



# Letter-to-Editor Writing Workshop

Making Education for Reconciliation news



# Why Letters to the Editor?

- You are building political will.
- The Letters page is one of the most popular sections in the paper.
- Politicians and their staff tend to read the letters to gauge their constituents on the news of the day.
- It's a relatively easy way to get your views published.

## Letters To The Editor

### **Paving Stone Nightmare**

Sir,- I am writing to complain about the poor quality of paving stones in this city. As the weather had cheered up a bit I decided to wear my nice shiny red pumps. However while walking along minding my own business, I stepped on a broken paving stone. There must have been a pool of water under it, and a tilde wave of water cascaded over my foot. So I had to spend the rest of my day with a cold, wet foot until it dried out. I am not impressed, someone needs to sort it out.

**Imogen Aitchison  
Berwick-upon-Tweed**

### **Clean Up Of The Chavs**

Sir,- While cycling on my way into university this morning I met with a pack of about five chavs (or neads as they are more commonly known around here) all wandering along aimlessly right across the whole width of the path. I must stress the point that this was a pedestrian AND cycle path, so I was well within my right to be there. However these chavs refused to get out of my way despite the hints I was giving that I was wanting past by pulling on my loud squeaky brakes. So I was forced to bump down the kurb and onto the road to avoid them. I would have politely have asked them to move, but since they looked very thuggish, I thought there

was a very high chance that they would probably push me off my bike. Surely it's time for something to be done to rid the streets of these sorts of people.

**Imogen Aitchison  
Berwick-upon-Tweed**

### **Down The Slippery Slope**

Sir,- I would like to make a complaint about which ever 'genius' came up with the bright idea of using metal grip-studs on the pavements at pedestrian crossings. They obviously never tested them out in the rain. It seems it never crossed their mind about the fact that metal becomes very slippery when wet. I've lost count on the amount of times that I have slipped on these 'grips'. In fact I'm surprised that I've never slipped into the path of passing traffic. They're an accident waiting to happen, and they need to be removed ASAP.

**Imogen Aitchison  
Berwick-upon-Tweed**

### **A Mobile Problem**

Sir,- Is it just me who is infuriated by the lack of attention that people pay when they are texting and walking? The amount of people who have nearly walked into me because they're too busy tapping away on their mobiles is getting ridiculous. In my view, unless you are running late to meet someone and you

need to give them a quick text to let them know, it's just not necessary to be texting and walking. I'm sure Twitter doesn't need to know that you're on your way to buy toilet roll. It wouldn't be so bad if they looked up more to see where they're going, but they don't and you're the one forced to get out of their way. Can people really not put their phones down for even a minute nowadays? Maybe it's time that permission should be granted giving you the right to knock peoples phones out of their hands if they're about to walk into you. Because that's what I would love to do. It would help bring them back into the real world.

**Imogen Aitchison  
Berwick-upon-Tweed**

### **Glasgow The Sunny City?**

Sir,- I know that no one can control the weather, but does it really have to rain so often in Glasgow. My poor umbrella cannot stand up to the amount of rain and wind that it has to battle against. I don't think I ever went out with an umbrella in my bag back home unless I knew it was definitely going to rain. But here in Glasgow I make sure I never leave the house without one. Wouldn't it be nice if for once Glasgow could be known as the nice sunny city?

**Imogen Aitchison  
Berwick-upon-Tweed**



# How to get published

- Priority of Publishing:
  - Front Page News/Editorials
  - Columns
  - Op-eds
  - Other Letters
- Letters to the editor typically are 150-200 words. Three or 4 paragraphs. Short and Sweet. The haiku of advocacy.
  - Tip: After drafting, cut 50 more words to trim the fat.
- Make it a habit to read the LTE section.





# How to get published and influence people

- Resist trying to say everything in one letter. There's no room for it and it muddies the message.
  - When writing, ask yourself: What is my message and how does that relate to the article that was in the paper?
- Be diplomatic.
- In addition to your full name, the newspaper will want your address and phone number (not for publication) to verify your letter.



Even if you don't get published,  
you may still get an assist.





# How to get published and influence people

- **Reference the article.** Letters that do not reference an article in the paper stand little chance of being published.
- **Reference the news.** With a big news story — release of the TRC report for instance — you might not need to cite the specific article, but you do need to reference the news.
- **Be creative.** TRC 62.i may not be mentioned in a story (i.e. missing & murdered Indigenous women), but you can remind readers that it is part of the story.
- **Challenge the editor.** Call out important stories relegated to the back pages.



## Letter Sample

- **Opening:** In your very first sentence, cite the article to which you are responding.
- For example, “Your editorial Saturday stating that the world may be cooling left me quite puzzled, given that the world’s glaciers are receding at record rates.” (Note: It’s okay to challenge a view, but never be disrespectful)



## Letter Sample

- **Transition to message:** You don't have much space, so transition quickly to your message.
- Start by stating the problem. "If we ignore what scientists are telling us, global temperatures will rise throughout the century with dire consequences — coastal flooding, droughts, famine, extinction of species."





## Letter Sample

- **Propose a solution:** This is the meat of your message.
- “We must reduce the level of carbon-dioxide — the primary greenhouse gas — to a level that will avert these disastrous effects. Scientists tell us that level is 350 parts per million in the atmosphere. The most efficient and effective means to do this is to place a fee on carbon and return the revenue equally to all residents.”



## Letter Sample

- **Closing the letter:** Finish up strong either by referring back to the beginning of the letter (closing the circle) or with something clever.
- “Policy-makers can argue all they want, but Mother Nature doesn’t argue — and she doesn’t negotiate.”



# Sample Letter 1

**Globe and Mail: Front Page article: Residential-School Documents Go Online, Published November 4, 2015**

## **Sorrow, support**

Re Residential-School Documents Go Online (Nov. 3): If we are to express genuine support for residential school survivors and true sorrow for their suffering, it is essential that provincial governments act on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to require that this part of Canadian history be taught in all public and secondary schools, with, wherever possible, participation from First Nations persons.

*Mervyn Russell, Oakville, Ont.*



## Sample Letter 2

**Toronto Star: Editorial, Dark truths test us all.** Published Dec. 16, 2015

In high school, one of the soccer teams I played against was from a former residential school. I had no clue of its history. I was never taught that these schools separated indigenous children from their families and cultures, often abusing them. What little I learned about indigenous peoples and their cultures was through a very stereotypical filter.

The release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is an important moment in Canada's history. It has the potential to set us on a path toward right relations between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Its calls to action must not be ignored.

My young boys, in grade two and kindergarten, must not grow up ignorant of the history of indigenous peoples in Canada, and their extraordinary contributions.

I urge Ontario and other provinces to implement the TRC's Call to Action #62 – to include this history in public school curriculums — as soon as possible.

**Shannon Neufeldt, KAIROS Canada**



# Sample Letter 3

**Globe and Mail: Front Page Article: Trudeau vows to develop plan to put Canada on path to true reconciliation, Published Dec. 17, 2015**

## **Right relations**

Growing up in the 1990s and early 2000s, I didn't learn about residential schools until Grade 12. In primary school, we got a rudimentary overview of the history of different indigenous groups before settlers arrived. It's as if their history after that was being wiped away.

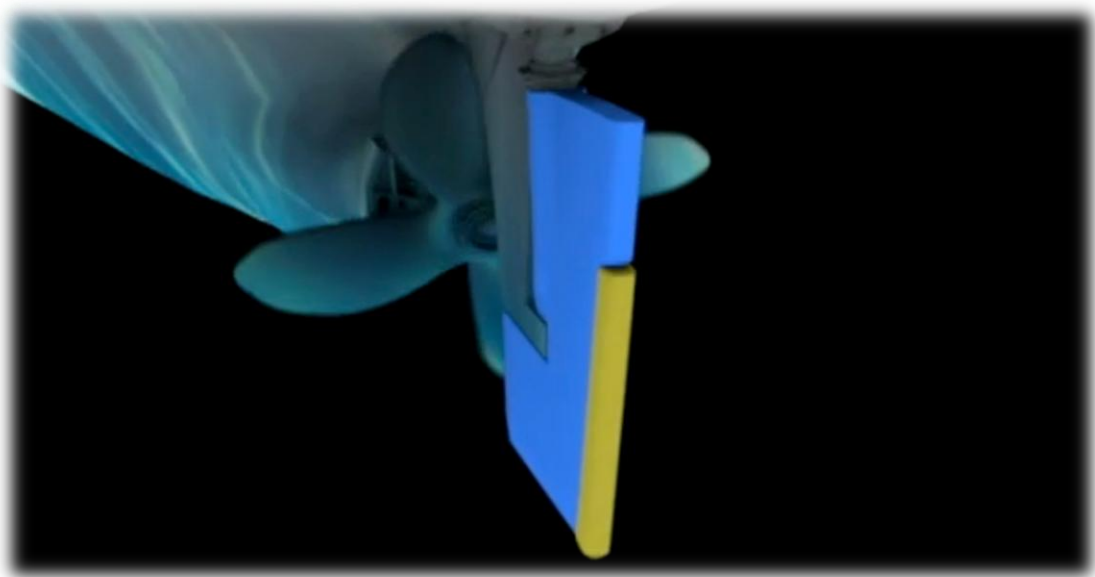
I am grateful that indigenous peoples have refused to let that happen. With the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report, we can no longer ignore the truth.

I see its call to action recommendation on education (No. 62) as a priority. All children and youth must learn about the history and contributions of indigenous peoples. This will be a huge help in the movement toward "right relations."

*Sheryl Johnson, Toronto*

# Trim Tab







## **Join the KAIROS LTE Team!**

- Receive timely notices of LTE opportunities. Ask your network to do the same.
- Share your printed letters!
- Send your letters to your MPPs/MLAs, Ministers of Education and Premiers
- Bring the accumulated letters with you to your meetings with politicians.





# Questions





Good Luck!

Cheryl McNamara  
Media Coordinator  
[cmcnamara@kairoscanada.org](mailto:cmcnamara@kairoscanada.org)