

FALL 2024 | VOLUME 103 NUMBER 1

# MBTEACHER

NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



**JOURNEY OF AN  
INTERNATIONALLY  
EDUCATED TEACHER**

**TEACHERS RATIFY  
HISTORIC PROVINCIAL  
COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT**

**BOREAL BEAUTY OF THE  
ALBERT BEACH TRAIL**

**COUNTERING SELF-  
SACRIFICE CULTURE**

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## COVER STORY DETERMINATION OVER DOUBT: MY JOURNEY AS AN INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED TEACHER

In 2015, Sherry Khanna immigrated to Canada. An extraordinary academic background and 23 years teaching at a renowned school in Delhi, India, had equipped her well. And yet, undervalued and underestimated, she would face roadblock after roadblock on her way to achieving the dream she'd held onto tenaciously for seven long years.

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## THE POWER OF COLLABORATION: HISTORIC COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT SIGNED

The Manitoba Teacher's Society and the Manitoba School Boards Association came together, signing the first ever province wide collective agreement for Manitoba's teachers. Lead negotiators from each table team praised the outcome of a contentious yet ultimately collaborative process described by MTS President Nathan Martindale as "a milestone."



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## A NEW GENERATION OF EXPLORERS: THE BOREAL BEAUTY OF ALBERT BEACH TRAIL

Once a hub of outdoor learning for local students from the 80's to early 2000's, Albert Beach Education Trail fell into obscurity until a division revitalized the space, bringing it back to its former glory. Opportunities for physical education, land-based learning, and the freedom to explore the great outdoors are just a few of the benefits this boreal beauty has to offer.



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## COUNTERING SELF- SACRIFICE CULTURE: SHIFTING THE BURNOUT NARRATIVE

No stranger to teacher burnout, Kelsey McDonald knows three things for sure: the system isn't changing anytime soon, educators are not the cure for what ails it, and trying to be the cure is costing teachers their health. Here she tackles the reasons teachers are often built to fail and what they can do to reframe self-care as a professional responsibility.

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# CONTRIBUTORS

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**Sherry Khanna**  
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Sherry Khanna, B.A., B.Ed., M.A., began her teaching journey in India, where she taught students in Grades 1-5 for 23 years. For the past seven years, she has been working as a substitute and was in various term teaching roles, including her recent focus on ELA, Social Studies, and EAL at the middle school level. An active committee member of the Newcomer Education Coalition, Sherry's passion for inclusivity extends beyond the classroom, reflecting her love for travel and cultural exploration.



**Jules Rocque**  
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Jules Rocque, Ph.D., is in his 19th year at the Université de Saint-Boniface (USB). This fall, he accepted the challenge of acting dean of the Faculté d'éducation et des études professionnelles for the present year. He has been a superintendent in Alberta, principal and teacher at the DSFM and in French Immersion in Manitoba, as well as three years on Baffin Island.



**Wayne Davies**  
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Wayne Davies is the Director of Student Teaching at the University of Winnipeg where he also teaches. Prior to this role, he spent 32 years as a teacher and school leader. He has taught and led in many settings including on the Lax Kw'alaams reserve as well as in rural and urban school divisions in Manitoba. Wayne has recently completed an Ed.d in educational leadership from the University of Western Ontario.



**Kelsey McDonald**  
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Kelsey McDonald has been a member of the St. James-Assiniboia Teacher's Association since 1999. She has worked as both a classroom and resource teacher, with most of her career spent in school counselling and administrative roles (K-12). Kelsey's dual passions for mental health advocacy and collegial support have inspired her to open a part-time private counselling practice aimed at providing support for educators.

FROM THE  
PRESIDENT



## A PLACE FOR YOU IN YOUR UNION

**Nathan Martindale**

Welcome back, everyone—here's to a remarkable year ahead!

As we embark on the 2024/25 school year, I want to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome back to the classroom! This year, we're not just returning with the excitement of a fresh start, but with something truly monumental—a new collective agreement that will shape the future of teaching in Manitoba.

On August 27, the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba School Boards Association signed copies of this historic provincial collective agreement, a moment made possible by the hard work and dedication of a team of staff and members working together. Seventy percent of eligible members cast a ballot with 95.1 percent responding with a resounding "yes".

### WAGE INCREASES AND IMPROVEMENTS TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE

This agreement ushers in standardized pay and working conditions across the province, helping to level the playing field for teachers in Manitoba's 37 anglophone school divisions.

And we're not stopping there. This deal is just the beginning—a foundation we will continue to build on in future negotiations. Our members deserve nothing less, and that commitment extends to our Francophone colleagues in DSFM. MTS members in Manitoba's 37 anglophone school divisions stand with their AÉFM colleagues in celebrating the October 8 ratification of their collective agreement. For our francophone educators to receive salary increases similar to those of their anglophone counterparts as well as a number of key improvements is a tremendous step forward, and one we pledge to build on. Félicitations to the negotiating team!

While we celebrate these tremendous achievements, we know

the journey is far from over. There remains much work to be done, advocating for working conditions that permit you to meaningfully connect with students, their families and your colleagues.

That's why we will keep pushing for more support in your classrooms, better access to clinicians for students who need them, and real solutions for managing class sizes and composition. For far too long, our members have carried the weight of underfunded classrooms, and MTS will continue to fight for the resources essential to effective, equitable and inspiring public education.

The ratification wasn't the only thing on our radar this summer, however. Bill 35 remains a focus for MTS.

We continue to advocate for policies and procedures relative to the Teacher Registry and Certificate Review in accordance with Bill 35, *The Education Administration Amendment Act*. MTS staff have dissected the legislation and conducted a pan-Canadian scan in an effort to ensure that the disciplinary process that flows from the legislation and the day-to-day operations of the registry do not fulfil their intent at the expense of due process, natural justice, fairness and representation for our members.

With every new school year comes the promise of growth and positive change. As you welcome your students and start building those all-important relationships, I want you to know that MTS stands with you, fighting for the future of public education and the well-being of every teacher.

Remember to stay connected with us through your Local association, the MTS website, and our social media channels.

There's a place for you in your union.

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FROM THE  
INTERIM  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR



## TEACHING IS A WAY OF BEING

**Glen Anderson**

Bring your best, healthiest self to your classroom and school communities.

As we get into the rhythm of a new school year, it's important to hang on to some of those healthy habits and mindsets we acquire during the summer. Teaching is a way of being as much as it is a profession, and while that commitment is admirable, it can also create the ideal conditions for burnout.

### IN THIS ISSUE

Putting your body, mind and soul on the line every day can take an overwhelming toll. Recognizing the signs that you're over-investing to the detriment of your health is half the battle. In *Countering self-sacrifice culture: Shifting the burnout narrative*, (page 31) Kelsey McDonald focuses on the factors that set educators up for self-sacrifice, and what you can do to ensure you're bringing your best, healthiest self to your classroom and school communities.

Another facet of teacher health is applying creativity to problem solving, whether we're talking pedagogy or the playground. In *The Principal of the Thing: Creativity in the classroom*, (page 28), Wayne Davies takes a deep dive into the concept of creativity and how it works to inspire teachers and students alike, pushing the boundaries of our approach to education.

And what better place to get creative than the great outdoors! Read all about the restored Albert Beach Educational Trail, (page 8), to find out how this once abandoned hub of outdoor learning has been restored to its former glory.

Teachers are generally a self-reflective bunch, but still, it isn't easy to put everything you've committed your career to under

the microscope. However, one Manitoba Faculty of Education has done just that. In *Voices from the field: Reflecting on teacher training at the Université de Saint-Boniface*, (page 21), Acting Dean, Jules Rocque, takes us through the data to reveal how education students rate their experience, and why all faculties of education should take notice.

This issue's cover story is at once difficult to read and incredibly inspiring. In *Determination over doubt: My journey as an Internationally Educated Teacher*, (page 14), Sherry Khanna describes a story of tenacity, fueled by hope and belief in oneself, in which she overcame tremendous obstacles to become a full-time permanent teacher in the Pembina Trails School Division. A must-read for anyone seeking to understand the harsh realities faced by many newcomers with valuable skills and talent to share.

Finally, I would like to offer my deepest congratulations to the exceptional MTS table team on the ratification of our first ever province-wide teacher collective agreement! The signing ceremony at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights was moving and historic (page 12). I have been involved in the work of the Society for four decades now, and this event was definitely a highlight of my career. I am exceptionally proud of our team and of the teachers MTS represents, and we look forward to building on the gains achieved in future negotiations.

All the best for a wonderful school year. **T**

# EXPLORE THE BOREAL BEAUTY OF ALBERT BEACH TRAIL

By Matea Tuhtar, MTS Staff

Nestled just a kilometer from the serene shore of Lake Winnipeg, the restored Albert Beach Education Trail is ready to offer a new generation of explorers an immersive experience through the heart of Manitoba's old growth boreal forest.

Located on a 51-acre lot owned by the Lord Selkirk School Division, the site was once a hub of outdoor learning for local students from the 80's to early 2000's, complete with a lodge and cabins. Over the years it fell into obscurity, that is, until recently, when a divisional committee launched a revitalization project that will see the educational space restored to its former glory.

LSSD superintendent Jerret Long has fond memories of visiting the camp with his students, at the start of his career in the division. "I actually got a

chance to go up and spend the night with a group of students, and do some outdoor education things, as well as cross country skiing and survival stuff. It was fantastic for kids, they loved it," remembers Long. "It's very exciting to get it going again."

## BRAINSTORMING THE SPACE

The initiative began in 2015 when then-superintendent Scott Kwasnitza worked with a committee to brainstorm what could be done in the space. Covid halted the plans for a while until recently Long and a group of interested teachers

restarted the work, completing phase one and two of what will likely be a years-long project.

One of those teachers is Jodi Forfar, who teaches science at Lockport School and has been a passionate proponent of outdoor education and involved from the start. "I've seen the benefits of taking students outdoors and allowing them to explore and engage with the natural environment around them," says Forfar. "So naturally when I found out about this space I thought it was a wonderful opportunity to run field trips out there and do some activities - it's

such a treasure to have access to 51 acres of boreal forest. There's so much diversity and so much to explore."

After a lot of physical labour to get the site back up and running, the Albert Beach Education Trail now offers an accessible 1.1 kilometer loop through the bush. It includes a picnic shelter with eight picnic tables, along with an open circular activity area, porta potties and fire pit. One of the highlights of the site is that it's one of the largest stands of birch trees in Manitoba. "We also have a ton of moss, Labrador tea and an abundance of different plants

and critters for the students to learn about," says Forfar.

## FROM CLASSROOM TO NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

On a recent field trip Forfar's students brought devices and used apps that identified various insects, plants and animals. "You can actually scan spiders and it will tell you what kind of species it is and some information about them—it's really neat. It's really taking classroom instruction and applying it to real life into the natural environment. The students said that it

was the best field trip ever."

Long says the site would be a great spot for Indigenous land-based teachings. "Jacquie Bercier is our cultural proficiency lead teacher in LSSD and she's been very excited about what she's seen up there. The potential is limitless in terms of options." The division has created a website for the trail, complete with lesson plans and curriculum materials that can match any grade level. "Everything from scavenger hunts for little ones to land-based learning opportunities for a Grade 12 biology class; there are so



many curricular outcomes that can be met by visiting the land," says Long.

"It has been wonderful to help preserve the space and give students an opportunity to take part and explore," says Forfar. "I feel like a lot of students have nature deprivation where kids aren't going outside as much anymore. So, if we can offer that opportunity and showcase all the wonderful aspects of being outside, I think they will definitely regain some of that appreciation for the natural environment."

### ABSOLUTE MOOD BOOSTER

Along with developing their physical abilities, Forfar says that being outdoors is an important mental health benefit as well. "It's an absolute mood booster. The kids are happy, they're smiling, and I think they really enjoy the freedom of being outdoors and being able to explore with their friends."


Long says that there's been a lot of good feedback from the surrounding community who are happy to see the site back up and running again. "And the staff and students who have visited have come back raving about it. It's such a unique opportunity to offer to them, and speaking for myself, having the chance to just put my phone down and walk through the trail, it's pretty powerful. You're just surrounded by nature and engrossed by the peace and tranquility there."

Currently the division is able to maintain and equip the site, thanks in part to various grants, but a bigger vision of an outdoor campus might be possible in future years.



The trail is open to the public, and Long welcomes other school divisions who would like to visit the site as well. The site is located at the end of a gravel road with enough room for school bus parking and Long suggests making a day trip out of the visit. "It's not too far a trip for other school divisions, including those in Winnipeg, to come up for the day."

### PLANS TO MAKE TRAIL AVAILABLE YEAR ROUND

The committee would like to make the trail available all year round, and use it as a space for cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter months. "We'd love for it to become an oasis in the East Beaches area," says Long. "We're very lucky to have this land and we're making it a safe usable space where everyone is welcome." 

## OUTDOOR EDUCATION & RECREATION

### LORD SELKIRK SCHOOL DIVISION ALBERT BEACH TRAIL

The Lord Selkirk School Division Albert Beach Education Trail is located at 55 Christopher Road at Albert Beach in the RM of Alexander. For more information visit <https://albertbeachtrail.weebly.com/> and [https://www.lssd.ca/what\\_we\\_offer/albert\\_beach\\_trail](https://www.lssd.ca/what_we_offer/albert_beach_trail) or scan the QR codes.







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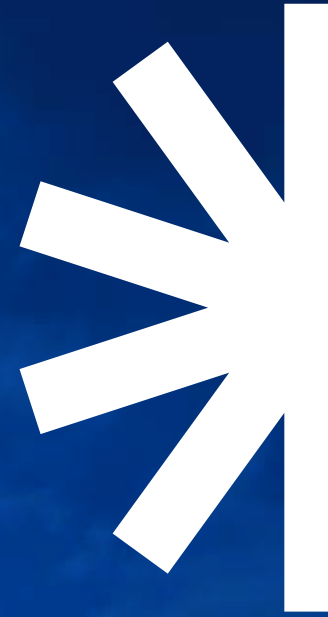
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# HISTORIC COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT SIGNED

By Raman Job, MTS Staff

Manitoba teachers have ratified the first-ever provincial collective agreement. Almost 70 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballots with 95 per cent voting “yes” to the deal which covers public school teachers in the 37 anglophone school divisions.

Representatives of The Manitoba Teachers’ Society and the Manitoba School Boards Association celebrated the signing of the first ever province-wide collective agreement for teachers on August 27 at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

Almost 60 people and four news outlets witnessed the event.

The agreement, which runs from July 1, 2022 until June 30, 2026, was meticulously crafted by two extraordinary lead negotiators, Arlyn Filewich of The Manitoba Teachers’ Society (MTS) and Justin Rempel of the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) and their respective table teams.

“When you look at the scope and the details of this agreement, it’s a testament to the power of collaboration, perseverance and mutual respect,” said MTS president Nathan Martindale. “It’s a milestone.”

Manitoba School Boards Association President Sandy Nemeth echoed that sentiment, “We’re pleased an agreement was reached and binding arbitration was avoided. There is a desire now and a need to get back to work and focus on the upcoming school year, which starts very soon.”

With binding arbitration on the horizon, MSBA reached out to resume negotiations in July, triggering a final push where the two teams came together to find common ground and arrive at the historic deal.

“Over the two-and-a-half-year process we were able to form a strong and trusting relationship,” said Rempel. “Arlyn represented her team and all teachers in



**OVER THE TWO-AND-A-HALF-YEAR PROCESS WE WERE ABLE TO FORM A STRONG AND TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP, SAID REMPEL. “ARLYN REPRESENTED HER TEAM AND ALL TEACHERS IN THE PROVINCE EXTREMELY WELL.”**

**- JUSTIN REMPEL (MSBA)**

the province extremely well.”

Filewich echoed Rempel's sentiment. “Justin and I developed a mutual respect as bargainers 10 years ago while working on a Local agreement. We didn’t know at that time that the friendship we forged would be a benefit to teachers and school divisions in provincial bargaining. Justin is a kind, smart, hard-working and stand-up guy. I will miss him as he pursues a new role in British Columbia.”

Filewich is quick to credit her negotiating team for representing MTS members well throughout the process.

“We have strived to improve the work lives of Manitoba educators. I’m really

happy that we have an agreement that will launch us forward for many decades to come.”

The signing itself was done in two phases. One with three representatives from MTS, the second with three of the MSBA representatives.

During the media scrum, Martindale was asked why the Society wanted province-wide bargaining. “Consistency,” he said, “We believe a teacher who works in the Winnipeg School Division should have the same salary, benefits and articles in the collective agreement as a teacher working in Swan River or Thompson.”

Not only was the first provincial agreement groundbreaking for anglophone teachers but it also paved the way to a new 2022-2026 agreement between the DSFM and AÉFM. The francophone table reached an agreement in committee on September 25 and subsequently ratified the agreement on October 8. As a result, francophone teachers will see similar salary increases to their anglophone counterparts along with a multitude of CA language improvements.

Brian O’Leary, Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning congratulated both MTS and MSBA for their historic accomplishment saying it would provide huge benefits beyond what’s in the agreement itself.

Later that morning, O’Leary spoke to students of this year’s inaugural session of the MTS Labour School, who were also guests of the Society at the signing.



*Back row, left to right: Patty Wiebe, Justin Rempel, Colleen Carswell  
Front row, left to right: Arlyn Filewich, Nathan Martindale, Joel Swaan*



*Left to right: Nathan Martindale, Joel Swaan, Arlyn Filewich, Darren Hardy, Ashleigh Deeley Michaluk, Reed Smith, Tammy Hodgins-Rector, Cale Dunbar, Marie-France Baker*



# DETERMINATION OVER DOUBT:

## MY JOURNEY AS AN INTERNATIONALLY EDUCATED TEACHER

By **Sherry Khanna**, Pembina Trails Teachers' Association

When I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in core English and Mathematics from the University of Delhi, India, I had no idea where my career would take me. What I did know was that I loved education and saw the power of what I did to change the world. After graduation I took over a teaching job with one of the renowned schools in the capital city, Delhi. My passion and zeal for teaching led me further, and I obtained a Master's degree in English literature.

All these years gave me the opportunity to enrich my in-depth knowledge of evolving education systems and programs. Since the very beginning, I was receptive and a quick learner. Having a desire to learn more helped me achieve great things and remain in the same school for 23 years.

In 2015, I came from India to Canada as an immigrant. I was filled with optimism, migrating to Canada with my daughter towards a promising and fulfilling future for my family.

Still, I was scared. My urban metropolitan background since early childhood and having means to travel abroad still wasn't enough to give me complete confidence that I could survive all by myself in Canada. And, unfortunately, once I arrived, many of my fears were realized. Things would be much harder than I imagined.

Advancing further in Canada each day made me doubt my choices and engulfed my soul and mind in uncertainties.

### **CANADA: THE DREAM AND THE DOUBT**

Suitcases were not the only baggage I arrived with. I had numerous apprehensions, inhibitions, fears and doubts of the unknown, being in this foreign land which was larger than large to me. Over time, all my hopes started to shatter and I could see myself drowning in the deep waters of an anonymous ocean around me.

However, surrendering and succumbing to difficulties was never in me. My circumstances caused me to outshine throughout my core career. I could foresee prospects in Canada and evolve strategies for achieving satisfying goals. To get where I wanted to be, however, I saw that I needed a greater understanding of Canadian culture.

I was lucky to get an office job which helped me learn new ways and approaches to adapt. I never let go of my dream, however, and remained curious to understand and return to the education system of Canada. I was absolutely focussed on succeeding.

At this point I had my left my homeland far behind, and getting a foothold in this foreign land was the sole option for me. I had to restart my career from scratch. I realized that completion of teaching certification was essential, and this could be possible only through seeking certain professional guidance. Therefore, after a 20-year break in my education career, I enrolled in University to complete my required courses and was able to



get certified in two years. Working full-time simultaneously with studies was challenging, but university unraveled lots for me and enhanced my aptitude.

I became eligible for teaching and started connecting with school divisions to apply as a substitute teacher. Hardships continued, as the next challenge became establishing references in Canada. For me, the very frustrating question was why someone should even be asking for a Canadian reference from an immigrant. Shouldn't the establishments offering Canadian certification be responsible for offering recommendations or waiver otherwise?

It again took a very long time before my application for subbing was accepted in one of the divisions. Going further, I registered myself with three school divisions in Winnipeg so that I could get work every day. I kept going for many years as a substitute teacher in a few school divisions but could never get a permanent position.

### BUILDING COMMUNITY WITH IETs

During my interactions with other Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs), I came across a program called the Immigrant Teacher Education Program (ITEP). ITEP is a mentorship program that familiarizes immigrant teachers with the Canadian education system. Only two divisions were offering ITEP, to only two teachers for two years at a very low stipend. The program was good, but it needed some thought to make it better, as we have many skilled IETs who are underutilized.

After facing several rejections, instead of getting shattered and disappointed, I kept working hard to grab tips from scarce resources around me and went on teaching myself. It was important for me to learn more and more by being in the system. To make this happen, working as a homeroom teacher for one of the private schools in Winnipeg was extremely helpful. This school barely remunerated compared to the hours vested, but at the same time it gave me practical classroom experience.

While teaching in schools, I also kept myself engaged working with a nonprofit organization. I was able to help a few IETs to get into the system. It was clear to me that an immediate need was to design a road map

to offer transition programs to smoothen the journey of IETs.

### SMALL, SIGNIFICANT STEPS FORWARD

My next goal was to get a term position. After several attempts, I repeatedly faced denial and rejection. I was totally perplexed. The system was clearly not well designed to welcome and bring in international teachers.

I have come across many well-educated, experienced international teachers who have been subbing for decades in Manitoba. They have either compromised for their survival and worked as education assistants or relocated themselves. It's so heartbreaking that their sacrifices remain unnoticed and their dreams of achieving success remain unfulfilled.

The teacher in me never allowed obstacles to take away my confidence. I was always parched for learning and crafted my vision for better understanding the Canadian education system. I kept preparing harder, seeking a term contract in any of the schools across Winnipeg.

After a very long time, I would get a chance to appear for a few rounds of interviews but at the end of the day, all I heard was "no". To work on my strengths, I followed up with the interviewers and the only feedback from them was the lack of Canadian experience. This was extremely challenging since the system did not know how to recognize newcomers possessing volumes of experience and merits. It was not fair.

All this while, I learned that one doesn't need to lose hope and should accept situations boldly. My struggles and failures provided learning and some great experiences. I took small steps ahead towards accomplishing bigger goals.

### AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY

The outbreak of the pandemic brought a breakthrough for me. I was hired as a supply teacher and as a credit recovery teacher. Once again, this was another opportunity to enhance my teaching skills and co-teach.

I am always curious to explore and discover. I am also a firm believer that hardships give way to learning and being interactive is the very key to success. I came across several educators, principals of schools and senior teachers and shared with them my life

experiences and heard theirs.

I was then introduced to the Newcomer Education Coalition (NEC). They are doing some amazing work in education for newcomers. I could see that the importance of representation was recognised in the education system.

In 2022, I was honored to become a committee member of the NEC. I was interviewed by the Winnipeg Free Press, which published an article to spread my message regarding the importance of representation and the need for IETs to be able to build a portfolio for the smooth transition into a career.


It became clear that schools also lack any kind of representation. The system looks diverse but that would be only for people who were born and brought up in Canada with different countries of origin. IETs are rarely there in the permanent pool of teachers.

### PERSEVERANCE AND PASSION FINALLY PAY OFF

Today, I can see awareness spreading in racialized communities and finding acceptance. I feel that we still need to go a long way and take bigger strides before we see a change in the system. One improvement is that school divisions are hiring more racialized staff. We also see that the leadership in the divisions is looking more diverse.

IBPOC (Indigenous, Black and People of Color) is another group taking initiative to improve diversity in the education system. My belonging to the community of IETs is due to my resemblance, shared beliefs, and our mutual experience of overcoming unique and numerous hardships. Becoming a part of IBPOC assured me that my efforts and vision are going in the right direction.

My perseverance, determination, passion, and belief in myself eventually worked, and today I hold a permanent contract with Pembina Trails School Division, Winnipeg. It's a very proud moment for me and my family to see me as a successful teacher for the forthcoming academic year. I am so very thankful to all my colleagues, principals, and my family who empowered me with strength, confidence, support and mentored me on my journey.

Today, I am a proud International Canadian Teacher, and I stay indebted. 



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# WHO WILL BE THE NEXT CLIMATE CHANGEMAKER?

## CLIMATE CHANGE CONNECTION INFLUENCER CHALLENGE CALLS FOR YOUTH TO SPEAK UP

By Susan Lindsay, Climate Change MB

The Climate Change Connection Youth Influencer Challenge aims not only to educate but to empower youth to become the next generation of climate communicators and changemakers.

From what to eat, what to drive, young people can have a big influence on what their parents, families and friends do; how they live; and what they buy; and they can be a driving source for positive change, especially when it comes to climate change. Perhaps most notably, Greta Thunberg, who in 2018, became one of the youngest climate activists in history to mobilize millions to take part in the climate movement. Her authentic voice has resonated with young and old alike across the globe. "No more Blah, Blah, Blah" she decried in a speech to world leaders, at the "Youth 4 Climate" summit held in Milan, Italy, 2021.

Now more and more youth are using their voice to advocate for change and Climate Change Connection wants to know who will be the next Climate Changemaker in Manitoba!

### INFLUENCER YOUTH CHALLENGE KICKS OFF

The Climate Change Connection Influencer Youth Challenge kicks off in September, 2024 and runs until April, 2025. It will include a series of virtual and in-person workshops and training along with ongoing mentorship from notable climate changemakers from across Canada. It will showcase influential figures like Greta Thunberg and will explore different communication

styles and tactics used by young change agents nationwide to raise awareness about climate change and environmental concerns.

The challenge is open to all Manitoba students in Grades 9-12, and will feature three cash prizes, up to \$2,000 to the team or individual that creates the most "influential" video on climate solutions and inspires action. The finalists will have their videos premiered to the general public, and the public will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite videos during Earth Month, in April, 2025. The videos that generate the most awareness and reach through likes, and social sharing will be the winners.

"Solutions for climate change exist, and there are so many great ideas that will help us to build a resilient Manitoba. But more needs to be done to generate awareness and communicate these solutions; and it's paramount that youth have the skills, support, and knowledge to feel empowered to speak out," explains Susan Lindsay, education lead, Climate Change Connection.

In addition to building communication and technical skills, the 2024 Climate Change Connection Youth Influencer Challenge aims to educate young people about the science surrounding climate change.

There is more work needed in improving climate science literacy in Manitoba. A recent survey by Learning for Sustainable Futures found that just over half of Canadians (55%) recognized carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses as the main contributors to climate change.



Now more and more youth are using their voice to advocate for change and Climate Change Connection wants to know who will be the next Climate Changemaker in Manitoba!

The survey also highlighted that 80% of respondents believe that Canadians require further information on climate change, with students expressing the greatest need for information (85%).

"As a mother and educator, I have seen first hand how a lack of knowledge and engagement can result in youth feeling anxious and unsure about our future, so we need to invest in our youth, focusing not just on facts but on the many solutions that exist to help young people gain positive insight on the myriad ways that we can mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and promote a net zero lifestyle," says Lindsay.

### WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE CONNECTION?

Climate Change Connection (CCC) has dedicated the last two decades to collaborating with communities, youth, and educators to raise awareness among Manitobans about climate change facts and solutions. Recently, they played a key role in launching *Manitoba's Road to Resilience*, which consists of three policy documents mapping out the pathway towards achieving a net-zero Manitoba. The pathway emphasizes the adoption of affordable clean energy, particularly geothermal and heat pump installations,

advocating for building upgrades to enhance efficiency, as well as encouraging the wider use of electric vehicles and expanding public transportation. The key to achieving a net zero strategy for Manitoba is more support for public education. Climate Change Connection emphasizes the necessity for increased support to educate Manitoba students and provide them with the latest information on climate change.

In addition to the primary goal of educating students on climate change facts and solutions, students who take part in the 2024 challenge will also learn how to research data and

to simplify intricate concepts into relatable information for their peers and the public. This includes honing public speaking and presentation abilities, crafting captivating content, and creating compelling narratives. Furthermore, they will also gain technical expertise in video editing and social media, skills that are in high demand in the new content creation economy.

"It would be great if they become the next YouTube or TikTok star and bring

greater awareness of climate change to the general public. But ultimately, we hope that students will walk away with transferable skills that they can use in a future career. By providing education that is hands-on, we spark the creativity needed to help them imagine innovative ways to succeed and help them develop the necessary skills and training to thrive in the sustainable future that we all will share," says Lindsay.

Climate Change Connection offers numerous resources for educators,

parents and youth, including teacher bootcamps, customized classroom presentations, youth climate change conferences, youth environmental group mentorship, teacher resources, lesson plans, community connections, and idle-free zone signs. Climate Change Connection also supports schools interested in becoming a Learning for Sustainable Futures School. If your school is interested in learning more, please email Susan Lindsay [susan@climatemb.ca](mailto:susan@climatemb.ca).

**CLIMATE CHANGE CONNECTION**  
**2024 MANITOBA YOUTH INFLUENCER CHALLENGE**  
 October 2024 - April 2025  
[www.climatemb.ca/youth-influencer-challenge](http://www.climatemb.ca/youth-influencer-challenge)

*Be a Changemaker*  
**WIN UP TO \$2000!**

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## LEARN MORE & SIGN UP TODAY

### CLIMATE CHANGE CONNECTION

Climate Change Connection offers numerous resources for educators, parents and youth. To learn more visit <https://climatechangeconnection.org/> and sign up for the influencer challenge at <https://climatechangeconnection.org/news/youth-influencer-challenge/> or scan the QR codes.



## VOICES FROM THE FIELD: REFLECTING ON TEACHER TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITÉ DE SAINT-BONIFACE

By Jules Rocque, Ph.D., Acting Dean, Faculté d'éducation et des études professionnelles at the Université de Saint-Boniface

If your Faculty of Education reached out to you seeking your perspective on your teacher training years, what would you have to say? Did you start your career feeling you had the necessary foundations and skills to teach?

Educational organizations, such as school divisions, schools and university faculties have formal and informal mechanisms in place that help their

employees set goals, guide planning and evaluate the level of success of their mission, their performance and efficiency of their mandate. Before arriving at the *Faculté d'éducation* at USB in 2006, I was a French immersion teacher in 1986 at *École Centrale* and a school administrator from 1990 to 2001 in various schools and districts. From 2001 to 2005, I worked as an assistant

superintendent and superintendent in North-Eastern Alberta.

Since my arrival at USB, in June of 2006, I have taught many courses at the grad level in school administration and staff supervision. I have also evaluated many student assignments, Masters, and PhD theses and had the privilege of participating as an external evaluator for various grad programs in

other French-language universities in Canada.

At the heart of these assessment experiences, I have identified three critical elements: i) the art of communicating sensitive feedback to people in an empathetic, authentic and tactful manner; ii) the need to build a collaborative and safe organizational culture that enables one to self-reflect, receive precise, critical and quality feedback in order to integrate changes into one's practice and iii) the importance of having conversations based on objective data gathered through observations and tools built for supporting staff and organizational growth. My varied experiences with staff appraisal and professional growth models along with my interest in research have brought me to this research project in collaboration with my colleague, Dr. Marie-Élaine Desmarais, professor at the *Faculté d'Éducation* at USB.

### DATA CAN CAUSE UNEASINESS

The systematic collection and analysis of data in a variety of ways provide critical information about the organization and the people who make it up, capturing strengths, areas for improvement while exploring steps towards future changes. When faced with data, people within organizations can feel some uneasiness as they are invited to review program content and individual practices.

This article provides the reader with a snapshot of a study that sought to gather the perceptions of graduates of the *Faculté d'Éducation* at USB on two main points: 1) the quality and effectiveness of their Bachelor of Education, a two-year full-time program, preparing them to assume their roles and responsibilities as teachers and 2) the strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement of their B. Ed. program.

Although it is impossible to share all the data collected in this study<sup>1</sup>, I have attempted to highlight some key elements from our study carried out in March of 2023 while giving you some



**THE ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM ARE WELL DEVELOPED, BUT WOULD BENEFIT FROM A LITTLE MORE DETAIL, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO THE INTEGRATION OF TEACHERS FROM IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS. THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE FIELD ARE VERY HIGH AND THE EDUCATION THEY RECEIVE DOES NOT NECESSARILY PREPARE THEM FOR SUCH CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SHOCKS."**

personal insight from the perspective of the catalyst of a research initiative that did create some initial uneasiness within the organization. For a longer version of the article, please consult the QR code.

### METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

A questionnaire was sent to 225 graduates from the 2018 to 2022 cohorts in March of 2023 of which 98, or 43 %, responded either completely or partially. Questions gathered sociodemographic information along with perceptions on program format, structure, content and delivery. The respondents could also comment on various other aspects of the program (i.e., pedagogical practices, library

and technical resources, accessibility to support services, etc.) while giving their overall general impressions on the strengths, areas of improvement and recommendations to help improve the program.

### TRAINING, PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the participants feel prepared to teach (86%) and a slightly smaller portion (76%) agree that the didactics contributed to their preparedness. Participants proposed recommendations for improvement.

*"The elements of the program are well developed, but would benefit from a little more detail, particularly with regard to the integration of teachers from immigrant backgrounds. The challenges encountered in the field are very high and the education they receive does not necessarily prepare them for such cultural, social and professional shocks."* (C3)

*"I would have liked training for the cases where students [have particular needs] and how to adapt to them and offer specific resources to [help] these students (ex.: students with autism, ADHD or other diagnoses)." (C8)*

*"Not enough on classroom management, especially with the diverse needs of learners."* (C13)

Communication with parents and assessment practices also emerged from the numerous comments gathered in the study as areas of need. As I read through these comments, I was reminded of a collective work that I edited in 2011. One chapter<sup>2</sup> dealt with school management and the integration of new teachers. The author surveyed school principals in Manitoba while focusing on the most important challenges that the new teachers faced. It is important to note that most new teachers in this study carried out in the early 2000s were graduands of *Faculté d'éducation*. When we look at the list of challenges identified by these principals, the first six are like the themes expressed by the respondents in the present study conducted in 2023, almost 25 years later.

- 1) Classroom management (87%<sup>3</sup>)
- 2) student assessment (66%)
- 3) differentiated teaching (65%)
- 4) Teaching techniques and strategies (43%)
- 5) planning (38%)
- 6) parent-teacher relations (29%)

In my humble opinion, this data should be of interest to members of the *Faculté d'éducation* at USB and indeed members of all Manitoba faculties of education, considering the recent data shared by the respondents in our study. I am a firm believer that educational institutions, and the people who drive them, have the potential to bring about change in the way things are done thus contributing to the improvement of teacher training.


### LIMITATIONS

The limitations of our study include, among others, partial responses to the questionnaire and results that cannot be generalized to all respondents' experiences and perceptions due to the number of participants from the cohorts of 2018 to 2022.

### VOICES FROM THE FIELD CAN INITIATE CHANGE

Judging by the relatively high participation rate in the study (43%) and the numerous comments received, participants seemed to enthusiastically embrace the opportunity to reflect on their experience at the *Faculté d'Éducation*, and share openly their preparedness to assume their tasks as educators. Strengths and weaknesses were raised through their voices, giving teaching and administration staff the opportunity for self-reflection, consider changes in practices while exploring innovative methods to improve the content and delivery of our program.

When an organization embraces a growth mindset, the individuals who make it up are open to data, learn how to read and interpret it, view their practices in a critical manner, embrace challenges and frame qualitative comments received from the field as an opportunity to grow. This is my wish for our *Faculté d'éducation*.

For a more detailed look at the data visit [https://ustboniface.ca/jrocque/file/LONG-MB-Teacher-FALL-2024-ROCQUE\\_AB\\_Aug30.pdf](https://ustboniface.ca/jrocque/file/LONG-MB-Teacher-FALL-2024-ROCQUE_AB_Aug30.pdf) or scan the QR code. 

<sup>1</sup>A detailed report (in French) presenting the raw quantitative and qualitative data is available online: <https://ustboniface.ca/jrocque/file/Rapport-de-recherche-et-Annexes-DIPLOMES-FAC-Ed-USB-01-07-24.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Ewart, G. (2011). *La direction d'école et l'intégration des nouveaux enseignants. In J. Rocque (Ed.) La direction d'école et le leadership pédagogique en milieu francophone minoritaire (139-157). Presses universitaires de Saint-Boniface.*

<sup>3</sup>Represents the % of principals who identified the area as challenging for new teachers.

**NOUVEAU BALADO MTS!**

**Au cœur de l'éducation**

**ÉDUCATRICES ET ÉDUCEATEURS FRANCOPHONES DU MANITOBA**

**DISPONIBLE SUR LES PLATEFORMES SUIVANTES :**

# OUR MEMBERS IN THE COMMUNITY:

## SUMMER 2024



### LISA

St. James-Assiniboia Teachers' Association

I am a board member and the Food Coordinator at the Scotland Pavilion and a full-time teacher. If I wasn't on summer break, I wouldn't be able to do my role, going into the kitchen anytime between 12-2:30 daily. It is exhausting, but so satisfying. I love the community, energy, friendships, and pride of a job well done. There are numerous teachers, EAs and support staff from multiple divisions who volunteer at our pavilion in key roles. My whole family is involved in the Scotland Pavilion and has been for more than 10 years. It's not August without Folklorama!



### SONJA

Mountain View Teachers' Association

Members of the Mountain View Teachers' Association love to get involved in local events. The 2024 Manitoba Summer Games were held in Dauphin and surrounding communities in August bringing youth from across the province to the area. MVTA/MTS members Danielle Schwitzer and Sonja Blank had fun organizing a group of 170+ out of more than 1,500 eleven to seventeen-year-old athletes for the opening ceremony of the summer games.



### JANNA

Mountain View Teachers' Association

In October 2023, I was asked to be a co-chair for Athletics for the upcoming Manitoba Summer Games in Dauphin. I accepted and worked with a partner to bring Athletics to the athletes of our province. It was such an interesting experience getting to see the back end of organizing large events while celebrating sport for our youth. I also wanted to teach the value of volunteering to those around me, including my children. They were phenomenal and took the challenge to make the games better. This was such a huge undertaking for a community of 8,000 people. I was a small cog in a huge process. I have made so many more contacts and friends while helping out the community and our youth.



### SAMANTHA

Sunrise Teachers' Association

I have been volunteering for Folklorama for 18+ years and it's always the highlight of my summer. It's been such an incredible way to network and meet people from different cultures, learn about different forms of dance, and every pavilion offers something unique to them. My students see me participating in ethno-cultural events and are encouraged to do the same!



### SHAUNA

Sunrise Teachers' Association

On August 11, the Ukrainian Dance school I perform with participated in Heritage Day at the Beausejour Pioneer Village Museum. I enjoy dancing at this event because my grandfather was on the first town council for Beausejour, I have taught in Beausejour for over 25 years, and dancing allows me to share my culture with the community. It holds a big place in my heart.

## IF I KNEW THEN...

Advice from seasoned pros to beginning teachers

### BEGINNING TEACHERS

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has developed a valuable *Beginning Teachers* information package to help start your career. To learn more visit <https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2024/08/20/beginning-teachers/> or scan the QR code.



### JON

Mountain View Teachers' Association

Learning to say no is a critical skill that new teachers are not taught. You have to recognize that you're only one person, and your time, energy, and resources are finite. Teaching is a job that can easily become unsustainable, and learning to say no keeps that in check, avoids burnout, and protects important parts of life like family time, rest, and hobbies. With that said, though, there is value in saying yes to things that are important to you and bring you satisfaction.

Be judicious about what you choose to spend your time and energy on.

### PETER

Border Land Teachers' Association (retired)

Teaching is the kind of job where there is always more you could do. There is no end to the amount of time and energy that it will consume if you let it. Set your boundaries and hold them firm. Have a life outside of teaching.

Be the teacher in the room. You are the responsible adult.

Get to know, and be respectful of non-teaching staff in the building. Those relationships are very important.

Be curious, be a learner.

Know and access your supports, including your union, your colleagues, your friends.

### AJ

River East Transcona Teachers' Association

Set clear boundaries. The demands of school life can quickly overwhelm you, especially in the first few years. It's far easier to establish healthy habits now than to unlearn bad ones later.

Make time for the staff room. While it's tempting to work through recess and lunch, take time to relax and recharge with your colleagues. They're one of your most valuable support systems, and you'll lean on them often.

Remember, teachers need heroes too—and they're called EAs, secretaries, and custodians.

Be kind to yourself. It may sound like a cliché, but teachers are often their own harshest critics. Treat yourself with the same compassion you offer others. Tomorrow is always a fresh start.

# NOUS AVONS DEMANDÉ AUX ENSEIGNANTS

QUELLES STRATÉGIES APPRISES EN DÉVELOPPEMENT PROFESSIONNEL  
ALLEZ-VOUS APPLIQUER OU ESSAYER CETTE ANNÉE ?



**YEDIA NGOY SHALA**  
l'École La Source

En tant qu'enseignante, on a toujours besoin du perfectionnement professionnel et moi j'ai beaucoup aimé apprendre. Puisque j'ai changé de niveau, avant j'enseignais à la maternelle, maintenant c'est ma première année d'enseigner en 3<sup>e</sup> année. Je devais vraiment me familiariser avec nos programmes d'études et j'ai beaucoup aimé l'appui de nos ELP (enseignants leaders pédagogiques). C'est un bon point et je félicite notre division scolaire la DSFM pour avoir mis sur pieds les ELP. Ils/elles sont disponibles à nous appuyer. Il y a aussi la possibilité dans notre convention collective de faire demande d'un congé pour études alors j'envisage vraiment de faire ça après 15 ans d'enseignement. J'aimerais poursuivre mes études en counseling. J'ai déjà une maîtrise en counseling, mais comme je n'ai pas encore trouvé de poste de conseillère au niveau de la division, je pense me perfectionner et me donner plus de chance puisque l'âge de la retraite approche. Je suis déjà dans ma cinquantaine et j'aimerais quitter la salle de classe, mais continuer à œuvrer pour l'éducation des enfants autrement.



**KATHERINE YOUNG**  
l'Institut R.D. Parker

Avec les ateliers des ÉFM, ce qui nous manquent sont des ateliers qui s'appliquent à l'école secondaire. Ils sont très basés sur les élèves au primaire parce que la plupart de nos enseignants enseignent au primaire. Mais pour nous au secondaire, c'est un défi de trouver des ateliers en français qui s'appliquent à nous. On est aussi séparé un peu des enseignants qui enseignent en anglais. On a aussi le défi d'enseigner dans une deuxième langue au secondaire. Il nous manque des ateliers qui s'appliquent à nous. Une autre chose que j'aurais aimé voir, puisqu'on revient aux examens provinciaux. Je ne suis pas scolarisée ici au Manitoba. Je n'ai jamais passé d'examen provinciaux comme une élève. J'aurais aimé avoir une formation au début de l'année pour que nous ayons ce qui s'applique à nous, parce que c'est vraiment dernière minute pour moi. Ils m'ont dit de chercher d'autres enseignants dans d'autres écoles qui ont déjà passé ceci, mais je ne pense pas que ce devrait être à moi, dans une école éloignée, de trouver mes collègues à faire des formations. Je pense que mon syndicat devrait m'aider à faire ça. Il faut nous aider à préparer des choses comme ça. S'ils ne font pas ça, ils ne comblent pas les besoins de tous les enseignants.



**SARA BELLEY**  
l'École Lacerte

Pour la journée des ÉFM cette année, j'ai eu la chance de participer à un atelier donné par Sylvie Berthelot-Dilk à propos du langage inclusif en français et c'était extrêmement intéressant. La langue française étant tellement genrée qu'il y a toujours des interrogations qu'on doit faire en 2024 en domaine de l'éducation. Donc je vais certainement continuer à m'intéresser à ce sujet.



**ANELISE PAUTES**  
École Sir William Osler

J'aime beaucoup toutes les journées de perfectionnement qu'on a eues. On a eu une conférencière qui s'appelait Monica Tang qui a parlé de légitimité linguistique. J'avais trouvé ça vraiment intéressant comme concept.



**DAVID LIWISKI**  
MacKenzie Middle School

Pour cette année, juste avec le développement professionnel, je pense que j'ai vraiment trouvé l'importance d'avoir les activités culturelles dans notre école. Ça va juste encourager une plus grande présence de la francophonie et vraiment la chance pour promouvoir la langue française.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SAGEs

*Spotlight on SAGEs* is a regular feature highlighting opportunities for enrichment and inspiration offered by the MTS Special Area Groups of Educators.



### MANITOBA EDUCATORS FOR INCLUSION (MEI)

MEI's mission is to promote educational practices which embrace and celebrate every child's unique experience, abilities and potential. We will accomplish this through providing educators with tools, resources, and educational strategies. Our ambition is to further enhance and create spaces where every child feels they belong. Our Vision is a future where every child feels seen, understood and included. Through conscious and intentional inclusive practice, educators across Manitoba will have the skills to see this future come to fruition. To join us or find out more, email us at [mbeducatorsforinclusion@gmail.com](mailto:mbeducatorsforinclusion@gmail.com).

To learn more visit <https://www.mbinclusion.ca/> or scan the QR code.



### MANITOBA HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION (MHETA)

MHETA is a team of teachers that volunteer their time to organize, plan and facilitate human ecology professional development within Manitoba. Members are offered a plethora of professional development opportunities and receive updates via email and blog posts about new and exciting trends, conferences, and general information about Home Economics. MHETA Members have access to the digital resource bank made up of resources created by MB teachers as well as helpful links to public content. For more info, connect with us at [mhetainfo@gmail.com](mailto:mhetainfo@gmail.com).

To learn more visit <https://www.mheta.ca/> or scan the QR code.



# THE PRINCIPAL OF THE THING:

## CREATIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM - PART 1

By **Wayne Davies Ed.d.**, University of Winnipeg

Creativity is a powerful force. Offering engaging educational experiences for students is what we are all about. Conversations with school leaders and teachers tell me that things are approaching a new normal and a powerful catalyst will be the creativity and ability of educators to engage students as well as their communities.

Creativity is an invaluable asset that makes all of our experiences better. It inspires innovation and prepares our students for a rapidly changing world and ourselves as educators for careers that are still unfolding. When teachers have the autonomy to develop engaging, school-wide projects incorporating student voice and community engagement, more than just academic achievement can be experienced. In this article, the first of two, we will examine initiatives that have grown within a variety of schools, flourishing into excellent examples of where creativity can help us go. In the winter issue of the MB Teacher magazine, we will take a look at how schools can interact with their community to thrive and flourish.

### TEACHER AUTONOMY IN DEVELOPING PROJECTS

Now that the pandemic is receding in our rearview mirrors, many of us are beginning to feel a surge of optimism. Teachers and school leaders are looking for new and interesting ways to engage their students

and augment the strategies they use to face challenges such as promoting mental wellness, student engagement and the like.

Talking to some of these passionate educators, it becomes clear that when teachers are empowered to design and implement projects, they can tailor these initiatives to the interests and needs of their students. This flexibility enables teachers to integrate various subjects and real-world issues into their curricula, making learning more relevant and impactful.

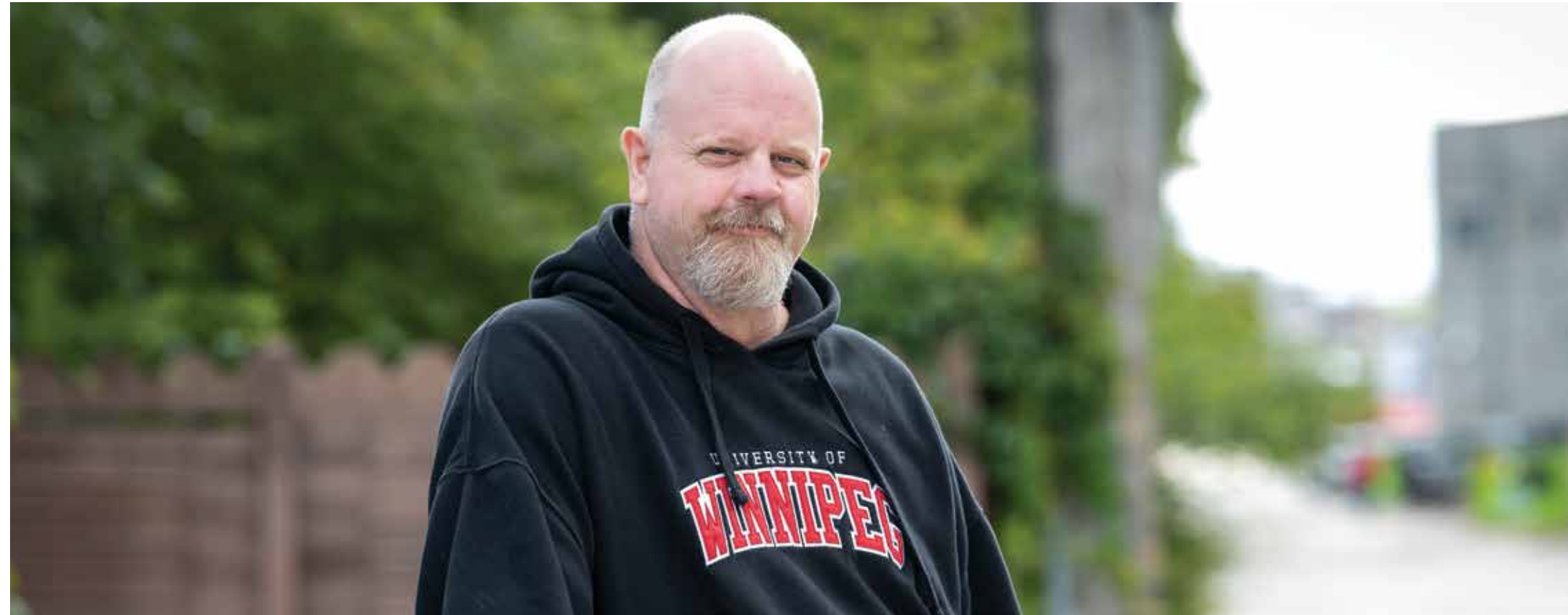
### PROMISES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Taking direct action on understanding and aiming to improve relations in light of Reconciliation is a crucial aspect of school and community engagement. School leader Paolo Teixeira of Champlain School recounted how staff, including colleague Jon Claassen and students, in partnership with Winnipeg School Division Indigenous Grandfather Vern Dano, and

Winnipeg School Division Kookum, Marsha Missyabit, developed the Identity Project in response to the question “Who Am I?” posed in the provincial Mamahtawisiwin document. Students were encouraged to recognize and celebrate their unique gifts, creating a variety of items including t-shirts.

### HIGHLIGHTING POSITIVE STUDENT ROLE MODELS

Student leadership is an invaluable change agent. In the case of Hedges Middle School, a transition plan was created using students to help a number of Grade 5 students find their place in the school. According to school leader John Bults, returning students gave tours to the new students, including low-organized games, board games and a teacher-led mini-lesson in the practical arts learning lab to help these students reduce their anxiety about transitioning to the school. Again, a creative response to a historical challenge of transitioning from one school to another.



### MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

Programs where older students mentor younger ones can be highly effective in building a supportive school environment. These programs can involve academic tutoring, social support, and guidance on personal development. Older students can serve as role models, helping younger students navigate school challenges and encouraging them to pursue their goals. This peer support system can boost confidence, improve academic performance, and foster a sense of belonging.

Sherry Bestvater, co-principal of Steinbach Regional Secondary School, reminded me that “The LINK Crew is an important program to build relationships and maintain a strong culture in our large high school. It helps develop and empower student leaders while orienting our Grade 9s and new students. Our new students have a connection to the people and traditions of our school. They have a sense of belonging from the very first day.”

### SCOPE & DEPTH

While a common denominator across all these projects is the ‘low to no’ cost of the initiatives, there are other things for educators to keep in mind; you also need to think about the scope and depth of your initiative. Is this going to be narrow in involvement but deep in engagement and the skills, dispositions and knowledge gained? Or, will it be widespread with the majority of the community involved but in a way that is not overly demanding? Both are legitimate ways to organize your initiative, but you will need to plan accordingly and make sure you are clear in your intent so as not to disappoint others. Finally, what do the on and off ramps look like for students and staff to easily come aboard or perhaps walk away from while maintaining their dignity?

### JUDGEMENT: THE CREATIVITY KILLER

Fear of judgment or criticism can make people feel nervous about being creative. They worry that their ideas might be

dismissed as impractical or irrelevant. The risk of failure and the associated consequences, such as losing credibility or missing out on a chance to advance, can further contribute to this anxiety. As one school leader told me, “Creating a safe space for staff to contribute their ideas exponentially increases a school’s ability of finding a gem of an idea for increasing student engagement and success.”

A lack of supportive workplace culture and encouragement for innovative thinking can also discourage individuals from sharing their creative ideas and experimenting with new approaches. This is why it is important for all of us to think about how we react when a colleague or a student says, “I have an idea!” Do we immediately greet this person with a long explanation of budget and policy woes, or do we listen with an openness that allows our colleague or students to get the whole idea out on the table?

School leaders and colleagues that do a good job of allowing ideas to emerge will reap great results. Gonzaga Middle School principal, Rex Ferguson-Baird, has

long understood this concept and helped his fair share of colleagues and students find success by listening deeply and only afterwards working with them to turn their ideas into real-life successes.


"The cost to the principal of 'time spent' listening to staff ideas will be moot when measured against a greater return reaping the rewards of increased student engagement," said Ferguson-Baird.

Bison Reading Buddies, Berkeley the therapy dog, and the establishment of an outdoor classroom are all testaments to that mindset, he added. "Creating a safe space for staff to contribute their ideas exponentially increases a school's ability of finding a gem of an idea for increasing student engagement and success."

### CREATIVITY IS A FORCE: EXPLORE, DREAM, DISCOVER

So perhaps as you look out at the year lying ahead of you, reflect on the words of H. Jackson Brown, Jr. (although often misattributed to Mark Twain) "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

Creativity is a powerful force. Offering engaging educational experiences for students is what we are all about. And while we are still at the beginning of this comeback, conversations with school leaders and teachers tell me that things are approaching a new normal and a powerful catalyst will be the creativity and ability of educators to engage students as well as their communities. The Tsimshian people of the northwest coast have a word, 'Wyi-Wah', the time is now!

In part two of this exploration of creativity, we will look at initiatives that have involved connections between the school, families and volunteers. Some great ideas have developed into amazing stories of success when teacher creativity collides with the community! Watch for that in the winter issue of the MB Teacher. 

# INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATION

## FORMERLY KNOWN AS PROJECT OVERSEAS

International Collaboration for Education (ICE) (formerly known as Project Overseas) is accepting applications from Manitoba educators wanting to work with colleagues in developing countries in the summer of 2025.

ICE is a joint endeavor of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and its Member and Associate Organizations to support partners in developing countries as they co-plan and co-deliver professional learning to local teachers. Since 1962, the project has assisted teacher organizations in over 50 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Caribbean. Every July, the project places over 50 volunteers in 10 to 15 countries.

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# COUNTERING SELF-SACRIFICE CULTURE: SHIFTING THE BURNOUT NARRATIVE

By Kelsey McDonald, St. James-Assiniboia Teachers' Association

The Manitoba Teachers' Society ran a public campaign in the spring and summer of 2023 called #RealTeacherTalkMB. If you know, you know. And if you don't, take a few minutes to scroll through the posts using the hashtag. The statements from my colleagues across Manitoba were extremely painful to read, illuminating the heartbreaking realities faced by teachers and the reasons why Manitoba has the highest rates of educator burnout in Canada.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines burnout as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. This acknowledges the issue as multifactorial; there is the stress inherent in the workplace and there is the management of that stress. It's clear that in order to reduce the rate of burnout in Manitoba, we must first get explicitly clear about the "Burnout Narrative" we uphold.

As an educator who has experienced burnout, the WHO's "both/and" definition resonates. Certainly, my self-care choices were a contributing factor. And they were not made in a vacuum. Those experiences are what inspired me to pursue a graduate degree in Counselling Psychology, which has supported a shift in my perspective on the Burnout Narrative.

### BIG FACTS:

- The landscape of public education is not changing anytime soon.
- As educators, we need to convey the

message that we are not the stopgap to resolve the system's issues.

- Trying to fulfil that role is costing too many of our colleagues their health.

### THE FOUR FACTORS OF EDUCATOR WELLBEING

To represent the ecosystem that is public education in Manitoba today, let us identify four distinct yet interrelated factors that impact educator wellbeing.

#### PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

The first factor is the difficult and uncomfortable truth of our broader social-ecological context, which MTS has spoken out about extensively. Our public education system has been severely under-resourced by provincial funding for many years. Further, Manitoba is the child poverty capital of Canada. The origins of this societal issue are historical and complex. Meaningful change will require the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders over the long-term. The impact of this broader context on our work environment is, and will remain, profound. We do not have control over this factor.

#### LOCAL CONTEXT

The second factor is that of the local context. When educators struggle with the stress that is inherent to the work, a supportive culture within school divisions is key in determining the degree of psychological safety for educators to be open about their struggle.

Educators need to have 'permission to be well.' Principals and vice-principals need to be included among the ranks



We work in a profession where our most powerful tool is relationship; we teach *students*, not *subjects*. That means self-care is not a luxury educators should strive to make time for *outside* of our work. Rather, it is an imperative part of the work.





of employees who are cared for within the system. School-based leaders need to know it is okay to not be okay sometimes. Only then can they model for the staff they supervise every day that health is valued in the workplace.

This could be as simple as ensuring that all MTS members know that it is 'okay' to use sick time to attend appointments with their mental health professional. Or it could be as complex as committing to implementing the Canadian Mental Health Association's *National Standard for Psychological Health in the Workplace*. Or, perhaps, it could be an approach somewhere in between, such as implementing the Canadian Mental Health Association's *Not Myself Today* program across divisions. While we do not have direct control over this factor of our work lives, we do have our Local MTS associations, and the Teacher Welfare Department at MTS which can advocate on our behalf.

### OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

With the third factor, the environment we 'live' in—our school communities—comes great power to influence the Burnout Narrative. Change leadership is not the sole domain of those with formal titles. Every educator has the opportunity to offer leadership among their group of site-based staff about how they choose to interact with the topic of educator wellbeing.

Teachers and school administrators in Manitoba care *very* deeply about supporting our students. We stretch ourselves on-the-daily, trying to bridge societal inequities, trying to fill the gaps left by chronic underfunding. We so very much want to give our students the educational supports and services they need and deserve.

When I was struggling with spreading myself too thin, I was fortunate enough to work in schools where I had caring colleagues who encouraged me to accept support. I also know that in

some buildings, good intentions to serve students have morphed into wider cultures where self-sacrifice is normalized, and working oneself into the ground in the name of our students is (either subtly or overtly) viewed as noble. This type of workplace culture becomes a slippery slope for those who are at-risk for burnout, or what Dr. Brené Brown calls "anxiety as lifestyle".

By raising the collective consciousness about the impact of self-sacrifice culture in schools, we can begin to shift the Burnout Narrative. We need to ask ourselves some important questions:

- Where does the expectation to "do it all" come from?
- How is it being upheld in our buildings?
- What would it be like to work in a school where it was safe to say: "I'm not myself today"?
- What if, when a colleague shares their exhaustion at marking/planning/emailing during too much of their

time off, rather than commiserating, we gently reminded them that they deserve to be well and enjoy life outside of work?

- How might our collective wellbeing change if we actively encouraged each other to "unplug" more often?

### OURSELVES

The final factor is you. And me. The individual educator.

For much of my career I "blah-blah-blah"-ed away the metaphorical putting on my own oxygen mask first, keeping myself on the hamster wheel of 'toxic-hope' that things would settle down soon, and then I would feel better.

To be clear, the fact we work in roles where we support others is not what makes us worthy of health—that worth is inherent in our humanity. At the same time, many educators struggle with setting/holding boundaries that protect their energy. I now understand that this personal challenge was a major risk-factor for my vulnerability to burnout.

And so, I offer a reframe on self-care: It is our *professional responsibility*.

We work in a profession where our most powerful tool is relationship; we teach students, not subjects. That means self-care is not a luxury educators should strive to make time for outside of our work. Rather, it is an imperative part of the work. Personally, I have found viewing self-care as a part of my job to be both permission giving and mobilizing.

Once we realize and accept that caring for ourselves is inherent in our work, we can then adopt a mindset of compassionate accountability while learning to shift our behaviours. This



means holding ourselves accountable for making progress toward improving self-care and having compassion for the challenge it is to do so.

If you're struggling with setting/holding boundaries that support a work/life balance, ask yourself "what is getting in the way of prioritizing my wellbeing?". Then be honest about the answer. The truth is that many of our perceived barriers are self-imposed. My lived experiences have provided me with

deep insight into the 'toxic-guilt' and 'hyper-responsibility' that keep so many educators stuck in self-sacrifice mode. I encourage you to invest in protecting your health by seeking professional support as early intervention.

I wholeheartedly believe that if we work together, we can reduce the rate of educator burnout in Manitoba. I hope you'll join me in raising your voice in the call for change. [T](#)

## IMPROVING SELF-CARE & COMPASSION

For Mental Health Association National Standards information scan the QR code.



For Canadian Mental Health Association's *Not Myself Today* Campaign information scan the QR code.



For Toxic Guilt and Hyper-Responsibility information scan the QR code.



# BOOK REVIEWS

By Lori Emilson, Lakeshore School Division



## THE SLEEPING GIANT: THE MISEWA SAGA

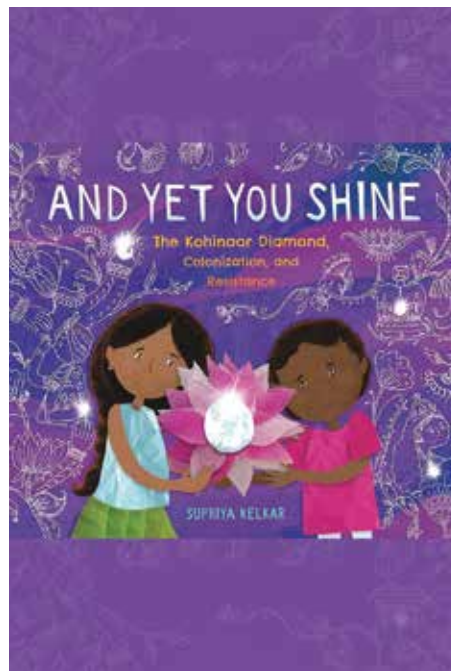
**Author:** David A. Robertson  
**Publisher:** Tundra Books (2024)

What a wild ride! David A Robertson does it again with another wholly satisfying story in the Misewa saga – a Narnia-inspired fantasy series featuring foster siblings Eli and Morgan, complete with Cree sky stories and legends.

The first three books in this series focus on Morgan. In Books 4 and 5 however, Eli takes the spotlight. In *The Sleeping Giant*, we learn more about Eli’s newfound powers. Eli struggles to control these powers and come to terms with the knowledge that he is only half-human. Eli, Morgan, their friends, and even former enemies work together to rescue kidnapped animals from Winnipeg’s Assiniboine Zoo. Time travel and portals complicate their mission,

resulting in a perilous journey fraught with danger. Several thrilling, violent battles occur between and among humans and creatures. New characters are introduced, and old characters reveal different sides of themselves. The story is packed with action and emotion. Can’t wait for the next (is it the final?) instalment to see how this epic saga concludes.

Recommended for ages 9-14.



## AND YET YOU SHINE: THE KOHINOOR DIAMOND, COLONIZATION, AND RESISTANCE

**Author:** Supriya Kelkar  
**Publisher:** Candlewick (2024)

Colonization is a very difficult topic. This picture book, with its mesmerizing illustrations, make it more approachable. This is the biography of one of the world’s largest diamonds. The Kohinoor Diamond was unearthed in South Asia hundreds of years ago and passed through many hands, and between various empires, the result of assassinations, wars and turmoil. It now sits in the Tower of London as part of the Crown Jewels. England claims legal possession, as it was received as part of England’s conquest of South Asia. It was in England that the diamond was recut to half its original size to match their standards of beauty.

The book’s message will likely fly over the heads of our youngest students, although they’ll still enjoy the lyrical language and beautiful collage illustrations. For students Gr. 5 - 12, the backmatter reveals much about decolonization and the true story of the Kohinoor, and should lead to great discussion. The diamond as a metaphor for colonization is too significant to pass up for ELA teachers. This book educates and engages students in critical thinking about history and the legacy of colonialism.

Recommended for all ages.

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