Conference Report

Canadian Teachers’ Federation Conference

November 17-19, 2005
Ottawa Marriott Hotel
Ottawa, Ontario
The Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF) believes that all students, teachers and parents have a right to a safe, welcoming school environment that supports learning. A civil society thrives in a culture that values and supports diversity. In CTF’s vision statement, prominence is given to the mission of the teaching profession to promote the well-being and education of all children and youth. One of the CTF priorities for 2005-2007 is to promote and encourage diversity and equity in public education.

A major purpose of the 2005 conference Building Inclusive Schools: A Search for Solutions was to broaden the definition and discussion of inclusion and in this report you will find several excellent definitions of inclusion. Speakers were chosen to address several critical issues within a broad examination of Inclusive Education. Participants had opportunities through presentations, workshops and discussions to examine and develop solutions and strategies that ensure children and youth are not excluded by culture, race, language, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or ability.

CTF wishes to thank all the educators who presented sessions at the Building Inclusive Schools: A Search for Solutions conference; participants benefited from their expertise, knowledge and insight into the theory and practice of inclusive education.

This report contains a summary of the three Keynote Presentations, and the seventeen Featured Speaker presentations that took place during the conference. You can find some of the PowerPoint presentations and workshop summaries on the CTF website at www.ctf-fce.ca. In their evaluation of the conference, participants commended CTF for the scope of the conference, the quality of the speakers, and the opportunity to network and discuss the issues with people from across the country. They also cautioned us not to let the momentum falter, that we must take the messages to other teachers and parents to continue to promote best practices and to provide practical strategies which further enhance inclusive education.

The newly formed CTF Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Human Rights will continue the work initiated by the conference. Please check the CTF website, in the Issues section for continuing information on Inclusion/Diversity & Equity.
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Welcome & Introduction

A visual narrative presentation, produced by Kristopher Wells, on the “look, sound, and feel” of inclusive schools set the stage for the conference.

Winston Carter, President of the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF), welcomed the delegates. Noting that the concept of inclusive schools has evolved and broadened over time and that society has become increasingly diverse and pluralistic, he invited the participants to celebrate this rich diversity, to share their expertise and to develop policies that ensure a safe teaching and learning environment for all students.

Noreen O’Haire, CTF’s Director of Professional Development, introduced the morning’s panel. Each speaker would discuss their vision for the overarching theme of safe and welcoming schools; schools where children and adults can learn and be nurtured, and where no one will be excluded for any reason.

Panel: Perspectives on Inclusive Education

DOUG NORRIS

Doug Norris, from Statistics Canada, gave a presentation of statistical data related to children with special needs in Canada. He first noted that the demographic transitions and increasing diversity taking place in Canada prompt a need to change our systems. To summarize this diversity, Norris focused on three key categories of children with special needs: children with disabilities, recent immigrant children, and off-reserve Aboriginal children.

Norris began with children with disabilities including both physical and cognitive/emotional disabilities. Although a small proportion, the absolute number of children with disabilities is large, with a higher prevalence of males. Students with cognitive/emotional disabilities have much lower levels of reading literacy than other students and are more likely to be in special education classes. However, parents of children with disabilities are less likely to believe that schools are “pushing” their children to meet their potential, and three in ten parents report difficulty accessing special education services, mostly due to inadequate resources.

For recent immigrant children, those with neither English nor French as their mother tongue comprise an increasing proportion. Immigrant students have lower literacy than other students, but this disadvantage disappears over time. Furthermore, despite lower reading literacy, recent immigrants perform better than other students in most other subjects, especially in mathematics and science.

The population of Aboriginal children is growing rapidly, with approximately two-thirds living off-reserve. This population has a high level of mobility as well as a high level of single-parent and low-income families. Research shows some improvements in educational attainment between 1981 and 2001, but large differences remain. Grade repetition increases at the transition years between elementary school, middle school, and high school. Aboriginal children’s reading literacy is below average, with the difference much
greater for males. Pre-elementary programs such as Aboriginal Head Start can help the
adjustment to school, and Aboriginal children’s attendance in these programs has
increased steadily since the early 1990s.

Norris concluded that the Canadian school system must change to respond to the
increasing diversity in Canada and to more effectively include and meet the needs of
children with special needs.

MICHAEL BACH

Michael Bach, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Association for Community
Living (CACL), expressed appreciation to CTF for its commitment to collaborate with
other organizations to hold a broader conversation concerning inclusive schools. Bach
reflected on three questions about how to expand inclusion.

First, could all interest groups form a shared political project for quality inclusive public
education in Canada? Bach defined the goal as education that assures full citizenship
and belonging for all children, regardless of their identity. He expressed hope, although
with uncertainty, that all stakeholder groups will be able to achieve a shared vision,
because so many groups are marginalized and face a huge scale of exclusion in the
current system.

Second, are individual groups really hearing each other’s stories of exclusion? The
main challenge is the lack of public recognition of the desperate need for a national
disability agenda in Canada. Another challenge is that the requirement to identify children
in certain ways in order to obtain support often results in the children being seen as
unworthy of inclusion in the first place. Bach urged all groups to use the ethical approach
of first listening to others and, in that context, creating the conversation for knowing one
another.

Third, assuming the first two questions can be successfully addressed, can all groups
forge a shared political, strategic, and tactical alliance to turn the shared vision into rea-

lity? Bach said yes but cautioned that the approach must be focused, even as it takes
into consideration different vantage points, funding regimes, and teaching strategies, lest
efforts result in disadvantaging certain groups. First there must be space to begin learning
from one another.

MAIRUTH SARSFIELD

Mairuth Sarsfield spoke from her vast experience as a writer and journalist and through
her work at the Department of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations. She challenged
teachers to value and support diversity and to be forceful at conveying this message, as
they have the potential to make a huge difference in their students’ lives. Students’ reach
should exceed their grasp, Sarsfield said, and, along with friendship and mentorship, that
reach is what a teacher provides.

Sarsfield said that inclusiveness is a noble dream, but it is only a signpost, not a
destination, and there is not a one-size-fits-all solution. As the Right Honourable
Michaëlle Jean said in her installation speech as Governor General of Canada, “The time
of the ‘two solitudes’ that, for too long, described the character of this country is past.” To
accept all students, regardless of their differences—the ethics of multiculturalism—is
what Canada must embrace, not merely the song, dance, costume, and food. The
challenge is to blend all the differences and still have a country called Canada. “We must
eliminate the spectre of all the solitudes and promote solidarity among all the citizens
who make up the Canada of today,” Jean added.
Sarsfield remarked that fulfilling the promise of multiculturalism or inclusiveness means having true Canadian citizenship, with all citizens having equal footing and attention. For teachers, it also means having equal access and having their foreign credentials recognized.

In closing, Sarsfield encouraged teachers to use the words of people whom students will acknowledge, such as the Governor General. Jean said, “Nothing in today’s society is more disgraceful than the marginalization of some young people who are driven to isolation and despair. We must not tolerate such disparities…. We must communicate to our youth the spirit of adventure that our ancestors, regardless of their origins, have passed on to us. We must give our young people the power and, even more, the desire to realize their full potential.”

JULIUS BUSKI

Julius Buski, Secretary General of CTF, said public education, as a system that serves everyone, by nature is inclusive; it is in definition, implementation, and practice where differences arise. The challenge is to transform schools into the reality of welcoming places that support learning for all, where no one is excluded because of any factors or characteristics.

CTF, like other groups and individuals at this conference, have collectively and individually expressed interest in and concern about inclusion for a long time. Efforts have included forming task forces or committees to study the issue, holding conferences to help frame policy, and passing or implementing policy.

Buski noted that CTF first gave consideration to special needs students in 1982. In 1992, CTF addressed inclusion and the integration of special needs children in its policies. Since then, it has studied anti-racism, anti-homophobia, and anti-sexism, among other topics. Moreover, CTF has established an Advisory Committee on Aboriginal Education; an Ad-Hoc Committee on Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender and Two-Spirited (BGLTT) Issues; and an Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Human Rights.

However, huge challenges remain. As the types of inclusion and exclusion increase in the face of significant social shifts and as society places more emphasis on social responsibility, the issues and challenges have become more complex. In particular, teachers face major challenges in terms of class size and composition, with inadequate resources to cope with the greater integration of special needs children in their classes.

Amid government funding cuts for programs and support mechanisms, groups and individuals need to hear each other rather than confront each other on definition and intentions, Buski said. There is a consensus that coalitions and partnerships must be formed to enable groups to seek solutions jointly.

In conclusion, Buski urged the delegates to use this conference as a catalyst for change; otherwise, they will have wasted time and missed an important opportunity.
PULL OUT? PULL IN? PULL TOGETHER! POWER LITERACY PROGRAMMING FOR ALL — Faye Brownlie

Faye Brownlie is the author of several teacher resource books and has worked in staff development both nationally and internationally. She also teaches one day per week at an elementary school in Richmond, BC. In her talk on literacy programming amid increasing classroom diversity, Brownlie highlighted a non-categorical support model of inclusion. She also spoke about effective classroom reading and writing practices that include all students.

Setting the context, Brownlie pointed to some major challenges facing Canadian schools, such as class size, lack of resources, spikes in grade repetition at the transition years, integration, and changing culture in the classroom. In particular, classroom teachers face an increasingly large percentage of English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Another challenge in teaching special needs students is capacity-building—focusing on the students and their needs, including their need for a sense of belonging, rather than the labels by which they are identified.

Brownlie advocated viewing inclusion as a regular education issue, not as a special education issue; it must be owned by the teachers, principals, and administrators in the district, not by specialists. She presented the model of a classroom in which the focus of support is on helping the classroom teacher teach all of the students, making the classroom work as a whole and the curriculum work for all.

Such a non-categorized resource model varies depending on the team but focuses on enhancing collaboration among teachers and specialists and on reducing the number of resource staff entering the classroom to help. As a result, the classroom teacher and students have fewer support people demanding their time, energy, and space, and programs become less fragmented and more efficient and effective for teaching and learning.

Brownlie described how the model might work, first in an elementary school. On the second day of school, the resource team discusses expectations and assigns one resource teacher to each classroom, regardless of specialty. That resource teacher works with the classroom teacher to design effective programming to meet the needs of all the students in the particular class. By the next day, the resource teachers are in the classroom, starting programming with their special education assistants. The resource teachers meet weekly, renegotiate their schedule and by the end of September have a plan in place to deliver programming based on need.

In a middle school, the same non-categorical team functioning applies. A resource teacher may be assigned to a pod of multi-age classrooms. In a secondary school, resource teachers are non-categorically assigned to grades and co-teach with the various subject teachers of their respective grade. They thus interact with all the students in the class but also have separate resource blocks for students who need special support.

Brownlie next outlined a model of effective meetings and collaboration between the classroom teacher, resource team, and principal. The first strategy is to set aside a 45-minute initial meeting. The classroom teacher describes the class, starting with strengths, and then moves to the teacher’s goals for the whole class and, finally, to the teacher’s
needs. The specialists, such as the ESL teacher or the resource teacher, then discuss the children under their attention. Next, the group discusses each child in the class and groups students according to their needs such as learning, emotional, counseling, or home support needs and social, language, or health concerns, etc. The group spends the last five minutes on aligning resource staff to areas most in need. The same meeting is repeated with on-call teachers.

The next piece is for the classroom teacher, resource teacher, and classroom assistant to take 45 minutes to plan the work for the classroom. By October, every teacher will have an action plan. In each class, either the classroom or the resource teacher takes ownership for providing support to the assistant and for working with tutors and parents. Moreover, either may work with the majority of the class or with small groups as needed. If a child must be pulled out of the classroom, it is done in recognition of class goals. Flexibility, thorough planning, ongoing dialogue, and constant negotiation are key with this model, Brownlie said.

She gave an overview of Richard Allington’s research on “what really matters for struggling readers.” The first factor is reading volume; increasing the amount of reading time per day will make better readers. The second is high-success reading opportunities; to learn the thinking involved in reading, children must spend 80 per cent of their reading time reading books that are easy. The third recommendation is to engage children in literate conversations, to take the time to read together and to interact with them while talking about the reading. The fourth suggestion is to give useful, explicit strategy instruction to teach literate thinking. This involves sharing with the child the thinking that takes place in the adult’s head when the adult reads—deliberately modeling, coaching, and engaging the child in the thinking.

Brownlie emphasized the importance of making good-quality choices of books and texts. The themes of social responsibility, equity, etc., are good choices as part of the regular conversation in the classroom in ethnically diverse schools.

Brownlie showed a video about teaching writing in primary school. The technique, called Squiggles, focused on developing ideas and writing skills by drawing, talking, and sharing. This video is available at www.sd72.bc.ca. Brownlie also recommended two webcasts on teaching literacy and doing assessment in the middle years, available at http://insinc.com/ministryofeducation/20041007/archive.html and http://insinc.com/ministryofeducation/20041008/archive.html

RACE AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF SCHOOLING — George Sefa Dei

Schools and teachers have an important role to play in preparing the future generation, stated George Sefa Dei, in opening the session on race and the cultural politics of schooling. Dei asked participants to look at the faces in the room and to acknowledge that something was not right by the lack of visible minorities. The situation was likened to the Western journalism conundrum: never believe anything until it is officially denied.

The concept of race and students needs rethinking and reframing with respect to inclusive schooling practice. While the term “inclusion” has come to mean everything, schools are filled with bodies that are physically present but mentally absent. The cultural opportunities of schooling have to do with power and how people interact in the system. Messages sent make students feel they want to be somewhere else. Youths are being pushed out.

It is the collective responsibility to pathologize success and failure. Along with successes, teachers must take responsibility for failures and not blame families. Translating success into the student’s community requires talking about academic and social excellence in school.
Race is a fundamental principle of society. The discourse around criminality affecting Asian and African youth is considered too controversial by some teachers. But police brutality is part of everyday life for some people in the system. While difficult to accept, these voices need to be heard and cannot be ignored.

Recognizing the intersection of race, class, gender, sex, language, and culture is critical. Some identities, such as race, are misrecognized. The liberal idea of colour blindness, in fact, marks the student’s face of racism. The negative agencies of race must be dissociated to embrace the powerful racial heritage in our communities. Racial differences, not simply diversity, need to be discussed. Symbols, markers of race, and a bit of history are not enough; teachers themselves must reflect the student body.

Social justice is needed for all students. Given the severity of issues for certain groups, such as African-Canadian students, there must be strategies and policies in place that target specific races. In Ghana, class and gender were issues for Dei. Oppression must be understood in contextual and institutional terms, to end the reproduction of already existing inequities. This is liberalization of social justice.

The everydayness of racism is revealing. For example, people do not stop to think about the racial makeup of firefighters when their house is burning; they take it for granted that the best have been recruited. However, individuals are hired because they fit in. Excellence is recognized if it looks like us. Teachers teach what they value.

To deflect White race in power requires critical race work in the school system. Anti-racism work must stem from the dominant educator’s point of entry or point of privilege. This means acknowledging the systemic nature of racism. Teachers morally distance themselves when they do not talk about self-education and responsibility. This creates a credibility gap: if one does not implicate oneself, some students will shut off.

White privilege continues to play out in schools through a process of racialization: whereas some are racialized for privilege, others are racialized for punishment. Understanding the meaning of power and privilege, thereby responding to difference, is the real issue in working with whiteness in anti-racist practice.

Dei advocates complicating people’s identities and talking about new ones. “We cannot be paralyzed by the discourse of complexity. We need to complicate blackness. The question is only how far do we want to go?” People are not talking about colour the way they should. The hyper-disability of blackness juxtaposed with whiteness must be addressed. “The criminality of Black bodies is related to the way White bodies are made to be innocent,” asserts Dei. “We need to disentangle that sense of self. We see Katrina in New Orleans but not in our own backyard. Go to Jane and Finch in Toronto.” Here we see disengaged bodies, spiritually and emotionally damaged due to racism.

Sixteen visible minorities were counted in the room—a 28 percent representation. “Why are we the wrong audience?” a participant asked, who acknowledged taking offence at the comment. Dei stated that he does not believe in “preaching to the choir,” which “gives a sense of complicity.” To challenge themselves, people need to be receptive to discomfort. They have a collective responsibility to ask about the absences, to ask who is not present. People need to disturb the peace.

“Anti-racists do not create the problem of race. It already exists,” noted Dei. Racism is not discussed, because it is so difficult. Where teachers were once hesitant to take on controversial issues in the classroom, now they are afraid. The climate has changed significantly. People do not come empty. Teachers must find new ways of dealing with the constant resistance to addressing problems. The key question is not who can do anti-racist work, but are teachers prepared to face the risks and consequences of doing anti-racist work?
Anti-racism education is good for everyone. Good intentions are not enough however. Speaking about racism is not the same thing as doing anti-racist work, and people need tools to work with. Educators are used to working with bodies of knowledge, but what happens to people when they enter school? How are issues of power negotiated in the school system? These are key issues, which are not solved by rhetoric. Recording in the books that work is done becomes seductive and dangerous.

While Dei supported the collection of data, he acknowledged that it is not an exact science and therefore will always be contentious. To talk about systemic change, there must be a body of knowledge. Those who want to use information for the purposes of labelling and stereotyping will do so irrespective of statistics.

Sherry Ramrattan Smith acknowledged the challenge put out by Dei to examine the production of knowledge, whose voice teachers hear, and what is said. In terms of power issues and accountability, teachers have individual as well as collective responsibilities. Change in the form of transformative socio-political action must come from within. She said Dei is clearly very passionate on the subject of anti-racism, and cares deeply about the public school system and that all students’ needs are met.

**TAKING DIFFERENCES INTO ACCOUNT — Blye Frank**

Blye Frank, from the Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University, discussed issues of privilege, homophobia, and heterosexism and explored language, pedagogy, curriculum, policy, and climate.

Frank explained that he prefers the phrase “taking differences into account” over a focus on diversity or inclusion. The idea of celebrating diversity is fine, he said, but it can easily lead to problems such as the co-opting and stereotyping of other cultures, and “it doesn’t cut the mustard” in addressing discrimination.

Role modeling and mentoring “begins with us,” he said. Most of the research done over the years has focused on oppression, and very little has examined the discourse of privilege. But all people are products of their social environments—that is why self-exploration is so critical.

“We all come from somewhere,” said Frank, adding that, “We all came into this room classed, raced, gendered, sexed, abled, regioned,” and so on. All these things are social practices. In other words, “We don’t have a gender. What we have are gender practices.” This is shown in anthropological work that reveals the different practices of masculinity across cultures.

Masculinity is also a class-based practice, and different groups of men practice masculinity differently in the same culture. In addition, different boys and men practice their own individual masculinities very differently in different contexts (e.g., work, home, school). Because gender is a set of social practices, this allows teachers to work on changing the practices. They must be held accountable for their practices, and when teachers exhibit sexist or racist pedagogy (for example), they should not be blamed, but educated.

Frank explained that when he views a classroom, he asks, “What is the discourse in this room that allows students to be written into the social text?” For example, are there posters in the classroom of same-sex parents? There is a tendency to work with the “challenged” students and not to educate the privileged about changing their prejudices, but everyone in the classroom must change to create a climate of inclusion.
One must also be aware of the world outside the classroom. For example, a girl who grew up in a sexist house, when educated about sexism, may go home with her new “gender glasses” on and question her household—and this could set her up for more abuse. “This is dangerous work. That doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be done; it means it should be done very thoughtfully,” said Frank.

He observed that the issue of equality is complicated. The focus, for instance, used to be on allowing girls access to things that were considered masculine, but it is still difficult to do the reverse. This is because “we never let men go ‘down’ the ladder—we only work on ‘bringing the girls along’.” Feminine qualities are still not accepted in men.

Frank highlighted some key areas to focus on when taking differences into account: language, pedagogy, curriculum, policy, and climate. Language is important but complex. The “zero-tolerance” policy must be revised to take context into account. For example, one boy with gay parents may use the word “homo” because his fathers use it; another boy may use the same word in a negative way. In general, “homosexual” is not a preferred term, because it is part of a “language of pathology.” When discussing sexuality and gender, the preferred terms are gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, transgendered, and transsexual.

Frank offered some basic advice on anti-homophobic/anti-heterosexist pedagogy. Encouraging students to “come out” is not the right approach, because, “They don’t live in the classroom.” There are repercussions and complications that the students must consider. Further, one should not assume that a student is straight. Questions should be worded so that the student does not have to identify either way. Finally, it is not enough to treat people all the same. This simply perpetuates existing inequalities. Instead teachers have to have an affirmative action pedagogy in their heads in the classroom.

Frank remarked that it is interesting to consider who writes the curriculum and what groups are represented at the table. He posed some questions to consider: How does one gain information? From what sources does one gain information? Where are issues of diversity in the curriculum?

Turning to policy, Frank asked what issues of diversity are taken into consideration in the policies of institutions such as universities, organizations, and businesses. The bottom line, he said, is that sexist, racist, and homophobic behaviour is not professional, and people should be held responsible for being unprofessional.

He gave an example of such behaviour: If a teacher asks two boys who are misbehaving, “Do you two guys have something going on there?” that teacher is using homophobic pedagogy to control those students. There must be more bridges between policy documents and everyday practices.

People from marginalized groups are very good at reading the environment, or climate, and will look for evidence of safe spaces, said Frank. For example, if a card, pamphlet, or office door has a gay-, lesbian-, bisexual-, or transgendered-positive message, “This means you are safe.” He posed some questions to consider: How “tellable” are you? What is your own degree of comfort? What does your office environment look like? If you have a receptionist or other co-workers, what role do they play in creating the climate?

A key theme throughout Frank’s talk was the need to examine oneself: “The greatest research project is self-reflection,” he emphasized.
INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS FOR NEW TIMES — Roger Slee

Roger Slee is former Deputy Director General of the Queensland Department of Education in Australia and current Dean of the Faculty of Education at McGill University. He stated that he would discuss the issue of inclusive education by drawing primarily on his experiences in Australia, with inclusive education as part of school reform.

Referring to a trip to India this year, Slee described a "moment of enlightenment" when he noticed signs that read "Happy School," "Happy School Society," and "Happy Teacher Training." These, he believed, should be a metaphor for what educators do. Unfortunately, in Australia's history, education has been happy for some but not for all. He characterized teachers as central to the reconstruction of schooling that is taking place.

The key indicators for academic failure are poverty and ability. As schools have enabled the possibility of success, they have also induced failure. This is not new; however, in the past, students were able to negotiate the transition to work, because there was a large market for unskilled labour. With the decrease in the number of jobs available for unskilled workers, the problem with lack of school success is becoming more apparent.

Slee indicated that different kinds of support are needed in different situations. Problems arise when the level of support is predicated on the gravity of the diagnosis attached to the child. This may result in children being labelled with a more severe condition to ensure support, and it makes it difficult to construct schools that are inclusive.

A 1984 Australian study, entitled Integration in Victorian Education: Report of the Ministerial Review of Educational Services for the Disabled, found that all children have the right to be included in their neighbourhood school. During the implementation of this aspect of the report, its effect was diluted by the addendum that inclusion might be delayed until such time as the necessary resources were in place.

In 1993, a review by Lewis of Victorian education produced a chart comparing segregation and integration in 1984 and 1993. Lewis found that in 1984 there were no students integrated into regular schools, and there were approximately 4,980 students in specialized schools. In 1993, there were some 5,000 integrated students, and approximately 5,100 students were in segregated placements. Although the original intent had been to shift resources so that children could be supported in regular classes, what happened was a redefining of students who qualified for additional support: any student with a disability, impairment, or difficulty was entitled to integration resources.

Slee referred to the "calculus of equity," which is E = DS + AR (Equity equals Disabled Students plus Added Resources). It is the problem of an education ministry to determine how much disability requires how many resources. The issue of resources and their allocation is an area of intense debate.

Although the purpose of The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (1998-2000) was to see whether or not school-based leadership was having a favourable effect on student outcomes, it did make findings pertinent to inclusiveness. The study looked at four areas: intellectual qualities, connectedness, supportive learning environment, and recognition of great levels of diversity. Results were inconclusive, but the study led to the consideration of a new curriculum based on "new knowledge for new times."

Slee emphasized the importance of investing in children—not simply funding a child but expanding the philosophy of education. Quality education is expensive, but tying funding to individual students does not facilitate inclusion. Inclusive education is more than just doing the right thing; it involves looking at how society deals with differences and the world that arises from them.
In response to a question concerning the role of parents and family in the transition from exclusion to inclusion, Slee stated that education is a partnership and that, in many ways, parents are at the centre of reform. They speak out, keep issues alive, support each other and help to re-educate teachers, administrators, and other families about the various disabilities.

A participant from Alberta, where funding is based upon identified needs, asked how it is possible to balance inclusive education with the need for a label to qualify for resources. Slee replied that the issue is a difficult one. He advocated stepping away from the problem and trying to look at it from a different angle. One possibility would be to assign money to schools on the basis of the programs they offer.

Following a question about the regional government’s role in the process, Slee observed that it is important to know what is in place, to detect patterns of inclusion, and to invest in staff development. He noted that frustration occurs when people are not operating on the same understanding; the first step is to ensure a common definition of inclusion.

Another participant expressed the need to “relegitimatize” the classroom teacher as the individual who best knows the students. Slee referred to the importance of involving the classroom teacher in any discussions concerning inclusion.

In response to a participant who reiterated the concern about balancing the need for a label to qualify for funding with the need to provide inclusive education, Slee stated that it is necessary to re-examine the funding premise and the manner in which resources are distributed. Rural schools are much more inclusive than urban schools, because there is no choice. The attitude of “these are our kids” is the “framework that informed all decisions.”

**First Nations Peoples and Education in Canada: Is Transformative Change on the Horizon?** — Karihwakeron Tim Thompson

With greetings in Cree, Karihwakeron Tim Thompson, Education Coordinator for the Chiefs of Ontario, welcomed participants, noting that his traditional name makes him feel strong. Naming ceremonies are tremendously important in Iroquois country, as they are announcements “to all the forces that help us live.”

Karihwakeron provided the group with some historical context. Six nations constitute the Iroquois Confederacy to form an extended longhouse (*haundenosaunee*), within which households are controlled by women who are usually elders. Men are permitted to reside there. The societal power of women may be the birthplace of North American feminism, he suggested.

Iroquois chiefs or *rotianeson* (people of the good) are watched from childhood for their kindness and conduct to all beings. Before Chief titles are confirmed, consent is sought first among all clan mothers and then from other Iroquois nations. Symbolic titles are bestowed on chiefs by women who are also the ones to remove them should chiefs “do wrong.”

In the context of European settlers, Karihwakeron explained the significance of the wampum belt. The two-path wampum was used to signify the long-term relationship with the British, symbolizing their parallel travels down the same river accompanied by their own laws and governments, and a policy of non-interference. “Crossing each other’s path could mean capsizing.”
Wampum belts also signified friendship, peace, and “good mind” and led to different kinds of agreements throughout the years. The British symbolized the relationship with the silver covenant chain. It signified the need “to polish the relationship regularly…. This is how we understand history; it tells us who we are and where we come from.”

Fast-forwarding to the present, Karihwakeron indicated that the Canadian government put the Aboriginal socio-economic conditions on its agenda, which led to an April 2004 meeting with all national Aboriginal organizations and a May 2005 Cabinet Ministers’ meeting to discuss life-long learning. The first full Ministers’ meeting in November 2005 is a look at a 10-year, quality-of-life agenda, with regularly monitored indicators in education, health, jobs, and other aspects.

The achievement gap between First Nations students and others is growing; only one-third of First Nations children graduate from high school. What is being done? Karihwakeron recounted the experience of a southern Ontario reserve where children were two to three grades behind. The entire community mobilized to develop and implement an action plan that closed the gap within one year.

He pointed to the need to rework the archaic funding formula for First Nations schools, drafted in 1988, wherein the line amount for Aboriginal languages was never clearly defined. Furthermore, the funding for First Nations schools was capped in 1996–97.

First Nations schools have a unique history, starting with residential schools where assimilation was the goal—in Karihwakeron’s words, “the twisted social experiment in the development of the Indian Act.” He related how his mother and aunts were shipped far away from their families to residential schools, where they were trained according to British gender roles. Post-secondary education for First Nations students meant enfranchisement from the White perspective, but to students it meant essentially giving up their identity.

Karihwakeron is looking for a transformative change in the issues (e.g., jurisdiction, performance measurement) on the agenda at the First Ministers’ Meeting—and not merely “tweaking the formula.” Also, the current idea among First Nations peoples that schools are oppressive and are perceived as jails needs to be replaced by a vision of schools as places in which to achieve one’s dreams.

First Nations are looking for a fundamental change in the educational structure as it relates to them. First Nations’ inability to keep up with provincial standards is viewed as a failure. But is it a fair comparison? First Nations schools should be viewed on their own terms.

Karihwakeron questioned the likelihood of a transformative change. Although First Nations have administrative power over their schools, will government authorities still make the decisions? Wrongly, First Nations are modeled on provincial schools, “But we need authority to innovate and set our own standards.”

First Nations people view education as life-long learning, starting from inside the womb and interconnecting with economic, social, and other factors. “We propose the establishment of regional educational authorities and structures where local visions are combined at the regional level.”

Karihwakeron mentioned a number of things that are needed: appropriate assessment tools to evaluate schools and teachers, funding control, professional development, and support for post-secondary First Nations institutions. Currently none of the 45 existing institutions are recognized by the federal or provincial governments, even though they have evolved directly from higher learning needs. As a result, some First Nation post-secondary programs (if students want credit for them) have to be delivered through recognized institutions.
“The ultimate measure of transformative change is whether or not it will be First Nations-driven or imposed,” said Karihwakeron. External initiatives have never succeeded.

The lack of Aboriginal teachers at the 7-to-12 grade levels was observed. Although not all Aboriginal teachers self-identify given issues of distrust, there is still a dearth. School boards have to actively recruit them.

First Nations’ control of education is necessary. It will be necessary to change the fundamental structure of education, to increase the number of Aboriginal secondary school teachers. Poor science and math backgrounds mean that most Aboriginal teachers remain at the elementary level. Karihwakeron related some innovative approaches that have inspired students in math and science in an Aboriginal context (e.g., Akwesasne).

An Inuit teacher related her story of students struggling with their first language. Recently in Nunavut, there have been changes whereby Inuit traditional ways, language, culture, and elders have been increasingly included in education. It can be as easy as closing school during the fall and spring hunts (e.g., as done in James Bay). Inuit teacher candidates can now go to school in their own language. Language of instruction is a major problem—only one of the 110 First Nations schools teaches in its local language; the others are all English immersion.

A participant suggested that the Nunavut educational model with its attention to maintaining Inuit culture and language, might be applicable elsewhere. There is not as much dialogue as there should be; First Nations dialogues tend to remain in First Nations country.

“We are failing, because the system is set up for the middle class,” said one participant, adding that students whose first language is Mi’kmag have done poorly when taught in English. This addresses the need for first language teaching, racial equity, and different learning styles—as well as the need for a holistic approach.

One participant said she felt she had failed as a Native-as-a-second-language teacher with “semi-literate” students in both languages. “I feel like an alien teacher,” she said, underlining the difficulty of working in a system where she is aware of the problems.

Karihwakeron agreed and pointed out how different Mohawk and Nishnaabemowin (verb-based languages) are, compared to English or French (noun-based languages). The moderator emphasized that the participant was not a failure, and her comments underlined the need to make the system transformative.

WHAT ABOUT THE BOYS? RECONSIDERING GENDER-EQUITABLE EDUCATION — Janice Wallace

The emergent issue of boys’ underachievement is being taken up across the country, said Janice Wallace, Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta. Educators are attempting to reconsider this important question in the context of gender-equitable education. Girls outperform boys on standardized tests in all subject areas, Wallace said. While this indicates successful intervention on behalf of girls in science and math, it also points to a problem with boys and literacy.

“Growing attention to high-stakes standardized testing has become a driving force in many jurisdictions,” Wallace said, noting that recent media attention has increased public demands for action. “What has not been reported,” she said, “is that boys
have not been doing well in relation to girls in the area of literacy for years. This is not a new phenomenon."

While some traditional theories blame a feminist-driven “war” on boys, others refer to “toxic gender roles” or our culture’s failure to produce “real men,” thus depriving boys of vital relational grounding. Meanwhile, critical theorists point to strategies of the right and economic interests, which “naturalize preferred ways of being boys.”

“Questions to consider,” Wallace said, “include who is best prepared to work with boys? What do we understand about different forms of masculinity? What forms are preferred and why? And how are forms of masculinity linked to political, ideological, and economic interests?”

She noted that traditional arguments portray all boys as an undifferentiated group of underachievers—victims of their own biology. Research, however, indicates that race and social class have a greater effect than gender on school performance. One study in a high-migrant-density, working class suburb showed that while one-third of boys and one-fifth of girls would fail at university-qualifying English, boys of higher socio-economic status would outperform poorer girls. In addition, Wallace noted, there are the “other” boys—gay boys or those with disabilities—whose experiences can be profoundly different from those of their peers. "If researchers are not careful and nuanced," she stressed, "they may misrecognize some disadvantages as affecting all boys." Economic factors help shape educational theory.

"In the past," said Wallace, "it was not unusual to leave high school and go to an okay job, but that’s not the case now." As the number of unskilled jobs decreases and competition increases, workplace demands for higher literacy skills have spurred public anxiety. This, in turn, has driven the current accountability regimes that characterize so many educational jurisdictions across Canada, fuelling demand for instruments such as standardized testing.

Strategies to improve boys’ literacy skills have included so-called “boy-friendly books,” the use of technologies, single-sex school settings, and increasing the number of male teachers and role models within the school. While Wallace did not dismiss these strategies out of hand, she suggested they be examined carefully. For instance, she said, "We need to look at the idea of boy-friendly books, at the idea that all boys prefer certain kinds of books. We need to recognize that there are wide differences between boys and boys, and between girls and girls, which are as significant as the differences between girls and boys."

Neither should technological interventions be implemented uncritically. “Information technology is not a neutral pedagogical terrain,” Wallace pointed out. “It can perpetuate narrowly defined masculine norms, excluding girls and multiple expressions of masculinity. We must not pursue in one area while we displace in others.”

The idea that boys with male elementary teachers do better is not supported by studies, Wallace said. Men contemplating elementary teaching positions, which are traditionally considered “female” jobs, can feel the need to exhibit hyper-masculine personae. Some parents, too, feel uncomfortable with male teachers in younger grades. “We need to have a frank talk about the construction of gender awareness and challenge the privileged tradition of hegemonic acceptable male behaviour,” Wallace suggested.

Same-sex schooling is seen as immediately proactive and has been associated with a long history of prestigious all-boy institutions. Such schools may adopt stereotypes of “what boys are like,” leading to stricter, more active programs. However, this strategy can further marginalize certain boys as well as lead to an increase in the very kinds of behaviour the schools are attempting to address. Besides, Wallace said, same-sex schooling confers “no significant advantage, according to research.”
“Where do we go from here?” Wallace asked. “Well, we have a moral responsibility to meet the needs of all students. We need to act, but wisely, not precipitously. There is no simple solution, no ‘tips for teachers’ to ‘fix’ boys. Nor do all boys need fixing. We need to find out which students are truly in need, what their problems are, and the roots of their problems. We need to listen to what boys say about education, and we need to look at what the teacher actually does in the classroom that makes a difference. The bottom line is that we need to respect our students.”

The solution is relational, Wallace said. “We need to create relationships that are meaningful….We must encourage in our students a sense of competence and control. We must design literacy tasks with a clear, immediate purpose. We must respond to the student personally, with genuine interest. We must encourage students to develop self-efficacy and allow them some control of the knowledge they acquire. We must promote dialogue and act in ways that affirm multiple possibilities.”

Action research projects can help educators understand how particular boys are developing literacy. Plans based on deep knowledge of individual students and their contexts can avoid entrenching harmful versions of masculinity, without rolling back the gains that have been made for girls.

Education at the Crossroads — Stephen Lewis

Stephen Lewis was introduced as the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for HIV/IDS in Africa, a Companion of the Order of Canada. In addition, he was named by TIME Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

“I have learned to never allow the absence of knowledge to impede the expression of an opinion,” joked Lewis, referring to his political career. Before talking about inclusive schools, he told participants that he considered the teaching profession as “the most resplendent profession.” Teachers should feel enormous pride in the way they respond to the needs of children.

Children have an extraordinary yearning for learning and going to school. Lewis referred to the 1990’s study, in which he participated, on the impact of war on children, led by Graça Machel, often referred to as “Mamma Africa”. The first and foremost finding of the report was that, “Whether a child is in war or coming out of war, what he wants and needs most is to be in school, be it a formal or informal school.” The fact that school is the centrepiece was corroborated by his experience later, when he entered Rwanda and spent time with young teens—“they all said they wanted to go to school.”—and when he visited children mutilated by landmines in South Africa. When asked by Lloyd Axworthy, then Foreign Affairs Minister, what he wanted, an 11-year-old boy who had lost both his arms replied “I want to go to school.” The children who escaped after being abducted and turned into sex slaves in Sudan also had the same desire. So did the girls interviewed after the fall of the Taliban. So do the millions of AIDS orphans in Africa, who are prevented from getting an education by the school fees that are the legacy of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies. There is an impulse in every child, Lewis observed, to learn and to be included in his environment. The intensity of their desire tells something about how much inclusion means to children.

The fact that school means so much to all these children speaks of “the nobility of your own collective work,” Lewis told the audience.
Referring to the program for the conference, he noted the concentration on Aboriginal children. This theme is a constant at conferences on diversity and inclusion, yet everyone knows Aboriginal children belong in school. The report prepared by Madam Justice Bertha Wilson on Aboriginal rights received little attention, yet “it was all in there.” He recalled his discomfort at UN committee meetings when, after he “lacerated countries for their human rights violations,” the representatives of these countries would respond by quoting from this report and condemn the way Canada treats its Aboriginal people. They stopped short of calling him a “bloody hypocrite,” he said. Teachers can play an important part by having discussion of issues in school, Lewis said.

The second item that stands out in the program is gender inequality. He recalled the recent incident at a North York high school in which a dozen students were charged with the alleged sexual assault and harassment of one of their peers. He noted that this episode prompted renewed discussion of the subtext of harassment and berating, based on looks and the size of girls’ breasts. “The macho ethos still exists,” Lewis said, and so does gender stereotyping. Talking about his three-year-old grandson’s experience in a school where there was “too much male aggression,” he insisted on the role teachers have to play to address gender stereotyping and inequality.

Womens’ studies courses should be made mandatory in all secondary schools, he said, including for boys, as it is absolutely critical for inclusiveness. “The worst blight on the planet is definitely gender inequality. Men find it hugely difficult to relinquish their power.” Gender inequality is the reason why women are being disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS virus. The fact that women have no power in sexual relationships is causing their disappearance from the African landscape, Lewis explained, and schools must be “deeply alert” to gender equality issues.

The third issue raised by Lewis is that surrounding Black students. Serious issues emerged from the alleged incident at the North York catholic school, where Black students accused the police and others of racism. The breakdown in schools suggests a sense of vulnerability on the part of Black students. “They don’t feel included.” Lewis talked about his experience and research when he wrote a report for Bob Rae, following the Yonge Street riots after the Rodney King incident in Los Angeles in 1992. He quoted the findings of Jasmine Zine in the book Removing the Margins: The Challenges and Possibilities of Inclusive Schooling. “It is hell,” said Lewis, “for those Black kids when they don’t see anybody in the school who looks like them,” when there are no Black principals, vice principals, heads of department or teachers.

More than 10 years later, the issues remain identical. With all the cutbacks in Ontario schools in particular, it has been difficult to do what everyone wanted to do. “It is lovely that you have this conference, but there is a repetitive aspect. Why does it take so long to build inclusive schools?” Lewis said that he came to the conclusion that parents who ask for all-Black schools have a significant point. He recoiled from the idea, he said, but it is difficult to be dogmatic and argue that it should not be tried. He drew a parallel with all-women colleges in the United States that have proved to be very good learning environments.

Another group that the program of the conference deals with are gays and lesbians. Lewis witnessed the feeling of exclusion of a child of gay and lesbian parents on Mother’s Day or Father’s Day at school, watching the young son of his lesbian daughter. “Is it in the interest of inclusion to celebrate these events in schools?” he asked, adding that he did not understand why there is not a greater sensitivity and appreciation of how the world works.

Moving on to children with special needs, he said that this is where the inclusion battle was fought in his early days in the Ontario legislature, with lengthy debates about children with disabilities who were rejected by schools and put in reform schools or adult wards of mental hospitals.
Lewis suggested that these children should not always be integrated in every classroom. “Sometimes, equality means dealing with everybody differently.” Deploring the need for some of his friends to fight for an interpreter so that their gifted deaf daughter could learn in school, he said that there was still a long way to go for the political leadership. This support is needed, “otherwise teachers will keep struggling and it is not good for children.”

It is encouraging to see multiculturalism given an increasingly important place in school, Lewis noted. This is something that is extraordinary and means that Canada is “darn better off than a country like France.” Canada has understood that multiculturalism and diversity make a huge difference. “I am glad it happened before I expire,” he added, saying that he sees a new idealism in the land, a strong desire to improve the human condition. He receives numerous letters from high school students who want to help in Africa and notices an increase in the number of young people who care and think as “global citizens.” Lewis suggested disasters like the recent Asian tsunami might have played a part in this new sense of solidarity. “This is a blessed moment to take advantage of inclusiveness.”

Lewis drew participants’ attention to Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that the education of the child shall be directed to

- The development of the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential,

- The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

- The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own,

- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin,

- The development of respect for the natural environment.

“This is a lovely litany of moral imperatives, and it all defines inclusiveness. That is the dream of a society.”

In conclusion, Lewis said that he spends his life “ricocheting between despair and hope.” When he comes back to Canada after spending time in Africa, he finds a quotient of hope. “There is no calling more honourable than to make every child a child who is included,” he reminded the teachers in the audience.

Discussion

In response to a participant who commented on the way talking about issues promotes the status quo and has a paralyzing effect, Lewis quipped that his experience at the UN allows him to comment authoritatively on this point. There is a tendency to call for a
report to avoid having to take action, he agreed, and “There is no question that it is self-
destructive.”

Another participant asked for more information on the US policies that are impeding
progress in the fight against AIDS in Africa. Lewis explained how, in the late 1980s and
early 1990s, the Structural Adjustment Program and its “antediluvian principles” started
having a highly destructive effect. Put simply, this Program made aid conditional on the
imposition of user fees for health services and education, thus resulting in the exclusion
from school of large number of children. Lewis said that he recently met with the Health
Minister in Kenya, a country that needs nurses desperately, although it has 4,000 retired
nurses. Due to the macroeconomic policies imposed on them by the International
Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, many developing countries have little control
on their budget and find themselves unable to hire nurses and doctors. A way was found
around the problem in Kenya: the Clinton Foundation has hired 300 Kenyan retired
nurses and pays for them. “It is nuts, but it is happening because of the way the IMF and
the World Bank see the world.”

A participant told Lewis that many parents of children with disabilities were at the
conference. They have worked for the inclusion of their children. She was concerned, she
said, that the comment on different needs meaning different treatment might be used to
justify the segregation of some children.

Lewis responded that he had carefully read the documents prepared by the Canadian
Association for Community Living (CACL) before coming to the conference. “I am not
suggesting segregation, but there are moments when children have a right to learn
separately, while being part of an integrated class.” From time to time, they need a
special response because they have special needs, as implied by the CACL in its 2004
document. In her report for the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, in 1984,
Madam Justice Rosalie Abella stated that equality is not sameness and that there are
moments when people need to acknowledge differences. In an aside, Lewis said that he
was in a “death struggle” with her. She has 23 honorary degrees, while he only has 22,
and he invited participants to throw their weight in his favour, if they hear of any university
giving out honorary degrees. “I never got a normal degree after years and years of study,
and this is why I lust after honorary degrees,” he explained.

Another participant thanked Lewis for his insights and asked him how he keeps strong.
“Let me explain. I am a democratic socialist, so I know the meaning of futility. I have
developed a cosmic patience.” Lewis joked that he still has fits of despair and occasion-
ally feels aggressive to the point of violence, adding that he would happily name some of
the people he would like to strangle, “except that would be actionable.” His wife also
insists on the importance of finding a good therapist, and she is not joking, he said. “You
have to keep fighting, regardless of how bad the odds are,” he added, giving the example
of the women’s movement.

Saying that the hardest questions often come from eight-year-olds, a teacher told
Lewis that, while his class was talking about AIDS in Africa once, responding to his
simple explanations about how international organizations are helping African countries,
one of the children asked: “If they don’t need the money, why don’t they let them have it?”

“If only Paul Martin had a similar intelligence...” replied Lewis. Jeffrey Sachs has been
trying to convince the governments of G8 countries to donate 0.7% of their GDP, but
minimal progress is being made towards this objective and towards reaching the
Millennium Development Goals. Lewis also alluded to Maud Barlow’s new book in which
she argues that, if the United States put together the money it is spending on the war on
terrorism and the Star Wars budget, it amounts to approximately one trillion dollars a
year. “Somewhere, there is something out of whack, and we have to wonder if our moral
anchor has been cut lose.”
Returning to the issue of the inclusion of disabled children in the classroom, the mother of a 15-year-old with autism pointed out that hundreds of parents have put thousands of hours into inclusion. “The opinion of many parents is that children’s right to be included supersedes their right to be pulled out at times.” She added that being pulled out of the classroom is stigmatizing.

“I am not denying the tremendous importance of what you are saying,” Lewis said, and every decision must be made with the best interest of the child in mind. He reminded her that he had fought all his life against segregation. Another participant noted that she had seen her disabled son included by extraordinary teachers who did not need to have him pulled out.

Lewis stressed that he was not saying that children should be pulled out of school gratuitously. If a school has all the needed supports, then pull-outs should not be necessary, he agreed. “I will not battle with those who have the experience. It is just hard for me to be categorical about this,” Lewis concluded.

A participant commented on the risk of promoting the stereotype of the Black sexual predator, with comments on African women becoming infected with HIV/AIDS because they cannot say no to men. In North America, she said, women under the age of 25 are also the group with the highest percentage of new infections.

She also pointed out that, when he says that every child wants to be in school, Lewis is not mentioning that school is also a place of trauma for many children in North America. Contrary to Lewis’s experience, she felt hope when going to Africa, she said. Lewis agreed that Ghana was a place where hope was possible. “I also feel hope for Africa,” he said. “It is a sophisticated culture, with great knowledge and creativity at the grassroots level. They could break the back of the pandemic, if given the resources to do so.”

Lewis said that he would not apologize for his comments on male predators. The behaviours he condemned are not specific to Black men and can be encountered everywhere. He quoted a study that showed that the riskiest environment for African women is marriage, as men with multiple partners are bringing the virus home to their wives. Political and religious authorities are trying to address this problem through prevention. The prevention message in Uganda, he said, is “Zero grazing,” to stop men from having multiple partners, and the transmission rate has been massively reduced. “I was not attempting to stigmatize Black men,” he repeated.

In answer to a question on pediatric AIDS, Lewis said that spending money in that area means dealing with “opportunistic infections,” in other words with pre-AIDS infections. He informed participants that the Clinton Foundation went to India earlier in the month to finally sign an agreement to manufacture pediatric formulations of medication. Until now, people used to break up tablets to get the appropriate dosage for children.

Winston Carter thanked Lewis for his comments. “Yes, it is an honour to be a teacher, and it is rewarding to have you as an ambassador for our cause,” he told Lewis. After this inspirational address, he told the audience, “it is easy to understand why Stephen Lewis in one of the 100 most influential people.”

Since he does not need another mug or silver apple, O’Haire told Lewis, that CTF will make a donation to the Stephen Lewis Foundation, and she encouraged participants to do so as well. www.stephenlewisfoundation.com
Differentiated Instruction as a Way to Achieve Equity and Excellence in Today’s Schools — Carol Ann Tomlinson

Carol Ann Tomlinson served as a public school teacher for 21 years, including 12 years as a program administrator of special services for struggling and advanced learners. She is currently Professor of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Policy in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. She has authored many articles on differentiated instruction in the mixed-ability classroom.

Tomlinson referred to two epiphanies she experienced during her first years of teaching. Over the summer, she had worked with colleagues on curriculum development, producing a notebook that she expected would meet her teaching needs for the coming school year. Approximately two weeks after the beginning of school, she had her first epiphany when she encountered an adolescent male, Golden, who could not read. This was a situation that was not covered in the curriculum notebook. Tomlinson had her second epiphany in the spring, during a concept development lesson on symbols in literature, when she noticed that her students were ultimately depending on one student, Jonathon, to provide the correct answer. At that moment, she realized that the year had been as wasteful for Jonathon as it had been for Golden. The Golden/Jonathon dilemma—that of challenging the very bright student while supporting the student with very special needs—was the topic of her presentation.

Although most of her observations were based on her experiences in the US, Tomlinson stated that the situation in Canada is similar. Schools struggle to balance equity (all students should have access to whatever it takes to help them achieve their full potential) and excellence. The system should produce the best in a variety of endeavours. “When equity and excellence flourish, the result is opportunity for each individual to develop and use the best that resides in that individual for the betterment of self and society.” Any decisions concerning education should strive to balance equity and excellence.

Tomlinson referred to a book by Gary Marx entitled Ten Trends: Educating Children for a Profoundly Different Future and shared three of the trends that she found particularly relevant.

Trend No. 3: The Country Will Become a Nation of Minorities

The current, White, middle class dominance in schools is changing due to the large influx of ESL students. In 1970, 12 per cent of the US population was non-White; by 2000, this had increased to 30 per cent. In the 1990s, there was more immigration than in any previous decade. By the year 2015, more than 50 per cent of all students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in public schools across the US “will not speak English as their first language.” In addition, 96 per cent of teachers have students with disabilities in their rooms. There is a need to try to teach all types of students and to promote understanding between groups. There is also a need to look at the diversity within a classroom, whether based on background, abilities, gender, or motivation, and to teach to that diversity.

As examples of the diversity a classroom teacher faces, Tomlinson described several students, some exceptionally gifted and some from very disadvantaged backgrounds, whom she had taught throughout her career. She stated that the challenge facing teachers is “to see the full range of learners as a part of—and not apart from—‘normal’
academic diversity." It is a challenge to teach to the belief that all students have the right to quality education to achieve their full potential. It is a struggle to maintain a balance between students who have high needs and those who are high achievers.

**Trend No. 8: Knowledge Creation and Breakthrough Thinking Will Stir a New Era of Enlightenment**

Tomlinson observed that originally her teaching was based on the premise that “all children should be consumers of knowledge. Some will be conservers of knowledge as well; some will also produce knowledge.” Gary Marx’s view is that one should see all children as creators of knowledge and should teach that way in order to meet the demands of the new society.

High-quality curriculum and instruction is “important, focused, engaging, demanding, authentic, and scaffolded” and builds ladders to get students to where they want to be. Every lesson plan should be a motivational plan, should involve students and reveal to them the “electricity of learning.” It is important to involve all students, not just those in the top 15 per cent.

Trend No. 4: Education Will Shift From Averages to Individuals

One size does not fit all as far as learning styles and programs are concerned. There will be a move from standardization to individualization, with educators providing more personal attention and being more responsive to individual learners. As Dennis Litsky observed in his book *The Big Picture*, “Learning is about...the three R’s: relationships, relevance, and rigor.” It is not a question of “stuffing” knowledge into students; it is building from knowing them. In support of this view, Tomlinson quoted from Confucius, Solomon, and Eastern tradition.

Diversity is challenging, but it presents numerous opportunities. Tomlinson identified three questions that must be answered: Are teachers willing and/or able to begin teaching where students are and not from a standard agenda? Can teachers develop strategies to allow them to “teach forward and backward” at the same time? Can teachers achieve that without lowering the ceilings for advanced learners?

Changing minds and approaches will require both intent and concrete manifestations of intent. Many students have been spending school in the pedagogy of poverty—what Tomlinson compares to fast-food; there is a need to “invite them” to experience fine dining with a tablecloth and cutlery. There is a need to change school structures to allow for this change in education philosophy.
Tomlinson noted that the challenges facing educators as they work through this change are to “own” each learner, to envisage ability as more malleable and widely distributed than previously thought and to deal with one child at a time, time after time, over time. It is also necessary to “become equally skilled in filling potholes and building bridges to the future.” As Bill Gates observed, “There are two ways to think about the need to ensure equity and excellence for the full range of learners in our schools.” The economic argument is that failing to do so constitutes failing the country; the moral argument is that failing to do so constitutes failing the students. He contended that, “Either argument is compelling.”

For all learners to have equity of access to excellence in today’s schools, there is a need to aim for the stars. Proliferation of the pedagogy of plenty will retain and extend access to equity and excellence for advanced learners—and it must be combined with best practice literacy and “scaffolding” to provide access to equity and excellence for struggling students. This should occur in an environment of “high ceilings” and high personalization.

“Differentiation attempts to ensure that each student has access to the best possible curriculum, in an institutional environment that supports every learner in achieving maximum growth toward the highest possible learning goals,” Tomlinson stressed.

**Featured Speaker Sessions: Friday, November 18**

**DISTINCTIVE AND INCLUSIVE? ENSURING DIVERSITY AND EQUITY IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS — Jane Gaskell**

Jane Gaskell opened her session by acknowledging the difficulties teachers face in coming to grips with this “terrifically” important topic. She proposed setting out dilemmas around inclusive schooling that she has encountered in her career and research, and providing a few organizers to think through the subject.

Inclusive schooling, as defined by Gaskell, is “a value system which embraces not only the integration of special needs students but also the understanding of individual differences and diverse learning styles, which characterize all classrooms.” The definition has evolved well beyond integration to include special needs mainstreaming and all forms of discrimination, disadvantage, and exclusion and is linked closely to social justice. The language of inclusion tries to address inequalities of many kinds such as homophobia, racism, poverty, Aboriginal rights, and gender equity.

While there is no single correct version of inclusion, clearly it is about success for all children. Historically the notion meant sorting and socializing; children were identified according to intelligence and streamed to become a particular type of person. Today there is widespread belief that schools must develop the potential of all students to think, communicate, and participate in democratic society. Despite the emerging consensus about the nature of schooling, systematic inequalities remain. Dropout and literacy rates, for example, indicate that there is much work to be done.

Including all students in one class and thereby creating an integrated learning environment represents the first version of inclusion put forth by Gaskell. When schooling became compulsory and state-funded, it was felt that common schools could provide a single, cohesive public out of a diverse and fragmented population. This concept opposes segregation and comes from progressive historical roots.
While there is no single correct version of inclusion, clearly it is about success for all children.

Neighbourhood schools have come to symbolize an educational system where students from different backgrounds interact in the same public space.

“The notion that there can be a single neutral space into which all students are included ignores the fact that no space is neutral, that its organization will suit some students more than others and that it will never include all students equally.”

The notion of putting students together in the same classroom requires differentiated instruction and puts the onus on the teacher to create an inclusive curriculum. Inclusion is then a value system based on understanding differences. In the real world, we do not always work with like-minded people but must deal with everybody.

“This policy is based in a theory of learning and citizenship that is quite plausible,” asserted Gaskell, “and for which there is evidence: students learn from each other, tracking students harms the least able, citizenship takes into account diversity, and segregation preserves privileged environments.” Neighbourhood schools have come to symbolize an educational system where students from different backgrounds interact in the same public space. The neighbourhood school values community and the inclusion of special needs students who are normalized as members of the community like everybody else.

According to the political theorist Hirschman, neighbourhood schooling encourages “voice” (communication) rather than “exit” (leaving) as a strategy for school improvement. When different schools are available, rumours circulate as to which one is better. Students who are not satisfied go elsewhere, and competition replaces the building process. Still, the notion of an inclusive neighbourhood school is based on myth. By virtue of housing alone, neighbourhoods are segregated.

A second version of inclusion recognizes distinctiveness and difference. In Gaskell’s words, “The notion that there can be a single neutral space into which all students are included ignores the fact that no space is neutral, that its organization will suit some students more than others and that it will never include all students equally.”

The current debate around Black-focused schools in Ontario is very contentious. The demand for a distinct space as a mechanism for inclusion is based on the views that the common school is racist, that the zero-tolerance policy systematically excludes Black students, that there are low numbers of Black teachers and guidance counsellors and that there is disproportionate streaming of Black students to non-academic professions.

George Sefa Dei argued that the only way to include Black students is to provide an environment that looks different from the neighbourhood school. Based on evidence that many schools are not achieving their goals, Gaskell sympathized with changing the face of space rather than ignoring difference and trying to be non-racist in the classroom.

In British Columbia, the Asian community is lobbying for teacher-centred, traditional schools with defined outcomes. Parents want a space that is more cohesive around their values, where they believe their children will do better. The first version of inclusive schools is not seen as inclusive because of the kinds of instruction.

Gaskell pointed out that there is no single best system; the choice depends on the context of the community and what engages teachers and students. Putting everyone in the same public space means there is no space. Counter-publics are needed to develop discourse and understanding.

When asked why discordant voices are not being heard, Gaskell stated that society is not egalitarian. Recognizing this, what is the best way to move forward in Canada? Gaskell noted that Edmonton, Ontario, Newfoundland, and Quebec have many distinct school systems. Distinction is a tradition in Canadian politics.

In First Nations schools, control and autonomy recognize and give primacy to the First Nations’ way of seeing the world, a viewpoint which was marginalized in public schools. Girls-only science classes provide a distinct space in which to create the involvement of girls in subjects traditionally dominated by boys.
Distinction, however, ignores the fact that no space, school, or culture is neutral. Gaskell expressed skepticism towards any universal model. If school is a microcosm of the society we want to create, then segregation does not promote this.

Each group that has historically suffered discrimination, suffers differently. Oppression and exclusion of special needs individuals looks different to gays and lesbians. There are real commonalities but also real differences. That tension needs to be discussed. Then, how Canadians process these issues needs to be examined. Society recognizes difference, but needs to recognize sexism, homophobia, and racism. The Canadian education system needs to focus on systems and how they marginalize and assign privilege, instead of focusing on "queers and poverty."

“I am inclined to the notion that there will never be one, single, public system that is inclusive," concluded Gaskell. "We know we are failing and must take it seriously. If we can agree that there is a tension around inclusion, then there is a place for distinct schooling."

EXCELLENCE AND INCLUSION: CAN CANADIAN SCHOOLS ACHIEVE BOTH? — Judy Lupart

Discussing students with exceptional learning needs, Judy Lupart, from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta, tracked the history of progressive inclusion in the Canadian education system. She explained that the concept of inclusion was preceded by concepts of segregation (from 1900–1950), categorization (in the 1950s and 1960s), integration (in the 1970s), and mainstreaming (in the 1980s).

Integration, mainstreaming, and inclusion are three very different concepts, Lupart noted. Authentic inclusion involves a completely transformed, unified system of education.

Lupart discussed the “five-box model,” which represents the flow of what happens when a student is identified as having special needs. The five stages are referral, testing, labeling, placement, and programming.

If the student were referred in Alberta today, it would take about five months for this process to be completed. There are several problems with this model. It is labour-intensive, costly, and resource-driven. The same model is applied whether the student has minimal needs or multiple needs. It is not a dynamic model but a static, one-way model. However, this is what must happen in most schools for someone to get access to different programming.

Another model that is widely used in Canadian schools is the Deno’s Cascade model, which identifies different levels of service including special needs programming.

Presenting some statistics from Alberta, Lupart noted that, since the 1970s, there has been a “mushrooming” of individuals considered to have special needs (a group that currently represents 13.1 per cent of the student population). This mushrooming has occurred among students categorized as having mild or moderate handicaps or as being gifted and talented—now 10.5 per cent of the student population. The percentage of those with severe handicaps and in all other categories has remained the same.

Schools now have a complex and sophisticated service delivery situation, where there is competition between special and regular education. When budgetary issues arise, there is a constant battle for resources. Although the documents talk about inclusion, the actual policies do not support its practice.
Lupart outlined some of the main trends in regular education including school reform, standards of performance, rising expectations and multiple concepts facing teachers, effective schools research, school governance, and professional development. All this contributes to the second paradox that educators deal with: a conflict has developed between excellence and equity. In the school reform movements, those involved in special education have adopted equity as the conceptual preference, while those involved in regular education have adopted excellence as the priority. “They are not speaking the same language,” said Lupart.

She did, however, outline some promising directions and ideas:

- Perspectives on disability: While disability was traditionally seen in terms of “functional limitations” and was viewed as a problem to be fixed, the minority rights perspective places the emphasis on changing the environment. This is not seen as charity but as the acquisition of basic human needs and rights. It is about removing barriers to make education a more positive experience for all students.

- Restructuring of schools: In the five-box model, about 80 per cent of resources go toward the first four boxes (diagnosis), yet the diagnostic report is not what makes the difference to the student struggling in the classroom. Instead, resources should go toward programming and making classes truly inclusive—creating a new kind of unified education system that includes all students.

- Excellence vs. equity: Schools can and should aim for high quality and a high level of equality. The concept of continuous progress implies that whoever comes to the classroom, whatever their needs are, teachers can facilitate their progress. Departmental standards of performance are inappropriate, because they do not reflect the varying degrees of disadvantage and advantage dealt with by different students.

- The importance of teachers: To promote both excellence and equity in schools, teachers must be well prepared and supported.

- Proportional representation: Classes should be representative of communities. If 13 per cent of the population has a special need, that translates to 13 per cent of students in a classroom or about three students in a class of 30. The way to support teachers is to help them invent “ad hocracy” instead of following “bureaucracy.” It is the presence of more complex learners—learners who are more challenging for teachers—that will lead to improvements in learning for all students.

- An inclusion model: One model brings together the salient aspects of inclusive education: educators’ characteristics, enabling conditions, a merging of regular and special education, and, ultimately, a unified education system.

Inclusive education requires several enabling conditions. It requires professional training and development for teachers, who often do not feel qualified to meet special education needs. It also requires pooling and transferring resources to support the new responsibilities that go along with inclusion (e.g., medical support). It also requires administrative leadership and support including acknowledgement of the efforts made by teachers.

Inclusive education has a number of goals: life-long learning, equity and quality, learning and thinking, home–school partnership, living and learning in community, and academic and social competence.
One promising direction is a model being developed in Alberta called Actively Building Capacity for Diversity (ABCD). The project involves creating a baseline profile of the school learning community and implementing school improvement initiatives.

In conclusion, Lupart listed a few elements “that matter” in moving forward toward inclusion in Canadian schools. It is important to have a clear understanding of what is meant by “inclusion.” Alignment of policies and systems with the principle of inclusion is also important. A whole-school approach is necessary, with all the individuals within the learning community as active participants on the team. Information on best practices must be in hand. Decision making must be evidence-based—it can be used to determine priorities.

THE PROMISE AND CHALLENGE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: EXPERIENCES IN COURTS AND ON THE FRONT LINES — Wayne McKay

Wayne McKay is a member of the Law Faculty at Dalhousie University. He has a national reputation as a teacher, scholar, and accomplished author in constitutional law, human rights, and education law. Currently he is completing a report on inclusive education in New Brunswick, which will have broad implications for the education system.

For McKay, inclusion must be considered in a much broader context than special needs and must encompass gender, race, and culture. This wider definition is especially important in Canada given its growing diversity and multicultural nature. As multiculturalism in Canada increases, an inclusive and diverse education system is the best way to move forward.

Equality in law is a guide to develop inclusive schools. Using the metaphor of a lighthouse, McKay stated that law could clear away the fog created by the use of various terms such as “mainstreaming,” “normalization,” and “integration.” Ontario and New Brunswick use the term “exceptional” to describe children with special needs, but that is still a label. Because a label acquires negative connotations, the terminology used is important.

Observing that the law provides a framework and not answers, McKay referred to several landmark cases that have served as guidelines for the development of an inclusive education model. In a 1996 decision in Moncton, the court found that it was the responsibility of the school board to provide a positive, discrimination-free school environment.

**Eaton vs. Brant County Board of Education** (1997), the first case on integration decided by the Supreme Court, rejected the presumption of inclusion. However, the court made several interesting statements concerning the fact that integration should probably be the first choice; that with any disability, accommodation up to the point of undue hardship is key; and that the end result should be in the best interests of the child. The last consideration includes the other children in the classroom as well.

In **Eldridge vs. British Columbia** (1997), a deaf man alleged discrimination by the hospital system, because it failed to fund interpreters to accommodate his disability. The court ruled that a violation of equality can occur through omission and that there is a positive duty to accommodate.

With respect to what constitutes “undue hardship,” McKay noted that this occurs when the remedy sought is unreasonable, impossible, risky to others or oneself, or cost-prohibitive. Concerning this last element, however, it is important to recognize that inclusion will always involve some cost. The courts have been reluctant to identify cost as the key factor in determining “undue hardship”. 
In the case of *Newfoundland Association of Public Employees (NAPE) vs. Newfoundland (2004)*, the court found that pay equity was involved, but the Newfoundland government successfully proved that paying out the entire amount of the award would place it in a severe fiscal deficit. Therefore, the government was required to pay only a portion of the amount.

Reference was made to several recent decisions with respect to children with autism or attention deficit disorder as well as to two cases involving homosexuality.

McKay indicated that it is important to address systemic changes in order to facilitate inclusion. Questions need to be answered: Does the curriculum constitute a bar to inclusion? Is the school building constructed to fit the programs, not the programs to fit the building? Is there adequate technology available? Do disciplinary practices accommodate cultural differences?

In schools where thoughtful integration has occurred, bullying has been reduced. By way of contrast, in schools where there is exclusion, bullying incidences are higher. Another area of concern is whether or not inclusion will have a negative impact on high achievement standards. McKay stated that, although overcoming challenges requires a serious effort, it is possible to maintain both equity and excellence. He contended that accountability and inclusion can co-exist if the right goals are established: social inclusion, citizenship, and tolerance versus the narrowly defined academic abilities rated by standardized tests. Education is about more than academic achievement.

In response to a question concerning the relevancy of cost in the Newfoundland case; McKay said that although the government had money, cost would have been a consideration, because it could have sharply increased taxes. Such a suit would be filed against the government as a whole rather than the individual department. The court has a limited role in dictating budget implications.

On the issue of “undue hardship,” McKay observed that one of the major purposes is to balance individual rights and society’s collective rights. Inclusive education may benefit students by exposing them to diversity, but the courts will at least listen to evidence from the other side. For example, if the court orders a small school board with five students with autism to give a specific program, the decision could require most of the educational budget, resulting in other programs being cut. Therefore, the court must look at whether that is reasonable.

A participant asked whether the creation of minority language schools would be an obstacle to inclusion. McKay replied that, conceptually and legally, it should not make a difference; accommodation would still be required.

With respect to the cases relating to homosexuality, McKay noted that where there are conflicting equality rights—e.g., sexual orientation and religion—one ruling held that a person can have anti-homosexual views but cannot act on them in a way that is discriminatory. Although there is a theological debate as to whether homosexuality is contrary to Catholic theology, McKay observed that it would be difficult to exclude gays totally, even in religious schools.

As for the next steps, McKay observed that although the concept of inclusion has been embraced, there is an ongoing debate about effective implementation. He said in his opinion, successful inclusion requires well-trained human resources, adequate financial resources, and integrated service delivery by the government. The courts have sent a clear message that the government has to provide inclusion.
“Sexual minorities are in all our schools,” said Bill Ryan, from the School of Social Work at McGill University, adding that they are “learning horrible things about themselves that will stay with them.”

Ryan shared the voices of youth involved in the Safe Spaces Project (SSP), which was piloted in Moncton and Kamloops and arose from Montreal’s Project 10. The Canadian Institute of Health Research collected data from project participants about their feelings. What was the most common response? “It’s hell!” Most youth consider killing themselves at one point in time. A survey of 200 BGLTT youth across Canada whose average age was 18 found that 75 per cent had considered taking their lives, while 44 per cent had attempted it at least once. “This is way off the scale compared to other groups.”

Ryan reminded participants that there is hope—and a good deal of it—and at the end of a process like SSP, youth can be happy with themselves and live just as satisfactorily as others.

BGLTT youth feel there is no one there for them, said Ryan. Most are more afraid of their parents’ reaction than that of their peers. Home, school environment, support organizations, and places of worship, in that order, are where youth seek support but also where they fear rejection.

If the issue is racism or anti-Semitism, there is usually at least one parent with the same experience and some coping tools to share, noted Ryan. This is not the case for sexual orientation. “They hear the worst things around the dining room table.” At the same time, youth tend to overestimate the negative reactions; most families come around.

Ryan outlined some BGLTT-youth facts:

- The majority of these youth are unidentified and do not identify themselves.
- They belong to all social classes, all cultural groups, and all religions.
- The school environment is probably the milieu that least respects the legal changes of the past 30 years (e.g., the Canadian and Québec charters of rights).
- They live their first experiences of attraction in a context of shame, fear, lack of information, and without role models. Those role models that do exist are almost exclusively European-Canadian.

Invited by Ryan to name well-known gay and lesbian role models, conference participants named several, but could think of far fewer transgender and bisexual role models. Role models are related to suicide rates, as stress levels increase when youth cannot project themselves into the future and must hide their reality.

It is important to measure and know more about this population because, next to the Aboriginal issue, BGLTT is a top human rights issue in Canada. Further, most professionals are unequipped or ill-equipped to deal with these issues. More and more children of same-sex couples (not only those from previous heterosexual unions) are in Canadian schools.
Ryan emphasized that the ultimate educational objective is to recognize and eliminate oppression in all its forms, thereby making school a safe place. If youth cannot stay, they will not learn. He suggested an integrated model where students work against discrimination of all types (e.g., Nova Scotia’s Youth Against Discrimination program), which is effective by allowing more people to “come into the fold.”

Ryan explained the differences between sexual orientation, identity, preferences, and gender roles. With respect to gender roles, he noted that once the line is crossed, youth find out quickly. If, for example, boys are less athletic and competitive but more artistic and expressive, they are labeled effeminate.

“Those who don’t conform to gender norms get into trouble,” he said, adding that the normative gender role for males is much narrower than for females. Ryan had many anecdotes to share about youth who “stepped out of the box.” One blew his nose with a pink handkerchief and was labeled a “faggot” after that. Life-affecting utterances like, “Girls don’t do that; boys don’t act like that, don’t kiss your dad goodnight anymore,” are telling people to stay in their boxes.

“We need to access humanity in other students. They have a well-honed sense of justice and abhor injustice,” said Ryan. The problem is that the small minority of homophobic youth, usually boys, “get all the terrain” by intimidating everyone else.

“Beneath homophobia is a fundamental conflict about gender roles,” remarked Ryan, observing also society’s gender-policing (gay men are attacked; lesbians are told to get back in their place). Thus, the best way to control homophobia is to continue the struggle for equality between men and women, dismantle the absolutes and expand the norms for both genders.

All youth suffer from rigid gender roles imposed by culture, but this is starting to change, said Ryan. He related the results of the Project 10 study of rural Québec which shows students’ attitudes toward BGLTT youth. While only 33 per cent of boys were positive, 73 per cent of girls responded positively, explaining why gays prefer “hanging out” with women. Boys may well be anxious to share positive BGLTT attitudes because of their fear of being perceived as gay themselves.

Boys have to prove that they are neither girls nor gay—no easy task. Yet the corresponding task is even more complex for lesbians in the female environment, which is open, affectionate, and emotionally intense. To change homophobic attitudes in youth, teachers must name the problem, support students who rally against injustice, and stand up to the homophobic minority.

BGLTT youth experience isolation in every possible way: cognitive, emotional, and social. As a result, “they essentially erase themselves” through withdrawal, low self-esteem, dropping out, and shame. Ryan gave the extreme example of the Gaspé boy who set his gasoline-drenched body ablaze in his desperate isolation.

Ryan concluded by encouraging teachers to provide educational environments that are safe. This necessitates policies that ensure a long-term response, including education to convince allies, prevention (a proactive response), heterosexual role models who are accepting and inclusive, and a response that is reactive to discriminatory discourse. Also there are many practical solutions such as making all lockers visible, eliminating washroom doors, and sending school messages that announce the rejection of all forms of discrimination.
HOW I LEARNED TO STOP TALKING ABOUT CULTURE: THE NEED FOR A CRITICAL ANALYSIS IN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION — Verna St. Denis

Verna St. Denis, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, a Ph.D. in education from Stanford University, specializes in anti-oppressive education. She is both Cree and Métis.

It is important, St. Denis said, to situate her analysis in an historical context. The development of Aboriginal education in Saskatchewan dates back to 1973. “I have learned over the last 10 years to feel that it is okay to talk less about culture and more about race and class,” she said, as a discourse of culture and cultural difference can justify continued discrimination, promoting a continuing legacy of colonization.

The paradox is that the educational failure of Aboriginal students comes from both too much and not enough culture. “It comes from the cultural incongruence between the culture of the students and the culture of the school.” There is a need for more anti-oppressive education. It is important for all students to learn about their Aboriginal heritage.

George Spindler, in his work on anthropology and education, stressed the need to develop a framework to remedy the absence of an educational anthropology. Recognizing the differences between cultures could help schools help children adjust to change, he argued. CWM Hart’s study on pre- and post-pubertal education, which concluded that, despite their marginal subsistence, primary societies care more about producing good citizens than good technicians, has had a lasting influence. In a report published a decade later, education is presented as an instrument used by societies to perpetuate themselves. This was the rationale for having Aboriginal teachers and for Aboriginal people to consider education and schools as important.

Spindler’s work showed how culture shaped “behaviour compulsion” and how imitation and participation were used to socialize the members of a culture. It led to the notion that motivation, incentives, and values were key factors in the failure of Aboriginal education, as stated in the Hawthorn Report published in 1967 by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The anthropologist Cora DuBois distinguished between different types of intercultural learners and concluded that Aboriginal children would not be able to adjust to a Western school. St. Denis warned against generalizing, saying people tend to ignore the fact that some Aboriginal students can and want to adjust and succeed in such a school. Also ignored is the fact that even monocultural learners sometimes face discrepancies and experience social dysphoria. DuBois also wrote that the establishment of a Western school in a non-Western society was likely to cause difficulties for learners, and that a village or a community school would provide more channels for learning and adjusting.

When St. Denis reread the Hawthorn Report, 20 years after her first encounter with it in the 1970s, she saw more clearly the assumptions and stereotypes it contained. In spite of these and of some inaccuracies, “some of the recommendations were right on.” One of them was to better educate teachers. It is not until 1993, however, that all teachers were required to take First Nations studies.

The importance of poverty was minimized by Hawthorn, St. Denis said. While the report explained that students did poorly because of low self-esteem, social dysphoria, poor health, unfamiliarity with the school system, inadequate clothing, lack of housing, and hunger, the report did not make the link between these problems and poverty. It tended to attribute them to cultural values, such as the lack of value attached to timeliness and cleanliness, for example, more than to poverty.
The position paper entitled *Indian Control of Indian Education* was published in 1972 by the Assembly of First Nations, a few years after the Hawthorne report. It restated that the present school system is “alien” to Indian children, that education must be made relevant to Indians, that Indian parents must be in control of education, and that Indian children must have pride.

Two years later, the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) was set up in Saskatchewan. St. Denis entered the program in 1978. She described herself as “a product of affirmative action and education equity.”

Daniel Francis’s *Myth of the Master Race* encouraged St. Denis and her peers to believe in the inherent inferiority of Indians. She survived schooling and this “education for inferiority”, she said, but many did not. When she entered ITEP, she discovered for the first time that Aboriginals had values and beliefs, a philosophy of life, and their own spirituality and practices. Paradoxically, she began to feel inadequate: “I was not a real Indian, I did not speak our language, and my parents did not live according to the Cree culture and practices.”

The book by Joyce Green, entitled *Contesting Fundamentalism* clarifies the issue of cultural fundamentalism. It constructs the identity as legitimate, and essential characteristics become idealized and enforced. The risk is that it can encourage the development of a “hierarchy of Indianness.” Another negative impact is the blame it often places on parents and grandparents for having fostered their children’s adjustment to Western culture, something over which they had no choice. Encouraging Aboriginal people to seek out and perform their culturally authentic roles can become oppressive itself, as it can amount to blaming the victim.

The tendency to blame the victim is not original, St. Denis said, and it can be seen as another form of colonization. The call for restoring culture is also a form of imperialist nostalgia, which occurs “when those who colonize display nostalgia for the culture as it was,” when people mourn the passing of what they have transformed, she explained.

Despite so many sincere efforts, little has changed over the last 25 years, as noted by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. “Nothing seems to work because we are dealing with the symptoms, such as the low self-esteem, not the cause.” The importance of “pride and dignity” was stressed in the Hawthorn Report, with some good recommendations for special training for teachers, but it does not stop racism, she commented. Over the past 30 years, advocating for culturally relevant education has had more impact, but it does not address the issue of racism.

In their book *Collected Wisdom*, Linda Cleary and Thomas Peacock argue that racism in schools must be acknowledged and confronted. Several studies document the feelings Aboriginal students have of being marginalized and isolated in school, of not being able to rely on the support of teachers, and in some cases, of being unwanted in school. Studies also show that they receive harsher punishments and have less access to advanced programs, and that teachers tend to have lower expectations when it comes to Aboriginal students. “The problem must be acknowledged.”

“If you treat Indian students like people, they start acting like people,” St. Denis said, quoting one of her teachers. But the myth of the master race has a lasting legacy in institutions and in individuals, although it does not make any sense any more for most Canadians, St. Denis concluded.
INCLUSION: IT IS NO LONGER A DISCUSSION; IT IS OUR PRACTICE — Joanna Blais

Joanna Blais is a coordinator in the Program and Student Services Branch of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, currently supporting schools and school divisions in programming for students with exceptional needs. In her presentation on the history and challenges of special education in Canada, she began by noting that inclusiveness has, in fact, existed in Canada for a long time in terms of services. Thus, the title of her talk was “Inclusion is No Longer a Discussion; It is Our Practice.” The debate is not whether or not to be inclusive but how to implement inclusion, she said.

Blais first highlighted a statement by the Counseil supérieur de l’éducation du Québec in 1977, “It is through its education system, the main force in the socialization of an individual, that society reveals what it is and what it aspires to be. If one argues that the state has the duty to educate all children, it follows that the school must be open to the greatest possible numbers of children and so organized as to be able to cater to the needs of those who require special education.”

The language has evolved, Blais remarked, but the thinking remains valid today. To explain the need for inclusiveness and to justify the cost, educators and policy makers often note how a society’s beliefs are reflected by the way it treats its most vulnerable children.

In Canada, since Confederation in 1867, the provinces have had jurisdiction over education including the education of students with special needs. In the Constitution Act of 1982, Section 15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on equality rights specifically provides that those with mental or physical disability have a right to equal protection of the law without discrimination.

Yet students with special needs have received special services since before Confederation, notably in residential settings and segregated classes from the early 1800s until the end of World War I. The return of disabled veterans sparked questions about the practices for persons with disabilities. Similarly, Blais said that when she was in Russia recently working on an inclusion project, the involvement of disabled veterans there played an important role in building inclusive schools.

After World War II and into the 1960s, Canadian parents and educators began to establish national special needs organizations. Meanwhile, the American civil rights movement led to many developments in the rights of minorities including people with disabilities.

Blais then spoke about the experience in Manitoba, where no specific legislation or regulation regarding students with exceptional learning needs existed until 2005. Era I, 1870–1958, was characterized by exclusion and elitism. Persons deemed as “mental defectives” or “mentally retarded” were prohibited from attending school.

Era II, 1958–1969, was the beginning of inclusion. The Manitoba Association of the Retarded was founded around 1960, and the government changed its policy to one of mandatory integration by 1967. The Macfarlane Commission, 1956–1957, was the first in Manitoba to address the issue of special needs groups, declaring that “existing services were totally inadequate.” The Christianson Report in 1963 recommended that handicapped students be educated in their home community and in regular school, and that the Department of Education and Health provide staff to support schools and families in students’ home communities.
During Era III, 1970s, Manitoba established and expanded support services, although not totally entrenched, replacing exclusion with integration and centralization with decentralized organization.

Era IV, the 1980s, saw the most enabling environments. Universities and colleges expanded services, and many classes provided adaptations for students who were non-print users. Interpreters began to be employed, funding remained a focus, and school divisions received support in the hiring of qualified educators with special education certification.

During Era V, the Inclusion Era, from the 1990s onwards, Manitoba undertook a special education review and created a framework for funding, guidelines, and legislation. In November 2005, regulations respecting appropriate educational programming came into effect.

Manitoba’s philosophy of inclusion incorporates basic values and a belief system that promotes participation, belonging, and interaction, Blais said. Inclusion is about how the education system deals with diversity and differences, ensures individual rights, adjusts teaching to meet individual needs and includes all children. Inclusion is a process that ensures all individuals feel accepted, valued, and safe.

For educators and front-line workers in schools, this means having services and funding mechanisms that allow them to address student diversity through the general provincial curriculum, differentiated instruction, adaptations, modifications, and individualized programming. A policy of inclusion creates an inclusive culture in schools and allows practices to evolve, while reflecting the policy and culture. Ensuring appropriate educational programming allows students to move along a learning continuum toward outcomes, better enables teachers to meet all students’ needs, and shifts intervention from remediation to prevention.

Supporting teachers, students, and families requires administrative leadership; a vision that frames expectations and goals; collaboration among parents, teachers, and other professionals; teachers’ professional development; time for planning and meeting; a clear communication plan; and responsive supports.

Inclusive schools have many benefits. They meld resources, combine talents, unify goals, and have fewer referrals and more students with higher levels of independence. Challenges lie in changing how the business of school is conducted, but inclusive schools should be viewed as works in progress, not finished products.

In closing, Blais said, “We have come a long way,” although there are still areas in which to improve. The way forward requires developing beliefs, attitudes, and values to support inclusion; involving families and communities; and creating a framework for staff professional growth.

GLBT TEACHERS AND STUDENTS AND THE POST-CHARTER QUEST FOR ETHICAL AND JUST TREATMENT IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS — André Grace

André Grace is an Associate Professor working in educational policy studies and inclusive education at the University of Alberta. He has been active in the field of research, examining the ethical, legal, legislative, cultural, and educational policy issues that affect the lives of BGLTT teachers and youth. Along with doctoral student Kris Wells, Grace established Agape, a focus group in the university’s Faculty of Education, for BGLTT faculty and students.
After outlining his clinical involvement, Grace explained his passion for BGLTT issues by relating some of his experiences as a gay youth in Newfoundland. He commented that the purpose of sharing stories was to make the experiences real and to facilitate understanding of BGLTT concerns. Stating that “memories become very indelible,” Grace spoke of the bullying and homophobia he endured when he was younger, as well as the hardships he experienced as a teacher during the 1980s before he “came out.”

One of Grace’s projects, for which he receives federal funding, is an arts-based community program for youth. In Edmonton, 18 per cent of children live in poverty. Many homosexual adolescents are struggling; they are homeless, using drugs or alcohol, and prostituting themselves to earn money to survive. In contrast, there are youth, usually with very supportive families, who are active in gay–straight alliances in their schools. These individuals are role models for other youth.

One influence that drives him is his view that people need to know about “sadness.” Culture and society have not caught up to the legal system. In fact, there has been an upsurge in “gay-bashing” as a result of the law allowing gay marriage. Out of sadness, however, comes good work. For the past two years, Grace and Wells have operated a summer camp for BGLTT youth and those questioning their sexuality.

Through the use of two film clips, from Global and CBC respectively, Wells identified Camp fYrefly as a place where youth, aged 13 to 25, can share their experiences and express feelings about their sexuality. Its purpose is to try to prepare them for the future by giving them skills to deal with tough, everyday situations. By providing a safe and comfortable environment, the camp allows them the freedom to be themselves. Participants noted that it was about “meeting friends, having fun” and feeling comfortable. Many are members of church groups, who mediate to others in their church group.

In response to a question concerning resources, Wells replied that Camp fYrefly is maintained through fundraising and private financial support. The only cost to the individual is a $20 commitment fee, but no one is excluded due to an inability to pay. With respect to the availability of the program to youth outside the Edmonton area, Wells indicated that, space permitting, anyone could attend as long as they had the funding for transportation.

Grace briefly outlined the changes in legislation with respect to the rights of BGLTT individuals, beginning with the 1953 change to the Canadian Immigration Act to prevent homosexuals from entering Canada. In 1965, Evert Clifford was jailed for admitting that he was a practising homosexual. It was not until 1967, when then-Minister of Justice Pierre Trudeau stated that the state had no business in the bedrooms of the nation, that steps were initiated to decriminalize homosexuality. This culminated in legislation in 1969. Clifford, however, was not released from jail until 1971. Since then, court decisions have extended the rights of gay and lesbian Canadians. “In a unanimous decision in Egan and Nesbit vs. Canada (1995), the Supreme Court of Canada read sexual orientation into the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, stating that sexual orientation is a protected category analogous to other personal characteristics listed in Section 15 (1).”

In Vriend vs. Alberta (1998), the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed equality rights for gays and lesbians. Also in 1998, the Supreme Court used the situation in Green vs. Alberta to further gay and lesbian rights. As well, teachers’ organizations have been moving forward in the protection of rights. Grace mentioned several changes in Alberta legislation, and the Alberta Teachers’ Federation (ATA) predicted that issues around gender identity will be more public in the coming years.

In response to several questions, Grace described the difference between “transgender” and “transsexual.” The former may be a psychological belief that the individual truly belongs to the opposite sex, whereas the latter includes the process of physically changing one’s sex. Referring to the Hall case, in which a Catholic school board refused to allow a gay student to attend his prom with his boyfriend, Grace stated that in Ontario,
denominational interests still supersede the rights of the individual. Because Hall and his
date were allowed to attend the prom through an interlocutory decision, no precedent was
created.

Grace visits schools to give presentations and to support students. His involvement has
led him to conclude that youth need positive representations and role models. They also
need family/community acceptance, positive peer and school relationships, and a “queer”
support network.

Wells described a quilt that his group had undertaken as a project. It arose from the
examples of the AIDS quilt and the “underground railroad,” where pieces of material could
indicate a safe house. The panels are “woven together with hope” and represent the
experiences of the youth involved.

In his concluding remarks, Grace stated that he was editing a book on what is happe-
ning to teachers’ federations provincially and locally and was listing all the resources
available to BGLTT individuals. He observed that it is “amazing what good work” is being
done throughout Canada.

THE POWER OF THE EDUCATOR — Lise Paiement

Paiement’s passion for the development of French culture through teaching and artistic
expression was evident in this highly interactive workshop.

The francophone population is small in Canada, and teaching in a French school
outside Québec is challenging. Parent support is not always available due to language,
and students do not always speak French when first arriving at school. To foster inclu-
sion, Paiement stressed establishing a personal relationship between teacher and
student at the very outset. French teachers have multiple roles. In addition to delivering
the curriculum, they must promote francophone culture within the Canadian context.
Ensuring the vitality of francophonie in Canada was likened to the challenge of distingui-
shing Canada from the United States. The francophonie are Canadian in their approach to
being pro-francophone, observed Paiement. The Prix Montfort is an example of how
francophonie is recognized as part of being Canadian.

Participants were asked to complete a small exercise by recalling teachers who had a
strong, positive influence on their lives and, in particular, their values. Participants talked
teachers who had inspired liberating moments, the motivation to excel and to feel
passion, and empowerment. Others remembered teachers who had instilled a sense of
pride in being francophone and of feeling comfortable as a minority with an accent.

The difficulty of integration was touched upon. Paiement talked of a francophone
woman in Manitoba who perpetuated her life-long struggle to integrate into the franc-
ophone community by marrying a Senegalese who was, in turn, discriminated against by
the same community. Minorities tend to exclude other minorities.

The first principle of inclusion, outlined Paiement, is authenticity of dialogue and action.
People need to learn about themselves through interaction with others and first-hand
experience, not through questionnaires. The dialogue must be real, not formal. Students
perceive teachers as holograms, not real people. Multicultural days must not be confused
with inclusion; this is not authentic dialogue.

In her research, Paiement examined the large mosaic of francophone immigrants
including the Congolese, Haitian, and Lebanese populations. She noted that these

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groups were excluded in the cafeteria of her school, and in the classroom she asked students why. “It is important to ask the right questions in order to talk about inclusion. Never let racist comments go unchecked in the classroom,” stated Paiement. She recalled a comment made to her during a conference: “You are costing us $7,000 in on-site translation.” Paiement replied, “It is uni-lingualism that is expensive.”

A second consideration of inclusion is awareness of self and others. Teachers should take the time to know their students, counseled Paiement. How does one address anglophone parents who arrive and want to help their students but do not speak French? As long as there is dialogue, these people will feel included. Paiement recounted how non-francophone parents were involved in a school trip. A course called Survival French for Parents Going on the Trip was developed and implemented by students, serving many purposes. In watching adults trying to learn, the exercise validated the fact that it is difficult to speak French. Students role-played teaching adults French and learned in the process. Memories were created through interaction with the adults.

The third principle of inclusion is the pedagogy of the social conscience, inspired by the work of Paolo Freire. Paiement used American Idol as a case in point. The brutality of judges’ comments is disastrous for young people—telling a real person they are fat, they cannot sing…. Still, students are big fans of the show. While teachers do not have the power to change American programming, they can discuss students’ reasons for liking the show. Responses were very superficial and not well thought out: “It’s fun.” “I like it.” “She knows she is not very good and that she shouldn’t be doing that.”

Paiement asked her students how they would feel if she made the same type of comments, with the intention of raising their awareness of these issues. It is the most a teacher can do. The educational system must be more involved with stimulating critical thinking, urged Paiement. It is important to understand what students see and to help them reach a point where they are capable of analyzing their actions. Paiement described an exercise undertaken by students, designed to raise consciousness based on real-life experience and a proactive approach. A “collaborative survey” was conducted whereby students would go into stores in the local mall and speak French with salespeople to discover whether French service was offered. Students were shocked at the injustice.

The next step was for students to prepare their curriculum vitae and return to the stores, where they would offer their services as a French-speaking representative and state that there was no French service in that store. Then the store could say it offered service in French. Several students obtained jobs this way. This exercise also validated the fact that teachers have power.

In conclusion, Paiement suggested that the climate of teachers’ classrooms must change from complaining to being proactive. With power comes responsibility. To help, one must listen. The worst feeling one can have is to feel excluded. Through respect for the teaching profession and for its values, the francophonie can be included.

Information on Paiement’s Projet de la pédagogie culturelle can be found at www.pedagogieculturelle.com.

INCLUSION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF ABORIGINAL YOUTH — David Rattray

"Mind and body are one, and the spirit is loosely connected to the body when a child is growing,” said David Rattray, Secondary Aboriginal Counsellor for School District No. 60 (Peace River North), BC. It is important to pour respect into the child’s spirit, so that the connection becomes strong. If this happens, the mind and body will be okay.
As a counsellor, Rattray said, the first thing he does is go to the spirit of the child and look at who the child is as a human being, where that person is beautiful, and where he or she is hurting. He outlined four goals for Aboriginal education:

- acknowledge emotional pain in individual students,
- create belonging environments,
- have healthy cultural experiences and understanding—including history,
- attend to academics—after the first three are “working.”

Discussing how he works with groups of students, Rattray explained that he takes a playful, humorous approach to getting his message across. By dealing with the students on an emotional level, he reaches them. “I’ll slip down to that level, and I’ll play with them,” he explained, “and then I’ll try to tease them up to another level—a mental development stage that I want them to be at.”

The next step after building inclusive schools, he said, is working with the spirit of students—in other words, taking the steps outlined above to connect with students on a deeper level.

Rattray illustrated his method with a story about one student who had been getting into fights. Sent to Rattray for counselling, the student at first appeared hostile, but Rattray focused on finding beauty in the student and on communicating at his level. When someone is violent, explained Rattray, the brain’s limbic system (which deals with emotions) is hijacked, while the pre-frontal cortex (problem-solving and thinking) is underutilized.

He explained that he used body language strategically when dealing with this student, to enhance communication. During their counselling session, Rattray looked for the reason behind the student’s fights—“to understand what held him together and look for his spirit.” Eventually Rattray discovered that once the opponent hit the ground, this student would always stop the fight. The student explained that to continue fighting would be disrespectful.

Rattray used this opportunity to point out to the student that he did, in fact, have a value system, and he just had to figure out how to apply it before the fighting began. The student left the session saying that he wanted to return for more counselling.

“He had a value system that the school system couldn’t see,” said Rattray. “He had a code of conduct that the school system couldn’t accept or understand.” He talked about other troubled youth who are misunderstood by the school system, explaining that Aboriginal students have different life experiences than other students. For example, although people in all communities and cultures have experienced sexual abuse, a significant number of Aboriginal people have been sexually abused by the time they are 18. “Every one of us in our communities is impacted by suicide, violence, sexual abuse, alcohol, and drugs.”

People who come from a very secure environment are used to saying “stop that behaviour” and seeing results, said Rattray. They have to reframe how they deal with someone in pain. He warned that Aboriginal students and parents may use a passive-aggressive approach when dealing with school personnel, agreeing to solutions that are put forward but then not acting on the agreement. A simple way to avoid this is to let the solution come from them—although this requires a more time-consuming, skillful conversation.

Another aspect of the knowledge base that teachers need to have is an understanding of colonization and decolonization, one of the consequences of which is emotional pain. Healing this pain is possible, and a healthy Aboriginal community is a wonderful place,
said Rattray. Aboriginal people who are starting to heal their pain are “awesome” and caring. “That is what we have to bring into the school system.”

He reviewed some of the concepts and principles of bicultural counselling, stressing the need to understand the impact of Aboriginal grief resulting from the many losses experienced by Aboriginal people and communities on young people.

Discussing the importance of a belonging environment, Rattray explained that an “almost-belonging” environment is teacher-centred, while a belonging environment focuses on the students’ rights and responsibilities. In a belonging environment, there is a belief in the beauty within every child, the expectations of that child are high, and the focus is on building trust and creating win/win situations.

One successful approach is the “school-within-a-school” concept, where the Aboriginal students in a school have the opportunity to stay together and to learn about their culture. Another mechanism is the healing circle.

Regarding the challenge of bicultural counselling, Rattray noted that the cultural divide can present a barrier. “To go where you need to go, you have to look at yourself and deal with your baggage,” he told participants.

Rattray encouraged people to continue working with their school systems to incorporate programs such as anger management classes rather than resorting to suspensions, which are ineffective. “You have to believe in what you are doing and change the mindset of critical people,” he stressed.

One participant concluded the session by noting that “none of this works until we take the risk of challenging our view of the world and changing ourselves.” For all students who feel alienated, “We have to challenge the racism and inherent inequities in our practice.”

LEADERSHIP IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION—Vianne Timmons

“Leadership is about dreams and ideals and making school a place where all children are welcome,” observed Vianne Timmons. She discussed the excessive attention paid to the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores compared to other educational achievements, such as the narrowing of the literacy gap between provinces. Timmons noted that this was indicative of the attitude about education. “The media and the public only look at math and sciences.”

Leadership shows itself in collaboration, the sharing of information (and, therefore, power), the use of evidence-based decision making (using not only science but also voices and context), and a positive attitude toward learning. “Good leadership is about quality education for all kids.”

Collaboration, said Timmons, is not only with other educators but also with parents, paraprofessionals, and multidisciplinary teams. Furthermore, team teaching addresses the isolation that teachers often feel. One teacher working with a student with autism was able to achieve positive outcomes through teamwork, parent support, trust, communication, and cooperation.

Timmons said that, for many parents, school was not a positive experience, and the memory of their own schooling makes the home–school relationship difficult. Some schools are not welcoming, whereas others are warm and energetic. Inclusive schooling is also about welcoming parents, especially since parents can be helpful in making connections between students and teachers. Sharing of information with parents, for example, is essential in order for them to be advocates of learning, said Timmons.
Family-centred schools are based on a set of beliefs, principles, values, and practices for supporting and strengthening family capacity to enhance and promote child development and learning. What are the benefits? Increased student attendance, parents helping teachers, and parents benefiting from guidance on how to support their children’s learning are a few.

Teachers often do not have time to search for innovative instructional strategies. However, this can be tremendously beneficial. For example, one teacher learned about visual prompts, graphic organizers, spoken words in bubbles, and other visual methods for her special needs student; the rest of the classroom benefited as well.

“A leader ensures positive attitudes among teachers, an openness to learn, flexibility, humour, and allows teachers to take risks,” asserted Timmons. Leaders also should provide mentorship opportunities and time for planning, develop an enabling climate, and be apprentices of learning and listening to children.

After reading quotations from First Nations reserve children in PEI, Timmons revealed that teachers are not always supportive in cases of prejudice. Sadly, 25 per cent of six- to eight-year-olds (First Nations) have experienced racism, while 94 per cent of those older than 12 have experienced it. They did, however, have enormous pride in being Mi’kmaq, which can be built on—all we have to do is listen to their voices."

Good leaders are aware of racism in their schools and watch out for school structures that inadvertently promote it. Is there segregation in the lunchroom or in the hallways? Do special needs students cluster at lunch?

The challenges for leaders are many, remarked Timmons, including finding the space and place for teachers to share, learn, collaborate, celebrate achievement. They must also provide a welcoming atmosphere for every child. How can they move forward? A love of children, the belief that children can learn, the ability to think creatively and to find resources, and a strong philosophy of inclusion are a few requirements for leadership. Leaders, added Timmons, are not only principals and teachers but also administrative assistants and custodians—the whole school culture must build a caring community around learning.

How can inclusive schools be achieved? Timmons suggested interactive homework, parent newsletters that speak to them and are not filled with jargon, and comfortable, parent-oriented, parent–teacher interviews as strategies.

She also gave the example of a family literacy program. It can be run at the elementary or secondary level (whether run by teachers or not)—two hours, one evening a week—and Timmons described its success in improving student literacy including reading scores and oral expression.

Timmons suggested that “the quality of our education should be measured by the quality of education that is provided for our most vulnerable children.” Participants agreed that the concept of which scores count in education is too narrow and caters to a certain kind of thinking and political view.

A discussion ensued about unfair comparison of jurisdictions that have inclusive schools. Compared to segregated schools, inclusive ones tend to score lower on PISA, for example, because the classes are not segregated by ability. This skews the perception of their effectiveness.

One parent of a child with intellectual disabilities underscored the importance of inclusion in the class rather than focusing on the grade level and being clear about this with the teacher.
Another participant observed the lack of respect for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) kids in schools, adding that school environment is crucial to enhance their learning abilities. “We have to change our method of educating.”

Others in the group suggested using the community around the school to engage families. One delegate announced the need to lobby for more resources to support and implement the inclusionary model. Timmons agreed that there can never be enough resources, although teachers should not wait for them. “We can do it today.”

Engaging beleaguered and overwhelmed teachers with mutual reinforcement, information-sharing, team-building, and celebration can refuel them for the challenge and send signals that they are not alone, said some. Concluding, Timmons, a mother of four, thanked the teachers that made her kids leave for and return from school with smiles on their faces.

Musical Literacy and Cultural Diversity——Tomson Highway

Tomson Highway greeted delegates in Cree, French, and English, and warned them that he told bad jokes and tended to laugh at them louder than his audience. Giving some of his family background, he said, “My father was a caribou hunter, and my mother was a caribou.” Born in a snowbank while his family traveled via dogsled in northern Manitoba, his father wanted to call him Snowball. His mother would have “none of it” (the genesis of “Nunavut”) but wanted to add a number to his name. [A good example of the bad jokes!]

Cree is the fastest and also the funniest language in the world, said Highway, adding that his fast speech has been responsible for the death of several interpreters in numerous countries. Because of that, he tends to run over at the mouth or, “How do you say that?” He said he was still learning English as he cleared his asparagus—or was that his esophagus?

Highway recounted that he was sent to high school in Winnipeg at a time when Aboriginal children seldom finished school. His sister graduated from Grade 7, a rare event. “People went blind when she flashed her certificate at them.”

Of course, it was even rarer to finish high school and continue to university. At the University of Manitoba there were 15 to 20 Aboriginal students in a sea of thousands of non-native students. “After a long dogsled journey to London,” he studied music there before transferring to the University of Western Ontario, where, again, Aboriginal students numbered about 20 in a student body of 18,000.

Highway reminded participants of the horrendous First Nations high school student dropout rate. Why? “There is nothing for us to read.” History books do not reflect First Nations history. Neither do characters in adventure books ring a familiar bell. “There was nothing to identify with—no tents and no caribou.”

In high school, Highway read works by Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway, and others, which were set in England, London, Paris, or New York. “Nothing ever happened in Gatineau or The Pas.” Furthermore, it was all in English or French, and there was definitely nothing in Cree.
English was his weakest subject, even though he practised in front of the mirror until “my tongue dried up.” Still, he was determined to master the English language. Now, Highway joked, “I sound like a radio.” At 18, he took one of the first Canadian literature courses with books about love affairs in London (Ontario) and Neepawa. Although no parts of the stories actually happened on reserves, he was transformed by the knowledge that such books existed and came to believe that he could write something similar. At age 30, he gave it a try and wrote in Cree about Cree adventures.

Although there are still obstacles to be defeated, the dropout rate has declined substantially, Aboriginal students at universities now number in the hundreds, and one can obtain a Bachelor of Arts in Native Canadian Literature. One woman is even doing a Ph.D. in Northern Manitoban Native Literature.

While the majority of Canadian non-Aboriginal writers come from major cities, most Aboriginal writers hail from isolated communities, said Highway. These are significant geographical barriers that represent high emotional costs when families, culture, and language are left behind.

“The loneliness was fierce,” but Highway learned much from those lonely experiences. Now his travels take him all over the world; “I can be lonely anywhere…. We were given wings, and you either flew or you didn’t. Most of us learned.”

Highway started piano at age 11 and remarked that of course he did not have the connections and advantages of Glenn Gould or Brazil’s Martha Argorichi. There were no pianos in their tents, but he learned to play and the “music that pulled me through loneliness and through the mastery of languages.”

The human language itself is a musical instrument, said Highway. The tents in which he grew up were filled with the wisdom of many languages, including Cree, Dene, Inuktitut, and pidgin English. “The real value of multilingualism right from the cradle is that it trains that brain muscle to tune to soundwaves.” When children are given the ability to work and discipline this muscle, they absorb languages later, “like a vacuum cleaner absorbs dirt.”

Highway encouraged every teacher present toward bilingualism and, further, to learn a third language and perhaps even Cree. Why not be able to say a few phrases in different languages?

Becoming multilingual is an act of humility and generosity, stated Highway, whereby “you give yourself and open your heart to another society and community.” It is a karmic gesture that returns tenfold, said Highway.

Music is the essence of life, affirmed Highway, adding that the value of music has been underestimated in Western society—it is usually the first educational item to be cut in times of fiscal constraint. It has greatly affected Highway’s life—“It gave me wings. I have a spectacular life, and music has been the key for that life.”

To be able to talk about music structure, to understand sound waves and music at its elementary level is to be able to read the language of music, mused Highway, as he called out the B-flats, E-minors, and dominant and tonic Gs during a samba tune he played on the piano. Samba highlights the tension between dominants and tonics but also pays attention to rests, just like silences during conversations.

Highway recounted his visit to Brazil, the birthplace of the samba and also the place where “if you misbehave you can blame it on the bossa nova.” In Brazil, samba schools are as plentiful in every community as hockey arenas are in Canada. An evening that starts with 30 professional musicians with different sized snare drums becomes, by four o’clock in the morning, an ensemble of 400 musicians playing bongos and maracas.
Turning to his own teaching, Highway said the first question his theatre students ask him is where they should send their first work. “Don’t send it anywhere,” he tells them. “Keep it, since you will likely have to produce it yourself. And write it with only two to three actors.” He had to self-produce his first six plays and continues to produce his own works. “The silver lining to that somewhat depressing cloud is that you learn how to write, act, raise money, and learn and play music,” he said.

Highway played the instrumental version of one of his children’s plays, explaining that he usually has a cabaret singer with him. In the play, a mosquito from northern Manitoba, born without wings, had to walk and take taxis and airplanes to get to his destination. “Picture dancing to this song in the moonlight,” Highway encouraged participants.

Studies have shown that, generally, the most successful in their field have had some element of musical literacy in their past, said Highway. Douglas Cardinal, the architect of Canada’s Museum of Civilization, would not have been able “to make cement sing” without a musical past. Music transforms lives and communities.

Thanking everyone “for listening to his silly jabber,” Highway said if he were the Governor General, he would decorate them all, and if he were the Surgeon General, he would allow them all to smoke. “Thank you, and wishes of joy and success.” As an appropriate close, the entire audience sang *Rockabye Baby* to his piano accompaniment.

### Closing Remarks

Noreen O’Haire thanked Highway for his gifts of language and remarked that now she had a better understanding of the tempo and cadence in his plays. She expressed appreciation for his gift of laughter and the musical journey on which he led participants. She noted that Highway had shown them the essential quality of music and language and, most importantly, the need to give the gift of oneself and to appreciate the gifts of others.

Denise Legg from the Alberta Teachers’ Association related to participants their work which has created a Safe Spaces toolkit with a guide for counsellors and for teachers. Showing the audience a quilt made by youth involved in Youth Understanding Youth, she explained that each square spoke to allowing voices to be heard. With that background, she presented the Canadian Teacher’s Federation with a framed poster in appreciation of their work on this issue.

Terry Price, Canadian Teachers’ Federation Past President, brought the proceedings to a close. “When we started this journey by identifying diversity as an issue in the classroom,” she said, “we set out to accomplish two things: one, to broaden our understanding of what it means to be truly inclusive and, two, to broaden our teaching base from that understanding. I think we have done that.” She said that, also, during the conference participants formed partnerships to make truly inclusive education a reality. “Now our challenge is to fly with that,” she declared. She encouraged participants to engage decision makers in education in their respective jurisdictions, to move the inclusive education agenda forward. She thanked all those who contributed to the success of the conference.
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<td>9:00 – 10:30</td>
<td>Welcome and Introductions  VICTORIA BALLROOM</td>
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<td>CARTIER I SALON</td>
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<td>Lunch  VICTORIA BALLROOM FOYER</td>
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**PLEASE VISIT THE DISPLAYS IN THE LAURIER SALON, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY 8:30 - 5:00**
### Friday, November 18, 2005

**8:00 – 8:45**
**Breakfast Buffet**  
**VICTORIA BALLROOM FOYER**

**9:00 – 10:30**
**Keynote Presentation**  
**VICTORIA BALLROOM**  
**CAROL ANN TOMLINSON**  
Differentiated Instruction as a Way to Achieve Equity and Excellence in Today’s Schools

**10:30 – 11:00**  
**Break**  
**LOWER-LEVEL FOYER**

**11:00 – 12:30**
**Workshop Sessions - Block B**

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<td>The Imaginary Indian: Deconstructing Stereotypes of Aboriginal Peoples</td>
<td>Jan BEAVER</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALBION SALON</td>
<td>Le principe de l'intégration est-il bon pour l’élève et l’équipe-école? (Is the inclusion principle good for the student and the team-school?)</td>
<td>Jean-Luc BERNARD</td>
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<td>IDEAS: Teaching for Diversity, Equity &amp; Acceptance in Schools</td>
<td>Richard BLAQUIÈRE</td>
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<td>Jimmy’s Got Two Married Dads. Now What Do I Do?</td>
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<td>O’CONNOR SALON</td>
<td>Building an Inclusive School: A Facilitation Approach for School Administrators</td>
<td>Joan MARTIN</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. VICTORIA SALON</td>
<td>Riding the 5 Waves to Successful Inclusion</td>
<td>Gordon PORTER</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALTA VISTA SALON</td>
<td>&quot;Inclusive&quot; by Design</td>
<td>Sherry RAMRATTAN SMITH &amp; Mark DUWYN</td>
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<td>ALBERT SALON</td>
<td>The Teacher as Both Urban Guerilla and Pied Piper</td>
<td>Mairuth SARSFIELD</td>
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<td>DALHOUSIE SALON</td>
<td>Exploring Media &amp; Race</td>
<td>Cathy WING</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. VICTORIA SALON</td>
<td>A Look Inside Noah’s Ark: Teachers At Work Differentiating Instruction</td>
<td>Carol Ann TOMLINSON</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARTIER III SALON</td>
<td>Inclusive Classrooms: Peaceful Schools</td>
<td>Hetty van GURP &amp; Teresa MacINNES</td>
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**12:30 – 1:30**  
**Lunch**  
**VICTORIA FOYER**

**1:30 – 3:00**
**Featured Speaker Sessions - Block C**

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<tr>
<th>Salon</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speaker(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>WELLINGTON SALON</td>
<td>Zanana AKANDE - Reflecting Reality: Widening the Scope; Raising the Standard</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARTIER II SALON</td>
<td>Jane GASKELL - Distinctive &amp; Inclusive? Ensuring Diversity and Equity in Canadian Schools</td>
<td>[C2]</td>
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</table>
Judy LUPART - Excellence & Inclusion: Can Canadian Schools Achieve Both? [C3]

Wayne McKay - The Promise and Challenge of Inclusive Education: Experiences in Courts and on the Front Lines [C4]

Bill Ryan - The Invisible Ten Percent: What You Can Do To Make Schools Safe for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans Students in Your School — And They Are There! [C5]

Verna St. Denis - How I learned to Stop Talking About Culture: The Need for a Critical Analysis in Aboriginal Education [C6]

3:00 – 3:15

Break LOCATION MISSING

3:15 – 4:45

Workshop Sessions - Block D

Indigenous Knowledge, Experience and Perspectives in the Curriculum [D1]
Shelly Agecoutay

Soaring to New Heights: Aboriginal Academic Achievement [D2]
Kevin Chief

Inclusionary Practices in New Brunswick: NBTA Research & Recommendations [D3]
Melinda Cook

Gauging Progress in Moving to Inclusion: Challenges and Directions for Tracking and Measurement [D4]
Cameron Crawford

What Is Class Bias? [D5]
Anita Dhawan

Inclusive Schools Must = School Heaven?! [D6]
Edy Guy-François

Neighborhood Literacy: It Takes a Village To Raise a Child [D7]
Sheryl Hoshizaki

Parents' Experiences with Inclusive Schools [D8]
Johanne Labine, Heather Sébastien & Pauline Theoret

The Journey Towards Inclusion: One School Division’s Perspective [D9]
Ken Loehndorf, Nancy Caird, Kelvin Colliar and George Thompson

Respecting All Faiths in Canadian Schools [D10]
Barb Maheu

Inclusion: Always A Journey, Never A Destination [D11]
Charlie Naylor

"Une invitation à la réussite : le profil d'entrée des élèves francophones en 1re année dans une perspective langagiére et culturelle" (An Invitation for Success: Grade-one entry profile for Francophone students from a linguistic and cultural perspective) [D14 - French session] Liliane Vincent and Madeleine Champagne

From the Moral to the Political: Addressing Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in K-12 Public Schools [D15] Kris Wells
Special Film Presentation

**CARTIER III SALON**

**TEACHING PEACE IN A TIME OF WAR**

A decade of civil war cost the lives of more than 250,000 people in the former Yugoslavia. The children of this region have been irrevocably afflicted by this violence. Can we help teach the language of peace to a generation of kids who have known only war?

Director Teresa MacInnes and Hetty van Gurp, president and founder of Peaceful Schools International, will screen the film and speak about the challenges and triumphs of introducing peace education in difficult circumstances.

**Saturday, 19 November 2005**

**8:00 – 8:45**

Breakfast  **LOWER-LEVEL FOYER**

**9:00 – 10:30**

Featured Speaker Sessions - Block E

**N. VICTORIA SALON**

Joanna BLAIS – *Inclusion: It Is No Longer a Discussion; It Is Our Practice*  [E1]

**CARTIER II SALON**

André GRACE – *LGBT Teachers & Students & the Post-Charter Quest for Ethical and Just Treatment in Canadian Schools*  [E2]

**CARTIER III SALON**

Lise PAIEMENT – *Le pouvoir de l’enseignante et de l’enseignant* (The Power of the Educator)  [E3]

**CARTIER I SALON**

David RATTRAY – *Inclusion: The Perspective of Aboriginal Youth*  [E4]

**S. VICTORIA SALON**

Vianne TIMMONS – *Leadership in Inclusive Schools*  [E5]

**10:30 – 11:00**

Break  **VICTORIA BALLROOM FOYER**

**11:00 – 12:30**

**TOMSON HIGHWAY**

Keynote Presentation

**VICTORIA BALLROOM**

Musical Literacy and Cultural Diversity

**12:30**

Closing remarks