

How we walk

in the library at Stephen Lewis Secondary School

Before the opening of Peel's newest secondary school in the spring of 2006, all newly-hired and acquired staff members met at several full-day P.D. sessions to discuss the vision we were going to build. I remember our first session very well, when our principal, Martha Wood, set the wheels in motion with the speech that defined us as a true community. As new members of the Stephen Lewis Secondary School community, we were being called upon to build a vision for our school intended to include hope, faith and respect for the diversity brought by every single individual that would walk into the building. I knew then that my decision to join Stephen Lewis Secondary School was a wise choice and that Stephen Lewis himself was at the heart of our school's philosophy.

When Stephen Lewis walked into our school in September 2006, he was greeted with the following speech by one of our students:

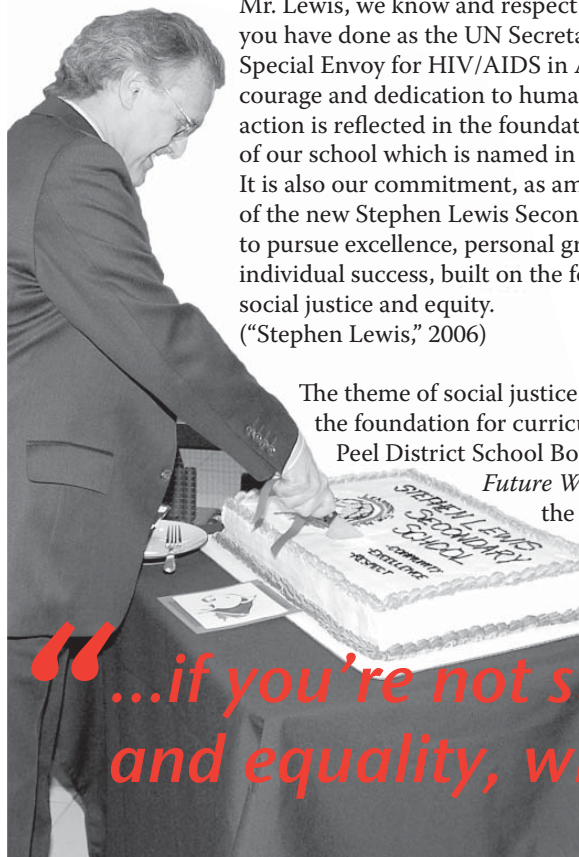
Mr. Lewis, we know and respect the work that you have done as the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Your courage and dedication to humanitarian social action is reflected in the foundation and vision of our school which is named in your honour. It is also our commitment, as ambassadors of the new Stephen Lewis Secondary School, to pursue excellence, personal growth and individual success, built on the foundation of social justice and equity. ("Stephen Lewis," 2006)

The theme of social justice and equity became the foundation for curriculum building. The Peel District School Board's document, *The Future We Want* (2003) was the "go to" resource for all departments. We were also provided with

useful ideas on developing an inclusive curriculum from the leading North American expert in this field, James A. Banks (1988). The plan was to re-construct each course curriculum by weaving social justice and proactive equity into all aspects of the course. This had a profound effect on the job of building the new school library. Our full-time teacher-librarian, Sandy Svatos and myself, the new .5 teacher-librarian, were very excited at the prospect of building "a comprehensive library program infused with a spirit of social justice that would fire up" our new students (Satterthwaite 12).

We had the wonderful advantage of having a "clean slate" to start from – literally. The actual library space, including shelving and circulation desk, were still under construction when we opened in September 2006. Staff and students were assigned to one of four "villages" named after four Canadian heroes of social justice: June Callwood, Craig Kielburger, Agnes Macphail, and David Suzuki. In addition to some obvious reference materials (encyclopedias, dictionaries, etc.) we started our non-fiction collection by looking to our village namesakes. We included *Race Against Time* (Lewis 2005), *Me to We* (Kielburger 2004), *The Sacred Balance* (Suzuki 2002), *Good News for a Change* (Suzuki 2003), *June Callwood: A Life of Action* (Dublin 2006), and *Agnes Macphail: Champion for the Underdog* (Wyatt 2000). We continued to grow (and grow to this day) by liaising with our course teachers, building relationships that foster the growth of resources offering social justice-related information.

Our Grade 9 Learning Strategies program has taken on bullying as its focal point of study. To support this program, we have included various children's picture books on bullying (*Just Kidding* by Trudi Ludwig, *Hooway for Wadney Wat* by Helen Lester), many teen and YA fiction titles as well as useful reference resources including Barbara Coloroso's *Just Because It's Not Wrong, Doesn't Make It Right* (2007),



“...if you're not struggling for social justice and equality, why are you on the planet?”

– Stephen Lewis