

IN THIS ISSUE

- Page 1**
- Co-President's Message
 - What Great Listeners Actually Do
- Page 2**
- Research First Nation Education – Bev Freedman
 - Chapter Executive
- Page 3**
- Doing Diversity: A History Lesson (Continued from page 1)
 - First Nation Education (continued from page 2)
- Page 4**
- Engaging Students in the Virtual Classroom – Tim Rudan
- Insert – FN Nation Education (continued)**



John Myers

Co-President's Message

Doing Diversity: A History Lesson – John Myers

In addition to COVID-19, our news is full of calls to redress dark periods in our past in which prejudice, racism, and even cultural genocide have shaped Canada. In a naïve belief that past experience might inform future actions, I present a brief “biased” history of a course that tried to explore issues of unity and diversity that still persist. I will conclude with some suggestions for future school policy in this area should provincial governments wish to “do the right thing”.

The Course

Canada's Multicultural Heritage was an optional course in Ontario high schools offered in grade 9 or 10 from 1973 to the mid-1980s when new governments and new priorities ended the experiment. This course was a response to the Multicultural Policy declaration in 1971 in recognition of our increasing diversity. For background on the development of this course see an article I wrote more many years ago (Myers, 2006). As for my early interest, I had taken a wide range of world history, social science, and religion courses that took me beyond Canada and Europe. Second, I wanted to be a better and more interesting teacher, and incorporating social history into my courses seemed a way to go, along with group work and inquiry-based teaching. Third, as the junior member of my department I would likely be teaching the new course. So, I had better learn how to do it well.

Perhaps the most influential reason for my interest in the emerging new course was the epiphany I had teaching the grade 10 Canadian history course, thanks to a couple of sisters of African descent. They were good students and wanted to do their independent essay assignments on Black history in Canada. I said, “Go ahead and teach me”. And they did! Mary Ann Shadd, the Buxton settlement, and a whole hidden history were revealed to me. So, when the Toronto School Board advertised for curriculum writers for this new course, I volunteered for one of the positions.

Half a dozen summers and curriculum projects later I was a curriculum consultant responsible for getting this course into schools. I had begun workshops for my school district in the late 1970s while still teaching high schoolers. Among my learnings in those years were the following:

- social history works: students were engaged as they saw themselves in the history they were studying and they worked hard,
- inquiry teaching works too, provided students have background knowledge, thinking skills, and time to research, discuss, and work through complex and emotional issues involving racism, prejudice, sexism, government policy and some aspects of Canadian history that are more shameful than celebratory,
- students were not interested in victim portrayal and definitely did not want to be preached at; “Don't preach” was the feedback and direction I got when I asked them for advice on doing my workshops for teachers in other schools,
- I had to think seriously about literacy: because I not only taught many students whose first language was not English, but also because finding appropriate resources at a suitable reading level for all of my students was difficult back then,
- looking at personal identity was magic! I showed an NFB field on Black history (*Fields of Endless Day*) and the students of African descent wanted me to reshoot it during lunch; my classroom was packed as every student of colour in the school showed up to watch.

These and other insights gave me, I think, some credibility when working in other schools. Nevertheless, there were resisters. Some of them liked the old British history course and did not want to change. Others thought that the course was fine for Toronto but not needed in the rest of Ontario. Because our approach was largely chronological focusing on

(Continued on page 3)

What Great Listeners Actually Do

John Myers attached this sketch note to his article. Sketch-Note by Tanmay Vora @tnvira, published by QAspire.com



Join PDK International
For News, Information & Member Renewal, call **1-800-766-1156**
or visit www.pdkint.org



First Nation Education – Bev Freedman

In the interests of disclosure, I am the child of immigrants enjoying settler privileges. I am not an expert and learn from Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and educators all the time. I have the privilege to work for and with several First Nations' education systems in the area of Manitoulin and Lake Huron. I am honoured to have developed friendships as I work

with FN colleagues. Acknowledging that colonialism and the residential school system were catastrophic for First Nations and that systemic inequities continue to have a negative effect in Indigenous communities, education continues to matter. Justice Sinclair recognized that education is both a source and the probable solution, when he stated, "education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it."¹

According to Statistics Canada (2017), Ontario is home to 24% of Canada's Indigenous Peoples. Approximately three percent of Ontarians identify as Indigenous and the largest grouping of Indigenous People is the Toronto area. Twenty-three percent of First Nations live on their reserve, and most live in urban settings. There are 120,600 Metis and approximately 4,000 Inuit who call Ontario home. One in four lives in remote, fly-in, and isolated communities which face unique challenges including access to services, education, medical care, and even fresh water.

Lifelong learning is integral to Indigenous worldviews. Formalized schooling came through colonization and the imposition of the residential school system. Its aim was to replace Indigenous ways of knowing, including cultures, traditions, and languages, with that of the dominant colonizer. For some, there is a mismatch between learning and their memories of enforced residential schooling. For others, their school experiences were neither successful nor happy. They did not see themselves represented in the curriculum. These factors influence their views of education and their relationship to their children's schooling. These families want the best for their children but may not see desirable pathways through formal traditional schooling with its rules and regulations, which must be followed to gain its rewards. They may feel disenfranchised, dealing with stressful life conditions, and so are disengaged.

According to Statistics Canada (2016), 68% of Indigenous adults aged 35 to 44, completed a high school diploma. For Indigenous adults aged 55 to 64, 59% graduated from high school.² In comparison, more than 80% of non-Indigenous Canadian adults aged 35 to 44 had a high school diploma. For adults in their twenties, 90% of non-Indigenous Canadians held a high school diploma, whereas for First Nations adults living off reserve, 75% finished high school and on reserve, only 48% of Indigenous adults in their twenties graduated.³ This demonstrates our Canadian education gap.⁴ These statistics reflect the consequences of past injustice, but the future is changing. Increasingly, Indigenous adults who initially did not complete their high school diploma/equivalency, are returning to upgrade, to complete their diploma, to achieve equivalency through the GED option (O'Donnell & Arriagada, 2019).

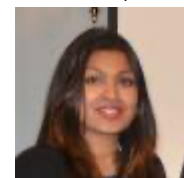
When they attain high school accreditation, Indigenous adults are more likely to be employed, and increasingly are continuing with formal education to obtain a post-secondary diploma or degree (O'Donnell & Arriagada, 2019). Obtaining high school and post-secondary credentials represents academic success and supports continued employment. It also improves adult oversight for today's children and youth in school. As Indigenous communities move to take back governance and control, decolonize, and re-enforce strength-based supports, educational outcomes will improve.

Dr. Pamela Toulouse in her research, states, "What matters to Indigenous peoples in education is that children, youth, adults, and Elders have the opportunity to develop their gifts in a respectful space" (2016:1). For FN students there are multiple choices. Most FN and Indigenous Peoples live in urban settings. Those on reserve might attend K-12 on reserve schooling such as Wiikwemkoong FN. Most may attend elementary schooling on reserve and leave for high school in a contiguous publicly funded district school board (DSB) paid through Education Service Agreements or ESA between the Board and FN funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). Others attend schools/classrooms in their local DSBs. Most on reserve education systems that provide some degree of K-12 learning, also provide educational opportunities to complete a high school diploma for adults who were early leavers, often through TVO's ILC.⁵ Educational funding of FN students by all levels of government remains inadequate, which too impacts educational outcomes.

(Continued on page 3)



Co-President
John Myers



Co-President
Nehal Patel



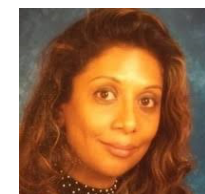
Membership Co-Chairs
Jelena Rakovac
Tim Rudan



Newsletter Editor
Shak Ahad



Treasurer
Movefa Nanton



Foundation Rep
Zenobia Omarali



Advisor
Ron Benson



Advisor
Bev Freedman
Chapter Executive
2021-2022

DOING DIVERSITY: A HISTORY LESSON (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

immigration and its impact, I seldom got criticized by history “purists”.

As I noted, new governments, new priorities, new policies, and new curriculum resulted in the demise of the course.

The Future?

In any future course or courses addressing some of our current issues there are changes we already see. For example, the use of inclusive language. My experiences with the earlier course tell me the following:

- don't preach! This includes to teachers as well as to students,
- policies without appropriate resources or time for teachers to practice are useless. There are many useful resources now, but they need to be selected, explored, and critiqued by students as well as by teachers,
- the research is in! Purposeful talk in groups, inquiry learning, and struggling with complex and controversial public issues work,
- teachers need more practice in working with active pedagogies: the one hour "drive by" workshop or "training" session is a waste of time and effort,
- we need to be confident in who we are and what we stand for; in my experience there seems to be an undercurrent of fear or at least hesitancy to tackle issues considered controversial; this means knowing our curriculum and knowing our provincial and school districts policies on diversity issues,
- we need to know our students and their communities, anticipate sensitive units and topics in advance, and prepare for them. Let me tell two stories from my own experience:
 - o a good news story: I used the Irish settlements in 19th century Canada in looking at the nature of bigotry and stereotyping. This was a safe choice as this group is accepted today, yet it enabled my diverse classroom to talk about tough issues after a framework for discussion and analysis had been established,
 - o a bad news story: I forgot to ask an African Canadian student I had taught in previous years if she could handle some pictures illustrating the abuse of slavery as part of a senior American history course. She could not and it was my fault for not checking with her in advance.

Pluralistic democracies work to the extent that we work through and resolve the messy, important, and inevitable conflicts that occur. Our students need to learn how to work in such a real adult world environment. Our future as a pluralistic democracy may depend on preparing the next generation to be better than us in this regard.

Reference

Myers, J. (2006a). The multicultural curriculum: Past reflections on a future course? *Education Today* 18 (3). 14-19.

PS

I am presenting an updated and greatly expanded version of this work at a national conference marking the 50th anniversary of Federal Multicultural Policy.

First Nation Education (Continued from page 2)

We know students learn when they feel a sense of belonging, feel safe and supported, feel respected, and see themselves in the curriculum. Students need to experience active, experiential, and authentic learning opportunities. Their voices need to count and their sense of identity nourished. Today, that includes access to nutrition, mental health and wellness supports, and differentiated instruction to accommodate different learning needs within a frame of high-quality academic learning. For First Nations' educational systems, quality education must be infused with Language, Culture, Heritage, and Identity.

Increasing the emphasis, whether on reserve or publicly run schools, is on Indigenizing the curriculum, content, pedagogy, and assessment by intentionally weaving in Language, Culture and a land-based approach to strengthen pride in Identity and a greater sense of belonging. It incorporates traditional knowledge of the Land and People that has been transmitted through generations. Indigenous Knowledge is evolving as Information and approaches evolve to meet changing situations using a worldview lens.

This approach requires communities coming together to support FN learning. Elders and Knowledge Keepers work with educators to integrate Language, Culture and Ecological lens into a culturally-based frame, which aligns to the Ontario curriculum. Educators must understand, learn, and work together to be more intentional in their approaches so students and their families see their place in the curriculum and recognize the decolonization of education.

Communities are collaborating and sharing resources and approaches such as the First Nations with Schools Collective⁶ composed of eight FN communities (two Haudenosaunee and six Anishnaabe FN communities). One example is “Jim Dumont, Elder and Eastern Doorway Chief of the Three Fires Midewiwin Society launched the project with a talk on March 9. This follows a year of exploration in culture-centred metrics that continues as First Nation education leaders grapple with little to no data infrastructure with which to manage data”.⁷

The following links will allow you to explore approaches to strengthening Indigenous knowledge in a holistic approach. We need to learn from and with our FN colleagues as part of our collective journey towards Reconciliation. We are at the beginning of our journey forward.

(Continue on insert)

Disclaimer: *The following are my personal experience and are not intended to discredit those who have created the possibility of continuing education for all during the pandemic.*

Globally, the challenges for educators to teach effectively during the pandemic have been epic. In Ontario, we have struggled with restrictions to lockdowns and tried to deliver instruction and provide guidance for all students. As a secondary school teacher, I felt overwhelmed in the virtual classroom, but I wish to share what I have learned in my efforts to create an engaging, online learning environment.

Personal welcomes

In the virtual classroom, greet students personally and generate a friendly candour. Students shared that it's important for the teacher to show their face regardless of the preferences of some of the students. My face created a positive first impression that reminded the students they are working with a person and not a machine.

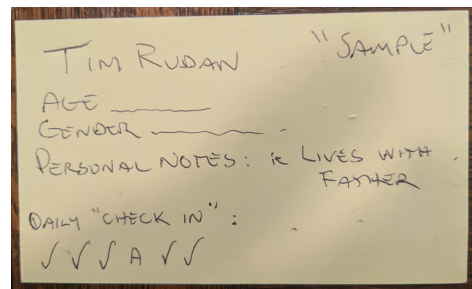
Rules and routines

Establishing rules and documenting them in a prominent spot along with the course outline is essential in the virtual classroom if engagement is a goal. Despite the grade or subject area, my greatest concern is to address and control instances where cyberbullying and other forms of harassment may result. Co-creation of personal and online conduct can create a more inclusive learning environment.

One routine could include posting a daily agenda even if the learning is intended to be asynchronous. I found that doing a daily warm-up was always a good way to engage the students. It was also a good way to follow up on asynchronous learning and also a way to create formative assessments situations.

The "Cards"

- Keep students' names on cue/recipe cards. I found this strategy gave me a hands-on way to make anecdotal notes, help me take attendance and track formative assessment. I credit Dr. Paul Vermette for this tool that works at all levels. The cards also helped me to learn names quickly and create informal groups.



Asynchronous learning and planning - If students are expected to learn asynchronously, plan to follow up with connections to the lesson in the virtual classroom. As mentioned, I used a "rechauffage" (warm up) to build upon what the students were assigned on their own; I found this expectation motivated students to work more independently. Just as with homework, students will not engage unless they see meaning and purpose. It is also important to make note of expectations for independent work in the course outline.

Assessment and evaluation: Personally, I am still learning how to effectively create online materials for assessment and evaluation. I consider myself fortunate to have worked with a team who openly shared materials with tips for modifications in the virtual classroom. However, regarding the tracking of marks,, I found using the online application *Brightspace* has brought more transparency for students and parents and guardians who could see the scoring of assignments on rubrics along with my comments. Students commented on being less anxious about marks especially toward the end of the course.

The pandemic has altered how we teach and the expectations for all teachers to maintain an online component when we return to the 'bricks and mortar' school seems highly likely. It has been an uphill battle for me, but gaining the confidence to navigate online learning platforms and tools has allowed me to adapt my practices along with thousands of other educators. Despite the learning medium, we know that an engaged classroom is a place where student achievement can meet and exceed expectations.

