

## MESSENGER EDITORIAL

# Safety of children in schools has to become the priority

Use whatever cliché you want in this case.

We are beating a dead horse. We are spinning our wheels in the mud. Or as Yogi Berra once said, it's déjà vu all over again.

Kids are getting beaten up at our public schools. There is bullying going on, and kids are being targeted. Some kids are going to school scared and coming home hurt.

The problem is not isolated at any school in particular, but the vortex of the situation, at least right now, seems to be Vimy Ridge Public School in Findlay Creek, just north of Greely.

Parents organized a protest at the school in February and talked about how kids are coming home with black eyes and concussions. The school held a town hall on the topic two weeks ago.

The board sent a statement to CTV News and claimed that they acknowledge the concerns from parents. They say they take the concerns seriously, but add they believe the kids are safe at school.

Among the steps being taken are class time spent on positive behaviour, character traits and focusing on kindness. There are assemblies focusing on kindness. Staff are reviewing practical conflict resolution skills.

That's all nice. But if you're a Grade 2 student and a Grade 5 student jumps you and starts punching you in the face, do any of the people who came up with these solutions think for a moment that conflict resolution skills are going help the kid getting the beat down?

What parents heard during the assembly is that suspending children is the last resort.

The problem is that none of the board's solutions are working. It's good that the kids are getting exposure to what positive behaviour and conflict resolution looks like and how it can help get you out of a situation. But it only takes two or three kids to spend that time not caring, not paying attention, and planning who they are going to punch out between the portables at recess.

For kids like that, punishment in the form of suspension might be the only option.

One thing we have been hearing from grumbling parents is that the Schools Resource Officer program should be revisited. That program, which paired police officers with schools to talk to problem students and help prevent conflicts and situations, was gloriously deep-sixed by OCDSB Board Chair Lyra Evans and an entourage of supporters.

We would imagine that there would be a lot more kids going home without black eyes and bloody noses if the program was reinstated.

The most important thing at our schools is the safety of the children. Right now, the average kids, the transgender and non-binary kids, the LGBTQ2+ kids, and kids of various races and religions are not safe. Only the bullies are. And it's about time the board implemented some action that fixes the problem immediately.

# Hands Up for Billy Miner Pie ice cream

It's not often that feelings of elation and joy at the grocery store trump the sticker shock of rising prices.

But it does happen.

I was walking through Your Independent Grocer last week, and I saw something that absolutely needed to end up in my cart. It was Billy Miner Pie ice cream.

FROM THE OTHER  
SIDE

Jeffrey Morris



The question wasn't if I was going to buy it. It was whether I would buy two, three, maybe six?

If you have ever eaten at the Keg, you have likely either had or at least know about Billy Miner pie.

But if you actually know who Bill Miner is, put your hands up.

Do you see what I did there? If you didn't put your hands up, let me explain.

Bill Miner was born in 1847. There are reports that he was born in Michigan, but others say Kentucky. Either way, he ended up in California and spent much of his life there in and out of prison, as he had become a career criminal as a stagecoach robber. He eventually moved up to British Columbia and became Canada's not famous and notorious train robber.

At first, he was using the name George Edwards. He is believed to have orchestrated the first train robbery in BC. The heist took part in 1904 in Silverdale, about 35 km east of Vancouver. That robbery is widely reported to be the first in Canada, but there are reports of a train robbery in Port Credit, Ontario that took place 30 years earlier.

Miner had nicknames and was romanticized in the era. He was known as the Grey Fox and the Gentleman Bandit. He was most known, however, for the famous phrase he used when holding up a train or during another robbery.

"Hands up!", he would say. If it was possible for anything to become viral in the early 1900s, "hands up" managed to do it.

Miner robbed Canadian Pacific Rail trans in 1904 and 1906. But in 1906, the Mounties finally got their man.

Miner and his two accomplices, Tom "Shorty" Dunn and Louis Colquhoun, attempted to rob a payroll train near Kamloops at Monte Creek, which was then known as Ducks. Unfortunately, they chose the wrong car of the train to rob. They walked away with only \$15 and a bottle of kidney pills that Miner had grabbed from a shelf.

They fled into the woods, and they were heavily pursued in a manhunt. The three men were having lunch near Douglas Lake. They were surrounded by a posse. Miner introduced himself as George Edwards and claimed that he and he and his partners were prospectors. The officer in charge of the posse did not believe him, and he placed the men under arrest.

Dunn resisted and pulled out in an attempt to fire at the officer but was shot in the leg. Colquhoun was disarmed, and Miner never

drew his gun. "Hands up!", said the officer, as legend has it.

Miner's arrest and trial was one of the biggest media events in the history of British Columbia, and the rest of Canada paid close attention. Miner had become a cult hero, like Bonnie and Clyde or Al Capone would become.

Because the CPR was very unpopular among residents of British Columbia, the train robber was often cheered and romanticized, like a modern-day Robin Hood.

As the tree men were transported by train to the provincial penitentiary in New Westminster, supporters of Miner lined the route and cheered.

Bill Miner's time in prison was not a long one. He escaped in 1907 and eventually made his way back to the United States, ending up in the American southeast. He resumed his career as a train robber, escaping prison in Georgia on two different occasions.

In 1913, Bill Miner passed away while in prison at Milledgeville, Georgia. He died of gastritis, picked up from drinking brackish water during an escape attempt.

While Miner's time in Canada was brief, his legend in British Columbia lasted for generations. The Keg, a BC-based Canadian steakhouse chain, named drinks after Miner and also introduced Billy Miner pie. They also had photos of Miner as part of their décor.

The Keg is not the only restaurant or bar to glorify Bill Miner.

On the corner of 5th Avenue and Lansdowne Street in Kamloops, a mural of Miner's famous Monte Creek robbery was painted on the exterior wall of Cactus Jack's Saloon and Dance Hall. In Maple Ridge, the original Bank of Montreal building built in the early 1900s became the famous Billy Miner Pub.

The Whistle Brewing Company of Penticton even launched a red ale called Hands Up! As a tribute to Bill Miner.

And a legend would not be a legend without rumours of a hidden treasure. Folklore suggests Miner buried loot in the forest near Silverdale. Historians say he either dug up the money and used it to get to the United States after escaping from prison, while some say that the treasure is still out there for the taking.

There was a song called 'The Ballad of Bill Miner' recorded by the San Francisco band The Blackout Cowboys. There was a Canadian film about Miner called The Grey Fox, starring Richard Farnsworth.

So the next time you head to the Keg for dinner and the dessert menu comes out, you now know all about the man that their famous Billy Miner pie is named after.

And on your next trip to Your Independent Grocer, hands up if you want some Billy Miner Pie ice cream.

## MANOTICK Messenger

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