-2451 (W)
 Fax. 204-639-2605
 E-mail: lpaterson273@yahoo.ca

Michael Ferchuk, Housing

Tel. 204-363-7317 (H)
 Tel. 204-363-7253 (W)
 Fax. 204-363-7459 (secure)

Edith Turner, Equality in Education

Tel. 204-357-2057 (H)
 Tel. 204-357-2225 (W)
 Fax. 204-357-2178
 E-mail: eturne@frontiersd.mb.ca

Blaine Klippenstein, Public Relations

Tel. 204-545-2150 (H)
 Tel. 204-545-6246 (W)
 Fax. 204-545-6228
 E-mail: blainek@mts.net

Terry Stover, Professional Development

Tel. 204-675-2278 (H)
 Tel. 204-675-2737 (W)
 Fax. 204-675-2005 (secure)
 E-mail: tstover@churchillmb.net

Tom Crawford, Grievances and Disputes

Tel. 204-473-2797 (H)
 Tel. 204-473-2403 (W)
 Fax. 204-473-8632
 E-mail: adamlake@mts.net

We want to hear from you. Send letters, info, concerns, updates, questions, etc to: The Voice / Blaine Klippenstein, Mountain View School, Barrows / MB / ROL OBO, fax (204) 545 6228, blainek@mts.net