WINTER 2023

THE ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

ATA Magazine

Indigenous educators

reflect on truth, engagement, colonialism and reconciliation

PAGE 20

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ATA Magazine

WINTER 2023

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Joni Turville
joni.turville@ata.ab.ca

MANAGING EDITOR
Cory Hare
cory.hare@ata.ab.ca

COPY EDITOR
Sandra Bit

SECTION EDITORS
Shelley Svidal
Lindsay Yakimyshyn

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Kim Clement
Jen Janzen

ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN
Gela Cabrera Loa
Yuet Chan
Erin Solano
Kim vanderHelm

ADVERTISING
Trevor Battye Advertising Sales
trevor@tbasales.ca

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The Alberta Teachers' Association
11010 142 Street Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1
Telephone: 780-447-9400
Toll Free in Alberta: 1-800-232-7208
Website: www.teachers.ab.ca

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Contributors

JADEN TSAN
p. 10

Jaden Tsan is a designer and illustrator based in Calgary. She loves all things fun and colourful and is often inspired by her childhood. She has had too many art teachers and professors throughout her educational career to pick a favourite, but she is grateful to all those who have been supportive, encouraging and honest!

MICHELLE DOW
p. 16

Michelle Dow is past president of the ATA's Council for Inclusive Education, a former Association instructor and a proud Alberta teacher. Interested in diversity, equity and inclusive education, Michelle believes that the hardest part of being a teacher is diving into the messiness of what it means to be learners and diverse beings in complex environments. She continues to grow in her practice and looks forward to new experiences. When not in the classroom, Michelle enjoys travelling; exploring; and spending time with family, friends and her pup Bailey.

DUSTIN DELFS
p. 58

NAIT photo tech alumnus Dustin Delfs founded Laughing Dog Photography in 2002 with a large-format film camera and half a dozen daily trips to the photo lab. Twenty years, six studios and 4,500 photo shoots later, the Laughing Dog team has worked from Vancouver to Newfoundland to Yellowknife; in helicopters, coal mines, operating rooms, NHL dressing rooms, bison herds and cookie factories; and he's still loving it, as much today as ever before!

KATHERINE ABBASS
p. 58

Katherine Abbass (she/her) is a writer and English teacher of Phoenician descent. Her work has been published in numerous literary magazines, including *Room*, *Riddle Fence* and *The Antigonish Review*. She currently resides with her dog, Angelou, on Treaty 6 territory.

CHRIS MATTATALL
p. 67

Dr. Chris Mattatall is an associate professor of educational psychology and inclusion at the University of Lethbridge. Teaching in both the undergraduate and graduate programs, Chris engages in research in areas related to reading acquisition and intervention, collaboration and the science of learning.

LIA M. DANIELS
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Dr. Lia M. Daniels is a motivation researcher at the University of Alberta.

LAUREN D. GOEGAN
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Dr. Lauren D. Goegan is a motivation researcher at the Universitiy of Manitoba.

MORGAN KLEVYER
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Morgan Klevyer is a Grade 1 teacher at Patricia Heights School in Edmonton.

DARREN SWEENEY
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Darren Sweeney is principal of Westbrook School in Edmonton.

SARAH HOLMGREN
p. 46

Sarah Holmgren is principal of Livingstone School in Lundbreck.

The Alberta Teachers' Association respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10 territories—the travelling route, gathering place and meeting grounds for Indigenous Peoples, whose histories, languages, cultures and traditions continue to influence our vibrant community. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We recognize the land as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.

Feature contributors

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

edlánet'e-a! Greetings!

Melissa Purcell

Feature Guest Editor
Tthebatthı Dënésułiné (Smith's Landing First Nation), Treaty 8 – Irish
Executive Staff Officer, Indigenous Education, ATA

THANK YOU to the many Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, students, teachers and scholars for generously sharing your stories and experiences with Alberta teachers. I am grateful to be part of a growing collective of Indigenous teachers and leaders across the province.

I hope that readers reflect on and learn from the diverse perspectives shared within this feature. Although we made efforts to gather many Indigenous voices from across the province, the insights shared in the feature are not intended to speak for all Indigenous Peoples. I recommend that all teachers develop and strengthen their relationships with local Indigenous Peoples, cultures, languages, traditions and stories. Listening, (un)learning and engaging with open hearts and minds is a critical pathway forward in the work of truth and reconciliation.

mahsi cho! Many thanks!

JANIS WEASEL BEAR-JOHNSON | p. 20

Working for the Calgary Board of Education, Janis has filled the roles of diversity and learning support advisor, classroom teacher, school- and system-based learning leader and well-being strategist for Indigenous education. Janis embraces holistic, strength-based philosophies and believes that education has the power to shape the world one mind at a time. The way forward for education in an era of reconciliation requires fostering co-existent relationships between Indigenous and Western knowledge structures. Of Piikani and European descent, Weasel Bear-Johnson was born and (mostly) raised in Mohkinstsis (Calgary).

DWAYNE DONALD | p. 22

Dwayne Donald, PhD, is a descendent of the amiskwaciwiyiniwak (Beaver Hills people) and the Papaschase Cree. He taught at Kainai High School for 10 years and is currently an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. His research focuses on the ways Indigenous wisdom traditions can expand and enhance current educational understandings of knowledge, knowing and what it means to live a good life.

YVONNE POITRAS PRATT | p. 26

Yvonne Poitras Pratt (Métis), associate professor, traces ancestral roots to the Red River and more recently to the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement. Her book, *Digital Storytelling in Indigenous Education: A Decolonizing Journey for a Metis Community*, shares how creating intergenerational digital stories is a form of decolonizing. She publishes on Métis education, reconciliation, decolonizing and arts-based education, and she has earned four teaching awards, among them the Alan Blizzard Award for Collaborative Teaching.

ANGELA HOULE | p. 26

Angela Houle is a former Indigenous Education consultant and now assistant principal with the Calgary Catholic School District. She lives in Calgary and is a wife and a mother of three. Her father's family is from Métis communities in southern Saskatchewan.

OMARLA COOKE | p. 28

Omarla Cooke is a member of the Piikani nation located southwest of Calgary and now calls the Sexsmith/Grande Prairie area home. Omarla currently works with the Grande Prairie Catholic School District as an Indigenous education team lead/ Indigenous high school success coach. This role allows her to continue to share cultural teachings and help those she works with understand the beauty and sacredness of Indigenous culture.

ROBYN BRULE | p. 30

Robyn Brule is a member of the Bigstone Cree Nation in Northern Alberta. Robyn graduated from St. Joseph Catholic in the 2021/2022 school year. Robyn has always been proud of her heritage and culture, but it wasn't until she was in high school that she truly embraced it fully.

JIREY MPUNGA | p. 31

Jirey Mpunga is a Grade 12 student at St. Joseph Catholic school in Grande Prairie. Coming from an immigrant family, she is open to learning more about the true history of the Indigenous Peoples of these lands.

PRESTON HUPPIE | p. 33

Preston Huppie has been an Indigenous education strategist for the Calgary Board of Education for the past six years. After earning a bachelor of education in 2005 and a master of Indigenous Peoples education in 2013, Preston worked for Kehewin Cree Nation for 10 years. He is passionate about including Indigenous education in the Alberta curriculum and equipping teachers with foundational knowledge of Indigenous perspectives from this land.

REBECCA SOCKBESON | p. 36

Rebecca Sockbeson is of the Penobscot Indian Nation, the Waponahki Confederacy of tribes, located in Indian Island, Maine, US, and the Maritimes in Canada. She is the eighth child of the Elizabeth Sockbeson clan, auntie to over 100 Waponahki and Nakota Sioux youth, and the mother of three children who are also of the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Treaty 6 territory, Alberta. She earned a master's degree in education from Harvard and a PhD in educational policy studies specializing in Indigenous Peoples Education from the University of Alberta, where she is a professor. Her scholarly research focuses on Indigenous knowledge and knowledge mobilization, Aboriginal healing through language and culture, antiracism and decolonization. Rebecca's publications and curriculum vitae can be found at www.rebeccasockbeson.com.

MEGAN TIPLER | p. 38

Megan Tipler is a Métis educator located in amiskwaciy. She previously worked as a secondary English teacher but is currently a graduate student at the University of Alberta, focusing on Indigenous perspectives in curriculum and teacher education.

Note

There are many terms that are used to describe First Nations, Métis, and Inuit within Canada. The terms used in this magazine feature are intentional and reflect various historical, legal and situational contexts. For more information, view *A Note on Terminology* at www.teachers.ab.ca > Professional Development > Indigenous Education and Waking Together > Stepping Stones.

MELISSA PURCELL | p. 41

Melissa Purcell is Tthebatthı Dënésułıné (Smith's Landing First Nation), Treaty 8 – Irish. She is a proud mother of one son and two daughters, and the oldest of her three sisters. Melissa is deeply committed to supporting Indigenous education and advancing truth and reconciliation. Melissa has experience teaching in Alberta band, charter and public schools. At the division level with Edmonton Public Schools she held the positions of teacher consultant, program coordinator and supervisor of First Nations, Métis and Inuit education.

Melissa is an executive staff officer, Indigenous Education, with the Alberta Teachers' Association and continues to lead Indigenous Education and Walking Together: Education for Reconciliation for teachers and school leaders across the province. She is currently pursuing graduate studies at the University of Calgary in educational research and hopes to begin her PhD journey soon.

TRUDIE LEE AND BRIAN HARDER | p. 21

Brian Harder is a Saskatchewan boy turned Calgary photographer, and Trudie Lee is Calgary-raised from a rock-n-roll background. They have seen a lot in their 50-plus years of combined experience and have been photographing Canada's largest industries, portraits, arts and entertainment together for more than 30 years. They own and operate one of the largest photography studios in Calgary (harderlee.ca).

ADAM TREMBLAY | pp. 29 and 31

Adam Tremblay is the communications and marketing officer for Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools.

Originally from Grande Prairie, he enjoys sharing the precious moments and stories that happen within his school division and helping to bring communities together to celebrate the gift of education.

Cover: Photo by Yuet Chan and illustration by Gela Cabrera Loa

PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

Joni Turville

Editor-in-Chief, *ATA Magazine*
Rédactrice en chef de l'*ATA Magazine*

One step leads to another

IT WAS A WARM, SUNNY SEPTEMBER afternoon when I followed my professor, Dr. Dwayne Donald, and my classmates into the river valley next to the University of Alberta. I was engaged in course work toward my doctor of philosophy, and this course was focused on research. Dr. Donald began by telling us about the Indigenous peoples who lived there for generations and about some of the significant landmarks. It was my first experience with land-based learning, and as we gathered in a circle on the soft grass to discuss our thoughts at the end of the class, I felt a sense of wonder. I hadn't ever thought about the land that was just beyond the walking path at the top of the valley or what stories it could tell.

During the course of the semester, we were challenged to think about the relational networks in which we live, including the connection between ourselves, the land, the animals and the sky, among the many other things that surround us every day and those things to which we typically pay little attention. It challenged me in very profound ways. I have to say that I'm still very early on in the journey to understanding Indigenous histories and ways of knowing and being.

That's why I'm excited about our feature. I learned a great deal as we worked on this issue and I hope you will as well. I'm grateful to our guest editor, Melissa Purcell, whose wise and gentle counsel—not just on this issue of the magazine but to our organization—has been invaluable as we continue to work toward reconciliation. My thanks also go to our guest contributors to our feature who bring their stories, wisdom and knowledge to you, the teachers of Alberta.

As ever, thanks for reading and thanks for all you do for the students of Alberta.

Un pas en entraine un autre

C'ÉTAIT UN APRÈS-MIDI DE SEPTEMBRE CHAUD ET ensoleillé, lorsque j'ai emboité le pas de mon professeur, Dwayne Donald, et de mes camarades de classe pour parcourir la vallée près de l'Université de l'Alberta. À cette époque, j'étudiais en vue de l'obtention d'un doctorat en philosophie, et ce cours portait essentiellement sur la recherche. Dr Donald a commencé par nous parler des peuples autochtones qui ont vécu à cet endroit pendant des générations, puis s'est attardé sur certains lieux importants de leur histoire. Ce fut ma première expérience d'apprentissage axé sur la terre. À la fin du cours, alors que nous nous réunissions en cercle sur l'herbe tendre pour échanger nos impressions, un sentiment d'émerveillement m'envahit. Je n'avais jamais songé auparavant à cette terre à peine plus loin de l'allée piétonnière en haut de la vallée, ou à tout ce qu'elle pourrait raconter.

Au fil du semestre, nous avons été invités à réfléchir aux réseaux relationnels dans lesquels nous vivons, ainsi qu'à notre relation à nous-mêmes, et à la multitude de choses qui nous entourent chaque jour comme la terre, les animaux et le ciel, et notamment à celles auxquelles nous prêtons généralement peu d'attention. Cela m'a profondément interpelée. Je dois dire que je n'en suis qu'au début de mon cheminement vers la compréhension de l'histoire des Autochtones, et de leurs différentes formes de savoir et de façons d'être.

Voici pourquoi je me réjouis de la sortie de ce numéro. J'ai beaucoup appris en le préparant et j'espère que vous en apprendrez beaucoup en le lisant. Je remercie infiniment Melissa Purcell, rédactrice invitée, dont les conseils bienveillants et judicieux prodigués non seulement lors de la réalisation de ce numéro, mais aussi à notre organisation, sont inestimables alors que nous poursuivons nos efforts vers la réconciliation. Je tiens à remercier également tous ceux qui ont contribué à notre rubrique spéciale en partageant leurs histoires, leur sagesse et leurs connaissances, avec vous, enseignants de l'Alberta.

Comme toujours, merci de faire partie de nos fidèles lecteurs, et merci de tout ce que vous faites pour les élèves de l'Alberta.

PHOTO BY RYAN PARKER

Jason Schilling

President, ATA
Président de l'ATA

Let's leave our comfort zones behind

When I taught high school in Coaldale, at the start of each semester, I would draw two circles on the board. One I would label "my comfort zone" and the other "where I learn." I would tell my students that we can spend all our time in our comfort zones — it's great there. But if we really want to push ourselves in our learning, we need to push ourselves out of those zones, and that is not always easy to do. The point is for my students to learn to let go of the fears and biases they may possess. The irony of this lesson was never lost on me. This is a lesson that also applies to me personally and professionally. I see learning as a lifelong journey, there is always more to learn, more to see, and we should not fear a challenge.

Every year we acknowledge June as National Indigenous History Month, the opportunity to engage in learning and celebrating the positive historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous peoples. However, acknowledging the rich, vibrant cultures, histories and languages of the original peoples of this land should be a year-round activity.

We need to hear from the survivors and intergenerational survivors of the residential school system in Canada — stories of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. No longer can we hide behind the veneer of "that was a long time ago and times were different then," for this is our comfort zone. The Alberta Teachers' Association recognizes that, as much as we have done to support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, we need to do more. We have a personal, professional and collective responsibility to engage in Indigenous education, to address our biases, and meaningfully contribute to truth and reconciliation. ATA

Sortons de notre zone de confort

Lorsque j'enseignais à l'école secondaire de Coaldale, au début de chaque semestre, je dessinais au tableau deux cercles. L'un que j'intitulais ma « zone de confort » et l'autre « là où j'apprends ». Je disais alors à mes élèves que nous pouvions passer tout notre temps dans notre zone de confort — après tout, on y est bien. Mais, si nous voulons vraiment approfondir notre apprentissage et nous dépasser, nous devons en sortir, même si ce n'est pas toujours facile. L'objectif était d'apprendre à mes élèves à se libérer de leurs peurs et préjugés. Je dois dire que l'ironie de cette leçon ne m'a jamais échappé puisqu'elle s'applique aussi à moi sur le plan personnel et professionnel. Je vois en effet l'apprentissage comme un voyage de toute une vie; il y a toujours plus à apprendre, plus à voir, et la crainte du défi ne devrait pas y avoir sa place.

Chaque année, en juin, nous commémorons le Mois national de l'histoire autochtone. C'est pour tous, la possibilité d'apprendre, et de célébrer la contribution positive des peuples autochtones à l'histoire passée et contemporaine, mais ce n'est pas suffisant. La reconnaissance de la richesse de l'histoire des peuples originaires de ce pays, de leur vitalité culturelle et de leurs langues devrait être une activité à longueur d'année.

Nous avons besoin d'entendre les survivants des régimes de pensionnats au Canada et les victimes de traumatismes intergénérationnels — témoignages de sévices physiques, psychologiques, et d'abus sexuels. Nous ne pouvons plus nous voiler la face et nous retrancher dans notre zone de confort derrière ces paroles : « C'était il y a longtemps et les temps étaient bien différents à cette époque. ». Et même si l'Alberta Teachers' Association reconnait que nous avons beaucoup fait pour appuyer les appels à l'action de la Commission de vérité et de réconciliation du Canada, nous devons en faire plus. Nous avons collectivement, professionnellement et personnellement la responsabilité de participer à l'éducation autochtone, de désamorcer nos préjugés et de contribuer de manière significative au rétablissement de la vérité et à la réconciliation. ATA

ISTOCK ADAPTED

Teachers: Making a difference through the decades

WE DUG INTO THE ARCHIVES to find tidbits from previous issues of the *ATA Magazine* that are worth another look, either because of their relevance today, or as a reminder of how far we've come. You decide.

Can you match the following excerpts with the year that they were originally published? 1926, 1950, 1996, 2008

1. A NOBLE PROFESSION

A fact which should be realized is that the profession of a teacher should be the most honorable—the one in highest esteem—of all the professions. If one only just considers that the perpetuation of civilization depends absolutely on his efforts, one can see that it should occupy a premier position.

Your guess: _____

2. THE WHOLE CHILD

In this present day and age, every principal will also take an intelligent interest in the personal, social, and civic development of his pupils. The school besides giving instruction in subjects prescribed in the program of studies, must provide in some way, for the development of the whole child—mentally, physically, morally, and socially. Modern schools provide a great variety of activities designed to develop the potentialities in each child.

Your guess: _____

3. FROM STUDENTS TO ENGAGED CITIZENS

With all the focus on finding jobs, it is easy to forget that a high school diploma is about much more than just preparing for the workforce. Students who complete high school also go on to lead healthier lives as more engaged citizens. Well-educated children are the only resource that will grow and sustain our economy and communities in the long-term.

Your guess: _____

4. ACTION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

In an atmosphere of cutbacks and major change in Alberta, one of the greatest challenges of the Public Education Action Centre is to convince teachers and others that, through collective action, they can make a difference. Albertans can be instrumental in ensuring positive change and growth for a publicly funded education system that is accessible to all children.

Your guess: _____

Answers: 1. "Teaching, the Most Essential and Noble of Professions." C. C. Thomas, June 1926 2. "The Principal and the School." J. F. K. English, June 1950 3. "All Albertans Need to Do More to Improve High School Completion." Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education, Fall 2008 4. "The Public Education Action Centre Works!" Donna Swiniarski, Spring 1996.

ILLUSTRATION BY MATEUSZ NAPIERALSKI

Looking south

Declining preservice enrolment, high attrition have led to teacher shortages in the U.S.

Lisa Everitt

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

THE FALL 2022 EDITION OF Looking Abroad explored five trends impacting the composition of the teaching profession. These trends help researchers understand the teacher workforce to predict its needs and to plan. What scholars found by looking at data over a 29-year period is that the teacher workforce is growing, getting grayer and younger at the same time, and becoming more feminized and racialized (Ingersoll et al. 2018).

These trends help policy-makers plan for teacher supply, but they do not help predict whether there is or will be a shortfall between the number of teachers available to work and the number of teachers who are needed to fill teaching positions. Sutcher, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas, in their comprehensive 2016 report, examined teacher supply, demand and attrition to predict whether a teacher shortage was on the horizon in the United States. Finally, they considered policy mechanisms for addressing the demand for high-quality teachers. This article will focus on Sutcher et al.'s 2016 predictions for teacher supply in the U.S. and consider what has happened to that supply since the pandemic began.

TEACHER SUPPLY

Predicting how many teachers are needed in the United States in any given year depends on a number of variables. For example, following the Great Recession of 2008, austerity budgets were imposed on public education. This resulted in approximately 120,000 teacher layoffs nationwide in the subsequent four years.

Kraft and Bleiberg (2022) note that "the Great Recession and its consequences for K–12 education provide a sobering case study about the repercussions of teacher layoffs" (p. 368) because the cuts had differential impacts on racialized and poor students, and student achievement was negatively affected. In addition, efforts to recruit teachers and diversify the teacher workforce were undermined because of widespread teacher layoffs.

As the American economy began to rebound, school authorities hired more teachers to address student enrolment growth and reinstate previously eliminated programming. As a result of these interrelated factors, the demand for teachers across the United States has grown. Sutcher et al. (2016), using modelling of available data, predicted that "unless major changes in teacher supply or a reduction in demand for additional teachers occur over the coming years, annual teacher shortages could increase to as much as 112,000 teachers by 2018" (p. 1). Unfortunately, the predictions made in 2016 are being realized as we continue to move through the COVID-19 pandemic. Carver-Thomas et al. (2022) observed that "around the country, severe teacher shortages have put greater pressure on teachers and administrators to scramble to cover positions that lack permanent teachers" (p. 1). This raises the question, what is driving the gap in teacher supply in the U.S.?

Sutcher et al. (2016) identify four main drivers of shortages in teacher supply in the U.S.: declining enrolment in preservice training programs, increased funding for school authorities, increased student enrollment and high teacher attrition.

First, the pool of newly graduated teachers in the U.S. is getting smaller because of declining enrolment in teacher preparation programs. Sutcher et al. (2016) wrote that "between 2009 and 2014 . . . teacher education enrolments dropped from 691,000 to 451,000, a 35 per cent reduction" (p. 3). The decreasing enrolment and graduation rates in teacher preparation programs suggest that teaching is becoming a less attractive career option in the U.S. How the status of the profession relates to the increasingly feminized demographic composition of the profession (Ingersoll and Merrill 2010, p. 18) is not well understood, but Irvine (2013) points out that a consequence of the feminization of the teaching profession is "wage inequality and a decline in occupational status" (p. 281). A potential avenue for future research is understanding why young men do not consider teaching a viable career choice.

In the years following the austerity budgets, school authority budgets in the U.S. gradually increased, and school authorities sought to restore previous student–teacher ratios as well as programming that had been previously cut. COVID-19 relief funding also supplemented school authority budgets, allowing for further hiring of teachers and other support workers (Carver-Thomas et al. 2022). Coupled with budgetary improvement was increased student enrolment in schools, and these two factors combined to increase demand for teachers in the U.S.

Teacher attrition is the fourth factor impacting teacher shortages. Sutcher et al. write that in the U.S., attrition rates for teachers exceed those of other professions as well as those of many other countries, including Canada. Further, these rates cannot be attributed solely to retirement as "contrary to common belief, retirements generally constitute less than one-third of those who leave teaching in a given year" (Sutcher et al. 2016, p. 4). If school authorities could reduce attrition rates, this would go a long way toward resolving teacher shortages in the U.S. Sutcher et al. point out that "in theory, the pool of former teachers is large, but estimates suggest only a third of teachers who exit the profession ever return" (p. 4).

Understanding why teachers leave the profession is an important task for researchers and policy makers. The next article in this series will consider the reasons why teachers leave teaching and outline what can be done to encourage teacher retention while raising the status of the teaching profession.

THREE-PART SERIES

This is the second part of a three-part series exploring teacher shortages and the impact of COVID-19 on teachers, as well as policy solutions to the shortage. The first part appeared in the fall 2022 issue of the *ATA Magazine*.

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Carol Van Slyke

Outreach Education Council Honorary Lifetime Membership Award Recipient

Peace River Regional Women's Shelter Board Chair

Peace River Region Restorative Justice Association Treasurer

Peace River Regional Mental Health Advisory Counsel Chair

ILLUSTRATION BY JADEN TSAN

Carol Van Slyke: In the business of giving hope

Lindsay Yakimyshyn

Staff Writer, *ATA Magazine*

CAROL VAN SLYKE came to outreach education by happenstance.

After teaching junior high for 18 years, she was looking for a change. An assignment arose at Peace River High School with half time in the outreach program. Though she hadn't even heard of outreach education, she took it on.

Her knowledge of outreach education—an alternative program for high school students whose needs are not met by traditional school settings—quickly grew and she soon found herself joining the ATA's provincial Outreach Education Council as a northern representative.

Seven years after working in outreach education, she became coordinator of Peace River Regional Outreach Campus, then later became its first principal.

"I did not expect that the outreach would become my passion," Van Slyke says, "This way of teaching spoke to all the things that I most enjoy about teaching."

Outreach education allowed Van Slyke to truly connect with her students, with whom she would work one on one for as many as five years. The campus offered the students—who had left the traditional education system for a variety of reasons—unique wraparound supports, from a food program to a licensed daycare.

"I loved that we were making a difference in these students' lives—attending to their present needs, their high school education needs and helping them to plan for their future. We were in the business of giving our students hope."

With Van Slyke at the helm, the Peace River Regional Outreach Campus blossomed. Most remarkably, she was able to secure the Andrew Grant—a $650,000 legacy project—to purchase and renovate a building for the program, allowing the school to spend money on instruction rather than rent.

While Van Slyke retired in 2016, her dedication to building hope within the community continues. She has volunteered with the Peace River Regional Women's Shelter, the Peace River Regional Mental Health Advisory Counsel and the Restorative Justice Association, and was recognized as a Town of Peace River Volunteer Awards Lifelong Achievement nominee.

"I want to make my community the best that it can be," she says. "I want the most vulnerable to be supported. To get things done, I have to be willing to put my energy and time where my values are. I can't sit back and expect someone else to do what I can see needs doing."

Got an idea? Unsung Hero is a space dedicated to honouring ATA members past and present who have had notable achievements, either in the ATA or in their private lives.
If you know of a member whom you feel should be recognized, please contact section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

The importance of sleep

Poor sleep associated with obesity, diabetes, cancer

Shelley Svidal

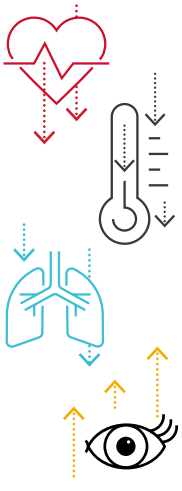
Staff Writer, *ATA Magazine*

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS to stay physically and mentally healthy is to get a good night's sleep, seven nights a week, 52 weeks a year.

Our sleep drive is regulated by our circadian rhythm, or internal clock, which runs approximately 24 hours. Any disruption of the rhythm, occasioned, for example, by jet lag or shift work, can disrupt the sleep drive. Sleep drive is also regulated by sleep/wake homeostasis: the longer we stay awake, the more our bodies crave sleep.

There are two types of sleep: rapid eye movement (REM) and nonrapid eye movement (NREM).

NREM sleep begins the sleep cycle and is divided into three stages. This is followed by REM, the fourth stage.



STAGE 1. TRANSITION (NREM)
The transition between wakefulness and sleep, during which your heart rate and breathing slow.

STAGE 2. LIGHT SLEEP (NREM)
Your heart rate and breathing continue to slow and your body temperature drops.

STAGE 3. DEEP SLEEP (NREM)
Your heart rate and breathing reach their lowest levels.

STAGE 4. ACTIVE SLEEP (REM)
This the sleep associated with dreaming. Your eyes move rapidly, and your heart rate and breathing quicken.

NREM and REM sleep cycle back and forth throughout the night, with NREM sleep decreasing and REM sleep increasing as morning nears.

The amount of sleep required to provide proper rest varies according to age.

RECOMMENDED HOURS OF SLEEP PER DAY

Life stage	Hours per day
Preschoolers (3–5 years)	10–13
School children (6–12 years)	9–12
Teenagers (13–18 years)	8–10
Adults (18–64 years)	7–9
Seniors (65 years and up)	7–8

– U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Too little sleep can lead to a host of physical and mental ailments, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and depression. Too much sleep can have the same effect. One solution is to practice good sleep hygiene.

Teachers lead busy and often stressful lives, and good sleep may seem unattainable. Remember that your Association is here to support you in any employment or other issues that may be causing you stress. Benefit providers can also lend support.

The eight habits of highly successful sleepers

1. Establish a sleep schedule and stick to it, even on weekends. Try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
2. Turn your bedroom into an oasis—cool, quiet, dark and comfortable.
3. Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bedtime. Caffeine blocks adenosine, a neurochemical that causes drowsiness. And while alcohol may help you fall asleep, it negatively affects the quality of that sleep and increases your risk of sleep apnea.
4. Don't take your cellphone to bed. The blue light emitted from the screen interferes with the production of melatonin, which promotes sleep.
5. Avoid late afternoon or evening naps. Napping after 3 p.m. can interrupt your circadian rhythm and affect nighttime sleep.
6. Exercise. Moderate or vigorous aerobic activity reduces the amount of time it takes to fall asleep.
7. Establish a bedtime routine. Take a long, hot bath; listen to music; or read a book before nodding off.
8. If you can't get to sleep, do something else. Tossing and turning is pointless. Resume your bedtime routine until you feel sleepy.

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

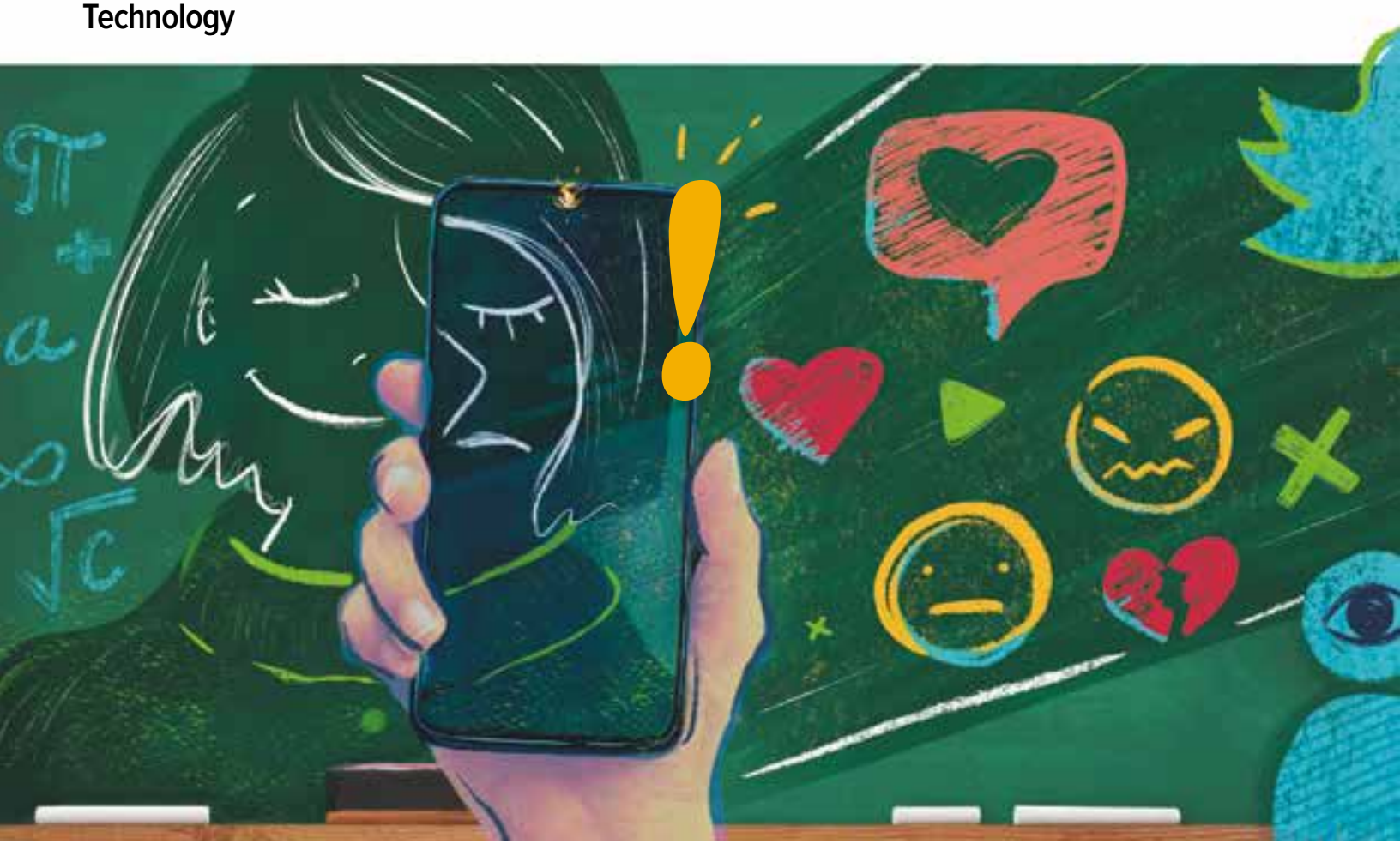
ISTOCK

Revisiting school start times

Adolescents require eight to 10 hours of sleep a day, but research indicates that one in three of them is not getting enough. School start times may be partly to blame. A 2016 study from McGill University found that school start times across Canada range from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Later school start times are associated with better adolescent sleep and improved academic performance.

Adolescents are fighting biology to get to school on time.

"The problem is that early school start times conflict with the natural circadian clock of teenagers," says Geneviève Gariépy, one of the authors of the study. "As teenagers go through puberty, their circadian clock gets delayed by two to three hours. By the time they reach junior high, falling asleep before 11 p.m. becomes biologically difficult, and waking up before 8 a.m. is a struggle. Adolescents are fighting biology to get to school on time." ATA



The merits of being antisocial

Tips for navigating social media as a teacher

Dave Matson

Staff Officer, ATA

SOCIAL MEDIA. I dread hearing those words. I'm not against social media per se, but as a staff officer in Teacher Employment Services who advises and represents teachers in difficult situations about incidents that occur on social media, I've seen the impact it can have on a teacher's professional life.

Sometimes these difficult situations involve students who have found pictures of their teacher online and then shared them broadly. Sometimes they're about a teacher who shared an unpopular opinion in a local chat group. Other times, they're about a teacher who has criticized a colleague or their employer on their timeline, or a parent who posts details about something that happened in the classroom using thinly veiled subtext ("I won't say which teacher, but I will say that it was a Grade 4 teacher" — but there's only one Grade 4 teacher at the school).

THE TEACHER HAT IS A SOMBRERO

Teachers are held in high esteem in the community, and as such, are held to a high standard of conduct, even while off duty. For this reason, teachers are advised to remain professional in all social media communication. Although it might be cathartic to "vent" online about a difficult situation that happened at work with a student, a parent, a colleague or even a decision of your employer, those about whom you are venting may not appreciate that catharsis. Depending on the situation, such communication could lead to disciplinary action by your employer, and it could also constitute unprofessional conduct.

AN OPEN BOOK

Teachers should assume that it's possible for anyone to access all of their social media posts. While privacy settings on social media create the illusion that shared content is kept inside a private bubble, remember that sometimes bubbles pop, meaning your social media posts are only as private as your friends/followers wish to keep them.

STAY ON THE RECORD

It is also common for parents and/or students to make "friend" requests of teachers on social media or to request their teacher's personal cellphone number. While this might be a convenient way

ILLUSTRATION BY GELA CABRERA

to communicate, it is not advisable to accept these requests, particularly from students. Doing so not only blurs the lines between your work and home life by giving them 24/7 access to you, but it also exposes you to the risks associated with communicating through an unmonitored and often informal medium.

People often think of social media or text messaging in a more relaxed way, which may make it difficult to remain professional in such contexts. For your own protection, communicate with parents and students only on platforms owned and monitored by your employer.

Help is available

Know that the ATA is here to help. Call Teacher Employment Services for advice if you experience any issues regarding electronic communication. As we always say, "dial before you dig!" The Association's Teacher Employment Services program area can be reached at 780-447-9400 (Edmonton area) or toll free at 1-800-232-7208.

Want to start a podcast? Here's how.

STEP 1: DEFINE YOUR IDEA.

The first and most important question to ask is, why do I want to do a podcast?

- **It's something to try.**
- **It's a hobby.**
- **It serves a niche.**
- **It addresses specific issues, e.g., lifestyle, values, politics, religion.**
- **It provides life hacks.**

It's better to be focused than to try doing a bit of everything.

Some of the most popular podcasts are personal commentaries that serve a niche.

STEP 2: DECIDE THE FORMAT, FREQUENCY AND LENGTH.

Format: The most common podcast formats are single voice (monologue) and host and guest (interview). The interview format is the most popular and a good approach for most topics.
Frequency: Publishing once a week is common but may be challenging to meet consistently. Podcasts that are published infrequently may struggle to attract and maintain an audience.
Length: Podcast lengths are trending down to 20 to 30 minutes (from 45 to 60), making them easier to consume during a commute, an exercise routine, a dog walk.

Length should dictate format. A single voice can work for up to 20 minutes, but a second voice helps hold listener interest for longer podcasts.

STEP 3: GET EQUIPPED.

You'll need

- **the quietest location** you can find, even if it's a closet. Try to reduce echoes. Well-placed blankets are a low-cost option.
- **a good microphone.** The Blue Yeti is a quality microphone for a reasonable price.
- **a device for recording and editing** (e.g., laptop, tablet). Phones can be used but are limiting.
- **audio editing software**, e.g., Audacity.
- **a platform for posting.** There are free platforms, such as Spotify Anchor, or paid subscriptions.

OTHER TIPS

- Plan to spend two hours to create a 30-minute podcast. Steps include planning, scripting, recording, editing, creating show notes and uploading to a service.
- Always have two or three completed podcasts "in the can."
- Pay attention to metrics.

See page 64 for a selection of podcasts recommended by your colleagues.

Information provided by Dave Albright, radio instructor at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Compiled by Cory Hare, managing editor, *ATA Magazine*.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- **Remembering and Forgeting in the Age of Technology**
  Michelle D. Miller

  Available through the ATA library.

No normal

Confronting ableism and disablism in education

Michelle M. Dow

Past President, ATA Council for Inclusive Education

AS EDUCATORS, HOW DO WE VIEW disability and ability?

A disability could be mental or physical. It could be visible or invisible. It could be temporary or lifelong. Disability takes many forms—so does prejudice.

Just as discrimination related to race, gender identity and religion requires attention and understanding, prejudice in the forms of **ableism** and **disablism** is also important to recognize.

Researcher Maria Timberlake describes ableism as "a largely unconscious acceptance of able-bodied privilege and sense of normal that does not need to be defined, normal is recognizable, and 'we know it when we see it.'" As a society, we have been conditioned to privilege those who are "normal"—however elusive the definition—and to pity, shun or overlook individuals who do not fall into that category.

Ableism and disablism in education can affect both teachers and students. In the series *Ableism in the Academy*, associate professor Steven Singer speaks candidly about his experiences as a Deaf man working in higher education. He details the instances of the ableism he encountered both as a professional and as a student, explaining how his D/deafness was often disregarded and how his mental illness was used against him at times. Aware of some of the discriminatory acts, he was more concerned with how ableist ideology and actions had impacted or would impact him when he was unaware. After all, how can the unseen consequences of bias be addressed?

Singer was keenly aware of his privileged position despite his disability, and even as he faced discrimination as a professional, it was the ways in which his students might be disadvantaged or disempowered that concerned him the most. This can be the troubling reality in schools, as students do not always have a voice and often have decisions made on their behalf by adults.

As educators, how do we address ableism and disablism in policies, spaces and practices? To help create inclusive environments for colleagues and students alike, consider the following actions:

- **Research disabilities** to gain understanding and to identify what you do not know.
- **Seek support** from experts and/or people with disabilities to identify what you do not know.
- **Analyze and evaluate spaces** with students and staff for areas of need or improvement (e.g., ramps, access to Braille, types of lighting and sounds). *Always include individuals with disabilities in this process!*
- **Analyze and evaluate practices and accommodations** with students and staff (e.g., access to ASL interpreters, access to visuals/tactile objects, access to modified pacing or workload, access to enlarged print). *Again, always include individuals with disabilities in this process!*
- **Examine accommodations or lack of accommodations** for bias. *What assumptions are being made about individuals when accommodations are not provided?*
- **Examine relationships** with students with disabilities and their parents. *What steps have been taken to build inclusive decision-making practices with stakeholders?*
- **Reflect on and explore perspectives** of stakeholders with regard to ableism and disablism ideology.
- **Create opportunities for stakeholders** to engage in discussion, feedback and participation in creating policies and/or practices.
- **Reflect, revise and take action** (and repeat!).

We can all take action to promote inclusion with intentionality, work to dismantle the notion of "normal," and counter ableism and disablism in education.

We can all take action to promote inclusion with intentionality, work to dismantle the notion of "normal," and counter ableism and disablism in education.

ILLUSTRATION BY KIM VANDERHELM

DEFINING TERMS

Ableism: discrimination in favour of persons who are able bodied or nondisabled

Disablism: discrimination against persons who are disabled

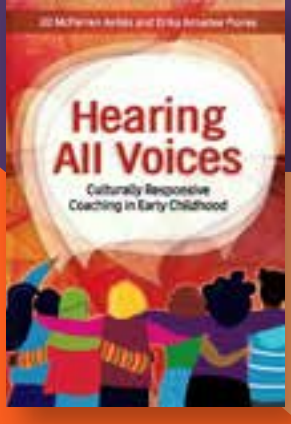
DID YOU KNOW?

International Women's Day was first held more than a century ago!

On March 19, 1911, the first International Women's Day was held in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. More than sixty years later, the United Nations proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year and recognized International Women's Day for the first time. Now this day acknowledging the achievements and contributions of women and girls is marked globally each year on March 8.

The ATA holds an annual Women in Leadership Summit. Check the ATA website for more information.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



Hearing All Voices: Culturally Responsive Coaching in Early Childhood

Jill McFarren Avilés and Erika Amadee Flores

Available through the ATA library.

IS THIS YOUR YEAR TO RETIRE?

FREE
ARTA membership for your first year of retirement.

Visit **artabenefits.net** to choose a benefit plan that will follow you wherever your retirement plans take you.

Did you know

YOU HAVE CHOICES IN YOUR RETIREE BENEFIT PLAN?

When it comes to health benefits, retiring teachers have more options available to them than ever before. With so much choice, you might be tempted to go with the most convenient offer, but there's no sense in rushing into a decision that will define your retirement. The **Alberta Retired Teachers' Association** understands the value of choice, and we allow our members to customize their retiree health benefits to suit their unique retirement goals, whatever they might be.

Financially sustainable benefit plans, by retirees, for retirees.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

Plan diversity that covers a variety of retirement lifestyles. You can choose the level and style of coverage that best suits your unique retirement goals, including options for single, couple, and family coverage.

Emergency Travel Insurance coverage for sudden and unforeseen medical travel expenses when you leave your province of residence, including COVID-19, no matter the travel advisory. ARTA travel coverage is unique and does not include a termination age, pre-existing conditions clauses, or stability clauses.

Trip Cancellation and Interruption Insurance with plan options that include $10,000 in coverage per covered person, per trip.

Three Stand-Alone Dental Care Options with preventative, minor, or major services coverage available.

Ancillary Programs which include the Boom discount program, ARTACares program (which provides support to you and your family when navigating the healthcare system), scholarships for family members, social connectedness programs, and much more.

Look for the **ARTA booth** at your local Teachers' Convention

ARTA BENEFIT PLANS

artabenefits.net

Lessons from mamiá'tsikimi: *the magpie*

Janis Weasel Bear-Johnson

Piikani and western European Indigenous Education, Calgary Board of Education

Of all the magpies I've known, "Kathy" is my favourite. We formed a friendship through the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the tree-sheltered balcony of my inner-city home became my temporary office.

Through the warm season, my husband and I began each day by filling the birdbath and watering the planters in our building's courtyard, one storey below. We'd leave offerings for birds and squirrels and watch with delight as the magpies would swoop in to see what they might find. Over time they got bolder. Perched in the tree, they would call through our screen door urging us to our morning routine. One of them—Kathy, the "chattiest"—took particular interest in us.

When one of us stepped out onto the balcony, Kathy would sail in. Sometimes she'd bring us a song or an offering of her own—the metal ring tab of a pop can, a smooth pebble, or, in one instance, three small red berries that she delicately placed on the balcony railing.

Kathy became comfortable enough to hop along the balcony floor, chasing grapes or pausing to peck at my bare toes as I worked. One afternoon I was immersed in a task with a pressing deadline as Kathy perched in the branches above. After several failed attempts to call my attention, she became impatient. Dropping from the tree, Kathy landed on the edge of my laptop screen, which slid slowly closed under her weight as she flapped her wings and squawked a clear message: *Human, it's time to take a break.*

In reminiscing about Kathy, I can't help but remember the day that magpies first caught my attention. Professionally, it was the darkest season that I've faced. Feeling isolated and hopeless, I struggled to find the motivation to get out the door each day.

One morning I tried to lift my spirits by driving my favourite route to work, a winding road through a quiet, forested oasis that usually invites me to reflection. On this day, such inspiration eluded me.

Suddenly, from the trees ahead, a flash of black and white darted out. A magpie glided straight toward me. I slowed down to let it cross my path and the bird swept low over my

FEATURE ILLUSTRATIONS BY GELA CABRERA LOA PHOTO BY HARDERLEE

car's hood, then rose into the trees on the other side of the road. I continued. Then another magpie sailed out—from the other side this time. Again, I slowed my vehicle. Again, the magpie sailed low, passing over the hood of my car. As I wound through the last stretch of the forested street, two more magpies completed this dance with my car. Four magpies. *Four*, a sacred number that, for the Blackfoot, represents balance, wholeness.

My discouragement forgotten, I wondered about these winged beings who had just brought me a timely message of hope. I'd driven this path countless times, and the magpies had never behaved this way. *Why today of all days*?

The greatest teacher

Looking back at all the time I've spent with *mamiá'tsikimi:* the magpie, I can see that they've been the greatest teacher. They've helped give me hope and helped me to flourish.

Through my 15-year career as an Indigenous educator, I've encountered many occasions when I've been overwhelmed by the investment required to implement change to help Indigenous students (and teachers) thrive. I've been discouraged by the complexities of navigating systemic racism and powerless to respond to big needs nested in holes too deep for me (or my colleagues or school leaders) to fill alone.

Teaching about the events that have traumatized Indigenous people—while being Indigenous—and the resistance that we often confront in the truth-telling, triggers my own trauma. It can be taxing to take up this work day after day with little systemic evidence of progress. Until pedagogical practices include the holistic, land-based connection and heritage languages that Indigenous students need, and they are given time to shape the relational culture of our school communities, we won't see the growth that needs to happen.

My work presents an ongoing and sometimes overwhelming challenge, but through spending time with magpies, I've begun to see and approach it differently. Magpies are watchful, caring and generous. They practice reciprocity with gifts, but the gift-giving doesn't just happen. It takes time, patience and reliability. It requires learning to be present without demands or personal agendas. It means coming to know what the magpies like and leaving offerings that they enjoy. It takes moving on their time.

Magpies crave connection. It's the first thing they do each day: check in with others. When the magpies trust you, they will share space in silence. When inspired, they'll share their throaty sing-songs with you. If you're lucky, they'll tell you a story.

Magpies will make you laugh. They'll remind you that black and white (light and darkness, hope and discouragement) co-exist, and that sometimes all it takes to change perceptions is gaining another perspective.

I keep a "blessing box" to store a collection of the gifts that the magpies have left over the years. It contains a variety of small stones, twigs (to build my nest, I presume), the odd feather with flashes of blue, emerald, flecks of gold. There's Kathy's three shriveled berries, and a replica arrowhead.

These mementos the magpies leave remind me of the magic of our exchanges, of the experiences and the lessons. I'm learning to dwell within those stories when I feel myself lingering too long with discouragement. Those magpies, they don't stay in one place for long. Neither should I. ATA

Magpies will make you laugh. They'll remind you that black and white (light and darkness, hope and discouragement) co-exist.

Unlearning colonialism and renewing kinship relations

Dwayne Donald

Papaschase Cree
Professor, Faculty of Education
University of Alberta

In September 1874, Treaty commissioners representing Queen Victoria traveled to Fort Qu'Appelle to negotiate the terms of a sacred promise to live in peace and friendship with the Indigenous Peoples of the region that came to be known as Treaty 4. (These people were the Nehiyawak (Cree), Anihšināpēk (Saulteaux), Dakota, Lakota and Nakoda.)

Prior to this meeting, the Indigenous leaders had learned that the Hudson's Bay Company had sold their lands to the Dominion of Canada without their consultation or consent. Thus, when the Treaty commissioners sought to initiate negotiations, they were surprised when the leaders declined to discuss the Treaty. Instead, an Anihšināpēk spokesman named Otahaoman explained through a translator that the assembled peoples felt that there was "something in the way" of their ability to discuss the terms of the Treaty in good faith (Morris 2014, 97–98).

It took several days of discussion for the Queen's representatives to comprehend the concerns expressed by Otahaoman, that these side dealings undermined the integrity of the government's Treaty intentions. Through the translator, Otahaoman clearly articulated the view that the Hudson's Bay Company really only had Indigenous Peoples' permission to conduct trade. The company did not have the right to claim ownership over any land.

Despite these misunderstandings, as well as notable disagreement among the various Indigenous groups in attendance, the parties did eventually ratify the terms of Treaty 4.

I begin with this story to draw attention to the persistence of Canadian colonial culture as "something in the way" of efforts to repair Indigenous–Canadian relations. The observation that Otahaoman articulated in 1874 is still a very relevant and unsettling problem today.

In the wake of the *94 Calls to Action* issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, educational jurisdictions and institutions across Canada have rushed to implement various policies and program initiatives. However, the rush to Reconciliation facilitates an active disregard for the truth of colonial ideologies that remain mostly uninterrogated in Canadian educational contexts and continue to be "in the way" of meaningful Indigenous–Canadian relational renewal. Such relational renewal is only possible if colonialism is unlearned through a broad social, cultural and educational reckoning.

Colonial ideologies have gotten "in the way" of schooling practices in the sense that prevailing curricular and pedagogical approaches perpetuate a colonial worldview. The founding principle of colonialism is relationship denial, and the centuries-long predominance of this principle has resulted in the creation of educational practices that perpetuate relationship denial in mostly subtle and unquestioned ways.

Such practices are reflective of the "Western code"—the Enlightenment-based knowledge paradigm that is presented as possessing all the answers to any important questions that could be asked by anyone, anywhere in the world. It is important to state that such conceptions

ka-miyo-wîcêhtoyahk
for us to get along well
ka-wîtaskîhtoyahk
for us to live as Nations
ka-wîtaskêhtoyahk
for us to share the land
and live as good neighbours
ka-miyo-ohpikihitoyahk
raise each other's children well

of knowledge and knowing have provided many benefits, but those understandings become a form of violence when they are prescribed as the *only* way to be a successful human being.

For example, Wynter (1995), has argued that the arrival of Christopher Columbus to Turtle Island instigated a centuries-long process wherein a universalized model of the human being was imposed on people around the world. She asserts that this particular advancement of colonial power has served to "absolutize the behavioural norms encoded in our present culture-specific conception of being human, allowing it to be posited as if it were the universal of the human species" (Wynter 1995, 42–43).

The assertion of this colonial power is carried out in the name of Progress.[1] Formal schooling eventually became a primary means by which those with power could discipline the citizenry to conform to this model of the human being and this notion of Progress. As I see it, this has resulted in the predominance of curricular and pedagogical approaches that perpetuate these universalized behavioural norms by persistently presenting knowledge according to the rubric of relationship denial.

The complex task of unlearning colonial forms of relationship denial does require learning more *about* the colonial worldview and the ways in which the cultural assumptions of that worldview inform the common sense conventions of educational practices. However, it cannot only rely on learning *about* such things in an informational way. To do so is to assume that relationship denial is just an intellectual problem that can be unlearned via a three-hour lecture with accompanying PowerPoint slides.

The difficult truth is that colonial forms of relationship denial are much more than just intellectual problems. Human beings who accept a colonial worldview as common sense come to embody colonial forms of relationship denial that teach them to divide the world.

One prominent form of relationship denial is evident in the ways in which the mental aspect of a human being is considered more important than the emotional, spiritual and physical aspects. The possibility for holistic unity and balance is denied when the different aspects of a human being are increasingly fragmented and disassociated as they become educated.

Relationship denial is also evident in the ways in which human beings are taught to believe that their needs are always more important than the needs of other forms of life. It is also evident in the ways in which students are taught to deny relationships that they have with people who do not look like them, speak like them or pray like them. When someone is educated to accept

[1] I choose to capitalize this term to denote its mythological prominence within settler colonial societies like Canada. This notion of Progress has grown out of the colonial experience and is predicated on the pursuit of unfettered economic growth and material prosperity stemming from faith in market capitalism. For more on this see Donald (2019) and Nisbet (1980).

relationship denial as a way of being in the world, it becomes part of how they are as a human being—how they live—and this acceptance has a very distinctive bearing on how they understand knowledge and knowing.

The field of education has become so fully informed by the assumed correctness of colonial worldview that it has become difficult to take seriously other knowledge systems or ways of being human. However, this struggle to honour other knowledge systems or ways of being is contributing to some of the most significant difficulties that society faces in trying to live in less damaging, divisive and ecologically destructive ways. It is clear to me that the acceptance of relationship denial as the natural cognitive habit of successful human beings undermines our ability to respond to these complex challenges in dynamic ways. Thus, an urgent challenge facing educators today involves decentering, denaturalizing and unlearning colonial logics of relationship denial as curricular and pedagogical common sense, and then honouring other ways to know and be.

As a teacher educator struggling to address this challenge, I draw significant guidance and inspiration from Indigenous wisdom teachings of kinship relationality. These wisdom teachings emphasize how human beings are at their best when they recognize themselves as enmeshed in networks of human and more-than-human relationships that enable life and living.

For example, in nêhiyawêwin (the Cree language), a foundational wisdom concept that is central to nêhiyaw (Cree) worldview is wâhkôhtowin. Translated into English, wâhkôhtowin is generally understood to refer to kinship. In a practical way, wâhkôhtowin describes ethical guidelines regarding how you are related to your kin and how to conduct yourself as a good relative.

Following those guidelines teaches one how to relate to human relatives and interact with them in accordance with traditional kinship teachings. Importantly, however, the nêhiyaw worldview also emphasizes honouring the ancient kinship relationships that humans have with all other forms of life that inhabit their traditional territories. This emphasis teaches human beings to understand themselves as fully enmeshed in networks of relationships that support and enable their life and living.

Thus, following the relational kinship wisdom of wâhkôhtowin, human beings are called to repeatedly acknowledge and honour the sun, the moon, the sky, the land, the wind, the water, the animals and the trees (just to name a few), as quite literally our kinship relations. Humans are fully reliant on these entities for survival and so the wise person works to ensure that those more-than-human relatives are healthy and consistently honoured. Cradled within this kinship teaching is an understanding that healthy human-to-human relations depend upon and flow from healthy relations with the more-than-human. They cannot be separated out.

These wisdom teachings of wâhkôhtowin enmeshment and kinship relationality are also central to the spirit and intent of the so-called Numbered Treaties negotiated between Indigenous Peoples and the British Crown between 1871 and 1921. Although I cannot claim expertise in the details of each individual Treaty, I can state that Indigenous Peoples understand those Treaties as sacred adoption ceremonies through which they agreed to live in peaceful coexistence with their newcomer relatives. This means that Indigenous Peoples understand those Treaties as a formal commitment to welcome newcomers into their kinship networks, share land and resources with them, and work together with them as relatives for mutual benefit. In this sense, the Numbered Treaties can be understood as expressions of the wâhkôhtowin imagination—human and more-than-human kinship interconnectivities.

However, such kinship interconnectivities are not a central part of how most Canadians understand the Numbered Treaties. In accordance with the colonial emphasis on relationship denial, Treaties have been a massive curricular omission in Canadian education systems. If Canadians have learned anything of Treaties in their formal schooling experiences, it usually comes in the form of historical background information that characterizes Treaties as business deals through which Indigenous Peoples surrendered their lands and received gifts and certain rights in return. So, tragically, the possibility that the Numbered Treaties could actually honour the layered complexities of kinship relationality and its constant renewal is undermined by ongoing institutional and societal dedication to relationship denial.

It is my view that Treaties can be a significant source of inspiration in addressing the two educational challenges mentioned previously: unlearning colonialism and honouring other ways to know and be. The handshake depicted on the Treaty medal guides

An urgent challenge facing educators today involves decentering, denaturalizing and unlearning colonial logics of relationship denial as curricular and pedagogical common sense, and then honouring other ways to know and be.

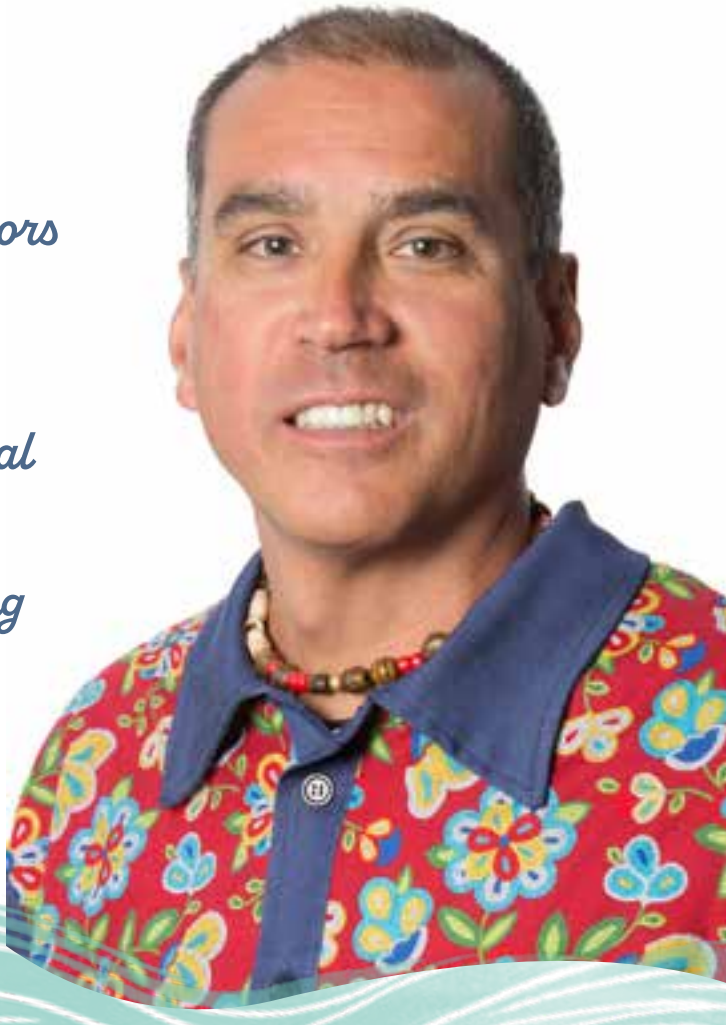


PHOTO SUPPLIED BY DWAYNE DONALD

me to work together with others in ways that bring benefits to all people who live on the land together. Specific to Treaty 6, the shaking of hands is understood to signify *ka-miyo-wîcêhtoyahk* (for us to get along well), *ka-wîtaskîhtoyahk* (for us to live as Nations), *ka-wîtaskêhtoyahk* (for us to share the land and live as good neighbours) and *ka-miyo-ohpikihitoyahk* (raise each other's children well).

What expressions of knowledge and knowing flow from an education that emphasizes kinship connectivities and relational renewal? What kind of human being emerges from such educational experiences? These are questions without clear answers. However, there are also questions that educators must begin to carefully consider as part of the much larger struggle to unlearn colonialism. It is clear to me that the human ability to honour other ways to know and be depends on the willingness to return to the ancient wisdom teachings of kinship relationality that are clearly emphasized in Treaty teachings.

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A delicate balance

Being an Indigenous teacher leader in Alberta

Yvonne Poitras Pratt

Métis Nation of Alberta (Red River Michif)
Fishing Lake Métis Settlement
Associate Professor, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

I was raised in a tiny house in a rural area near Quesnel, B.C. — "the bush," as we call it — on the Métis homeland but away from my parents' home community of Fishing Lake Métis Settlement. My father did not believe in taking out bank loans so our new and bigger house that sat on the same two-acre lot was built paycheque by paycheque. My dad, who could not swim a stroke and was afraid of water, worked as a "river rat" on the fast-flowing, murky Fraser River. My mother worked part-time as a housekeeper for a wealthy British family in the downtown area and I often wondered what that much wealth and prestige felt like.

Still, I rejoiced in the freedom of my childhood — making forts with my brothers, climbing far too high in towering pine trees, and heading down to the nearby lake with our inflated tire tubes during storms so my brothers and I could ride the whitecapped waves.

As a child, I loved school. School was my happy place, my safe place, a place where I could dream, imagine, learn and flourish. It was a haven from the chaos that would unexpectedly and periodically invade my childhood home. School became a refuge and a place where I could strive to make my life better. I carried this same ethos with me when I enrolled in education at a post-secondary in 1996 with three small children at home, and now as an associate professor in education. It is these very different stories I think

PHOTO BY ANGELA HOULE

Being Métis means I am teaching hard truths from a place of knowingness and vulnerability that I can feel in my throat and in the pounding of my heart.

about when asked what it is like to be an Indigenous teacher leader in Alberta.

As a teacher educator, I have devoted my life to bringing Indigenous truths to others. I realize my passion for teaching came from lessons I received as a young child playing underfoot at Indigenous (then called Native) political gatherings with my parents. I have many childhood memories of listening to and absorbing the ways of the Indigenous world—the art of debating, political strategizing and the power of advocacy – while playing on the floor at these gatherings and seated around the family dinner table. My passion for doing what is right was engrained early on and is now brought into my present-day teaching and learning practices.

Here in Alberta, I am continually shocked at how little people know about the Métis. Alberta is the only place in Canada with eight land bases, or settlements, set aside for the Métis. This should be a point of pride for Albertans. Yet, time and again, I hear people say "Oh, I didn't know!"

Encountering this un-knowingness over and over is a constant reminder of how much work still needs to be accomplished before we can ever hope that racism will end. Ignorance, after all, breeds racism. The erasure, ignoring and suppression of Métis voices and presence in K–12 classrooms represent a form of *symbolic violence* that ensures our truths remain cloaked and unheard. Education is the only way to break this cycle.

By serving as an active member of the Alberta Métis Education Council and on the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, I am acutely aware of these ongoing issues and the next challenges coming our way, be it funding delays, a damaging curriculum, or the longstanding struggle to be fully recognized as one of Canada's three Indigenous groups. These community roles allow me to experience a sense of community when I am feeling overwhelmed and alone in the day-to-day struggles.

Being an Indigenous teacher leader also means I am called to speak up — always remembering that my voice must speak for the collective good. As Métis, we have a proud and terrifying lineage of those who spoke their truths and were demonized, and even executed, for this act. This includes people like my great-great grandfather, Pierre Poitras, who sat on the Provisional Government with Louis Riel and who was, according to Métis lawyer Jean Teillet, "brutalized" by the colonizers.

Others, such as Jim Brady, Malcolm Norris, Joe Dion, Felix Calliou and Peter Tomkins, made possible the establishment of Métis settlements here in Alberta, yet their advocacy remains either unknown or hidden behind colonial half-truths. I look to the venerable Métis matriarch and truth-teller Maria Campbell, who spoke her truth, our truths, in the novel *Half-breed* in 1972. My role, then, as a Métis educator is to speak these truths. I often say that I have no right asking someone to do something if I am not willing to do it myself. So, I show up and speak up when that is what is needed.

In my teacher educator role, I bring my willingness to face challenges along with my love of learning into my classes. Being Métis means I am teaching hard truths from a place of knowingness and vulnerability that I can feel in my throat and in the pounding of my heart. Looking out at the sea of faces who are there to learn so they can teach better, I know I have to stay brave while keeping a spirit of kindness intact. The wrong word, gesture or mood can upset the delicate balance of learning and teaching difficult truths from a place of strength and vulnerability. The thrill of meeting this learning challenge reminds me of my childhood days where I found the courage, coaxed by my brothers, to make it to the highest branches of the pine tree to build something new. ATA

The first-ever Truth and Reconciliation Honouring Day event, held at the Blackfoot Sun/Medicine Wheel on Sept 30, 2021, attracted more than 200 attendees.
PHOTO BY YVONNE POITRAS PRATT

Every student needs to know they belong

Omarla Cooke

Piikani Nation, Treaty 7, Irish, Italian
Indigenous Education Team Lead/
Indigenous High School Success Coach,
Grande Prairie Catholic School District

I am that person who waits till the end of August to do my back-to-school shopping and plan my first day of work. Some of you may completely understand and others are probably thinking, "That poor lady needs to get organized." That won't happen. That's not me. And that is completely okay.

I haven't always been a procrastinator when it comes to preparing for school. When I was a kid, I looked forward to going school-supply shopping with my family. We would pick out what we needed — often not what we wanted, as being frugal was important. More than anything, I looked forward to school and was excited about being around my classmates and teachers. The school was a safe place for me. That was until I hit later elementary school.

We had moved around a lot — a byproduct of the Sixties Scoop and Residential Institutions — and I went to many different schools. I can think back and fondly remember each of the schools I attended before my later elementary grades.

The staff and students had never treated me differently (at least I didn't recognize any different treatment). I was a straight-A student and, as I said, always looked forward to school.

That all changed one afternoon when I asked my teacher for help with my math. She told me, "Don't worry, my dear. You are just a little Indian girl — you won't need to know how to use math."

Yes, you read that correctly.

At that time, I had limited knowledge about the relationship between my people and non-Indigenous peoples. My grandparents and eight of their children had attended residential institutions, but although they sometimes talked quietly about their experiences, they didn't reveal details and didn't speak openly of the atrocities they'd faced, at least not in the presence of little ones like me. Still, although I didn't understand what they were talking about, I could feel a sense of hurt and sadness about their time in those horrific places.

For me, up until that comment about not needing math, I had never faced any negative interactions due to being Indigenous, so my teacher's words were life-changing ... and not in a good way. That moment of being labeled "just a little Indian girl" changed my whole outlook on the educational system and my journey in the halls of whatever school I was in. I gave in to those words my teacher had spoken and played out those words for the remainder of my young educational journey.

I dropped out of high school when I turned 16. There were other factors as well that led to me leaving, including a motor vehicle accident that made it hard to return to the classroom, but mostly it was the words. I became the words my teacher had spoken. I became the statistic that I later learned about. My love of and joy in spending time in the school's hallways were shattered into pieces that I couldn't glue back together — yet.

Then I found out I was going to be a mother. As I watched my belly grow, and it grew big, I had moments of self-talk and reflection. I knew that if I was going to be a good mother, I had to ensure that I was a good role model as well. So, I turned those words my teacher had spoken into my fire, my reason and my passion for education. I used those words to get me back into school to earn my high school diploma. I didn't use the regular route and the math took longer, but I did it.

As I rebuilt my relationship with school, I saw an opportunity for me to be a role model, not only for my children but for other children as well. There may be a child sitting in a classroom, just like I was that fateful afternoon, who needs someone to encourage them and

As I rebuilt my relationship with school, I saw an opportunity for me to be a role model, not only for my children but for other children as well.

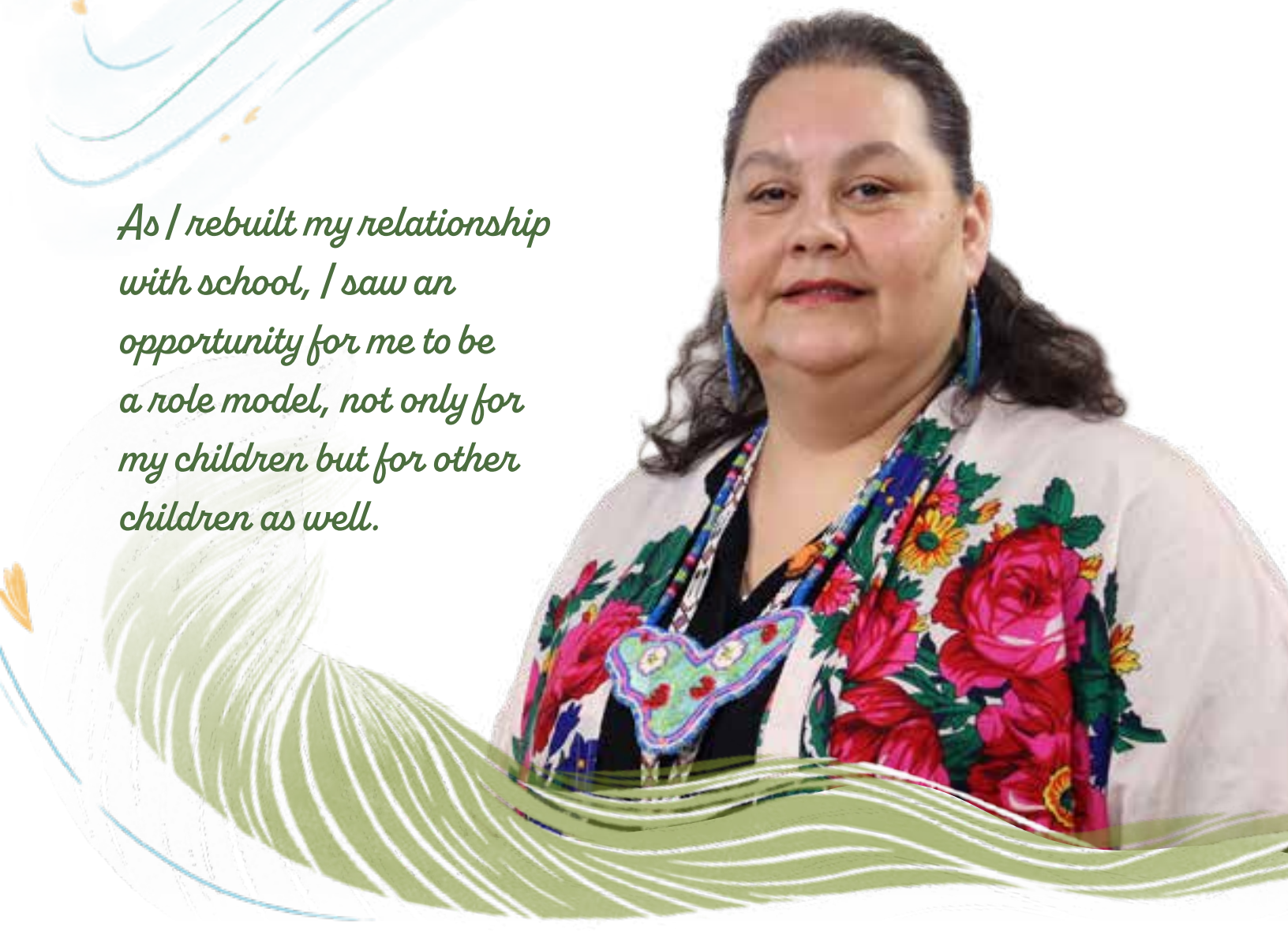


PHOTO BY ADAM TREMBLAY

build them up. Maybe there is a child in the hallway who sees teachers and school leaders who look nothing like them and so can scarcely ever imagine themselves in those roles. Maybe there is a family who needs someone who understands not wanting to send their children to school because you only have one loaf of bread left with nothing to put on it. Maybe there is a school leader who feels they have run out of ways to help a family—not because they don't care but because they may not be seen as a support due to the historical realities many Indigenous people have etched upon their hearts.

I turned those words my teacher had spoken into my pledge to be one person in a school hallway who can build up every other person there, signaling that we all belong there, and all deserve access to top-notch public education.

As the following student submissions demonstrate, fostering this sense of belonging is a vital part of our journey as teachers. We work through the curriculum with our students, and that is a huge part of our work. But there is also the relationship piece — as teachers, we create a safe space for our students to thrive and spark their passions in life. What we do is important and, I can attest, what we say is imperative.

As you enter your schools day after day, know that this little Indian girl (the correct term is Indigenous, thank you) will always encourage each child to be their best because each child is important.

Kiitamatsiin (see you again).

Embracing identity

opens the door to high school success

Robyn Brule

Bigstone Cree Nation, Treaty 8
Former Student, St. Joseph Catholic High School, Grande Prairie

I'm a First Nations student who graduated from St. Joseph Catholic High School in Grande Prairie in June of 2022. Finishing high school was a huge accomplishment for me. I'll admit, when I was younger, I never imagined myself getting to this point in my life because school for me was just another obstacle I couldn't overcome.

I spent a lot of my youth moving schools between my home communities of Bigstone Cree Nation and Sturgeon Lake First Nation and Grande Prairie. Although the moving was a contributing factor or obstacle to my relationship with school, another was that I felt invisible or not valued. Often I faced racist viewpoints and stereotypical racist slurs that made me feel not safe or welcome in the halls of the non-Indigenous schools I attended.

In the community of Bigstone, I attended Oski Pasikoniwew Kamik (OPK), a very cultural-based school and environment, with people I grew up with, so it's an understatement that moving to the city was a big change. At OPK, we focused on the traditions of our community as Bigstone Cree nation members, and in doing this, it created a community within itself. The faith or spiritual infusion was done through such things as smudging, language, and other cultural activities such as round dances and celebrations.

After moving to Grande Prairie, I didn't know how to adjust to a new faith that I was required to learn or the vast bodies of students that I knew nothing about or shared no connection with. I felt alone and I couldn't express myself because no one knew where I came from. I held back my identity because I didn't want to be targeted with the stereotype labels and treated less than others, something that I saw with some of the other Indigenous students in the schools.

I moved back and forth a couple more times, growing even more confused with myself. I continued on this path for a few more years until, at some point, I was introduced to an Indigenous liaison who helped people like me. I met with the nice lady frequently, but I couldn't change the negative aspects of it all weighing me down — negative aspects such as hearing Indigenous people be called lazy, uneducated, welfare cases, addicted, noncontributors to society — you know the uneducated, misinformed stereotypes that are associated with Indigenous Peoples. Hearing this weighed on me and, as mentioned earlier, I did not want to identify as Indigenous. It was a shameful thing for me, but only in non-Indigenous settings, because in Indigenous settings I was proud and wanted to share that I am Indigenous.

Finally, arriving at St. Joe's, I held no expectations. I thought I had already passed the point of finding success for myself because of the way things had been in all my previous schools. But then I connected with Omarla Cooke, an Indigenous high school success coach at St. Joe's high school in Grande Prairie.

She changed the way I saw myself, encouraging me to believe in myself and to share my voice and perspectives as an Indigenous person and strong Indigenous woman. This was something that I was not encouraged to do previously, or at least this is what I thought. She modeled what a strong Indigenous person who is connected to her traditions and culture, as well as her faith, can do to create change.

This sparked a motivation to invest in me and believe I could do great things myself. I sat with her one day and shyly shared that I was not going to make it to the end of the semester because I was not confident in my work and felt overwhelmed. She cheered me on and helped me work through the work she knew I could do while still giving me challenges that I needed. She helped me open doors that I never knew existed, doors like completing and achieving my diploma, and possible post-secondary routes.

Soon enough, I started applying myself to work and thrived on the empowerment I felt when I completed something. I wasn't going to be another dropout, because I found the strength and courage to push through the statistics and work hard to achieve something not many in my family could. It sure took a while, but I finally found myself in an environment completely different from what I'm used to, and it became a home away from home.

PHOTO BY ADAM TREMBLAY

With knowledge, we can work toward a better world

Jirey Mpunga

Grade 12 student, St. Joseph Catholic High School, Grande Prairie

My view on Indigenous communities changed incredibly last year when I was enrolled in an Indigenous class provided by my school. Ever since then, my passion to learn more, to expand my knowledge about anything Indigenous, has grown wonderfully.

It was never like this when I was younger, considering how my family and I used to regard Indigenous Peoples. I had always wondered why Indigenous Peoples were called hideous names and treated very poorly. I would hear people around me calling Indigenous Peoples slobs and uneducated, and saying "they get free money" … all sorts of things.

Deep down, I knew there was more to it because there's always more to a person than their appearance or background. In essence, after learning about the Indigenous Peoples and their culture in the fourth grade, I literally fell in love with their culture. I was so intrigued by the uniqueness of throat singing and their traditional clothes. I appreciated how colourful and bright their clothes were and how their songs often tell stories of courage, hope and strength. Though all these things are significant, one thing that really took my heart is how powerful Indigenous Peoples have been to this very day.

Residential Schools aren't a secret anymore. Hundreds of gravesites are being found all over Canada, the graves of innocent young souls. Their graves are evidence of the ignorance and lack of acknowledgment that is still shown today toward Indigenous Peoples. It's horrific discovering the truth, what really went down in those schools. No one, no child, deserves to endure what the Indigenous children went through.

I used to be uneducated on topics such as these. I still am, considering how much more there is to learn and understand.

There are many Indigenous reserves that are lacking clean, fresh water. Where is the promise for all to have clean drinking water as a basic necessity? Do Indigenous reserves not lie on Canadian lands where this is a promise made to all Canadians? Is simple humanitarian need no longer a thing? Other concerns include unkept treaties, residential schools, and missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women, just to name a few.

These are heavy topics that unfortunately go unseen or are pushed aside, though the inclusion of mandatory Indigenous classes in the school curriculum has helped greatly. Even if it made a slight difference, it's better than no change at all. This allows the rising generation to be better and do better. We can move forward with the knowledge we have already accumulated, acknowledge what our ancestors have done, and hopefully work our way to a better world.

All we need is a wâspison

Through reconciliation we can balance differing world views

Preston Huppie

Métis/Cree, Traditional Métis Homeland (Edmonton, Treaty 6)
Indigenous Education Strategist, CN Gunn Elementary School, Calgary Board of Education

Tanisi, Preston Huppie nitisiyihkâson (my name is). I am a Métis/Cree educator from the Métis homeland and the Treaty 6 ancestral territory in what is now referred to as Alberta. The story of who I am leads to the challenge of fitting in a balanced education involving an Indigenous world view and a Western world view. It began with our family being forced to move west, away from the Red River of Manitoba. As settlers moved in, so did Western values. Métis people, and Indigenous values, were displaced and struggled with their placement and identity on this land. Our Indigenous world view was taken from us through the loss of culture, language and traditions.

When they signed treaties with settlers, our Elders said we must learn both Indigenous and Western ways if we are to live in harmony together. However, throughout our history together, settlers haven't shown much interest in learning about Indigenous ways, and Indigenous Peoples have only learned Western ways through oppressive systems like Residential or Day Schools. Moving forward together means we all need to decolonize our minds, bodies, spirits and hearts, find a balance between two world views that don't always see eye to eye, and provide a balanced education for all students.

The way I seek to find balance between the world views is through the concept of a moss bag, or *wâspison* in Cree. A moss bag is an Indigenous carrying case for babies that's made from moose hide, deer hide or cloth. Laces are used to tie the baby inside so they can be carried, cared for and loved. Just the head and the face of the baby are visible while the arms and legs are gently wrapped like in a mother's womb. Beaded flowers or a floral design typically adorn each side and actual moss was used as a medicine to keep babies healthy. The babies learned to trust those who tied and cuddled them. I believe our education system needs to bring together Indigenous and Western views and tie them together in a way that can hold our collective histories with students nestled in, like in a moss bag. This is my philosophy of teaching. As we teach and learn more about the two world views, we'll see our students within the moss bag of education and we'll know they are receiving the best education, as our ancestors intended.

I am here to help students with who they are, where they come from and how they fit within this moss bag of education.

As a Métis/Cree educator, I am here to tie the moss bag of two world views together so that each has its place in reconciliation. I am here to help students with who they are, where they come from and how they fit within this moss bag of education. I am also here to provide this perspective of balanced teaching to non-Indigenous teachers in the classroom, school and community.

We must learn our shared inherited history both as settlers and as Indigenous Peoples. This must not be a hierarchy of learning, but more a balance of learning coming from two world views. We need to know that this is the best thing to do. Through reconciliation, together we can all learn about the truth and history of this land and provide the best education for our students and ourselves.

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN MOSS BAG PHOTO COURTESY OF McCORD STEWART MUSEUM

Roundtable discussion

Three Elders share their perspectives on Indigenous engagement, protocol and allyship

The *ATA Magazine* invited Elders from the ATA Indigenous Advisory Circle, which included 11 First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders and Knowledge Keepers from across the province, to participate in interviews. Three Indigenous Elders among the group gathered for a roundtable discussion (held via Zoom) to discuss three fundamental questions. What ensued was a free-flowing and engaging conversation that spanned an hour and a half. Here are excerpts from that discussion.

Elders

Doreen Bergum

Born in an era when it was illegal to express one's Métis culture, Doreen Bergum dove into her culture at age 55, when laws changed. She learned music, dances and handicrafts that were secretly shared during her childhood. Currently, Doreen is the Métis Elder for the Homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta Region #3 and an internationally recognized jigger. She shares her culture with students in schools, colleges and universities and creates storyboards and museum displays.

William Sewepagaham

William Sewepagaham is from the Little Red River Cree Nation in northern Alberta and is fluent in Cree. William earned a bachelor of education from the University of Calgary and a masters of education from the University of British Columbia and spent his career as a director of education, a principal, a classroom teacher, guidance counsellor, as well as in curriculum development. William also worked as a community liaison at various times and is a highly respected Elder across Alberta who was in great demand in schools.

Mary Cardinal Collins

Mary Cardinal Collins is originally from onihcikiskwapiwinihk Saddle Lake First Nation, from the clan Wecokan (wîcôkân "helper" in SRO). Her mother is of Métis heritage, although she was brought up on the reserve in the 1940s. Mary went to Blue Quills Indian Residential School when she was seven, but while other children lost their language, she didn't.

Facilitator

Melissa Purcell

Tthebatthı Dënésułıné
(Smith's Landing First Nation), Treaty 8 – Irish
Executive Staff Officer, Indigenous Education, ATA

What advice do you have for teachers on engaging in Indigenous education with students, families and school staff?

Doreen Bergum

When I was growing up, I was taught the seven sacred teachings of love, respect, humility, courage, wisdom, honesty and truth. When I was in school and someone asked me a question about who I was, I was embarrassed because I had never embraced my culture. I think you have to reverse it and make sure students don't get embarrassed, so they can come out and be proud of who they are, especially of their ancestors, their parents and their culture.

I believe that the biggest thing is respect—respecting youth, respecting the teachers and just building up that encouragement to be proud of who they are.

Or you can consult Elders. They can come in and tell stories and share their culture. We just have to remember that not all Elders are the same, and the teachings and values and all stories are not the same.

William Sewepagaham

It's very important that we talk about this topic. School is something — some parents think it's not for them, ... and some don't really want to go there, but if they do, it should be celebrated.

Always acknowledge [parents]. Always smile — a smile goes a long way. And say, "Hi, how are you? My name is so and so."

Mary Cardinal Collins

If you get a chance to have personal relationships ... I know we talk a lot about relationships in our teachings, and I know when I first started teaching, which was a long time ago, there was a real emphasis on having professional relationships. And by that I think it was meant that it wasn't really personal — you're the teacher and there's a big boundary there. There still is a boundary, but I think for any of these relationships with Indigenous Peoples, it has to be on a personal level.

Indigenous education has to be embedded in all the subject areas and it just needs, I think, to be mentioned on a regular basis that this was an Indigenous way of looking at things.

Doreen Bergum

William Sewepagaham

Mary Cardinal Collins

How can teachers learn about cultural protocol? Why is this important for maintaining, strengthening or entering into relationships?

Doreen

Every Elder has a different protocol. In the beginning, I never accepted tobacco, but once I found out the true story behind the tobacco, I accept it all the time. I pray with it, and I take it to the cemetery. I take it back to the land. This is why every Elder should be consulted. [Ask] "what is your protocol" because it's all so individual.

William

I agree with Doreen about tobacco. You have to ask first if they accept tobacco. The other thing is … if you invite an Elder … ask what the topic is. All the Elders are experts in different areas, for example, stories, hunting, trapping. So, ask Elders what their area of expertise is.

Always be careful of the protocol. Always ask, "what should I do?"

Mary

Learning how to do protocol is part of the learning process, and it's a way to get to know the culture of all the different areas. It's always good to ask about it. Don't be shy, ask, "what is the protocol in this area?"

A while ago I had to do a presentation on the use of tobacco and it was elementary grades. After I finished, some of the kids wrote me a letter and one of the letters asked me … "I thought tobacco was a bad plant, that it's not healthy." I had to explain that the plant itself is not bad, it's how people use it. It's not unhealthy in itself … that all things on earth, all natural things, are supposed to be used for good, but sometimes people overuse them or don't use them in a good way.

Those kinds of things I think people need to think about and, for people like myself, the cultural keepers, have to explain.

We all grow in our knowledge ourselves. We didn't spring out of childhood just knowing everything, so over the years, I think we've learned all the ins and outs of protocol and we end up with practices that are true to ourselves and true to what we believe in.

Circling back to protocol, it's very important — important as a culture and a cultural learning tool itself and for opening doors to all kinds of knowledge.

How can non-Indigenous teachers be effective allies?

Doreen

My whole thing is, get to know us. Get to know who we are. To be able to teach with respect to our children, I think it's very important to get to know who we are and educate yourself on First Nations, Métis and Inuit, because we're all different. I think that's the biggest way that teachers can become allies and support our cultures—get to know us and be part of us. Get to know our ways of knowing, our ways of being so our students, our youth, can be proud of who they are, to continue along their path.

William

If somebody gives you a gift, never say no. Start building yourself [into] a pillar in the community by doing small things. Smile, respect, acknowledge. The other thing that teachers can do is learn the Cree language. For example, *tansi* — that means how are you?

Be positive. Always think positively when you see families, Elders, kids. Love their kids. Always be kind to them, the kids and everybody else. It makes a difference.

Mary

Learn about us. Get to know us, but don't take over. The best allies for me are people who get to know you and get to know about your culture.

PHOTOS BY YUET CHAN

An oath of antiracist conviction

A teacher's commitment to addressing anti-Indigenous racism

(includes and is not limited to):

1. I have the will and commitment to learn from and stay with my personal discomfort. I understand that feeling guilty serves neither me nor Indigenous Peoples.
2. I actively recognize the wrongdoing associated with the Indian Residential School System, Sixties Scoop, and other aspects of the oppressive history of Canada's treatment of Indigenous Peoples.
3. I am responsible for what I do today and choose to interrupt oppressive colonial history through my commitment to teach the truth about it.
4. I care about others without co-opting or prying into their cultural ways or practices. I recognize that Indigenous culture has been continuously objectified, stolen and outlawed; therefore, it is inappropriate to feel entitled to seek sensitive cultural information directly from individuals. I instead practice self-inquiry into my motives while focusing on my commitment to learning from Indigenous scholarship in the fields of Indigenous Education and Indigenous Studies.
5. I respect the space of Indigenous ceremony, including smudge, without attempting to recreate it.
6. I believe that all parents do their best and know that the way they show up for their child is not necessarily a reflection of their love for their child. I reject the assumption that, if a family or parent is less involved than others, it indicates lack of love and care for their child; all parents do the best they can.
7. I understand that a child's brain is not fully developed and reject assumptions that forgetful or tardy children are less competent than those who are focused and on time. I reject assumptions that any child who forgets their lunch or arrives late is inferior in any way.
8. I foster the highest and most reasonable expectations of all students' academic capacities regardless of race, class, gender, sexuality or ethnicity.
9. I engage with pedagogical humility by graciously learning from personal misunderstandings and mistakes rather than assuming a defensive, expert position.
10. I courageously take opportunities to learn, question, and develop professionally in Indigenous Education and Indigenous Studies and to respect what is being called for by Indigenous leaders and educators in this area.
11. I critically rethink the world around me, including the taken-for-granted of how things are done.
12. I release Indigenous students from expectations that they be experts or knowledgeable about anything Indigenous.
13. I reject stereotypes that quiet Indigenous students have lower learning capacities, and I recognize Indigenous students as greater than the intergenerational trauma they are likely surviving.
14. I expect no praise for teaching truth and take it as a responsibility and part of a legacy of my own contribution to a more just future.
15. I rejoice in difference and finding ways to nourish and be nourished by the richness of diverse ways of thinking and being.

Rebecca Sockbeson

Penobscot Indian Nation and Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
Professor of Indigenous Peoples Education, University of Alberta

Addressing anti-Indigenous racism in schools

Rebecca Sockbeson

Penobscot Indian Nation and Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation
Professor of Indigenous Peoples Education,
University of Alberta

These oath statements of antiracist conviction reflect the habits of some of the most effective and trusted settler individuals I have learned from over my 25 years as a practitioner in Indigenous education. These pledges offer what many of us as Aboriginal educators hoped for with the development of competency 5 of the 2019 Teaching Quality Standard (TQS): Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit.

I offer antiracist conviction as a way to engage with competency 5, create opportunities for necessary self-reflection, and catalyze social and political change. Antiracist conviction calls for settlers and institutions to be actively aware of their own history and identify the benefits inherited from colonialism. Settlers, both white and racialized, can be effective at impacting social and political change if their antiracist conviction is backed up by an understanding of how they benefit from colonial structures of oppression. They are grounded in conviction, and where I come from, that is "walking your talk." In this case, the making of competency 5 is the metaphoric talk, and now it is time to walk the language of competency 5 pedagogically. These oath statements rely on Alberta's teachers and school leaders to assert the political will required to fulfill Teaching Quality competency 5.

I introduced the term antiracist conviction (Sockbeson 2019) as an opportunity for educators and institutions to actively apply antiracist theory and practice and address in concrete and material ways how multifaceted layers of racism continue to increase and reinforce the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It has long been clear that continuing to engage with deficit approaches in education, where Aboriginal students and their perceived deficiencies are blamed for achievement gaps, is a self-defeating approach uncritically resting on existing structures of division and disenfranchisement. We can no longer simply talk about building the resilience of Aboriginal students while silently perpetuating the very systems that cause the harm Aboriginal students need to brace themselves against. As Chagdud Tulku (Drolma 2003) observed, "trying to change the world without changing our minds is like trying to clean the dirty face in the mirror by scrubbing the glass."

Antiracist conviction calls for settlers and institutions to be actively aware of their own history and identify the benefits inherited from colonialism.

Antiracist conviction calls for settlers and schools to hold up mirrors to their own history in Canada and identify how they still benefit today from colonial subjugation and past genocidal policies. Recognizing the many continuing benefits of this past means accepting being implicated by them. A recognition of being implicated in neocolonial forms of oppression is not about blame but, rather, responsibility. This means continual reflection on how educational practices might reinforce the very practices they claim to want to dismantle, and then acting to name and correct them.

In 2013, I was part of a small team of Aboriginal scholars who coauthored and led the delivery of the University of Alberta's EDU 211 Aboriginal Education and the Context for Professional Development, Alberta's

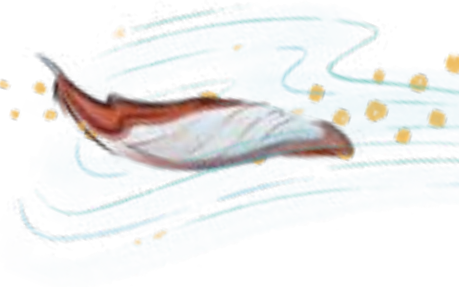
Heart Berries

Illustration by Megan Tipler

Inspired by Terese Marie Mailhot's novel Heart Berries, this illustration is intended to be a reminder of the power of the heart and people's capacity to uplift and learn from one another.

"White people tend to think we are like a convenience store, they like to come in and buy the candy, the M&Ms of our culture and spirituality, and leave behind all the cleaning products, like the oppression, colonialism and racism."

— Rene Attean, Penobscot Elder, scholar and basket maker



first compulsory course for teachers in Indigenous education. Since then, the course has reached well over 10,000 preservice teachers in Alberta, yet there exist over 50,000 practicing teachers in the province who, if they attended a preservice teacher education program in Alberta, were not required to take an Aboriginal education course. One of my core hopes was that the course would begin to critically address Aboriginal people's racist experiences in schools and society at large. The leading reason Aboriginal students depart early from school is racism, and we must systematically address this in both our administrative and pedagogical approaches (Hampton & St. Denis 2002).

By adopting these oaths, settler educators can purposefully engage antiracist policy and practice when expanding knowledge systems in educational institutions. This space of engagement must prioritize "difficult" knowledge above "lovely knowledge" (our dances, food and stories) that late Elder Rene Attean identified as the "M&Ms" (Attean 1992; Pitt & Britzman 2010).

"White people tend to think we are like a convenience store, they like to come in and buy the candy, the M&Ms of our culture and spirituality, and leave behind all the cleaning products, like the oppression, colonialism and racism."

—Rene Attean, Penobscot Elder, scholar and basket maker

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Moving beyond performative gestures of reconciliation

Melissa Purcell

Tthebatthı Dënésułıné
(Smith's Landing First Nation), Treaty 8 – Irish
Executive Staff Officer, Indigenous Education, ATA

Reconciliation is more than simply hiring an Indigenous person, creating a smudging room or hanging Indigenous artwork on the wall. Yes, these are entry points for indigenizing spaces; however, we must move beyond insincere or empty efforts to authentically contribute to truth and reconciliation.

Reconciliation must be rooted in relationships and is a lifelong journey that includes critical self-reflection and actively contributing to meaningful and intentional positive change.

This journey includes non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples walking alongside each other, creating spaces and opportunities for authentic and respectful relationships, and working towards building a new way to collectively move forward. As stated by author Paulette Regan in her 2010 book *Unsettling the Settler Within*, educators must "recognize the possibility of opening transformative pathways on a journey that starts within ourselves — a journey of critical reflection" fundamentally based on truth, respect and kindness (p. 17).

Reflection is crucial in the reconciliation journey, but as Paulo Freire said regarding his banking concept of education, "thinking that is concerned about reality does not take place in ivory tower isolation, . . . [and] thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world" (p. 120). In other words, we have a moral imperative to individually and collectively carry this work forward through meaningful action, intention and responsible care.

However, reconciliation must be more than performative action, "political theatre" or "framed in a nationalist narrative that displaces real accountability," as Stacia Loft states in her article "Reconciliation... Really? From MacDonald to Harper: A Legacy of Colonial Violence" (p. 45).

Symbolic gestures and demonstrations must be fundamentally rooted in relationships and serve as a reminder of and commitment to our individual and collective contributions, rather than a "tipi and costumes approach," as University of Alberta researcher Dwayne Donald puts it (p. 5).

Reconciliation must work "to 'restory' the dominant-culture version of history; that is, we must make decolonizing space for Indigenous history — counter-narratives of diplomacy, law, and peace-making practices — as told by Indigenous Peoples themselves," Regan says (p. 6). And we "must recognize the strength and resilience of [Indigenous Peoples] who, despite the harms perpetrated against them, continue to resist colonialism, reclaiming and reconstituting their own governance systems, laws and histories, and ceremonies" (pp. 7–8), and support the resurgence and revitalization of the original peoples of this land.

Reconciliation as a relational process

Often educators feel the need to immediately jump into action-related behaviour without spending time becoming more aware of the significance and meaning of the learning that they are about to engage in. This often creates a superficial and sometimes tokenistic application or appropriation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge. There is pressure for educators to demonstrate the application of First Nations, Métis and Inuit foundational knowledge through resources, initiatives or demonstrations of learning in classrooms and school communities. There is often a focus within our professional learning lives related to the tangible lesson plans or

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

Reconciliation must be rooted in relationality and is a lifelong learning journey that includes critical reflection and actively contributing to systemic change by dismantling colonial constructs.

resources that can be applied the next day. Instead, establishing and strengthening relationships with Indigenous Peoples, languages, cultures, stories and traditions that are interconnected with the land, water, animals, plants and cosmos all around us can contribute to authentically moving reconciliation forward.

Know that with every small step, large step and every twist and turn in this journey, and working toward closing the relational gaps, that you will always be right when you are listening and responding with an open heart and open mind. Reconciliation must be rooted in relationality and is a lifelong learning journey that includes critical reflection and actively contributing to systemic change by dismantling colonial constructs and, always, seeking authentic ways to move this work forward.

As Donald states, "if colonialism is indeed a shared condition, then decolonization needs to be a shared endeavour" (p. 5) as we collectively carry our stories and hearts together walking to heartbeat of the Mother Earth.

We must do better for the sake of our children and for the betterment of future generations.

Connecting Policy to Action

Alberta's Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) and Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS) define reconciliation as the "process and goal of creating societal change through a fundamental shift in thinking and attitudes, increasing intercultural understanding to build a better society through learning about First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives and experiences, including residential schools and treaties" (LQS 2020, p. 2).

As shared within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report, Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, reconciliation is about "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between [Indigenous] and non-[Indigenous] peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour" (p. 7).

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Class size and complexity matter!

Teachers and school leaders report unsustainable levels of moral distress

Phil McRae

Associate Coordinator, Research, ATA

> "Class size doesn't matter unless you're one of too many kids or the only teacher. When people say class size doesn't matter, they are talking about other people's children."
>
> —Joe Bower (1978–2016)

WHEN THE ATA CONDUCTED its seventh pandemic pulse survey, during the first week of October 2022, Alberta schools were experiencing a simultaneous spread of COVID-19, influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). It was a difficult and uncertain time for schools with substitute shortages and mixed messaging about the state of the pandemic.

By Nov. 7, in Edmonton Public Schools, over 70 per cent of schools had met or exceeded the 10 per cent absentee threshold for "outbreak status" determined by Alberta Health Services. During this time, pediatric hospitals in Alberta were reporting unprecedented levels of emergency room visits and admissions to the point that, on Nov. 25, both the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary and Edmonton's Stollery Children's Hospital were at or above 100 per cent in-patient capacity.

Controversially, the Alberta government introduced regulatory changes at the end of November that prohibited any school division from implementing mask mandates in their schools. The new regulations also stipulated that Alberta schools could no longer shift Grade 1 to 12 classes to a solely online format.

In early December, the Alberta Medical Association responded to the changing pediatric hospitalizations with an emergent letter to the ministers of both health and education to institute a temporary mask requirement in schools with the provision of high-quality, medical-grade masks. And they also requested the placement of HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) purifiers in Alberta classrooms.

TOP 3 CLASSROOM COMPLEXITIES

1. Social/emotional
2. Cognitive
3. Behavioural

While all of this was unfolding across the public health landscape in the fall of 2022, Alberta's class sizes had become significantly larger, with greater levels of complexity and diversity of student needs across all grade levels, nested in a context of diminished resources and classroom supports.

As an Alberta teacher commented, *"I teach Grade 3. I have one student that has been diagnosed with autism and a student with severe behaviour. Three of my students are reading at a beginning of Grade 1 level. One student moved from another country and had no schooling or English before last year. I have seven English language learners who are at least one grade behind in reading and writing. Poor attendance has been an issue for the last two years."*

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

When respondents were asked for the best descriptor of what they will likely be doing five years from now in the year 2027, the following plans were identified:

- 16 per cent will have retired
- 16 per cent will have left the profession for another occupation
- 7 per cent will have left Alberta to teach in another location

Across this study, and in the context of the challenges of underfunded and resource-hungry classrooms and schools, Alberta teachers and school leaders are reporting high levels of compassion stress and compassion fatigue and unsustainable levels of moral distress. Moral distress is "when one knows the right thing to do, but institutional constraints make it nearly impossible to pursue the right course of action."[1]

Alberta teachers and school leaders know what the right thing to do is, but they do not have the resources, supports, professional autonomy or time to contend with the many cascading challenges across our schools and school communities. Moral distress is clearly setting into the profession of teaching in Alberta, and we must all focus on ways to change this concerning trajectory.

[1] Jameton, A. 1984. *Nursing Practice: The Ethical Issues.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

FALL 2022 PULSE RAPID RESEARCH STUDY

KEY FINDINGS

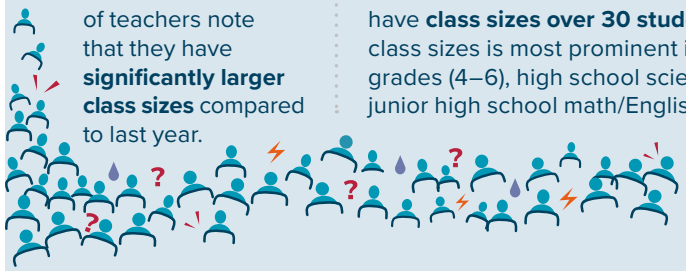
LARGE CLASS SIZES

64%

of teachers note that they have **significantly larger class sizes** compared to last year.

4 in 10 Alberta teachers

have **class sizes over 30 students**. The growth in class sizes is most prominent in the elementary grades (4–6), high school science/math and junior high school math/English language arts.



COMPLEX CLASSROOMS

85%

of teachers report an **increase in the complexity and diversity of student needs** in their classrooms from last year. The top three complexities identified are social/emotional, cognitive and behavioural.

50+%

of teachers also estimate that the **timelines for speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and/or psychoeducational assessments** for any of their students will take **six months to a year** (31 per cent) or will **not be completed at all** within this school year (26 per cent).

56%

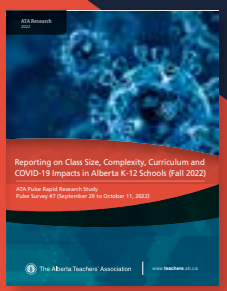
of teachers report a **decline in support for students with exceptionalities.**

COVID-19 AND CURRICULUM

86% of teachers strongly agree/agree that students in their classes are **struggling with learning and have experienced significant gaps** in their understanding of curriculum during the pandemic.

Three out of four K–6 teachers feel that they **did not** have the necessary **curriculum inservicing and planning time** required to successfully implement the new Alberta K–6 curriculum by September 2022.

79% of Grade 1 to 3 teachers have seen an **increase** this year in the **expectations to undertake new diagnostic testing** for students.



▶ The full results and individual summary reports and infographics for all ATA pandemic pulse surveys can be found on the Association's website https://tinyurl.com/2hddmzyr.

What's on your mind?

Students embrace the benefits of a growth mindset

Lia M. Daniels

Motivation Researcher, University of Alberta

Lauren D. Goegan

Motivation Researcher, University of Manitoba

Morgan Klevyer

Grade 1 Teacher, Patricia Heights School, Edmonton

Darren Sweeney

Principal, Westbrook School, Edmonton

Sarah Holmgren

Principal, Livingstone School, Lundbreck

SUPPLIED

Figure 1. Word frequency of students' definitions of a growth mindset

This project was supported by a grant from the Kule Institute for Advanced Study and the Alberta Teachers' Association that was designed to encourage the codevelopment of research collaborations between faculty members at the University of Alberta and Alberta teachers.

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, the concept of different mindsets (the underlying beliefs people have about learning and intelligence) has exploded in popularity in educational settings. When learning about mindsets, teachers and students typically hear about two individuals: one with a fixed mindset and one with a growth mindset.

The student with a fixed mindset might think that their abilities are static and unchanging, which often results in them giving up when things get hard and feeling sad or frustrated. The student with a growth mindset believes that, through effort and strategies, they can grow their brains, leading to improvement and positive emotions.

The story we share here is an example of a schoolwide mindset messaging effort implemented at one elementary school in Edmonton. It came to be through a university–school partnership grant and shared interests in understanding how teachers spontaneously employ growth mindset messaging and how their students respond. Despite the complexities of teaching during the pandemic, eight teachers at the school allowed the researchers to interview parent-consented students (n = 84), leading to the following insights.

GROWTH MINDSETS ARE GOOD

When asked what a growth mindset is, students almost always used positive words and explanations. For example, they said a growth mindset is "having a positive attitude about your life" and "a part in your mind that tells you to be positive." Here are some other popular ways that students described a growth mindset.

"When your mind is open to feedback and is always looking to get better."

"When you think you can do something."

"In a good mood and ready to learn."

"To keep trying and believe in yourself."

Figure 1 represents the frequency of words used by students to define a growth mindset, with larger words indicating a higher frequency of use. Despite this overall positivity, students also described how a growth mindset required more than just positive thinking.

MINDSETS ARE NOT JUST FOR ME

Interestingly, students seemed aware that all sorts of people can have growth or fixed mindsets. Some students thought of other members of the school community such as "my best friend has a growth mindset for math because she is not the best but always keeps going." But students had expanded their understanding of mindsets beyond school, explaining, for example, that "my parents usually have a growth mindset and I can tell because they are always trying to make their work better and they don't just give up" and "my sister has a growth mindset and I know because she is open to try many different things."

A GROWTH MINDSET FEELS GOOD

Finally, we asked students about their emotions. In the context of COVID-19, it seems that anything that can bolster students' pleasant emotions and reduce negative emotions is a win—and growth mindsets did just that. Students associate feeling more excited, confident and happy and less sad and angry with the notion of a growth mindset. While this is not causal evidence, it certainly does paint a clear picture of the good that students infer from school-based growth mindset messaging.

CONCLUSION

Teachers and students alike are captivated by the notion of growth mindsets. This university-school partnership helped shed light on how students at one school respond to growth mindset messaging. These students, as young as Grade 1, generally seemed to understand the possible benefits of a growth mindset for themselves and for others.

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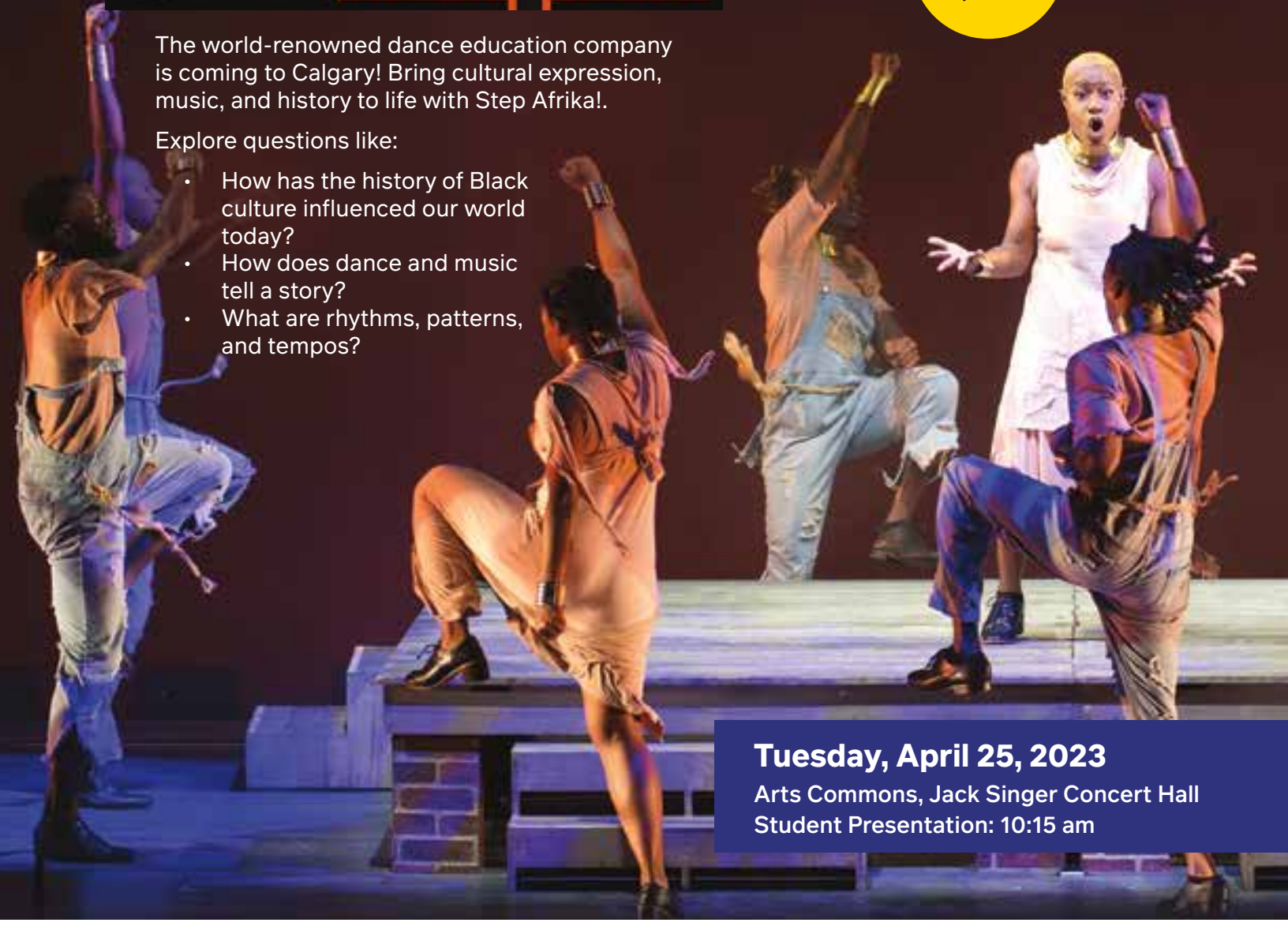

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1. ***Teaching Difficult Histories in Difficult Times: Stories of Practice***

Events such as war, genocide, slavery and terrorism can be challenging for teachers to discuss in classrooms in an unbiased way. In this book, educators will find the voices of many teachers who have struggled and reflected on their practices in teaching these difficult histories.

2. ***How to Look at Student Work to Uncover Student Thinking***

Rather than looking at student work to determine what's right or wrong, this book encourages teachers to consider what students are telling you about their understanding and their thinking around the material.

3. ***75 tâches pour enseigner le français au fil des jours***

Cet ouvrage présente des tâches quotidiennes, hebdomadaires et occasionnelles qui favorisent l'autonomie des élèves envers la prise en charge progressive de leur apprentissage. Il fournit un cadre clair pour accompagner les élèves et les aider à devenir des lecteurs et des auteurs pour la vie.

4. ***Studio Thinking 2: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education***

The authors examine eight habits of mind that result from education in the visual arts: develop craft, persistence, envision, express, observe, reflect, stretch and explore, and understand. They also look at the four studio structures that teach these habits of mind.

5. ***Des routines mathématiques au quotidien***

Cet ouvrage présente des routines qui aideront vos élèves de 6 à 12 ans à renforcer leurs acquis et à développer leur fluidité de raisonnement et de calcul, tout en inspirant chez eux un sentiment de confiance en leurs habiletés mathématiques.

Information provided by ATA librarian Sandra Anderson.

Your colleagues recommend

Teachers suggested these reads by Facebook.

Karlee Hren

I Just finished *The Dressmaker's Secret* by Lorna Cook and have just started *Secrets of the Sprakkar: Iceland's Extra-ordinary Women and How They Are Changing the World,* by Eliza Reid.

Annie Forney

My class and I fell in love with *Bumble Gum Brain* by Julia Cook. One of the best growth mindset books I've read. Plus I gave the kids gum to chew while we read it. It's so easy to have a brick brain, but so much better to grow your bubble gum brain!

6. ***Restoring Students' Innate Power: Trauma-Responsive Strategies for Teaching Multilingual Newcomers***

Author Louise El Yaafouri examines how trauma affects newcomer students and how teachers can use stress-mitigating strategies to help these students engage in learning.

7. ***Hacking Graphic Novels: 8 Ways to Teach Higher-Level Thinking with Comics and Visual Storytelling***

Graphic novels are amazing tools for drawing many reluctant readers into a love of reading. Author Shveta Miller shows teachers to see these books as tools for complex thinking, and to work with students to expand visual and textual literacy.

8. ***Forest Walking: Discovering the Trees and Woodlands of North America***

In this love letter to and about forests, the authors bring to light many fascinating new facts about how arboreal environments affect climate, weather and people.

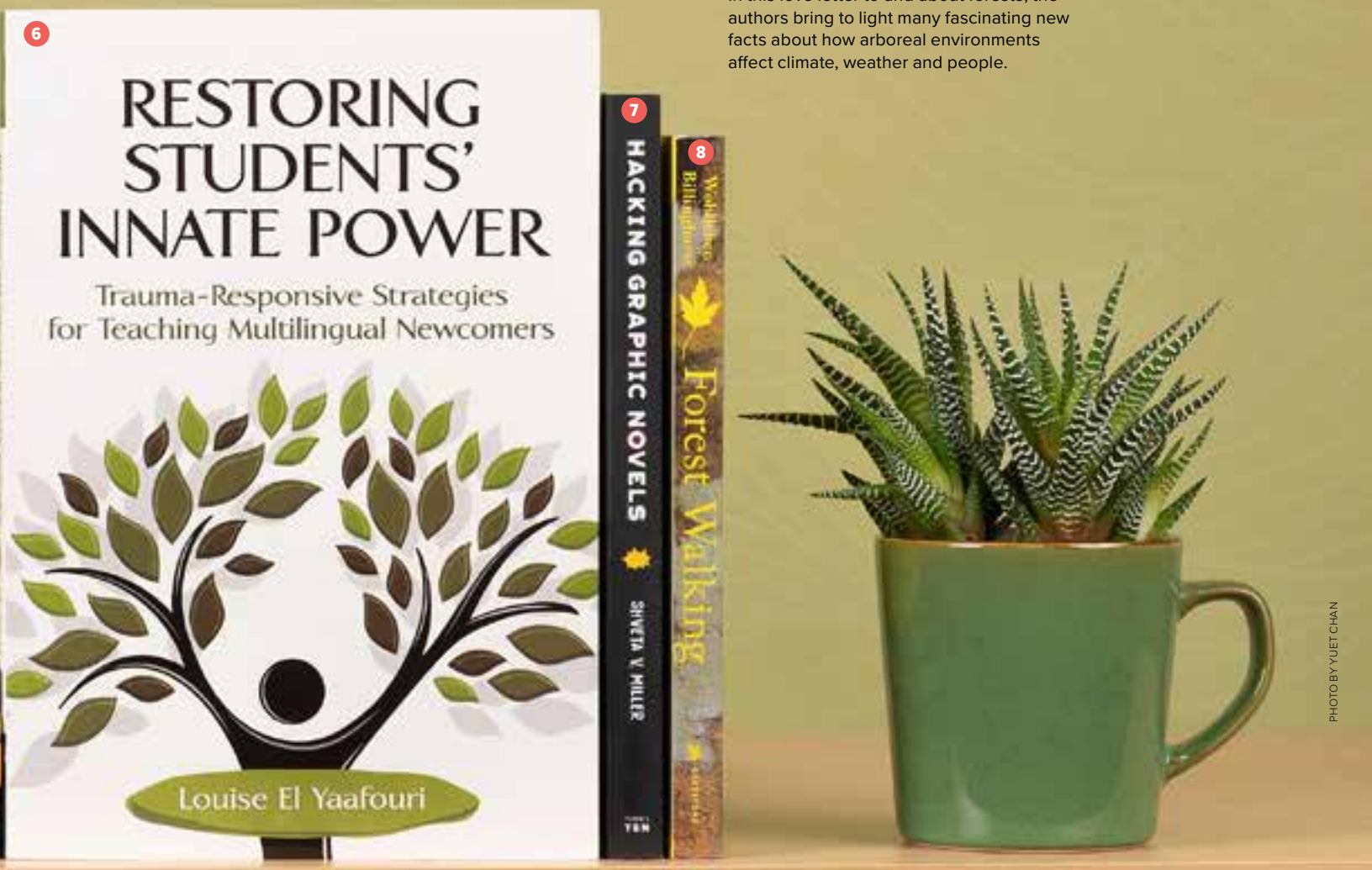


PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

Andrew Lojczyc

I've been reading *Caesar's Last Breath* by Sam Kean. Really cool breakdown of our atmosphere, its history, and the people who have studied gases over time. So far, between Sam Kean, Randall Munroe and Mary Roach, I feel like I have a litany of fun examples and anecdotes for all my science classes.

Laurel Janinne

Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle by Emily and Amelia Nagoski. It's an essential for surviving life as a teacher these days.

Anna Sparrow

A Minor Chorus, by Billy-Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree Nation), and *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong.

What winter-themed books do you recommend for students?

Goodbye Autumn, Hello Winter

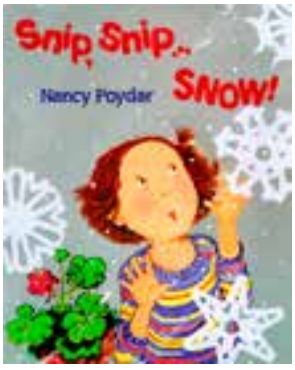
Wonderful story and illustrations by Kenard Pak. I love to use this book just as the first real snowfall comes. We talk about how it's not actually winter yet, but it *looks* and *feels* like winter.

Julia Cestra-de Vries

Ten Ways to Hear Snow

A beautiful story by Cathy Camper of connection between a girl and her grandmother using onomatopoeia of different snow sounds.

Kristina Tran



Snip, snip...snow!

I love reading this book by Nancy Poydar. After reading the story, I provide a large round circle template for my kindergarten students to cut out and then I teach them how to fold the circle and "snip" with scissors to make a paper snowflake. We then discuss how no two snowflakes are alike and that we are all different and that is part of what makes us unique. The snowflakes also make a great winter-themed bulletin board!

Michelle Fatica

The Mitten

There are so many ways to use the book, the illustrations and the story. This Ukrainian folk tale, by Olha Tkachenko, can be expanded to themes of inclusion, new winter clothes, even staying warm!

Dana Robb

Fishing with Grandma

This book by Maren Vsetula and Susan Avingaq is a wonderful picture book that ties Inuit culture and traditions with my students' traditions in central Alberta. It's about two children going ice fishing with their grandma and then sharing their catches with the community. It is one of my very favourite stories to share with my own children as well as my students.

Erynn Rice

Teacher recommendations gathered through Facebook

PHOTO BY YUET CHAN

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- Homeroom Teacher (Preparatory to Grade 6)
- Mathematics Teacher (High School)
- Business Teacher (High School)
- Music Teacher
- STEM Teacher (High School)
- Visual Arts Teacher (Primary School)

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Highlighting ATA programs and services

Learning and growing together

Planning your professional growth

Who needs a professional growth plan?

As per Alberta Education's Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy, every teacher employed by a school authority or early childhood services operator who

- is under a probationary contract or continuing contract, or
- under other provisions of the *School Act* if required by the policy of the school authority or ECS operator is responsible for completing an annual teacher professional growth plan during each school year.

Where do I start?

The ATA's website! Resources and tools are available to assist you in developing your professional growth plan.

Check out the Reflection on My Professional Practice Tool, a comprehensive digital, interactive tool to assist teachers and school leaders in reflecting on the knowledge, skills and attributes of their professional practice. It also suggests resources to support the implementation of competency indicators.

THE ATA EDUCATIONAL TRUST—FUNDING TEACHERS' PD SINCE 1978

- ATA specialist council conference grants ($500)
- Morgex/Johnson Insurance Centennial Fund for Teacher Development ($600)

Apply by September 30th of each year. Check out the ATA Educational Trust's webpage for eligibility requirements and other details.

Learning alongside your colleagues

How can I connect with and learn alongside colleagues across the province who work in the same discipline (e.g., science or fine arts)?

There's an ATA specialist council for that!

Specialist councils foster the professional development of teachers with common interests in curriculum areas. Opportunities to share ideas and gather new information in each specialty area are provided through annual conferences, publications, and regional workshops and seminars.

Join one of the 21 councils today (the first one is free to active members of the ATA and to associate members who are ineligible for active membership).

- Alberta School Learning Commons Council
- Career and Technology Education Council
- Conseil français
- Council for Inclusive Education
- Council of School Counsellors
- Council for School Leadership
- Early Childhood Education Council
- Educational Technology Council
- English as a Second Language Council
- English Language Arts Council
- Fine Arts Council
- Global Environmental and Outdoor Education Council
- Health and Physical Education Council
- Indigenous Education Council
- Mathematics Council
- Middle Years Council
- Outreach Education Council
- Religious and Moral Education Council
- Science Council
- Second Languages and Intercultural Council
- Social Studies Council

Pleins feux sur les programmes et services de l'ATA

Apprendre et grandir ensemble

Planifier votre perfectionnement professionnel

Qui a besoin d'un plan de croissance professionnelle?

Conformément à la politique sur le perfectionnement, la supervision et l'évaluation des enseignants du ministère de l'Éducation, chaque enseignant employé par un conseil scolaire ou un établissement d'éducation préscolaire :

- en vertu d'un contrat probatoire ou d'un contrat continu, ou
- en vertu d'autres dispositions de la *School Act*, si la politique du conseil scolaire ou de l'établissement d'éducation préscolaire l'exige, est tenu de préparer, au cours de chaque année scolaire, un plan annuel de croissance professionnelle.

Par où commencer?

Le site de l'ATA! Des ressources et outils sont offerts pour vous aider à élaborer votre plan de croissance professionnelle.

Faites l'essai de l'Outil d'autoréflexion sur la pratique professionnelle de l'enseignant, un outil numérique complet et interactif conçu pour guider la réflexion des enseignants et des leadeurs scolaires sur les connaissances, habiletés et attributs liés à leur pratique professionnelle. L'outil propose également des ressources pour soutenir la mise en œuvre des indicateurs de compétences.

L'*ATA EDUCATIONAL TRUST* : SOURCE DE FINANCEMENT POUR LE PP DES ENSEIGNANTS DEPUIS 1978

- Subventions pour assister au colloque d'un conseil de spécialistes de l'ATA (500 $)
- *Morgex/Johnson Insurance Centennial Fund for Teacher Development* (600 $)

La date limite pour présenter une demande est le 30 septembre de chaque année. Consultez le site Web de l'*ATA Educational Trust* pour prendre connaissance des critères d'admissibilité et d'autres renseignements.

Apprendre en compagnie de vos collègues

Comment puis-je prendre contact avec des collègues de partout dans la province qui enseignent la même discipline (p. ex., les sciences ou les beaux-arts) et apprendre à leurs côtés?

Voilà la raison d'être des conseils de spécialistes de l'ATA!

Les conseils de spécialistes facilitent le perfectionnement professionnel des enseignants dans des domaines spécialisés d'intérêt commun. Des occasions de partage d'idées et de collecte de nouvelles informations sont offertes dans chacun de ces domaines spécialisés au moyen de congrès, de publications, d'ateliers régionaux et de colloques.

Joignez-vous dès aujourd'hui à l'un des 21 conseils (l'adhésion à un premier conseil de spécialistes est gratuite pour les membres actifs de l'ATA et les membres associés qui ne sont pas admissibles au statut de membre actif).

- Alberta School Learning Commons Council
- Career and Technology Education Council
- Conseil français
- Council for Inclusive Education
- Council of School Counsellors
- Council for School Leadership
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- Educational Technology Council
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- Science Council
- Second Languages and Intercultural Council
- Social Studies Council

PHOTOS BY LAUGHING DOG PHOTOGRAPHY

Mamma Mia!

Drama teacher duo celebrates 25 years of collaboration

Katherine Abbass

Freelance Contributor

THIS IS AS CLOSE TO SILENT as the theatre will get in the weeks leading up to a big show.

Even though it's dinner break, and most students are across the street grabbing a quick slice at Nitza's Pizza, the 450-seat auditorium still hums with chatter from those who have stayed behind. Heavy stage curtains hardly dull the jovial bellows of director Jim Nahrebeski, who putters in the wings.

In terms of noise, co-producer Don Steenwinkel knows not to expect any less — the theatre is subdued, but far from silent. This is good enough for him. He relaxes into a front row seat to study the skeleton of a wooden balcony, one of many set pieces that will transport the audience to Greece for Leduc Composite High School's production of *Mamma Mia!* It's the 25th consecutive year that Nahrebeski and Steenwinkel have directed the school's annual musical. It will also be their last production together, as both teachers transition into retirement.

Nahrebeski sums up his co-producer in two words: inspired genius. But Steenwinkel credits Nahrebeski with having a clear vision for each show.

"He's got that picture of what he wants it to look like in his mind's eye, and I've got a picture of what I want it to sound like."

This makes sense, given that Steenwinkel was first hired in 1997 to revive the school's band program. Nahrebeski then roped him in to help with the music for *Grease*. A year later, they wrote the curriculum for a 10-credit class that would grow to become a pillar at the school: the musical theatre program.

Guys and Dolls marked the program's first official production in 1999. Post-performance, nobody in the cast or crew could sit still. The students, Nahrebeski remembers, were awed by their own success

"That energy? That's the Kool-Aid we drink every time," he says.

Over the years, Nahrebeski and Steenwinkel have established several student-centred principles they've always adhered to, like ensuring that any kid who wants to be onstage, gets onstage. This means that some shows have seen up to 55 different performers.

But of course, no production is without its challenges. During their second production of *Guys and Dolls*, one actor completely lost his voice; the student lip-synched "Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat" as Steenwinkel sang from his place at the drumkit. When the Maclab Centre closed for renovations in 2004, the musical moved to the Timms Centre in Edmonton, and a heap of problems hitched a ride, such as a set piece jumping ship on Highway 2 and a '58 Buick having to be lifted from trailer to loading dock in minus 35-degree weather.

Steenwinkel says humour is the key to keeping such challenges in perspective.

"It's laugh or cry sometimes," he says. "So we choose to laugh."

The duo recalls how, in the early days, they relied heavily on their school community to bring each vision to life. Make-up savvy moms painted faces while whole families stepped up to build sets. Anyone involved, no matter their capacity, instantly became part of the village, a village that program alumni remember for the way it nurtured their creativity, confidence and sense of community.

Don Steenwinkel (left) and Jim Nahrebeski have been co-producers of the musical theatre program at Leduc Composite High School for 25 years.

"Many friends I made in that class are my closest friends today," says Tyler Biddulph, a 2014 graduate who just completed his second teaching practicum. His major, of course, is drama.

Another musical theatre program alumna, Rebecca Schmautz, went on to the Vancouver Film School; now, she acts in feature films. Schmautz credits Nahrebeski and Steenwinkel with giving students "something a lot of kids in high school search for: a place to belong, a community where they are safe to be themselves."

Though it has been a decade since he was their student, Stephen Raitz can still paraphrase one of Steenwinkel and Nahrebeski's promises.

"You will forget the equations, the theories and many other things from high school courses, but you'll never forget this show."

"And it's so true," Raitz says. "I carry the memories and the friendships made to this day."

As students return from their break, the theatre begins to buzz. The stage fills with shoes scuffing out bits of choreography. In the wings, voices volley lyrics into the rafters. The students can't help it —they're itching to resume their work.

Steenwinkel gestures around at the theatre.

"I consider this a great achievement," he says, "but that's not what keeps you going for 25 years."

His gaze floats toward the stage, where several students stare up at him in anticipation. Their eager eyes beckon the magic-makers back. Steenwinkel grins.

"It's not about us," he says. "It's knowing that we're making something special with these guys."

BACKSTAGE WITH

Jim Nahrebeski and Don Steenwinkel

How has the partnership transcended the musical theatre program?

Jim: Over the years we have forged a friendship that transcends most. This is built on shared experience that can never really be understood by anyone else. We have experienced both of the faces of drama — tragedy and comedy. We have attended our students' funerals and their weddings. The highs and lows of running this program for so long have brought us to a level of friendship that can't be broken.

Is there a particular song that you can no longer stand to hear?

Don: After each show, my brain spins with "earworms" for weeks. Sometimes I'm so sick of them I have to put headphones on at night and listen to something else just to sleep. But after about a year, this is replaced by time and place memories that bring me back into the theatre and make me smile, and it makes me happy to know that I will always have that.

As a long-time football coach, what would you say are some commonalities between football and theatre?

Jim: I think the biggest one is moving people around in space to create the vision you are trying to achieve. As well, the unification of a cast or a team working toward a common goal — absolute commitment for success.

How does your experience with the LCHS musical theatre program compare to your experience directing Leduc's community choir for adults?

Don: Directing adults is a very different thing! I often have to catch myself to avoid using school classroom management techniques to get their attention. But Leduc is a great arts community, and I have parents and even grandparents of students singing in the choir. And now, former students are starting to join, and the choir has grown over the years to a wonderful mix of young and old.

▶ **Got an idea?** In Profile features an interesting teacher in each issue of the *ATA Magazine*. If you know of a teacher who would be a good profile subject, please contact managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Creative colleagues

Teachers have their own extracurricular activities. Some volunteer. Some write books. Others produce podcasts, create art or make music. Here are some endeavours undertaken by your colleagues.

BUSINESS

Kello Inclusive

High school teacher Katie MacMillan is the founder and director of operations of Kello Inclusive—Canada's first exclusively inclusive talent agency representing disabled and visibly different talent. Kello is always looking to support disabled talent both in front and behind the camera and is also focused on connecting with brands, companies and organizations that care about inclusivity.

KATIE MACMILLAN

Harry Ainlay School, Edmonton

www.kelloinclusive.org

SPORTS

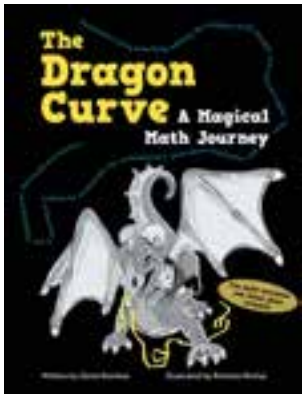
Team roping

Northern Alberta teacher and proud cowboy Colby Bowers has been competing in team roping and rodeo events his entire life and, in 2016, won the Canadian Intercollegiate Team Roping title. In 2022, he qualified to compete at the World Series of Team Roping Finale, which is the second largest equestrian event in the world and considered to be the premier team roping event since its inception in 2006.

COLBY BOWERS

Cold Lake High School, Cold Lake

BOOKS



The Dragon Curve

Alicia Burdess's passion for math goes beyond the classroom. She has recently published a children's book, *The Dragon Curve: A Magical Math Journey*. Burdess focuses on learning through imagination in this book, which illuminates the joy and beauty of math by bringing the reader into the world of fractals. Fun math activities and lesson plans are included in *The Dragon Curve*, which is illustrated by a former student of Burdess.

ALICIA BURDESS

Lead Teacher for Numeracy, Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools

www.aliciaburdess.com

Self-published

The Girl Who Was Brave Enough

Cortney Warr: teacher, artist. She collaborated with author Naden Parkin on *The Girl Who Was Brave Enough*, creating vibrant illustrations for this story about a girl, the love of a father and adventures that remind us of the importance of believing in ourselves. Her illustrations are also featured in *You Are a Gift* (Jen Edwards), a mindfulness guide focused on building self-awareness and confidence in children.

CORTNEY WARR

Whispering Ridge Community School, Grande Prairie

www.cortneywarr.com

Self-published

▶ **What's new with you?** If you'd like to make a submission for publication in Who's Out There?, email a summary (50–75 words) to section editor Lindsay Yakimyshyn at lindsay.yakimyshyn@ata.ab.ca.

What podcast do you recommend?

We asked teachers to lend us their ears

Mari-Jane Eagleson

Ellected is a podcast sharing women's experiences in politics in Alberta and across the country at all levels of government and political organizations.

Katie Chapman

Stolen: Surviving St. Michael's. It's a hard listen but such an important one for us to hear.

Dawn Thompson

The Brian Mendlar Show! Saw him at a PD session and he was amazing. My teacher friend and I sat on the floor for three hours because the room was so packed. He was so motivating and so real! A must listen if you have never had the pleasure of hearing him speak.

Claire Kraatz

CBC's What on Earth podcast about climate change. It will impact every aspect of our lives. The episode entitled "Climate in the Classroom" is excellent.

Andrew Finlay

The Strategists. But then I am a political junkie.

Melissa Steeves

I highly recommend ***Mountain Town Ramblers.*** It is a passion project of an Alberta teacher and his partner. They go to mountain towns, so far mostly across Alberta, hike and explore, and then eat delicious food. It inspired my seven year old and me to go whitewater rafting this summer and spend more time outdoors. I like it because it is local, funny and light.

▶ See more at facebook.com/ABteachers.

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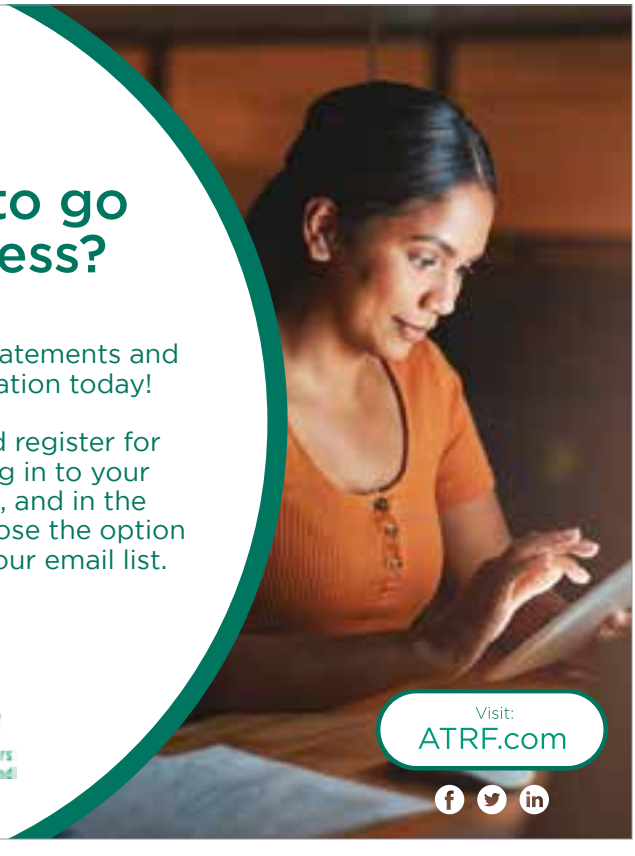

The Dogecoin

ISTOCK

Picture this

Visual prompt helps reluctant writers get started

> "It was a very fun activity that encouraged a lot of reluctant writers to begin the writing process without feeling anxiety or pressure.

Chris Mattatall

Associate Professor, Educational Psychology and Inclusion Faculty of Education, University of Lethbridge

MY TEACHER HACK IS CALLED postcard writing, also known as picture prompts.

Place interesting, funny, provocative political or science-related pictures on a piece of poster board, enough for each student to choose one photo. Line them up along the bottom of the blackboard or whiteboard, pictures hidden. Ask students to randomly choose a picture and do a writing activity with it. You can also do activities where everyone uses the same photo.

I've used postcard writing to get my students to offer opinions, expand their vocabulary, write good topic sentences or supporting details, or think from the perspectives of those in the photo. Photos can prompt many writing activities, such as creating a meme, a newspaper heading, explaining what's going on in the image or writing a story based on the image.

Teachers can also begin the activity by suggesting a plot or a situation that the student must finish. It probably goes without saying that the teacher needs to be wise about choosing the images for writing prompts.

The best way to do this activity is to have an assortment of individual photos mounted on a stiff backing so they can be used more than once over time.

Some activities may call for only one photo to be displayed for the entire class.

I'm not sure where I borrowed this concept, but it was one of the most enjoyable and differentiated activities I've used to motivate students to engage in creative writing. It can be used in many subject areas and for varied purposes depending on the images. It's an inclusive activity that welcomes all students to participate, including students new to Canada, and those with varying levels of skill and ability.

Postcard writing allows teachers to start small and build up to more creative and expansive writing. Getting students to start writing is important because, as they say, it's easier to steer a moving cart.

▶ **Got an Idea?** Teacher Hacks is a place for colleagues to share their awesome ideas. If you have a hack that you'd like to share with your colleagues, please email a summary and photos to managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

Not your average polar bear

Improvised act of kindness has lifelong impact

Chris Gibbon

Executive Staff Officer, ATA

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN SOLANO

THE CHALLENGE
Turning Halloween tragedy into triumph with little time or materials.

I REMEMBER as a Grade 1 student in the early 1970s taking the S10 from Capilano and transferring to the U2 (not the band, the bus) in front of Woolworth's to get to my school on the west end of downtown Edmonton, Holy Child Catholic Elementary (formerly École Grandin). It was a long trip for me and my older brother, who was in Grade 4.

We attended that school partially because my mom wanted us in French immersion, but more importantly, because she knew the principal, Louis Binassi, from her high school days.

Holy Child was your typical brick and mortar, two-storey building built in the early 1900s, but Mr. Binassi, and the rest of the staff, brought it to life.

The one day that will always stand out in my year there is Halloween. My parents had just divorced and money was scarce. I recall that my brother and I had stayed at my grandmother's the night before, and I went to school on Halloween morning with no costume and no treats for the party that was to take place that afternoon. When I walked into that classroom and saw everyone in a costume, my heart sank and I started to cry. My teacher walked me down to the office, and that started the act of kindness that I will never forget.

> "The principal of my school went out of his way that day to make me feel good about myself."

Mr. Binassi and the school secretary snapped into action. They took my white, fleece-lined winter coat and turned it inside out. A little black paint or makeup on the nose and I was instantaneously transformed into a polar bear. Mr. Binassi grabbed some cookies from somewhere and we walked back to the class. I held my head high, and I was proud of my new costume.

I do not really recall the rest of that day, let alone the rest of Grade 1, but I know the principal of my school went out of his way that day to make me feel good about myself and feel like I belonged. I cannot remember if I ever thanked Mr. Binassi for that act of kindness 50 years ago, so I will do so today. Thank you, Mr. Binassi, from me and all the other students. You made us feel welcome and special in your many years as a school leader.

▶ **Got an idea?** Maybe you created a lesson that totally flopped or were on the receiving end of a lesson that was truly inspiring. Whatever your story, please summarize it in up to 300 words and email it to managing editor Cory Hare at cory.hare@ata.ab.ca.

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