

# MBTEACHER

NEWSMAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

**TEACHER HITS  
HIGH NOTE  
WITH JUNO  
AWARD**

**EXPLORE THE RED  
RIVER HERITAGE FAIR**

**TEACHER ACTION  
YIELDS BILL 35  
AMENDMENTS**

**MTS EQUITY,  
DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSION SCAN**



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## COVER STORY RETIRING MUSIC TEACHER HITS A HIGH NOTE WITH JUNO AWARD

Music teacher Jewel Casselman is ending her illustrious 34-year career on an ultimate high note. Casselman was recently awarded the prestigious 2023 Juno MusiCounts award for Best Music Teacher in the country – a testament to her unwavering commitment to music education.

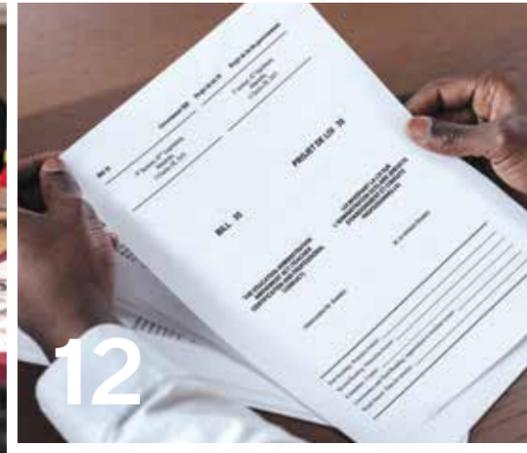


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## HISTORY ON DISPLAY: EXPLORE AND CELEBRATE THE RED RIVER HERITAGE FAIR

The long running Red River Heritage Fair just celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> year this May, and its first year back after a 3-year pandemic hiatus. Over 100 students from across Manitoba joined their peers at the University of Winnipeg campus to explore and celebrate Canada's history.



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## TEACHER ACTION YIELDS BILL 35 AMENDMENTS: WHAT'S NEXT?

Teachers spoke volumes about Bill 35 at the Manitoba Legislature last month. Among their concerns: the broad definition of misconduct, including competency in a misconduct framework, the lack of clarity around representation at hearings and disciplinary panels composed mainly of non-teachers. Here's what our members told the Minister.



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## MTS EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SCAN: MEMBERS AND STAFF SPEAK OUT

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion consultants Drs. Catherine McGregor and Grace Wong Sneddon dived deeply into how – and how well – MTS provides access, voice and safety to all members and staff. The resulting data and recommendations provide an unvarnished look into the challenges and opportunities ahead.

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**Dr. Catherine McGregor  
Dr. Grace Wong Sneddon  
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Dr. Catherine McGregor and Dr. Grace Wong Sneddon are academic researchers and knowledge mobilization professionals from the University of Victoria. Both have been engaged in university sector initiatives designed to create more equitable campuses and ensure diversity and inclusion are principles which drive organizational culture and workplace practices. They also provide consulting and research support to not-for-profit organizations in educational and social services sectors.



**Fatumah Mbabaali  
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Fatumah Mbabaali is the principal at Collicutt School in Winnipeg. An educator in Manitoba for over 25 years, she has worked as a classroom teacher, learning support teacher, vice principal and principal. Three decades ago, Fatumah fled war-torn Uganda and settled in Winnipeg. Her research focuses on the sense of belonging among war-affected refugee youth during their pre-migration and post-migration, as well as factors that impact their sense of belonging during resettlement.



**Val Harder  
PAGE 34**

Val Harder is in her 7<sup>th</sup> year as the Grades 5-8 literacy coach in Garden Valley School Division. She has been an educator for 25 years, spending most of her time as a Grade 8 classroom teacher. Val is passionate about reading, writing and thinking, and especially loves to read and talk about middle grade realistic fiction.

FROM THE  
PRESIDENT



## SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

**Nathan Martindale**

Education funding falls short,  
but our memories are long.

To say that the past few months as MTS president were busy and intense would be an understatement. All of the regular duties and meetings were to be expected, but as is the case in any highly charged political environment, there are always curveballs. For example, Bill 35.

The provincial government introduced Bill 35—*The Education Administration Amendment Act*, in late March. In the ensuing weeks I met with Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister Wayne Ewasko and the NDP and Liberal caucuses, detailing aspects of the proposed legislation we supported, while focusing on significant and much-needed amendments.

I was clear that they will find no more ardent supporters of child safety than Manitoba teachers. However, the bill in its proposed form did nothing to achieve its laudable goal, while creating a potentially destructive climate for the teaching profession and inappropriately including competency within a misconduct framework.

### MEMBERS RALLY TO AMEND BILL 35

When the bill was referred to legislative committee, MTS put out the call and our members answered. They rallied to the occasion, voicing their emphatic support of child safety while pointing out flaws in the legislation with the potential to tie the hands of teachers and threaten the quality of education provided.

I'm so proud of the members who presented, in person, virtually and through written submission. They spoke with passion, pride and professionalism—solidarity in action! I thank each of you on behalf of the entire membership, some 16,600 strong.

The sheer volume of presentations forced the Minister of Education to bring forward amendments to the bill. I would also

like to thank MFL president, Kevin Rebeck, who also presented to the committee on Bill 35. Unlike the fight to *Slam the Door on 64*, where education partners and a long list of organizations rallied around MTS, we were largely alone in speaking up on Bill 35. Having Kevin echo and amplify our voices when so many others stood on the sidelines is a tangible benefit to our recent affiliation with the MFL.

### ELECTION ON THE HORIZON

The other focus over the last few months has been the upcoming provincial election. The Provincial Executive's Political Action Committee has developed political messaging and other strategies that will help both members and the public make an informed decision on October 3.

We need a government ready to invest in the future and make the consistent, dependable and effective funding of public education the priority it must be. Seven years of underfunding has caused incredible damage, evidenced by our current ad campaign, #RealTeacherTalkMB.

A one-time election year cash infusion doesn't erase that reality, or our memories. And while teachers are pleased to see amendments to Bill 35, the government did not answer our calls related to competence, the definition of misconduct and the make-up of disciplinary panels. Our work is far from over.

As we approach October 3, we must make all candidates aware of our priorities. We must talk to our families, friends, and neighbours about why public education matters and why the next government, regardless of political stripe, must invest in it. Our children's future—our collective future—depends on it. **1**

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FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

## EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

**Danielle Fullan Kolton, Ph.D.**

Developing strategic plans for meaningful and sustainable change.

In her book, *Inclusion on Purpose*, Ruchika Tulshyan provides valuable insights into the distinctions between Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

- **Equity** involves identifying and dismantling systemic barriers that prevent the representation and inclusion of historically marginalized communities. It's akin to being part of a party planning committee, actively working to remove obstacles.
- **Diversity** entails striving for equal or greater representation of underrepresented and historically marginalized individuals. It's comparable to being invited to the party, ensuring a broader range of voices and perspectives.
- **Inclusion** encompasses actions taken to represent, welcome, and value people from historically underestimated and marginalized communities. It encourages individuals to bring their authentic selves to work without fear of exclusion or discrimination. It's similar to being asked to dance, creating an environment where everyone feels accepted and valued.

Understanding these distinctions is crucial as we delve into the findings of our EDI scan (see page 22 for more on the process) and develop strategic plans for meaningful and sustainable change, focusing on processes that generate voice and access and agency rather than performative gestures or mere box-checking. And while outcomes are certainly important, *how* we do the work is as important as the work we choose to do. Process and progress will feel equal parts messy and slow.

As well-intentioned allies, we must resist the temptation to rush into ill-informed actions (also known as action bias). Authentic EDI work, as Tulshyan emphasizes, requires both internal motivation and action-oriented approaches, and our EDI Scan offers numerous

recommendations predicated on investment of resources, more education, listening and amplifying diverse voices, measurement and accountability, a comprehensive policy overhaul, and creating and maintaining identity-safe spaces for this transformative work.

Over the course of the coming years, we must strike a balance between overplanning and underacting, avoiding the trap of becoming reactive social justice superheroes. Without focus, urgency makes this worse because change takes time and persistence. We must identify the actions that truly make a difference while maintaining momentum and earning the trust of our members, demonstrating our genuine commitment to this work.

And there are no shortcuts to careful planning, uncomfortable reflection about power and privilege, learning about unconscious bias and systemic barriers, creating feedback mechanisms, and being open to learn from our mistakes along the way. Because we will make mistakes and we must not be paralyzed by fear of this. We must be humble learners and knowledge seekers.

It's easy to write these encouraging words, but taking action will be significantly more challenging and, at times, disheartening. Changing deeply ingrained colonial and patriarchal practices within a 104-year-old labour organization is a formidable task. Even supporters who endorse the concepts and principles of EDI work may feel challenged and uncomfortable by a perceived loss of status, certainty, fairness, autonomy, power, and profile, among other reasons. When we *know* better, we don't necessarily *do* better.

The EDI scan marked the initial step in our long-term journey to be better, and we will continue to engage members and staff, PX and Local leaders, our Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and knowledgeable others to strengthen our work. **1**

# CANADIAN HISTORY ON DISPLAY:

## EXPLORING THE RED RIVER HERITAGE FAIR

By Matea Tuhtar, MTS Staff

When you walk into the Red River Heritage Fair you're greeted by the slogan 'Because Canada is cool!' and judging by the passionate projects in the room, the testament is heartfelt. The long-running fair just celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> year this May, and its first year back after a 3-year pandemic hiatus.

Over 100 students from across Manitoba joined their peers at the University of Winnipeg campus, to explore and celebrate Canada's history.

"It's really fun being back," says Joanna Dawson, Director of Programs at Canada's History Society, a national charitable organization that supports heritage fairs throughout Canada. "The committee stayed in touch during the pandemic, and it's been exciting to get back together. It's kind of like riding a bike – it's all come back to us now. And the kids always have a great time."

### THEMES DIVERSE AS CANADA ITSELF

That excitement was easy to spot as students from Grades 4-11 showed

off their poster boards, dioramas, costumes, technology-based projects, and hands-on displays on themes as diverse as Canada itself. Topics ranged from the Halifax Explosion, the Underground Railroad, the Pig War, many notable Canadian figures, and of course, the history of Tim Hortons. The students also get to do a scavenger hunt and explore different workshops throughout the day such as a beading class.

"I have been sending my students to the Fair for the last ten years, and the projects are always amazing," says Orysya Petryshyn who teaches history at Sisler High School in Winnipeg and also volunteers on the RRHF executive. "This year I actually had two students

who are new immigrants from Ukraine and they entered their projects for the first time. They said it was a fabulous experience telling their stories."

### HISTORY PROJECTS CROSS CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Founded in 1993, Heritage Fairs are now held in every province and territory of Canada. Each year, approximately 60,000 students carry out research projects in the classroom. The judges panel at the Fair is comprised of representatives from the various partner organizations. The judges get a chance to talk to each student and ask questions and give advice. The judging is split into different categories and

medals and prizes are awarded to top projects.

"The History projects really fit into the classroom because there are so many connections, not only for social studies, but a lot of cross curricular connections as well," says Dawson. "The students are doing their own research, they're asking questions, they're evaluating sources and then they have to communicate their learning. It involves public speaking, putting together information in a display, and it's a really rewarding experience for them."

Equally rewarding for the students is a chance to network and meet with peers from other schools. "They've probably worked on these projects for

two or three months and then they get to come and leave school and spend a day at a university and see what other kids are doing, and learn from each other," says Dawson.

### SEEING HISTORY APPLIED IN REAL LIFE

Petryshyn says her students enjoyed the chance to interact with all the exhibits and the people running them. "I think this is the best chance for students to learn history. They see history is not just sitting in the classroom and writing essays. Here they see it applied in real life." This year Petryshyn invited the minister of education to speak to the crowd, as well as the premier who sent a

video greeting. During the lunch hour the participants were treated to a performance and master class by Anastasiia Nazarenko, a talented circus performer who came from Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. She arrived with her mother in Canada, escaping the War in Ukraine and is currently Petryshyn's student at Sisler.

The volunteer-run fair relies on sponsors like Canada's History Society and partnerships from Canadian-based museums which provide prizes and set up information booths for students. Winners of the fair get to participate in Canada's History Society's *Young Citizens* program and make a video about their heritage project to share with the world for a chance to win a





\$500 RESP prize.

"I think the biggest challenge with the fair is that sometimes new teachers aren't aware of it," says Dawson. "And it can seem a bit intimidating, or be seen as an extra project and they're not sure how to incorporate it into their classroom. I think the first step is always to come see the

fair because it's so exciting. You really get a sense of how fun and engaging the day is, and how much learning is going on."

### MTS PD DAY SESSION COMING THIS OCTOBER

Petryshyn says she's going to hold an MTS PD Day session at MSSTA this

October, to talk to other teachers about the Heritage Fair and how it can benefit their classrooms. "History is a priority for any country, especially one of the best countries like Canada," she says. "I think this event is tremendous." 

## CANADIAN HISTORY CLASSROOM RESOURCES

### TEACHERS' TIPS

For resources on teaching Canadian history visit <https://www.canadashistory.ca/education/classroom-resources/teachers-tips> or scan the QR code.



### HERITAGE FAIRS PROGRAM

To learn more visit <https://www.canadashistory.ca/education/heritage-fairs-and-young-citizens> and <https://www.redriverheritage.ca/> or scan the QR codes.



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# TEACHER ACTION YIELDS BILL 35 AMENDMENTS

By Samantha Turenne, MTS Staff

## WHAT'S NEXT?

After 12 hours of passionate and articulate arguments from Manitoba educators, the government made important changes to Bill 35—*The Education Administration Amendment Act*, including the expressed right to representation during a hearing.

More than 40 educators from across the province spoke at the bill's standing committee hearing using personal—at times deeply painful examples to illustrate their numerous concerns with the legislation ranging from the broad definition of misconduct and the inclusion of competency in a misconduct framework to the lack of representation at hearings and a disciplinary panel composed of primarily non-teachers.

Speaking in French, Desirée Pappel, president of Association des éducatrices et éducateurs franco-manitobains (AEFM) and the first presenter on Bill 35, said that she is very concerned that her colleagues who were educated outside of Canada will be disproportionately targeted by the inclusion of teacher competence in this legislation.

"I have already seen a colleague accused of being unfit by parents, simply because his teaching style was different from what they experienced in their youth—some 20 or 30 years prior—in the Manitoba system," said Pappel. "An unintended consequence of this may be that our students, instead of being protected, will be limited—because they are prevented from having the experience of learning from teachers with different styles from other countries, which some people want to call unfit."

Nicole Bobick, president of the Swan Valley Teachers' Association, agreed that teacher competency did not belong in this legislation and said that competency is something that grows over time when appropriately nurtured and supported.

"A teacher should be supported to grow and feel comfortable asking questions about how to improve their skills," said Bobick. "When teacher misconduct and teacher competency are grouped together with protecting children from child abuse, as they are in Bill 35, the trust of protection and fair process is lost. Fear replaces that trust as teachers may not want to be open anymore about the areas they need to improve upon."

Tammy Tutkaluk, president of the Brandon Teachers' Association (BTA), spoke about the strong commitment to professional learning and development by educators in her Local.

"This year, over 101 teachers out of the 750, used BTA funds to take professional development opportunities to improve their teaching," said Tutkaluk. "Teachers always want to continue to improve, to do better, to learn more. We are lifelong learners."

Over the two nights of presentations, each concluding at the stroke of midnight, many educators spoke about their fear that this bill opens the door to special interest groups dictating what can and cannot be taught in the classroom with the unqualified inclusion of "significant emotional harm" under the definition of "misconduct."

"It feels like it's sneaking in Florida with its empty bookshelves, whitewashed history and can't-say-gay rules," said Tara Law, a teacher with the Louis Riel School Division. "We've worked so hard in our division to celebrate diversity in all its forms. Can this bill allow parents to disagree with us, based on significant emotional harm, and silence us and the beautiful members of our classroom?"

Katie Hurst, a Winnipeg teacher, said that the purpose of schools is to support students in learning to be learners, to learn their strengths and to use their strengths to benefit themselves and others and the world around them.

"Schools are not simply meant to teach what parents want their children to know,"

said Hurst. "Public schools are meant to teach learners what society needs them to know."

The government did not budge on the repeated requests to define "significant emotional harm" as it relates to misconduct. It remains under the definition of misconduct and leaves the door open to subjective interpretations which can be based on value-laden and biased perspectives.

Presenters like Catherine Hart took the minister to task over his assurances that "frivolous, vexatious and malicious" complaints will be dismissed by the commissioner.

"I'm seeing attacks on transgender people. I'm seeing books banned and removed from libraries. I'm seeing all kinds of vexatious complaints being given so much more merit than I ever thought they would be," said Hart. "We were directed to take down all our Pride flags in June 2021. This was not dismissed as a vexatious complaint. It was treated as having merit. The person who made the complaint referenced their patriotism. I know from the conversations I had with the kids in our GSA that they did not feel safe in school that day we took down the Pride flags."

With the inclusion of teacher competency in the bill, the composition of the hearing panel is crucial, as those tasked with making judgements about teacher competence must have the knowledge and expertise necessary to do so.

"Look up the governance makeup of professional law societies, colleges of physicians, surgeons, nurses, and social workers. They're regulating themselves because they know what they're doing," said Gus Watanabe. "The majority of people sitting in governance positions should be professional educators. And when I hear some say we can't trust educators to help themselves or to police themselves, I wonder why doctors and lawyers don't hear those same things. It's because not everyone's been a doctor or a lawyer, but everyone's been a student."

Unfortunately, the government was not open to altering the makeup of the panel or removing competency from the bill. However, the bill was amended to include specific language to confirm that consultations will occur with "representatives of teachers, employers of teachers, teachers, and any other persons the minister considers appropriate" when establishing the competence standards that a teacher must meet to be issued and maintain a teaching certificate.

Cari Satran, a Grade 8 teacher in the Seven Oaks School Division, said that the bill was "a nice big smoke screen" and that the real problem with safety is poverty and inadequate resources to support student needs.

"I have six kids who have trouble getting to school every single day, and when they come, it's often because the only meal they're getting is at school," said Satran. "Ask me how much money I've spent on groceries.

Ask me how much money I've spent on school supplies. Ask me how much clothing I brought to school, aside from doing United Way and Koats for Kids. If this Conservative government cared about safety in schools, then the funding would be given to schools."

Educators also participated in the process by sending written submissions to the bill's standing committee. Forty written submissions were received. Education Minister Wayne Ewasko said the amendments were a direct result of feedback received during the committee hearings.

## NEXT STEPS

Bill 35 will be read a third time in the legislature and, if passed before June 1, will come into force on a date to be fixed by proclamation.

Manitoba Education has informed us that it will come into force in stages through "selective

proclamation", meaning that implementation of the individual pieces will be staggered.

The parts the bill related to establishing the commissioner and their supporting office will be proclaimed first, along with those related to the teacher registry and the provisions that deal with teacher misconduct. This portion is expected to be in place by the fall of 2024. The existing processes will be in place until such time, including the Certificate Review Committee.

The Department of Education will also be consulting with MTS and other stakeholders to inform the development of competence standards. The section of Bill 35 that relates to competence will be proclaimed after the standards are written. Competence issues will be reviewed by the commissioner once this process has been completed.

We will keep you updated throughout the process. **T**

# PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

MTS PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	HOW THE OPPOSITION RESPONDED	HOW THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDED
Remove competency from the bill.		Amendment not accepted.
Ensure hearing panels are composed of a majority of teachers.	Supported the MTS proposed amendment.	Amendment not accepted.
Include the expressed right to representation for a teacher being investigated.	Proposed that the investigated teacher should have the right to representation in an investigation.	Adopted the following amendment: The commissioner and the investigated teacher may appear and be represented by counsel or an agent at the hearing, and the panel may have counsel to assist it.
Limit reports by employers to suspensions and terminations. These reports should not include discipline for professional misconduct or incompetence.		Amendment not accepted.
Define "significant emotional harm."		Amendment not accepted.
Protect the privacy of teachers who are deemed not to have the capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities because of a physical or mental disability.		Adopted the following amendment: Personal health information, as defined in PHIA, will only be made public in cases where the information available substantially outweighs the teacher's privacy interests.



# RETIRING MUSIC TEACHER HITS A HIGH NOTE WITH JUNO AWARD

By Matea Tuhtar, MTS Staff

Music teacher Jewel Casselman is ending her illustrious 34-year career on an ultimate high note. Casselman was recently awarded the prestigious 2023 Juno MusiCounts award for Best Music Teacher in the country – a testament to her unwavering commitment to music education.

Jewel Casselman, who teaches music at Lakewood School in Winnipeg, says the experience of winning the award has been surreal. “When they said “And the winner is...” I was floored. I was not expecting it at all,” says Casselman, who plans on retiring after this school year. “What a way to wind up a career. I still wake up in the morning and go “I won a Juno. It’s kind of crazy, to be recognized nationally that way.”

In the past the music teacher award has been handed out to high school and middle school teachers, ...“because they can just do things that elementary kids can’t do—like go on trips and compete in Jazz festivals. But it doesn’t mean that the elementary students are doing anything less important,” says Casselman.

## FINDING THEIR VOICE

Casselman has long been passionate about the importance of music education for elementary kids. "It's better now, but when I first started teaching a lot of kindergarten classes didn't get music, and I really fought for it and said 'No, this is when they need it!'. If you get them in Kindergarten you have them for all those elementary years."

"For a lot of these kids, I'm their first exposure to any kind of formal music education," says Casselman. "I teach them how to find the beat and how to find their singing voice, the difference between high and low notes, composing, the sounds and silences in music... I try to plant these little seeds and for those six years I get to watch their world grow."

Casselman has seen a few students become professional musicians when they're older, but more important to her is seeing them appreciate the importance of music, arts and culture. "Which in turn influences how they will live their lives."

The genre of music that kids listen to is not that important. "Music is everywhere, it's all around them. I ask them if they've listened to how much music there is in their video games? Someone composed that," she says. "I've had kids bring me rap songs they want me to listen to, and I personally think good rap is an art form."

"Sometimes it's really funny because a student will come to me and say 'I just found this new band, it's called AC/DC. And I'm like 'Wow I'll have to try them!'," she laughs. "Because to them it's brand new and exciting."

## THE ORFF PHILOSOPHY

This excitement is what has carried Casselman through her long career. She's based her teaching on the Orff philosophy—a child centered way of learning that involves singing, playing, movement and percussion instruments. Since 2009, she's also been teaching university level courses in Orff during the summer months.



**THIS IS NOT A JOB YOU CAN LEAVE WHEN YOU WALK OUT OF THE ROOM. IT REALLY HAS TO BE A PASSION, YOU HAVE TO REALLY WANT TO DO IT. AND I AM REALLY GOING TO MISS IT. I LOVE THE SCHOOL, AND I LOVE THOSE KIDS. THAT'S WHY I GET UP EVERY MORNING TO GO TO WORK – TO GO SEE THOSE KIDS. THEY JUST INSPIRE ME TO BE A BETTER PERSON EVERY DAY.**

Her 'whole child' teaching extends to her special education students. Casselman says she tries to find time in her schedule every week when she can bring kids into her room and just let them explore sounds in a low pressure environment. "Sometimes we just turn down all the lights and just have really quiet music playing and they can just play without distraction. Music is a great form of communication."

Casselman says some of her favorite messages come from parents of neurodivergent kids. "I had one little boy who at the start of school couldn't even have music on in the house, he would go and turn it off. He really struggled in kindergarten and Grade 1, but then he started staying in the music room longer and longer. He became more involved. And we came to the end of the year where we had an assembly and I brought his mom

into the school and she watched her son, who hated music, stand in front of the entire school and perform. That's the power of music."

## COVID YEARS ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING

Casselman has long been involved with the MMEA SAGE group and says that while music education is fairly strong in Manitoba, the COVID years were especially challenging. "Teaching online was quite hard. And then when we came back to school, I taught for a whole year off of a cart, because my room was not large enough to have everybody two meters apart. So I loaded everything onto a cart and walked from classroom to classroom."

She estimates that during 2021 she walked all the way to Vancouver. "I was averaging 20-25 thousand steps a day," she recalls. "It was really a couple of years of chaos. Music teachers really had to think outside the box—we couldn't sing or play most instruments." Popsicle friends became Casselman's best friend that year, and that's what the kids used to make rhythms, along with a couple of other things they kept in a little bag in their desks, because they couldn't share anything. "I know one teacher who taught outside all year long – winter included. You had to get creative."

## MUSIC EDUCATION VITAL

Casselman believes that music should be one of the "R's" taught in every school. "Because it's vital. It's one of the core subjects because music is math, music is language arts, music is social studies, music is science—it covers all those things. There's been many studies done about music and memory and retention. Gross motor skills, fine motor skills, it's all there."

While backstage at the Junos, Casselman says she was approached by artists who congratulated her and told her that this is the most important award of the evening, because they wouldn't be here today



without teachers like her. And when she returned to school she was met with a stack of congratulations cards, flowers, and lots of kids excited to hear about her adventure. "The kids just stormed me saying they missed me so much. That was better than the Juno."

## WISDOM FOR FUTURE MUSIC TEACHERS

With retirement looming, Casselman says the most important bit of wisdom

she can impart to the next generation of music teachers is to "Have a thick skin, and a good sense of humour. Don't be afraid to ask for help, especially in the beginning. We have a small but wonderful community of music educators in this province—reach out to your colleagues."

"This is not a job you can leave when you walk out of the room. It really has to be a passion, you have to really want to do it. And I am really going to miss it. I love the school, and

I love those kids. That's why I get up every morning to go to work – to go see those kids. They just inspire me to be a better person every day."

To learn more about the MusiCounts award visit [musiccounts.ca](https://musiccounts.ca) or scan the QR code. 



# COMPASSION FATIGUE:

## THE COST OF CONNECTION IS REAL AND EXHAUSTING

By Angela Haig, Ph.D., C. Psych., MTS Staff

Do you have less bandwidth for the troubling stories students tell you in May than in September? Do you find yourself feeling physically and emotionally drained at this time of year? Typically we think of this as burnout, where we feel exhausted by overwhelming demands and heavy workload. But teachers may also be struggling with compassion fatigue (or empathic strain, as it is beginning to be called) where we feel this way because we care.



### OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD FOR EDUCATORS

Let me explain. Compassion fatigue is an occupational hazard for educators because they teach through connection with their students. This connection is the heart and soul of teaching, but it leaves you open to hearing and witnessing the pain and challenges that your students live with. Over time, that can be draining.

Sometimes your students tell you about traumatic things that have happened to them. This is secondary traumatic stress: you weren't actually at the scene of the trauma but hear about it second hand. Over time and repeated exposures, this can lead to vicarious trauma, where our worldview is changed by what we have been exposed to. For example, I might have difficulty trusting people after hearing so many stories of betrayal.

These issues overlap and can be experienced separately or altogether. The point is, you experience this because you care. It is not that you have done something wrong.

### DEALING WITH COMPASSION FATIGUE

How do you deal with it? Well, there is no magic bullet. But one of the ways you can cope is by staying in your body as much as possible and knowing how you are feeling from moment to moment. When a child is telling you a disturbing story, make sure you are taking a deep breath, and that you are clear that you are in your body, not getting swept up in the child's story as if it is happening to you. Any kind of grounding exercise will help, from deep breathing, tapping your feet on the ground, noticing the details of the room you are in, etc.

It also helps if you think about each event as something you open and close to. Just as you lean in to show the child you are listening, you must lean back and exhale the experience to let your

body know that it is over and you are safe. The problem happens when we go into "fight or flight" mode and forget to tell our nervous system when the event is over and we're safe now. That's how we get stuck. That's how we hold stress in our bodies. That's how we get so worn out.

All I'm saying is that you need to be as aware of your own state as you are the state of your students. It helps you to be in the moment, be there for students telling you difficult things, without blurring the edges of your boundaries and taking it on as your own. It gets easier with practice, and is necessary for educators.

You care so much for your students, and this is how you connect with them. Just be aware that there is a cost to that, an occupational hazard, and focus on yourself as well. **T**

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# PRIORITIZE PUBLIC EDUCATION

## A MESSAGE TO POLITICIANS

By Samantha Turenne, MTS Staff

The upcoming provincial election is an opportunity for educators to demand courageous and progressive action on public education. This can range from calling for policies that oppose book bans to ensuring that funding for school food programs is sustainable.

*Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Election candidate.  
Election candidate who?  
Election candidate who needs to  
prioritize public education!*

As we look ahead to the summer, be prepared for a parade of election candidates hoping to win your vote in the upcoming provincial election, set for October 3, 2023.

### MTS PUBLIC POLL DATA

Based on data from an MTS public poll, most Manitobans (64%) believe either health care (35%) or cost-of-living (29%) are the most important issues facing the province.

With a margin of error of +/- 3 and accuracy of 19/20 this data provides a clear picture of where Manitoba's political parties will focus their efforts.

Most parties will have comprehensive platforms aimed at improving timely access to quality health care and ensuring affordability measures are in place for Manitobans.

On the other hand, only four per cent of Manitobans viewed public education as a priority. This means few parties will spend time developing priorities and policies for public education that go beyond the obligatory mention of "increase



funding for public education."

A commitment to increase funding for a public education system that has been starved of adequate funding for seven years will go a long way in checking the box and assuring the public that education is on the political agenda. Two-thirds (62%) of Manitobans believe that the government should increase public education funding.

But, as educators, you know that the key to improving student outcomes in our education system

goes far beyond an increase in funding. It is not enough to simply increase funding. The real solution resides in a solid commitment to ensure public education funding is adequate, equitable and predictable.

### INCREASED FUNDING DOESN'T ERASE YEARS OF UNDERFUNDING

The current government has touted "astronomical" increases to funding, while at the same time school divisions are forced to make cuts to staff and

programs. The "astronomical" increase is not enough to erase the years of underfunding.

Ensuring adequacy requires a funding formula that is sensitive to the differing cost structures across the province. Diverse student and contextual needs must also be acknowledged.

Unfortunately, the government's long-awaited review of the education funding model has been delayed to the 2024/25 school year. It is still unclear as to whether the new model will address the adequacy of funds, since the stated purpose of the education funding review team is to "create a system of fair and sustainable funding for schools, providing more opportunities and supports for all students in Manitoba, no matter where they live."

### EQUITY NOT ACHIEVED WITHOUT ADEQUACY

While the government's goal of achieving equity in education funding is admirable, true equity cannot be achieved without addressing adequacy.

The government said that the new funding model will be flexible so schools can make decisions based on their needs. Ensuring flexibility and autonomy while ignoring the adequacy of funds creates a situation where schools will be forced



**OPERATING REVENUE THAT IS BELOW THE RATE OF INFLATION AND ENROLMENT GROWTH MEANS THAT THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM IS LOSING GROUND ON A PER PUPIL BASIS. THIS HAS BEEN THE REALITY IN MANITOBA FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS.**

to make decisions on which programs to keep and which to cut. Furthermore, it will increase the pressure on staff who will be called on to be "flexible" when presented with growing workload demands due to staffing cuts.

Is there a willingness by the new government to backfill the seven years of underfunding of public education?

What about a guarantee to fund at the rate of inflation and enrolment growth, at a minimum?

Operating revenue that is below the rate of inflation and enrolment growth means that the public education system is losing ground on a per pupil basis. This has been the reality in Manitoba for the past seven years.

### INFLATION FUNDING BARELY MAINTAINS RESOURCES

Funding at the level of inflation barely maintains student resources and supports. There is still a considerable and widening gap in the ability to meet the diverse needs of students.

Ask the candidates at your door whether their party will properly invest in students so the education system can effectively respond to growing needs.

Is there a political party that is willing to commit to multi-year funding for public education, so that schools can count on the continuation of vital resources and programs?

These are some important questions that need to be answered by anyone running in the upcoming election. **T**

## QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

### HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK CANDIDATES AT YOUR DOOR

1. Why are you running for MLA?
2. What are your top priorities for improving public education?
3. What will you do to improve the quality of public schools?
4. What is your plan to provide adequate funding for all public schools?
5. What do you believe are the best ways to evaluate school and student performance?
6. How would you help schools recruit and retain highly qualified teachers?
7. What is your plan for ensuring the development of a more diverse teaching workforce, reflective of the changing student population?
8. What resources and services, beyond academics, do you believe schools and the community should provide to support student well-being and achievement?
9. What is the role of schools in teaching children about topics such as: gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, cyber-safety, mental health and wellness, bullying etc.?
10. What can be done to improve student outcomes?
11. How will you improve working conditions for educators?

# MTS EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SCAN

## MEMBERS AND STAFF SPEAK OUT ON BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

By Drs. Catherine McGregor and Grace Wong Sneddon

*“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion consultants Drs. Catherine McGregor and Grace Wong Sneddon were contracted in 2022 to dive deeply into how—and how well—MTS has provided access, voice and safety to all members and staff of the organization. The result is compelling. The data and recommendations that flow from them provide an unvarnished look into the very real challenges we face as well as the opportunities ahead, should we be bold and brave enough to grasp them. It is imperative that members and staff alike engage with these findings and continue the dialogue, as together we digest the information and determine the way forward.”*

— Dr. Danielle Fullan Kolton, Executive Director, MTS

In accordance with a 2021 MTS Provincial Council resolution, the Society undertook a comprehensive organizational equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) scan, the work of which unfolded throughout 2021 and 2022.

This included an internal audit of the staffing and leadership demographics, organizational policies, practices, and experiences of the Society, along with an external audit of membership and leadership demographics, organizational policies and practices, of other teacher unions in Canada, and the experiences of the membership. EDI consultants Dr. Catherine McGregor and Dr. Grace Wong Sneddon were contracted to complete the work. The consultants submitted a report to the 2023 MTS Provincial Council, outlining the process and the findings of extensive research conducted. The 148-page report is available in full and executive summary formats at [mbteach.org](http://mbteach.org). Members and staff are strongly encouraged to read the information and reflect on how MTS can move

forward, armed with this research, to evolve the organization meaningfully and effectively.

### INTERNAL SCAN

An internal scan is designed to look specifically at the methods, practices, policies, and procedures through which the commitments to organizational vision are realized. Policies were a significant element in this scan and referred to in the report. They include:

1. Operational policies and procedures for employees (MTS as Employer)
2. Handbook policies for members (Policy I and Policy II) (MTS as Advocate/MTS as Governance)

### EXTERNAL SCAN

An external scan offers a bird's-eye view of the organizational landscape and gives some scope to consider the breadth and range of approaches various organizations may have taken in their organizational plans or strategies.

We have taken an approach designed to situate the scans within the current Canadian landscape: we provide MTS with both a historical and contemporary lens through which to understand basic equity affirming systems and processes. These histories and provincial and federal frameworks provide details which can enable a deepened understanding of how organizations have typically responded to issues of equity and inclusion.

As academic researchers and equity consultants, we know that many of the systemic roots which have shaped Canadian organizations come from these histories, beliefs, and understandings, often developed over time in colonial contexts. We also know that building on legislative principles and human rights provides sound foundations for actions now and into the future.

We also believe that this broad environmental scan of legislation, trade union and teacher organizational histories

will help you to articulate your vision, mission, and values. This information may also help you devise some guiding principles which can be used in creating plans for the dismantling of systemic inequities throughout MTS, developing good governance practices and achieving organizational leadership.

### THE MEMBERS SPEAK

An online survey, offered in English and French, focus groups and individual interviews were conducted from August to December, 2022. In total, there were 1,105 member survey participants, 22 members participated in individual interviews, and 33 focus groups were conducted, two of which were offered by a French facilitator. All data was collected anonymously. Transcripts of all focus group interviews were reviewed for personal identifiers, and these were removed prior to creating thematic summaries so that no individual could be identified.

Using quantitative data standards,

we calculated the validity of the survey by considering the population size, the confidence level and margin of error to establish a minimum sample size. In this case, a sample of about 1,000 individuals meets the industry standard for validity of the data, assuming about a 3% margin of error and an overall population of approximately 16,600 members; we met the 95% confidence level.

The survey offered a good initial benchmark from which to measure and assess member knowledge, perspectives, and beliefs, and which we can confidently say represents the overall MTS population. Many themes were repeated across the interviews—a strong sign of authenticity.

### IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

We recognize that there are many diverse topics canvassed in the overall report, and navigating through the many observations and issues identified will seem daunting. We

also acknowledged throughout this report the complex roles that MTS plays as an organization: they are employer to their staff, an advocate for their members in their work as educators, and act as organizational leaders tasked with managing the organization governance systems. This complexity means the planning processes will need to carefully consider what actions are needed for each organizational component.

### THE WORK AHEAD

The data provides a window onto the landscape on which MTS operates, the challenges ahead, and, encouragingly, the capacity for constructive, meaningful change. We hope this focus on background information on equity work and quantitative and qualitative research will be of value as you consider your path forward. Log onto your MTS MyProfile account to read the full EDI report or scan the QR code. 



# #REALTEACHERTALKMB

## NEW MTS CAMPAIGN TAPS INTO TEACHER VOICE

By Anne Bennett, MTS Staff

With the campaign now in full swing, the public has full access to each and every comment. Ads will be in market until the end of June.

If you've driven down a main thoroughfare lately, along streets in cities, towns and highways across the province, you may have noticed advertising with a single line of text: #RealTeacherTalkMB. That one simple line is a portal to dozens of heartfelt—and often heart-breaking—reflections of Manitoba's public school teachers; MTS members who on a daily basis face and fight the impact of chronic education underfunding in their classrooms, a battle they have waged for seven straight years.

### COVID AFTERMATH

Years that included no less an obstacle than a global pandemic and its aftermath. "It's gutting to read these words, to hear the voices of our members who have given much more than they should have to, physically, emotionally, even financially, to support their students," says MTS president Nathan Martindale. "The government has turned a deaf ear to the needs of teachers and students and we must make not only our government, but all those who seek to form government, listen to us. With a provincial election in the fall, we must do all we can to shine a light on the reality in our classrooms, and the very real ways in which our children, and those dedicated to their learning, are being failed."

### CAMPAIGN RESPONSE

Response to the campaign, which began on MTS social media platforms, has been tremendous. Teacher comments are released twice a day, Monday to Friday. With the campaign now in full swing, the public has full access to each and every



**THE EFFORT IS INTENTIONAL, ALLOWING THE PUBLIC TO GLIMPSE THE CLASSROOM IN A WAY THEY MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE, AND TO RAISE THE CONCERNS OF TEACHERS WITH CANDIDATES OF ALL POLITICAL STRIPES WHO COME CALLING FOR THEIR VOTES.**

comment. Ads will be in market until the end of June.

The effort is intentional. It allows the public to glimpse the classroom in a way they might not otherwise, and to raise the concerns of teachers with candidates of all political stripes who come calling for their votes.

"The strangulation of public education funding has to stop," says Martindale. This isn't a union issue, it isn't even a partisan political issue. Education is a public trust, a commitment from government to the people. If we do not stand firm, if we do not demand that our children's education becomes a priority for this or any future government, we will have failed to stand for our future."

### MEMBERS' VOICES CRUCIAL

MTS members' voices, says Martindale, are crucial to that effort. In the fight against Bill 64 our members rose up, and with the allyship of education partners and others from across the province, the bill was defeated. In the fight against Bill 35, members again answered the call, speaking out with all the eloquence and passion of educators utterly dedicated to the students they serve. Once again, those voices were heard and the government was compelled to amend the legislation. October's election is yet one more hurdle, one more challenge. And again, our members' voices must be heard.

Watch for #RealTeacherTalkMB advertising in your community, share the social media posts to your Facebook, Instagram and Twitter networks, and amplify the voices of your colleagues with family, friends and neighbours as we make our way to decision day on October 3.

### TELL US WHAT YOU'RE SEEING IN THE CLASSROOM

Want to share how chronic education underfunding shows up in your classroom? Email us at [realteachertalkmb@mbteach.org](mailto:realteachertalkmb@mbteach.org). Fifty words (or so) is perfect. Comments may be edited for length and clarity and you will not be identified. Questions? Email [abennett@mbteach.org](mailto:abennett@mbteach.org).

To learn more about public education underfunding please visit [educationmattersmb.org](http://educationmattersmb.org) or scan the QR code. 





## TABLE TOPICS: MTS BARGAINING UPDATE

Negotiations on behalf of Manitoba’s 16,600 MTS members are taking place centrally and at tables across the province. Here’s the latest news.

### PROVINCIAL BARGAINING

Negotiations are ongoing. Since the last update, meetings have taken place on February 24, March 21 & 22, April 17 & 19, and May 2. The next meeting will take place on June 13. Dates for the fall and winter are to be determined. Bargaining updates will be available through your MTS MyProfile account.

### AÉFM (FRANCOPHONE PROVINCIAL TABLE)

Negotiations are ongoing. Since the last update, meetings have taken place on February 1, April 4, and May 3. Meetings are taking place on May 29 & 30, and June 7. Bargaining updates

will be available through your MTS MyProfile account.

### NELSON HOUSE TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION

Nelson House teachers are MTS members under federal jurisdiction. They recently settled their 2018-2022 round, getting the same salary increases won by all Manitoba teachers.

### SANDY BAY TEACHERS’ ASSOCIATION

Sandy Bay teachers are MTS members under federal jurisdiction. They recently reached a one-year agreement for the 2022/2023 year with a COLA based

on Manitoba’s annual inflation rate in 2022, which was 7.9%. This sets a precedent in the province as we expect teacher salaries to keep pace with inflation.

Bargaining updates are available through your MTS MyProfile account. If you haven’t registered yet, please do at [mbteach.org](http://mbteach.org) or scan the QR code to stay up to date on all things MTS.



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# WE ASKED TEACHERS:

## HOW ARE YOU PRACTICING SELF CARE THIS SUMMER?



**SHERI W.**

I'm going to be doing a lot of painting and art. I do visual art and hopefully I'll be able to sit and spend a lot of time in my art room. I can lose myself in art - I can spend hours with it and it just refreshes my brain and makes me feel a lot better.



**SCOTT T.**

My biggest hobby is LEGO. I enjoy building my own stuff, as well as LEGO sets so I have a few projects on the go. I'll also be doing some traveling this summer to go to different LEGO conventions. When I'm not doing that I also enjoy getting outdoors to fish and ride my bike.



**ROBERT G.**

For me it's about trying to establish balance. During the school year it's such an intellectually demanding job, so for me it's about finding time to be outside, spend time with family, spend time to get into my hobbies and good habits to kind of reset and be refueled for the year ahead.



**BRYANNE D.**

This summer, my husband, who's also a teacher, and I are going out to the mountains in BC and Colorado. We'll be doing some mountain biking, getting some Vitamin D, and enjoying all that comes with that mountain lifestyle. Taking it easy, having no real plans, just unplugging and going into nature.



**ROBYN P.**

I am saying yes to new opportunities that come up. If anyone offers for me to go do something, I have to say yes. It's going to be a 'yes' summer. So if someone asks me to go kayaking, I'll have to say yes. If someone asks me to go for a hike, I'm going to say yes. And if it's new people who I might not spend as much time with, I'm going to say yes. Keep the good habits, but stay open to new things.



**MELANIE S.**

My plan for the summer is all about the kids. We'll be doing lots of camping, we like to go to Spruce Woods and Stephenfield Provincial Park and we'll be spending lots of time at the pool and the beach. We like to spend time outside biking and hiking. Once the busyness of the year and all their sports wind down, summer is the time to connect together.



**MEGAN A.**

I'm actually on maternity leave this summer, my first maternity leave. So for me practicing self care is holding onto as many self-care strategies as I had in the past. The two things I'm holding onto are moving my body, I try to move my body every day. Whether that's just popping my baby into a carrier and going for a walk, going to yoga, or going to the gym. Or doing something in the kitchen because that is my love language. It's one of those two things every day that I can do for myself, and also to benefit my family because I'm improving my own mood, I'm giving nourishing food to my family. I'm trying to hold onto to those things because life gets busy, especially when kids come into the mix. I'm hoping to continue those things when I'm back at work next year.

## SPOTLIGHT ON SAGEs

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



### THE MANITOBA ASSOCIATION FOR COMPUTING EDUCATORS

The Manitoba Association for Computing Educators (ManACE) is dedicated to the use of instructional technology at all levels of education. ManACE provides support and leadership to Manitoba educators through Technology Information Nights (TIN nights), SEED Grants for technology purchases, ManACE Journals, Dial I.T. Up Podcast, and a variety of MTS PD Day sessions. ManACE is also a planning partner for the annual BYTE and Riding The Wave Conferences and works in conjunction with both MAETL and MERLIN.

To learn more visit [manace.ca](http://manace.ca) or scan the QR code.



### THE MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF DANCE EDUCATORS

The Manitoba Association of Dance Educators (MADE) consists of teachers and artists dedicated to promoting and advancing dance education in Manitoba schools. MADE members are committed to providing varied and valuable professional development for teachers in the province on the latest trends and research in dance education. MADE works with local and out-of-province organizations to advocate for quality dance education within our schools.

To learn more visit [madesage.ca](http://madesage.ca) or scan the QR code.



# THE PRINCIPAL OF THE THING:

## SUPPORTING WAR-AFFECTED REFUGEE YOUTH

By **Fatumah Mbabaali**, Principal, Collicutt School

As a child I was affected by multiple wars in Uganda, my country of origin. School interruptions and displacement from my home were the norm. I lost my childhood friendships, family members, home, school, community and familiar language. And I lost my social capital, which was a critical support to my social emotional wellbeing.

Students fleeing from war and arriving in our classrooms may experience losses similar to mine. Once in Canada, loneliness, isolation, language deficits, different cultural practices, and in some cases different skin colors may isolate refugee youth and thus jeopardize their sense of belonging in their new country.

My doctoral thesis, *“Exploring the sense of belonging of war-affected refugee youth”*, investigated the sense of belonging of war-affected refugee youth during pre-migration and post-migration periods, as well as the factors that may enhance or hinder their sense of belonging. I use the term “refugee” cautiously as it may evoke negative connotations. The term is a label to describe a circumstance or situation under which people relocate. What follows is an overview of some key areas discussed in my thesis. I hope that sharing the work will lead to greater awareness and discussion among school leaders as we navigate the realities faced by our students.

### LOSS AND UPROOTING

The effects of war can have a negative effect on children’s developing security and emerging personality (Jensen, 1992, p. 986). Children living in conflict zones often experience major disruptions to their daily living activities. Their schools close down, recreational activities end, they are no longer safe playing in their neighbourhoods with friends, and their home life often is altered due to a lack of shelter or having to move to another area (Lasser & Adams, 2007). Children not living in or near direct combat zones often are exposed to war through television and overhearing adult conversations. Whether the child has suffered from direct or indirect exposure, the psychological effects of exposure to war can be significant (Lasser & Adams, (2007).

The psychological experiences of adolescent refugees are ones of loss and uprooting. They experience individual losses of family, home, school, town, friends, relatives, and former

identity; and collective losses such as country, community, culture, and language (Bromley, 1988; Jones, 1998). Eisenbruch (1990) uses the term cultural bereavement to describe these losses. However, the massive losses suffered by refugees have no prescribed rituals for healing and little social support. Society does not easily acknowledge the grief of a person who has lost everything they hold dear in their former country.

In addition, refugee families may be so busy “adjusting” during resettlement that they cannot give themselves permission to grieve (Fantino & Colak, 2001). Unfortunately, the host society seldom recognizes the grieving process in refugee children. It may be necessary for refugee youth to have proper closure to their past losses in order to create new ties and relationships.

### POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

In cases where war-affected refugee youth are suspected to suffer from

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), schools should consult school psychologists for support. In addition, it is helpful for all educators to get Trauma-Informed Training, which can be accessed through ‘New Directions’ agency. The participants in my research accessed the following agencies for support: **The Needs Centre**, **Welcome Place**, **New Directions** and the **Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre (MATC)**. One of the participants noted that it was helpful to have MATC on board to work with war-affected students, as “MATC had a psychological component with trained psychologists to deal with war trauma.” Additional supports mentioned by the participants were provided by churches and associations where refugee students received assistance from community volunteers.

As they resettle in their new country, children often lose some of the support of their parents, grandparents, and communities. These support people are

often busy; preoccupied with economic survival, working more than one job, and going to school.

By moving to one or more places before resettling in Canada, youth may have developed multiple self-images that may lead to identity confusion. Therefore, the challenge facing these youth is to blend their new life experiences in their host country with their past life experiences, and to mold them into a unified self-image that will be respected and found meaningful in their new community. Keeping this in mind, educators may need to be aware of the possibility of identity confusion among war-affected refugee youth to assist them in forming a firm identity that may successfully lead them to the next developmental stage of adulthood.

### A SENSE OF BELONGING

Belonging is the human need to be an accepted member of a group, (Fiske, 2004). Whether it is family, friends, co-workers or a sports team, humans have

an inherent desire to belong and be an important part of something greater than themselves. A sense of belonging is the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment whereby a person feels integral to that system or environment (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1966). Friendships among students in schools is a critical part of their wellbeing and thus their sense of belonging.

The need to belong and be part of their new community may override one’s need to maintain unique cultural practices that may make them appear “different” and isolated. Youth new to Canada are inevitably confronted with the values of the majority society and may feel “left out.” By accepting the values of the host society, they may feel disloyal to their parents. At home, they are also confronted with the values of their parents, values which may be held by a small minority. This dilemma may lead some youth to pursue their cultural identity and a



sense of belonging by joining already existing gangs.

## THE MAJOR TASK FOR EDUCATORS

The major task for educators is to take time to listen to the views, feelings and sentiments of war-affected refugee youth, thus creating a safe space where they can talk and express themselves freely. However, this is not an easy task as it may depend on individual personalities and temperaments as well as the nature of their war experiences.

## LISTENING TO STUDENTS' LIFE STORIES

Listening to students' life stories is helpful for them as it may provide healing and closure for some. Disregarding students' perspectives may result in [inefficient] interventions that do not address students' real problems or concerns and may even pose a threat to their self-esteem and self-efficacy (Boyden, 2003). Children must be encouraged to provide real insight into their feelings and experiences. If children are to be helped to overcome highly stressful experiences, their views and perspectives need to be treated as a source of learning and strength, not weakness. It is important for curricula and teaching practices to operate within a broad range of accepted social values while being attuned to students' identities and cultures (Woods, 1990).

## OTHER STRATEGIES THAT HELP

Other strategies that may support and foster a sense of belonging for refugee youth include:

- a) encouraging students to share their culture through food, clothing, games, songs, dances, and languages,
- b) having students work on projects using their first languages,
- c) utilizing students' expertise in their areas of strengths such as music, sports, or math,
- d) equal treatment,
- e) acknowledging their cultures,
- f) school entry preparation,
- g) appropriate grade level placement,



- h) preparation for school rules, expectations and routines,
- i) genuine care,
- j) preparation for community routines and rituals including shopping and transportation and
- k) creating and encouraging interactions between refugee and Canadian-born students.

School routines such as gym expectations and gym game rules, cafeteria expectations, as well as general school expectations and rules must be explained. Use of storybooks reflective of cultures of newcomer youth was mentioned by the participants in my research as a way to bring pride to these youth. Newcomer youth may bring books familiar to them and should be encouraged to share them.

Slowing down in delivering lessons and assignments will support newcomer students to have a better understanding of what is being taught. Instead of having students work on several assignments a year, students may focus on fewer projects that may require integrated concepts and skills including math, science, or social studies. The book, 'Learning in Depth,' by Egan (2010) outlines ideas on how to

integrate topics and teach them for long periods of time.

Encouraging and including newcomer youth in school social and political committees like social justice, student council and other student groups may reinforce feelings of being valued and make them feel like contributing members of their school community. Involving students in Canadian life skills experiences through teaching them about picnics, camping, fishing, swimming, and participating in these activities as part of school programming, may also be beneficial to newcomer students.

Resettlement in a new country not only offers a safe haven for building a stable life and a hopeful future, but also the opportunity to belong. War-affected refugee youth enter Canada with high expectations, dreams, and potential to become contributing individuals in their new communities.

The adversity experienced by refugee youth creates a level of resilience that can be relied on and utilized to overcome many life challenges, which we all hope will lead these students to become valued citizens in their new communities. <sup>1</sup>



# Find resources to help teach about residential schools



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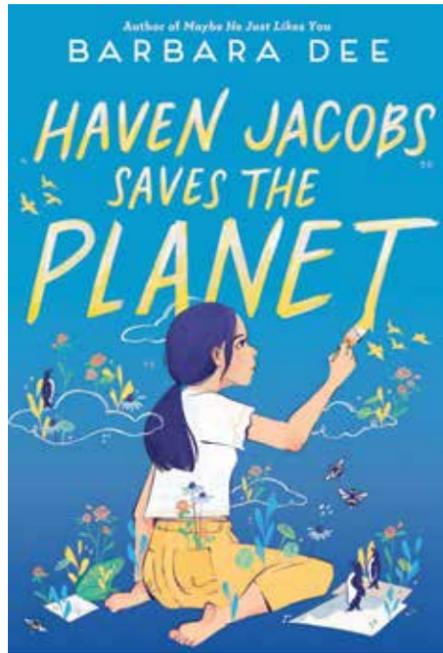
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# BOOK REVIEWS

By Val Harder, Literacy Coach, Garden Valley



## HAVEN JACOBS SAVES THE PLANET

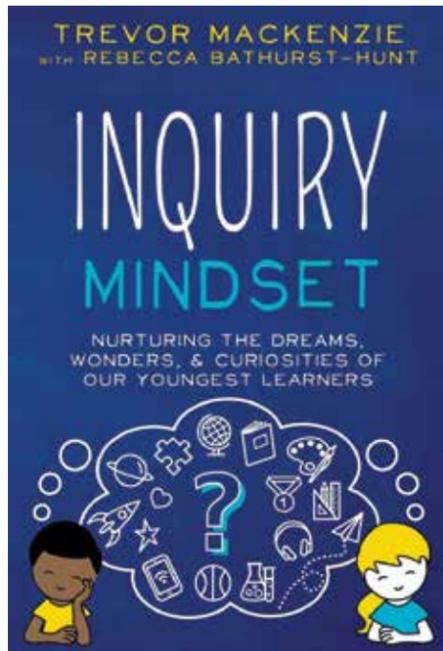
**Author:** Barbara Dee  
**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster (2022)

Haven Jacobs, a highly anxious 12-year-old, is extremely concerned about the state of the world. Specifically, she is worried about how people are doing so little to help the environment. This has deeply impacted her life at home and at school. Haven is so concerned about the environment that she decides to do whatever it takes to make a difference. Unfortunately, Haven doesn't always realize that in her passion to stand up for her beliefs, she bulldozes over others, and doesn't always see the whole picture. This makes things much more difficult for her, both at school with her classmates, as well as at home with her parents and her older brother.

Haven's social studies teacher challenges her to find something small Haven can

do that she feels will make a difference. In Science, they study the local river, and realize that it has had some major environmental changes in the last two years. Pollutants in the water and garbage have increased, while wildlife has decreased. Haven decides to take a stand for the river, putting her friendships as well as her relationship with her family to the test.

Barbara Dee does such an excellent job of diving into complex issues in an engaging way – ensuring that middle grade readers will be able to understand and truly enjoy the story. I strongly recommend each of her books, including *Maybe He Just Likes You*, *My Life in the Fish Tank*, and *Violets are Blue*, among others.



## INQUIRY MINDSET BOOK SERIES

**Author:** Trevor Mackenzie  
**Publisher:** EdTechTeam Press (2016), Elevate Books (2019, 2021)

Canadian high school teacher, Trevor Mackenzie, has written a fantastic series of professional books focused on inquiry in the classroom. I suggest starting with *Inquiry Mindset*, co-written with Kindergarten teacher Rebecca Bathurst-Hunt, where Mackenzie builds into the reader's understanding about what inquiry is, and what it can look like in the classroom. According to Mackenzie, there are four types of inquiry: Structured, Controlled, Guided, and Free. These types of inquiry are scaffolded, and the focus for instruction slowly moves from teacher-directed to student choice.

In *Dive Into Inquiry*, which is actually Mackenzie's first book, his focus is on inquiry in the secondary classroom. Using the four types of inquiry from *Inquiry Mindset*, the

reader learns how to focus on the four pillars of inquiry: Explore a Passion, Aim for a Goal, Delve into your Curiosities, and Take on a New Challenge. Mackenzie helps the reader think about how Essential Questions need to be incorporated into the inquiry process and includes many excellent classroom examples.

In *Inquiry Mindset: Assessment Edition*, Mackenzie focuses on the importance of co-designing and co-constructing assessment with our students. This book outlines the beliefs, values, and frameworks that allow teachers to scaffold their inquiry assessment focused on student voice, deep understanding and student agency. Mackenzie also includes reflective prompts in each chapter to encourage the reader to focus on where they are at in their journey with inquiry assessment.



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