

Editorial



On November 27, I had the good fortune of tuning into CBC Radio Sunday Edition with Michael Enright. He was interviewing John Pateman, CEO/Head of public libraries in Thunder Bay, Ontario (Enright, 2016).

Pateman was advocating for more inclusive ways of attracting all members of the community to library spaces and not just a certain segment of the population, of which he reports has historically been white, middle-class, middle-aged women. He suggested we need to think differently about the notion of silence, and the restrictions of food and drink and digital devices. He argued for designating spaces where talking, food, and drink are permitted, and where digital devices can be used respectfully, while maintaining other places for silence without intrusions. Most importantly, he argued that holdings should be based on production, or the use of books, rather than on elitist notions of what constitutes good literature. He made the case based on research results that even the classics are not enjoyed by all, and therefore the books on the shelves should reflect a diversity of reading tastes. What was striking was his vision to think broadly and innovatively about the complexities of engaging the community. I believe his idea of an inclusive library is an excellent metaphor for exploring how to link education and community.

The engaging submissions in this issue reflect how linking education and community in meaningful and fruitful ways requires structures for reciprocity, trusting relationships, inclusivity, and equitable partnerships. The authors show, for example, how university research agendas have been changing. For more than two decades, university/community collaboration has been increasingly encouraged by funders. As a result, proposed projects must be geared to what communities need, rather than to particular research interests of solo academics. Schools and other educational institutions are reaching out to bring communities in, or to transform community spaces into, exciting sites of learning. The burgeoning knowledge economy and the rapid pace of globalization make these links imperative, but also underscore the importance of an ethical stance in every aspect of the work. The authors in this issue show, with interesting and innovative examples, how these links can be made and open up possibilities for thinking about future, rewarding work.

The submissions for this issue are placed alphabetically in the table of contents for pragmatic reasons, but are summarized thematically in this editorial.

Commentaries

The commentaries in this issue, as in all others, are invited. In each issue, we invite local educators and those further afield, to get a range of researcher and practitioner voices who are known for work, which has contributed to the area that the issue is addressing, and to contribute their perspectives on the particular topic. They are not asked to respond to the articles we receive, nor is their work peer reviewed like all other submissions. Depending on the wish of each invitee, these commentators are either interviewed, or they submit a written piece. We shy away from giving direction for this work, and find it interesting to note, that after 19 issues, the commentaries together always reflect many of the themes that emerge in the peer-reviewed articles. The commentaries provide a multifaceted frame for what follows, and we believe, an interesting way to draw the audience into the theme of the issue.

Joyce Epstein, is a professor of education and sociology at Johns Hopkins University and known widely for her work on linking schools with communities. For over four decades, she has devoted her work to school improvement. In this interview, she discusses her extensive research, which has shown that family (she purposefully uses the term *family*, and not *parents*, to embrace a broad and inclusive notion of adults who are important to students) and community participation in schools contributes to student engagement and success. She has developed a model based on action teams which include school leaders, family and community members, and students, who focus on understanding child development, communicating widely about programs and student progress, learning in home spaces, and volunteering. These action teams not only plan the work, but also have responsibility of evaluating the plans. Her examples attest to the success of this model.

Noel Burke, former assistant deputy minister of education in Quebec, dean of lifelong learning at Concordia University, Montreal, and long-time educator in the Quebec school system, shares in his interview his passion for building bonds between communities and schools. After visiting very successful community schools in England and elsewhere, he proposed to the Ministry and Quebec school boards the idea of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in this province. His primary rationale for this endeavor was the potential benefits to both students and communities, but also, he suggested it was a way of using and, therefore, retaining, local schools within communities at a time when school populations were diminishing and leaving behind economically unviable empty spaces. He discusses the lessons he learned and the importance of finding a middle ground among partners and creating equitable ways to share resources to produce mutually beneficial learning environments.

Julie Lindsay is an educational consultant and adjunct lecturer in the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University in Australia. Based on extensive international experience, she argues that to maximize learning in an era of intense globalization necessitates the need to use digital possibilities, or technology integration, and to learn collaboratively and contextually by linking geographically dispersed classrooms, schools, institutions, and communities. She discusses the need to embrace new pedagogies that emerge from learning in connected communities, and to foster autonomous learning in order to produce globally competent citizens.

Corrine Rogers currently lives in South East Asia working part time as a school nurse and as the primary nurse for a non-governmental organization that works against human trafficking. She recounts how during her MA program in nursing at the University of Alberta, she became immersed in narrative ways of thinking as she reflected on her community development work during the tragic tsunami in Thailand in 2004. This narrative work shifted her thinking about the role and function of community development work. It gave her the lens to reexamine her experience and value the relational and moral dimensions of this work when using the perspective of living alongside community members, listening to and honouring their stories of displacement. Her commentary resonates with the work of others in this issue who show how reflecting on experiences can create sites for growth and new understanding.

Moving Beyond Outreach to Reciprocal Partnerships

Player, Gill, and Campano share how they worked collaboratively with immigrant youth in middle and high school as they inquired into issues of access into higher education. After visiting a campus, the youth felt a clash between their Indonesian and Mexican identities and the university culture. In time, however, they developed a sense of belonging in higher education balanced with a healthy skepticism about university admissions and institutional representation. These authors stress the importance of research partnerships that are truly reciprocal and that value existing knowledge among those involved. **Poldma** describes how in her design course, the students worked in design teams with an outside consultant with expertise on the Syrian crisis in the Middle East. Their designs were required to integrate aesthetic dimensions with ethical and sustainable plans for refugee camps. Their results were presented to a panel of experts and the winners attended a World Humanitarian Conference. The students were not only engaged, but also widened their worldviews as they developed their design competencies. **Treffry-Goatley, Wiebesiek, and Moletsane** from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa have been working on a project with McGill University on violence against women and girls. More specifically they have worked with youth,

aged 15-18, using visual methodologies (for example, Photovoice, digital storytelling, etc.) to examine girls' safety from the perspectives of seven participants. The results to date show poignantly the imperative of continuing collaborative work with those whose voices have been marginalized. They underscore, however, how carefully this work must be balanced with the ethical issues that can arise when confronting sensitive topics that may lead to risk for the participants because of unintended disclosures. **McGillen, Bhattacharyya, and Brinton Lykes** discuss their partnership between a university team and community-based, second language teachers working with undocumented immigrants. Together they produced a toolkit to help these immigrants respond to threats they encounter because of their status. Their work has helped to counter deficit notions about immigrants, bolster individual and collective identity, reduce social isolation, and ignite advocacy for change. **Fraser** describes a youth-run media institute that brings together 150 youth, aged 18-22, with film and video mentors to produce stories and resulting films. While tensions originally existed between encouraging originality and meaning and moving beyond notions inherited from mass media, the success and recognition of the work has changed the culture of the institute over time.

Thinking Ecologically About Educational Contexts and Community

I have borrowed for this theme, the term *thinking ecologically* from the contribution of **Sullivan**, who suggests it is "a way of seeing and interpreting an interconnected and interdependent world." She shares how her work with educators when collaborating with them in the depths of the Everglades National Park has changed her teaching and thinking about educational contexts and communities. Her poignant poetry about this work may be listened to in the pages of her article. She emphasizes how going into the natural world to teach and write are vehicles which generate empathy, compassion, and collective activity that can enhance conservation and social justice efforts for producing a sustainable global society. **Jagger** adds to this theme when she describes how she and her grade four students embarked on a three-month community mapping project in Sandy Beach, a provincial park in British Columbia, which allowed them to apply classroom learning to an authentic situation beyond the school. She focuses on the work of four students and, through narrative excerpts and visuals, she shows how they recognized the interconnectedness of species, the relation of local history to what occurs in nature, and the dire need for sustainability in our world. **Hagenah and Thompson** describe how they worked with a group of middle school girls and a team of community experts in the Seattle area to investigate the toxicity of Hicklin Lake located near their school. One group of girls created and installed signs for a nature walking tour, while the other prepared a documentary film

to disseminate information about the lake to the local community. By working with community experts they were able to apply scientific knowledge in a real-life context and to advocate within the community the need and rationale for a clean-up of the lake. **Smith** writes about his work with Michigan's Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI), in which he has been involved in both community and academic contexts. In these projects, students work in the community while community members bring local knowledge and resources into the classroom. He illustrates how this deepens their knowledge and ties to the community. Known as "place and community-based education," the objective is to increase environmental literacy and responsibility among Michigan's youth. It provides students with the opportunity of participating as citizens to enhance the social and natural environments in which they live. **Truong, Gray, and Ward** share how a partnership among researchers, school teachers, and the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Australia in a Garden-Based Learning (GBL) project, has allowed disadvantaged youth to participate in designing, building, planting, and harvesting the school garden. Their research has shown that this project enhances well-being, health literacy, and attitudes towards the environment. In addition, it builds life skills, increases self-esteem, and connects students with adults, while increasing their engagement with learning. **LaBanca** describes the vision he brought to an urban, magnet middle school which was predicated on experiential, project-based, and technology-enhanced learning. He discusses examples of several projects in which the students work alongside community members to design, implement, and evaluate their work which showcases student talents, forges meaningful relationships, and enhances student learning. **Low, Carter, Wood, Mitchell, Proietti, and Friedmann** share their work in an Urban Arts Project located in James Lyng High School in Montreal. The project is predicated on an inclusive notion of the urban arts and the value of arts integration in a culturally relevant pedagogy. Community artists, teachers, and university researchers have partnered to bring community artists into the school, and to reach out and work with students via urban art. The authors attest to positive changes among students in terms of engagement, self-esteem, and a sense of ownership. They candidly discuss the issues each of the partners has faced and yet, all remain very positive about the possibilities for rethinking how schooling works, particularly for youth for whom schooling is a challenge.

Reflecting on Experiences as Sites of Growth and Understanding

Vaughan, Dufour, and Hammond, two instructors and a PhD student, were involved in a three-year, "Right to the City" (RTTC) project out of Concordia University in Montreal. They share how using a social justice lens they ran their classes in the community for

teaching, learning, and art-making, drawing on community resources and knowledge. The focus is on Hammond's PhD work where she used personal experience and local oral history to create a graphic novella showing how she changed and grew in this teaching and research nexus. **Martin**, an Indigenous educator, reflects on her experience of conducting her community-based doctoral study while attending carefully to the Secwepemc reclamation, revitalization, and renewal of culture, language, and land. She describes how Indigenous Storywork and Narrative Inquiry were key for allowing her to understand her cultural identity in safe, relational, and embodied spaces and to grow as a result. She emphasizes how understanding oneself, "is a heart process." **Trask** shares her experience of growing up as a white, middle-class school girl in small-town Saskatchewan and how this identity construction initially contributed to deficit notions she had about race and classes as a novice teacher in a diverse setting. She shares candidly how she examined and deconstructed these assumptions and came to new understandings about the culturally diverse students with whom she was involved. She advocates strongly for identity exploration and critical multiculturalism in teacher preparation to promote authentic communities in schools and classrooms.

Creating Intergenerational Links in Community

Sitter, Wideman, Furey, Gosine, and Skanes focus on the experiences of undergraduate students while working with older adults during their first fieldwork placement while concurrently attending a social work undergraduate course predicated on critical pedagogy and the integration of the arts. The students were required to create artifacts about their experiences of working with older adults. The authors conclude that the visual reflective process enabled the students to explore their positionality as it related to elders and to broaden their understanding about aging. **Bacon** describes her experiences in working in a number of community-based projects with her adult students, for example, service learning with elders, teaching literacy to women, and tree planting. These experiences changed her as a teacher as she realized the need to give up control and bridge the student-teacher gap that she had experienced. As well, the partnerships fostered a deep sense of collectiveness among people from different generations and helped students build strong bonds with their community. **Shira** shares how a group of intergenerational journal writers have engaged over time in the "Writing Alone Together" (WAT) project in a school in the Gulf Islands in British Columbia. She outlines in detail the process that they use and concludes that the work cultivates an intergenerational community, and diminishes social isolation, depression, and anxiety.

Bridging Divides Through Relationships

There is ample evidence across all contributions in this issue that relationships play a significant role in all efforts to link education and community. The final two pieces, however, address more specifically how divides have been bridged through establishing trust and building relationships. **Neufeld, Vashchyshyn, and Chernoff** describe the substantial body of literature that shows that parent/family engagement in secondary mathematics classrooms is largely absent. They hypothesize that this is due to limited pre-service education, and to an antagonistic portrayal of parents/families as having opposing and narrow-minded conceptions about mathematics. They suggest that these barriers are often exaggerated, but even when they are not, there is a dire need to change the rhetoric and create opportunities for communication and trust building by providing a willingness to listen to and respect different perspectives. Last, but not least, **Adler and Brown** describe how a university-community choir facilitated the creation, consumption, and sharing of art, culture, and knowledge among stakeholders from both the university and the community. They highlight the value that this choir brought to both the university and community as music and music education became a bridge in a university and community divide.

LBK

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References

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Lynn Butler-Kisber (B. Ed., M. Ed., McGill University; Ed. D., Harvard University), a former elementary school teacher, is Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education in the Faculty of Education at McGill, where she is Director of the Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership Programs I & II. She has served as Director of Undergraduate Education Programs, Director of Graduate Studies and Research in Educational Studies, Associate Dean in Education, and Associate Dean and Dean of Students, as well as on numerous committees within the University and in the educational milieu. In 2007 she was appointed to the Board of Directors of St. George's Schools. She teaches courses on language arts, qualitative research, and teacher education. She has a particular interest in feminist/equity and social justice issues, and the role of arts-based analysis and representation in qualitative research. Her current research and development activities include the McGill/Champlain College Mentoring Project, the Quebec/ Vermont International Professional Learning Community Project, and other work with teachers and school leaders in Dominican Republic, France, and Bhutan. The focus of this work includes leadership, literacy, student engagement, professional development, and qualitative methodologies. She has published and presented extensively in these areas. She is currently working on the second edition of *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*, published by Sage.