

ARBOS AWARD

WAYNE CLEMENTS'S STORY

2023 ARBOS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION



Wayne Clements has dedicated his life to education and advocating for inclusivity in schools, as well as throughout the education community. He held numerous positions in education at the local, provincial, national, and international levels over the course of his remarkable career: RPSTA 1987-1997

executive and three years as president; STF 1995-2004 executive and president 2000-2003; CTF vice-president 2002-2007; Education International – LGBTQ+ representative for CTF 2004-2007; co-chair of CTF Aboriginal Voices in Education committee.

Following graduation from Norquay High School, Wayne received his bachelor of education and post-graduate diploma from the University of Regina and his teaching English as a foreign language certificate in Costa Rica in 2010. Wayne received recognition for his tremendous contributions to education, including Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee Medal in 2002 and the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal in 2005. In addition to these well-deserved awards and contributions to education, he also served in many capacities such as serving on the local implementation and negotiation committees (LINC), Teachers' Bargaining, Board of Governors for the University of Regina, Governing Board for the Avenue Community Centre (OutSaskatoon) and founding planning committee member for Camp fYrefly, Saskatoon. He was also a participant and team leader for Project Overseas for Belize, Central America in 1988 and 1989 as well as for Ghana, West Africa in 1990.

After 30 years as a teacher and vice-principal in Regina and Saskatoon Public School Divisions, Wayne superannuated in 2010. However, his passion for teaching did not stop there. He continues to volunteer his time teaching English in a one-room rural school in Costa Rica. To date, his involvement in the education sector has spanned some 43 years.

Wayne's past colleagues remember him for his passion for honoring diversity and creating safe inclusive spaces for all. He worked tirelessly to make things better for teachers and students alike. Wayne's leadership in advocating for inclusivity made a significant impact on the education sector. He orchestrated opportunities for teachers across the country to learn about diversity, to be respectful and accepting, and to find ways to practise inclusivity. Notably, in the past 22 years, he has only missed marching in the Saskatoon Pride Parade once and that was due to the Covid19 pandemic

Wayne's reputation of kindness, generosity and inclusivity is a true testament to who he is as a person. With his vast experiences, expertise and knowledge, he imparts on others the importance of promoting diversity, both in and out of the workplace. Throughout his interactions with others, Wayne always conveys the need to acknowledge and accept diversity and ensure inclusion for all – no questions asked.

Wayne's dedication to public education and his advocacy for inclusivity has had a profound impact on the education community and beyond. His unwavering commitment to the profession serves as an inspiration that will continue to shape the industry for generations to come.

A CONVERSATION WITH WAYNE CLEMENTS

What inspired you to pursue a career in education?

Well, during high school, I was a bit of a rebel. I couldn't deal with authority, loathed studying and vowed after graduating I would never look at another textbook in my life. But, after deciding on a career change four years later, I thought back to my Grade 4 teacher who told me, "Wayne, someday you will make a great teacher!" And, as the old saying goes – the rest is history!

What do you love most about being a teacher?

Entering the teaching profession has awarded me with so many personal and professional opportunities throughout the years. However, the most rewarding has always been watching my students not only learn and develop skills, but to become outstanding, successful individuals despite the poverty, abuse and obstacles found in society. What can be more rewarding than having a former student, some 20 or 30 years later, recognize you and say, "I just want to say thanks Mr. C, you inspired me!"

What is your biggest career defining moment?

Well, there are several but a few in regard to inclusion and equity come to mind.

- After attending an evening session at a Breaking the Silence conference at the U of S, finding pamphlets attached to our windshields saying that "promoting such a lifestyle would result in an eternity of damnation."
- Marching in a pride parade in Regina and having an individual step off the sidewalk and shout in my face that I, along with the marching teachers would be destined to hell fire and damnation.
- My partner and I being refused hotel accommodations in New Zealand – not once, but twice.
- During my STF presidency, receiving a letter from a retired teacher telling me that all the advocacy the STF was involved in was simply wrong and should stop. "I would never want my granddaughter to be taught by a gay or lesbian teacher. She could turn out gay," were the words she wrote.
- Standing before a teacher convention in a rural Saskatchewan school division, giving my President's report, a teacher stood up and heckled me and stated that there was no way his STF membership fees should be spent on promoting gay rights. I thought to myself – this has got to change.
- Having a lesbian couple transfer their daughter to the school where I was vice-principal stating, "we believe our daughter will be in a safe school where the vice-principal is gay."
- An STF staff member hugging me and saying with tears in her eyes, "Last night our teenage son said to my husband and me – 'I guess if you are OK with the STF president being gay, then it's OK to tell you that I'm gay.'"
- It was defining moments like these that confirmed for me that I would do what I could to advocate for the rights, dignity, inclusion and safety for both students and teachers. It strengthened my resolve.

What are some of the accomplishments you've achieved in your career?

There are too many accomplishments to mention except for a few that I believe are relevant to my advocacy.

- Having the CTF publish resources from the LGBTQ+ committee and the Aboriginal Voices committee that I was part of.
- Presenting policies on anti-sexism, anti-racism and anti-homophobia being adopted unanimously at the CTF Annual General Meetings.
- Standing before the Education International Congress, Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2004. I asked Congress to adopt the first ever policy on anti-homophobia. It passed, but this was just one day after I had been in discussions with a delegation from a Caribbean country who told me it was wrong, that they could never support it and a teacher in their country would lose their job and possibly be jailed if they were to be found gay!

If you could give a new teacher advice – what would it be?

My advice would be – no matter what your personal beliefs, your professional ambitions or comfort level in dealing with the myriad of issues you will face, you are a teacher. Always try to create a caring, understanding and inspirational classroom. The difference you make in the life of that LGBTQ+ student, that First Nations student or more recently, that "new" Canadian student who may not always be immediately seen. But, keep in mind that the safe place you provide may someday, 20 or 30 years later, result in an adult approaching you and saying, "Hey Mr. C, I just want to say thank you!"



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