

# Home Rules

Ontario Federation of Teaching Parents Bimonthly Newsletter

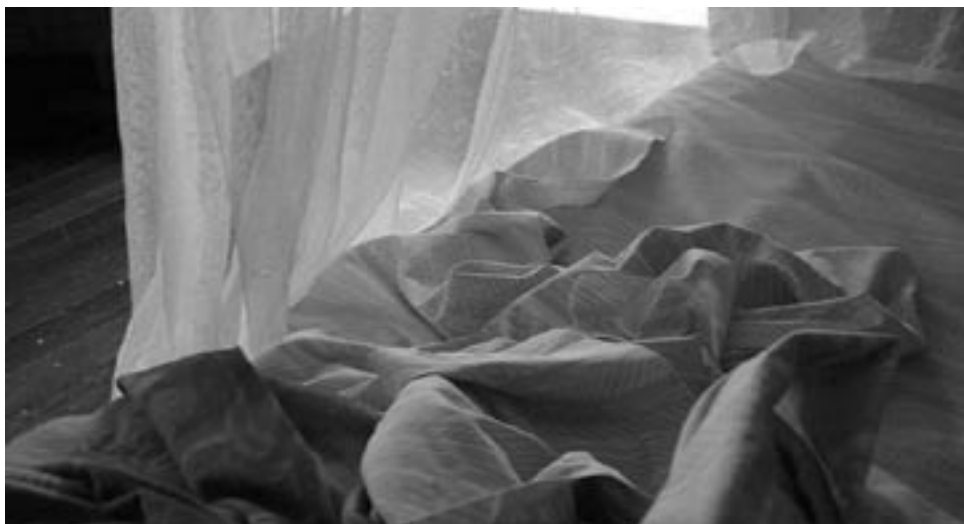


OFTP

Volume 13, Issue 3, June 2008

**“You can educate your child at home”**

## COMMENTARY



### Make your bed?

*What does it really mean to make your own bed?*

By Carlo Ricci

This paper is about whether children should be forced to make their beds, but it is also about so much more: It is about respect, freedom, democracy and agency.

As many parents can attest, there is no shortage of parental advice out there; unfortunately, much of it is of the militant kind. The argument I have heard recently is that my young children, ages 3 and 5, should be making their bed. We have friends whose children make their bed daily and there is no

reason why my children should not be doing the same, I have been told. Furthermore, by having them make their bed, they will learn to be responsible. In short, making their bed is good for them.

At first, this argument can sound fairly convincing. It can make us feel ashamed that there are children the same age as, or younger than, our children who make their beds, and yet our children don't. However, when I consider what else they are learning

by being forced to make their bed, I quickly realize that there can be more harm than good. Being forced to make their bed is not a neutral activity, but there are some other very negative lessons that they are learning which, I believe, we would be better off avoiding.

I want to make clear that I am not against young people making their beds. In fact, there are days that my children do, and if they choose to make their bed I believe that it is a very appropriate thing for them to decide to do. What I am against is children being forced, coerced or manipulated into making their beds. Once these techniques or strategies become part of the equation, then that is where I believe we have gone beyond making their bed and into something much more dangerous.

By forcing children to make their beds either by force or reward we are manipulating them to do what it is that we want them to do. For example, through this, they are internalizing that they need to make their bed not because it is something that they should be doing (a debatable point), but because it is something that they will either get in trouble for not doing or that they will get a reward for doing (whether it be candy, a smile and so on). In addition, this can lead young people to feel disempowered because they are made to feel that they do not have control over their own lives. As well, they learn that they need to listen to what others want them to do and not to listen to themselves. They may begin to believe that the love that is showered on them is conditional, rather than knowing that they are loved unconditionally.

If you really want your young child to make their bed, you need to ask yourself why it is that you want them to do this: is it because others are doing it? Is it because YOU want the bed made? Are these reasons worth sacrificing your young child's sense of determining their own lives? The best we ought to do if we want our young children to make their bed is to trust that by watching

#### IN THIS ISSUE...

What does it really mean to make your own bed? .....	1
Masthead, Letters, Notes and Announcements.....	2
Profile - Jonnylee Simpon .....	3
Home Rules Reader Photo Album .....	4
Fun Events .....	6
OFTP Online Groups, Submission Guidelines.....	8

...continued on page 6

# Home Rules

is published bi-monthly by the  
Ontario Federation of Teaching  
Parents (OFTP)

**OFTP** is a non-profit, volunteer-managed group committed to providing information about and support for homebased education to our members and the public at large.

OFTP supports parental choice in education as stated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (26.3). We act as a link between home educators and institutions such as the provincial government and local school boards. OFTP believes that parents have the right to determine the satisfactory nature of instruction for their children. The views expressed in articles in this newsletter are those of the writers and are not necessarily the views of OFTP. OFTP believes that parents need to find the method that works for their particular family. OFTP does not espouse any one method of home education over another. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without prior written permission from the editor or author.

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If your e-mail address and/or mailing address has changed, please notify the Membership Secretary immediately.

## EDITORIAL

# The Diversity in Education Conference

By: Marina DeLuca-Howard

When I first started organizing the Diversity in Education Conference I was hoping to provide attendees with a safe space to meet one another, children in tow, and explore their own experiences with learning. I envisioned lively conversation in a non-hierarchical setting: an attendee-directed experience. When I tried to define the parameters of what that meant I failed utterly--something akin to panic ensued quite quickly. What I always wanted in a conference every time I attended was to feel as though I had a choice and a voice. In short I wanted to be able to glean knowledge and meet others in a manner that met my needs for autonomy. As a believer in experiential learning I tried to find a way to reach authenticity, without treating others to a chaotic top down experience.

When Michelle Webb, the registrar and treasurer, asked me to make a speech at the conference all I could do was welcome everyone and tell them I wasn't there to make speeches or proselytize. I wanted them to shape their own experience, talk to one another and build community--but I couldn't make them. The thing about grass roots organizations is that if one person is directing them they are not grassroots organizations any longer.

The problem with mob rule is that many of us picture pitchforks and torches and angry confrontation. I have a different vision of society and education and human nature, one that is optimistic. It is this that I wanted to share, and in fact could not share but only provide space for it to happen--with the full understanding that it would be chaotic. But order as a yardstick for success doesn't create justice or community. It merely creates order. So how to use my understanding of the just society--informed by Marshall Rosenberg's ideas of compassionate communication? Can we meet our needs for contribution in a sustainable manner?

The nature of bias is such that a smorgasbord of ideas needed to take hold. But the conference needed to be a potluck, not a set menu. I had no idea what anyone would bring to the Conference. How to be inclusive and accepting of diversity in its full sense without defining it and limiting it?

There are ideas of the ninetieth century that permeate education and shape it as "a class system" with a clear authority, unquestionable and always right. The idea that knowledge can be boxed and packaged and handed unaltered to be used by the recipient is a hold over from another era where power was thought of differently--informed by monarchies and land ownerships and privileges. That has been captured and preserved in the education system: whether grade school high school, university or conference. Most often when people converge



Photo: Dave Howard

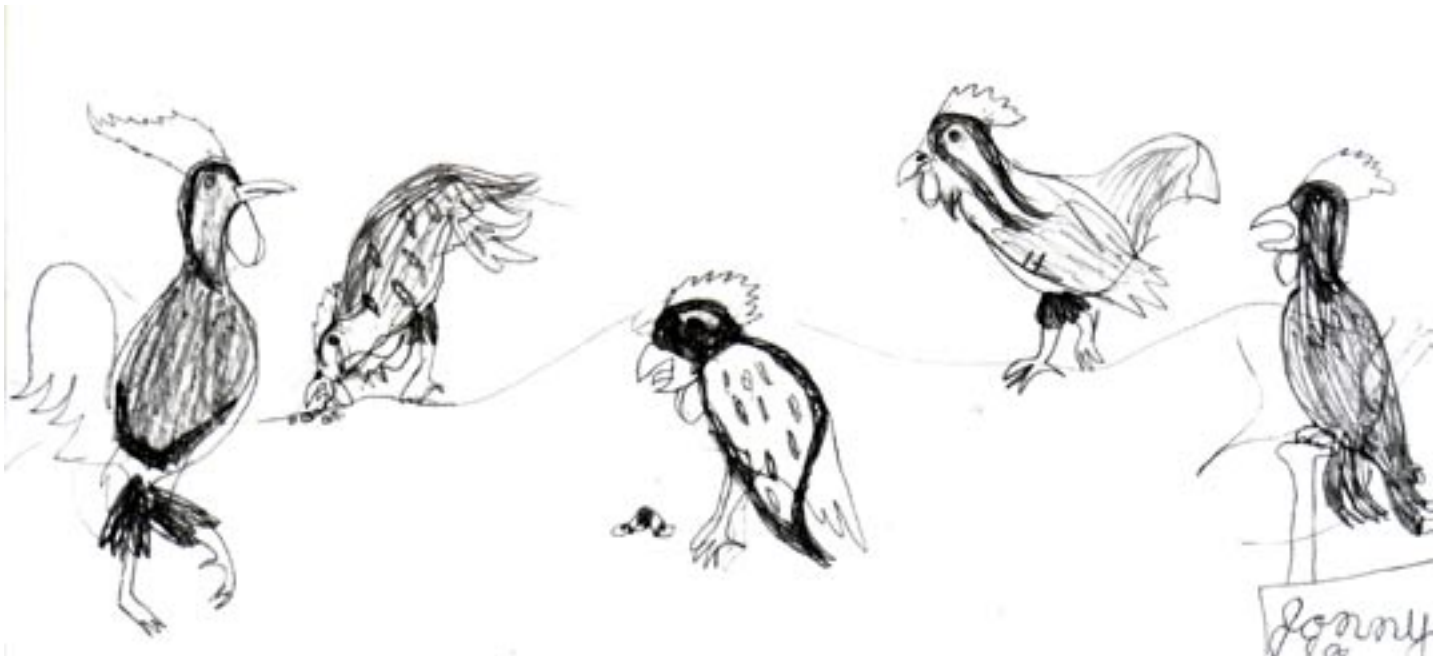
in order to learn, it has until this point taken this particular form.

And a conference is by definition not about democracy per se. It is about clear delineation between experts and non-experts--in a manner that gives power and credence to one over the other. It frames dualistic ideas of the enlightened and the unenlightened. The language of school and education is very much rooted in ideas of hierarchy.

I wanted the conference to be conferring, not teaching, but generating knowledge; the idea that you don't compartmentalize; a consensus or a discussion among equals.

Thanks to our speakers, our vendors, and most of all, all our tireless volunteers who worked so hard to make this event happen: Michelle Webb, Theresa Vaz, my partner John, Kim Kutner, Teresa Van Neste, Dufferin Grove Park, Geoff Webb, the Walmer Centre, Dave Howard to name only a few; and to the many unscheduled volunteers who showed up last minute and simply asked if they could help. This conference really belongs to them.

# The Education of Jonnylee



By: Margo Quinn

*Drawing by Jonnylee Joy Simpson*

It's Monday morning, I watch Jonnylee, my 7 year old grand-daughter run across her lawn, down the little hill to grandma's house. Homeschool will be at grandma's today.

After lots of hugs and kisses, it's right to work! Her first job is taking care of her pets, 5 hens and 2 pygmy goats. After the hens are fed and the eggs are gathered, the goats are fed and their little barn is cleaned – it's loving time.

Each little hen is called by name, she holds them and talks to them. Gramma waits and watches, the joy on her dear wee face is something to behold. I don't wait too long! Jonnylee will come and say, "I'm ready gramma". That's when we come inside and after a little snack, we settle down together at the kitchen table for some book work.

Homeschool for Jonnylee is a family affair.

There's grampa, he helps Jonnylee learn what the rest of us know little about! How electricity works, how to take a piece of wood and make it into something useful and practical. She is able to tap into his years of living. How he has dealt with everyday situations, with wisdom, patience and perseverance.

There's daddy. After work they love to go for long walks. Together they love and learn of nature. Jonnylee rarely comes back from a walk with daddy without some little treat

sure in her hand. Experiencing the wonders of nature can teach us as no book can do.

There's mommy. Mothers of course are



the greatest teachers on earth. They don't always teach from a textbook but they always teach from a heart of love. Jonnylee's mommy is the music teacher, the computer teacher. Because she has her own successful business she is also the teacher of P.R. skills, how to deal with people with courtesy

and respect. She instills by example the value of hard work and making good choices.

And there's my gramma. How we love to get gramma's blanket, sit together on the couch and read and read. I read to Jonnylee and she reads to me. We talk together of days gone by and days that are yet to be. We play together, laugh together. Sometimes the 53 years between us seems like nothing. I feel so blessed to have a part in the learning of Jonnylee's life. I watch her learn with such joy and freedom.

She has lost nothing by coming out of the mold of the structured school of learning, but she has gained everything by being in the loving, nurturing, caring, happy home of learning.

Some say that Jonnylee when she's older will never fit into the world around her and I say no she probably won't. She'll soar much higher and with much more freedom to be who she is and to do what she loves to do. And whatever she chooses to do, I know she will do it well, with all her heart. For that is the way she does things now. And in an atmosphere of love and encouragement, those qualities will only increase.

*Submitted by Margo Quinn, grandmother of Jonnylee Joy Simpson. We live in Greely, Ontario.*



↑ Carlo Ricci (front, left) sits down at a spontaneous discussion group at OFTP's Diversity In Education conference this year.



↑ Sophia Donais, Leah Howard and Emory Shisko enjoy screaming at the Manitoba Children's Museum in downtown Winnipeg



↑ Emory and Sophia enjoy the camping stop on their way back home to Toronto from grandma's house in Saskatchewan.

# Home Rules

## READER PHOTO ALBUM

*Thanks to everyone who sent their photos, and those who agreed to let us print their photos. We're hoping readers will keep sharing photos of their homeschooling practices, their excursions and adventures - or just take an opportunity to say 'hi' to everyone.*



↑ Michelle Webb and Marina DeLuca-Howard pause for a moment for a photo op at the Diversity In Education conference. Michelle's daughter, Dara, enjoys the conference from her mom's sling.



← Inanna Webb keeps the mosquitos away at her friends's cottage, while trying to fish off the end of the dock, near Orillia, ON.



↑ Sophia Donais considers taking some photos of her own. Maybe we'll see them next issue?



↑ Jonnylee Simpson takes her rooster for a ride with her grandpa in Greely, Ont. Read her story on page 3.



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**Send us your photos!**

See submission guidelines on back page!



↑ Jonnylee Simpson with her rooster, in the summer of 2007.



→ Crispin DeLuca-Howard contemplates the pool noodle before deciding whether or not he should go swimming in the Severn River near Washago, ON

## Make your bed

... continued from front page

us make our beds and theirs (if that is what you want), they will want to make their bed on their own. This may happen at an early age or it may happen at a stage in their lives when they are long gone from our homes and into their own homes with their own families.

I also want to clarify that I am not saying that we should not ask or request that children make their bed. I think that this is a very appropriate request to make on young people, but what I am saying is that if they do not adhere to our request, then we ought not to force them or manipulate them to comply with our desire. We should not allow ourselves to feel disappointed.

I believe that the premise of this paper is so important because children are the last acceptably oppressed group, and that we should create places and spaces where children can unfold in their own way at their own pace. If we want to change the world, we need to, in large part, reconsider our child rearing practices. We need to value, honour and respect young peoples' bodies, minds and spirits. We cannot expect young people who are raised in oppressive conditions to easily become more democratic when they get older. The great news is that we can change the world by heeding Gandhi's advice: "you must be the change you want to see in the world." We can start with ourselves and our own families and hope that the movement will continue grow exponentially.

### *Biography*

*Carlo Ricci currently teaches in the faculty of education's graduate program at Nipissing University and he founded and edits the online Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning (JUAL). He tries to incorporate the spirit of unschooling, democratic and learner centered principles in all of his classes. Everything of value that he has learned, he has learned outside of formal schooling. He has never taken a course in school connected to what he now teaches and writes about. He has taught in elementary and high school. He has also taught in undergraduate, teacher education programs and graduate programs. His personal schooling experience as a student and later as a teacher has inspired him to revolt against institutional schooling. He continues to heal from the wounds inflicted on him by formal schooling. He has two daughters ages 3 and 5 that he hopes will decide to unschool.*

## FUN EVENTS

### Serengeti Bush Camp

The Toronto Zoo invites the adventurer in everyone for a night at Serengeti Bush Camp. You'll explore the African Savanna, meet the animals who inhabit it, and camp under the Serengeti stars. It's an unforgettable experience.

#### YOUTH & SCHOOL GROUPS

The following nights are still available for Youth and School Groups in 2008. While the advertising is to school or youth groups it would make a great homeschooling summer trip! There is also a section below for groups of 12 or less, as well as Family Nights.

To book your group, please complete a Bush Camp registration form, include a deposit of \$160 along with a credit card number, and return it to them as soon as possible.

According to their websites these dates were still available at press time:

Sunday August 3, Sunday August 10, Sunday August 17, Monday August 18

For smaller groups of 12 or less, they may be able to accommodate you on a night with another group. Please call 416-392-5947 to enquire. NOTE: they will only accept registrations on those nights for groups that are similar age/grade/group as the original group booked.

#### FAMILY NIGHTS

Family Nights take place on designated dates from June 27 to August 27, and the Toronto Zoo is now accepting registrations for 2008 Family Nights. For a detailed brochure of 2008 BUSH CAMP INFORMATION and REGISTRATION FORMS, please see their website listed below.

The following Family Nights are still available. All other nights are full. (As of 2008-07-22)

Wednesday August 6, Tuesday August 12, Wednesday August 13, Wednesday August 20, Tuesday August 26, Wednesday August 27

#### DETAILS

For complete details, visit:

<http://www.torontozoo.com/CampsPrograms/BushCamp.asp>



# Puppets Up!

## A great field trip for families in August

The highly acclaimed **International Puppet Festival, Puppets Up!** returns to **Almonte, Aug. 9 and 10**. It is an event that the whole family can enjoy together. The historic streets of the picturesque **Eastern Ontario** town are closed to traffic and filled with the bustle of families, many with 3 generations, enjoying a safe and exciting day together in the sun.

Over the two days of the festival, top professional puppet troupes from Canada and abroad will stage 22

daily parades.

Each day at 2:30 p.m. a parade of festival participants passes down the hill past the historic Old Post Office in Almonte, led by well-known entertainment celebrities, and featuring local celebrity puppets carried by their owners. You can be part of the parade!

Puppet Workshops during the four days preceding the festival, from August 5-8 there will be a variety of workshops covering a range of topics connected with puppets. One of the workshops is specifically designed for families, and takes place over the course of 4 days. The workshop leader is Phil Romain, aka Tip the



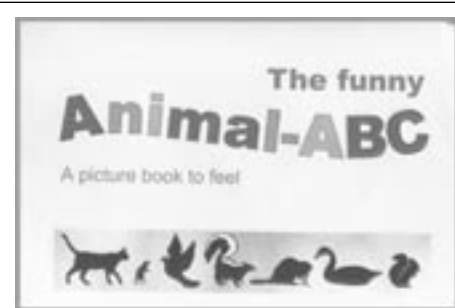
shows daily in large, tent-theatres throughout the downtown core. The shows range from the traditional to the avant garde and feature thousands of puppets in all styles and sizes: walking life-size puppets, tiny finger puppets, celebrity puppets, shadow puppets, and marionettes. You can even make your own puppets!

The festival also includes continuous street entertainment. Store windows become mini-stages for tableaux and video shows! The street comes alive with musicians, dancers, clowns, puppet-making workshops, face-painting, balcony puppet shows and

Clown. Families will be able to build a giant head, with huge hands to be carried in the parade.

For more information visit [www.puppetsup.com](http://www.puppetsup.com)

*Submitted by Stephanie Williams, Workshop Coordinator, Puppets Up! Stephanie is a retired teacher of Visual Arts who now volunteers at the National Gallery of Canada as a docent, the Savoy Society of Ottawa as a producer, she sings with Crosstown Harmony, a Ladies' Barbershop Chorus and enjoys all the fun of organizing workshops and a crafts market for Puppets Up!*



## ABC-book accessible to all

### Tamarico distributes a funny ABC-book with Braille and printed drawings and texts.

Each letter of the alphabet is illustrated by an animal and by the letter and the name of the animal in Braille. Each animal is also represented by a drawing (with colours) and by the same drawing in relief. That means that each element of information is available in several ways: printed words, Braille, drawings, relief.

The book introduces seeing children to Braille and will allow them to discover some animals using their fingers only. Several kindergarden classrooms in Belgium have already tested the book and used it with success.

This ABC-book is available in English, French, German, Dutch and Spanish version.

### Visit:

<http://tamarico.com/index.php?page=abc-book-the-alphabet-book>

## OFTP E-MAIL LISTS

*For Members Only*

### OFTP Exec List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OFTPEXEC>

This list is open to all members and its purpose is to discuss OFTP operations and initiatives.

### OFTP General List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oftp>

The purpose of this list is to discuss and share ideas and information about homeschooling. Discussions may include daily homeschooling issues, passing along articles or conference information, product reviews and questions about legalities.

### OFTP Chat List

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oftpchat>

The purpose of this list is to provide a forum for members to share thoughts, feelings, questions and information on "off topic" (non-homeschool) issues.

To find OFTP's specialized lists, please visit <http://ontariohomeschool.org/oftpgroups.html>



**For ad rates and sizes, please visit**

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND DEADLINES

If you would like to submit a piece to the newsletter, here are some guidelines to follow:

**Topic Suggestions** - your 'style' of homeschooling; curriculum critiques or reviews; teen stories; research studies on homeschooling; educational articles; book reviews; tell us about your support group etc.

**Length Restrictions** - There are no restrictions, although the newsletter is only twelve pages! When making a submission, please include a brief bio, approximately 2 to 3 sentences in length.

**Book Reviews** - Please include the author, ISBN number, publisher, copyright date and name of reviewer. If a homeschooled child has reviewed the book please include the child's age.

**Curriculum Reviews** - Include curriculum name, supplier name and contact information, price, appropriate age/grade level and name of reviewer.

**Format** - The Editor can accept most file formats. Articles can be attached to a regular e-mail or included within the body of the e-mail message. Articles may also be sent through traditional mail (be sure to allow sufficient time prior to the deadline).

**Issue Deadlines** - Submission deadlines are the third Friday of each odd-numbered month (ie: January, March etc.) by 6 p.m.

*Consider  
writing an  
article or  
send us  
drawings  
or photos.*



*We're  
always looking for  
submissions!*