



Comparative Cultures

Who's Afraid Of The Big Bad Wolf?

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

When I read out fairy tales or sing nursery rhymes to my preschooler, I often wonder if they aren't antithetical to the virtues we attempt to teach our children - to be nice, kind, generous and so on.

For instance, take the classic tale of *Hansel and Gretel*. Since my 3-year-old cannot read, I tweaked the story to avoid talking about the stepmother and how she sent Hansel and Gretel to the forest with the sole purpose of abandoning them. I also skipped the bit about the father agreeing to this evil idea and chaperoning them to the forest. And the part about how the witch in the candy house fed Hansel lots of food only to make him chubby so she could later eat him. What an ingenious but wicked idea!

At the end, I had nearly altered the story beyond recognition. Toddlers,

however, are smart and my daughter kept asking me why the woman in the pictures looked so angry. I mumbled something about kids staying up past their bedtime and moved on to the next page. You have to think pretty quickly when you have to spontaneously improvise a story.

I had similar doubts with the people and ideas featured in some other classic tales and rhymes too. Like *Cinderella*, whose evil stepisters made her do all the work. Or the idea that those who are evil are ugly-looking. And princesses are always skinny and beautiful. Just look at the images in any book or cartoon and you will know what I mean. What if my preschooler starts thinking that all 'ugly-looking' people are thereby evil? There are too many issues to contend with, though my hope is that she will learn to think critically by age four, ha!

The issue isn't just with stories. I find

nursery rhymes problematic, too. Has anyone paid attention to the words of *Goosey Goosey Gander*? Or *Three Blind Mice*? Since when did throwing old men down the stairs become something to sing about? The fact that he wouldn't say his prayers is little justification for the act. And how does running behind the farmer's wife become a reason for having your tail cut off with a carving knife? Even if the tails belong to blind mice.

I know my preschooler doesn't care and will probably go through school humming these rhymes and forgetting about them as she gets older. I doubt she will think cutting off tails and throwing people down stairs is appropriate but I do hope she will learn to think about and question such ideas before accepting them blindly.

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Gone But Not Forgotten

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville Free Press

December's article on the demolition of the Orchard Park Public School (OPPS) building on Sunset Blvd. brought back memories for former students, teachers and neighbours.

When the school closed in 2008, Harry and Barbara Schell, who live across the street, wrote the following letter to the school principal.

"We have lived across the road from OPPS since 1962. When we were making plans to build our home, many said, 'Oh don't build across from the school! You will have noise, litter, traffic, and problems.' That has not been the case.

"Our four children attended OPPS as did six of our nine grandchildren. The OPPS schoolyard became an extension of our yard when our children and grandchildren were growing up.

"When Susie (Mrs. Chewins) graduated Teachers College in 1971, Keith Sutherland, the principal of the day, gave her a job. We're convinced he knew he could borrow from the neighbours across the street if he employed their daughter. Borrowing over the years included sugar, flour, oven space, a television, and BBQ among other things. We were happy to oblige. Susie spent her career at OPPS and when the school closes in June, we will miss the continued connection to our neighbour across the street.

"We have thoroughly enjoyed the school as a neighbour and enjoyed seeing growth in a place that was nurturing, protective, and educative for thousands of Stouffville children.

Orchard Park Public School has been a wonderful neighbour and one we will miss."

And despite the fact that the Schells were so sad to see

the school go, Harry noted that Priestly Demolition did an outstanding job this fall, said their daughter, Sandy Schell Kennedy. Sandy, who attended the school from kindergarten to grade 6 and whose children were also students there, said she has many wonderful memories of Orchard Park. In particular she will never forget how generously the school community rallied around former student Luke Anderson, who was paralyzed after a mountain biking accident 10 years ago in B.C.

"I was on school council and wanted to propose we as a school do something to assist Luke financially. I was hoping a small donation from the school's fun fair could be made. Our wonderful council decided that year that the entire proceeds would go to Luke. We were so lucky to be part of a wonderful, caring school community."

Former teacher Elaine Clendenning also felt strongly that the school's demise represented the end of an era for many people in the community. "I cherish many memories of my years at Orchard Park," she wrote in an email. "These will last longer than the building."

Gallery Round-up

On Feb. 17 from 1 to 3 p.m. The Latham Gallery will host a closing reception for the current exhibition, *Nature of Form*, followed by a talk by artist Derek Evans at 3:30 p.m. A free Family Day art activity will also be offered at the gallery on Feb. 17 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and everyone is welcome to attend.

From Feb. 22 until March 29, the work of Mark Stebbins will be featured at the gallery. The visual artist's paintings contain references to traditional crafts like quilting and rug hooking, while incorporating digital elements to create a layered and rich tapestry of colour and form.

For full details on upcoming gallery events visit www.lathamgallery.ca.



Mark Stebbins, *Gleaner*, acrylic ink on board, 2012

Gleaner, by Mark Stebbins, will be part of an upcoming exhibition of the artist's work which opens at The Latham Gallery on Feb. 22.



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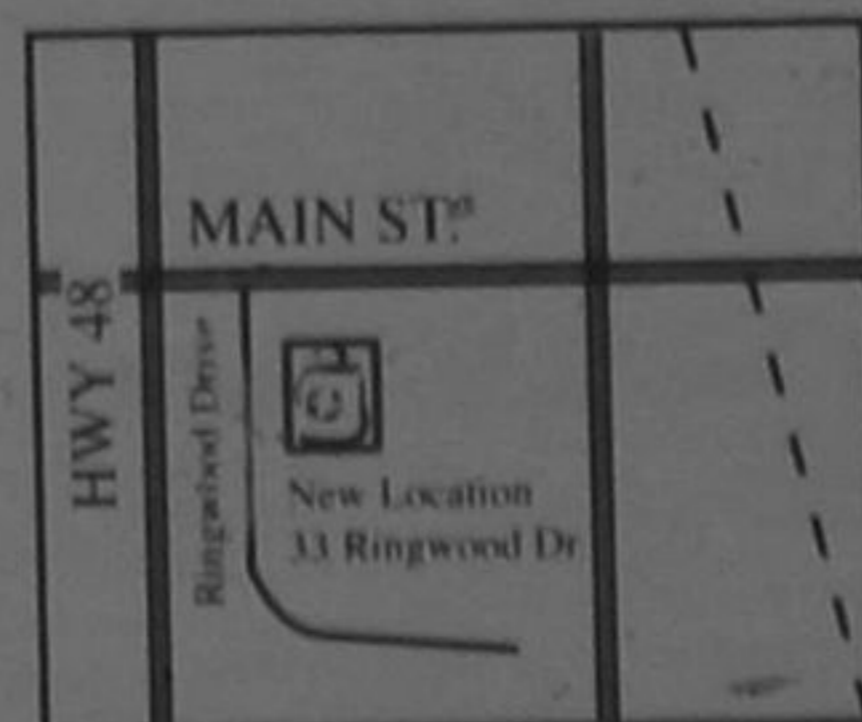
Evening Out

a special event in support of the building fund

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