

VOICE OF STUDENTS MISSING IN SEX-ED DEBATE

There is a crucial voice missing in the debate regarding the provincial government's decision to repeal the 2015 sex-education curriculum - the young people for whom it was developed.

As an educator in Halton for 35 years, I taught health and physical education, including the sex-education component of the curriculum in its various forms.

For a good portion of my career I was a guidance counsellor and head of the student services department. In that role, I dealt with numerous cases involving young people and sexual issues, focusing on three aspects of the curriculum that have now repealed.

The first is consent. Much of the discussion to date has focused on the potential victims of unwanted sexual activity, which, of course is priority. But, there is also those who are the perpetrators.

I think of a group of young men in Grade 12 who, although they did not perpetrate the acts, witnessed the purposeful sexual exploitation of girls who were unwittingly administered the date rape drug at parties. In their minds, the boys were doing nothing wrong, completely unaware of the criminal act of being a bystander.

They were shocked to discover this.

I think of the Grade 10 boy who surreptitiously took cell-

phone pictures of his female classmates in certain poses and posted them online. He thought it was just "fun" only to discover it was potentially illegal.

Then there is cyber bullying.

I think of the Grade 10 girl who refused to come to school because a group of girls spread a rumour (untrue) on social media that she had engaged in a sexual act with several boys. The group of girls had no idea the devastating impact this was having on her.

The third aspect is sexual orientation, which reminds me of the young woman who, in her graduating year, was considering taking her own life since she didn't know how to tell her parents she was homosexual.

All of these situations are real and occurred prior to 2015, when the 1998 curriculum was being taught. With the new curriculum, updated in 2015, the circumstances listed above may have never happened since students would have been informed.

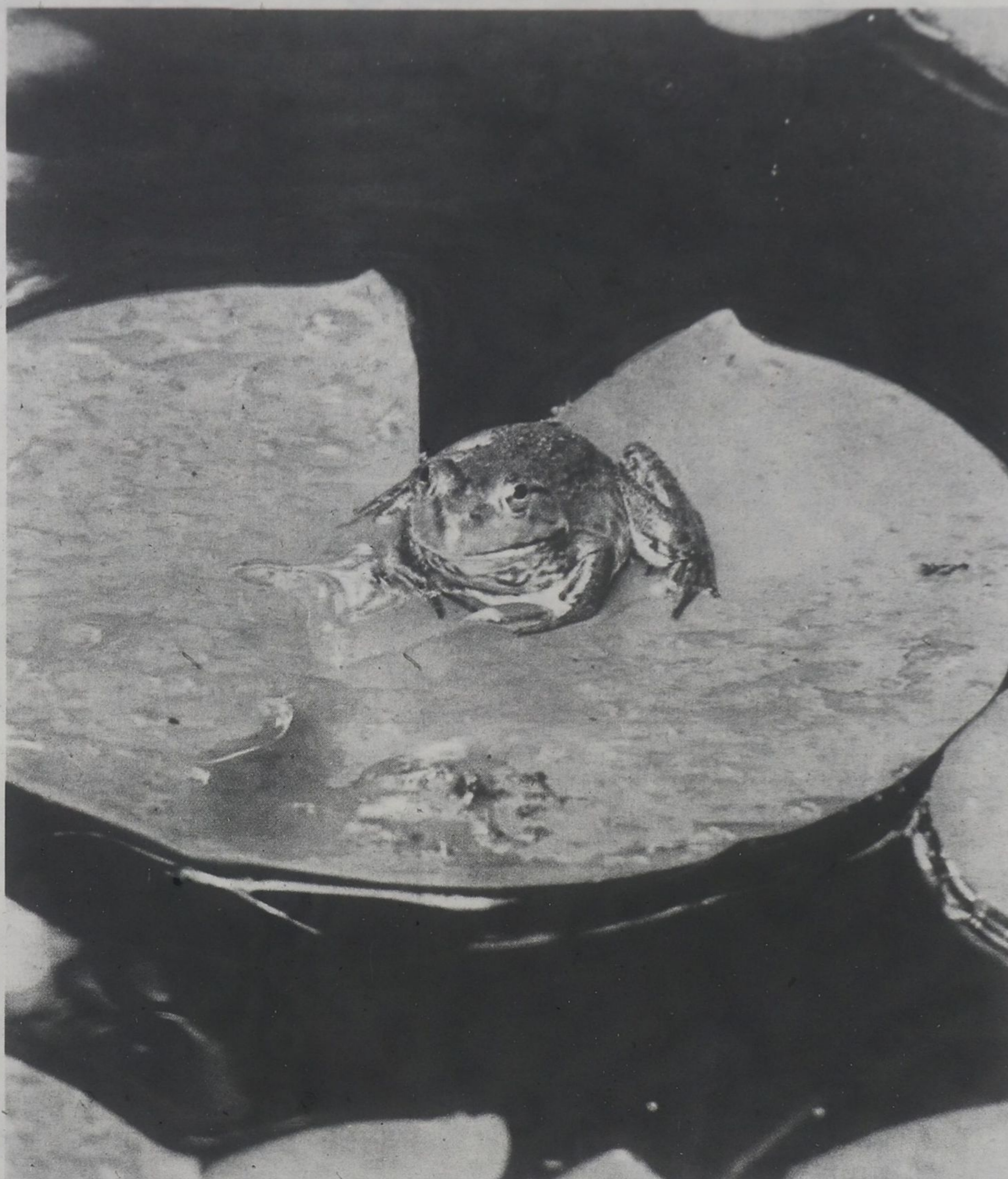
Although I realize well-meaning parents and politicians believe repealing the 2015 curriculum is best for students, it is with confidence that I state it is not.

Your experience and reality upon which you make your decision is not the experience and reality of young people today.

Listen to what young people have to say. The 2015 curriculum is a response to their voice.

Mavis O'Neil

SNAPSHOT



Keith Hincks photo

Keith Hincks snapped this photo of a frog hanging out on a lily pad in his Milton pond. Do you have a cute, fun, unique or interesting photo taken in Milton? Send your Snapshot submission for consideration to cohara@metroland.com. Please include a short description and the name of the photographer for publication.

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