

education **forum**



Karen Littlewood

OSSTF/FEESO's 67th president:
Strong, willing, and able

SAFETY for ALL



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forum

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From pain comes hope

From struggle comes a new tomorrow

It has now been more than a year since we changed our world view, since we cocooned and masked-up, and collapsed our physical spheres. It has been a time of loss and of pain for so many. We have seen the way the pandemic has amplified the inequities and struggles of many communities, especially Black, Indigenous, racialized, poor, and working poor

communities. But finally, we are seeing hope on the horizon, at least in terms of vaccinations and wellness. It is a small hope, but I think it is a step towards a greater healing.

The pain that many communities are facing right now is nothing new, but for many people, we are seeing more clearly these inequities. It is maybe from the recognition of the challenges that we can continue to work towards a more hopeful future. Sometimes it takes a form of hurting so intense for us to have our worlds shaken up and reworked. This may be one of these times of reckoning. It is the time for us to look forward to changes that will help reduce inequities and injustice. I'm holding onto this hope as I'm holding onto the warm rays of sun that beam down on the plants and trees in my city.

OSSTF/FEESO is embarking on its own journey of growth and change. This issue is a testament to this. We see it in articles like that of the two teacher candidates who have faced completing their teacher certification during a pandemic—they speak of the great change that they have had to experience and of the way their eyes have been opened by this unknown learning style. They embark on their careers as educators, as future OSSTF/FEESO members with a perspective of equity that no previous teacher candidates could have imagined. Their practice will be all the stronger because of this experience, it will be strengthened by this heightened awareness of access, of privilege, and it will be pushed by their dedication to challenging oppression. We hear from Wacera W. Muriuki, an international student at one of On-

tario's universities, about the importance of identity in claiming one's voice and in asserting one's value, especially when confronting colonial structures and practices embedded in our learning institutions. Janelle Brady also challenges us to consider the history of Black identity and Black bodies in the history of labour activism, and to recognize the responsibility of our organizations to actively fight anti-Black racism and oppression.

Our president-elect, Karen Littlewood, featured in this issue speaks of her drive to use unity and our collective voice as part of the larger labour movement. Her ability to see OSSTF/FEESO as a leader in Canadian labour situates us as changemakers and as policy setters. By focusing on our togetherness and on the role education has in shaping a more just society, Littlewood brings a hope for greater unity as we fight austerity agendas, privatization, and most importantly, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigeneity, oppression, and the legacy of colonialism.

The power of pausing and reflecting on where we are shows us that there is a new day ahead. I wish each of you a bright tomorrow and I hope the spring ushers in the growth and change you want. Perhaps something in this issue will spark in you a new thought or a new excitement. No matter what we face as we move through the pandemic, we will be forever changed. The pain has been real and must be acknowledged while also embracing the hope of tomorrow.

In solidarity,

Tracey Germa, Editor
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La douleur engendre l'espoir

La lutte engendre un nouvel avenir

Il y a maintenant plus d'un an depuis que nous avons changé notre vision du monde, depuis que nous sommes confinés et masqués et que notre monde physique s'est effondré. Pour un si grand nombre de personnes, il s'agit d'une période de perte et de douleur. Nous avons vu comment la pandémie a amplifié les inégalités et les défis pour de nombreuses communautés, surtout les Noirs, les Autochtones, les personnes racialisées, les pauvres et les communautés à faible revenu. Cependant, nous voyons finalement l'espoir à l'horizon, du moins en termes de vaccinations et de bien-être. Il ne s'agit que d'un petit espoir, mais je crois que c'est un pas vers une plus grande guérison.

La douleur à laquelle font maintenant face de nombreuses communautés n'est pas nouvelle, mais pour de nombreuses personnes, nous voyons plus clairement ces inégalités. Peut-être que c'est en reconnaissant les défis que nous pouvons continuer à travailler vers un meilleur avenir. Parfois, il faut une forme de douleur si intense pour nous faire remanier et retravailler nos mondes. Nous vivons peut-être une de ces heures de vérité. Il est temps pour nous d'envisager des changements qui aideront à réduire les inégalités et les injustices. Je m'accroche à cet espoir comme je m'accroche aux chauds rayons de soleil qui plombent sur les plantes et les arbres de ma ville.

OSSTF/FEESO entreprend son propre périple de croissance et de changement. Le présent numéro en atteste bien. Nous le voyons dans les articles comme celui des deux candidates à l'enseignement qui ont dû obtenir leur certification de personnel enseignant

pendant la pandémie—elles parlent du grand changement qu'elles ont dû vivre et de la façon à laquelle ce style d'enseignement jusqu'alors inconnu leur a ouvert les yeux. Elles entreprennent leur carrière comme éducatrices, comme futures membres d'OSSTF/FEESO armées d'une perspective d'égalité qu'aucune autre candidate et aucun autre candidat à l'enseignement n'aurait pu imaginer. Leur pratique en ressortira encore plus forte de cette expérience, elle sera renforcée par cette plus forte sensibilisation à l'accès, au privilège et elle sera entraînée par leur dévouement dans le but de contrer l'oppression. Nous écoutons Wacera W. Muriuki, une étudiante internationale inscrite à une des universités de l'Ontario, qui nous parle de l'importance de l'identité lorsque que l'on cherche à faire entendre sa voix et à affirmer ses valeurs, surtout face à des structures et des pratiques coloniales empreintes dans nos établissements d'enseignement. Janelle Brady nous porte également à prendre en considération l'histoire de l'identité et du corps des Noirs dans l'histoire de l'activisme syndical et de reconnaître la responsabilité de nos organismes à lutter activement contre le racisme et l'oppression anti-noir.

Notre présidente élue, Karen Littlewood, présentée dans ce numéro, parle de ses efforts afin d'utiliser l'unité et notre voix collective dans le cadre du mouvement syndical plus large. Sa capacité de percevoir OSSTF/FEESO comme étant un chef de file dans le mouvement syndical canadien fait de nous des porteurs de changements et des innovateurs en matière de politiques.

En nous concentrons sur notre unité et sur le rôle de l'éducation pour façonner une société plus juste, Mme Littlewood apporte l'espoir d'une plus grande unité alors que nous luttons contre les programmes d'austérité, la privatisation et surtout le racisme anti-noir, le racisme anti-autochtone, l'oppression et l'héritage colonialiste.

La force de faire une pause et de réfléchir sur notre situation actuelle nous montre qu'un nouveau jour se lève. Je vous souhaite à tous et chacune un bel avenir et j'espère que le printemps apportera avec lui la croissance et le changement que vous désirez. Peut-être ce numéro incitera-t-il en vous l'étincelle d'une nouvelle pensée ou un nouvel engouement. Quels que soient les obstacles à mesure que nous avançons dans la présente pandémie, nous en serons à tout jamais changés. La douleur n'a été que trop réelle et doit être reconnue tout en s'ouvrant à l'espoir de demain.

En toute solidarité,

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I-identity

Exploring African identity
as a post-secondary
student in Canada

by Wacera W. Muriuki

The experience of moving to a new school is one many are familiar with. Throw in race, gender, historical colonial context, and its lasting legacy, then you have an intersectional mix that fewer are able to relate to.

As an African, Kenyan, moving to a predominantly white town and university, one could flippantly say I was affected by culture shock. I would argue otherwise. I had watched enough movies throughout my life, travelled, spoke English as my first language, engaged with Western culture more times than I could care to count, I even knew more Western-focused history than my own—I was ready! Perhaps in this sense I was. What I was not prepared for was the West's reception of me. I knew of racism, had experienced it each time I had travelled off the African continent, knew how to deal with it. What I did not know how to deal with, what no one had prepared me for was the new deep set 'need' I felt to be a quieter, more palatable version of myself as a Kenyan, as an African, in order to fit into, and in essence be accepted, in my new society. Suddenly, my earrings and beaded necklaces were too loud a statement, my accent unintelligible, my name too much trouble. The worst part? No one explicitly said these things to me.

The legacy of colonialism is such that ex-colonizers' culture, and Western culture in general, continues to be promoted and elevated above others'. This stems from the imperial-time belief that "the morals and values of the colonizer were superior to that of the colonized" (Igboin, 2011). Perhaps more significant is the reason this idea was and continues to be perpetuated. Under colonial rule, attributes deemed desirable were

those of the colonizer, and those "who came closest to emulating them were accorded the highest social status...a premium was placed on the acquisition of the "appropriate" cultural characteristics" (Moore and Johnson, 2004, p. 12). Still alive today, this method of social ranking carries on in the very same categories of "speech, Western...style dress; Christian beliefs and practices; legal, monogamous marriage and the nuclear family; [colonizers'] customs, ideas, values, and morals, sports and entertainment, arts and music, furnishings, societies and associations," (Moore and Johnson, 2004, p. 12). If you are reading this and share a similar context of colonialism, you may be remembering how you were instructed not to speak 'that language' in the school halls, maybe even how there was a punishment for those who did, the way you were ridiculed for not sounding 'right,' how you were repeatedly told to 'do' your hair (whatever that means) because it looked god-awful and untidy in its natural state—your afro. What is more, is that such hegemonic ideals are embodied in the institutions of once colonized states. Schools reinforce it, families perpetuate it, churches police it—and I for one have never seen a five-star hotel offer githeri (Kenyan traditional meal of maize and legumes, mostly beans of any type mixed and boiled together) on their menu. What does this say about the 'acceptability' of traditional foods, are they simply not 'good enough,' 'sophisticated' enough to be served at such establishments? Instead, you must eat pasta and meals you cannot pronounce, from countries who eat said meals as their traditional food. Are sushi, boeuf bourguignon, and lasagna, acceptable because of their nation of origin? Why do I mention this?

To illustrate how hegemonic ideas of what is acceptable and what is not pervades every aspect of human life, even food.

So, what does this have to do with moving to Canada? Finding myself in the middle of a culture I had subconsciously been taught to revere, trying to be African felt wrong. Wearing beads to an event, not using an English name, these became things I was hyper-aware about. Is this a bad thing? No, not inherently. It has more to do with the thought process that follows. It is not Canada's job to make me feel comfortable, nor is it my job to combat or educate ignorant individuals who feel the need to stare, give unsolicited opinions or label me. What is my job—and yours as well if you find yourself in a situation much like my own—is to grow conscious of discourse I have internalized that keeps me from completely expressing my authentic self.

In a discussion with other students of African descent in predominantly white spaces, two distinct categories of responses emerged as the reason for identity affirmation. The first, like myself, acted out of a place of perceived pressure. Most agreed that it simply felt safer to fit in rather than stand out, particularly in smaller towns where you are more obviously a minority. This is to avoid being treated differently or however 'full African-ness' would warrant. One begins to see that the more they adapt and conform to their new society, the easier it is to go about life in many ways, leading to the subconscious acceptance that difference is undesirable. Some feel a pressure to defend their Africanness, for there exists an expectation of what an African is supposed to look like, sound and act like. This definition, of course, is often one-dimensional and ill-informed, but is another obstacle one finds themselves having to navigate. The fear of not being African enough. It may be important to note that this is a label that gains traction once back on African soil, where an acquired accent, increased agency, and new world perspectives mark you as 'too Western.' Too African across the sea and not enough African at home, a phenomenon that can be discussed in an essay all of its own.

The other set of responses reflected a vastly different rationale for affirming identity. The main question posed being, what's wrong with standing out? Instead of feeling pressure as one of few Black or African students, they saw this

as a space to, for lack of a better word, shine! "What's the point of conforming?" I was asked. I, of course, was taken aback, but remain in awe of such powerful spirits. It may be important to note that only two of the thirty people I spoke to expressed this opinion.

So how does one reinforce their African identity in a foreign land? Many mentioned that clubs and groups on campus created spaces that relieved the pressure of self-regulation, of having to police their Africanness, providing a place to 'just be.' Others spoke of food, how it not only brought a piece of home to an otherwise foreign environment but also allowed them to share this with others. Sharing pictures of home also fulfills this dual function, both revealing the beauty, or organized chaos, of one's nation and acting as a personal reminder of where you are from and why you love it. Also noted was how speaking a different language became more significant, with many taking advantage of any opportunity to speak their native tongue. When alone, if you are not gassing yourself up in another language in front of the mirror, then music from the continent is probably doing that for you, acting as a grounding force in the process. Accent and expressions are another means of identity affirmation. What do I mean by expressions? You may have heard a Kenyan say, "kwenda uko," a Ugandan say "banange," the widely used "ehel," or my personal favourite, "haiya!" which denotes surprise. Just like the English phrases "you're kidding, right," "wow," or "that's crazy," the above phrases, among countless others, punctuate conversation, expressing a myriad of emotions. They may have to be explained initially to those not sharing a similar context but should not, I feel, be a reason for insecurity and self-regulation. Bring your authentic self into conversation, unapologetically.

One respondent mentioned how she loved that she had no English names because it forced others to acknowledge her ethnic identity. I contrast this directly

to countless others who, casting aside their ethnic names, choose instead to go by nicknames or English names, subduing, indeed, suppressing the truth of their individual identity which includes the ethno-cultural. Though there may be various reasons for this, I would like to pose a question: if you do not see the significance of your own name, why should others? That lecturer is not going to put any effort into pronouncing your name right if it simply does not seem to be of importance. That friend is not going to give a second thought to your ethnic name if you so quickly throw in an alternative. Although we must all adapt to our new environments, I suggest that we must decide and hold fast to parts of our identity that we will not compromise on.

Regardless of how you choose to affirm your identity, the bottom line remains the same, seek to understand the voice in your head that tells you to 'tone down' and in so doing, show up as your most powerful self—however that may look for you. I-identity. How you see and define yourself needs to be subjective. Silence the voice that says you must look, sound, or act a certain way. Your power may just be found in what sets you apart.

Wacera W. Muriuki is a student studying International Development at Trent University with a deep love and appreciation for African history. She holds a particular interest in how elements of this history affect society today.

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Karen Littlewood, présidente élue d'OSSTF/FEESO

Forte, disposée et capable

par Tracey Germa

OSSTF/FEESO president-elect, Karen Littlewood

Strong, willing, and able

by Tracey Germa

On March 14, 2021, the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Assembly (AMPA), held virtually, elected Karen Littlewood as the 67th president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO). From District 17, Simcoe, Karen brings with her a variety of experiences as an educator, including starting her career as an elementary teacher, along with her most recent leadership work on the Provincial Executive as an Executive Officer for two years and a Vice-President for an additional two years. Earlier this spring, not long after her election, I had the opportunity to sit down with our president-elect to ask her about her story, her trajectory, and her vision for the future.

Karen brings to the position a long history of advocacy beyond the classroom and the Federation. She notes that one of the most influential experiences in her leadership development was being selected as a participant at the prodigious Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference in 2012. The program brings together mid-career individuals from across the country, representing private business, industry, public sector, unions, and volunteer organizations. The conference asks participants to challenge their thinking and to develop creative, collaborative leadership practices. Karen has since worked to increase OSSTF/FEESO appointments to the conference, helping develop new leaders for the organization. Her experience at the leadership conference also led to a local commitment to engage with something meaningful and apart from education and unionism. This took her to the David Busby Centre in Barrie, which works on local poverty intervention, homelessness supports, and harm-reduction programs. Karen

Le 14 mars 2021, la Réunion annuelle de l'Assemblée provinciale (RAAP), tenue virtuellement, a élu Karen Littlewood comme 67^e présidente de la Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario (OSSTF/FEESO). Originaire du District 17, Simcoe, Karen apporte avec elle une variété d'expériences en tant qu'éducatrice, y compris le début de sa carrière en tant qu'enseignante à l'élémentaire, ainsi que son plus récent travail de dirigeante au sein de l'Exécutif provincial en tant qu'agente exécutive pendant deux ans et de vice-présidente pendant deux autres années. Plus tôt ce printemps, peu de temps après son élection, j'ai eu l'occasion de m'asseoir avec notre présidente élue pour l'interroger sur son histoire, son trajet et sa vision de l'avenir.

Karen apporte à ce poste une longue histoire de défense des intérêts au-delà de la salle de classe et de la Fédération. Elle note que l'une des expériences les plus influentes dans son développement du leadership a été d'être choisie comme participante à la prodigieuse Conférence canadienne du Gouverneur général sur le leadership en 2012. Ce programme réunit des personnes à mi-carrière de tout le pays, représentant des entreprises privées, des industries, le secteur public, des syndicats et des organismes bénévoles. La conférence demande aux participants de remettre en question leur façon de penser et de développer des pratiques de leadership créatives et collaboratives. Depuis, Karen s'est efforcée d'accroître la participation d'OSSTF/FEESO à la conférence, contribuant ainsi à développer de nouveaux dirigeants pour l'organisation. Son expérience à la conférence sur le leadership l'a également amenée à s'engager localement dans quelque chose d'important, en dehors de l'éducation et du syndicalisme. Cela l'a amenée au *David Busby Centre* de Barrie, qui travaille sur des programmes locaux d'intervention contre la pauvreté, de soutien aux sans-abri et de réduction des méfaits. Karen a été bénévole au *Busby Centre* de 2012 à 2017 et a reçu le prix du bénévole de l'année décerné par le centre en 2017. Les revendications de Karen ont également été façonnées par son travail en tant que l'une des membres fondateurs de *Barrie Pride*, qui a

(suite à la page 13)

served as a volunteer with the Centre from 2012–2017 and was awarded the Centre's Volunteer of the Year Award in 2017. Karen's advocacy has also been shaped by her work as one of the founding members of *Barrie Pride*, which began in 2013 and has grown now to be one of Ontario's most celebrated small-town Pride events.

Originally, Karen studied translation at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario and had no thoughts of becoming an educator. It was only after being introduced to the idea of applying to a teacher education program by a friend that Karen began to consider a career as a teacher. Midway through her teacher education training at North Bay's Nipissing University, Karen was pool-hired to teach core French, grades 4 through 6 in Keswick, Ontario. Karen spent more than 15 years working as a member of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), until a newspaper ad for a high school teaching job in Alliston, Ontario caught her eye. Karen had not expected to get an interview, never mind a job offer, so when the offer came she knew she had to embrace this new opportunity. She left behind her seniority with ETFO as well as a part-time local release position with the union. It was in this new role where Karen found her true passion as an educator—teaching in a congregated special education class with another teacher and a number of educational assistants.

Although Karen had moved panels, she did not give up her dedication to unionism. Thanks to her involvement with her local Labour Council, Karen was already actively involved with OSSTF/FEESO members/leaders through their shared work as affiliates during elections. Karen moved through a variety of positions and was an active force in her local Bargaining Unit and District when she was elected in 2014 to be president of the District 17 Teachers' Bargaining Unit.

When asked about what made her decide to become involved with organized labour, Karen responded by saying:

"A turning point for me was the need to participate in a work refusal while I was still an elementary teacher. It was an

incredibly scary situation where I was threatened with job loss and other reprisals. My union had my back in such a strong way that I knew I would be able to stand up and protect myself and protect others. My local [ETFO] president at the time was Ann Hoggarth [former *Barrie MPP*], who is now a very dear friend. I learned so much about unionism from Ann. I often refer to that work refusal because I know how much courage it takes to stand up and refuse unsafe work, and it was the union that gave me the strength.

At the same time, I was becoming more and more involved in my local labour council, serving on the *Barrie and District Labour Council* executive for many years. Labour council was so eye-opening, hearing from other workers with different experiences. I'll never forget my first Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Convention in 2009, listening to tradespeople, blue-collar workers, and others in labour about their struggles and their unique situations. I heard about their differences but I also heard about their solidarity. It made me really appreciate the choices I had made but more so the opportunities I had been given."

Karen makes a point of highlighting the value of being part of one's local labour council. As she notes, "...it is something everyone can do to become part of something important. There is so much value in seeing yourself as part of something—it's a great place to start."

This dedication to labour is paramount to Karen's vision of OSSTF/FEESO's future. She identifies that she is fearful of labour's future, reminding us that right-to-work states and union-busting south of the border are all signs of how governments are fighting against the rights of workers everywhere. But she is also buoyed by the growth of labour in North America, by the recent increase in the numbers of workers protected by a union, and by the push to organize workers in places like McDonald's and Amazon. For Karen, labour is the great community equalizer, it is how we work together to protect our communities and fight for a greater good. She is working

to maintain and grow OSSTF/FEESO's position as a leader in labour, advocating for the sharing of wealth and protections, with the knowledge that there is enough to go around and that we must be united across unions to bring everyone up. Karen believes this is best done in consort with all our labour partners, as part of the larger labour movement, including our membership in the OFL and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).

When asked where she sees OSSTF/FEESO in five years, Karen says:

"Education continues to be under attack and we have nowhere near the resources we need to build the province of Ontario. OSSTF/FEESO is incredibly diverse and we need to highlight that. We lead in so many different ways but we have to make sure our members are ready for the challenges ahead. That starts with building up from within and ensuring our members have the support they need. It continues with building OSSTF/FEESO's profile and being at the forefront of education in Ontario.

Education truly is an investment and you need people to make the system work. You need the money to fund the system. I'd love to see some predictability and some certainty, but I don't know if five years is going to be enough for that."

As only the eleventh female President of OSSTF/FEESO in its 102-year history, Karen recognizes the important role she is taking on and seeks to be a strong role model for women and for others in the organization who do not see themselves reflected in our leadership. This is not a responsibility she takes lightly, noting that:

"I'm an ordinary person who has come into this through different pathways and steps. If people can see themselves as someone who can also achieve similar leadership positions, whatever that may be for them, then I am happy to serve as a model in that position. We need to see strong women, and we need to have that throughout the system, with our locals, with our employers, at the provincial level, as well as in the communities we live and work in. I recognize that I come into this position with privi-

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débuté en 2013 et qui est maintenant devenu l'un des événements de fierté de petite ville les plus célébrés de l'Ontario.

À l'origine, Karen a étudié la traduction à l'Université Laurentienne de Sudbury (Ontario) et elle ne pensait pas devenir enseignante. Ce n'est qu'après qu'une amie lui ait présenté l'idée de s'inscrire à un programme de formation des enseignants que Karen a commencé à envisager une carrière d'enseignante. À mi-chemin de sa formation en enseignement à l'Université Nipissing de North Bay, Karen a été embauchée pour enseigner le français de base de la 4^e à la 6^e année à Keswick (Ontario). Karen a passé plus de 15 ans à travailler comme membre de la Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario (FEEO/ETFO), jusqu'à ce qu'une annonce dans un journal pour un poste d'enseignante au secondaire à Alliston (Ontario) attire son attention. Karen ne s'attendait pas à passer une entrevue, encore moins à recevoir une offre d'emploi, alors quand l'offre est arrivée, elle savait qu'elle devait saisir cette nouvelle occasion. Elle a laissé derrière elle son ancienneté au sein d'ETFO ainsi qu'un poste local libéré à temps partiel au sein du syndicat. C'est dans ce nouveau rôle que Karen a découvert sa véritable passion en tant qu'éducatrice – enseigner dans une classe d'éducation de l'enfance en difficulté regroupée avec un autre enseignant et un certain nombre d'éducatrices.

Bien que Karen ait changé de palier, elle n'a pas renoncé à son dévouement au syndicalisme. Grâce à son implication dans son Conseil du travail local, Karen était déjà activement impliquée avec les membres/dirigeants d'OSSTF/FEESO par leur travail commun en tant qu'affiliés lors des élections. Karen a occupé divers postes et était une force active dans son unité de négociation locale et au sein du district lorsqu'elle a été élue en 2014 présidente de l'unité de négociation du personnel enseignant du District 17.

Lorsqu'on lui a demandé ce qui l'avait décidée à s'engager dans le syndicalisme, Karen a répondu en disant :

« Un tournant pour moi a été la nécessité de participer à un refus de travail-

ler alors que j'étais encore enseignante à l'élémentaire. C'était une situation incroyablement effrayante où j'ai été menacée de perdre mon emploi et d'autres représailles. Mon syndicat m'a soutenu avec une telle force que j'ai su que je serais capable de me défendre, de me protéger et de protéger les autres. La présidente de mon unité locale [ETFO] à l'époque était Ann Hoggarth [ancienne députée provinciale de Barrie], qui est maintenant une amie très chère. Ann m'a beaucoup appris sur le syndicalisme. Je fais souvent référence à ce refus de travailler, parce que je sais combien il faut de courage pour se lever et refuser un travail dangereux et c'est le syndicat qui m'a donné

cette force.

En même temps, je m'impliquais de plus en plus dans mon conseil du travail local, siégeant à l'exécutif du *Barrie and District Labour Council* pendant de nombreuses années. Le conseil du travail m'a ouvert les yeux en me permettant d'entendre d'autres travailleuses et travailleurs ayant des expériences différentes. Je n'oublierai jamais mon premier congrès de la Fédération du travail de l'Ontario (FTO/OFL) en 2009, où j'ai écouté des gens de métier, des cols bleus et d'autres travailleuses et travailleurs parler de leurs luttes et de leurs situations uniques. J'ai entendu parler de leurs différences, mais aussi

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lege, not only as a teacher, but also as a white woman.

I've ended up here through the experiences I've had and the support I've been given through my years in education. This is where my need to give back and support others comes from. My hope is to be a role model for all those members who have doubted their worthiness or who have questioned if the union has a place for them. I hope to be the leader they need and a small inspiration in their own steps into Federation work."

Having spent the time early in her career often saying, "I think I can do that," but not actually taking on the challenge, Karen urges all members of the Federation to act on their ideas and make them a reality. She says, "The second you think it, you need to go with that and say yes, I can do that." She cites the "imposter syndrome" that many females who seek to be leaders experience, where we use internalized excuses of not being good enough to deter ourselves from stepping up and believing that we belong in leadership positions. Karen goes on to say that:

"Throughout my career, I have had so many opportunities and have worked with such incredible people that I would tell 25-year-old Karen to go with the flow. I know you can't really tell people that, though, and I think either you do, or you don't.

I've always been willing to take a chance and put myself out there and to see what it brings. When the door opens, you can walk through, and if you don't like what's there, you can walk back out. I find it important to look at things as learning experiences and to try and turn them into positives. I think 25-year-old Karen took all of her experiences and found the positives that helped her grow."

I ended my interview with Karen asking her what she turns to when she's struggling—is there a song, a piece of art, a poem, or something that helps lift her up. She answered with, "For me, it's Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's cover of *Some-where Over the Rainbow*. It is calm, mellow, and gives me perspective." She also

reflects on how she relies on looking at things from a variety of perspectives and considering different points of view. She makes it a point to consider how her actions, and in turn, that of our organization, will impact others. It is this driving force of working for a greater good that labour must continue to fight for. It is this understanding of the power we have to impact our communities and improve everyone's life that helps keep Karen focused on the tomorrow, even in the hardest of times.

As we concluded the conversation, we spoke of the weight of the role she has taken on. She views it as a privilege, yes, but even more as a duty. She is ready to lead us forward as part of the labour movement, as a driving force in protecting and enhancing publicly-funded education in this province. She is prepared to do that by opening new doors, strengthening relationships, and by being a powerful voice that represents, respects, and honours our members' diverse experiences.

Karen Littlewood's term as president begins July 1, 2021.

Tracey Germa is the editor of *Education Forum* and works in the Communications/Political Action Department at Provincial Office.

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de leur solidarité. J'ai vraiment apprécié les choix que j'ai faits, mais surtout les possibilités qui m'ont été offertes »

Karen tient à souligner l'importance de faire partie du conseil du travail local. Comme elle le fait remarquer, « ... c'est quelque chose que tout le monde peut faire pour faire partie de quelque chose d'important. Il y a tellement de valeur à se voir comme faisant partie de quelque chose – c'est un excellent point de départ. »

Ce dévouement au travail est primordial dans la vision qu'a Karen de l'avenir d'OSSTF/FEESO. Elle reconnaît qu'elle craint l'avenir du mouvement syndical, nous rappelant que les États où le droit au travail est en vigueur et que la destruc-

tion des syndicats au Sud de la frontière sont autant de signes de la façon dont les gouvernements luttent contre les droits des travailleuses et travailleurs partout dans le monde. Mais elle est également encouragée par la croissance du mouvement syndical en Amérique du Nord, par l'augmentation récente du nombre de travailleuses et de travailleurs protégés par un syndicat et par la pression exercée pour organiser les travailleuses et les travailleurs dans des endroits comme McDonald's et Amazon. Pour Karen, le travail est le grand égalisateur de la communauté, c'est la façon dont nous travaillons ensemble pour protéger nos communautés et lutter pour un plus grand bien. Elle s'efforce de maintenir et d'accroître la position d'OSSTF/FEESO en tant que chef de file dans le domaine syndical, en préconisant le partage de la richesse et des protections, tout en sachant qu'il y a assez pour tout le monde et que nous devons être unis entre les syndicats afin d'améliorer la situation de tous. Karen croit que la meilleure façon d'y parvenir est de collaborer avec tous nos partenaires syndicaux, dans le cadre du mouvement syndical élargi, y compris nos membres de la Fédération du travail de l'Ontario et du Congrès du travail du Canada.

Lorsqu'on lui demande où elle voit OSSTF/FEESO dans cinq ans, Karen répond :

« L'éducation continue d'être attaquée et nous sommes loin d'avoir les ressources dont nous avons besoin pour bâtir la province de l'Ontario. OSSTF/FEESO est incroyablement diversifiée et nous devons le souligner. Nous dirigeons de tant de façons différentes, mais nous devons nous assurer que nos membres sont prêts à relever les défis à venir. Cela commence par un renforcement interne et par l'assurance que nos membres ont le soutien dont ils ont besoin. Cela se poursuit par le développement du profil d'OSSTF/FEESO et en étant à l'avant-garde de l'éducation en Ontario.

L'éducation est vraiment un investissement et vous avez besoin de personnes pour faire fonctionner le système. Vous avez besoin de l'argent pour financer le système. J'aimerais voir une certaine pré-

visibilité et une certaine certitude, mais je ne sais pas si cinq ans seront suffisants pour cela. »

En tant que onzième présidente d'OSSTF/FEESO en 102 ans d'histoire, Karen reconnaît l'importance du rôle qu'elle assume et cherche à être un modèle pour les femmes et pour les autres membres de l'organisation qui ne se reconnaissent pas dans notre leadership. Ce n'est pas une responsabilité qu'elle prend à la légère, notant que :

« Je suis une personne ordinaire qui est arrivée là par différents parcours et étapes. Si les gens peuvent se voir comme quelqu'un qui peut aussi atteindre des postes similaires de dirigeants, quels qu'ils soient, alors je suis heureuse de servir de modèle dans ce poste. Nous avons besoin de voir des femmes fortes et nous avons besoin de cela dans tout le système, avec nos unités locales, avec nos employeurs, au niveau provincial ainsi que dans les communautés dans lesquelles nous vivons et travaillons. Je reconnais que j'arrive à ce poste avec des privilèges, non seulement en tant qu'enseignante, mais aussi en tant que femme blanche.

Je me suis retrouvée ici grâce aux expériences que j'ai vécues et au soutien que j'ai reçu au cours de mes années en enseignement. C'est de là que vient mon besoin de rendre la pareille et de soutenir les autres. J'espère être un modèle pour tous les membres qui ont douté

de leur valeur ou qui se sont demandé si le syndicat avait une place pour eux. J'espère être la chef de file dont ils ont besoin et une petite inspiration dans leurs propres pas vers le travail au sein de la Fédération. »

Ayant passé le temps, au début de sa carrière, à dire « Je pense que je peux le faire », mais sans relever le défi, Karen exhorte tous les membres de la Fédération à concrétiser leurs idées et à en faire une réalité. Elle dit, « À la seconde où vous le pensez, vous devez aller dans ce sens et dire oui, je peux le faire. » Elle cite le « syndrome de l'imposteur » que connaissent de nombreuses femmes qui cherchent à devenir des chefs de file, où nous utilisons des excuses intériorisées de ne pas être assez bonnes pour nous dissuader de faire un pas en avant et de croire que nous avons notre place dans des postes de leadership. Karen poursuit en disant que :

« Tout au long de ma carrière, j'ai eu tellement d'occasions et j'ai travaillé avec des gens tellement incroyables que je dirais à Karen, 25 ans, de suivre le courant. Mais je sais qu'on ne peut pas vraiment dire ça aux gens et je pense que soit on le fait, soit on ne le fait pas.

J'ai toujours été prête à tenter ma chance, à me lancer et à voir ce que ça donne. Quand la porte s'ouvre, vous pouvez la franchir et si vous n'aimez pas ce qu'il y a, vous pouvez repartir. Je

trouve important de considérer les choses comme des expériences d'apprentissage et d'essayer de les transformer en positif. Je pense que Karen, 25 ans, a pris toutes ses expériences et a trouvé les points positifs qui l'ont aidée à grandir. »

J'ai terminé mon entretien avec Karen en lui demandant vers quoi elle se tourne lorsqu'elle a des difficultés – y a-t-il une chanson, une œuvre d'art, un poème ou quelque chose qui l'aide à se relever? Elle a répondu : « Pour moi, c'est la reprise de « Quelque part au-delà de l'arc-en-ciel » (*Somewhere Over the Rainbow*) d'Israel Kamakawiwo'ole. C'est calme, doux et ça me donne de la perspective. » Elle explique également comment elle s'appuie sur le fait de regarder les choses sous différents angles et de considérer différents points de vue. Elle met un point d'honneur à prendre en compte l'impact de ses actions et donc de celles de notre organisation, sur les autres. C'est cette force motrice qui consiste à travailler pour un bien plus grand que les syndicats doivent continuer à défendre. C'est cette compréhension du pouvoir que nous avons d'avoir un impact sur nos communautés et d'améliorer la vie de chacun qui aide Karen à rester concentrée sur l'avenir, même dans les moments les plus difficiles.

Au terme de notre conversation, nous avons parlé du poids du rôle qu'elle assume. Elle le considère comme un privilège, certes, mais encore plus comme une obligation. Elle est prête à nous faire avancer en tant que membre du mouvement syndical, en tant que force motrice pour protéger et améliorer l'éducation financée à même les deniers publics dans cette province. Elle est prête à le faire en ouvrant de nouvelles portes, en renforçant les relations et en étant une voix puissante qui représente, respecte et honore les diverses expériences de nos membres.

Le mandat de Karen Littlewood, en tant que présidente, commence le 1^{er} juillet 2021.

Tracey Germa est la rédactrice en chef d'Education Forum et œuvre dans le Secteur des communications/action politique au Bureau provincial.



Photo: OSSTF/FEESO archives

**REPRÉSENTANT FIÈREMENT PLUS DE 200 CLASSIFICATIONS
D'EMPLOI ŒUVRANT DANS TOUS LES SECTEURS DE
L'ÉDUCATION FINANCÉE À MÊME LES DENIERS PUBLICS**



Facing History and Ourselves

uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate

At Facing History and Ourselves (facinghistory.org/about-us), we believe the bigotry and hate that we witness today are the legacy of brutal injustices of the past. Facing our collective history and how it informs our attitudes and behaviours allows us to choose a world of equity and justice. Facing History's resources address racism, antisemitism, and prejudice at pivotal moments in history; we help students connect choices made in the past to those they will confront in their own lives. Through professional development opportunities, we connect with educators across the country in supporting their work towards creating the next generation of leaders who will build a world based on knowledge and compassion. With a commitment to supporting educators and students during COVID-19, much of our offerings such as webinars, teaching resources and strategies have been adapted for online and hybrid learning.

How does the Facing History approach look & feel in the classroom?

Facing History Canada works with a group of talented, passionate, and committed teacher leaders who are part of a national educator community that centres equity, anti-racism, learning, and collaboration. We had a chance to speak with some of Facing History's OSSTF/FEESO-member teacher leaders to hear what our approach to education feels and looks like in classrooms, particularly during these challenging times we find ourselves in.

Who you are, what you teach, how you came to Facing History.

I'm **Leah Mauer—District 12, Toronto**. I teach history, social science, English, ESL, and special education. I'm also an assistant curriculum leader (ACL) in Building Capacity and Supporting Achievement: English/Social Science. I came to Facing History while I was a teacher candidate looking to engage students in difficult conversations. I was introduced to a teacher who was teaching the Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity course, and that teacher brought me to a planning meeting where I met Leora Schaefer, the Executive Director of the Canada office. The rest is history!

My name is **Ben Gross—District 12, Toronto**. I teach history and social science and am the ACL of Social and Global Studies at my school. I came to Facing History when the CHG3 Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity course was offered at my school and they were recommended as an organization with a great approach and resources.

My name is **Jse-Che Lam—District 12, Toronto** and I'm an English and history teacher.

What is your ‘why’ for teaching and how does Facing History help support and guide your purpose?

Leah: My why is to help students understand themselves, understand the world, and work to make it better. Facing History helped me combine my passions for history and social justice with their pedagogical framework, so I could help my students become the upstanders I know they can be.

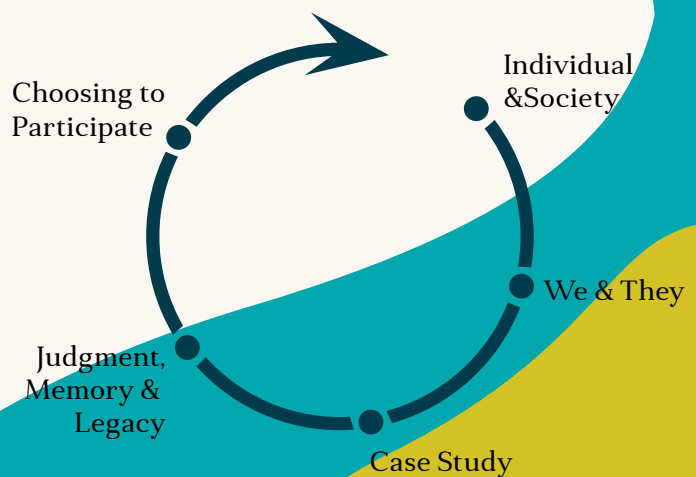
Ben: My why for teaching is to identify things that are accepted as ‘normal’ but need to be questioned and disrupted. This has resulted in a lot of learning for both myself and my students. Facing History is an organization composed of people who, I believe, share my ‘why.’ The organization supports me in working towards my purpose through professional development, opportunities to meet other like-minded educators, and by providing excellent text and video resources for classrooms that cover challenging topics.

Jse-Che: At the start of the 2020–2021 school year, our school launched the NBE3: Contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices course which several Ontario school boards are now teaching in place of the traditional Grade 11 English course. The resources from Facing History have been instrumental in building the framework of this course. As a settler, there is a particular weight of responsibility that I feel towards this course as I want to get it right the first time. I want to ensure that I do not perpetuate stereotypical representations of First Nations, Métis or Inuit peoples.

How do the Facing History curriculum resources invite students to develop the critical analysis skills and mindsets for equity?

Leah: The scope and sequence framework is really helpful for that. All Facing History resources centre around identity, membership, case studies, legacy, and choosing to participate. The scope and sequence also helps me frame my courses with the end in mind, and helps me sort through what’s important to teach in a crowded curriculum and what can be omitted.

The discussion questions, videos, and teaching strategies on Facing History’s website (facinghistory.org) also help engage students and make it easy for me to evaluate what students are getting out of the course.



Ben: Facing History curriculum material invites students to be critical about themselves and their world by offering in-depth resources that you often can't find in the standard classroom texts. The curation of these resources allows teachers to easily find a place to start developing a more critical understanding of history, both for themselves and their students. This more critical understanding of history is essential in understanding the need for and purpose of equity in all aspects of our society today. It helps students see that the issues of the past are the roots of, and still live on in, the policies and practices of today.

Jse-Che: With the speed of change with which the world is experiencing today, it's critical that educators prepare students to think critically. It is vital that students know how to examine history and see how it affects them today. It's necessary for students to see themselves in a position where they show confidence in historical thinking and the role that they play in effecting change. The resources from Facing History have always been useful in breaking down complex issues and for the organization's statements about how educators can speak to and debrief contentious events with their classes.

Can you share a classroom story with us?

Ben: Over the past few years, working with Facing History has provided my students with incredible opportunities.

In my Grade 12 Equity and Social Justice course, we read Theodore Fontaine's memoir ***Broken Circle: The Dark Legacy of Indian Residential Schools*** and used Facing History resources to engage with Chief Theodore Fontaine's story and create a piece of art as a class in response. We learned that Chief Fontaine is from the Turtle Clan and so the students decided to design a turtle in collaboration with Alan Colley, who acted as an Indigenous mentor on the project and is the owner and creator of Toronto Aboriginal Eco Tours.



The turtle was cut out of a single piece of wood by our amazing colleague, Dan Kunanec, and the students made pieces of clay to fit the design on the turtle's back. Each student designed at least one piece of the turtle's shell, some with incredible pieces of art, others with words that impacted them from Chief Fontaine's memoir or interviews. Facing History organized a gathering at which Chief Fontaine spoke and the students were able to ask him questions and present him with the turtle as a gift. The turtle now travels with Chief Fontaine when he visits schools and he uses it as a teaching and learning tool. The students learned so much from this process—the truth of the history and legacy of Residential Schools and that their learning and work can have an impact.

Through our connection with Alan Colley, our senior Social Science courses and our Emerging Green Technology courses collaborated to learn about, design, and build Haudenosaunee Mound Gardens. These are incredibly effective sustainable growing systems that outperformed the raised and irrigated garden beds in our Urban Farm—without being watered!



We are so grateful to our Indigenous mentors who have gifted us with seeds to grow corn, beans and squash. As we expand the number of mounds, we have shared our seeds and produce back to our community, to the people who shared with us, and to others with whom we have built relationships. This has been a valuable process for us and our students to learn about the importance of relationship and reciprocity—with other people and with the earth. The students engaged in learning about the impact of colonialism and white supremacy on food sovereignty, how implementing UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) could help support the return of food sovereignty, and that distinct disciplines like equity studies, sociology, history, and green industries are all deeply connected.

How has Facing History supported your teaching during COVID?

Leah: Facing History's website has an incredible back to school 2020 section, with lots of tools to help students collaborate online. They've put out incredible and timely resources on difficult things that have happened this year—from the murder of George Floyd, to the insurrection at the U.S. capitol, to helping students grapple with their own feelings about COVID. Students are hungry for human interaction and to have a place to wrestle with all the changes that have been occurring in our world. Facing History has made it so much easier for me to engage them in this way.

Ben: The free online resources that Facing History provides are amazing. Access to digital copies of texts, the scholar videos, and the library of teaching strategies were all lifesavers when transitioning back and forth between virtual and in-person—and both at the same time. The continued opportunity to participate in virtual professional learning was also appreciated, especially as someone who has had to attend fewer events in the past couple of years after I moved further away from Toronto.

Thank you **Leah, Ben and Jse-Che** for sharing your experiences with us.

To learn more about Facing History, explore our website (facinghistory.org) and join our Facing History educator community!

Erez Zobary is a Program Specialist at Facing History and Ourselves and holds a Bachelor of Arts and Education from Queen's University. Erez graduated as an English and History high school teacher with a specialization in social justice education and is also a District 12, Toronto occasional teacher member.



BLACK LABOUR ACTIVISM AND THE FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

An important part of our labour history and future

by Janelle Brady

The resurgence of the struggles for racial and social justice after the Black liberation uprisings in 2020 have brought the issue of anti-Black racism to the fore. Organizations have responded with a recognition of the long history of systemic racism suffered by Black people. Some have attempted to shy away from the impact the history of injustice in Canada and deflect by pointing criticisms towards the U.S. instead. Others attempted to frame anti-Black racism as a new phenomenon that only occurred after the killing of George Floyd, but that deflection has also been called into question. In Toronto alone, thousands took to the streets to march in solidarity and support of Regis Korchinski-Paquet in the Not Another Black Life march and other vigils and events, after her death during a wellness check by police. Black community activists made clear the connections to police brutality, lack of services and supports, and the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black people through various avenues and channels in a year that will have a generational impact.

In this critical moment Black community members are blazing new crossroads that engage equity, diversity, inclusion, and dismantling anti-Black racism. In the Canadian landscape, it is important to denote the long history of anti-Black racism and forms of activism and resistance. The responses, reactions, and resistances cannot be treated as though they are new. Black labour and community activists are often treated with newness as though they have not made large contributions to the labour, social, racial, and class movement. In the article, I address the idea of Black invisibility in labour, political, and community responses and highlight the many Black activists who have helped and continue to shape equitable and equal outcomes in all realms of the Canadian experience.

Canada has a long history of systemic anti-Black racism dating back to slavery despite grand narratives of the nation as a place of refuge for Black people. As well, Black Canadians faced various forms of segregation such as segregated schools, athletic teams, and entertainment. For example, civil rights activist, Viola Desmond (1914–1965), refused to leave a Whites-only section of the Roseland Theatre in Nova Scotia nine years before Rosa Parks refused to sit at the back of a bus. Approximately twelve years before Viola Desmond, Carrie Best and her husband were also arrested for sitting in the Whites-only section of this theatre. This motivated Best to establish *The Clarion*, a Black newspaper which broke the story of Viola Desmond's arrest. Black women have a long history of activism and resistance in Canada. Black people also faced segregation in higher education, and they were prohibited from attending medical and other professional schools and professional practices such as nursing until the 1950s. In fact, it was thanks to Dr. A. Pearl Oliver (1917–2008), founder of the Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, that Black people were able to practice nursing. Black presence in Canada dates as far back as



V. Desmond

BEP
BSCP
IBEW
OSCP
CBRE
UAW
BADC
WIDS

Mathieu de Coste in 1608 and as well as the Jamaican Marrons who settled in Nova Scotia in the 16th century. Despite the many forms of Black resistance and long history of Black presence, there is still the prevalence of newness afforded to Black communities, where Black Canadians, no matter how long they live in Canada, are not seen as *real* Canadians. The connection between Blackness and newness is also afforded to Black community members in the labour movement.

Black labour activists have often tied their union organizing to community organizing. The two are interconnected and where community organizing is often seen as illegitimate, this has been central to the Black Canadian experience. For example, The Black Experience Project (BEP) by Environics noted the high level of activism taking shape through many forms by Black Canadians. Much of the organizing of Black labour and community members have and continues to benefit other communities and groups.

Stanley Grizzle (1918–2016) was born in Toronto to Jamaican parents and growing up his father was the only Black taxi driver in Canada who faced brutal attacks because of his race. Stanley Grizzle went on to be a porter as well for Canada Pacific Railway. Grizzle was elected as president of the Toronto local Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) in 1946 where he fought for better working conditions and racial equity. Grizzle's union organizing transcended to electoral politics when he and Jack White, of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), became the first Black Canadian candidates to run for election for the Ontario legislature for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (now the New Democratic Party). Stanley Grizzle went on to become the first Black Citizenship Judge in Canada. Some years earlier, it was Black porters in Winnipeg, John A. Robinson, J.W. Barber, B.F. Jones, and P. White who established the Order of Sleeping Car Porters (OSCP) which was the first Black railway union in North America. They negotiated contracts and later joined the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway of Employees (CBRE) in 1919 and fought for the removal of the White-only membership clause in its constitution.

Bromley Armstrong CM, OOnt (1926–2018), was part of the United Automobile Workers (UAW) local 439, went on to become the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner. Armstrong participated in “tests” which were sit-ins coordinated by the Joint Labour Committee to Combat Racial Intolerance and the National Unity Association in Dresden, Ontario was faced with severe anti-Black racism that was captured in media. Bromley's activism in this and his leadership of anti-discrimination campaigns are what led to Canada's first anti-discrimination laws. Further, the Ontario government introduced the *Fair Employment Practices Act* and the *Fair Accommodation Act*. Like the activism of Black Canadians today, they take multiple forms and avenues and as such Bromley also was very engaged in community activism. He founded several organizations such as the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, the Black Business and Professional Association, the Jamaican Canadian Association, and countless others. This lends to the later social activism of leaders and founders of the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC) like Akua Benjamin, Dudley Laws, Charles Roach, Lennox Farrell, Numvoyo and Brian Hyman, Akilah and Dari Meade, who spoke out against anti-Black racism and worked to establish police accountability measures such as the

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LE MILITANTISME SYNDICAL NOIR ET LA LUTTE POUR LA JUSTICE RACIALE

Une partie importante de l'histoire et de l'avenir de notre travail

par Janelle Brady

La résurgence des luttes pour la justice raciale et sociale après les soulèvements de la libération des Noirs en 2020 a mis la question du racisme anti-noir au premier plan. Les organisations ont réagi en reconnaissant la longue histoire du racisme systémique dont souffrent les Noirs. Certains ont tenté d'éluder l'impact de l'histoire de l'injustice au Canada et de détourner les critiques en les dirigeant vers les États-Unis. D'autres ont tenté de présenter le racisme anti-noir comme un nouveau phénomène qui n'est apparu qu'après le meurtre de George Floyd, mais cette déflexion a également été remise en question. À Toronto, sans parler des autres villes, des milliers de personnes sont descendues dans la rue pour manifester leur solidarité et leur soutien à Regis Korchinski-Paquet lors de la marche *Not Another Black Life* et d'autres veilles et événements, après sa mort lors d'un contrôle-santé effectué par la police. Les activistes de la communauté noire ont clairement établi les liens entre la brutalité policière, le manque de services et de soutien et les effets démesurés de la COVID-19 sur les Noirs par le biais de divers moyens et canaux au cours d'une année qui aura une influence générationnelle.

En cette période critique, les membres de la communauté noire adoptent de nouveaux carrefours qui engagent l'équité, la diversité, l'inclusion et démantèlent le racisme anti-noir. Dans le contexte canadien, il est important de rappeler la longue histoire du racisme anti-noir et les formes d'activisme et de résistance. Les réponses, réactions et résistances ne peuvent être traitées comme si elles étaient nouvelles. Les militants syndicaux et communautaires noirs sont souvent traités comme s'ils étaient nou-

veaux, comme s'ils n'avaient pas apporté de grandes contributions au mouvement syndical, social, racial et de classe. Dans cet article, j'aborde l'idée de l'invisibilité des Noirs dans les réponses syndicales, politiques et communautaires et je souligne les nombreux militants noirs qui ont aidé et continuent de façonner des résultats équitables et égaux dans tous les domaines de l'expérience canadienne.

Le Canada a une longue histoire de racisme anti-noir systémique qui remonte à l'esclavage, malgré les grands récits qui présentent le pays comme un lieu de refuge pour les Noirs. De plus, les Canadiens noirs ont été confrontés à diverses formes de ségrégation, notamment dans les écoles, les équipes sportives et le divertissement. Par exemple, Viola Desmond (1914-1965), militante des droits de la personne, a refusé de quitter la section réservée aux Blancs du théâtre Roseland, en Nouvelle-Écosse, neuf ans avant que Rosa Parks ne refuse de s'asseoir à l'arrière d'un autobus. Environ douze ans avant Viola Desmond, Carrie Best et son mari ont également été arrêtés pour s'être assis dans la section réservée aux Blancs de ce théâtre. C'est ce qui a poussé Carrie Best à créer *The Clarion*, un journal noir qui a révélé l'histoire de l'arrestation de Viola Desmond. Les femmes noires ont une longue histoire de militantisme et de résistance au Canada. Les Noirs ont également été confrontés à la ségrégation dans l'enseignement supérieur et il leur a été interdit de fréquenter les écoles de médecine et autres écoles professionnelles et d'exercer des professions comme les soins infirmiers jusque dans les années 1950. En fait, c'est grâce au Dr A. Pearleen Oliver (1917-2008), fondateur de la *Nova Scotia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People*, que les Noirs ont pu exer-

cer la profession d'infirmier. La présence des Noirs au Canada remonte aussi loin que Mathieu de Coste en 1608 et que les Marrons jamaïcains qui se sont installés en Nouvelle-Écosse au 16^e siècle. Malgré les nombreuses formes de résistance des Noirs et la longue histoire de leur présence, il existe toujours une prévalence de la nouveauté accordée aux communautés noires, où les Canadiens noirs, peu importe depuis combien de temps ils vivent au Canada, ne sont pas considérés comme de *véritables* Canadiens. Le lien entre les Noirs et la nouveauté est également présent chez les membres de la communauté noire dans le mouvement syndical.

Les militants syndicaux noirs ont souvent lié leur organisation syndicale à l'organisation communautaire. Les deux sont interconnectés et, alors que l'organisation communautaire est souvent considérée comme illégitime, elle a été au cœur de l'expérience des Noirs canadiens. Par exemple, le *Black Experience Project* (BEP) d'*Environics* a noté un niveau élevé d'activisme qui se manifeste sous de nombreuses formes chez les Canadiens noirs. Une grande partie de l'organisation des travailleurs et des membres des communautés noires a profité et continue de profiter à d'autres communautés et groupes.

Stanley Grizzle (1918-2016) est né à Toronto de parents jamaïcains. Pendant son enfance, son père était le seul chauffeur de taxi noir au Canada qui a dû faire face à des attaques brutales en raison de sa race. Stanley Grizzle a ensuite été porteur pour le Chemin de fer Canadien Pacifique. Il a été élu président de la Fraternité des porteurs de voitures-lits de Toronto (BSCP) en 1946, où il s'est battu pour de meilleures conditions de

/suite à la page 26

BLMTO

/continued from page 24

Special Investigations Unit, and other race equity justice initiatives. Black activism continues with the organizing of Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLMTO) and countless community organizations and groups where people continue the fight to realize racial justice.

Black existence in Canada and later immigration is thanks to the activism of leaders like Donald Moore (1891–1994) who was also a porter for some time and eventually purchased a dry cleaners business located at 318 Spadina Avenue. Moore's business was a meeting place for Garveyism organizations in Toronto and various West Indian progressive groups. Moore founded the Negro Citizenship Association and on April 27, 1954 led a contingent of 34 members of this group from various community and labour organizations to Ottawa, including Stanley Grizzle when he was a leader in the BSCP, and secretary of the Negro Citizenship Association. Together this group presented a brief to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration leading to the eventual passing of a less discriminatory 1962 *Immigration Act*, allowing for non-White citizens to enter the country. This also led to the West Indian Domestic Scheme (WIDS) that was supposed to lead to a path of citizenship for Black Caribbean domestic workers. Later leaders like Sherona Hall (1948–2006), who was also part of BADC, fought against unfair practices against women through the WIDS through an intersectional lens. Hall's organizing and that of Black women will be centered in part two of this article as Black women in Canada have long been, and continue to be, integral to community and labour activism.

There are countless Black labour and community leaders who have fought to realize racial justice and through doing so have afforded non-Black communities various rights to this day like anti-discrimination laws, non-discriminatory immigration policies that have benefited many non-Blacks, better police ac-

countability, and the establishment of the Special Investigations Unit, and a blueprint for better and more fair working conditions, just to name a few. Their activism continues to this day with Black labour organizers who continue to lead not only in the labour movement, but through various political, scholarly, community, faith-based, and educational outlets. Though Black presence in Canada is often overlooked, the legacy and ongoing forms of Black resistance are what make life more equitable and fairer for everyone.

Janelle Brady is a Founding Advisor of Progress Toronto. She is a community organizer and activist who looks at dismantling systemic oppression and racism of Black and racialized communities.

/suite de la page 25

travail et l'équité raciale. L'organisation syndicale de Stanley Grizzle a transcendé la politique électorale lorsque lui et Jack White, de la Fraternité internationale des ouvriers en électricité (FIOE/IBEW), sont devenus les premiers candidats canadiens noirs à se présenter aux élections de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario pour la Fédération du Commonwealth coopératif (maintenant le Nouveau Parti démocratique). Stanley Grizzle est ensuite devenu le premier juge noir de la citoyenneté au Canada. Quelques années auparavant, ce sont des porteurs noirs de Winnipeg, John A. Robinson, J.W. Barber, B.F. Jones et P. White, qui ont créé l'Ordre des porteurs de voitures-lits (OSCP), le premier syndicat ferroviaire noir en Amérique du Nord. Ils ont négocié des conventions collectives et se sont joints plus tard à la Fraternité canadienne des cheminots (CBRE) en 1919 et ont lutté pour la suppression de la clause d'affiliation réservée aux Blancs dans ses statuts.

Bromley Armstrong C.M., O. Ont. (1926–2018), faisait partie de la Section locale 439 du Syndicat des travailleurs

unis de l'automobile (UAW) et est devenu commissaire aux droits de la personne de l'Ontario. M. Armstrong a participé à des « tests », qui étaient des manifestations assises organisées par le *Joint Labour Committee to Combat Racial Intolerance* (comité mixte des travailleurs pour combattre l'intolérance raciale) et la *National Unity Association* à Dresden (Ontario), où il a été confronté à un grave racisme anti-noir qui a été filmé par les médias. L'activisme de Bromley à cet égard et son leadership dans les campagnes de lutte à la discrimination sont à l'origine des premières lois anti-discrimination au Canada. De plus, le gouvernement de l'Ontario a introduit la *Fair Employment Practices Act* (loi concernant les pratiques d'emploi équitables) et la *Fair Accommodation Act* (Loi concernant les pratiques équitables en matière d'hébergement). Comme l'activisme des Canadiens noirs d'aujourd'hui, il prend de multiples formes et avenues et, à ce titre, Bromley était également très engagé dans l'activisme communautaire. Il a fondé plusieurs organisations telles que l'Alliance urbaine sur les relations interraciales, la *Black Business and Professional Association*, la *Jamaican Canadian Association* et de nombreuses autres. Cela a contribué à l'activisme social ultérieur des chefs de file et des fondateurs du *Black Action Defense Committee* (Comité de défense d'action noire) (BADC), comme Akua Benjamin, Dudley Laws, Charles Roach, Lennox Farrell, Numvoye et Brian Hyman, Akilah et Dari Meade, qui se sont élevés contre le racisme anti-noir et ont œuvré à la mise en place de mesures de responsabilisation de la police, comme l'Unité des enquêtes spéciales et d'autres initiatives en faveur de l'équité raciale. Le militantisme noir se poursuit avec l'organisation de *Black Lives Matter Toronto* (BLMTO) et d'innombrables organisations et groupes communautaires où les gens continuent de se battre pour obtenir la justice raciale.

L'existence des Noirs au Canada et leur immigration ultérieure sont dues



à l'activisme de chefs de file comme Donald Moore (1891-1994), qui a été porteur pendant un certain temps et a fini par acheter une entreprise de nettoyage à sec située au 318, avenue Spadina. L'entreprise de Donald Moore est un lieu de rencontre pour les organisations de garveyisme de Toronto et divers groupes progressistes antillais. Donald Moore a fondé la *Negro Citizenship Association* et, le 27 avril 1954, il dirige un contingent de 34 membres de ce groupe provenant de diverses organisations communautaires et syndicales à Ottawa, dont Stanley Grizzle lorsqu'il était un dirigeant du BSCP et secrétaire de la *Negro Citizenship Association*. Ensemble, ce groupe a présenté un mémoire au ministre de la Citoyenneté et de l'Immigration, ce qui a conduit à l'adoption d'une *Loi sur l'immigration* moins discriminatoire en 1962, permettant aux citoyens non blancs d'entrer dans le pays. Cette loi a également débouché sur le Programme de recrutement de domestiques antillaises (*West Indian Domestic Scheme*) (WIDS), qui était censé ouvrir la voie de la citoyenneté aux travailleurs domestiques noirs des Caraïbes. Plus tard, des chefs de file comme Sherona Hall (1948-2006), qui faisait également partie du BADC, se sont battus contre les pratiques injustes à l'égard des femmes dans le cadre du WIDS en adoptant une optique intersectionnelle. Le travail de syndicalisation de Sherona Hall et des femmes noires sera abordé

dans la deuxième partie de cet article, car les femmes noires du Canada ont longtemps fait partie intégrante du militantisme communautaire et syndical et elles continuent de le faire.

D'innombrables dirigeants syndicaux et communautaires noirs se sont battus pour la justice raciale et, ce faisant, ont accordé aux communautés non noires divers droits, comme des lois antidiscriminatoires, des politiques d'immigration non discriminatoires qui ont profité à de nombreux non Noirs, une meilleure responsabilisation de la police et la création de l'Unité des enquêtes spéciales, ainsi qu'un plan pour des conditions de travail meilleures et plus équitables, pour n'en nommer que quelques-uns. Leur militantisme se poursuit encore aujourd'hui avec les organisateurs syndicaux noirs qui continuent de diriger non seulement le mouvement syndical, mais aussi diverses activités politiques, universitaires, communautaires, confessionnelles et éducatives. Bien que la présence des Noirs au Canada soit souvent négligée, l'héritage et les formes continues de résistance des Noirs sont ce qui rend la vie plus équitable et plus juste pour tous.

Janelle Brady est conseillère fondatrice de *Progress Toronto*. Elle est une organisatrice communautaire et une militante qui cherche à démanteler l'oppression systémique et le racisme des communautés noires et racialisées.

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SPIRALING

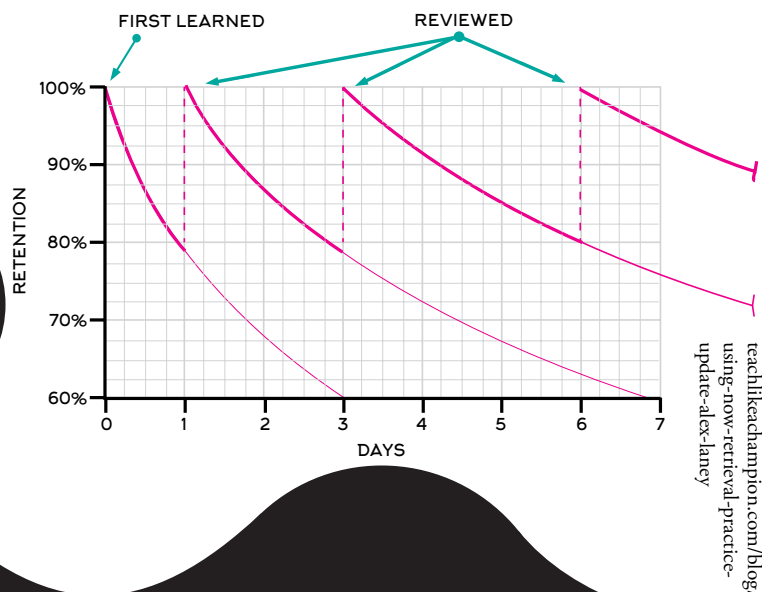
BY MARC PAXTON

A TOOL FOR MATH EDUCATORS THAT OPENS UP POSSIBILITIES.



EXECUTED PROPERLY, THE FORGETTING CURVE BECOMES LESS AND LESS STEEP, LEADING TO LONG-TERM ACQUISITION OF SKILLS AND GREATER POST-LEARNING PERFORMANCE.

TYPICALLY FORGETTING CURVE FOR NEWLY LEARNED INFORMATION



Spiralling... no, not out of control as one tries to complete reports, finish up that last little bit of marking or prep for the next few days...or the drain as many felt 2020 had been. Rather spiralling through the curriculum in Grade 9 (and more recently Grade 10) applied mathematics.

Unfortunately, when I think of spiralling it usually comes with a negative memory association—spiralling out of control, or, more colourfully, spiralling the toilet drain. But a spiralling curriculum, also referred to as interleaving, is a powerful tool which can have very positive effects on students' ability to perform well and to retain information over a much longer period of time.

So what is spiralling? To borrow from Kyle Pearce of tapintoteenminds.com spiralling is:

"...organizing topics that might traditionally be taught in blocks, chapters, or units of study over a short period of time and we are introducing topics in smaller chunks and spreading them out over a longer period of time."

When I taught my first ever section of Grade 9 applied math (many standardized tests ago) I was handed a textbook by my department head and told to start at

the beginning and do about a section a day. This seemed to make sense, and over the years

I tweaked and changed things, but still generally followed the organizational paradigm set out by the textbook. Invariably at the end of the course, I would spend time reviewing topics that hadn't been directly touched upon for the better part of a semester and, as my own familiarity with the curriculum was increasing, I found it increasingly difficult to understand how the students couldn't retain concepts only a few months old.


What I was failing to realize at the time, was that I was falling victim to a number of psychological paradigms.

First is the illusion of understanding, which states that people feel they understand complex phenomena with far greater precision, coherence, and depth than they really do; an illusion that is far stronger for explanatory knowledge than many other kinds of knowledge, such as that for facts, procedures or narratives (Rozenblit and Keil, 2002). So, the students felt that they were more able to explain to me how different ideas in mathematics worked than they were actually able to. Rozenblit and Keil also found, that when the inadequacies of this illusion are made obvious to a person, they will adjust their attitude

more moderately.

They will better be able to self-identify their knowledge gaps. Unfortunately, for my students, the only time they were presented with the fact that they may not have understood as much as they thought they did was upon receiving their unit test. And by then we were usually a few days into the new unit.

Next is the idea of the forgetting curve, first proposed by Hermann Ebbinghaus in the late 19th century. While his methodology was suspect (he used himself as a subject) the idea that memories fade over time with a certain degree of measurability is one that has held up well. There is still debate about the exact shape of the forgetting curve and of how certain memories (those paired with significant emotional connection for instance) are forgotten at different rates (Averell and Heathcoate, 2011). However, there is enough reliable evidence to suggest that the more time that passes between learning a new skill, fact, or process, the more difficult accurate recall becomes. So, to counteract the effects of the forgetting curve, active recall is required repeatedly over time, with breaks in between. Executed properly, the forgetting curve becomes less and less



steep, leading to long-term acquisition of skills and greater post-learning performance.

The third psychological paradigm we fall prey to is a notion explored by Bjork (1994). When learning new tasks in a blocked fashion (that's to say one unit at a time) versus interleaved (spiralled), participants reported feeling that they learned best when they were allowed to practice by blocking. What's rather astonishing is that even when presented with the fact that the interleaved participants performed better, most participants still felt that blocking was the best way to learn.

I was faced with these paradigms and wanted to make a change. So, how did I start the process of adapting what I was doing? I was fortunate to have an opportunity a few years ago to spend a year as a school board-level math consultant. This gave me time to explore what was out there, attend more professional development than I would have been able to otherwise and, most importantly, allowed me to talk with and observe many math teachers. Jon Orr, Kyle Pearce, Alex Overwijk, and Peter Liljedahl—their ideas, theories and practical examples—changed how I would teach math forever.

I spent the better part of the next year completely rebuilding the Grade 9 applied math course, and at the core of this new course—spiralling!

My first hurdle was how to best logically go over everything, but at increasingly more complex levels. My solution was to attach a theme to each spiral. This had two added benefits. First, it gave a contextually relevant reference point to which I would often refer, further aiding memory retention. Second, it allowed for a much greater application

of the concepts, which seemed prudent given that the course is in fact called Applied Mathematics.

Next came the daily structure, which I borrowed from Sylvia Wentland—my co-conspirator in this endeavour and an invaluable asset off whom I could bounce ideas and gain insight and motivation. The approach is to split the learning week into three pieces: Tuesday through Thursday are problem days, which I will elaborate on further in a moment; Friday is our consolidation and practice day; and Monday is a performance quiz.

Problem days see the students placed into groups randomly (visible random groupings) using technology (flipity.net) or cards. The groups are never preconceived and they change every day. There is some soft-skill development here, but that's a discussion for another day. The students work at whiteboards spread around the perimeter of the classroom (vertical non-permanent surfaces) so their process and thinking are visible to myself as I circulate around the groups and to the other groups. A different strand is chosen each day and the problems are selected so that topics are covered over and over again, but each time at a deeper layer. As we move through spirals there is greater overlap between strands or references to older problems, but with a new twist.

Consolidation occurs by reviewing the daily problems, practicing skills (I use Knowledgehook

and Desmos activities) and working with small groups to shore up any identified gaps. This is followed by the performance quiz; each one consisting of three questions (similar to the daily problems, but not identical). Each question is graded on a four-point scale: attempted, but not getting it; starting to get it; got it; got it and could teach it to others.

Student feedback has been positive. Students report decreased anxiety related to mathematics and to test-taking. They are more receptive to feedback and are increasingly using the feedback to develop their skills.

Furthermore, the students' time to task has diminished, while their time on task has increased significantly. Math-talk has improved

and the students' willingness to attempt problems (especially more complex problems) has increased. No longer are questions left blank if the student doesn't understand or have the solution immediately.

With the proposed destreaming of the Grade 9 math curriculum, it seems that the idea of spiralling would be particularly useful. In my experience, many of the students in my applied class, while grumbly at first, are quite capable of rising to the challenge of reading, understanding and planning a strategy and

having a mathematical conversation with their peers and myself. By spiralling the curriculum, students with gaps are given more time for remediation and students with processing issues have more time to assimilate their learning. By starting slowly and gradually building, these students are given multiple opportunities to join the conversation. Furthermore, students demonstrating strength would have many occasions to support their peers and could also be given opportunities for extension and enrichment within the context of the current spiral. Given that destreaming

results in a mixed-ability classroom

it makes sense that spiralling

would be a good fit,

one that would

help address

some of

the inequities and inequalities that destreaming is targeting.

I would strongly urge anyone considering the idea of spiralling to take the plunge. It's been an adventure, but one well worth it for me and my students.

Great resources from teachers in Ontario: Jon Orr from Lambton-Kent DSB; Kyle Pearce from Greater Essex County DSB; just about everyone in Ottawa-Carleton DSB, but I've specifically enjoyed learning from Laura Wheeler, Alex Overwijk, Jimmy Pai, and Mary Bourassa; and of course the great people I see on a daily basis in my home board of Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB, Sylvia Wentland, Stacey Willis, and Ben Medd.

Marc Paxton is a teacher in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.



TEACHER CANDIDATES AND THE COVID-19 EXPERIENCE SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES ON A CAREER DURING A PANDEMIC

BY EMMAROSE MACDONALD AND DANIEL FRAWLEY

INTRODUCTION

As both students and educators during the pandemic, teacher candidates have an unusual perspective on education. We learn from our professors at university and the students we teach on placement. Through our practicum experiences and from speaking with other educators, we have found that there is no single, typical experience of school during this time. We hear stories of classes that are finding innovative ways to connect and thrive, and classes that are facing immense barriers, inequities, and burnout. As there is a shortage of practicum hosts, teacher candidates are finding themselves in unusual placements. Our peers have been teaching in person and virtually, in ESL classrooms, Virtual Learning Centres, student success programs, learning hubs, and more. While not the typical teaching placements, we are able to learn about a broader view of schools and how we simply cannot generalize about learning during the pandemic.

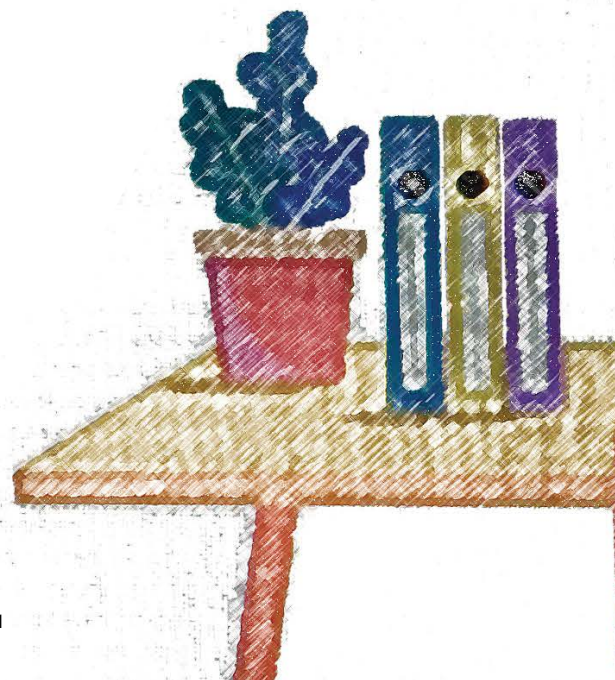


EMMAROSE:

When I began the teacher education program, I knew the career was difficult, but I had an attitude that as an individual I simply had to grow stronger. The pandemic has taught me that the field of education is immensely challenging and unpredictable. I have shifted my focus from individual success to collective wellness in our school communities. How can we create learning environments where students feel connected, seen, and valued, especially during difficult times? What actions can I take to prioritize sustainable wellness at both the personal and community levels?

I believe that our unusual experiences as both students and teachers during the pandemic will shape this generation of teachers moving forward. As a student, I crave my teachers' clarity, flexibility, and good humour. It seems every month brings a new challenge and I deeply appreciate my professors' efforts to create structure, while also demonstrating understanding and compassion. I miss the hands on, experiential learning of in person courses and I look for meaningful learning tasks that are clear and practical. As a teacher, I miss seeing my students' faces. It can be difficult to check in on students when the camera is off and the mic is muted. We need to think about opportunities for students to give us feedback and to have a sense of autonomy over their own learning. Overall, everyone is missing connection. Both virtual and in person classrooms are becoming some of the few spaces that students get to interact with each other. Taking the time for community connections is an important part of our collective wellness.

Do I still want to teach? Absolutely. Is teaching easy? No. Teaching was never easy and it certainly is not right now. The pandemic has shown me that youth need caring adults who can create supportive learning communities during difficult times. I am most inspired by the teachers and school staff who instead of thinking about what we cannot do in schools are innovating new ways to teach and gather, both in person and virtually.



There is so much that feels out of our control this year, but we can consider what we can do from our circle of influence. How can I have a positive impact on my learning communities from where I am? How can I model self-care and community care at this time? I hope that a focus on wellness will continue into whatever the future holds for education.

DANIEL:

It has been incredibly valuable seeing my university professors and host teachers adapt to virtual modes of learning. Seeing them model flexibility, self-assessment, and improve ad-hoc systems throughout this difficult time, has been deeply educational and inspiring. By

comparison, I have experienced a mere fraction of their challenges: in a short placement in a virtual Grade 10 class last fall, a placement in a virtual Grade 8 class this March/April, working as a remote tutor, and volunteering as a Crisis Text Line Responder with Kids Help Phone. None of it has been the sort of perfection promised in a typical five-second YouTube ad for a new learning platform or tool. When it worked best was when our shared humanity was acknowledged, faults and all. In virtual teaching, I have found that creating opportunities for discussion, where students feel respected and heard while space is given for others to offer their perspectives is crucial.

Making personal connections and

building community creates the foundation for a positive learning environment—but how is that accomplished when teaching and learning are so impacted by the pandemic? Those short interactions between students, custodial staff, guidance counsellors, social workers, special education resource teachers (SERTs), nurses, and teachers all coalesce into a greater whole, whereas they are siloed now. Masking, physical distancing, and independent work areas are likewise fragmenting what makes our collective effort so special.

Deborah Britzman says that learning to teach (and teaching itself for that



matter) is a constant state of flux: formation, transformation, self-assessment, becoming, and striving to become. Their wisdom holds true during these unprecedented times. I find comfort in these words as I take my first steps towards the field of teaching, which looks less familiar than what I expected when I started my B.Ed.

As a learner, I find myself struggling to navigate through countless hours of screen time—Zoom classes, online readings, discussion boards, virtual projects—despite having built strong academic skills, coping strategies, and my own innumerable privileges. In talking with my peers, I am not surprised to hear of their struggles as well. I hope

this gives me sensitivity and insight into what elementary and secondary students are facing now and how a sense of belonging is equally crucial to their success after the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

As graduating teacher candidates, we are entering a job market that hasn't been seen in Ontario for decades. In the last year, we have had deep learning opportunities that are unprecedented and invaluable. But these gains are coming at the real costs of growing disparities of inequity, further cracking open the already-present gaps in learning, and the heartbreaking impacts of the pan-

demic on the lives of students and their caregivers. How will we cope with the conditions that are causing experienced teachers to leave the profession? How will we support the students who have faced disproportionate impacts to their learning due to their social location? How will we mobilize our privilege to foster reciprocal relationships with communities? We are learning that our own self-assessment and framework of questions combined with our commitment to build community and prioritize wellness may be good places to start.

EmmaRose MacDonald and **Daniel Frawley** are teacher candidates at Trent University's School of Education.



OSSTF/FEESO'S RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

Lending our voices to research

BY CATHY RENFREW AND CHIS SAMUEL

Psst...hey, wanna fill out a survey?

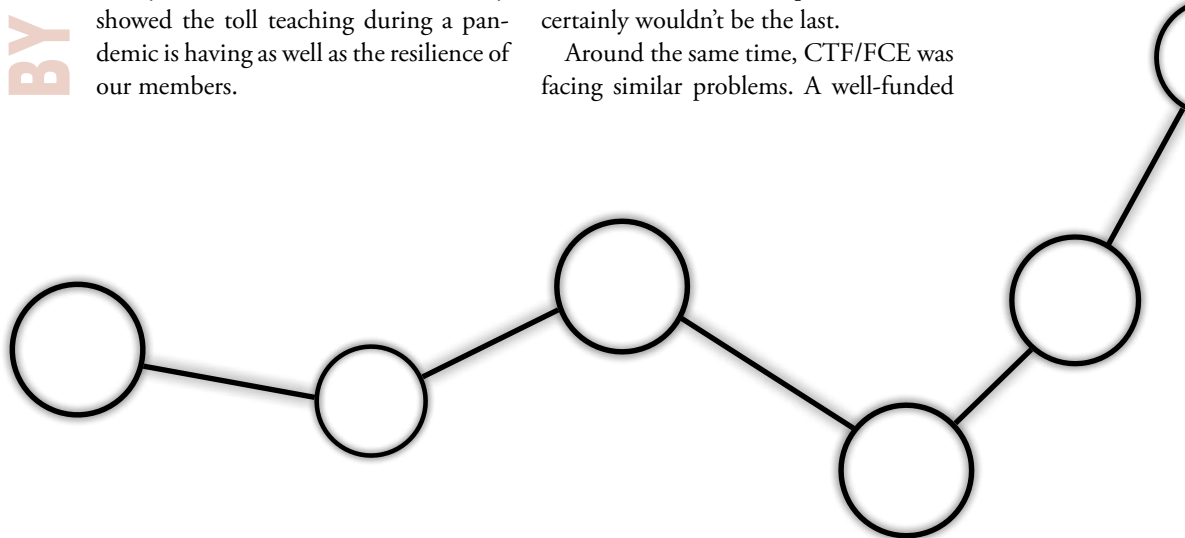
OSSTF/FEESO members have probably noticed a recent stream of invitations to take part in studies and surveys. Over the past year, these surveys have almost exclusively focused on COVID-19 and what it means to work as an education worker or teacher during a pandemic. The focus has not been exclusively on COVID-19—we've encouraged participation in studies on gender and work absences, as well as on employment security and professional identity—but COVID-19 is taking up a lot of research space, for obvious reasons.

When Provincial Office sends out an invitation to participate in a survey, the invitation often includes something along the lines of, "these surveys provide us with evidence to inform ongoing advocacy and programming" or "the data gathered from these studies will help inform our advocacy on members' behalf." OSSTF/FEESO strongly believes that our bargaining, member protection and political action strategies should be informed by solid evidence. For example, data from Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF-FCE) surveys have been shared with provincial councillors to highlight concerns about equity and mental health. Using social media, we also published results of a recent CTF-FCE survey on mental health. That survey showed the toll teaching during a pandemic is having as well as the resilience of our members.

The surveys OSSTF/FEESO promotes are part of our "Research Partnership Strategy." The strategy is fairly new, with full implementation only happening in the last few months. Even so, it's gaining traction. In this article, we're going to explain the origins and future directions of the strategy as well as provide some preliminary findings from two recent studies.

So...why a whole strategy for surveys? Essentially, two things prompted us to develop a comprehensive and structured approach to research. In 2019, OSSTF/FEESO received a request from a researcher wanting us to promote a survey they had developed as part of a larger project on equity and inclusion. The impetus behind the study was good and it had considerable promise for improving public education in Ontario. Even so, the staff assigned had questions. Would the study unintentionally be harmful to our members? Hadn't we just promoted a similar survey? Could some of the questions be re-stated to make more sense to our members? Could it be expanded to include education workers rather than just teachers? It was impossible to make a decision about promoting a survey—and tacitly endorsing the study itself—without answers to these questions. We knew this wasn't the first time we'd been in this position and it certainly wouldn't be the last.

Around the same time, CTF/FCE was facing similar problems. A well-funded



research institute had begun circulating a survey in other provinces. The study was ostensibly about mental health, but it in fact had the potential to be very damaging to education workers and teachers on both a personal and professional level. The study focused on teachers, but it framed the value of teacher mental health entirely in terms of impacts on student outcomes. Moreover, the study lacked proper ethics scrutiny and asked questions that were irrelevant, poorly articulated, and at times offensive.

In the wake of these two challenges, staff from OSSTF/FEESO and CTF/FCE began to collaborate on a process for evaluating research proposals. Our goal was to develop a template framework that could be adapted and adopted by other member organizations. We began with some basic principles:

- Academic researchers have expertise in research methodology and data analysis, while OSSTF/FEESO has practical knowledge about members' needs and interests.
- A systematic approach to collaboration with external researchers would allow OSSTF/FEESO to promote high-quality research that supports public education and/or the labour movement in Ontario.
- Successful collaborations will foster new opportunities for additional research.
- A formal process would allow for consistent evaluations of proposals, a formal feedback process, and the ability to track the number of approved partnerships per year, their subject area, and the affected classifications.

We also knew that we could be a valuable partner in promoting surveys and studies as part of researchers' recruitment efforts. We do this through District/Bar-

gaining Unit memos sent to local leaders and through social media. Tweets about three recent surveys made a total of 13,114 impressions and Facebook posts about the same surveys reached 17,812 people.

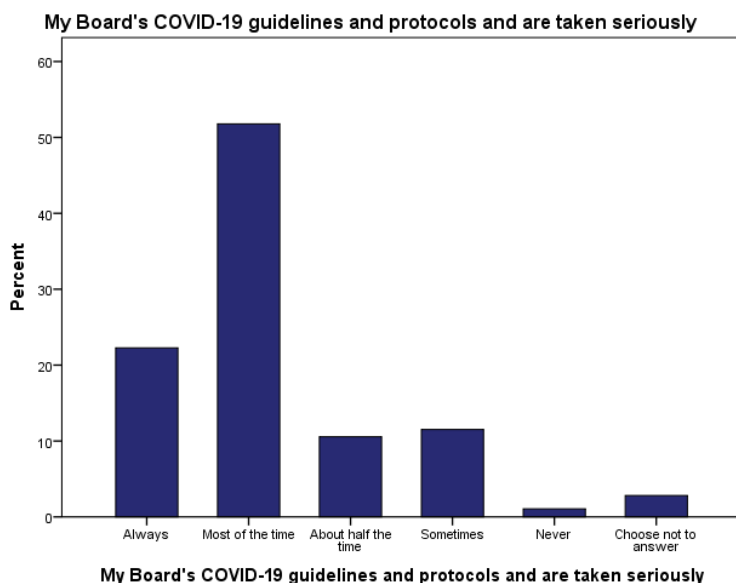
The core of OSSTF/FEESO's framework is a formal application and review process, which we have detailed for prospective partners in a short guidebook. The guidebook and related documents will be available on the OSSTF/FEESO website soon, but currently we simply share them when researchers initially contact us about their projects.

The first step for researchers is to complete an application form. The application form is—as one researcher described it—a beast. We ask potential partners to very clearly describe the aims of their study, its specific research question, strategies for answering the question (surveys, interviews, etc.), timelines, ethical considerations, budgetary expectations, and a publication plan. One application ended up over thirty pages long! It is a tough process, but has significant value. The level of detail we require shows that we take research design seriously. It tells researchers that we will only consider their study if they have thought through the most important considerations. At the same time, it allows us to be flexible and adaptive to researchers' specific situations: applicants are always welcome to work with OSSTF/FEESO's Policy Analyst/Researcher to make sure they are submitting a proposal that we will most likely be able to support.

Perhaps most importantly, the application gives us a comprehensive and concrete picture of the proposed project so we can give it careful consideration. The completed application form and supporting documents go to a four-person review committee for evaluation.

THE COMMITTEE SCORES THE APPLICATION ACCORDING TO FIVE CRITERIA:

- **Value alignment:** Does the proposal align with OSSTF/FEESO's principles? Does it support public education? Will it improve members' professional development or general well-being?
- **Research contribution:** Will the research answer an important question related to public education and/or Ontario's labour movement? Does the proposed study help close a gap in current knowledge? Have we already endorsed studies in this area?
- **Research design:** Does the proposal include a clearly articulated research question and provide a feasible strategy for answering that question?
- **Ethics:** Will the researcher collect and store data in accordance with national research standards? Our preference is for the researcher to submit approval from a university Research Ethics Board (REB), although we will screen proposals internally if necessary.
- **Overall impression:** This is an opportunity for the committee to think about the project in general terms. It also allows us to consider whether a proposal that does not yet meet our criteria might be revised into a project we could confidently endorse.



Approximately 75% of participants described that their respective board has been taking the COVID-19 guidelines seriously (i.e., responded as 'Always' or 'Most of the time').

At the review stage, the committee also thinks about specific components that the researcher could revise to make the study a better fit for our members. For instance, we strongly encourage researchers whose proposal focuses solely on teachers to expand the scope of their projects to include education workers. It is not always possible, but wherever we can broaden the scope of a project, we do.

Next, the committee makes recommendations to the Provincial Executive for a final decision. At this stage, the committee makes one of three possible recommendations: accept as-is; accept on the condition that the researcher makes key revisions; or reject. If the Provincial Executive agrees to endorse a survey, staff continue to work with researchers on the questions asked as well as timing and promotion of the study. Usually, promoting a survey involves sending out a District/Bargaining Unit memo, social media posts, and an article on osstfupdate.ca. At this stage, we also ask researchers to commit to providing plain-language reports of their findings to Provincial Executive as well as at least one article for OSSTF/FEESO's *Education Forum* magazine, so expect to hear more about recent studies in the coming months.

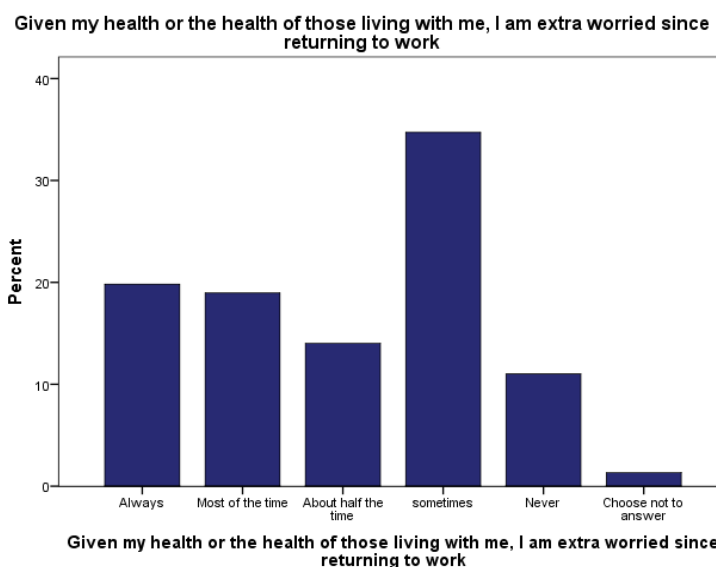
A significant benefit of the strategy

is that we are able to track the surveys that we endorse. We are starting to track whether surveys are available in both English and French and which members are eligible to participate. Since we began tracking in June 2020, OSSTF/FEESO has promoted ten external studies. Of the four surveys for which we have data, an average of 1,400 members participated in each survey. We're awaiting final numbers for another three of those ten studies.

Tracking research partnerships also ensures we receive the results of the study and so far, our partners have been happy to share. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, a number of researchers have asked OSSTF/FEESO to endorse participation in their studies. Most of those are still in the final stages of analysis, so we don't yet have full results, but we do have some. For the most part, they confirm what we have already been telling the government and the public.

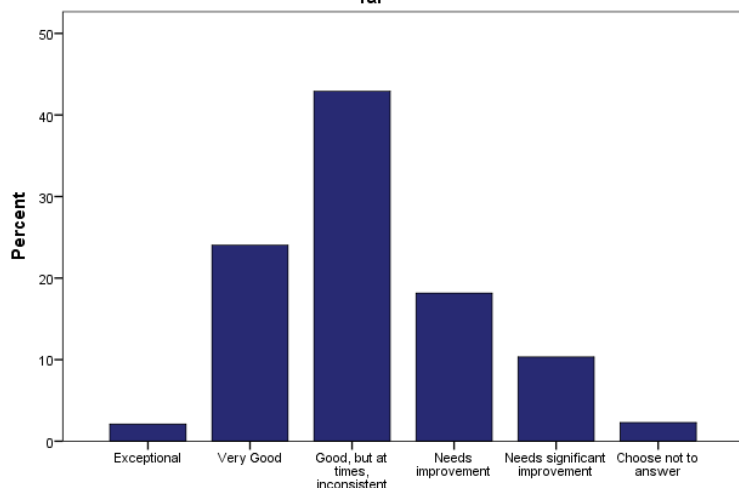
For example, Sarah Barrett from York University found that, "We now know that when emergency responses are not enacted smoothly, vulnerable students (e.g. having special needs, living in poverty, racialized, Indigenous) and non-traditional students (e.g. adult) tend to be disproportionately and negatively affected." Therefore, emergency responses to COVID-19 should prioritize two-way communications with front-line workers. Barrett also emphasizes the need for professional development through coaching (as opposed to courses) in order to respond quickly to "unanticipated technological problems and pedagogical issues."

Basem Gohar (University of Guelph) and Behdin Nowrouzi-Kia (University of Toronto) only recently completed collecting data from their survey of



Approximately 40% of participants expressed high concern returning to work due to worries about their health or the health of those living with them (i.e., responded as 'Always' or 'Most of the time').

This year, training on school safety protocols and practices have been _____ so far



This year, training on school safety protocols and practices have been _____ so far

About 26% of the sample reported that the safety protocols and practices had been ‘exceptional’ or ‘very good while approximately 43% reported adequate protocols with inconsistencies. Furthermore, approximately 28% reported that the protocols need improvement (i.e., “Needs improvement” or ‘Needs significant improvement’).

OSSTF/FEESO members on the psychosocial impacts of working during the pandemic. However, they were able to share some preliminary findings, which show some mixed results in terms of members’ feelings of safety. Approximately 75 per cent of participants reported that their respective board has been taking the COVID-19 guidelines seriously (i.e., responded as ‘Always’ or ‘Most of the time’). Nonetheless, approximately 40 per cent of participants expressed high concern returning to work due to worries about their health or the health of those living with them. Notably, significant numbers said they were concerned either sometimes or about half the time. Finally, 43 per cent of respondents reported adequate protocols at their school board, but said there were inconsistencies in imple-

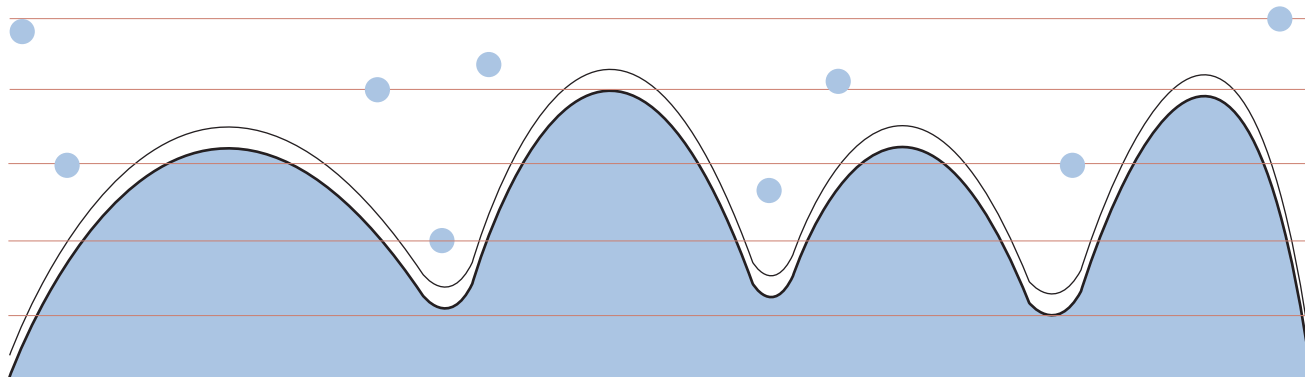
mentation. In addition, approximately 28 per cent reported that the protocols need improvement. Only about 26 per cent reported that the safety protocols and practices had been “exceptional” or “very good.”

Given inconsistencies in providing safe work environments, it is no surprise that members are deeply concerned about their health and the health of their loved ones. Linda Duxbury (Carleton University) and Michael Halinski (Ryerson University) surveyed OSSTF/FEESO members as part of a study of how people across multiple professions have balanced work and life responsibilities in relation to the pandemic. Like Gohar and Nowrouzi-Kia, their findings are preliminary, but show significant concern about members’ own health and the health of

their children. For example, the survey asked “what is keeping you up at nights right now?” and the top three responses were, “I/a member of my family will get COVID-19”, “the well-being of my children” and “the health and happiness of my elderly parents/in-laws.”

Now that OSSTF/FEESO has been through the entire partnership process with a number of researchers, we are in a position to begin to review and refine the strategy. We will likely streamline some areas, such as the application process and expand on others, such as our tracking processes. As the next step in the strategy, OSSTF/FEESO will be actively promoting research important to the Federation. We will be offering three grants of up to \$3,500 to support research for emergent issues and priorities. At least one of the awards will be reserved for researchers who identify as Indigenous, belonging to an equity-seeking group and/or belonging to an oppressed group. Ultimately, our goal is to integrate the current strategy into a larger, more proactive approach to identifying and supporting high quality research. This will not only improve public education in Ontario, it will help cement OSSTF/FEESO’s reputation as a serious and evidence-based partner in policy-making, professional development, and advocacy.

At the time of writing **Cathy Renfrew** was the Director of Educational Services, she is now the Associate General Secretary of the Professional Services Division and **Chris Samuel** works as the Policy Analyst/Researcher, both at OSSTF/FEESO Provincial Office.



Bargaining Unit BOOST

by Ronda Allan

Editor's note: Bargaining Unit Boost is a new column that will be featured in Education Forum. Each issue will highlight an OSSTF/FEESO Bargaining Unit and the job class(es) within that unit. OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has over 60,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, early childhood educators, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, university support staff, and many others in education.

OSSTF/FEESO represents education workers and teacher members that work in a variety of school environments. The focus of this *Bargaining Unit Boost* is on those teaching for the International Language Schools of Canada.

The International Language Schools of Canada (ILSC) Bargaining Unit in District 34, Independent Educational Programs, was organized in 2003. It has upwards of 60 members on its seniority list, representing as many as 80 during their peak season in the summer months. Members teach a variety of courses (mostly four-week-long sessions).

ILSC has international campuses in India and Australia, and its Canadian locations are in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Both Toronto and Vancouver campuses are the only two with unionized staff.

In an interview with ILSC members Jaida Fullerton (Bargaining Unit president) and Wendy Wells (Bargaining unit chief negotiator), we found out all about the range of students they teach and the benefits of the ILSC for these international learners. As well, they

touched on the rewards of their job, and the challenges faced by teachers in this unit.

Jaida and Wendy have both been teaching for ILSC at the Toronto campus since 2013 as permanent full-time teachers. This teaching position is defined as one who regularly working a 27 (twenty-seven) or more contact hours and/or equivalent duties per week. Other teaching positions at the ILSC include probationary, standard-time, part-time, and casual.

The number of enrolled students at the ILSC varies. During the winter term there may be 200–500, while in the summer term there could be upwards of a 1000, and each class has a maximum of 17 students. Offered at different levels, most of these classes are ESL-based, communicative and academic (in addition to business-centred and liberal-arts-focused specialized programs). They cater mainly to young adult international students, many of whom intend to continue their higher education in a Canadian college or university. However, Jaida and Wendy remark that they have both experienced classrooms where there has been a range from a high school student to a university professor.

When asked about the rewards of the job, both Jaida and Wendy concurred that it was watching the learning progression of their students. They very much enjoy the rapport they build with their students.

And along with the rest of the class, they too hear and learn about interesting cultural perspectives the students share. They get to witness lasting friendships amongst the students, including one relationship that grew into marriage between and two students from France and Korea. In general, many of the students keep in touch with the teachers about their continued achievements and daily lives.

Jaida and Wendy, like the rest of us, have been challenged by new working conditions during COVID-19. Not only did they see a decrease in enrolment due to international flights being halted but once set up with e-learning tools, time differences made it difficult for the students to join the class. Luckily however, working together with ILSC's global partners, students could join in on classes taught in other locations to help with this issue.

Ronda Allan is the Managing Editor of *Education Forum* and works in the Communications/Political Action Department at Provincial Office.



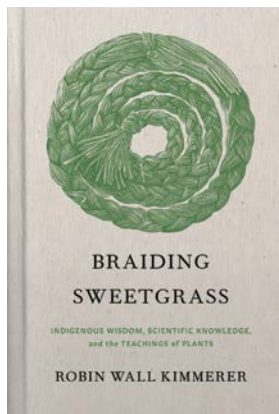
2018 Labour Day parade

**PROUDLY REPRESENTING OVER 200 DIFFERENT JOB CLASSES
WORKING IN ALL AREAS OF PUBLICLY-FUNDED EDUCATION**



Top picks

Reviews



Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants
by Robin Wall Kimmerer
Milkweed Editions

408 pages, Paperback \$18.00, hardcover \$35.00, eBook \$9.99

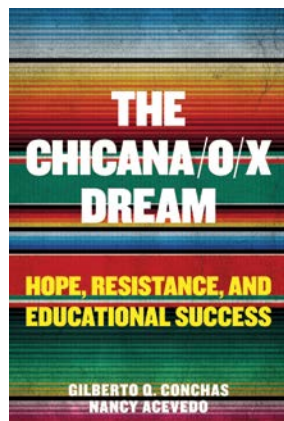
Reviewed by Stuart Ross

What can I say about this book? It is amazing! *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer is a book that anyone who loves science, and the natural world should read. Kimmerer, a professor of Environmental Biology and a member of the Potawatomi Nation, writes in a way that welcomes the reader into the world of Indigenous knowledge. Kimmerer adeptly weaves the scientific knowledge that we are all familiar with into the traditional knowledge of her people, leaving the reader with a better sense of why we need to consider ourselves a part of nature, and not conquerors of it. She teaches the reader that not only are the living components of the forest connected to us, but the non-living ones are as well. What I found particularly interesting while reading this book, is that the Potawatomi Nation speaks a language that is 70 per cent verb-based, which assigns an urgency to the “being” of all things in nature, instead of assigning a value to them based on what their economic benefits have you ever wondered why the strawberry

is so sacred? Or questioned why tree sap is such a prized resource? Maybe you just want to gain a better understanding of your connection to nature. Kimmerer’s book is the resource to help you grow your appreciation of the natural world.

Stuart Ross is a teacher in District 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge.

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The Chicana/o/x Dream: Hope, Resistance, and Educational Success

by Gilberto Q. Conchas and Nancy Acevedo

Harvard Education Press (October 27, 2020).

256 pages, Paperback \$33.00

Reviewed by Derik Chica

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.”

—Donald J. Trump, June 16, 2015

Gilberto Q. Conchas’ and Nancy Acevedo’s *The Chicana/o/x Dream: Hope, Resistance, and Educational Success* is a timely book that tells the stories of several Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x students while presenting a critical race theory and coloniality analysis on education systems. It includes concrete best practice and policy recommen-

dations based on research completed alongside students with intersectional oppressed identities.

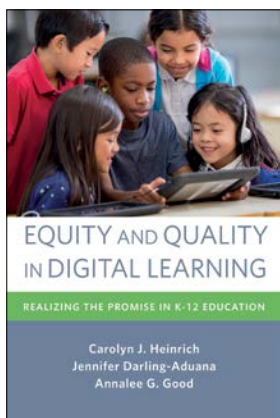
The Chicana/o/x Dream begins contextualizing the current state of the United States education system and people’s political reality under Donald Trump. It concludes with a critique of potential education funding cuts that may accompany our current pandemic situation.

While based in the United States, the book does a lovely job of extrapolating the student testimonies and allowing for any reader, especially education workers, to relate and reflect. Together, we reflect on the stories of gay and/or disabled Chicana/o/xs, Chicana/o/xs who grew up poor and/or without legal immigration statuses (undocumented), single parents, and Chicana/o/xs with experiences in the judicial system, including gang members.

These *testimonios* are told in the context of secondary and post-secondary education and analyzed using the famous work of queer Chicana scholar, Gloria E. Anzaldúa. Conchas and Acevedo present a strength-based analysis, showcasing the unique ability of people who face intersectional forms of oppression in being able to clearly identify barriers in education systems that may be hidden to those with more privileged identities. They also show that students who face these barriers do not often feel included in education systems or see themselves represented in school; however, with guidance and support, these students take the responsibility to share their success with family and friends around them, building new bridges between marginalized communities and educational institutions.

The Chicana/o/x Dream was an unforgettable experience, filled with “aha” moments, self-reflection, and deep and personal stories that were a privilege to be reading about. I would encourage everyone to read it and learn about the experiences of others, while picking up a little Spanish along the way.

Derik Chica is a teacher in District 12, Toronto and is a member of the provincial Human Rights Committee.



Equity and Quality in Digital Learning: Realizing the Promise in K-12 Education
by Carolyn J. Heinrich, Jennifer Darling-Aduana, and Annalee G. Good

Harvard Education Press
(September 2020)

208 pages, Paperback \$32.00

Reviewed by Lauren Simmons

The book *Equity and Quality in Digital Learning: Realizing the Promise in K-12 Education* pre-dates the astronomical pivot that educators experienced in 2020, in the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is perhaps most salient now that we have all experienced the highs and lows of online learning. In it, authors Carolyn J. Heinrich, Jennifer Darling-Aduana, and Annalee G. Good trace their findings after ten years researching and working with the Dallas and Milwaukee public school districts.

The main conclusion of the book is that in order for digital learning to succeed, it requires coordinated efforts at pre-planning, ongoing monitoring, and extensive support such as training for education workers. Without these, the authors argue, digital learning will only serve to exacerbate the challenges faced by marginalized learners in our classrooms, particularly special needs students and racialized students.

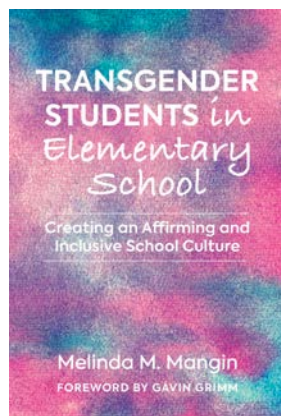
The strength of *Equity and Quality in Digital Learning* is the detailed research findings that support the authors' conclusions. Educators who appreciate research methodology and hearing first-person accounts will enjoy this text. It's not overly burdened with statistics, and

is mostly written to be accessible for those without a research background; however, the book's context, in diverse American school settings, does limit the extent to which Canadian readers can extrapolate to our own settings.

Where Heinrich, Darling-Aduana and Good fall short is in truly addressing the question of equity that they set out to tackle. They provide detailed advice, based on their research, for how to successfully implement digital learning, but their work on equity feels cursory. While Chapter 6, "Acting on the Evidence," provides a clear path forward, and the book has a number of appendices that can be used by educators, our time demands a laser focus on the concern of equity.

Lauren Simmons is a teacher in District 12, Toronto and is a member of the provincial Educational Services Committee.

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Transgender Students in Elementary School: Creating an Affirming and Inclusive School Culture

by Melinda M. Mangin (Foreword by Gavin Grimm)

Harvard Education Press
(Oct. 6 2020)

256 pages, Paperback \$44.32

Reviewed by Sarah McLaren

As society's understanding of gender evolves, the numbers of self-identified transgender and gender-expansive stu-

dents within our classrooms are growing. Unfortunately, educators and others within the school system can lack the resources, knowledge, and vocabulary to provide the necessary supports for these students to thrive. Melinda M. Mangin's book, *Transgender Students in Elementary School: Creating an Affirming and Inclusive School Culture* fills this gap for educators and provides clear, concrete steps to create an "affirming and inclusive school culture."

Mangin's book is both practical and informative, and is intended to be used by educators and other education stakeholders looking to develop a more informed practice. The chapters are organized by topic (e.g. "What to Do About Gendered School Spaces?") and includes an extensive glossary of transgender terms. Mangin provides a comprehensive overview of several important concepts, including the differences between sex, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as "gender fluid" and "gender expansive."

Perhaps the most valuable aspects of *Transgender Students in Elementary School* are the first-hand accounts from educators, principals, parents, and others that are peppered throughout the text. These anecdotes provide powerful insight into the experiences of those closest to transgender students and the struggles and successes they have faced in creating a more gender inclusive culture within their school buildings. I often found my eyes skipping ahead to these sections of the text, as they outlined (sometimes with brutal honesty) the intersectionality between the participants' own lived experiences and their personal perceptions of gender.

Despite being an American publication aimed specifically at elementary school educators, *Transgender Students in Elementary School* is a worthwhile read for anyone working within in the system. Mangin successfully weaves both data and narrative together into an easily accessible, insightful text; I highly recommend.

Sarah McLaren is a teacher in District 4, Near North and is a member of the provincial Status of Women Committee.

A goodbye and a torch passed

High quality education and unions go hand in hand



So this is indeed my “Last Word” for *Education Forum*. Having the opportunity to share my thoughts through this venue has been only one of the privileges of the role I’ve held for the last four years. Representing educators working from JK to university, across the four publicly-funded education systems, in independent schools, and post-secondary has, of course, been the greatest privilege. And in the process, I’ve been given the opportunity to stand up for the education system itself and all it stands for.

It has been a true honour to fight, shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues at Provincial Office, local leaders, and members—who truly *are* the union—to enhance and defend an institution that I continue to believe is the most critical democratizer, the most important support for equity, we have in our society. Publicly-funded education has been and remains the driver of Ontario’s civic, social, and economic life. As former Premier William Davis used to say, when you get education right, everything else follows. (You may not expect me to quote a Progressive Conservative Premier but Davis was both pro-education and pro-union and stands as a giant now compared to the intellectually and ideologically stunted current PC “leadership.”)

I did not begin a career in education in order to be a unionist. It wasn’t even on my radar. But when Mike Harris came gunning for the education system with the most destructive changes we’d ever seen proposed, I looked around to see who was leading the fightback and it was unquestionably my union. Galvanizing me into union activism is the sole thing for which I thank Harris. From there on in, I thank my union for giving me the

opportunities I’d never dreamed of.

The more I learned, the more I realized the truth that high quality education systems and unions go hand-in-hand. Contrary to the myth propagated by our right-wing adversaries, unions make education stronger. And why wouldn’t they? Would poor pay attract better educators? Would giving employers permission to arbitrarily discipline and discharge educators make people more interested in education careers? Would giving bureaucrats the unfettered ability to make policy changes without the voice of frontline workers lead to better decisions? Of course not.

As Dr. Charles Ungerleider has said, the proposals that truly strengthen education always come from the union side of the bargaining table. Smaller classes, more supports for special needs students, and defence of educator professional judgment have all been union proposals.

OSSTF/FEESO is not perfect; no institution is. We always have work to do in engaging members. We have more work to do in supporting equity for our members. Dismantling systemic barriers is crucial to our work. But let us not lose sight of the good we have done, for members, for students, and for the society in which we live for our 102-year history.

As I pass the torch, I wish everyone who is carrying on, as educators and unionists, nothing but the best in your crucial work. You will have my undying solidarity. Dark times will pass. The union must emerge strengthened and ready for the next challenge for the sake of everyone who benefits from our work.

Harvey Bischof,
OSSTF/FEESO President

Dire au revoir et passer le flambeau

L'éducation de qualité supérieure et les syndicats vont de pair

Alors il s'agit bien de mes « dernières paroles pour » *Education Forum*. Le fait de pouvoir partager mes pensées par l'intermédiaire de cette publication a été un des privilèges du rôle que j'ai assumé au cours des quatre dernières années. La représentation des éducatrices et des éducateurs œuvrant de la maternelle/jardin d'enfants au niveau universitaire, au sein des quatre systèmes d'éducation financés à même les deniers publics, dans les écoles indépendantes et au postsecondaire a été pour moi, sans le moindre doute, le plus grand privilège. Et par la même occasion, j'ai eu l'occasion de me dresser en faveur du système d'éducation et de tout ce qu'il représente.

Cela a été un véritable honneur de lutter, côte à côte avec mes collègues au Bureau provincial, les dirigeants locaux et les membres—qui forment *véritablement* le syndicat—dans le but d'améliorer et de défendre une institution que je continue croire être le facteur démocratique le plus critique, le soutien le plus important en matière d'égalité que nous ayons dans notre société. L'éducation financée à même les deniers publics a été et continue d'être le moteur de la vie civique, sociale et économique de l'Ontario. Comme l'affirmait l'ancien premier ministre de l'Ontario, William Davis, lorsque le domaine de l'éducation se porte bien, le reste suit. (Il vous surprend peut-être de m'entendre citer un premier ministre progressiste-conservateur, mais M. Davis était à la fois favorable à l'éducation et au mouvement syndical et se démarque comme un géant maintenant si on le compare au « leadership » ac-

tuel du parti Conservateur, grièvement dépourvu sur les points de vue intellectuel et idéologique.)

Je n'ai pas choisi une carrière en éducation en espérant devenir syndicaliste. Ce n'était même pas dans mes horizons. Cependant, lorsque Mike Harris a déclaré la guerre au système d'éducation en proposant les changements les plus destructeurs jamais vus, j'ai regardé autour de moi pour voir qui allait diriger la lutte contre ceux-ci, et il n'y avait nul doute que c'était mon syndicat. La seule chose pour laquelle je me dois de remercier Mike Harris, c'est de m'avoir dirigé dans l'activisme syndical. À partir de là, je remercie mon syndicat de m'avoir fourni les occasions dont je n'avais même pas rêvé.

Plus j'en ai appris, plus j'ai constaté cette vérité voulant que les systèmes d'éducation de qualité supérieure et les syndicats vont de pair. Contrairement aux fausses idées colportées par nos adversaires de la droite, les syndicats renforcent l'éducation. Et pourquoi ne serait-ce pas le cas? Est-ce que des salaires moins élevés permettraient d'attirer de meilleures éducatrices et de meilleurs éducateurs? Est-ce que le fait d'accorder aux employeurs la permission de discipliner et congédier arbitrairement les éducatrices et éducateurs rehausserait l'intérêt de qui que ce soit à entreprendre une carrière dans l'enseignement? Est-ce que le fait d'accorder aux bureaucrates la capacité illimitée d'apporter des changements de politique sans la voix des travailleuses et des travailleurs de première ligne entraînerait des décisions plus judicieuses? Bien sûr que non.

Comme le Dr Charles Ungerleider l'a indiqué, les propositions qui renforcent véritablement l'éducation ne proviennent que du côté des syndicats à la table de négociation. Une réduction des effectifs de classe, davantage de soutiens à l'intention des élèves ayant des besoins particuliers et la défense du discernement professionnel des éducatrices et des éducateurs sont tous des points qui ont figuré aux propositions syndicales.

OSSTF/FEESO n'est pas parfait; quel établissement peut affirmer l'être. Nous avons toujours des efforts à déployer dans le but de susciter la participation des membres. Nous avons encore plus de travail à faire dans le but d'appuyer l'équité parmi nos membres. Le démantèlement des obstacles systémiques est crucial à notre travail. Cependant, ne perdons pas de vue des réussites que nous avons réalisées, pour les membres, les élèves et la société dans laquelle nous continuons de vivre depuis les débuts de notre histoire de 102 ans.

Alors que je passe le flambeau, je souhaite à toutes celles et tous ceux qui poursuivent la lutte, à titre d'éducatrices et d'éducateurs ou de syndicalistes, tous les succès souhaités dans votre travail crucial. Vous pouvez compter sur ma solidarité incessante. Les temps difficiles que nous traversons présentement seront éventuellement chose du passé. Le syndicat doit s'en sortir renforcé et prêt pour le prochain défi, au nom de toutes celles et tous ceux qui sont touchés par notre travail.

Harvey Bischof,
Président d'OSSTF/FEESO



Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators

The purpose of ONABSE is to promote and facilitate the education of all students, African Canadian students in particular; to establish a coalition of African Canadian educators and others directly or indirectly involved in the educational process; to create a forum for the exchange of ideas and strategies to improve educational opportunities for African Canadians; to identify and develop African Canadian professionals who will assume leadership positions in education and to influence public policy concerning the education of African Canadian people.

ONABSE is composed of a number of commissions, each of which is organized for the purpose of affording meaningful dialogue and participation of members.

Membership Types:

Community Organization
Small Business
Institutional
Individual
Corporate
Student
Retired Educator



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