

News & Events

May 8-9 [Remember lives lost in WW II](#)

May 15 [Int'l Day of Families](#)

May 17 [Int'l Day Against Homophobia](#)

May 21 [World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development](#)

May 19-22 [Aboriginal Awareness Week](#)

May 22 [Int'l Day for Biological Diversity](#)

May 29 [Int'l Day of UN Peacekeepers](#)

May 31 [World No-Tobacco Day](#)

June 4 [Clean Air Day](#)

June 5 [World Environment Day](#)

June 7 [Aspen Foundation AGM](#)

June 8-14 [Rivers to Oceans Week](#)

June 12 [World Day Against Child Labour](#)

June 14 [World Blood Donor Day](#)

June 20 [World Refugee Day](#)

June 21 [Aboriginal Day](#)

July 1 [Canada Day](#)

July 5 [Int'l Day of Cooperatives](#)

Social Justice Education is for Everyone – Part 1

By Dan Scratch

What is social justice education? Depending on the person you're speaking to, the answer can vary greatly. For the purpose of this series, I would like to argue that the purpose of social justice education is to engage in a pedagogy that is democratic, just and equitable.

In order to engage in social justice education as an educator you must acknowledge that the world we live in contains social, political and economic inequalities. Issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, language and colonialism impact the world we live in and in turn, the classrooms we teach in. Many of the students that we work with have real world experiences with social justice topics and yet we rarely engage students in these topics in the classroom. If the starting point of social justice education is to acknowledge that injustices and inequities exist within our world and in our classrooms, then our duty as educators is to engage in a critical learning experience with our students to understand how these issues were created, how they are perpetuated within society today, and what we as students, teachers and citizens can do to create a more democratic, just and equitable world.

Engaging in social justice education is an exciting and sometimes overwhelming concept. As we engage with students we must remember that social justice education is not merely about teaching social justice topics. Social justice education requires us to relate to students in a more human and democratic way that allows us to embrace student voice in the classroom. This should remind us that the best way to create authentic relationships with our students is to engage in acts of community building. If we want students to participate in democracy in the future, teachers must not act as authoritarians in the present. Social justice education pushes us to use a teaching approach that encourages democracy, community and relationship building.

This beginning process is a necessary step to teaching with a social justice framework. Social justice education empowers youth to become critical thinkers engaged in their communities and world. Social justice education can have a profound impact on all students, regardless of personal experience. Learning about social justice issues in the classroom can be an empowering experience for youth who have experienced injustice and oppression within their own lives and can provide a safe space to voice their experiences and engage in dialogue with their peers about the world they live in. It's just as important that students who come from more privileged positions within our society learn about the issues that impact their peers in order to gain essential skills and values such as empathy, compassion, understanding and an ability to use their privilege in a way that creates a more positive world for all. After all, social justice education can and should be for everyone.



Aspen Foundation for Labour Education

The Great Western Garment Company Ltd.

By Barb Maheu

Each year I have the pleasure of providing workshops for the Aspen Foundation at teachers' conventions throughout the province. This year we featured lessons included in *GWG: Piece by Piece—A Resource for Alberta Teachers*. For grades 4, 5 and 7, we provided "Bye, Bye Blues: Stories of Canada's Great Western Garment Factory" and for grades 9, 10 and 12 "Forever in Blue Jeans: Teaching Ideas for Industrialization, Globalization and Collectivism."

Each lesson is based on Alberta curriculum outcomes and highlights various songs from [Maria Dunn's GWG: Piece-by-Piece video ballad](#). This year's road show started with NCTCA in Edmonton, on to SWATCA in Lethbridge and last at Palliser in Calgary. At Palliser, Chris Mertens, Palliser Convention's past president, dropped into our session.

In 1978, his father Erwin Mertens became the president of GWG. Chris shared several stories based on his recollections of his father's career at GWG, adding further insight into the company's history. I smiled at another secondary session when, near the end, one of the high school teachers asked if it would be OK to use the grade four lesson, "[The Chocolate Bar War](#)" which had been featured early that day. I said sure, but why? He said someone from the morning session was talking about the lesson and he figured he could make it work in his context. Wherever one travels in the province, there are always those who remember the company and have a story to tell. This is what I love about conventions; there are so many creative and innovative teachers looking for ideas to engage students and stimulate thinking. In 2017, we hope to present at conventions we missed in 2016.

[Find the GWG lessons here](#)

Barb Maheu wrote the lessons for *GWG: Piece by Piece—A Resource for Alberta Teachers*. She worked as an executive staff officer at the Alberta Teachers' Association and is currently teaching pre-service education courses at the University of Alberta. Barb was a high school social studies teacher with Sturgeon School Division for over two decades.

Support our work!

We believe that it is important that schools teach about building new, fairer, kinder, and more just workplaces and communities. Friends like you make our work possible.

Your support is key to offering Social Justice and Labour Education in schools

Aspen Foundation is a registered charity and provides **income tax receipts** to individual donors.

[Click here to donate!](#)

Related Links & Info

[May Day](#)
[Peace and Justice History](#)
[Press Progress](#)
[AFLE Teaching Resources](#)
[Social Studies Council](#)
[SUNIA](#)
[UN Observances](#)

[Like us on Facebook!](#)

Join us for our 15th Annual General Meeting!

Tuesday, June 7, 2016
12:00pm Lunch | 1:00pm AGM

Health Sciences Association (HSAA)
18410 100 Ave NW, Edmonton AB

Please RSVP to afle@telus.net

