

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Kathleen Woodcock Date Submitted: July 19, 2018

Name of Conference: CSBA's Congress 2018 & National Trustee Gathering on Aboriginal Education

Sponsoring Organization: Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA)

Theme (If any): "Navigating the Waters"

Conference Dates: July 4, 2018 to July 7, 2018

Location: The Westin Nova Scotian, Halifax, NS

**Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:
(Include a brief Summary)**

July 4, 2018 – National Trustee Gathering on Aboriginal Education "Navigating the Waters"

- Conference opened with an opening prayer and smudge, greetings from Chief Leroy Denny, a representative of Premier McNeil and Mike Savage, Mayor, Halifax
- Performance of Mi'kmaq drumming by Eastern Eagles Drummers, Shubenacadie First Nation's Indian Brook Indian Reserve

Bernie Francis, DLitt, Mi'kmaw linguist

- Grew up on the Maupeltu (Membertou) First Nation community in Cape Breton, NS
- Worked as the Director of the Court Worker Program for the federal court system, a program that ensures fair and proper treatment for Mi'kmaw people including access to a translator
- After leaving the court system, began his training in linguistics with linguist Doug Smith from the University of Toronto and developed a new orthography of the Mi'kmaw language with Professor Smith
- Through several stories, he expressed the importance of making sure that as part of the education of the Mi'kmaw children, they need to understand that the Mi'kmaw people had a language, a culture, an identity and they were not 'discovered' by Europeans
- Suggests that the fear still exists (amongst some Indigenous people) that speaking against the churches is a terrible thing; Francis says it is the only way to get closer to reconciliation
- Indicated that some of the words held in reverence by the People were turned around by the missionary priests to mean something totally different and negative
- Indicated that the People need to remember that someone did not come from somewhere and gave them a better spirituality, the People already had a strong, important spirituality
- Advised the audience to revisit the language and learn about the language; 'don't let it die'
- Co-author of *The Language of this Land, Mi'kma'ki* and *The Mi'kmaw Grammar of Father Pacifique, New Edition*.

Senator Dan Christmas, first Mi'kmaw senator to be appointed to the Senate of Canada

- Worked for the Union of Nova Scotia Indians for 15 years; actively involved in the recognition and implementation of Mi'kmaw aboriginal and treaty rights in Nova Scotia
- Has been Senior Advisor with Membertou and assisted the Chief and Council and its Management Team with day-to-day operations of the Community of Membertou
- Served as elected councilor for Membertou for 18 years
- Quoted William S. Burroughs, 'The aim of education is the knowledge, not of facts, but of values' – Indigenous values, culture, language, are critical for reconciliation
- The government of Canada has tried over the years to define what/who is an Indian, beginning with the first Indian Act
- The senator provided some findings from an Angus Reid Institute study:
 - Canadians are deeply divided on how best to address Indigenous issues
 - Social issues, such as violence and alcohol abuse are at the top of the list of concerns facing First Nations communities
 - The study and results can be found at <http://angusreid.org/Indigenous-canada/>
- The senator queried how can we guide the nation forward on truth and reconciliation → by developing and funding curricula; confronting the gaps in the present and looking forward to bridging the gaps
- Issued a call to action to attendees to contribute to reconciliation in our role as advocates of public education

Rebecca Thomas, former Halifax poet laureate

- She is a Mi'kmaw woman living in Mi'kma'ki (Nova Scotia); daughter of a residential school survivor
- Her work focuses on the relationships between Canada's First Peoples, their relationship with the federal government and how First Nations' people are perceived publicly.
- On a life long journey to promote understanding and empathy for Indigenous people and marginalized communities
- Performed her work about 'navigating the waters' referring to being unable to build a canoe due to her lack of knowledge about her culture and ways because of the lack of education of her people

July 5, 2018 Navigating the Waters

Floyd Martens, President, CSBA

- Welcomed and thanked members of Congress for attending despite the 'awkward' situation involving the dissolution of school boards in Nova Scotia

Candy Palmater, Comedian, Broadcaster, Lawyer

- Told stories about her family, facing racism in elementary and high school as well as university
- Emphasized that Indigenous students need supports around them to graduate and we all need to aim that average Indigenous students need to be our standard, rather than the exception
- Described many instances in her life when she was able to effect change in her life because of the supports she had (family, athletic coach, parents) taught her how to get back up after she had failed

- Admitted to mistakes in life, everyone has them, and learning from your mistakes is how we can change things
- Powerful stories about challenges in the face of adversity and racism; love yourself enough to risk the falls and then you will become a change agent – “Remember that you are enough!”

Indigenous Knowledge: Two-eyed seeing and governance

Presenter: Albert Marshall, Elder, Unama’ki Institute of Natural Resources

- Created the two-eyed seeing concept – program designed to learn about the intimate connection to the environment; once you invoke both eyes and look at something from another perspective, you can’t help but reflect on who you are
- Advocated for raising the spirit of collaboration which will lead to the spirit of co-leading; we (aboriginal and non-aboriginal) haven’t been able to enter into a dialogue about where we can go from here; need to find a way to live in peace and harmony
- Education should be flexible within the system that brings out success; relationship must be based on trust
- The overarching plan needs to be shared with both sides and come from both sides (two-eyed seeing)
- If we have a spirit of collaboration to work on solving the issues between the cultures of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, he will be encouraged – although he doubts he will see it in this life
- The curriculum needs to have enough flexibility to accommodate and incorporate the ways of the First Peoples of the specific geographic area. In the Maritimes, there are only two Indigenous groups they need to develop curriculum for, so they need to be proactive to get it done.

Panel Discussion, Contributing authors of Marie Battiste’s book, ‘Living Treaties: Narrating Mi’kmaw Treaty Relations’

Participants: Eleanor Bernard, Daniel Paul, Jaime Battiste

- Panel participants described their chapter contributions to Marie Battiste’s book
- We are all treaty people; in Nova Scotia we have one of the first sectoral agreements in a modern day treaty; this is an opportunity to contribute/decide on how education is going to be administered in their community for their students
- Daniel Paul talked about his book, “*We Were Not the Savages*”, a history book about treaties
- There was an assimilation policy applied to relations with Indigenous people in Canada up until the 1990’s
- Graduation rates have improved over the years because Indigenous people are involved in determining their education
- Writers were creating the Indigenous history which has been lacking – telling the history from their perspective
- There are lots of good things that are happening in this era of reconciliation

July 5, 2018 CSBA Congress

Rev. Lennett Anderson, Ph.D.

- Inspiring, dynamic speaker with a message of moving from the process to making progress
- A forward focus is mandatory in navigating the waters in our education systems
- Need to be able to speak truth without compromise

- He's a big believer in giving voice to those who have not been heard
- Have a backward glance, with a forward focus, i.e., learn from your history and focus on your vision for the future
- Eyes that look are common, eyes that see are rare – vision is a function of the heart!!
- Leadership is the ability to transform vision into action/reality
- Every good board member must have a vision; the vision of your heart will remove the restriction of your life
- Need to look at our models of delivery, take responsibility for mistakes and take hold of transformative change
- Call for action to move education forward in Nova Scotia and across Canada

July 6, 2018 CSBA Congress

Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit

Presenter: Marie Battiste, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan

- Chronicles the nature of Eurocentrism, its foundations and imposition through education on Indigenous peoples together with its devastating impacts on them, their knowledge systems and their self-determination.
- Presentation relays decolonizing theory and practices, the costs of ongoing colonial practices and the benefits to all for reconciling Indigenous knowledge with the humanities and social sciences, and trans-systemic transformations to achieve social justice and human rights
- Very detailed presentation that could have been the whole conference
- We have all been marinated in Eurocentrism, characterized by superiority, progress, hegemony and monopoly over all other knowledge systems
- Manifestations of cognitive imperialism:
 - Defines success as assimilation to dominant Eurocentric values, norms and languages
 - Erodes collective cultures, languages and communities by privileging English-French languages
 - Dismissed by political correctness discourses and free speech and even academic freedom
- Over 150,000 aboriginal students forced to attend residential school between 1870-1999
- Truth and Reconciliation on Indian residential schools = cultural genocide
 - Impacts of the system were immediate and have been ongoing since the earliest years of implementation
 - Violated treaty rights to an education
 - Lost knowledge, skills and connectedness to the land, family, language, community, culture, spirituality, Indigenous humanity sciences knowledge
 - Beginning of nihilism – meaninglessness, emptiness, incoherence with community values
 - National school curricula and textbooks have been key tools of Canada's aggressive assimilation policy
- Educational responses to cognitive imperialism:
 - Focus on 'culture' inclusion – ignores hidden norms that privileges eurocentrism, whiteness, dominance, normalization of status quo, ignores racialization
 - Focus on the student as deficit model; pathologizes FNMI youth, ignores poverty, oppression class hierarchy wealth distribution
 - Focus on equity

- Focus on the Indigenous students as an ‘other’ charter group, i.e., all things are equal among groups – not true; can’t use teachings for Inuit as teachings for Metis, etc.; doing this ignores treaties, aboriginal rights, stolen lands
- We are all related!!!

What is Mental Health Literacy (MHL) and How Can We Achieve It?

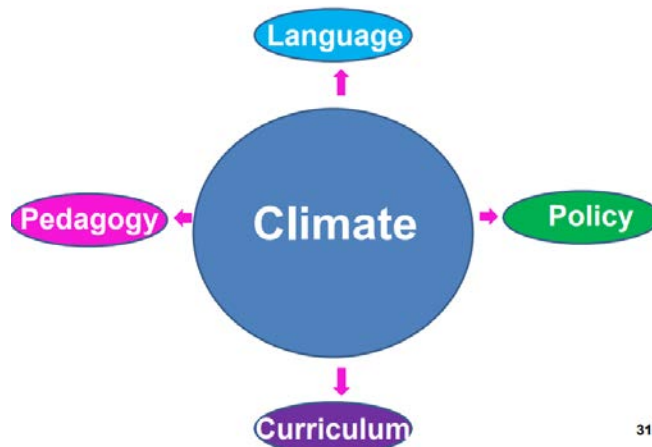
Presenter: Dr. Stan Kutcher, ONS, MD, FRCPK, FCAHS

- Mental health literacy (MHL) is the foundation for mental health promotion, prevention and care
- Knowing about something is not the same as knowing something
- The ‘evidence’ chimera – best practice, evidence informed, evidence based, best available evidence based
- Presented some interesting stats from Stats Canada (see presentation on CSBA web site)
- Schools are the ideal location to embed MHL for BOTH teachers and students
- MHL is the foundation for mental health promotion, prevention, case identification, triage, intervention and ongoing care
- Mental Health Literacy is:
 - Understanding how to obtain and maintain good mental health
 - Understanding how to identify mental disorders and their treatment
 - Stigma reduction
 - Enhance help-seeking efficacy; know where to go, when to go, what to expect when you get there and know how to increase the likelihood of ‘best available care’
- Mental health is not about wellness or feeling good:
 - “Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people, and the ability to change and cope with adversity.” (Surgeon General USA (1999))
- We have created a language of pathology about normal reactions, e.g., sadness is not depression
- Results from data provided by using this approach (<http://teenmentalhealth.org/>):
 - Can effectively improve MHL for both students and teachers with a simple, frugal and pedagogically familiar intervention (no external program needed)
 - Using this approach can embed sustainability into the education system and strengthen the relationship between education and health systems
 - Can improve access to mental health care for those students who most require it
 - The results are similar – research conducted and ongoing in many different countries ranging from low to high income locations (Malawi to the USA)

Moving Beyond the Four D’s of Multiculturalism: Taking Difference into Account in Education

Presenter: Blye Frank, PH.D., Dean, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

- Education that fosters inclusivity and equity moves beyond what is commonly known as ‘The Four “Ds” of Multiculturalism: Dress, Diet, Dialect, and Dance’ (in the presentation, a fifth “D” was added, drumming) to consider the current sociocultural landscape of schooling.
- Raising questions about difference ultimately raises intensely personal questions about ourselves – as raced, sexed, gendered and classed social actors – and where we fit in the relations of power, of domination and subordination, in our schools and more broadly in our society
- Advocated moving to an educational model of multiculturalism:



31

- Cultural competency is ‘central to the ability to respond to others in culturally sensitive and appropriate manners’
- Cultural safety - ‘From a set of competencies to an environment of safety, taking the cultural values and norms of others into consideration, be that in our teaching, or more generally, in all aspects of our institutional environments’
- Equitable relations do not simply happen they demand time, resources and desire

July 7, 2018

Floyd Martens, President, CSBA

- At a media scrum during the conference, he reiterated CSBA commitment to local meaningful input into education via local school boards and that school boards need to be more involved with the community
- CSBA presently working on copyright, cannabis legislation, tax legislation and Indigenous education implementation among other issues
- Laurie French, Past-President, OPSBA acclaimed as President, CSBA

Cross-Country Check-In

Presidents of School Board Associations

British Columbia School Trustees Association <http://bcsta.org/>

- Minority government creating interesting challenges
- Recruiting 3,700 new teachers province-wide
- Recent funding model review – government sat down with school boards but not with community
- Fully funded busing for First Nations students
- Created a learning guide for governance
- Elections in fall 2018

Alberta School Boards Association <http://www.asba.ab.ca/>

- In a year of transition as president, vice-president and executive director resigned
- 6% increase in membership fees
- Renewed mandate of confidence in ASBA mission
- Provincial government collaboration
- New curriculum pending
- Have an Indigenous Advisory Council

- Education budget has been maintained but population is growing

Saskatchewan School Boards Association <https://saskschoolboards.ca/>

- Partially restored funding - \$55M cut backs
- Working on Truth and Reconciliation calls to action
- A change in the Ministry of Education has resulted in a more positive experience/relationship
- Service agreements being renewed; reviewing insurance program/plan

Manitoba School Boards Association <http://www.mbschoolboards.ca/>

- Currently playing catch up – there's been a 4% cumulative reduction in funding
- Have received capital funding for new schools
- The MSBA still sets taxes
- Legislated wage freeze for teachers has led to court injunction to remove;
- Public/private partnerships are being reviewed; decided to keep with the usual funding capital formula
- Working on Indigenous education initiatives – Nelson House First Nations is the first band to join as affiliate member
- Current practice is to implement treaty and territory acknowledgements throughout the MSBA boards
- Elections in fall 2018

Ontario Public School Boards Association <http://www.opsba.org/>

- Five priorities – the whole child and student well-being for today and tomorrow; advancing reconciliation: First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education; trustees as leaders in public education; education funding; labour relations
- OPSBA's role is to work with whatever government is elected by the people of Ontario
- Work with Ontario Education Services Corporation (OESC) to provide governance resources for trustees, school boards, directors of education and communities
- Shortage of French language teachers affects all Ontario boards (see French as Second Language Labour Market Partnership report on web site)
- Continue to advocate for local priority funding
- Entering labour relations bargaining next year
- Elections in fall 2018

Quebec English School Boards Association <https://www.qesba.qc.ca/en/>

- Met with Premier to stress importance of local school boards
- Facing declining enrolment and reduced tax base for English boards
- Elections are separate from municipal elections
- Full report to CSBA at:
https://www.qesba.qc.ca/images/QESBA_Annual_Report_to_CSBA_2018.pdf

Quebec French School Boards

- Working on redefining the role of trustee
- Creating a framework to deal with cannabis legislation vis a vis schools
- Called on all political leaders to lead the way in community engagement

Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association <http://www.schoolboardsnl.ca/>

- Comprised of five member school boards and a provincial office
- Education Act and NLSBA undergoing a review
- School Boards Matter report:
<http://www.schoolboardsnl.ca/pdf/School-Boards-Matter-Report-Small.pdf>
- Despite review happening, government is putting emphasis on education e.g., hiring 40 early education specialists

International Perspectives

Tom Gentzel, Executive Director & CEO, National School Boards Association

- Provided NSBA's vision for equity in public education
- NSBA is trying to work with the Trump administration
- Advocating for additional funding
- Local leadership is what makes public education strong
- The universal trend to cut out the local democracy i.e., school boards/districts, by usually saying that it's more efficient, just isn't true
- About 'community ownership' of our schools – 'Are our schools a community asset or merely an extension of another jurisdiction?'

How a Science Fair Project Created Opportunity and Positive Change in a Nova Scotia Community

Presenter: Stella Bowles, Student, South Shore Regional School Board, Halifax

- The presenter explained how her school science fair project prompted three levels of government to commit to a \$15.7 million cleanup plan to rid the LaHave River of illegal straight pipes (a practice that led to astronomical readings of fecal contamination in the LaHave River)
- Acknowledged the support provided by her parents
- Made the case that traditional classrooms are discouraging students' creativity; hands on learning is critical for student achievement
- Very inspiring speaker; proof that young people can effect change
- <http://earlgrey5.wixsite.com/stellab>

Making Community Connections: A Committee-Based Approach to Advocacy and Engagement

Presenter: Members of the Louis Riel School Board, Manitoba

<https://www.lrsd.net/Pages/default.aspx>

- Community Connections Committee established as a standing committee at the LRSB in 2014 with a mandate to engage with local and greater community not only to make valuable stakeholder connections, but to ensure they remain connected with those they serve and represent
- Presentation described the steps they went through to bring about this committee including their governance model, establishing the Community Connections Committee, developing a 4 year plan "Reaching Out" and evaluating what has changed in terms of community voice and community engagement.
- Made sure they asked high school students for their opinions on:
 - How prepared do you feel for life after high school?
 - What makes you nervous about life after high school?

- What would help you feel more prepared?
- Evaluating success: what changed?
 - New events - Seniors day, Arts in Action, #LRSDprojectgenerosity, LRSD's Powwow Club, Annual graduation powwow, Annual choir performance in support of the United Way
 - Increased recognition among students in the high schools
 - Continued receipt of invitations to community events that are not school based
 - Viewed as more accessible
 - Appreciation of their presence and visibility in their schools and buildings
- After **every** engagement opportunity or conversation, ask “does this change any policy or practice?” to make sure they evaluated progress and if there was none, took action to correct that

Some of the presentations delivered at t the Congress can be found on the CSBA web site at:

<http://www.opsba.org/Pages/Register%20now%20for%20CSBA%20Congress%202018%20in%20Halifax.aspx>

Materials Taken Away:

___ General Distribution

___ Trustee Distribution

___ Staff Distribution: Name of Staff Member: _____