

# ET EVO VOICE

SUMMER 2020

## LEARNING TO CRITICALLY ADDRESS ANTI-BLACK RACISM

An interview with  
Kike Ojo-Thompson



**DARE TO BE  
POWERFUL**

**CREATING A  
NEW NORMAL**

**ADVICE FROM OUR  
GRANDMOTHERS**

**SINGING IN  
SOLIDARITY**





New  
low-fee  
RESP

## When you give them a future you give them everything.

We believe education opens the door to infinite possibilities. That's why we're proud to introduce our new, low-fee mutual funds available only within our Educators RESP. With a 20% lower fee\* more of your money goes towards saving for their future so you can enjoy watching your child – and your savings – grow. It's never too early to start planning for your child's education.

**Educators**  
FINANCIAL GROUP

Learn more at [educatorsfinancialgroup.ca/lowfeeRESP](http://educatorsfinancialgroup.ca/lowfeeRESP). Helping the education community, and their families, achieve their financial goals since 1975.

\*20% lower management fee than our A Series Educators Monitored Portfolios and Balanced Fund. Commissions, trailing commissions, management fees and expenses may all be associated with mutual funds. Please read the prospectus before investing. Mutual funds are not guaranteed, their value changes frequently and past performance may not be repeated.

# OUR WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IS AN *Inclusive* MOVEMENT

The women's movement is a movement towards social justice and equity for all people. Through an exploration of economics and the workplace, education, gender-based violence, health, politics and the law, pop culture and the arts and social movements, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario's Women's Equality Project honours the contributions to society made by diverse women and non-binary people.

This resource is available at Shop ETFO and includes access to blackline masters in both English and French.





- 4 FROM THE EDITOR
- 5 FROM THE PRESIDENT  
By Sam Hammond
- 6 FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY  
By Sharon O'Halloran
- 40 CURRICULUM: WOMEN'S  
EQUALITY PROJECT
- 42 YOUR FEDERATION
- 45 BOOK REVIEWS
- 47 CROSSWORD: "TALENT SEARCH"  
By Matt Gaffney

8  
**DARE TO BE POWERFUL**  
Toni Minichiello reflects on how transformative women's mentorship programs can be.

12  
**CREATING A NEW NORMAL**  
Catherine Oikawa considers the ways COVID-19 has impacted communities, and the feminist principles that help us chart a new way forward.

18  
**INTERVIEW: LEARNING TO CRITICALLY ADDRESS ANTI-BLACK RACISM**  
Voice speaks to anti-Black racism and equity educator Kike Ojo-Thompson.



18



24

**24  
ADVICE FROM OUR  
GRANDMOTHERS**

Tanya C. Leary talks about how she can draw on a history of resilience to help chart her way forward and what legacies she wants to leave to her students.

**28  
SINGING IN SOLIDARITY**

Velvet Lacasse shows us how music can be a powerful tool for teaching social justice.

**34  
BUILDING CULTURAL AGENCY**

Neeru Sekhon writes about creating a community-focused cultural hub and the power of the arts to create opportunities for self-representation and reflection.



34

## FROM THE EDITOR

PHOTO BY KATHRYN GAITENS



The summer issue of *Voice* is our Women's Issue. It is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women's programs and women members and to consider the contributions of intersectional feminist principles to our thinking and our social movements. With an unprecedented year of bargaining, followed by the worst global pandemic of our lifetime, there are many lessons to be learned from this year. "What gives me hope," writes General Secretary Sharon O'Halloran, "is that while COVID-19 exposes systemic

inequities, the global response demonstrates that anything is possible and that we can co-construct our future by advocating for equity together."

Reflecting on how transformative women's mentorship programs can be in *Dare to be Powerful*, Toni Minichiello writes, "I started to see myself as an activist, as someone who could make change and support justice within my school community and beyond. I started to think of myself in a different kind of leadership role." In a related online-only story, Sharon Ethier looks at the opportunities for getting involved in ETFO women's programs, both locally and provincially.

Catherine Oikawa considers the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted communities and the feminist principles that help us chart a new way forward in her article, *Creating a New Normal*. In *Advice From Our Grandmothers: Teaching and Learning in a Global Pandemic*, Tanya Leary reflects on how to draw on a history of resilience to help chart a way forward in this unprecedented time.

In the feature interview, *Voice* speaks with anti-Black racism and equity educator Kike Ojo-Thompson about systemic and anti-Black racism, historical legacies of wealth and dominance. "Educators must be committed to addressing what is arguably the most significant issue pertaining to education, of our time, and that is racism," says Ojo-Thompson. "It must be a requirement of the education system."

Both Velvet Lacasse in *Singing in Solidarity* and Neeru Sekhon in *Building Cultural Agency: Creating a Community Focused Cultural Hub* write about the power of the arts. Sekhon writes, "In a political environment seemingly dedicated to further entrenching the very marginalization that public educators seek to ameliorate in our classrooms, creating a cultural space that unites students and the communities that support them is a powerful act of resistance."

These feature articles along with book reviews, a special crossword and a curriculum insert from the Women's Equality Project are sure to make great summer reading.

Have a safe and restful summer!

# ETFO VOICE

## ETFO Executive Members

### PRESIDENT

**Sam Hammond**, Hamilton-Wentworth

### FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

**Karen Campbell**, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

### VICE-PRESIDENTS

**David Mastin**, Durham

**Monica Rusnak**, Ontario North East

### OTF TABLE OFFICER

**Nathan Core**, Waterloo Region

### EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

**Adelina Cecchin**, Greater Essex County

**Amy Chevis**, Simcoe County

**Mary Fowler**, Durham

**Joy Lachica**, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

**Felicia Samuel**, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

**Sabrina Sawyer**, Grand Erie

**Mario Spagnuolo**, Greater Essex County

**Sylvia Van Campen**, Upper Canada

**Greg Weiler**, Waterloo Region

**Sharon O'Halloran**, General Secretary

**Jerry DeQuetteville**, Deputy General Secretary

**Bobbi Taillefer**, Deputy General Secretary

## ETFO Voice

**Izida Zorde**, Editor

**Sharon O'Halloran**, Business Manager

**Michelle Goddard**, Advertising Sales

**David Beyer**, Design

### Contributors not otherwise credited:

Mary Morison, Karen Kindree

Member of the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) and Canadian Education Press Association

Indexed in the Canadian Educational Index / Répertoire canadien sur l'éducation

ISSN: 1481-4072

Articles contained herein reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily express official policy of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

Acceptance of an advertisement does not imply ETFO endorsement of the product or service. Advertising contracts are subject to cancellation if members complain.

Publications Mail Agreement no. 42409515.

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:



136 Isabella Street

Toronto, ON M4Y 0B5

Phone: 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836

E-mail: [etfovoice@etfo.org](mailto:etfovoice@etfo.org)

[etfovoice.ca](http://etfovoice.ca)

Printed by Thistle Printing on FSC certified, 10% post-consumer content; Carbon Lite and Green-e® certified renewable energy paper.



# PERSEVERING THROUGH THE CHALLENGES OF A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

**T**he 2019-2020 school year was one for the history books. We started the year bargaining with a Conservative government determined to make massive cuts to public education and ended with a global pandemic and our members having to adjust to emergency distance learning over the course of just a couple of weeks.

Through our perseverance, our solidarity, our strong connections with parents, communities and education affiliates we were able to fight back the worst of the cuts. Educators, parents and community members know that a well-funded, quality public education system means that students, no matter where they live or what their circumstances, receive an equitable start. ETFO members showed their overwhelming support for bargaining by voting 97 and 94 percent in favour of the tentative settlements reached for teachers/occasional teachers and education workers respectively. In May as I write this, bargaining continues at the local level for many in the province.

Since March, we have been navigating the worst pandemic of our lifetime. Educators across the province have been working tirelessly to engage students and teach through emergency distance learning, all the while knowing how central school is to a child's life and worrying about our students' well-being as many families struggle with the realities of the pandemic. There's no way around it. This time has been exceptionally difficult for everyone.

During this trying time, we have seen incredible acts of kindness and support in our communities. But while a crisis can bring out the best in people, it can also bring out the worst. We have seen racism and bigotry; we have seen attacks on Asian Canadians; we have seen this virus disproportionately affect racialized communities, people with disabilities and the elderly. This reminds us how important it is to have anti-racism and equity embedded in everything we do. The importance of the work that is done in schools, in other workplaces, in our communities and in ETFO to build a more just society becomes so much more apparent in a time of crisis.



Despite limited data, we know the crisis has affected marginalized and racialized communities more than others. We also see the impact on many front-line workers, who despite being essential to the well-being of Ontarians, have to continue to fight for personal protective equipment, paid sick days and basic protections in their workplace. We see the devastation in long-term care, a system that was thrown wide-open to privatization under Mike Harris, now the chair of the biggest for-profit long-term care corporation in Canada. These corporations have underpaid workers, cut corners and failed to provide the equipment necessary to keep workers and residents safe. ETFO will continue to advocate for all Ontarians to have decent wages, benefits, paid sick-leave and other basic labour rights and for the universal public long-term care system that we clearly need.

We know the importance of well-funded, universal public services. Without the years of struggle to protect our healthcare system this crisis would have been much worse. Our debt to healthcare workers should be

repaid with a commitment to stand in solidarity when they face attacks from this or any other government.

Every summer issue of *Voice*, we celebrate the achievements of women and recommit to the women's programs that make ETFO such an important leader in the labour movement. Globally, women have been disproportionately affected by this pandemic, and women have in many cases led the response. Our commitment to women's programs is consistent with our commitment to equity and social justice and I am proud to be the president of a union that is actively working for equity both within our organization and in our broader communities.

We learned this year that sometimes you have to fight like hell to hold on to what you believe in. We will continue to fight for quality public education and to advocate for our members, our students and our communities as we finish the school year remotely and plan for a safe return to school in the fall.

Have a safe, restful and enjoyable summer.

— Sam Hammond

# BUILDING AN EQUITABLE FUTURE WE CAN ALL BELIEVE IN

**T**he summer issue of *Voice* is always our Women's Issue. It is an opportunity to recognize the achievements of women members, to talk about the value and impact of mentorship and women's programs and to acknowledge both how far we have come as an organization and an advocate for social change, and how far we have yet to go.

This year has been unprecedented. We had one of the most difficult rounds of bargaining in ETFO's history, but educators and parents knew that what was at stake was one of the best public education systems in the world and together we were able to stave off many of the drastic cuts. As bargaining was concluding, we experienced the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic to Ontario, which has required Ontarians to stay home and educators and students to begin emergency distance learning. As ETFO members implemented distance learning strategies, we were concerned for our students and their families. As we all know, many students rely on the supports they receive in school and the relationships they have with their teachers and other educators and their classmates.

This pandemic has also laid bare the way that women and other marginalized groups have been differentially affected by COVID-19. Gender, compounded by intersections of race, ability, status, language, precarity and a host of other factors, determines how we are affected by a crisis and the kinds of resources available to each of us. The pandemic is worsening problems women were facing even before it started, writes Kristina Lunz, co-founder of The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy. "Crises like this exacerbate already existing structural inequalities in society – when it comes to women's rights, women's health and women's economic status, this is exactly what we are seeing now."

Women are more often employed in marginal jobs. They tend to earn less money than men do and represent the vast majority of healthcare, child care and elder care workers. According to Statistics Canada, women have seen steeper job losses than men and are more



PHOTO BY KATHRYN GAITENS

often in part-time work. In May, Statistics Canada reported that 1.5 million women lost their jobs during March and April.

What gives me hope is that while COVID-19 exposes systemic inequities, the global response is showing that anything is possible and that we can co-construct our future by advocating for equity. Right now governments are being forced to address some of the structural and systemic inequalities that dictate different outcomes for different people depending on the intersections of their identities. They must prioritize the needs of people over those of profit and politics. Increases in awareness of inequities in the province have many local communities responding by organizing to support one another. By standing together, by support-

ing and advocating for one another and for equity, we have the opportunity to create a new normal for Ontario. We can continue to advocate for an Ontario that puts the needs of people first.

When this crisis subsides and the language of austerity and privatization is reintroduced, we will have to fight to protect the gains won for all Ontarians – but particularly those who have been most affected by this crisis. We must be ready to show that Ontario's economic recovery can only be built on a foundation of strong public services that help address systemic inequities. We must be ready to show that a properly funded high-quality public education system is essential if we are to come out of this crisis together.

– Sharon O'Halloran

# We applaud our teachers!



How can we express our gratitude?

You are inspiring. You are courageous. You are doing amazing things for students, parents and families in Ontario.

At ETFO AQ we are proud to support our dedicated teachers. Thank you.

Join our community today to learn with and from teachers at [etfo-aq.ca](https://etfo-aq.ca).  

**ETFO**  **AQ**  
BY TEACHERS / FOR TEACHERS



# DARE TO BE POWERFUL

“When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid.” – AUDRE LORDE

BY TONI MINICHIELLO

There are those moments in your life where you can actually feel the energy of change about to happen. For me it has always been when I am about to take a leap into what I fear. I remember when I walked into the Student Learning Centre at Ryerson University and saw the poster that accompanied the Audre Lorde quote above. I knew then that big change was going to happen for me. This same feeling of change materialized when I walked into my first Peel Elementary Teacher Local mentorship meeting. I knew the experience was going to be transformative. I had been teaching for 11 years, and while I loved working with the students and my colleagues, I longed for the spark I had at the beginning of my career. I missed the excitement and challenges. I needed to explore what made me passionate and motivated.

I decided I would have a YES year, saying yes to new opportunities and experiences at my school and in my professional learning. I wanted to explore a personal leadership path and began attending leadership workshops offered by my board. Unfortunately, they were never quite what I was looking for. I couldn't connect to the vision.

Later that year, I attended “The Leadership Toolkit” workshop offered in my local. As I sat nervously looking around at all the women in the room, many of whom were actively involved in our union, I was inspired. In our time together, we learned about committees we could be involved in and other opportunities for leadership. It became apparent that the values, norms and goals within the union

were more in line with what I needed to feel challenged and fulfilled as a teacher and a union member. As part of our learning we talked about common conflict within school structures and how we can best support our students and each other. This mindset really spoke to the advocacy and community I felt was missing within my own work. It assured me that I had connected with a like-minded community and gave me hope there were avenues within the education system that would support my values, particularly my commitment to equity.

I started to see myself as an activist, as someone who could make change and support justice within my school community and beyond. I started to think of myself in a different kind of leadership role.

In the spring of 2019, I began a two-year mentorship program in my local for members who identify as women. The program encouraged us to carve out a leadership path that aligns with our individual passions and goals, and exposed us to the many journeys and struggles that women have faced within the teaching profession and unionism. The focus of the work in this program is leadership development within our union, equity, activism and social justice.

At the beginning of our mentorship program, we spoke of ourselves, our experiences and the reasons we were there. We learned about what leadership looks like depending on a person's skills and goals and spoke about those who lead quietly. We were able to break out with our mentor and speak about their journeys and how they could best support us as we carved out our own.

We talked about active listening and working through defensiveness when having difficult conversations as well as goal-setting and building trusting relationships.

It was when we started to dive into the story of ETFO that I started to question the systemic barriers to women in leadership and what many women may experience as internal barriers. I started to do a little research about women in our union.

I learned that more than 80 percent of ETFO members are women; however, this same percentage is not represented in key areas of our union. For example, women are less likely to get to the microphone and speak to motions at the ETFO annual meeting and are significantly underrepresented in local leadership roles, such as president and chief negotiator. Although our numbers are increasing, women are still underrepresented.

I learned that women's programs create safe spaces where women can take risks, find their voices and get plugged in to other opportunities within ETFO. As our mentorship journeys developed, and our individual goals and paths started to become more clear, we began to share our experiences and support one another in building toward and achieving our goals.

The Berger-Marks Foundation's Institute for Women's Policy Research has profiled mentorship programs within unions and identified that informal mentoring can be helpful, but tends to reinforce existing inequitable power dynamics of gender and race. As it states in the report, “Mentoring can especially help women, who constitute almost half the workforce but are underrepresented



PHOTO BY CHRISTINE COUSINS



PHOTO COURTESY PEEL TEACHER LOCAL



in the leadership ranks of unions. Mentoring can help by providing women with the support they need to move up through the ranks and reach the top positions. Having more women visible in leadership positions can increase women's activism in unions. Informal opportunities often leave women and racialized members with less access to mentorship and associated support for leadership/skills development." The research shows that formal mentorship breaks down barriers and can help unions strengthen and transform over time by allowing more experienced union members to share their experience and knowledge and develop relationships with newer members who can then lean on their mentor for support. Knowing women are underrepresented in many ETFO programs and leadership roles, intentional mentorship programs for women, such as ours, play an important formal role.

Women in our group came to this program with different goals in mind. I wanted to find ways I could support students and families with an ecological approach but within the boundaries and barriers of the school system. I thought to do so meant only through leadership as a principal or vice principal. I needed to figure out a direction of leadership that I valued for myself.

I spoke with some of our group of mentees when I was writing this article and asked if I could share their different goals and experiences.

Gurpreet's journey was focused on helping mobilize other women within our union, particularly new teachers. She felt new teachers might not recognize all the opportunities in the union and their schools. She explained that unless someone taps you on the shoulder, you might not get opportunities or feel you have value within the system. Gurpreet started her journey as a member of the New Teacher Committee within her local, and because of her mentor and the support of the others in the mentorship program, she began to develop "confidence in her competence" and decided to run as the chair of the New Teacher Committee. As a result of the support of this program, she is more aware and open about her personal and professional journey. She was able to find a place within the mentorship group where she could be vulnerable and open.

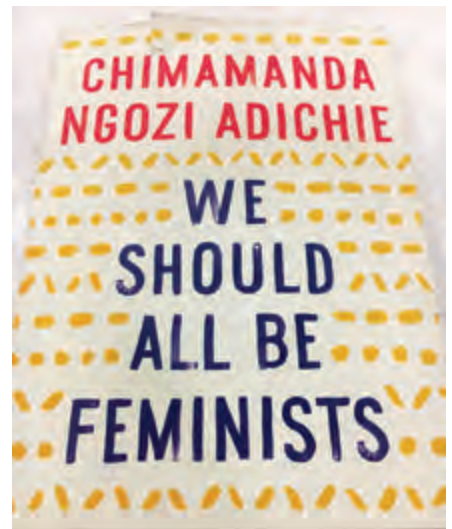
Nichole did not know what path she wanted to take. She was intrigued by the leadership opportunities within ETFO and inspired by others' narratives and the strength of the collective group. Our work together gave her the guidance and encouragement to write and present a proposal to the local executive that led to the development of a French as a Second Language Network within the Peel Elementary Teachers' Local.

Tracy applied for the program in the hopes of being inspired to find ways to be of service to the union after 11 years of membership. Listening to first-hand experiences of women within ETFO, she has deepened her perspective about women in union leadership, including those in released positions. Tracy has taken an active role in our strike action as an alternate steward for her school. She feels she has a deeper understanding of the importance of women's programs within the union and a fuller picture of the history of ETFO, particularly why dedicated funding is so needed to support more women leaders. Tracy feels that she will continue to be a positive advocate for union issues within her school.

Danielle, like Tracy, was looking to find ways to get more involved, however with a different goal in mind. As a Black woman who embeds social justice and equity in her teaching practice, she found it disturbing that this wasn't a common practice for all educators. She hoped the mentorship program would give her the tools to change the experiences of many Black students who are discriminated against in implicit and explicit ways in our school system. She wanted to find solutions, change policy and develop

workshops to support teachers' understandings of how systemic anti-Black racism impacts Black students. Her goal was to work with educators to recognize the experiences of Black students and change them for the better. Danielle is now an active member of PETL's Anti-Racism and Equity Committee and continues to do important work supported by allies, mentors and a community of women members.

Like Audre Lorde, I dare to be powerful. Developing my power and leadership to make change in my school and my community with this group of mentees has been a transformative experience for me. Our group wanted not only to grow ourselves, but also to make a positive difference for our students. Through this program, we've been able to do just that. And more than that, we are confident that this supportive mentorship journey does not end when the program is over. It is just beginning a new understanding of who we are and the power we have as



a collective of women involved in the union. Most of all, we have discovered that we are not only sisters in the struggle, but also sisters in strength. ■

Toni Minichiello is a member of the Peel Elementary Teacher Local.



# CREATING A NEW NORMAL

## FEMINIST LESSONS FROM COVID-19

BY CATHERINE OIKAWA

**T**hese days, I find I am constantly distracted. Teaching my grade 7/8 students from isolation, I am pulled in different directions. I'm trying to tend to my children and their needs, while listening to a virtual staff meeting, all while attempting to remember the "must haves" on the grocery list and wondering if we have masks and sanitizer for shopping. The mental load is heavy. The staff meeting is complete, the kids are napping and, at 2:30 pm, I sit down to create a distance learning plan for my students. I, of course, consider where we left off, what resources I have, who I need to collaborate with, and then I pause. I pause because I wonder how my students and their families are coping. How is Taylor\* able to handle learning online when she stays in during recess most days to get the one-on-one teacher instruction she requires to be successful? I wonder how Jordan is managing being isolated from his friends when he often tells me his friends are his family? I know I should be working on my distance learning plan, but I am distracted because I can't help but think about the impact this pandemic is having on the various communities I am part of and

other communities across the province. How many students have a device they can use to access distance learning set up by their teacher? If they have a computer, is this the same computer shared with siblings or their parents who are now working from home? Do all families have access to the internet? What is happening with Devon? She comes from a single-parent home. Her mom works in healthcare and we normally schedule phone calls around her shift work for progress updates... how is she feeling?

Classrooms are microcosms of our communities. In the communities I have worked in, I have seen families struggle with mental health concerns, custody issues, behaviour issues, food insecurity along with the financial difficulties that come with the high cost of living in the GTA. Mental health awareness is shifting from a topic I sometimes touched upon in my classroom to one that is part of my daily teaching practice now. A large part of my role as an intermediate teacher is working with adolescent students to help them understand the highs and lows of their emotions and provide strategies to support them through their anxiety. Without the physical structure and routine of school, the anxiety



PHOTOS COURTESY CATHERINE OIKAWA





levels of many students are on the rise. The world is changing, both locally and globally, right before their eyes, and the many supports they once had to acclimatize and manage flexibility are no longer available to them. I actively remind myself and my students to take deep breaths... take a break when our minds are spinning... when the news is overwhelming... when a video call cannot replace seeing someone in person.

Food insecurity, job insecurity, reduced access to social programs all contribute to the increased stress we are experiencing. COVID-19 is exposing flaws in our health, social and economic systems and putting people who are already marginalized at even greater risk. Anyone who needs access to social programs is facing these challenges with less support than before. Those who face food and housing insecurity are having more difficulty accessing services and finding shelter. Non-medical front-line workers are exposing themselves to this virus for the same low wages, lack of benefits and little personal protective equipment.

### **FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON SYSTEMIC CHANGE**

Even in these early days of understanding the impacts of COVID-19, feminist organizations have identified the disproportionate impacts of this pandemic on women and other vulnerable groups. The duality of this pandemic is in exposing disparities that already exist in our communities while also creating the space and opportunities to do things differently as we transition into



whatever becomes our new normal. Evolving circumstances are changing the world as we know it and highlighting the intersections that put the most vulnerable people in our communities at greatest risk during a crisis. An unfortunate reality is that, depending on identity and social location, people's health outcomes are different. Critical factors such as gender, age, geography, ability, race/ethnicity and Indigeneity, migration/refugee status, class and other structural conditions, including precarious housing and employment and political and environmental stressors all play a role (see "Beyond Health and Gender Analysis: An Intersectional View of the COVID-19 Pandemic Outbreak and Response," by Olena Hankivsky and Anuj Kapilashrami).

Educators and others have been organizing with healthcare workers, labour rights activists and associated groups to push for long-term changes to labour laws and protections for all front-line workers. Sustaining these connections is important as we move forward into the post-pandemic future.

### **EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE**

The government's decision to close schools and shut down non-essential businesses felt like an abrupt but absolute necessity. At the time of this writing, it remains uncertain how long we will stay in isolation and, for many people and small businesses, waiting this out is not an option. Both the federal and provincial governments have recognized the position we are all in and have responded in noteworthy ways. They have put unprecedented measures in place to keep the major-

ity safe and at home. The release of billions of dollars created the Canadian Emergency Relief Benefit and other Federal and Provincial programs to support a broad cross-section of people affected by COVID-19. When we eventually acclimatize to our new normal after the pandemic, I hope we will all fight to protect both this worldview, which prioritizes our social safety nets, public services and communities, and the new infrastructure that has been created.

The pandemic has emphasized the gaps in our systems, but what feels different during this global crisis is that the relief effort is collective and prioritizes people. Ideas that we believed to be radical pre-pandemic are now feasible, if not already in action. Anything is possible! Governments are using all means at their disposal to help Canadians through this challenge. Businesses are re-tooling manufacturing to produce personal protective equipment. Neighbours are checking in on each other and offering help or accepting help while groups like 15 and Fairness continue to push for fair wages, paid sick days and decent working conditions for all Ontarians.

### **BRINGING THE LESSONS FROM COVID-19 TO THE CLASSROOM**

Teachers are educators, but we are also mentors, counsellors, coaches, mediators and cheerleaders. We have an opportunity here to imagine how we can transform everything about the way we live to prioritize our communities, our public services, our environment and our social safety nets. Recognizing the intersectional ways in which people are

**“EVEN IN THESE EARLY DAYS OF UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19, FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS HAVE IDENTIFIED THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS OF THIS PANDEMIC ON WOMEN AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS. THE DUALITY OF THIS PANDEMIC IS IN EXPOSING DISPARITIES THAT ALREADY EXIST IN OUR COMMUNITIES WHILE ALSO CREATING THE SPACE AND OPPORTUNITIES TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY AS WE TRANSITION INTO WHATEVER BECOMES OUR NEW NORMAL. ”**





**“THOUGH UNINVITED, THIS PANDEMIC HAS CREATED A MULTI-GENERATIONAL SHARED EXPERIENCE. LET’S SHIFT FROM AN INDIVIDUAL FOCUS TO ONE THAT INCLUDES THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY AND HARNESS OPPORTUNITIES TO CHANGE THE TRAJECTORY OF OUR STUDENTS’ FUTURE. TEACHING STUDENTS THE VALUE OF A SOCIETY THAT IS BUILT ON EQUITY AND ACCESS, THE IMPORTANCE OF ALLYSHIP AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING OUR FUTURE FOR THE BETTER IS CRITICAL IN THIS MOMENT.”**

impacted by a crisis is forcing us to reconsider the systems that currently exist. COVID-19 is teaching us empathy, that this is not an us versus them or left versus right nor is it a public versus private fight. This is life versus death and the only way to save lives is through a collective effort that has taking care of everyone at its centre. We need to re-evaluate the systems that exist and how they can be rebuilt so that everyone is considered and supported. This crisis is an opportunity to empower our students and to help foster critical global citizens.

Though uninvited, this pandemic has created a multi-generational shared experience. Let’s shift from an individual focus to one that includes the global community and harness opportunities to change the trajectory of our students’ future. Teaching students the value of a society that is built on equity and access, the importance of allyship and the possibility of changing our future for the better is critical in this moment. There are endless examples of the benefits of collective and community action. The collective effort in response to COVID-19 is reactive, but imagine what we could accomplish with a proactive approach to protecting our future and ensuring that the new normal means a society built on care and equity. Our responsibility as teachers is to continue the conversation and promote thinking holistically. Now more than ever, we need our students to be hopeful critical thinkers, strong allies and powerful advocates. Our students will be the caretakers of the earth and the decision-makers of what our future holds.

### **KEY LESSONS FOR THE NEW NORMAL**

- 1.** All students need equitable access to the internet and necessary tools/devices to access different learning platforms.
- 2.** Everyone from grocery clerks and delivery drivers to doctors and personal support workers are essential.
- 3.** Everyone is entitled to decent wages, benefits, paid sick days and other labour protections.
- 4.** Equity, giving some people advantages to bring them to the same starting point as others, is an essential component of a healthy society.
- 5.** Investment in our social programs, our public services and the needs of our communities benefits everyone.
- 6.** Prioritizing investment in healthcare and healthcare workers and ensuring our healthcare system is well funded saves lives.
- 7.** It is possible to radically change how we live. We have just seen a global example of this. When governments say that significantly prioritizing the need of the earth or its people is not possible, we know otherwise.
- 8.** Investment can easily be prioritized to meet the needs of people, public services and the environment before the needs of the market. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.
- 9.** It takes a village. We can transform our communities locally by focussing on what each of us needs and can contribute.
- 10.** Anything is possible! We can all work on identifying inequality and using our privilege to influence change.

\*All names of students have been changed.

Catherine Oikawa is a member of the Durham Teacher Local.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIKE OJO-THOMPSON

# LEARNING TO CRITICALLY ADDRESS ANTI-BLACK RACISM

VOICE IN CONVERSATION WITH **KIKE OJO-THOMPSON**,  
PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT, KOJO INSTITUTE

**VOICE:** You work as an equity consultant, helping organizations build towards more equitable outcomes for their staff and the communities they serve, but you have also worked as a teacher and with a number of boards where systemic and anti-Black racism have been significant issues. Can you talk about what systemic racism or systemic forms of oppression mean?

**KIKE OJO-THOMPSON:** As an equity consultant, facilitator and practitioner, I work towards equity using anti-oppressive practice, anti-racism and anti-Black racism frameworks. I use those frameworks, because, unlike more popular frameworks such as Diversity and Inclusion, they identify the system, how it operates, and how it impacts people as a result of the legacies of colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, capitalism, religious crusades, etc. Anti-racism, anti-Black racism and anti-oppressive practice move beyond the redistribution of resources as a strategy to address how the system operates to produce social inequalities.

A significant idea at the heart of systemic racism is that our systems are neutral, that the system does not have values, preferences, or an identity, and that regardless of who you are or where you come from, the system will treat you the same. I've come to understand that naming the system as *not* neutral is an act of courage, particularly in a time and place where liberalism and more recently neo-liberalism are so normalized. There is a heavy societal investment in the idea that you can be anything in this country if you simply work hard enough. This idea renders the system inconsequential and serves to normalize the fact that particular groups consistently do poorly within it. Instead of questioning the system's impact on those groups, society problematizes the groups themselves for their 'shortcomings' – their inability to succeed – often citing their behavior, cultural practices and religious beliefs as responsible for their fates.

I have remained committed to outing this problematic process and injecting an alternative for addressing social inequality. As a former high school teacher in Ontario and a graduate of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, I have a connection to education as a sector, supporting a number of school boards. Consistently I see how boards take up the poor and troubling outcomes for African descent people, using a cultural deficit model. This uptake leads to strategies that focus on attempting to 'fix' the Black child/youth, their family and their community. It renders the issues to those of self-esteem, anger management and mentorship, completely ignoring the systemic and structural set up of education and its impact.

**VOICE:** That leads right into our next question. What is anti-Black racism and what are its impacts on Black students and Black educators?

**KO:** The term anti-Black racism refers to the specific form of racism that is perpetrated on Black people. While all racialized people experience and are the targets of racism globally, anti-Black racism is perpetrated by all non-Black people. In Canada, this concept was popularized by grass roots activists and academics in the 1990s. A core feature of anti-Black racism is the way that state authority is visited upon the lives of African Canadian people. When I say state authority, I am talking about all systems including education, criminal justice, immigration, child welfare, health and mental health systems.

We know that anti-Black racism is operating within education because of the outcomes we see for Black students. Disproportionate streaming into the lowest streams, over-representation in suspension and expulsion rates, lack of representation of Black staff and in the school's physical environment, lack of curricular inclusion of Black people and Black ways of knowing, over-representation of Black



**“WHEN BLACK TEACHERS ATTEMPT TO SPEAK UP TO ADDRESS THE ANTI-BLACK RACISM THEY SEE PLAYING OUT AGAINST BLACK STUDENTS, THEY ARE PROBLEMATIZED. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM DOES NOT RESPOND KINDLY TO THOSE WHO ATTEMPT TO DISRUPT RACISM. IN RESPONSE, THEY EXPERIENCE PUNISHMENT, SILENCING, GASLIGHTING, SABOTAGE, TARGETING AND DENIAL. THEY OFTEN HAVE TO MAKE A HARD DECISION: PURSUE JUSTICE AND BE RELEGATED TO THE MARGINS OR UPHOLD THE STATUS QUO AND ENDURE RACISM AS YOU CLIMB THE LADDER. NEITHER DECISION IS SAFE...”**

students pushed out of education (otherwise known as the drop-out rate), lack of Black student involvement in academic and leadership spaces, and over-representation in athletic programs. These are just some of the ways that anti-Black racism is evident as it relates to Black students. As a result, Black students learn that they are both invisible and hyper-visible at any given time. Always taken up negatively, they learn to dislike their identities and origins. They question their capabilities and begin to understand education as an unsafe space and experience for them. They note the difference in how they are treated in comparison to their peers and begin to buy into the notion that whiteness is ideal. We see this in personal aesthetic choices as well as romantic/intimate partner choices made by some students. In others, we overhear anti-Black narratives among Black students and the looking down upon anything reflecting an African origin. All of these things are learned and as educators we need to understand how pervasive anti-Black ideas are so that we can be intentional about disrupting them.

For educators, navigating the whiteness of the education system is a daily hardship. When I was a teacher, I experienced the ways that my expertise and professional capabilities were questioned by my peers. When I committed to a social justice curriculum, I managed daily fears about the consequences I might face. Additionally, when Black teachers attempt to speak up to address the anti-Black racism they see playing out against Black students, they are problematized. The education system does not respond kindly to those who attempt to disrupt racism. In response, they experience punishment, silencing, gaslighting, sabotage, targeting and denial. They often have to make a hard decision: pursue justice and be relegated to the margins or uphold the status quo and endure racism as you “climb the ladder.” Neither decision is safe, though one appears to at least have immediate benefits.

For a fulsome appreciation for the impact of the school system which is steeped in whiteness, I wonder if readers will do an exercise with me...

Close your eyes. Now picture your own children in elementary school. Now imagine that when you drop them off at school, you are leaving them with an entire cast of Black people – from the principal to the school’s maintenance team. Most of the kids and other parents are Black too. Now also imagine that if you have any concerns about your child’s education and wish to speak to an authority figure, you would again be facing a Black person. How do you feel? Any worries? Questions? Do you feel safe and secure?

**VOICE: You have talked about the legacies that impact anti-Black racism. What do these look like? How have these histories been perpetuated and reproduced? How do we recognize and challenge them?**

**KO:** The legacies are the processes and occurrences that establish the location of wealth and dominance globally and define our values. In my work, I typically refer to six legacies: colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, capitalism, religious universalism and the theft and conquest of the Americas.

With regards to race, colonialism and slavery are the most relevant legacies. Colonialism locates wealth and dominance in the colonizing countries. The countries that historically colonized were in Europe: England, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Germany, etc. The colonizing countries gained wealth and status and the bodies of the people who came from these countries have been imbued with that status (and sometimes wealth) as a result. Conversely, the countries that were colonized and those who come from those countries experience subordination. We use terms like ‘third world,’ and immigration policy makes it far more difficult for colonized people to move freely between countries. Through colonialism we come to understand that whiteness is ideal. Similarly, slavery locates wealth and dominance in white countries in Europe. It established the idealization of whiteness and Africa as the ultimate other. As such, African descent people are made the ultimate other.

Despite the fact that none of us were alive for either the trans-Atlantic slave trade or the onset of colonialism, the racism practiced today is rooted in these legacies. The meaning of Black bodies and white bodies is established through these legacies and maintained through our social institutions. Education plays a key role.

Our education system is not neutral. Education, along with child welfare, criminal justice and healthcare, proliferate and reproduce the values and ideas of the legacies. The dominance of whiteness is not natural but the result of the legacies. Equally, the subordination of Blackness is also not natural.

**VOICE: How do gender and other intersections of identity add layers of complexity to this experience?**

**KO:** There is some fantastic research available on the particular impact that anti-Black racism has on girls. Intersectionality is the phenomenon where two or more identities interlock to create a particular experience of oppression. For Black girls, their femininity is experienced through racism, as the racism they face is experi-



**“DESPITE THE FACT THAT NONE OF US WERE ALIVE FOR EITHER THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE OR THE ONSET OF COLONIALISM, THE RACISM PRACTICED TODAY IS ROOTED IN THESE LEGACIES. THE MEANING OF BLACK BODIES AND WHITE BODIES IS ESTABLISHED THROUGH THESE LEGACIES AND MAINTAINED THROUGH OUR SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS. EDUCATION PLAYS A KEY ROLE. ”**

enced through their gender. Their experience of anti-Black racism is different from their male counterparts. With every identity that is subordinated due to the legacies, we face discrimination and oppression in a way that is interlocking. Each form of oppression impacts the others.

**VOICE: What are your thoughts on the ways in which COVID-19 has been affecting racialized communities in disproportionate ways and the fact that the government has only recently agreed to collect identity-based data?**

**KO:** Canada’s failure to mandate the collection of disaggregated identity-based data in all facets of public service is further evidence of the assumption of the neutrality of our systems. Without making it mandatory, we leave the decision up to decision-makers who don’t understand systemic racism. Without disaggregated data there is no way to know definitively who is being impacted, and who is being effectively supported by social and medical systems.

The impact of COVID-19 in racialized communities in Canada is really about how social inequalities make groups more vulnerable to exposure and co-morbidities. Therefore, the work of addressing anti-Black racism is about more than just the liberation of Black people, it is a public health matter that affects everyone.

The education system should be invested in addressing anti-Black racism wherever it appears.

**VOICE: You are going to be speaking on a panel called Four Big Questions on Racial Justice in Education. What are some of the things you plan to talk about?**

**KO:** Yes! I’m really looking forward to the conversation. I’ll be joining my colleagues Paul Gorski, who runs the Equity Literacy Institute out of North Carolina, Dr. Debbie Donsky, Principal at Peel District School Board and Pamala Agawa, Vice Principal at York District School Board, on Zoom for four Thursdays in May. Each week we will discuss/unpack a different question pertaining to the pursuit of racial justice in education. My question asks: What can we, as individuals, do to disrupt racism within education? What does action look like?

I chose to take on this question because there are far too many people who claim to be invested in the work of eliminating racism in education but say and do nothing in the face of the daily examples before them. They often explain that they are “just a teacher,” or only have domain over their classroom. In both cases they are underestimating their influence and power. Surely, they understand that they have more power than their racialized students and their parents. Fear is a common excuse, but what exactly are teachers afraid of? What would happen if we collectively acted with integrity and in the fullness of our reach and capabilities?

If teachers are more concerned about appeasing organizational whiteness and their leadership and peers then they are not likely to do the work to disrupt.

**VOICE: What are some good resources for educators who are interested in learning more about how they can recognize that anti-Black racism happens in systemic ways but we all individually can act to challenge or reproduce it?**

**KO:** I believe in the power of education and learning but far too often we settle for training and learning as a response to systemic racism. What is clear to me is that teachers would do better if better was expected or even further still, if better were required. Educators must be committed to addressing what is arguably the most significant issue pertaining to education, of our time, and that is racism. It must be a requirement of the education system.

That said, if you are going to read, start with the many reports written about various school boards in Ontario, outlining the racism and anti-Black racism within them. There has been a low professional standard in education regarding the responsibility of educators to do research and take accountability for their awareness of the matters pertaining to their boards. This should be unacceptable. Part of the problem is that systemic racism includes denial and dismissal of the issue despite Ministry reports and evidence. One of the ways that the denial and dismissal is performed is by the collective ignoring of these vital reports. Each of us can take responsibility with this first step. ■

With contributions from Sonia Ellis-Seguín and Izida Zorbe, ETFO Executive Staff.



"THE FUNCTION, THE VERY SERIOUS FUNCTION OF RACISM IS DISTRACTION. IT KEEPS YOU FROM DOING YOUR WORK. IT KEEPS YOU EXPLAINING, OVER AND OVER AGAIN, YOUR REASON FOR BEING...NONE OF THIS IS NECESSARY.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ONE MORE THING."

- TONI MORRISON

ARTIST:  
JIBOLA FAGBAMIYE



WWW.ETFO.CA/LINK/BHM

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH POSTER

The 2020 ETFO Black History Month Poster is a visual representation of a Toni Morrison quote using several themes within the African-Canadian experience from the past and present while providing an insightful look into our future. This concept integrates elements of colour while using Afrofuturism to recognize the historic Black communities of Africville, Nova Scotia and Hogan's Alley, British Columbia. The central image is a young Muslim woman wearing a hijab which is representative of the modern-day Canadian experience in various urban areas across the province.

Visit [ETFO.ca/LINK/BHM](http://ETFO.ca/LINK/BHM) to access downloadable copies of the poster and accompanying Curriculum Guide insert.



# ADVICE FROM OUR GRANDMOTHERS

## TEACHING AND LEARNING DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

BY TANYA C. LEARY



PHOTOS COURTESY TANYA LEARY

### CRISIS TEACHING

In mid-March, we were suddenly glued to the news. The government abruptly announced it was closing public schools, closing borders and asking people across the country to stay home. As educators, we waited to find out what this meant for students. We knew our students needed their classrooms for more than just their education, and we worried for them. In consultation with ETFO and other stakeholders, the Ministry provided parents and school boards with online learning directives following the March break closures. The entire province was thrown into a whirlwind of emergency distance learning. Bracing for what was yet to come, we held our families close. The provincial state of emergency was extended several times by the premier, and as I write this article, I have no idea whether we will return to school at all this year. Teaching and learning during a global pandemic in the 21st century is unknown territory for everyone. How do we move forward in these uncertain times and what might our future look like?

Educators have jumped into the deep end, head-first. We are committed to our students and we know the importance of school in



their lives. Board-directed inventories of classroom technology emerged and parents were surveyed to ensure they had a device and access to the internet. Inequity loomed as it became increasingly clear that many did not. Not only were many parents struggling with food security, childcare, job loss, health issues, working from home full time, grief and panic, they suddenly had to learn a new platform and help their children with distance learning. Some parents had to learn several new platforms depending on how many children they had. That alone required patience, technical knowledge and expensive devices. Many of our own members experienced the same issues.

### DRAWING FROM A HISTORY OF RESILIENCE

As an Indigenous woman, mom and educator, I have felt the need to take a moment to pause and reflect. How do I take lessons of re-

siliency from our ancestors or the women in my community, and apply them in this moment? What is the legacy I want to leave for my students? If this were any other situation, I would turn to the grandmothers for their insight and wisdom about how to keep going in times of adversity. What would they do?

I think about the late Elsie Knott from Curve Lake First Nation. She was the first female band council chief in Canada, from the community in which I grew up. What did she do when they had no bus to get the kids to school back in the day? She bought a hearse and drove them to the school in town herself. Through a cloud of oppression, she remained resilient and a role model for the rest of us.







Many grandmothers have not seen something exactly like this pandemic, but smaller epidemics have been part of their lives. Smallpox. Scarlet fever. Polio. Many northern communities still struggle with tuberculosis, food insecurity, boil-water advisories and access to education.

I think of the late Shannen Koostachin, a young social justice warrior who brought national attention to her cause, her community's need for a school. *Shannen's Dream* is an essential read for elementary students.

I think back to Maria Montessori, a woman and educator who broke gender barriers, advocated for students with special needs, changed the face of education and influenced the way our youngest students learn through play. Playing is learning, and children don't need technology to play and learn. ETFO's resource, "Engaging Children Through Play," is an excellent resource for framing play through an Indigenous perspective in the classroom.

I think about the grandmothers and Ojibwe language teachers from the communities I have taught in. They remind us that everything we need to know in life, we learn from the earth. Our histories and cultures are embedded in Indigenous languages, and these women kept our languages alive even when it wasn't safe to do so. They kept the teachings from the earth alive.

I think about Alanis Obomsawin, a filmmaker who, in her 80s, is still bringing us documentaries about the education, mis-education and rights of Indigenous children and peoples in Canada. With the ancestors behind her, she uses storytelling and media to shine light on challenging issues. The National Film Board of Canada has over 300 Indigenous films made by Indigenous filmmakers in the Indigenous Cinema Gallery and the CAMPUS learning platform is currently free for educators.

What do they all have in common? They relied on the support of their community. They employed critical thinking in times of crisis. They explored local social justice issues in their global context. They faced criticism and experienced push-back. Yet, they were resilient. They never gave up. They created change.

As we are faced with emergency online teaching, how do we breathe life into these fundamental concepts, now, and when we return to the classroom? If this is an opportunity to do things differently moving forward, what can we change?

## FROM CRISIS TO CREATIVITY

On pandemic day 25, my husband sent me a video link to Jon Corbin, a hip-hop, spoken-word artist and teacher from Milton, Ontario. He spoke about the challenges in his home as a parent. He spoke about reframing ways of thinking to a more holistic view of the child. He spoke about his passion for hip-hop and his need to spark creativity in his students and his own children. Corbin identifies five simple things that might help us all through our distance learning journey, keeping the concept of sparking creativity at the forefront.

### Five ways to re-frame distance learning for educators and parents:

- 1. Have a plan.** Co-create a schedule. Help kids know what to expect. Set expectations for “learning.” The learning goal is for children to create more than they consume. Could we facilitate a balance between academics and creating?
- 2. Observe their motivation.** Pay attention to what they like. What are their interests? What excites them? What have they always wanted to try but were maybe too nervous to? Talk about it with them. Cultivate their creativity through conversation.
- 3. Find resources.** What can be found around the house or online that will support their interests and creativity?
- 4. Give ownership to the children.** Let the kids decide what they want to create. Can they decide on a project and follow through on it?
- 5. Encourage sharing.** Is there a time each week that could be set aside to share with each other? Maybe share with family through mail, or online with peers. The sharing circle, in all grades, was one of my students’ favorite times of the week.

## MOVING FORWARD

I think back to a time in my life when I was living in a remote First Nation and struggling with patience as a new teacher and the mother of a young child. I sought the advice of an elder, a grandmother in the community. Elders often have a beautiful way of answering questions through storytelling. She talked to me about how women traditionally raised and taught their children. She told me that I should treat my daughter and my students as if they were guests in my home. And this small piece of advice has been the single most important life lesson I have ever embedded



in my personal and professional life. As Paulo Freire wrote in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “every time you open your mouth, you either oppress or you liberate.” Author Peggy O’Mara said “the way we talk to children becomes their inner voice.”

Quotes like this remind me of the teachings I received from our Elders, passed down by our ancestors. Love, kindness, bravery, courage, humility, honesty and wisdom. Teachings in life which resonate with a holistic view of the child and their education.

Moving forward, I hope that during this pandemic time, we remember what is truly important. Keeping the spirits of our young ones shining should be our goal. Nurturing their creative souls in addition to creating a community of learners remains imperative. Encouraging them to

get outside safely while social-distancing to connect with the earth and all her bounty is a necessary part of everyday life for our students. There are many online resources that support these activities.

As the province prepares for a what if we don’t go back to the classroom until it’s safe to do so, educators continue on the frontlines of online emergency education. I guarantee our students won’t remember much of the information we transmit through the new 5G waves. What they will remember is the relationships we build with them, how we speak to them and how we support them. We have an opportunity to return to the teachings from our grandmothers and focus on relationship-based education. ■

Tanya C. Leary is a member of the Hamilton-Wentworth Teacher Local.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VELVET LACASSE

# SINGING IN SOLIDARITY

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IN MUSIC EDUCATION

BY VELVET LACASSE

I am sitting with The Grove Choir at lunchtime, in our school in downtown Toronto. We are sharing ideas about how we might re-write the lyrics to an 80s pop song as part of our Gender Splendour curriculum. “Girls Just Wanna Have Fundamental Rights” will be about the messages we receive about what it means to be a “girl,” and how we might respond to gender inequality. Music education is a powerful way to explore social justice issues in the classroom. Playing and listening to music creates opportunities for critical thinking and reflection and encourages students to imagine the possibilities of transformation and change.

Elementary students are smart and curious and critical. After drawing two boxes labelled “girl” and “boy,” it’s easy to generate a long list of expectations around behaviour, clothing, preferences, appearance and attitude. Everyone understands there are consequences for “stepping outside of the box” and challenging the rules around gender identity and expression, including bullying, exclusion and gender-based violence. We discuss where these gendered expectations come from, and how they reinforce binaries, power and heterosexism.

As an educator, I am always trying to create brave and inclusive spaces for my students to ask questions and share their ideas and diverse lived experiences. I know that explicit discussions about power and exclusion can feel validating and overwhelming at the same time, which is why I try to focus on sto-

ries of resistance and how we might respond to systemic oppression by taking action. Together, we are learning what it means to be an ally, and we are using music to join our voices in solidarity and struggle.

*“Some folks think that girls should like pink*

*No thanks – please don’t tell me what I should think.*

*I want to be the one to walk or to run*

*Oh girls, they wanna have fundamental rights*

*Oh girls, just wanna have rights!”*

### CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

As a classroom teacher who is learning how to integrate social justice and the arts throughout the curriculum, I wonder: How can we implement music curriculum that is inclusive and culturally relevant and responsive? How can we disrupt the dominant way of hearing, which privileges and centres Western European concepts of music and excludes many diverse voices and musical expressions?

In their chapter, “Social Justice and Urban Music Education,” Gaztambide-Fernandez and Stewart Rose (2015) argue that to confront the social, economic and cultural reproduction of inequality in our classrooms, educators need to rethink and reimagine how music is being taught. Gaztambide-Fernandez and Stewart Rose offer a framework with critical questions about access, pedagogy, representation and ideology. For example, “Who is participating?”

**“EDUCATORS CAN AMPLIFY THE VOICES AND EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN MUSIC EDUCATION BY CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO RESEARCH DIFFERENT MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS OR GENRES AROUND THE WORLD THROUGHOUT HISTORY AND CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF WOMEN IN MUSIC.”**





“What and whose music is being taught?”  
 “How is music political?” “What are the politics of music?”

In “Stumbling towards Clarity: Practical Issues in Teaching Global Musics” (2015), June Countryman encourages educators to use student-led inquiry to address issues of social consciousness, equity, power and privilege in the music classroom. Countryman offers additional questions to explore: “Who made this music and why?” “How would it be used in its place/time of origin?” “How did we come to have access to it?”

Women’s History Month in October is an opportunity to explore powerful questions about access and representation by asking “Whose voices are represented, and whose voices are missing?” One of the ways we can support women’s equality is to ensure that we are sharing stories of women who have created/are creating music as performers, composers, songwriters, producers, studio musicians, DJs, conductors, sound engineers, promoters and festival organizers.

Educators can amplify the voices and experiences of women in music education by creating opportunities for students to research

different musical expressions or genres around the world throughout history and celebrating the achievements of women in music. Students can choose social issues that they are passionate about and share or compose their own music to make connections between the arts, artists and social movements.

### WOMEN’S EQUALITY PROJECT

ETFO recently published the Women’s Equality Project, which provides junior and intermediate lesson plans for students to explore gender inequities and engage in social justice work. There are seven modules available at ShopETFO including “Women and Pop Culture and the Arts.” These integrated lesson plans provide educators with background information, guiding questions, arts-infused instruction and invitations for advocacy and resistance. Check them out!

Activity #5 is called “Protest Songs: Women Using Music to Build Solidarity.” It begins with an exploration of different quotes and invites students to think about how the arts are used to organize people to address inequalities and call for change in their local and global communities. For example:

“The role of the artist is to make the revolution irresistible.” Toni Cade Bambara

“I want to remind us all that art is dangerous. Somebody’s out to get you. You have to know it before you start, and do it under those circumstances, because it is one of the most important things that human beings can do.” Toni Morrison

“All great art comes from a sense of outrage.” Glenn Close

After reflecting on the quotes, educators are supported to lead a discussion with the following prompts: “Art is a radical form of expression that is a disruptive force against systems of oppression. Art is used to get people to think differently, to reimagine an equitable society and to take action. Because of its potential and reach, artists can sometimes face repercussions from the status quo in some parts of the world.” (The ETFO Women’s Equality Project, Module 7, Page 91.)

### WHERE DO I BEGIN?

To transform curriculum, educators must include students and families and build relationships and movements. We need to create collaborative spaces to share ideas and



PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE COUSINS

resources about what critical pedagogy and social justice education looks like in the elementary classroom. We must include student voices in our curriculum and support students to ask critical questions about access and representation.

As a classroom teacher, I have been teaching my own music for the past 10 years at The Grove Community School. Here are some examples of what social justice music education sounds like at our school.

#### **EXAMPLE #1: FAITH NOLAN**

I want my students to understand that music is a powerful way to share stories and express our feelings. During African Heritage Month, I use different songs to explore the impact music can have to make change. I was thrilled to discover Faith Nolan, a Toronto-based musician and activist, and I have used many of her songs to support our learning about Black excellence and resistance.

Faith Nolan has an extensive history of social justice activism and music making. Faith was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She is of African, Mi'kmaq and Irish descent and identifies as a feminist and a lesbian. Since the 1980s,

Faith has been singing songs about women's equality, anti-poverty, systemic racism, 2SLGBTQ+ issues, prison justice, worker's rights, peace and the environment. Faith has released 16 albums, collaborated on several film and radio projects and received many awards. She also leads workshops and choirs.

Her album, "One World," was recorded with members of Elementary Teachers of Toronto. I use the song "We're Different" to explore concepts of power, privilege and anti-racism with my students. As we build our brave and inclusive classroom community, we acknowledge and celebrate the ways we are different from each other. With support, my students begin to understand how these differences impact the ways we are excluded or included in certain spaces. Being an ally means identifying and confronting injustice and discrimination when we see or hear it. In her song, Faith celebrates many of the ways we are different, and at the end, she reminds us we are all similar in one very important way: "We all need kindness, we all need love."

Every March 21, we recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with a whole-school assembly.

**"I WANT MY STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND THAT MUSIC IS A POWERFUL WAY TO SHARE STORIES AND EXPRESS OUR FEELINGS. DURING AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH, I USE DIFFERENT SONGS TO EXPLORE THE IMPACT MUSIC CAN HAVE TO MAKE CHANGE."**



**“AS WE BUILD OUR BRAVE AND INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY, WE ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE THE WAYS WE ARE DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER. WITH SUPPORT, MY STUDENTS BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND HOW THESE DIFFERENCES IMPACT THE WAYS WE ARE EXCLUDED OR INCLUDED IN CERTAIN SPACES.”**

Students from Kindergarten to Grade 8 share their learning about anti-racism and environmental justice. One year, we invited Faith to perform an interactive concert inspired by African Diasporic and Canadian history. She sang songs about Mary Ann Shadd and Viola Desmond, and she invited the audience to sing along. Her songs are fun, engaging and educational. Her album, “Africville,” was a source of inspiration and guidance during my grade 2/3 Social Studies inquiry.

#### **EXAMPLE #2: ANSLEY SIMPSON**

Music is a powerful way to communicate and connect with one another and with the land. It has been used throughout history to tell stories and to teach. In many Indigenous communities, music is also an important part of ceremony and celebration. Singing and dancing are helping to heal and revitalize cultural traditions impacted by colonization and state violence. As part of our ongoing

commitment to reconciliation through education, it is important for educators to amplify the voices of those who have been systemically silenced, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists.

Ansley Simpson is an Anishinaabe singer-songwriter. She was nominated for two Indigenous Music awards in 2018 and she was the winner of “Best New Artist.” Her new album, “She Fell from the Sky,” will be released in 2020. Ansley has a child who attends The Grove, and she has shared music and teachings with our community to support the core values of environmental justice, equity and community activism. As an ally, I am learning about the importance of listening, asking for permission and sourcing the teachings that are shared with me.

“The Humble Song” was recorded by Odemin Kwe Singers. Ansley taught us “The Humble Song” in preparation for Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21. Each of the



verses honours the wisdom of all living beings and invites us to “bend down low” to “know what they know.” As a community, we learned the song together and sang it as we participated in a Round Dance outside in the field. “The Humble Song” helps us to understand the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which include humility, truth and love. These teachings deepen our understanding of how we are all connected in relationship.

*“We will raise each other up, higher and higher*

*We will raise each other up.”*

### **EXAMPLE #3: RAW**

I had the privilege of studying with Leslie Stewart Rose at OISE and taking her course called “Sounds of Change.” Throughout the course, we discussed the importance of creating opportunities for students to compose and improvise music. This creative process re-

quires educators to let go of control and power and trust our students. We explored this transformative pedagogy as we played musical instruments and other found sounds together, layering and listening to each other. I discovered that playing drums is a powerful way to have a conversation, to honour the individual sounds that we create and to celebrate the powerful sounds that we can create together.

Raging Asian Women Taiko Drummers (RAW) is a community arts collective made up of East and Southeast Asian women. Their website describes their music: “We are a Japanese Taiko drumming group that exists as a critical response and challenge to both systemic and internalized oppressions. Through performance, education and community outreach, we seek to challenge, redefine and represent ourselves, and to inspire ourselves and others in striving for racial and gender equality. Through collective membership, artistic creation and active development, we carve space for self-expression, authentic engagement, community and empowerment.” ([ragingasianwomen.ca/about/](http://ragingasianwomen.ca/about/))

One year during Asian Heritage Month, we invited members of RAW to come to our school to perform. The performance was strong, athletic and loud. In preparation, we learned how the ancient art of taiko drumming was traditionally performed by men and how it is being used as a tool of resistance to revitalize Japanese Canadian communities. We learned the history of Japanese Canadians and the systemic racism they experienced. RAW helped us understand the concept of intersectionality and how our different social and cultural identities (e.g., race, class, gender) intersect and overlap to create experiences of privilege and oppression depending on where we are. We also learned the collective power and joy of making music together.

### **CHORUS OF CHANGE**

“Musicking” is a word inspired by the verb “to music.” It was created by Christopher Small in 1988 to describe music that is created in relationship by the active participation of everyone involved in making and sharing music. When we empower our students to express themselves through the creative process and amplify the musicking of artists who have been systemically silenced, we can begin to reimagine and transform our school communities as a chorus of change. ■

Velvet Lacasse is a member of the Elementary Teachers of Toronto. She and Natasha Henry wrote the module “Women and Social Movements” for ETFO’s Women’s Equality Project.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VELVET LACASSE

### **WOMEN MUSICIANS TO EXPLORE IN THE CLASSROOM:**

- Maylee Todd
- LAL
- Susan Aglukark
- Aqua
- Alessia Cara
- Jessie Reyez
- Veronica Johnny
- Ruth B
- Jully Black
- Lights
- Sarah McLachlan
- Celine Dion
- Joni Mitchell
- Buffy Sainte-Marie
- Anjulie Persaud
- Keshia Chante
- Esthero
- Diana Krall
- Loreena McKennitt
- Cold Specks
- Grimes
- Régine Chassagne
- Fefe Dobson
- Melissa Auf der Maur
- Serena Ryder
- Shania Twain
- Nelly Furtado
- Anne Murray
- Alanis Morissette
- k.d. lang
- Carly Rae Jepsen
- Charlotte Cardin
- Shay Lia
- Ria Mae
- Kirsten Collins
- Nikki Yanofsky
- Emmalyn Estrada

# BUILDING CULTURAL AGENCY

## CREATING A COMMUNITY-FOCUSED CULTURAL HUB

BY NEERU SEKHON

**T**aking field trips to art galleries is a common practice for many art teachers seeking to enrich their programming with real-life experiences. Visit local downtown galleries on a school day, and you might see teachers and students wandering through looking for inspiration from artists' depictions of the world around them. Indeed, the arts curriculum notes that art galleries can be sites for exploring the local community and its resources. On a trip to an art gallery, however, my students and I were struck by the mismatch between what we saw on the walls and what we see in our everyday lives. Where were the high-rise buildings and basement apartments that are part of our lived experiences in the landscapes depicting Canada? Where were people who looked like us – wearing patkas, in hijab, or braided cornrows – in the portraits and photographs on the walls? Stewarding my students through these spaces, we concluded that the everyday art of our lived experiences was not reflected in the institutions that we were supposed to be learning from.

During our last art field trip, we decided to take action. If we couldn't see more of ourselves in the art on the walls of the galleries we visited or in artists who receive mainstream acclaim, it was going to be up to us to create our own spaces and visual narratives.

### MORNING STAR CONTEMPORARY

Morning Star Contemporary is our response to the lack of representation in mainstream institutions. It is a school-based, student-led

contemporary art gallery in which the artists and art forms we learn with and from reflect the diversity of our lives. The students and I started our gallery programming in response to frustrations we have experienced as people whose identities and lived experiences are marginalized in creative narratives. Students actively intervene by using participatory action research to investigate inquiry topics based on an issue impacting their families or communities, working alongside relevant artists to share life experiences and learn new skills, creating art that offers thoughtful visions and community-inspired solutions for a more just reality, and hosting exhibitions for peers, families and neighbours to inspire one another to make a difference. These creative experiences are not only curricular learning opportunities, they are spaces for social and political solidarity and resistance.

Cultivating an understanding of reality to shape more just futures for ourselves within our school means that much of our learning happens by partnering with community members. This practice prioritizes community knowledge, wisdom and creative intuition. Since we started the gallery, we have partnered with contemporary artists whose lived experiences and creative practices reflect our own ways of experiencing the world and enrich our community. We have run





PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE COUSINS

workshops and displays with award-winning photographer, physician and educator Zun Lee. Together we explored how we can use photography to centre Black families' everyday lives as worthy of artistic celebration. We have navigated difficult emotions such as loss and anger through self-directed art projects with Michèle Pearson Clarke, a Trinidad-born artist whose work in photography, film, video and installation explores grief as a queer Black person. We have taken community walks, illustrating everyday overlooked places in our neighborhood that inform our multi-hyphenated experiences as part of our explorations with Jagdeep Raina's work. His work explores everyday Punjabi-Kashmiri experiences, looking at memory, migration and mapping our everyday landscapes. Most recently, we mounted an exhibition titled "Ancestral Futures" in which students partnered with Rajni Perera, a Sri Lankan-born, Toronto-based painter, whose own artistic journey and commitment to depicting people of colour as majestic time-travellers provided identity-affirming examples for students. We visited the artist's show in the city and worked with them in a skill-building workshop at the school to explore how we might use our own artistic traditions to address marginalization. Students then used culturally relevant art forms to imagine futuristic artworks that depicted an ancestor/personal hero, sharing their cultural traditions and identities as "special powers" to address a social issue. Student docents led K-8 peers through the exhibition and ran student-led artist talks for the community. Parents, caregivers and neighbours who visited beamed with pride at seeing their cultures, heritages and identities represented on gallery walls, and their thoughtful engagement with student-led conversations about topics ranging from environmental sustainability to 2SLGBTQ+ expression to mental health demonstrated how everyone in a learning community can contribute cultural wisdom to help create the future we want.

By partnering with contemporary artists whose identities and lived experiences can speak to the ways that our communities move in the world, we learn about skills, techniques and artistic approaches to creating artwork through mentorship. By locating our work away from traditional institutions and centering our artist-student partnerships and exhibitions at our school, we elevate and celebrate that communities like ours are sites for meaningful cultural production. Finally, by working in solidarity with arts educators,





arts workers and community members on workshops, exhibitions and student-led panels at the gallery, we create engaging artistic experiences *by* and *for* our communities, despite social and political forces that might dictate otherwise.

### **ART-MAKING ON AN INCREASINGLY BLIGHTED SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CANVAS**

In the spring of 2019, the provincial government made sweeping cuts to public education, eliminating vital teaching positions and gap-closing programs designed to support marginalized students. These cuts created ripple effects: for example, teaching posi-

tion cuts mean that elective courses – many of which are arts courses – can no longer be offered; fewer arts opportunities are now available to our students as they progress in their public education journeys. Provincial cuts to public education and other sectors have a greater impact on communities that are already struggling. As a middle school teacher in Malton, a neighbourhood that is disproportionately impacted by opportunity gaps, I am committed to continuing to create opportunities for my students that reflect their communities and experiences and amplify their voices. In a political environment seemingly dedicated to further entrenching the very marginalization that public educa-



tors seek to ameliorate in our classrooms, creating a cultural space that unites students and the communities that support them is a powerful act of resistance.

## STRATEGIES FOR CREATIVE RESISTANCE THROUGH THE ARTS

### Ensure culturally relevant and responsive practices

Consider the cultural forms of expression you prioritize in arts education and how they might reify cultural and structural power. Is the art you showcase reflective of traditional Eurocentric modes of expression? How might you prioritize students' own ways of knowing instead? When my students started to research how to tell their ancestors' stories as part of an exhibition, we were keen to step away from traditional art forms. Instead of using traditional portraiture, students chose to integrate the embroidery practiced by many of the elders in their families to create family phulkaris. Instead of ceramic sculptures, students used materials such as West Indian shipping barrels and left-over wood for moko jumbie stilts and collaborative installations. I supported them by arranging for community elders and artists whose own cultural practices incorporate the media students were exploring to co-teach modules. There are tremendous benefits to co-constructing lessons and workshops with students based on their traditions and lived experiences.

### Organize to achieve cultural justice

Create arts experiences that recognize the historical marginalization, omission and erasure of diverse cultural practices and honour students' communities and voices. Consider how partnering with community members and artists can help centre marginalized cultural narratives to reclaim social and political power. When facilitating arts partnerships, consider not only the ways you can build powerful programming but also how your pedagogy can build solidarities between groups of people fighting for a more just way of living for all.

### Show up for marginalized students by supporting them in taking up space

As holders of marginalized identities, students are often disenfranchised in creative spaces. Consider how you might work with your students to take up space by creating arts learning experiences for them, by them. On my students' last trip to a prominent art gallery, we were keen to disrupt the knowledge flow that dictated our passive role as receivers of artistic knowledge. We arranged to run our own tour and workshop in partnership and conversation with artist Sandra Brewster, whose own work was taking up space in this institution as the first Black Canadian woman artist to have a solo show there. We discussed how we might use photography to investigate our connections to home and "back home" (our heritage homelands). Visitors gathered around our

group of students and our partner artist to hear about our creative process. We took up space and took control of our artistic narratives to tell our stories.

### Steward allyship by creating authentic artist/community-student learning partnerships

As culturally responsive educators, we make student and community expertise a priority in our practice because we know that when students see themselves and their communities' knowledge reflected in their programming, it enhances learning. Are there artists and cultural producers in your city or region whose own creative practice, identity and lived experiences can authentically speak to your students? Invite them into your classroom. Powerful things can happen when community members, educators and students unite to co-construct creative experiences.

### Recentre everyday community spaces as cultural hubs

Creating a school-based gallery establishes students as creative agents and storytellers. This is important in all communities, but particularly in those that are often misrepresented in the popular media. Is there a space in your school building that might be transformed into a site for creative storytelling? This space can function as a site for people to come together to engage in storytelling, acknowledging strengths and generating power and hope.

### Educate for liberation

Our students absorb and are deeply impacted by the social and political conditions around them. Don't underestimate your students' need and capacity to unpack social and political realities; in fact, consider how using creative experiences can enhance students' intersectional understandings of the world around them, even if these knowledges are tough to hold. By celebrating our knowledges and experiences through artistic expression and working alongside arts workers and community members to assert the value of the arts in education and community-building, all members of our learning community can come together to engage with what bell hooks calls "education as the practice of freedom." In this sometimes challenging, but always fruitful, critical unpacking, there is creative liberation. ■

Neeru Sekhon is a member of the Peel Teacher Local.

Thank you  
health care workers  
- and everyone  
on the frontlines.

## Dedication. Commitment. Compassion.

Ontario's extraordinary frontline workers are rising to the challenge every day. And putting themselves at risk to deliver the services we all need.

On behalf of ETFO educators, thank you for your incredible work during these challenging times.

We can all show our gratitude by ensuring that frontline workers receive the protections they need now — and for the future.

**Fair wages. Paid sick days.  
Secure benefits.**

And proper funding to strengthen Ontario's public services, from our hospitals to our children's schools.

**We're all counting on  
frontline workers. And  
they can count on us.**



[BuildingBetterSchools.ca](http://BuildingBetterSchools.ca)

# WOMEN'S EQUALITY



*The women's movement is a movement intended to achieve social justice and equity for all people. Through an exploration of economics and the workplace, education, gender-based violence, health, politics and the law, pop culture and the arts and social movements, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario's Women's Equality Project honours the contributions to society made by diverse women and non-binary people.*

*The full resource consists of 7 modules and a teacher resource. To purchase it, please contact ShopETFO.*

*This excerpt titled Women's Equality in the Key Concepts section of the Teacher Resource and was written by Stephanie Fearon.*

## CONTEXT

Women's equality is a fundamental human right and cornerstone of an inclusive society. Countries around the world, including Canada, have made commitments to uphold the rights of women and girls (OHCHR, 2018). Despite such measures, women worldwide continue to face discrimination in all aspects of social, political and economic life (OECD, 2017).

## WHAT IS FEMINISM?

Feminism addresses gender inequalities. Feminism champions the rights of women to fully contribute at home, at work and in public life, for the betterment of society at large (OECD, 2017).

**To achieve this aim, feminism seeks to:**

- dismantle patriarchy; and
- secure equal rights for women and girls.

Feminism understands that individuals hold multiple identities (Bell, 2016). As a result, feminism recognizes that sexism intersects with other forms of discrimination, like racism, classism, transphobia, ableism and more, to oppress women (Crenshaw, 2015; Bell, 2016).

Acknowledging the ways that identities connect, overlap and influence one another has given women, girls and advocates a way to frame their circumstances and to fight for their inclusion and visibility (Bell, 2016; Crenshaw, 2015).

## WHAT IS PATRIARCHY?

Feminist theory defines patriarchy as a social system that imposes oppressive gender roles. This unjust system evokes male dominance over women. Feminism reveals and critically analyzes the ways that patriarchy privileges men, as well as limits the aspirations, opportunities and rights of women and girls.

## WHAT DOES FEMINISM HAVE TO DO WITH TEACHING AND LEARNING?

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (2002) and its members are committed to social justice and equity. Ontario educators work alongside students and their families to change unfair systems internally, in education, and in society (ETFO, 2002).

Feminist pedagogy transforms educators and students into agents of social change for women's equality (Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, 2015). These social change makers are committed to community, leadership and voice in the classroom and beyond.

**The goals of feminist pedagogy are to (Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, 2015):**

- raise students' consciousness about patriarchal oppression;
- empower students to take action; and
- help students develop specific strategies for activism.

## DEEPENING OUR KNOWLEDGE

**How do I begin to reimagine my classroom as a feminist space?**

Feminist pedagogy supports students and educators to become agents of change for gender equality (Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, 2015).

**In classrooms around the world, students have advocated for women's rights by organizing:**

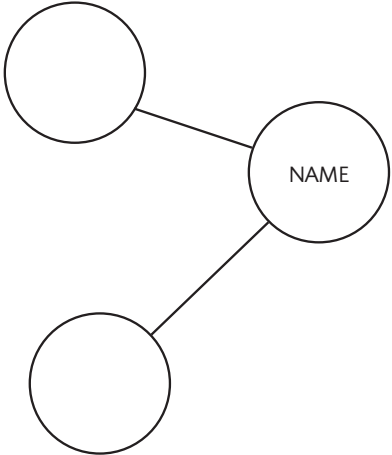
- letter-writing campaigns;
- national women's marches;
- picketing events; and
- social media movements (e.g., #metoo, #bringbackourgirls, #sayhername).

## TRY IT OUT!

There are many ways to explore the concept of feminism with students. One way is to investigate the experiences of feminists from around the world.\* Take a look at the prompts below and try them out with your students:

Another way to learn about feminism is to investigate the experiences of local and international movements. When developing learning tasks that examine the work of specific feminists and women's movements, reflect on the following questions:

- How does the learning task critically explore the fluid and overlapping identities of individual women?
- How does the learning task highlight that one woman's experiences with privilege and oppression are not identical to another's?
- How does the lesson help students learn about the varying and intersecting forms of discrimination endured by diverse women?
- How does the lesson encourage students to learn more about the varied experiences of women (locally and globally)?
- How does the learning task disrupt stereotypes about gender?
- How does the lesson provoke students to investigate the ways that patriarchy is reproduced and reinforced in their community and beyond?
- How does the learning task challenge students to work for women's rights in their school and local community?
- How does the learning task push students to confront their own identities, biases and experiences of privilege and oppression?
- How does the learning task connect to the curriculum?

TRY ASKING	TRY DOING						
<p>Which identities does your chosen feminist hold? Which identities are privileged in society? Which are not?</p>	<p>Create an identity map:</p> 						
<p>What forms of discrimination does/did your chosen feminist face? How can we learn more about these forms of discrimination?</p>	<p>Make a list of obstacles faced by your chosen feminist. Identify which obstacles are individual, institutional and beliefs/ideas.**</p>						
<p>How does your chosen feminist champion the rights of women and girls?</p>	<p>Brainstorm a list of actions undertaken by your chosen feminist.</p>						
<p>After learning about your chosen feminist, what are you curious about?</p>	<p>Create a K-W-L Chart.***</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1094 1361 1497 1599"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1094 1361 1217 1431">K</th> <th data-bbox="1217 1361 1358 1431">W</th> <th data-bbox="1358 1361 1497 1431">L</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1094 1431 1217 1599"></td> <td data-bbox="1217 1431 1358 1599"></td> <td data-bbox="1358 1431 1497 1599"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	K	W	L			
K	W	L					

\*Volumes one and two of *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* by Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo contain hundreds of stories about the lives of women from the past and present. The women featured in these books have overcome obstacles and positively impacted the world.

\*\*Individual: Inappropriate jokes (sexist, racist, homophobic, classist, etc.); Institutional: School courses ignoring the histories/contributions of Indigenous women; Beliefs/Ideas: Women make poor leaders.

\*\*\*K – I know    W – I wonder    L – I learned



## MAY REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

**A**s a result of the distancing measures required by COVID-19, ETFO held its Representative Council meeting over Zoom for the first time in the organization’s history. The meeting was a success, demonstrating that members of the Council could do the important work of the meeting while respecting social distancing measures.

In his address, President Hammond welcomed members of Representative Council to the unprecedented online event. He thanked members and leaders for their solidarity and

support during this year’s difficult round of bargaining. Reflecting on school closures under COVID-19, he said “many parents now have a much greater understanding and appreciation for the work of our members.” He thanked ETFO members who are making emergency distance learning work and was clear that while synchronous learning is an option, ETFO opposes its imposition on our educators. “ETFO members must use their professional judgement in how they implement their distance learning plan,” he said.

Hammond talked about the need to proceed with any school reopening cautiously,

ensuring the health and safety of ETFO members and the students we teach. He noted that while communities have clearly come together to support one another, there has also been a resurgence of racism in light of the pandemic. “ETFO redoubles on our commitment to equity and social justice,” he said.

Hammond said that while more than 80 percent of COVID-19 deaths have happened in private long-term care centres, advocates for privatization are attempting to use this pandemic to advance for-profit models for public services. “We will continue to push back against these measures,” he concluded.



# OCCASIONAL AND LTO DECES IN HALTON VOTE TO BECOME ETFO MEMBERS

In April 2020, Occasional and LTO DECEs in Halton voted to become members of ETFO. Our organizing campaign started in September 2019. Organizing was initially done through face-to-face conversations, which gave the occasional DECEs an opportunity to engage with one another and build relationships. In March, in response to the pandemic, all the meetings moved online. Apps such as WhatsApp, Hustle and Zoom were the new platforms to connect and engage with DECEs.

The Halton Teacher Local did outreach for the campaign and discussed the benefits of joining ETFO. Occasional DECEs also played a major role. “I made phone calls, I texted co-workers and used social media to encourage my colleagues to vote. We shared photos of ourselves after we voted which was fun. We acted together and that was powerful,” said new member Lesia Carlson.

ETFO is continuing to organize in the coming months, working with DECEs in Durham and Grand Erie. Understanding that ETFO helps protect the public education system for educators and students, ETFO will continue to organize educators across the province.





## ETFO WOMEN'S PROGRAMS

Eighty-one percent of ETFO's members are women. As part of our ongoing commitment to equity, ETFO makes it a priority to encourage women's leadership in the union. This commitment is reflected in an ever-growing number of leadership programs offered to women members. These programs strive to address issues specific not only to women, but also to the many other designated groups that women members might identify with such as Aboriginal members, racialized members, members with disabilities and 2SLGBTQ+ members.

A recent review of ETFO's women's programs showed that these programs have always been well-regarded and well-received. The review also found that it is important to connect the programs together and offer ongoing opportunities to increase women's leadership across the union in all areas. Through the development of common goals and the identification of recurring themes, ETFO is revising existing leadership programs for women and creating new ones. Go to [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca) and search "women's programs" to see what is available.



## RATIFICATION VOTE RESULTS

ETFO's online ratification votes concluded on April 27, 2020. ETFO's double majority voting process requires that a majority of voting members and a majority of locals vote to accept their applicable central agreement.

### TEACHER/OCCASIONAL TEACHER 2019-2022 CENTRAL AGREEMENT

- 97% of teacher and occasional teacher voting members voted to accept the central agreement.
- 100% of teacher and occasional teacher locals voted to accept the central agreement.

### EDUCATION WORKER 2019-2022 CENTRAL AGREEMENT

- 94% of DECE, ESP, PSP and education worker voting members voted to accept the central agreement.
- 100% of education worker locals voted to accept the central agreement.

## ETFO VIRTUAL LEARNING

Interactive and live webinars started in May 2020. Sessions on a broad array of topics are archived and available to watch. ETFO members can go to [etfo.ca/link/virtualllearning](http://etfo.ca/link/virtualllearning) to register for these professional learning opportunities or to watch recordings. All live webinars, PDF resources and on-demand webcasts are free for members!



## COVID-19 RESOURCES

Educators had many questions when students were forced to transition to emergency remote learning in the spring. COVID-19 dramatically altered the landscape of teaching. We do not yet know what the fall holds.

Read ETFO's PRS Matters on the topic and access ETFO's resources related to COVID-19 at [etfo.ca](http://etfo.ca).

## VOLUNTARY REDEPLOYMENT PORTAL

In May, The Ontario government launched a Voluntary Redeployment Program (VRP) as part of their response plan to COVID-19. The program allows some staff in the education sector to volunteer for temporary redeployment to the community.

Members can use the portal to apply for placement in a community facility that is in critical need of additional staffing resources.

ETFO has expressed support for the program in general, but has also emphasized that the entire process must be voluntary and that members be able to opt out at any stage of their redeployment without any consequence for doing so.

## REVIEWS



### A GIRL CALLED ECHO VOL. 1 AND 2

Katherena Vermette, illustrated by Scott B. Henderson, coloured by Donovan Yaciuk  
HighWater Press, 2017  
15 pages, \$18.95



Reviewed by Joan Hill-Keast

*Pemmican Wars* is narrated by a middle-schooler named Echo who shares her story of starting at a new school after being put in foster care due to her mother's illness. The young protagonist is inspired by a history lesson; Echo is so engrossed in seeking out more information about her own Métis identity and her people's history that she escapes present day life and becomes a participant in the historical events of the Pemmican Wars. As Echo becomes aware of the historical significance and ongoing impact of the events on her people, she gains a better understanding of her identity and culture, draws closer to her mother and engages more in school life. In Volume 2, *Red River Resistance*, Echo makes new friends and joins an Indigenous student leadership group. She spends much of the story back in time interacting with esteemed Métis leaders.

*Pemmican Wars* and *Red River Resistance* are both told from the perspective of their Métis author and are inclusive of the 2SLG-BTQ+ community. The books include historical timelines; Volume 1 includes a recipe to make pemmican and Volume 2 The Métis List of Rights from May 9, 1870 and a Map of Red River settlement in 1870.

These richly illustrated and culturally layered graphic novels encourage young people to explore their own "sense of personal identity as a member of various communities" most particularly those of Indigenous ancestry from the *Citizenship Education Framework*. The graphic novel genre engages adolescents and improves literacy for reluctant readers, English Language Learners, ESL students and students with language and learning disabilities. The highly pleasurable artwork and limited text allows readers to more readily encode information.

Both volumes connect well with the grades 7 and 8 History curriculum, particularly Understanding History Context, Historical Importance, Historical Significance and Cause and Consequence Canada, Grade 7 1800–1850: Conflict and Challenges, and Grade 8 Creating Canada, 1850–1890. The significance of these two events can be connected to present day issues facing Métis people.

Using this book in the classroom is reconciliation – I give both graphic novels a resounding 5 stars!

Joan Hill-Keast is a member of Ottawa Carleton Occasional Teacher Local.



### SPECTACULAR WOMEN IN SPACE

Sonia Gueldenpfennig  
Second Story Press, 2004  
110 pages, \$10.95



Reviewed by Vicki Harding

*Spectacular Women in Space* is a collection of short biographies of female astronauts and cosmonauts from around the world. Part of Second Story Press' *The Women's Hall of Fame Series*, this collection highlights not just the life stories of the women within its pages, but also the hurdles they overcame in their quest for equality in space exploration. Ten women are featured, including Canadian astronauts Roberta Bondar and Julie Payette.

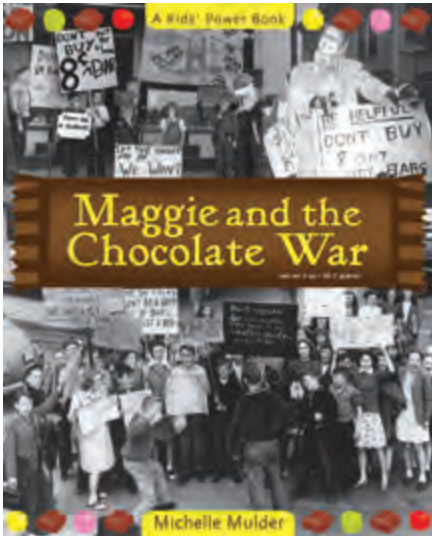
This book is best suited to intermediate grades. The biographies are well-written with accessible language and a conversational tone. Unfamiliar vocabulary is highlighted and an explanation provided within the text. Students will learn a bit about each woman's childhood as well as what inspired them to pursue a career in science, and ultimately the study of space. Many of these women faced a great deal of discrimination. Their work towards equality continues to open doors for today's generation of girls finding their own passion in STEM. All 10 biographies share an irrepressible excitement for space and a common theme – a revolution of women breaking into the world of space exploration.

This is a powerful collection of biographies about women that can be used as a source for student research or read as a model for student output in intermediate Language Arts. I especially like that two Canadian astronauts are featured. Students can use Bondar and Payette's stories to study Canada's contribution to the space race in conjunction with the rise of women's rights in Canadian History Since WWI. In addition, the biographies reference many different experiments performed in space. In Science, some of these simple experiments (growing crystals, for example) could be performed in the classroom and then compared to the results from space.

*Spectacular Women in Space* is a worthy addition to the intermediate reading list. My one critique is that the book is not particularly appealing, visually. The photographs are all black-and-white and the text is dense. I think that this book would benefit from a visual overhaul to better appeal to today's young readers. Otherwise, this is a quality publication and I am inspired to explore other titles in the series.

Vicki Harding is a member of Ottawa Carleton Teacher Local

## REVIEWS



### MAGGIE AND THE CHOCOLATE WAR

Michelle Mulder

Second Story Press, 2007

93 pages, \$14.95



Reviewed by Emily Hastings-Speck

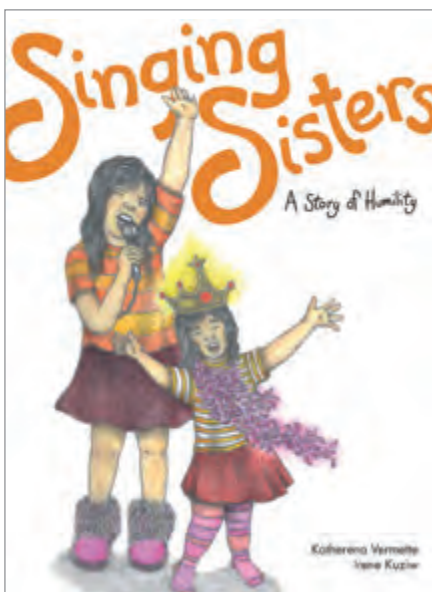
“We have to do something,” says Maggie. World War II is over, but since rationing ended, food prices keep going up. When the price of a chocolate bar suddenly jumps from five cents to eight cents, Maggie and her friends get a crash course in community action and organizing as they join kids across Canada on a strike against the price hike.

*Maggie and the Chocolate War* is an engaging story that skilfully blends a fictional story with historical facts. Maggie has been doing deliveries for her shopkeeper father to earn money, determined to buy her friend Jo a chocolate bar for her birthday. Things get complicated when chocolate prices rise unexpectedly, and Maggie is torn between her loyalty to her father, her relationships with her friends, her desire to create social change and her secret plan to be the Best Friend Ever for Jo’s birthday. The author creates an appealing blend of Maggie’s personal story with the historical context and includes original sources. The story between Maggie and Jo resolves nicely, but the story of the Chocolate War itself is left unclear unless you read the historical note at

the end. The reader might feel as though there should be another chapter to the story.

*Maggie and the Chocolate War* provides rich opportunities for cross-curricular learning and discussions – links to history and social studies, social movements and activism and feminism (there are some great subtle parts of the story involving Maggie’s mother). There could be links made to math, in terms of prices and cost of living. The book includes excellent examples of the use of primary sources as material. News clippings and photographs are embedded throughout the text, and the chapters are written in short chunks appropriate for discussion. The text is accessible and appropriate for grades three and up, but will appeal most to junior students in grades four to six.

Emily Hastings-Speck is a member of the Peel Teacher Local.



### SINGING SISTERS: A STORY OF HUMILITY

Katherena Vermette, illustrated by Irene Kuziw

HighWater Press, 2014

24 pages, \$9.95



Reviewed by Amy Williams

*Singing Sisters: A Story of Humility*, written by accomplished author Katherena Vermette and beautifully illustrated with full-page images by Irene Kuziw, is a children’s picture book depicting two sisters involved in sibling rivalry.

The author deftly navigates the conflict that occurs between two Indigenous sisters. First explored are the feelings Ma’iingan experiences when her younger sister encroaches on what she feels to be her territory: singing. As the younger sister mimics the skillful singing of her older sister, Ma’iingan becomes jealous and gets upset. Then a helpful technique unfolds to aid Ma’iingan in sympathizing with her younger sister, opening the door to her humble response. Ma’iingan’s mother affirms her talent but also encourages her to share the activity of singing with her sister. Imitation really is the best form of flattery!

The author examines with great insight the topics of humility, sharing, empathy, jealousy and sibling rivalry using an everyday, relatable storyline. It is easy to identify with both Ma’iingan and her younger sister’s feelings.

Educators can use *Singing Sisters* in the classroom as a read-aloud, but its value is not limited to such. As a read-aloud, this book will

spark diverse conversations about families, relationships and conflict. Curriculum connections are easily made throughout this book, specifically focusing on Indigenous traditions, vocabulary, culture and emotional intelligence. The text is simple but the message is deep and complex. Young learners will love this heartwarming and profoundly relevant story!

*Singing Sisters* is one book in a series, “The Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe,” which include love, wisdom, courage, respect, honesty and truth (in addition to humility). There is a Teacher’s Guide available for the Seven Teachings Series with ideas and suggestions to guide students’ learning and to provide both support and strategies for educators. This book is appropriate for a range of students spanning Kindergarten to early and even upper primary levels.

I highly recommend this captivating, easy-to-read book as a way to engage young learners with its powerful message of humility and empathy.

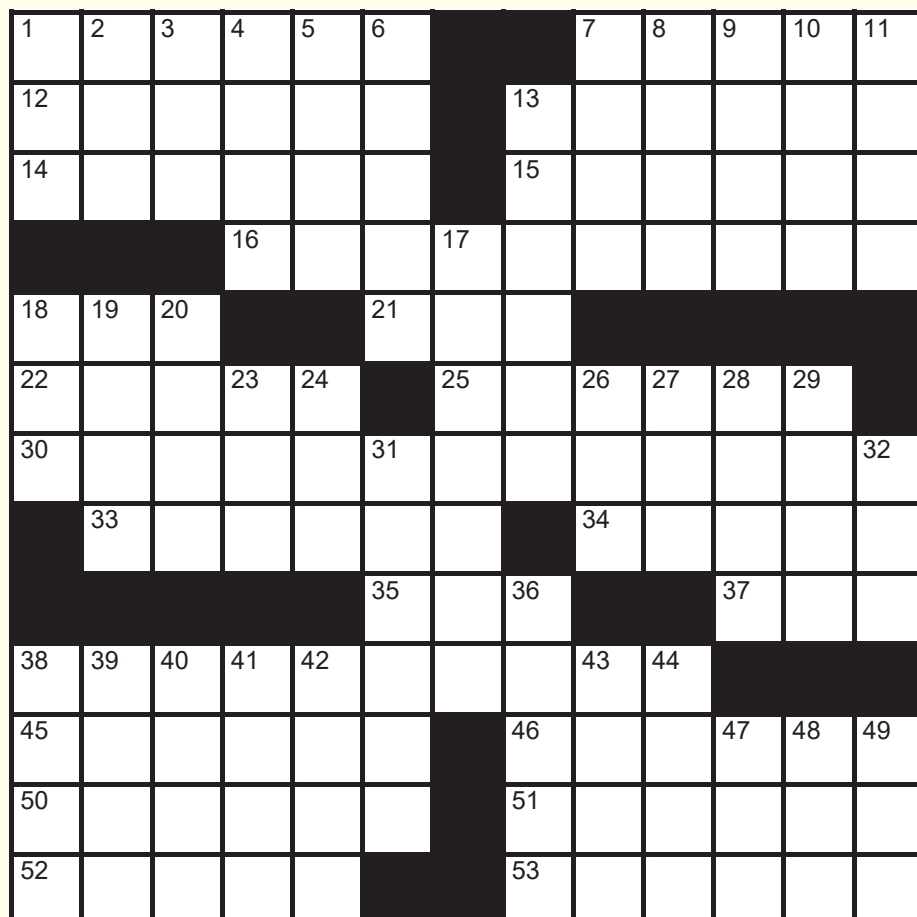
Amy Williams is a member of the Upper Grand Occasional Teacher Local.

## CROSSWORD

# "TALENT SEARCH"

BY MATT GAFFNEY

**INSTRUCTIONS:** This puzzle's contest answer is a famous actress. Email your answer to [etfocrossword@etfo.org](mailto:etfocrossword@etfo.org) by July 15, 2020 for a chance to win prizes. Make sure you put the word "Crossword" in the subject line and remember to include your local with the information you send. The answer to last issue's puzzle was **Greta Thunberg**. Winners are Bradley Thibaudeau, Hamilton-Wentworth Teacher Local; Kelsey McKibbin, Hastings & Prince Edward Occasional Teacher Local and Michele Nicholson, Avon Maitland Teacher Local.



### ACROSS

- Subject to a long-winded tirade
- \_\_\_ panels (rooftop items)
- Anxious
- Fulfill one's potential
- Zany
- Slowly force to fit
- Where you might see Measha Bruegger-gosman or Barbara Fris perform
- Prefix with angle or athlete
- Command to a canine
- Woman's name that becomes a country if you put an R at the front
- Elbow \_\_\_ (hard work)
- Elaine McCoy and Ratna Omidvar, e.g.
- Ripped open quickly, as a wrapped present

- Sault Ste. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Deer (Alberta city)
- Not many
- "\_\_\_\_\_ Years of Struggle: the History of Women and the Vote in Canada" (2018 book by Joan Sangster)
- Guaranteed to be beneficial, as a proposition
- Doesn't pronounce clearly, as a syllable
- Worked very hard
- Neighbor of a Czech or a Hungarian
- Lighted sign in a radio station
- Our contest answer's first name; check out the theme entries' initials for her last name

### DOWN

- Booze in a mojito
- Actress de Armas
- Short form of "Edward"
- Filled food
- Right away, in four letters
- Hits keys
- Former leader of Iran
- Approximately
- In \_\_\_\_\_ of (replacing)
- Rental car company
- Actress Russo
- Where to see a play, in Mexico
- Got balanced again, as a ship
- \_\_\_\_\_ of a kind (inseparable pair)
- Simple watercraft
- Facts and figures, for short
- NNW or SSE, e.g.
- Card in a royal flush
- Tree with oval leaves
- Programming pioneer Lovelace
- Medieval peasant
- Port Colborne's lake
- Deserved
- Make seams
- Prada item
- "I'm \_\_\_\_\_ your tricks!" ("You don't fool me!")
- Twelve hours before or after midnight
- "A Streetcar Named Desire" director Kazan
- Spring festival
- Operator
- Spanish for "she"
- Singing Celine
- Successor to the VHS tape
- Place for a bud, pod or ring
- Music genre from Jamaica

# SAVE A TREE



ETFO Voice is available as a digital-only subscription. Subscribe to the digital version to receive Voice issues by email 4 times a year or visit [etfovoice.ca](http://etfovoice.ca) anytime. So far, over 14,000 ETFO members have opted for digital-only subscriptions.

Get in touch with member records if you would like to switch over: [membersrecords@etfo.org](mailto:membersrecords@etfo.org)

↑  
**CANADIAN  
OUTDOOR**  
SUMMIT

The future of the outdoor  
community is in our hands.

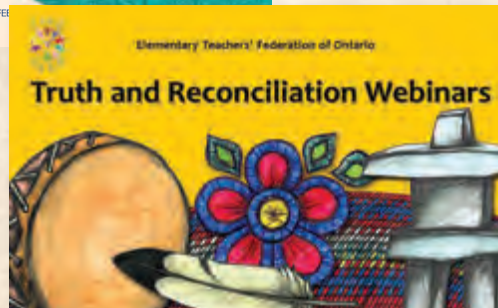
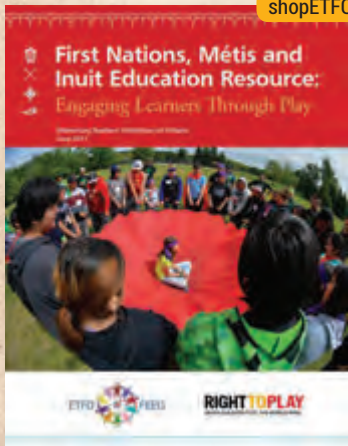
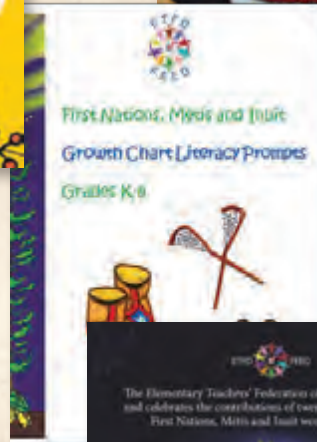
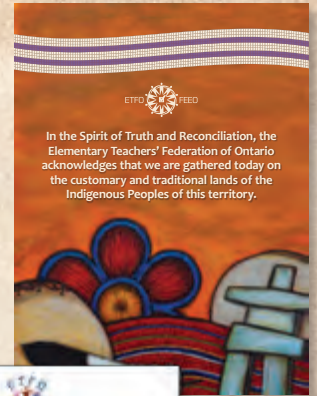
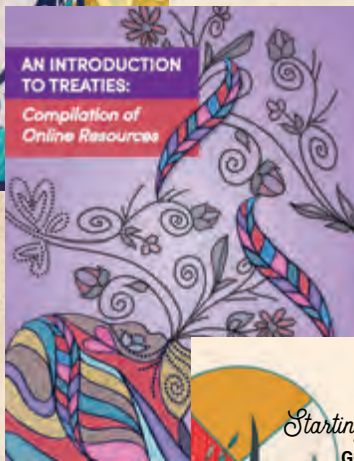
LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER.  
ALL OF US.

WANT TO BE PART  
OF THE CONVERSATION?

Follow us, connect with us  
[CANADIANOUTDOORSUMMIT.COM](http://CANADIANOUTDOORSUMMIT.COM)



# INTERESTED IN FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT EDUCATION RESOURCES?



shopETFO

Check out the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario's FNMI resources and links at

**ETFOFNMI.CA**





# TAKE YOUR PICK

**Be the first to know about new contests, special offers and promotions from OTIP!**

Subscribe to our electronic communications and you will be entered to win a **\$500 gift card of your choice.\***

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY!**

**[OTIPinsurance.com/ETFO\\_pick](https://OTIPinsurance.com/ETFO_pick)**

There are over 15 gift cards to choose from!



Win one of ten \$500 gift cards offered through Tango Blast Rewards operated by Tango Card, Inc. Contest closes August 31, 2020. Open to all active and retired Ontario education community members, at least 18 years of age and resident of Ontario. Enter at: [otipinsurance.com/etfo\\_pick](https://otipinsurance.com/etfo_pick). No purchase necessary. Contest can only be entered once. Selected contestants must correctly answer unaided, a mathematical, skill-testing question before being declared a winner. Odds of winning depend on number of eligible entries received through OTIP and Edvantage websites by each draw date. See full terms and conditions at [www.otipinsurance.com/subscribe-to-win-rules](https://www.otipinsurance.com/subscribe-to-win-rules). The gift card merchants represented, including Tango, are not sponsors of the rewards or otherwise affiliated with this offer. E-gift cards are subject to the issuer's terms and conditions.



136 Isabella Street  
Toronto, ON M4Y 0B5  
42409515

