

Voice

JUNE 2009 - VOL. 11 / NO. 5

SPECIAL ISSUE



LEADERS AND LEARNING
ETFO members at work

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Teacher Leadership Today

THIS IS THE THIRD ANNUAL special edition of *Voice*. In 2007 our special issue theme was teacher-led professional learning. In 2008 we focused on education and poverty. This time the spotlight is on leadership.

Almost every issue of *Voice* contains an article or two by teacher leaders, members who share their pedagogical strategies or their lesson plans and invite their colleagues to make use of their work.

This issue extends the notion of leadership to bring you stories of ETFO members who are leaders not only in the classroom but in their federation and their communities.

Nicole Walter Rowan and Meghan Jewell describe a profession learning program that came about because teachers took the initiative to find resources for the learning they needed.

[A Big Idea Comes to Life](#)



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Everyone learns when experienced teachers work with colleagues at the beginning of their careers.

[A Tale of Two Mentors](#)



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One story in the 2008 special issue featured the Model Schools for Inner Cities program that operates in high needs neighbourhoods of the Toronto District School Board. As part of this initiative, ETFO member Harpreet Ghuman works to expand the ways in which educators support students.

[Leading and Learning with the Community](#)



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Former staff member, Wendy Matthews, retired from ETFO but not from teaching or leadership. After working with teachers in Cambodia, she has become an education advisor to an international development organization.

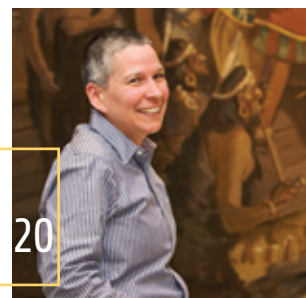
[Adventures in Leadership: Bringing a Lifetime of Learning to Rural Cambodia](#)



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Dr. Susan Dion's article focuses on the distinctive leadership style of Aboriginal women across Canada.

[Aboriginal Women Practising Leadership](#)



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Teacher Leadership Today

Elizabeth Barnett became a leader because she was ‘tapped on the shoulder.’ She continues that tradition as she combines community activism with a full teaching load.

A Tap on the Shoulder Bears Fruit



ETFO activist, Darline Pomeroy, is a First Nations woman whose years as a volunteer in a national organization have enriched her teaching.

Following Her Passion Creates a Leader



As president of the Kingston & District Labour Council, Debi Wells illustrates ETFO’s connection to the broader labour movement.

Teacher, Union Leader, Social Activist



There are many roads to leadership. For Laurel Liddicoat-Newton the leadership journey started with workplace health and safety.

Scratch and Win: Workplace Illness Creates a Leader



Local leaders are the face of ETFO in the community. Dave Wing grew into the role of local leader in Kawartha Pine Ridge with mentoring and support from colleagues.

Taking on the Challenge of Local Leadership



Not all ETFO leaders are teachers and not all are in elementary schools. Educational assistant, Lori Kuzyk, is an award-winning leader.

A Quiet Leader Is Recognized



The profiles in this issue are a mere sampling of the leaders among ETFO members. Every day, in classrooms and communities across the province and abroad, ETFO members work to make a difference. We celebrate all of your efforts and achievements.

Johanna Brand.

COVER PHOTO: RICK MATTHEWS



DAVID CLEGG - President, ETFO

Teachers Can't Ignore Politics

EARLY IN MY TEACHING CAREER I CAME TO

understand the extent to which public education is intricately entwined with politics. Governments of all stripes use public education to demonstrate commitment to their political goals—be they cost-cutting, social justice and equity, or economic growth. I learned very early on that teachers' working conditions are often affected by seemingly arbitrary political acts.

When I began teaching in 1992 I looked forward to a career as an intermediate classroom teacher. I believed naively then, as many new teachers do, that I could simply shut my classroom door and the politics of education would not enter my life as a teacher.

Then a recession hit and, while it was not as severe as the one we are experiencing today, Ontario was particularly affected. The province lost industries and jobs. Seeking to reduce its budget deficit, the NDP provincial government announced restraint measures and forced a 'social contract' upon various public sector unions.

For teachers this meant an agreement that froze our salaries. There would be no incremental increases, no moving up the grid. This agreement created a generational divide: those new to the profession, not already earning the maximum salary, bore the brunt of the burden.

I was one of those teachers, and the unfairness of that agreement moved me to become involved in federation activities. Just eight years after I first stepped into the classroom I became the president of the 3,500 member York Region Local, having served as chief negotiator, political action chair, and local vice-president.

The 90s were a decade of tremendous politically-driven change in education. The social contract was followed by huge cuts to

education budgets made by the Conservative governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. These governments denigrated public servants, unions, and teachers in particular. Government proposals to test teachers implied that many were incompetent. Mandatory "voluntary activities" were legislated, although never proclaimed into law. Moves to institute standardized testing of students underlined the belief that without external 'validators' teachers could not be relied upon to do their jobs.

Those of us active in teacher federations worked to protect public education. We staged days of protest and a two-week job action in 1997. I became more convinced than ever that political action was key to improving teaching and public education.

The government forced amalgamation of local governments and school districts in the name of 'efficiency'. In 1998, in the midst of this, ETFO was created. I joined the executive of the newly-formed federation in 1999. I became a vice-president in 2002, first vice-president in 2005, and president in 2007, some 14 years after first becoming active.

My work as an ETFO activist would not have been sustainable if I did not believe in the need for social justice and equity in teaching. It began with wanting fairness for young teachers. Today we are working for fairness for all elementary teachers. Our campaign to *Close the Gap* has been at its heart a campaign to create equity between teachers and students in the elementary panel and those in secondary schools.

My own activism in ETFO made me believe I could make a difference. The strength of our union is its people. I encourage you to use your skills and talents to work to make a difference for yourself and your colleagues—and, ultimately, for the students we teach.



GENE LEWIS - General Secretary, ETFO

ETFO Is a Union of Leaders

ETFO IS AN ORGANIZATION MADE UP OF 73,000 potential leaders. Most of our members chose education as a career because they wanted to lead and support others, to help them grow and achieve. Without that impulse it's unlikely you would have wanted to become a teacher in the first place.

There is tremendous leadership potential within our membership: people with the skills and ability to make a difference not only in their own classrooms and schools but in their communities and their federation. Let's recognize that not every educator is in a position to do more; coping with work and family responsibilities stretches some to their limits, especially at the start of their careers. However, assuming greater leadership is an option for many.

Why would you want to step outside your comfort zone and start to take on a bigger role? It is in your own self-interest to do so. The choice is simple: you can be an integral part of making things happen, or be someone who lets things happen to you. You can live in your own classroom, or you can dream bigger and recognize that you and your students are affected every day by events that take place outside those four walls. Don't limit yourself and don't limit your students.

Certainly, to take a step toward leadership is to take a risk. You may put yourself forward and you may initially be accepted – or not. Your skills may be recognized – or not. Starting small and learning from those around you will be critical to your success. Are you involved in setting up a professional learning community

in your school? Are you engaged in an ETFO leadership training program? Are you working as part of a team, offering support to a community organization? Are you contributing to your local? The key to success is making a commitment, working at it, and having the determination to succeed. Essential to your efforts is the desire, not just to become a leader, but to make a difference.

How do people become leaders? Almost all of you who are in leadership positions now will remember the tap on the shoulder, the invitation you got from someone else to join a group, to come to a meeting, to make a few phone calls.

Good leaders make sure they extend the invitation to others. They understand that there is a pool of people who want to be involved and who have lots to offer. They recognize that there are those who need a nudge to encourage them to take that first step.

As an aspiring leader, you must be prepared to send the signals that you are ready to take part. As a practising leader you must be able to recognize those signals and encourage those aspirations. But for both aspiring and existing leaders the motivation is identical – a drive to make things better for others.

By expanding your horizons in this way you will grow, both personally and professionally. You won't go from a shrinking violet to a sunflower in one step, but over time, slowly but surely, you will gain skills, knowledge, and experience that will enrich you and enhance the lives of everyone around you.



A Big Idea Comes to Life

BY NICOLE WALTER ROWAN
AND MEGHAN JEWELL

PHOTOS: ALAN DICKSON

IMAGINE . . . classroom teachers directing their own professional development, conducting *their* own research in *their* own classrooms. Having access to leading North American researchers and staff developers. Having time to support each other. Having funding to make it possible. Imagine . . . nine teachers in Thunder Bay are doing just that.

THE CHALLENGE:

Learning a new way of teaching math

Over the past 20 years, methods of teaching mathematics have shifted, from keeping students busy with the rote learning of disconnected facts and procedures to teaching for automaticity and flexibility and for a deep understanding of mathematical concepts.¹ Today, communication and community are critical in teaching and learning math. Classroom experiences

are structured so that students will develop mathematical strategies and ideas as they work toward making sense of problems. Students also learn to collaborate, responding directly to the ideas of others that may conflict with their own. In such a community, students learn to articulate their perceptions, listen to each other, and analyze each other's ideas.

As classroom teachers at Agnew H. Johnston Public School in Thunder Bay, we wanted to provide our students with the most appropriate and progressive learning experiences. We knew that every year there are students who “just don't get it,” we were aware that we needed to do things differently. We wanted to teach math in a manner that ensured *all* students learned. Some of us simply weren't comfortable with math ourselves and didn't have the confidence to know where to begin.

The reform movement in math-

ematics education is something we hadn't experienced ourselves or seen in practice. We didn't have the background knowledge, and the expertise wasn't available in our school community. Trying to squeeze one more thing into an already packed instructional day was also a daunting task. As Jacqueline Watts, a Junior teacher, pointed out, “There is so much in the math curriculum in grades 4 and 5. Trying to tackle all of that *and* do it in a new way was pretty intimidating.”

THE SOLUTION:

Designing our own learning

To put challenging instructional theory into practice we turned to each other – kindergarten to grade 5 teachers, English and French Immersion teachers.

Our story goes back a few years. Nicole Walter Rowan's professional relationship with Dr. Alex Lawson

began when Lawson was a graduate student and spent time in Walter Rowan's classroom. Lawson, now an associate professor at Lakehead University's Faculty of Education, urged her to attend workshops offered through the Mathematics in the City program at City College in New York.² Thanks to a small MISA grant, she was able to do that and it was there she met Antonia (Toni) Cameron, the facilitator of her first workshop.

At the end of the 2006–2007 school year, the Lakehead board's elementary and student success coordinators agreed to fund a two-day workshop that introduced members of our teaching team to Dr. Lawson and Toni Cameron. The workshop took place in July and it increased teachers' enthusiasm for additional learning.

Subsequently, ETFO's Teachers Learning Together (TLT) project made it possible for some teachers at our school to conduct a small action research project in their classrooms. Diane Scocchia, a French resource support teacher, was among them: "We started with the 'Five Productive Talk Moves' identified in the book *Classroom Discussions*.³ We quickly realized there was much more to learn." Developing this type of thinking seems straightforward at first glance, but genuinely embedding it in the classroom culture takes skill, practice, and professional support.

TODAY, COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ARE CRITICAL IN TEACHING AND LEARNING MATH.

ETFO staff also made Nicole Walter Rowan aware of the Ministry of Education's Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP). The teaching team applied for and received a grant of just over \$100,000. This funding made possible Toni Cameron's visits to Thunder Bay. It allowed two team members to travel to New York City to observe and participate in collaborative learning community meetings led by Cameron. The grant also paid for release time so that the team could work together.

LAYERS OF LEARNING

The team built its project around coaching and research. Lawson's leadership ensured research components of the project were grounded in sound practice, and Cameron's guidance provided the team with an effective model for coaching and co-teaching.

Teachers played a variety of roles in the team's loosely structured grade-level groups. We planned focus lessons together and observed each other teaching, shared and celebrated successful lessons, and problem-solved when things did not go as planned. Finding a credible and manageable means to track our professional learning was a priority.

Ultimately, with the help of Lawson and Cameron, the team decided to analyze a video.⁴ We watched and made notes about teacher actions and student behaviours that provided evidence of the classroom culture. This exercise allowed us to document the baseline of our understanding.

Having spent a year scrutinizing our lessons, analyzing student work,





examining our questions, and exploring the role of student talk, we believed that we had a fairly deep understanding of how teachers' actions impact student learning in a successful reform classroom. We were surprised by what we saw.

When he first viewed the video, Gaetan Roy, a grade 5 French Immersion teacher, was taken aback. "The teacher was so skilled at facilitating the class discussion. And the level of dialogue among the children supporting their reasoning and explaining their process, questioning and defending. In grade 3!"

BUILDING CLASSROOM COMMUNITIES

We focused on the "Five Talk Moves" (see sidebar) to build communities of learners in our classrooms. All of the social structures *appeared* to be in place. Students were looking at the speaker, they could restate someone else's reasoning, and they sometimes even politely disagreed with each other's ideas. But Cameron's first visit to our school exposed a problem.

What was missing? There *was* social accountability in our classrooms: everyone had the right to solve the problem in their own way and all ideas about process were accepted. Students talked about their solutions and took turns explaining their thinking. It was a safe place to learn; but students did not challenge solutions they did not understand. They did not defend their opinions if someone disagreed. They were not motivated to express their ideas with a clarity that would ensure others understood their thinking. They weren't really talking to each other as young mathematicians. Academic accountability was not yet an expectation within our classrooms.

As teachers, we struggled with this process among ourselves. Being rig-

orous in critiquing each other was a huge challenge. One team member remarked recently how much she has grown in this respect. At the beginning, she took feedback personally, feeling that it was a criticism of her students and of her skills as a teacher.

It was also hard for teachers to give feedback: we didn't want to criticize. Sometimes we didn't even see what was missing or know what we should be focusing on, and when we did, we sometimes lacked the vocabulary or clarity to discuss it.

OUR LEARNING HAS AN IMPACT

All of the teachers testified to changes in their practice, their beliefs about student learning, and many positive outcomes in both teacher and student learning. "It challenged my thinking about what's important in math instruction. There needed to be less emphasis on the final product and more value given to the process," Lynn Crookham, a grade 1/2 teacher, said.

Susan Momot, a kindergarten French Immersion teacher, admitted she initially had reservations about the language barrier. "The children were already good listeners and considerate of their peers but now there are significant changes. For example, I have a little boy who will start out by saying, '(Name) has a good point, *but* . . . And they are very adept at using the phrase *parce que* now. This approach works in French Immersion as well."

Jennifer McGuire, also a Primary French Immersion teacher, described how her practice has changed: "I now prompt further student participation with carefully planned questions, use wait time more deliberately, and am comfortable with the silence that sometimes follows. The students must know it's their responsibility, not to



MODEL LESSONS WERE VIDEOTAPE
FOR A VARIETY OF USES. TEAM
MEMBERS WILL USE THEM TO ASSIST
THEIR OWN LEARNING.

just listen, but to understand each other's reasoning rather than waiting for the teacher to jump in and clarify."

"I now see that students are very capable of doing more challenging math than I expected and they are really enjoying it," said kindergarten teacher, Tasha Vlotaros. "They are counting and adding by 10s, 5s, and combinations of the two. They are interested in how their classmates are finding solutions and excited to express their own ideas!"

"I'm beginning to see strong thinking in students who I originally thought were not strong in math," said Sarah Gerry, a grade 1 French Immersion teacher. She found that learning to listen for students' thinking provided valuable insight.

THE FIVE PRODUCTIVE TALK MOVES

1. Revoicing ("So you're saying that . . . ?")
2. Asking a student to restate someone else's reasoning ("Can you repeat what he just said in your own words?")
3. Asking students to apply their own reasoning to someone else's reasoning ("Do you agree or disagree and why?")
4. Prompting students for further participation ("Would someone like to add on to what she said?")
5. Using wait time ("Take your time; we'll wait . . .")

(from *Classroom Discussions*)

TEACHERS WORK TOGETHER

Lawson and Cameron's influence on the depth of learning was irrefutable; however, we credited a great deal of our growth to collegial support. The collaboration was both planned and incidental.

We had lofty goals – to increase our content and pedagogical knowledge and improve assessment practices in

mathematics in one school year. We did it through co-teaching and coaching, observing students, collegial discussions and sharing our experiences.

Cristine Sillen, a JK/SK teacher at École Gron Morgan Public School, was the only team member not at Agnew. "Being involved in the pre-planning, the hatching of thoughts and ideas, and then watching another teacher facilitate




the lesson has been a wonderful growth opportunity,” she said. However, Sillen found working alone challenging: “Having the opportunity to quickly bounce ideas off other participating teachers would have had a huge impact.”

Our approach made a difference in the culture of our school, according to Principal Joy Petrick: “It has contributed to a new level of professional openness. Teachers have taken huge risks professionally, and have done so with all of their colleagues watching and giving them feedback. The professional accountability and collegial support crosses divisional boundaries. In our schoolwide literacy PLCs, it has changed the way we talk about our practice and its impact on student learning.”

Judith Sowder, a renowned researcher of mathematics education, wrote that teachers engaged in changing how they teach math need to be dedicated to becoming “serious learners of practice rather than learners of strategies

and activities.”⁵ It was not enough to read about, try, and discuss new lessons, or to implement a new list of activities to do with students. We had to become a learning community committed to “lateral accountability” and examining our practice to see how it could be improved.⁶

REACHING OUT

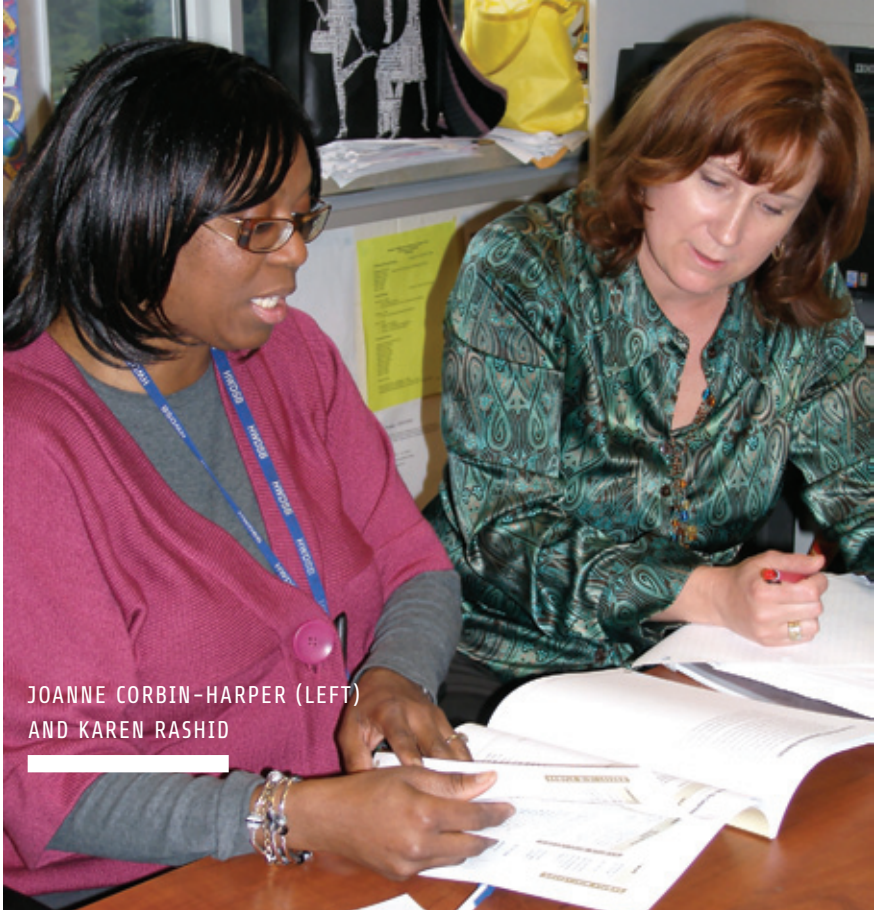
We have taken our practice public. Early on we partnered with a TLLP team from the Rainy River District School Board. We have opened our classrooms to LDSB central resource teachers, Lakehead University master’s students, and student teachers. We had visits from teachers from the Superior Greenstone District School Board and members of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. At times working in a fishbowl has been a little overwhelming; but everyone who took part insists we would invite another hundred people in to observe before giving up this remarkable experience. 

.....
Nicole Walter Rowan, a member of the Lakehead ETFO local, is a grade 2/3 teacher at Agnew H. Johnston Public School in Thunder Bay. Meghan Jewell is a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University. The project has received a second TLLP grant to continue its work in 2009–2010.

RESOURCES/NOTES

1. M. Battista, “The Mathematical Miseducation of America’s Youth,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(6), 425–433.
2. Mathematics in the City, established in 1995, is a collaboration between City College of New York and the Freudenthal Institute in the Netherlands. It is both a think tank and a national centre of inservice for K–8 mathematics education. For more information visit the website: mic3217.addr.com.
3. Suzanne Chapin, Catherine O’Connor, and Nancy C. Anderson, *Classroom Discussions: Using Math Talk to Help Students Learn, Grades 1–6*. (Sausalito, CA: Math Solutions Publications, 2003).
4. Maarten Dolk and Catherine Fosnot, *Turkey Investigations, Grades 3–5: A Context for Multiplication*, in the *Young Mathematicians at Work* series (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005).
5. Judith Sowder, “The Mathematical Education and Development of Teachers” in *Second Handbook of Research on Mathematics Teaching and Learning*, F. Lester, ed (Reston: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2007), pp. 157–224. Also see: D. L. Ball and D. K. Cohen, “Developing Practice, Developing Practitioners: Toward a Practice-Based Theory of Professional Education” in *Teaching as the Learning Profession: Handbook of Policy and Practice*, L. Darling-Hammond and G. Sykes, eds. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), pp. 3–32.
6. B. Lord, “Teachers’ Professional Development: Critical Collegueship and the Role of Professional Communities” in *The Future of Education: Perspectives on National Standards in America*, N. Cobb, ed. (New York: College Board, 1994), pp. 175–204.

BY JODIE HOWCROFT



JOANNE CORBIN-HARPER (LEFT)
AND KAREN RASHID

Lead On: A Tale of Two Mentors



ANDREW THOMPSON AND
JENNY SETO-VANDERLIP

PHOTOS: JODIE HOWCROFT

Once upon a time two new teachers embarked on their first year of teaching . . .

THANKFULLY, they did not take this journey alone.

As part of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) that started in 2006–2007, newly certified teachers have the opportunity to work directly with and benefit from the leadership of a mentor for a full year.

Mentors play an important role in creating the possibility for happy endings for new teachers: that despite the stress and demands of their first year, they will become highly effective professionals who enjoy a fulfilling career.

Let's meet two of these mentors.



The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board had a mentoring program in place well before NTIP began. Now there is a dedicated team of over 200 volunteer mentors. During two training sessions, mentors meet other mentors, and share ideas, experiences, and questions. They receive a Ministry of Education handbook and they also have access to a Web-based conference provided by the board. They are supported by board staff and also work with their school principals.

NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM (NTIP)

Since the 2006–2007 school year, every district school board has been required to provide an NTIP for certified teachers new to the profession (including teachers trained out of province) who have been hired into permanent positions (full-time or part-time). The NTIP must include the following components:

1. orientation for new teachers by the school and the school board.
2. professional development and training in specified areas.
3. mentoring programs established by the school board and principals.
4. two teacher performance appraisals for each new teacher in the first 12 months of hire.²



JO-ANN CORBIN HARPER

Jo-Ann Corbin-Harper is passionate about teaching.

A grade 6 teacher at Ancaster Meadow School, Corbin-Harper has been with the Hamilton-Wentworth DSB for 16 years. Before that, she taught in Barbados. Not one to shy away from leadership roles, she takes on student teachers, has served as a literacy lead, is an ETFO steward, and has led literacy in-services.

Corbin-Harper's desire to guide others and to help develop their teaching skills led her to become a mentor. She completed the application form (which must include a principal's recommendation) five years ago and hasn't looked back.

Her protégé Karen Rashid is in the classroom next door, also teaching grade 6 – an ideal situation. Finding time to meet formally can be challenging; proximity allows for many useful, informal chats, say Rashid and Corbin-Harper.

Witnessing the professional growth of her protégés is Corbin-Harper's reward: "To see you've helped that person develop as a teacher; they've taken the ideas you shared and shaped them to be their own."

She defines a good mentor as "someone who listens, who understands, who is a guide, who knows the curriculum, and who realizes that they can learn from their protégé too."

Corbin-Harper and Rashid are clearly comfortable with each other, speaking openly and adding a little good-natured humour to the conversation. Mentors do not evaluate their protégés, which allows for this level of trust and comfort. According to ETFO, "A mentor is not a supervisor or an evaluator. A mentor is a colleague, a coach, a support, and a resource."¹

Karen Rashid feels her relationship with Corbin-Harper is one of the greatest advantages of the NTIP program: "Knowing I am not alone, knowing I have someone to support me, having a safety net and a sounding board makes such a difference."

For mentors there are substantial benefits too. "I'm a little more open-minded, more patient," Corbin-Harper states. "I love to share ideas and I get fantastic ideas from my protégé. I feel lucky to be able to help shape another person's career." Her wish is that more teachers would get involved "to realize the value of the program."

JENNY SETO-VANDERLIP

This former bank manager turned teacher has taken on many leadership roles. At Ray Lewis School, where she has a grade 5 class, Seto-Vanderlip co-leads peer mediation, hosts student teachers, and is involved with differentiated instruction. She has served on the directions team and as literacy lead, and is currently the math lead.

She has been mentoring for three of the eight years she has been teaching and, like Jo-Ann Corbin-Harper, she is passionate about her profession.

“I like to help take away any fears about teaching and help new teachers understand that teaching is both wonderful and rewarding,” she says. “I love having the ability to share ideas, experiences, to listen, to coach and guide, help others get comfortable in their new job, focus on the positive, and promote everything that is great about teaching. It's all about the kids.” She also likes getting ideas from her protégés and learning from them.

Andrew Thompson, Jenny Seto-

Vanderlip's current protégé, teaches grade 5 and Junior French at Westwood School, seven kilometres away. Their situation does not allow for brief, informal collaboration. Seto-Vanderlip and Thompson meet formally, about once a month. Both enjoy the flexibility of the mentoring program. They receive guidelines, but it is up to them to choose when they will meet and what they do.

Seto-Vanderlip has attended in-services with her protégés and helped with report cards, assessment, and program planning. She has invited her protégés to observe her or a colleague teach.

A good mentor, according to Jenny Seto-Vanderlip, is “available, listens, guides, coaches. It is someone who is positive and someone who loves the job.”

The best part of mentoring she feels occurs when the protégé “has grown, is more confident, and still calls you to share great ideas; there is that continuance of working together.”

Interestingly, both new teachers – Andrew Thompson and Karen Rashid

– intend to become mentors themselves. “Mentoring has been absolutely valuable,” says Thompson. “I’ve experienced the benefits and now I can’t wait to mentor in the future.”

Mentors give every first-year teacher the potential to prosper. The hope is that every new teacher’s story ends something like this:

Thanks to the guidance and leadership of a mentor, the protégés survived and thrived during their first year of teaching. They learned that teaching is, indeed, wonderful, and they taught happily and effectively ever after. ✓

NOTES

1. “New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP): Performance Appraisal for New Teachers, Role of Mentors,” PRS Matters Bulletin. (Toronto: Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, March 2007). Available at etfo.ca/Advice for Members/PRS Matters Bulletins.
2. Ibid.
3. Partnering for Success: Getting the Most from Ontario’s New Teacher Induction Program. A Resource Handbook for Mentors (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008), p. 5.



EFFECTIVE MENTORING IS...

STRUCTURED and purposeful, based on defined goals developed with the new teacher and addressing specific aspects of teacher development over time.

SUPPORTIVE and conducive to fostering a collegial and collaborative professional learning community within the school that supports professional development and builds professional capacity.

DIFFERENTIATED and tailored to the learning needs of the new teacher, and his or her background and training.³

LEADING AND LEARNING WITH THE COMMUNITY



PHOTOS: ANNE de HAAS

BY HARPREET GHUMAN

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG LEARNER there was a clearly defined understanding of the role of teachers in schooling and in their interactions with students and families. Teachers were “academic” instructors who stood or sat at a distance from us, the students. On most occasions they asked us to refer to instructions written on the board or to listen carefully to what they said. Lucky students had one of those rare teachers that conversed with them about current events. And in the rarest of moments, we were engaged in learning that was interactive and enjoyable with a teacher whose class we looked forward to attending.

Growing up in the Jane and Finch community of Toronto in the mid 1980s, I felt quite fortunate to meet friends and families from so many different countries.

Their stories taught me a lot about their diverse cultural and religious beliefs, and this in turn broadened my own understanding of the world. However, I did not sense that this linguistic and cultural knowledge had any currency at school. We were always focused on “learning” that included mastering the English language and not speaking our first language.

Thankfully many scholars and educators are now urging that such cultural knowledge be recognized as assets in students and families, and this perception has changed teaching practice to some degree. Pedro Noguera and many other scholars have long called for close partnerships and collaboration between schools and communities.² What defines the roles, responsibilities, and boundaries of an educator in supporting students? From teaching

Teachers need to know more than the 3 Rs; if you don't know the community your students live in – the social, racial dynamics – you won't be as effective. Teachers aren't meant to be tourists in the neighbourhood where they teach.

– Dr. Patrick Solomon¹

curriculum to engaging students in extracurricular activities, there are a variety of ways teachers connect and work with students that can be rewarding for both them and their students.

In my career, however, I have found that there is no better way to connect with and truly understand the diverse experiences and talents of students and their families than to be a visible member in the community where I am teaching. Interactions with students, families, and various community stakeholders can have a profound impact on the cultural sensitivity and awareness of school staff, establish trust and partnerships between the school and its community, and ultimately enhance the possibilities of student success regardless of the barriers that may exist. This is particularly important in urban or inner-city schools, which are often located in neighbourhoods that are highly diverse in their ethnocultural makeup.

THE MODEL SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

Schools must see well beyond their walls to better understand the complexities of their communities and the diverse teaching practices needed to educate our children. In 2005,



the Toronto District School Board launched Model Schools for Inner Cities, an initiative built on a vision of equity and inclusiveness that specifically supports schools in high-needs neighbourhoods in Toronto.

The five essential components of the initiative laid the framework for a different kind of teaching and learning, and these have had a great impact on my work:

1. innovation in teaching/learning and in school structure
2. support services to meet the social, emotional, and physical well being of students
3. school as the heart of the community
4. research, review, and evaluation of students and programs
5. commitment to share successful practice.³

In each of the inner-city neighbourhoods served by the Model Schools initiative, a number of schools serve as models and leaders for a cluster of high-needs schools. “High needs” is defined in part by the Learning Opportunities Index, which measures the challenges faced by families in their experience of public schooling.

Part of my role as model-school lead teacher at Firgrove Public School involves collaborating with administrators, school staff, and community partners to ensure that these five essential components make up the lens through which all stakeholders view teaching and learning.

A NEW TAKE ON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Two projects that have enabled me to bring educators together to learn more about the students they teach and the community they work in are the Faith Walk and Community Outreaching.

Co-ordinating a Faith Walk for staff from the various schools to visit the different places of worship and learn about the cultural and religious beliefs and values of their students was an important step in broadening what the teachers understood as “professional learning.” In addition to the latest literacy and numeracy initiatives from the ministry or our school board, professional learning must also encompass truly knowing our students so that we can actually teach them literacy and numeracy effectively. Staff from the cluster schools visited a number of places of worship including the Jaffari Islamic Centre in Thornhill, and the BAPS Swaminarayan complex in Etobicoke.

As part of their visit, administrators and staff were able to speak with faith leaders and address some of their own misconceptions. This experience has helped educators understand their students and families and has led them to adapt their practices to be more culturally sensitive. Whether it is putting in place religious accommodations (e.g., time for prayers, supporting students through fasting), or understanding children's food restrictions, this type of professional learning benefits everyone.

The Community Outreaching initiative was a professional learning experience that took educators into the community to see and experience the neighbourhood their students live in and its support services. Initially some staff asked why I was organizing this excursion and whether it was mandatory. Not only is “School as the heart of the community” an integral aspect of the Model School vision, it is also a strategy to shift the way some educators understand teaching and learning. We know that many curricular initiatives have come and gone with little or no impact on the achievement of students in marginalized communities. Student, community, and school failure is not accepted in middle-class communities, and we should not accept such failures in the Jane and Finch community or anywhere else. Instead, we must continue to explore and incorporate new ways of teaching that remove the systemic barriers that exist for our students.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN MANY WAYS

In organizing the Faith Walk and Community Outreaching programs we were responding to the urgent need to support our disengaged learners. Of course, having release time during the day to take part was beneficial, especially for those staff that questioned the projects’ premises. This was an important first step in reframing our ongoing conversation of what professional learning is. During half-day visits, staff in groups of three or four were able to go to their students’ neighbourhoods, spend time in local community centres, malls, and hospitals, and connect with community agencies and area service providers.

One teacher recalls her experience: “Families seeing us in the community were eager to share insights with us that they felt were important. I



WE MUST CONTINUE TO EXPLORE AND INCORPORATE NEW WAYS OF TEACHING THAT REMOVE THE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS THAT EXIST FOR OUR STUDENTS.


remember thinking: I’ve worked in this neighbourhood for years and did not realize how many agencies were available to support some of my students and their families.”

NEW CONNECTIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY

As part of the outreach experience, staff returned to their schools with a formal report of where they had been and what community agencies they were now liaising with. For some, this meant seeing whether their students could read at the local seniors’ centre while others found peer mentors and big brothers/sisters for younger students. Some staff commented on the number of homework clubs and tutoring services available at the local library and in the community centres. These experiences not only deepened their own understanding of students’ lives in the community but more importantly increased their awareness of the many services that they could connect families to.

Such perceptions are not the traditional indicators of teachers’ engagement in their professional practice. But community engagement and cultural sensitivity are particularly imperative in the urban or inner-city context if schools and communities are to move forward. I have experienced first-hand the impact these can have on student morale and on the creation of a strong foundation of trust between schools and communities. A genuinely open commitment on the part of educators to consider new perspectives in meeting students’ needs is vital to our mutual success.

I continue to be inspired by the positive relationships staff have built with students and families through such experiences and believe that we can never underestimate the power and influence these relationships have on student learning.

If students in our schools are disengaged, we must ask why and in turn put in place practices that allow all children to reach their full potential. As teachers we often talk about the “one teacher who made a difference” on our learning. We must create schools, boards and systemic structures that do what these special teachers did for us. This “culturally relevant teaching” validates student realities and reflects a continued shift towards authentic student and community engagement. 

NOTES

1. Louise Brown, “Where Teachers Learn Diversity. Unusual York Program Urges Aspiring Educators to Focus on Community, Not Just the Classroom.” *Toronto Star*, May 21, 2008.
2. P.A. Noguera and J. Y. Wing (eds.), *Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).
3. Toronto District School Board, *Model Schools for Inner Cities Task Force Report*, May 2005. Available at tdsb.on.ca/Programs/Documents, Reports and Research.

BY CHARLOTTE MORGAN

WENDY AND STUDENTS AT O'CHRAP SCHOOL
FIND A WELCOME SHADY SPOT IN 40+C HEAT.

WENDY MATTHEWS loves a challenge. She found one worthy of her talents in Samlaut, Cambodia.

In 2007, as Matthews was preparing to retire as ETFO's coordinator of Professional Services, the federation was approached by Right To Play, an international humanitarian organization that uses sports and play programs to promote development in countries affected by war, poverty, and disease.¹ Right To Play was beginning a partnership with the Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation (MJP), a conservation and community development organization with a special focus on the impoverished villages in northwest Cambodia.² MJP's Millennium Village Project needed a seasoned professional to help define its education component.³ This would be a one-month contract.

Matthews was soon en route to Samlaut, an impoverished area in northern Cambodia that had been the last stronghold of the Khmer Rouge. She became MJP's education advisor.

"I arrived in September, Cambodia's rainy season," Matthews recalls. "It was at least 30 degrees, and very humid. Thick mud made the roads almost impassable. Flooding encouraged mosquitoes and malaria. Acclimatizing to the environment was a challenge."

Adventures in Leadership: BRINGING A LIFETIME OF LEARNING TO RURAL CAMBODIA

PHOTO: NARAP OURM

THE SAMLAUT MILLENNIUM VILLAGE PROJECT consists of 10 villages with a population of 5,000 spread over 600 square kilometres. The area contains most of the region's forests, fresh water, ecosystems, and endangered species. It also has more landmines than any other place in Asia.

"Apart from the climate, the most obvious challenge was language," Matthews says. "I was fortunate that Narap Ourm, MJP's education coordinator, was able to translate into Khmer for me. Initially I was struck by everything that wasn't there in terms of infrastructure. Then I shifted focus to see

what *was* there and to build on it to make a difference."

Traditionally, Cambodian students learn by rote. With class sizes of 40 or more and few material resources, teaching and learning is a challenge. Teachers earn about one dollar a day, leaving them well below the poverty line. To make ends meet, some teach twice during the staggered school day – once in the morning and once in the afternoon – and also engage in private tutoring.

To understand what change was necessary in Samlaut's four primary schools and one junior secondary



PHOTOS: WENDY MATTHEWS



school, Matthews quickly studied existing school governance, curriculum, and teacher qualifications. She, Narap, and his assistant, Kethya, worked together to develop some practical goals, one of which was to encourage active learning for both students and teachers.

“It was serendipity that the Cambodian government’s recent child-friendly school policy also supported active learning,” Matthews said. “However, that information was slow in reaching Samlaut, and it wasn’t supported by curriculum or resources. We decided to define what the policy meant for us.”

THEY WERE SOON READY TO SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE, and planned a two-day pilot workshop for 18 teachers. Matthews used role-playing and other strategies to help prepare Narap and Kethya to lead it. Necessary materials were carried down muddy tracks to Samlaut on the back of Narap’s motorcycle. They set up the room for group work, not for the lecture format familiar to Cambodian teachers.

“We started early because the school had no electricity. Reading participants’ body language, I could see there was some miscommunication between

what was intended and what was received in Khmer. Overall, though, the workshop went really well,” Matthews says proudly.

By now, with her one-month contract coming to an end, Matthews had been working seven days a week from morning to night, battling the heat and rain, and working in an unfamiliar language. More remained to be done and her goals were ambitious: “I wanted to leave a plan outlining the next year’s projects and timing. The plan continued to build relationships with stakeholder groups such as village councils, the district and provincial education offices, and UNICEF. These links are now an important part of Samlaut’s network and ensure the previously neglected region stays on the government’s radar.”

If, after that initial visit, Matthews thought she was leaving Cambodia behind, she was gladly mistaken. She has returned twice, in March and again in November 2008. On that last visit she had company: Beth Gunding, former ESL coordinator for the Peel District School Board, provided three days of intensive literacy training to Samlaut’s Primary teachers, and Right To

Play’s Julia Porter spent five days training two village sports coordinators.

DURING HER FOLLOWUP VISITS Matthews focused on revising the plan and found time to visit teachers in their classrooms. The rapidly expanding project now includes kindergarten classes, after-school sports programs, and school libraries that also welcome parents.

This month, when Matthews makes her fourth trip, she will be accompanied by two Canadian interns who will work with the MJP team to develop community preschools and after-school EcoRanger clubs for 10- to 12-year-olds.

When asked how she was able to achieve all this and more, Matthews points to her 32 years of teaching: she taught every elementary grade before moving into a staff position at ETFO where she delivered professional learning programs to teachers. She also credits her interest in strenuous outdoor activities and the time she spent travelling independently in Asia during a self-funded leave.

THOSE WHO SEEK TO FOLLOW her example have big shoes to fill. They would have to be physically and mentally fit, cre-



ative and persistent, and treat problems as challenges and mistakes as opportunities for learning. They would also have to be respectful of other cultures, capable of building broad networks, and able to recognize that effective strategies are informed by the experiences and expertise brought by all.

Matthews says, “Everything I have ever learned has been useful in Samlaut. While we work very hard, the MJP team and I have an enormous amount of fun. And the Cambodian people are amazingly resilient, quick to embrace change, and want to build better lives for themselves and their children. It’s an honour to help them do so.”

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Former *Voice* editor, Charlotte Morgan, is now a freelance writer and editor.

NOTES

1. For more information visit righttoplay.com.
2. Established by Angelina Jolie in 2003, the Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation provides direct support to local villages and to endangered wildlife and habitats, with the aim of achieving a path to sustainable social, environmental and economic development by 2012. Visit mjpasia.org.
3. The Millennium Village Project, also known as Samlaut2012, incorporates the principles of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals. Visit endpoverty2015.org.

ETFO Leadership Opportunities

ETFO provides a wide array of leadership training for members and activists. Not all programs are provided every year and requirements for participation vary. Leadership training may also be included in ETFO conferences. Information about workshops and conferences is available on our website, etfo.ca.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING TRAINING

This training for local presidents, chief negotiators, grievance officers, stewards, and local executive members also helps develop new leaders for ETFO locals. **New Teacher Collective Bargaining Workshops** are also provided upon local request. Contact Christine Brown, cbrown@etfo.org.

Skills for Aspiring Chief Negotiators workshops are open to all members. No experience is required. Contact Lynn McLean, lmclean@etfo.org.

Members can qualify for **WHSC instructor training** by completing Level I and Level II health and safety training, which is open to all members. Contact Susan Ansara, sansara@etfo.org.

DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

Leadership training is provided for members from designated groups committed to becoming involved in union work. Contact Sherry Ramrattan Smith, srsmith@etfo.org.

LEADERS FOR TOMORROW

This intensive, year-long leadership development program for women members from designated groups includes workshops and experiences directly related to local and provincial leadership roles in ETFO. Participants are required to put their learning into practice throughout the year. Contact Sherry Ramrattan Smith, srsmith@etfo.org.

MENTOR TRAINING PROGRAM

For experienced teachers who wish to mentor new teachers. Training is also provided for leaders of Mentor Training workshops. Contact Joanne Languay, jlanguay@etfo.org.

EQUITY AND WOMEN’S SERVICES PRESENTER TRAINING

Members from designated groups, who have participated in the *Diversity in Leadership* or the *Leaders for Tomorrow* programs, receive training to deliver Equity and Women’s Services workshops. Contact Sherry Ramrattan Smith, srsmith@etfo.org.

PRESENTER’S PALETTE and BEYOND THE WORKSHOP PRESENTER’S PALETTE

Participants enhance their facilitation, presentation, and leadership skills to use as workshop leaders in ETFO programs. Contact Jane Bennett, jbennett@etfo.org.

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICE

This year-long institute provides six days of face-to-face meetings and an online community for 40 women teachers who develop, carry out, and report on an action research project. Contact Anne Rodrigue, arodrigue@etfo.org.

UNION SCHOOL

The school focuses on the many skills necessary to be an effective local union leader. Participants attend two face-to-face sessions, take part in an online community, and complete a practicum activity. Contact Jerry DeQuetteville, jdequetteville@etfo.org.

WOMEN IN ACTION

Workshops, provided in partnership with ETFO locals, develop women’s political leadership skills. Participants who have been elected to either local or provincial office in ETFO are eligible to receive training to become Women in Action facilitators. Contact Mary Morison, mmorison@etfo.org.

ABORIGINAL WOMEN PRACTISING LEADERSHIP



BY SUSAN DION

PHOTO: ANNE de HAAS

I work in an academic institution and a few years ago I was being considered for tenure. As part of my process I was required to attend a meeting of my faculty's Tenure and Promotions Committee and present my case. Reflecting on my first five years working as teacher/researcher in the university, I was supposed to build a case that would prove to the committee that the work I had accomplished met the university's standard for tenure and promotion. Participating in this Euro-informed practice caused me to think about the work of Aboriginal women who were my mentors and guides. Rather than assess my accomplishments against the demands of the university, I asked myself: "Does my work contribute to and is it informed by the ways in which Aboriginal women practise leadership in our communities?"

My understanding of leadership as practised by Aboriginal women is derived from my experiences working with, reading, listening to, and sometimes observing from a distance the work of Aboriginal women. Aboriginal leadership is informed by what I refer to as the "Four Rs of Aboriginal Education": remembering, relationship, responsibility and reciprocity. These concepts cannot be separated; they intertwine and inform each other.

As Aboriginal women, remembering who we are, and honouring our ways of knowing and being, is difficult and purposeful work crucial to our survival. We work in relationship with each other, recovering our languages and our ways of knowing. We take our responsibilities to past and future generations seriously. We work cognizant of the concept of reciprocity, never taking without giving back. In this article, I share the stories of women I look to as mentors and guides, women who practise and contribute to my understanding of Aboriginal leadership.

We survive, and we do more than survive. We bond, we care, we fight, we teach, we nurse, we bear, we feed, we earn, we laugh, we love, we hang in there, no matter what.

– Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna Pueblo-Sioux scholar¹

JO-ANNE ARCHIBALD:
Remembering and leadership

In her book *Indigenous Storywork*, teacher-educator Jo-ann Archibald of the Sto:lo Nation writes about her learning journey, which began with a dream.

“I needed to learn how to hear what the Elders had told me in the dream. After learning how to listen to the stories, I was expected to use their cultural knowledge and to share it with others, thereby ensuring its continuation. Important knowledge and wisdom contain power, if one comes to understand and appreciate the power of a particular knowledge, then one must be ready to share and teach it respectfully and responsibly to others in order for this knowledge, and its power to continue.”²

Archibald explains that her cultural values, beliefs, lessons, and understandings are formed through learning relationships with Elders. Recognizing that Indigenous stories lost educational and social value due to colonization, Archibald works with Elders and Indigenous scholars to find ways of respectfully placing First Nations stories within academic and educational settings. She insists that traditional stories and storytelling are to be taken seriously. Sharing her *remembering* work she brings the story-related teachings of Elders into the academy, explores characteristics of traditional stories, and discusses the power of storytelling for teaching and learning purposes.

Archibald draws attention to remembering as a source of strength

and identity. In the Elders’ stories, listeners have access to Indigenous knowledge that informs our ways of being and, in particular, our ways of being in relationship with each other. In her story work, Archibald provides us with ways of countering the stories that Others have told about us. Engaging us in the process of reclaiming memory, experience, and everyday life, Archibald teaches us to interact with our stories, and to think about our history, culture, and current context.

SHELLEY CARDINAL:
Responsibility and leadership

Aboriginal women practise leadership that is informed by a genuine sense of *responsibility*. Writing about her understanding and use of the concept of “response-ability,” Anishinaabe scholar Kimberly Blaeser explains: “I employ this term to represent a kind of worldview, a sense of being responsible by being engaged in life processes, of having both the capability and the obligation to live this way.”³

For me Shelley Cardinal embodies response-ability. Cardinal is the National Aboriginal consultant to the Canadian Red Cross’s RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention programs. She is the motivating force behind Walking the Prevention Circle, a program that focuses on prevention education for Aboriginal communities. My work with Shelley Cardinal is through our participation in PrevNet, a national networking organization committed to the elimination of violence and the nurturing of positive relationships. In

this work I have had the opportunity to see the ways in which Cardinal practises leadership. From her I have learned to draw strength and power from the teachings of our grandmothers, who show us that physically, intellectually, and spiritually our survival and continuance matter most of all and that our responsibility is to ensure attention to the social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual life of our people.

In spite of living in an environment in which we as Aboriginal women have found ourselves stripped of our basic rights and pushed to the edge of total despair, Cardinal, like other Aboriginal women, recognizes the need to nurture, to protect, to provide, and to heal. She is committed to recognizing and responding to the needs of our communities. She works with communities who ask for her participation and who identify their own needs and their own sources of strength. Cardinal establishes respectful relationships with people in the community to engage them in the work of healing. Because the demand for Walking the Prevention Circle programming is far greater than she alone can meet, Cardinal has trained Aboriginal facilitators to deliver the program. The program explores the roots of abuse and violence, the legacy of historical wrongs, and the power found in traditional Aboriginal principles. The workshops allow participants to name and reclaim the past, empowering themselves to begin the transition from the cycle of violence to the circle of healing.

In her day-to-day life, in her role as “Auntie” to a very special niece, and as a friend and mentor, Shelley Cardinal draws on humour, a beautiful spirit, and her faith in Aboriginal people to accomplish the work of leadership.

INUIT WOMAN'S COLLECTIVE:
Relationship and leadership

For me, the Western concept of leadership implies a focus on the individual that contradicts Indigenous ways of being. Aboriginal women recognize that survival depends on working in *relationship* with others and on recognizing the significance of relationship. We come to know ourselves through our relationships, and we learn and accomplish in relationship with others. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, "Connecting is related to issues of identity and place, to spiritual relationships and community well-being."⁴ She understands that honouring relationships is a humanizing process and draws our attention to the wisdom of Indigenous creation stories that position individuals in sets of relationships with other people and with the environment. As Smith says, "To be connected is to be whole."⁵

Arnaik Video Productions is an Inuit women's collective. As in other Indigenous women's collectives, these women draw on the strength they find in relationship with each other. Their work nurtures relationships between generations, between people and the land, and between Inuit and non-Inuit peoples. Their stunningly beautiful feature length film *Before Tomorrow* documents an Inuit community, telling the stories of the impact of disease following contact with Europeans, and of a woman who demonstrates that human dignity is at the core of life. The strength of the collective is in an approach that values and reflects the culture and traditions of the community.


The women work in relationship with each other, writing scripts, designing and creating wardrobe, and shaping their own performances and those of other actors. The originality of Arnaik Video Productions arises out of a production process that honours the lives and the relationships of the women involved in the collective.

CATHY PAWIS:
Reciprocity and leadership

The concept of leadership as I experience it practised in non-Aboriginal contexts is incongruent with Aboriginal ways of knowing and being. Reciprocity, not something I recognize

PHOTO COURTESY ARNAIK VIDEO COLLECTIVE

ARNAIK VIDEO COLLECTIVE: CAROL KUNNUK, SUSAN AVINGAQ,
MARIE-HÉLÈNE COUSINEAU AND MADELINE IVALU



as significant within non-Aboriginal contexts, is especially significant in relation to Aboriginal concepts of leadership. *Reciprocity* is about giving in return for what you receive. It is a practice that supports balance – and it is critical. Individuals require balance within themselves; balance is necessary for healthy families; and the well-being of all people requires balance within communities and between nations.

Cathy Pawis, central co-ordinating principal for the Toronto District School Board, not only practises reciprocity herself, she is doing the hard work of teaching others about reciprocity. The TDSB is responsible for the delivery of public education on Anishinaabe land, and Pawis is working with the board to infuse Anishinaabe perspectives into the school curriculum, and respect for the Anishinaabe, their history and culture into school board policies and practices. Conscious of her own responsibilities as an expe-

rienced and certified teacher in the TDSB, Pawis has taken on the work of transforming school board practices. She does not take the easy path, but is strategic and works in support of accomplishing systemic change. It is not enough to get exceptions to the rules: Pawis pushes the boundaries to change the system.

Identifying and supporting Aboriginal students and families, delivering professional development courses for teachers and administrators, doing curriculum development, planning programs and events for students and teachers, bringing Aboriginal parents and community members into the schools as experts to teach students and their teachers about Aboriginal culture – Pawis's work contributes to the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge and re-establishes the legitimacy of its ways of knowing and being.

Following her lead and drawing on her expertise, the board is making Aboriginal education a priority. Pawis explains: "We have 8,000 to 10,000 Aboriginal children in Toronto – more than any other city in the province – but they tend to go underground; they are a group that do not often speak out because they have been discriminated against for so long. Now, for the first time, the board is making Aboriginal students and Aboriginal subject material a priority." ⁶

Pawis, like other Aboriginal women, practises reciprocity quietly. Eber Hampton addresses this quality in his important article *Towards a Redefinition of Indian Education*. Hampton writes: "The second standard of Indian Education is to serve the people. Its purpose is not individual advancement or status."⁷ Hampton understands that for the most part Aboriginal people (and I would argue Aboriginal women

in particular) do not have time – and it is against our ways of knowing and being – to be concerned with individual advancement or status. Our survival has depended and continues to depend on our capacities to work first and foremost in support of our people. In her day-to-day practice, Cathy Pawis works relentlessly in the service of Aboriginal children, families, and communities. She consistently practises an Aboriginal-informed leadership style, and she is recognized within the community as a leader in Aboriginal education.

CONCLUSION

Aboriginal women in our families, communities and nations are enacting an Aboriginal-informed leadership practice, and I am thankful to them. In the end, I did get tenure and in the process of doing so I felt the support of the Aboriginal women who came before me, the Aboriginal women walking with me, and the Aboriginal women who will come after me. ✓

Meegwich

NOTES

1. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).
2. Jo-Ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), p. 3.
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4. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999), p. 148.
5. Ibid.
6. Louise Brown, "A Study in First Nations 101," *Toronto Star*, June 20, 2006.
7. Eber Hampton, "Towards a Redefinition of Indian Education," in *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, Marie Battiste and Jean Barman, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press. p. 21).



BY RACHELLE MARSAN

A TAP ON THE SHOULDER BEARS FRUIT

PHOTOS: ANNE de HAAS

Elizabeth Barnett has come alive.

2007 was a year of change for Barnett. When both of her parents died within months of each other, Barnett decided to dig deeper for her passion. “I realized how short life is, and I began re-evaluating my life,” she recalls.

Her parents, both former teachers, were the role models for her community activism. “My parents taught me to fight for what I believe in, and to speak out for those who can’t speak out for themselves.” Barnett feels strongly that everyone should “live their passion, get involved, and find what makes you come alive.”

This innovative leader began her teaching career with the Halton Dis-

trict School Board 14 years ago. She is now the special education resource teacher at Sir Ernest MacMillan Public School. Barnett found her voice through her involvement with ETFO. She has been actively involved with the federation in numerous capacities.

“Brenda Dolling, who has been retired for 10 years now, ‘tapped me on the shoulder’ in my first year of teaching,” says Barnett. “She was very political and used to talk ETFO and politics in the staff room all the time. It was a great environment to be in and a great learning experience for me! She strongly encouraged me to get involved with ETFO. I did... and all

those doors opened for me.”

Barnett also credits ETFO’s *Leaders for Tomorrow* program: “This was a major turning point for me. I met strong, intelligent women who were all working towards the same goal of building personal leadership skills while working on issues of equity and social justice. I learned that I could be a leader.”

Barnett began her work with ETFO as the steward at Munn’s Public School in 1998. She went on to work on the Halton local’s newsletter *Babble On*, joined the local executive as a member at large, and sat on the local’s constitution and political action committees.

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

– Howard Thurman, American educator and philosopher (1899-1981)

Barnett has been a delegate to ETFO's Annual Meeting many times, and was a member of the provincial Status of Women Committee.

Barnett created and was the first chair of the Halton local's Human Rights (now Social Justice) Committee and worked to ensure the inclusion of an LGBT focus within the local and within her board. The committee undertook a number of initiatives, including joining with the Halton board to purchase *We're Erasing Prejudice for Good* kits for every school in the board. The curriculum resource is based on a variety of children's books, and for several years the committee purchased a book for every school to accompany the kit.

The committee also staged the workshop "Homophobia in the Classroom" and liaised with HOPE, the Halton Organization for Pride and Education, a nonprofit group. A major focus for the organization for the past 10 years has been organizing the annual PRIDE picnic, where LGBT people and their families get together. Barnett joined the HOPE board of directors last year and serves as its treasurer.

Working with the board Barnett has also been involved, since its inception, with Spectrum, a Halton DSB group open to all employees. Its mandate is to make the board a safer, more inclusive place for staff and students to deal with LGBT issues.

"We have two anonymous conferences [on the board's intranet site], one for students, one for staff. We have published a pamphlet for secondary teachers based on ETFO's *Responding to Homophobia and Heterosexism: A Resource Guide for Educators*. We offer workshops, we preview books, and we make recommendations to the board," she says.

"We also run Halton's "Inside and Out Conference" for students and teachers from grades 7 to 12 involved with GSAs (gay/straight alliances). This year we held our second conference and, working with our local as well as ETFO provincial, I arranged for all elementary teachers to be offered the opportunity to attend the "Imagine a World Free from Fear" workshop in the afternoon. It wouldn't have been open to K to 6 teachers otherwise.

"This year we are making a movie for teachers, which will provide scenarios for dealing with LGBT issues in the classroom. Many teachers and administrators don't know how to deal with homophobia; our aim is to give them the tools to be able to do so."

PASSING LEADERSHIP ON

Barnett has done her part to continue tapping people on the shoulder. "The personal invitation is the best way to get more people involved in the federation. I have done this as often as possible, encouraging colleagues, especially those who are new to the profession."

This practice has had some happy outcomes. In a recent discussion with retired teacher Dennis Yeo, Barnett learned that "he feels that I am the reason that he became so involved with ETFO and later, with HOPE. He said that my encouragement helped him to grow and gain confidence.

"Dennis was 'closeted' until the last two years of his career. He felt that doors were closed for him early in his career because he was gay. Not knowing if your administrator is going to support you is a big concern. Finally,




BARNETT AND RETIRED COLLEAGUE DENNIS YEO

at age 50, he came out and was able to feel the freedom of being true to himself. Now he is chair of the board of HOPE!"

Barnett admits that "fighting heterosexism and homophobia is an uphill battle and we need more people involved, we need more allies to step up. I actually just approached someone in a local coffee shop and encouraged her to come out to HOPE events. She didn't know there was a community for LGBT people in Halton."

Barnett feels her job will be done when "no one would think twice when they see two women or two men walking down the street hand in hand. All families would be celebrated in our classrooms. You would never hear homophobic jokes in the staff room or on the radio. 'Gay' would never be used in a derogatory fashion; you wouldn't hear students in the hallway say, "That's so gay." Everyone would be able to marry the person they loved, and nobody would care. Their marriages would be honoured equally."

Elizabeth Barnett discovered her passion and hasn't looked back since. 

Rachelle Marsan is a Grade 5/6 Gifted teacher at W.H.Morden PS in Oakville, and a member of the Halton ETFO local. She is a co-author of the ETFO resource *Homefree*, and a co-creator of ETFO's *Body Image* curriculum package.

BY DARLINE POMEROY

IT BRINGS A SMILE to my face when I look back and recall just how I came to the profession that I now am truly passionate about and fully committed to. My very best friend at the time decided to become a teacher, so after little thought I concluded that I might as well do the same. We were going to the same teachers college and we could share a room and continue our friendship. Why not? As it turned out, she taught for only a short time whereas I grew eventually to love teaching. As I reflect, it seems that over the years it has often been what I have done *outside* the classroom that has motivated me to remain *in* the classroom.

Before my oldest daughter was born, I resigned my position and had no intention of ever returning to the classroom full-time. I immediately signed

FOLLOWING HER PASSION

People need to feel that they are valued and are in a place created to honour their uniqueness in the world.



PHOTOS: RICK MATTHEWS



on as a Guider with Girl Guides of Canada. For the next 15 years my daughters got carted off to every kind of guiding activity while I took on a wide variety of roles in the organization and eventually became an International Advisor. My love of camping and the outdoors was a strong motivator. During this same time, financial pressure pushed me back into the classroom as an occasional teacher. It was during those years that my confidence as a teacher began to increase and I began to value myself as an educator. Finally, my husband's illness left me little choice but to return to teaching full-time.

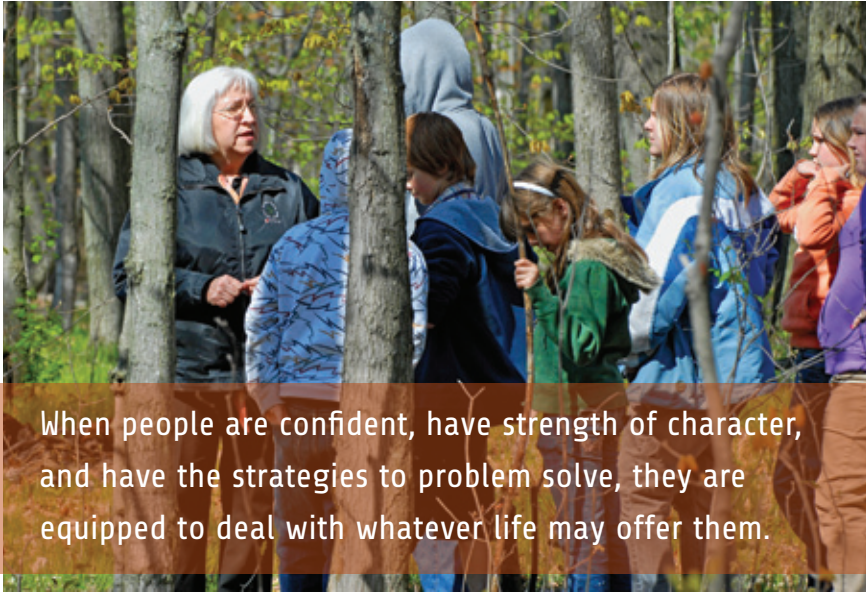
IT WAS A VERY DIFFERENT PERSON who stepped into the classroom from the one who had abandoned it years earlier. For some years I had been heavily involved in pursuing my First Nations

roots and learning about my forgotten cultural heritage. In this new beginning, my heritage played a definitive role in my teaching. It seemed natural to incorporate the ideas and teachings that I had gleaned from my heritage into what I did, and continue to do, in my classroom. I now had much to share and much less time to share it in.

Each year, I set out to make my classroom a unique learning place so that my students would sense from the beginning that they have arrived somewhere special . . . as special and unique as they are! People need to feel that they are valued and are in a place created to honour their uniqueness in the world. I include the colours of nature in my room and there are lots of green plants. I have tried to create a calming, soothing, and safe place.

CREATES A LEADER





When people are confident, have strength of character, and have the strategies to problem solve, they are equipped to deal with whatever life may offer them.

TALKING CIRCLES ARE A MAJOR FOCUS.

I use a talking stick that I have carved myself, which depicts the Seven Grandfathers. It is in the circle that we learn to communicate with each other, to listen attentively and respectfully, to feel respected, to share our feelings and thoughts, and to problem solve. Each member of the class is recognized as an equal who is valued and critical to the success of the whole group. Sometimes we go into the forest to build debris huts. I allow the students to lead and assist each other as they use sets of skills, develop ideas, and solve problems. When they come out of the forest, they have new confidence and have established a sense of community that will carry them through the entire school year.

I have come to understand that building self-esteem and developing a sense of community where every member feels valued and empowered is critical in all that I do. When people are confident, have strength of character, and have the strategies to problem solve, they are equipped to deal with whatever life may offer them. Students are then able to take on the challenges of a classroom and in many instances a huge variety of expectations in their

homes, and they are better able to learn. They are more prepared and willing to contribute positively to their classroom, school community, and families.


IN MY WORK IN ETFO during the past several years, I have served on a variety of committees. It is just as critical in this setting to create an inclusive community where all members are valued, respected, and encouraged. This focus is also at work in my large, extended family. Three or four generations regularly share tasks, food, and laughter, and also come together for support and problem solving.

These values have led to my keen interest in and involvement with equity and social justice issues. What can I model for others? How can I empower others and create a more inclusive community and world? I try to find and create ways that each person, including myself, can bring greater awareness and appreciation of diversity into their lives and extend and broaden their view of the world. We are indeed all one family under the same sky.

I have grown very comfortable under my white hair and am now growing into the role of elder. I embrace the role of mother and grandmother and feel privileged that our house is home



to three generations of my family, with my own mother living nearby. My grandson, Rariwhisaks, is the sixth generation of our family to make his home on the lake where we are able to live close to nature and those things and people that we value.

IT HAS BECOME CLEAR TO ME that my role is that of caregiver, nurturer, and guide. I want those I come into contact with to realize that they have many talents and are valued as human beings, and that our home, classroom, or meeting room is a safe, inclusive, and supportive refuge. I recognize as I grow into of the role of grandmother or elder that I must embody the true meaning of integrity – to walk the talk and to be authentic – and model it for future generations. I am what I teach. 

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Darline Pomeroy is a member of the Kawartha Pine Ridge Teacher Local and of ETFO's Aboriginal Education Standing Committee.



Debi Wells

TEACHER, UNION LEADER, SOCIAL ACTIVIST

ONTARIO ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

are a diverse group of individuals with many strengths and talents. In a collective sense, we tend to be problem solvers, ready to tackle the many challenges that confront us in our professional lives. At the same time, we strive to achieve balance in our personal lives both at home and within the community. Multitasking is virtually second nature to the average elementary teacher and something at which we excel.

Debi Wells, vice-president of the Limestone Teacher Local fits this paradigm in all respects. Teacher, union leader, political/social activist, wife and mother, Wells is a person who wears a variety of hats, often simultaneously. “There are many different ways one can live,” she says. “You can live thinking nothing can be changed and what is, is good enough. Or you can think it could be better and if I give it a good go, it can be better.”

Born in Hamilton, Bermuda, Wells grew up in Montreal, Sarnia, and Kingston.

BY CATHERINE ALLEN

HER PASSION FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

was forged in the era of the Chicago Riots and the Vietnam War protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s. She recalls lively debates around the dinner table with her dad, a life-long Conservative from Cape Breton. “I never won because my dad was quite a fast talker but he never won either because I knew that I was right.” Arguments ranged from women’s rights to apartheid, to whether police had the moral authority to beat up Vietnam War demonstrators.

These early formative experiences facilitated Wells’s ability to articulate her point of view and when she moved on to York University, where she studied political economics, she became an active participant in the protests against the war and racism, as well as an ardent supporter of the women’s rights movement. Later, she acquired

her master’s in Canadian studies at Carleton University in Ottawa and worked part-time as an educational assistant for a class of children with behavioural problems.

WELLS DECIDED TO ENTER TEACHING in the mid 1980s and enrolled at McArthur College, Queen’s University. Working in the Kingston area as a core French teacher, she moved from one classroom to another, and soon found herself in the unique position of observing other teachers’ concerns and problems from a first-hand perspective. “Teachers are generally not political,” observes Wells. “We read a lot, we work with paper a lot, we have lots of great skills but we’re not used to standing up for ourselves.” As an individual who had always spoken up for the rights of others, she gradually became an unofficial spokesperson for the teachers with whom she worked.

RETIRED CEP MEMBER BRIAN BROPHY AND DEBI WELLS RAISE THE LABOUR COUNCIL BANNER AT THE DAY OF MOURNING IN KINGSTON.



PHOTOS: SARAH HAWKINS

MANY TEACHERS IN ONTARIO experienced a rude political awakening after the provincial Tories, led by Mike Harris came to power in the mid-90s. As the government dismantled social and public services and waged a relentless campaign against the education system, a groundswell of opposition grew that finally spilled over into the two-week provincewide political protest mounted by teachers and their unions.

Reflecting back on that time, Wells says, “I think that at a certain point people have to either decide to put up with what’s going on even if they don’t like it or work to change things.” A “boat-rocker” from way back, she opted to increase her involvement within the local federation. Beginning as a picket captain during the protest, Wells gradually assumed other positions within the union before being elected vice-president of the Limestone Teacher Local in 2002.

She firmly maintains that teachers can be agents for change both within the education system and the broader community: “The line that I take with teachers is that we have more education, higher wages, more flex time and more ability to speak in public than almost anybody in Canada.” Through her participation with a number of community-based organizations such as the Kingston Action Network, the Kingston District and Labour Council, and the Kingston Economic Develop-

ment Corporation, she has discovered that people listen to what she has to say because she is a teacher. It is an empowering insight, one that all elementary teachers should take to heart.

Subscribing to the precept that strength lies in numbers, Wells began to push her union to become more actively engaged with the local labour council. “I think that if teachers and their unions are to really succeed, they must become part of the community in such a way that they are needed and respected,” she says. In 2006, she was asked to become vice-president of the Kingston District and Labour Council, which represents almost every union in the area. Within two years, she had become president of this organization, where she now acts as the official spokesperson for over 10,000 unionized workers.

“THERE IS ONLY SO MUCH POLITICAL ACTIVITY you can cram into a day,” Wells says, but she has no intention of decreasing her current level of involvement. She is understandably proud of her work within the Limestone Teacher Local, believing that she still has goals to achieve and issues that need to be addressed and resolved.


“The bottom line,” she says, “is that ETFO does take care of elementary teachers, ensuring that working conditions are acceptable and that health and safety concerns are handled appropriately. Our union offers a huge protec-

tion for teachers and provides peace of mind.”

Wells draws a sharp contrast between the working conditions and attitudes of secondary teachers and those of the elementary panel and strongly endorses ETFO’s *Close the Gap* initiative. “At some point [in our dealings with the province/boards] we have to say ‘no’ and I think that we will. We have to take one step at a time; we’re going to change things eventually.”

She is also a strong advocate for the younger teachers within the profession, who are “being buried” by the demands of the job, and maintains that ETFO and the various locals must remain sensitive to the specific challenges that these individuals experience so that “we don’t lose them.”

AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE, she might be interested in running for president of the Limestone Teacher Local, although she hastens to add that she is happy with the status quo that she and president Mike Lumb have evolved over the past seven years: “We’re good at what we do and have more experience than most people at the board office. We have a team that’s working well.”

For now though, this multitasker *par excellence* plans to continue doing what she does best: advocating for the rights of workers. “I’m very proud of the work I’ve done,” says Debi Wells, “and I can do it better because I’m a teacher.” 

Catherine Allen is a member of the Ottawa-Carleton Teacher Local and a freelance writer/editor.



BY CATHERINE A. COCCHIO

Scratch and Win: WORKPLACE ILLNESS CREATES A LEADER

FOR MOST CANADIANS, the annual switch from long to short sleeves is a welcome sign of spring. Until recently however, Laurel Liddicoat-Newton dreaded the thought of baring her arms and legs in front of staff and students.

Liddicoat-Newton is the learning resource teacher at Lansdowne Elementary School in Sarnia. In the fall of 2005 she was reassigned to a classroom in the school's eight-classroom port-a-pac (eight temporary buildings sharing a hallway attached to the doorway of the main building) and began dealing with a virulent case of hives. For the entire year, long sleeves and long pants helped her maintain some measure of dignity between scratching spells, but the combination of spring showers, warmer temperatures, and an airtight classroom aggravated what had become a chronic condition.

Liddicoat-Newton was well acquainted with environmental concerns plaguing her school's main building. But she did not immediately suspect that her workplace was the cause of her hives. Curing her condition would eventually require her to lead 13 colleagues in a work refusal.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES have turned Liddicoat-Newton into a health and safety advocate and a leader in her school and in her union. Her involvement dates back to her arrival at the school. "When I moved to a grade 1 assignment at Lansdowne in 2001, my classroom in the main building had an odour. It smelled like tar. I taught in Petrolia for 10 years so I knew the oily kind of smell. Kids came to grade 1 and got nosebleeds. After three years of complaining, I finally got some parents on board," she says.

The tar smell was most pronounced on days when the temperature rose above 20 degrees. Scheduling air quality testing during periods most likely to produce positive results was next to impossible. Liddicoat-Newton and the parents persisted, and eventually air quality testing confirmed suspicions that she and her students were working in an unhealthy environment. Invasive exploration of the roof and ceiling exposed large clumps of hard tar pitch hidden behind concrete.

As a result, the class was evacuated for two months while the area was cleaned. In the meantime, Liddicoat-

Newton became the health and safety representative at Lansdowne. Little did she know how personal this role would become.

“I FOUND MOULD IN MY PORTABLE in October 2005 but I didn’t put it together with my outbreak of hives until another teacher complained of the same symptoms,” she recalls. “We phoned the board’s health and safety officer, and the board sent technicians to take moisture readings. There was a lot of beeping. When we asked what that meant, the technician told us beeping was bad.”

The board followed up with room-by-room clean up from October to January. During Christmas break, workers stripped and rebuilt the portables, but not the hall connecting them. January 2006 was very wet and the hall roof leaked in seven locations, but there was no remediation. Meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth II School in Petrolia reported similar conditions. Their portables were eventually sealed by the Ministry of Labour.

“Queen Elizabeth teachers knew about us,” Liddicoat-Newton says. “They were told not to worry, Lansdowne School was worse. The funny thing was, when we got together at a stewards’ meeting, we told them the board had told us the same thing. The board failed to realize that teachers network. This was a turning point for me. We realized this was bigger than we could handle ourselves.”

Liddicoat-Newton turned to her Lambton Kent ETFO Local for help. The vice-president contacted professional relations services and health and safety staff in provincial office. They called the Ministry of Labour and real action began.

An MOL inspection revealed mould under a loose edge of wallpaper, and this led to a more thorough investi-



PHOTO: ALINA CLAIRE LYND

LAUREL LIDDICOAT-NEWTON AND MEMBERS OF THE LAMBTON KENT ETFO LOCAL EXECUTIVE MEET TO DISCUSS LOCAL ISSUES.

gation. During Easter weekend 2007, the board hired a new company (not the one first hired to do remediation in the portables in 2005) to remediate classrooms, but Liddicoat-Newton remained sceptical.

HER WORST FEARS WERE CONFIRMED by March break when workers ripped away skirting from the base of the portable and exposed an expansive growth of cauliflower-like mould on the bare ground below. There was no cement pad base under the two end units and all the rainwater from the roof was directed to this area. The board called in the same company to remediate. Liddicoat-Newton called her union.

When she came back from March break, Liddicoat-Newton refused to re-enter the port-a-pac. Under her leadership, 13 others took the same stand. In support of their action, they presented the board with a letter signed by the whole group. It had been prepared by ETFO’s lawyer and an ETFO staff

health and safety officer.

“The director accused us of creating an hysterical frenzy, maintaining that the situation would work itself out,” Liddicoat-Newton recalls. But the determined group disagreed with their director. “ETFO encouraged a proactive, not reactive, approach, and we kept at it.”

Classes moved to a temporary site for three weeks, while remediation work took place at Lansdowne. News of the group’s success spread quickly, and many other schools with sick staff and problems with mould registered grievances. ETFO President David Clegg came to the defence of the teachers with strong statements to the media. ETFO won a favourable arbitration ruling in summer 2007.

THE SETTLEMENT ORDERED investigation of all 55 schools by a new company. Liddicoat-Newton was appointed to accompany investigators as ETFO representative so that staff would feel comfortable answering questions openly.


Encouraging people to talk about workplace health and safety is key. The Lambton Kent Local’s goal is to train health and safety representatives and stewards to be advocates. It now has a three-step protocol for addressing mould, air quality, or other health and safety issues. Step one, let the employer know there’s a concern. Step two, if there’s no reaction, contact the health and safety representative at your school. Step three, contact the ETFO representative on the joint health and safety committee.



PHOTO: ALINA CLAIRE LYNDIS

Liddicoat-Newton never returned to the port-a-pac. She taught in the library until October when work was completed on a two-room addition, which replaced the eight portables at the school.

Liddicoat-Newton proudly admits that she lost faith in the leadership of her board, but not that of her union. Motivated by the health and safety training she received from ETFO, she now serves as school steward, health and safety site representative, elementary facilities representative on the joint health and safety committee, local executive officer, social committee chair, and budget committee member.

This year, Liddicoat-Newton is enrolled in ETFO's Union School. As part of a required project, she conducted a survey about workplace violence. Overwhelmed by 200 responses, Liddicoat-Newton is convinced people want an opportunity to talk. She sees ETFO's role changing as education changes. Working in a safe, healthy environment should not be a lottery but a right. She stands firm in her belief that having ETFO support and encouragement is a win-win situation. 

Professional Learning for a Health and Safety Advocate

By Catherine A. Cocchio

Valence Young felt inadequate and unformed in her role as worker representative on her board's health and safety committee, even though she had participated in a work refusal and had advocated for staff during Ministry of Labour (MoL) investigations of schools in the Renfrew District School Board.

"While I was on the joint H & S committee, we had three (MoL) investigations in one year involving asbestos, mould, and indoor air quality," Young says. Although she did have WSIB-approved H&S certification, Young believed she needed something more.

Young enrolled in ETFO's *Reflections on Practice* leadership institute in 2007. Joining 29 other women, she attended three face-to-face meetings, conducted an action research project, and reported on her findings.

"If your role is to represent your colleagues, you fill the gap with the most accurate research you can find. When you learn that staff concerns are serious, and are concerns in workplaces across sectors, you realize you have a tiger by the tail," she says. "The MoL investigations all happened while I was doing my research on the effectiveness of the occupational health and safety procedures in our schools.

"The support network of the *Reflections on Practice* group had a profound influence on my confidence as a researcher. I realized that I actually had something to contribute by doing research."

Young's research showed that teaching staff are often reluctant to become involved in health and safety issues. "When you've done accurate research in search of best practice, in terms of basic legislative requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, then you have leverage to speak out with conviction. If you can stick to the facts and reflect the requirements of the legislation as you speak, that increases the potential for progress on difficult issues," she says.

Speaking with confidence is exactly what Young did as she presented multiple resolutions addressing health and safety issues at ETFO's Annual Meeting. She also agreed to serve on ETFO's Provincial Health and Safety Committee.

Discovering that her voice and work were important encouraged Young to enrol in the Master of Industrial Relations program at Queen's University. She hopes to base her Master's research paper on her original *Reflections on Practice* report and is gathering data about the effectiveness of the internal responsibility system for occupational health and safety in the education sector.

"The idea of being of service is really important to me. I think I'll be better able to serve workers in the workplace once I'm done," Young says – with confidence.





DAVE WING:

Taking on the Challenge of Local Leadership

Dave Wing is the president of the Kawartha Pine Ridge ETFO Local. He started teaching in 1989. Today he is married (to another teacher) and has two children, ages five and seven. He spoke with *Voice* about his leadership journey.

PHOTOS: RICK MATTHEWS

What motivated you to become a teacher?

Coming out of university I decided that my degree wouldn't likely lead to gainful employment. I had some friends who were becoming teachers. Teaching was not a lifelong dream; I came to it later.

At that time employers were recruiting on campus. There was pool hiring; you knew in March that a board had hired you but you didn't know what the job was or where you would be placed.

In my heart of hearts I wanted to teach Intermediate; I settled on grades 4 and 5 because of the location of the school. I did that for two years then I taught grades 5 and 6 for the next eight years.

Now I wouldn't teach anything but Junior grades. I loved the children that age. They still are, if not in awe, quite taken with teachers. They want to be at school; they want to learn. The school where I taught fluctuated between 90 and 100 kids total, so I had the unique experience of not only being part of a school, but also being part of a community.

When did you first become active in the federation?

I became a steward. In a small school everyone takes on many roles, so not many were keen to take on another responsibility. I had never needed federation help, but I had colleagues who did. They turned to me and my interest

developed from that. They were just asking me who they should talk to. I found the answers and realized there was a support network there, and that our school could use someone.

Then I became a local executive member and coordinated professional development workshops. In our local at that time there was no formal PD chair. I was an unreleased vice-president for four or five years, and learned more about the federation in that role. Then I became a first vice-president, which is a released position in our local.

In this local the first vice-president is grievance officer and PD chair, works on many other committees, and acts in the president's stead – you know, “other duties as assigned.” In the

last few rounds of bargaining I was the chief negotiator; that was just how the roles played out.

What really piqued my interest was the impending union amalgamation in 1997–1998. Before I was in education, I never understood the need for two federations, so I was excited about the prospect of working together.

What is the most satisfying aspect of your work; what is the most difficult part?

I became president when Mark Fallis was hired at provincial office, three years ago. I had mixed emotions when that happened. The first thing that goes through your mind is that you are losing a friend in your working partnership. For four or five years I was first vice-president and he was president, and he was my mentor, teaching me the skills needed for the job.

The question that you ask yourself right away is “Am I ready?” It’s quite different to sit in the president’s chair. There is less opportunity to say, “I’m

not sure, I’ll ask.” But I quickly learned that just because I moved into the position doesn’t mean I have to know all the answers. You have to be a little humble and always be willing to say, “I don’t know but I will get you the answer.” If you don’t have humility you won’t last.

At the end of the day making decisions is tough: sometimes they are popular and sometimes not, but they have to be made. Your executive or an individual teacher is looking to you for a decision.

For the first while after I became president I would leave the office and the voice in my head would be saying, “Who did I disappoint today? What

didn’t I get done?” If you take the job seriously you want to be everything to anyone who needs the service. The reality is you can never finish this job; you are never done. Now I make a point of saying, “Great! Today I got these things done; tomorrow I will work on that other thing.”

You have to be able to turn the office off and go home. Today with technology the office can reach out and permeate your life in a way that could not have happened before. My wife and children, while supportive, have no problems reminding me about where my priorities should be. Having unconditional support at home makes all the difference on the difficult days.

For a while, I wasn’t taking my own advice: I always tell members any job is a job. There are things that are more important. The other thing Mark taught me is to take the job seriously but not always take myself seriously.

You earn the title of president – to my mind that’s an honour, something I have been entrusted with – but it doesn’t make me any different from any other member. I just have a different job. And that’s something you’d better remember as president. There are checks and balances in the form of elections if you don’t.

My wife and children, while supportive, have no problems reminding me about where my priorities should be. Having unconditional support at home makes all the difference on the difficult days.

Describe your community involvements.

I became involved in the community several years ago as chair of the name change committee for the municipality of Clarington, which was previously known as the Town of Newcastle. I was on the local Liberal riding association executive and a member of the board of directors of Bethesda House, a women’s shelter. Given the after-hours demands of my current role as president, I was not able to commit





Creating partnerships in the community helps to support the positive image of teachers.



myself fully to these endeavours, so I have since resigned such positions. KPR ETFO continues to promote the shelter's fundraising efforts in the local, and we try to attend their events.

We can bring ETFO resources and energy to community organizations. For example, there was a group in Cobourg supporting grandmothers in Africa. They hadn't thought of ETFO's support of equity and social justice initiatives, so we were able to bring that to them. Creating partnerships in the community helps to support the positive image of teachers, the value that members bring to their work every day. It's important to make sure ETFO has a presence at community functions and gives back to the community.

Were mentors important? Who were yours?

One person who was important is a lifelong friend who is a principal. He gets what a leader does and needs to do, and what you don't need to do. Our friendship developed out of how he treated staff and how he treated me. I've learned a lot about leadership from being his friend.

When I was growing up my parents had a tourist business. I was fortunate that I could be at home and be part of the business and be parented at the same time. My parents were busy so I also learned to fend for myself and learned that you don't rely on someone else to do things for you: if you are trying to get something done you do it yourself. As long as I remember, I was self-directed and self-motivated, which

can be seen as a "leadership quality," but it's how I would approach any job. My parents instilled a work ethic and integrity; I still hear their voices in my ear as I approach situations: not to do this or that; to do the right thing.

Currently at the office I am blessed with Martin Higgs, our office administrator who is a retired former president of the OPSTF [Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, one of ETFO's predecessor organizations]. Marsha Jones, president of the Kawartha Pine Ridge Occasional Teacher Local, gave me the push into my first role as vice-president; she convinced me to run – it hadn't occurred to me. I use both these experienced leaders as sounding boards every day.

What advice would you give new teachers?

The hours spent outside of the classroom are a large portion of a teacher's job. Teaching is a critical role in society and this responsibility can be overwhelming. While teachers want to be everything to every student, especially new teachers, they have to strike a balance between the job and making time for themselves and look out for their own health and well-being.

Sometimes new teachers are too quick to second-guess themselves. More often than not their intrinsic feeling of what's right, what kids need, is the right thing to do. They have already demonstrated incredible leadership to get to where they are.

I would hope that they are aware of the opportunities in our organization to

try out different leadership roles. It pays great dividends when you are involved in the federation. I urge them to try out a committee or to become their school steward and see if it is for them.

How has ETFO changed in the last 10 years?

We have had different strong leaders at the helm. With every change, we have had strong visionary leaders always taking us to new places, asserting themselves as a force in public education to effect change for members and students. Now that staff officers are assigned fewer locals, I feel that there is a closer working relationship with the provincial organization.

Teachers are gaining more strength and they are playing a more active role in determining school goals, priorities and overall school management; for example, in the previous round of bargaining we started to take more control over supervision time, working with administration to determine supervision schedules.

Through *Building for Tomorrow* and *Close the Gap* [ETFO's collective bargaining campaigns], teachers have come to realize that their organization and their profession are something to be very proud of and that they deserve more respect than what has been given in the past. I expect that school boards are finding teachers more difficult – I would say more aware – and more willing to advocate for themselves and their students. I do think new teachers come into the profession more willing to demand the respect they deserve. ▣

LORIE KUZYK

A Quiet Leader Is Recognized

EDUCATION ASSISTANTS make up a small fraction of the ETFO membership. But the impact they have in the classroom can be substantial.

Lorie Kuzyk is a good example. Kuzyk, a member of the Rainy River Education Support Personnel Local of ETFO, has been working in the classroom for almost 20 years. Currently she works with grade 9 to 12 students in the basic and college streams at Rainy River High School. She also leads the Later Literacy program, which involves 2,000 minutes of one-on-one time with each student.

Kuzyk's contributions were recognized this spring when she was one of 20 Ontario educators who received the Premier's Award for Excellence in Education. For many, Kuzyk is the starting point of a cycle of success. "Without support they wouldn't read," Kuzyk says. "They'd feel lost and frustrated." The students have a range of learning difficulties in reading and writing. In addition to working one on one, she leads literacy circles, and works on students' writing skills. She reads novels aloud and facilitates shared reading.

PHOTOS: LAURA ARMISTEAD



Receiving the Premier's Award for Excellence in Education did for Kuzyk what she regularly does for students: it revitalized her. "I feel now there's more that I can do. It kindled a spark."



"Most, if they can hear the material orally, are able to do the work," Kuzyk says. "As their reading gets better, their frustration leaves and their confidence builds. It creates an 'I can do this' feeling that makes them want to do more." The increased confidence and self-esteem Kuzyk strives to build helps her students to become more independent learners.

KUZYK ALSO EMPHASIZES PEER SUPPORT. Students who help each other grow to respect and help one another. The student who needs help today becomes the one providing help to someone else later on.

Kuzyk herself liked school "for the sports and the social life." On graduating from grade 12 she became a hairdresser and soon owned her own shop. When she had her third child she decided to leave the business and become a stay-at-home mom. "That lasted two months," she says. She returned to working outside the home when she became employed by the high school as a communication and classroom assistant. She is also teaching cosmetology under a letter of permission.

Kuzyk credits the two and a half years she spent in elementary schools and the teachers she worked with there

with increasing her understanding of special needs students, and with developing her patience with them. "The teachers were wonderful. I learned a lot from them. I learned to understand why kids were the way they were."

In addition to her work in the classroom, Kuzyk takes an active part in extracurricular activities. She goes with students on field trips – such as theatre trips to Winnipeg – and is involved with fundraising for Prom, Drama, and Grad Days by organizing teas and raffles. Each year, she helps with sewing costumes and making props for the drama production, and does hair and make-up. She also gives personal help to students who are struggling financially and academically.

Receiving the Premier's Award for Excellence in Education did for Kuzyk what she regularly does for students: it revitalized her. "Listening and interacting with other people and how they support their students gets you going again. I feel now there's more I can do. It kindled a spark." ✓



RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP

- R. Chan Allen. *Guiding Change Journeys: A Synergistic Approach to Organization Transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2002.
- Peter U. Bender. *Leadership from Within*. <http://www.peterurbender.com/leadwith.html>
- Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith. *Learning to Lead: A Workbook on Becoming a Leader*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994.
- Warren Bennis. *On Becoming a Leader: The Leadership Classic* (revised) Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1994.
- Dawna Markova Berkley. *I Will Not Die an Unlived Life: Reclaiming Purpose and Passion*. San Francisco, CA: Conari Press, 2000.
- Constance H. Buchanan. *Choosing to Lead: Women and the Crisis of American Values*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996.
- Michael Fullan. *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001.
- Timothy W. Gallwey. *The Inner Game of Work*. New York: Random House, 2000.
- Kathleen Hall Jamieson. *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Kevin Cashman Provo. *Leadership from the Inside Out: Becoming a Leader for Life*. Provo, UT: Executive Excellence Publishing, 1999.
- Susan Scott. *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time*. New York: Penguin, 2002.
- P. Senge, et al. *Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organizations and Society*. New York: Doubleday, 2004.
- Marilyn Waring. *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women Are Worth*. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- L. Whitworth, et al. *Co-Active Coaching: New Skills For Coaching People Toward Success in Work and Life*. Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 2002.
- R. Stone Zander and B. Zander. *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000.



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Nottawasaga Inn
ophea.net/khc

October 16-17, Toronto OSEA Conference 2009

"Re-Vision"

Ontario Society for Education Through Art
osea.on.ca

October 23-25, Huntsville 39th Annual CODE Conference "Momentum... Powered by Drama and Dance"

Council of Drama and Dance Educators
Deerhurst Resort
code.on.ca

October 24, Maple OFSHEEA Annual Conference "Towards Tomorrow Today"

Ontario Family Studies Home Economics
Educators' Association
Maple High School, 50 Springside Rd.
ofsheea.ca

November 2-3, Huntsville 5th Annual National Character Education Conference

With Tom Jackson, Dr. Monte Selby, Micah
Jacobson
Deerhurst Resort
ncec.ca

November 5-8, Toronto Ontario Music Educators' Association Annual Conference

"Con Brio '09" with the Canadian Brass
Double Tree Hilton, 655 Dixon Rd.
omea.on.ca

November 11-13, Richmond Hill ECOO 30th Annual Conference "Inspire, Connect, Teach"

The Educational Computing Organization
of Ontario
Sheraton Parkway North
ecoo.org

November 12-14, Toronto STAO 2009 – Spotlight on the New Curriculum

"Inquiry to Innovation"

Science Teachers' Association of Ontario
Double Tree Hilton, 655 Dixon Rd.
stao.org

Nov 12-13, Ottawa 5th Annual STAN Conference "Building the Talent Pipeline – From Research to Practice"

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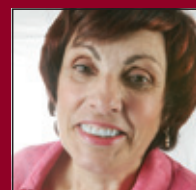
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