

## McDowell Board of Directors approves \$88,000 in research funding

The end of the school year signals the start of seven new professionally led research projects. In early June, the Foundation Board approved over \$88,000 in new research money for the 2018-19 school year.

The projects approved for funding for 2018-19 are:

- Culture-Based School Mathematics for Reconciliation and Professional Development
- Gathering Strength: Indigenous Mental Health and High School
- Using Teacher Collaboration in an Islamic Faith-Based School to Nurture Student and Staff Sense of Belonging
- Exploring Refugee Children's Pre- and Post-Migration Educational Experiences
- History Underground: The Road to Reconciliation
- Promising Practices for Family Engagement
- Exploring Indigenous Understanding and Reconciliation Through Art

The scope of the research projects the Foundation is able to fund is exciting, and we look forward to the benefits to students and teachers that will occur because of our dedicated research teams and the hard work they do each year.

The Foundation would like to thank all of the teachers and other educators that applied for funding in this year's competition. Projects focused on teacher wellness, reconciliation, student mental health and many others were identified as fundable through the review process but were not funded due to budgetary constraints.



## Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan Annual Raffle

Thank you to the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan, especially Elaine Broughton, for your unwavering support of the Foundation and to this year's donors and winners:

- Handmade "Spin Cycle" lap quilt donated by STS – Northwest Chapter.  
**WINNER:** Sandra Hill – STS Regina Chapter
- Trio of acrylic paintings donated by STS – Northwest Chapter.  
**WINNER:** Ron Veller, STS – Kerrobert Chapter
- Wooden carving donated by STS – Kindersley Chapter.  
**WINNER:** Dorothy Thordarson, STS – Regina Chapter

# Learning From Practice: O'Soup said teachers have key role to play in helping northern youth tell their story

At the annual Learning From Practice Conference held in February 2018, Corey O'Soup, Saskatchewan's Advocate for Children and Youth, called on fellow educators to lend their invaluable influence in an effort to deal with the often overwhelming difficulties faced by Indigenous youth in Saskatchewan, particularly in the North.

Citing the important role teachers play in the lives of many at-risk youth, O'Soup maintained they can be critical in realizing his goal to achieve real change. Teachers can help deal with the sorts of problems that have led to suicides and the myriad of ongoing challenges facing Indigenous youth.

He brandished the special report entitled *Shhh... Listen!! We Have Something to Say! Youth Voices from the North*, which was spawned after a rash of six suicides in a short period of time during his first days on the job in La Ronge.

O'Soup reminded the educators in attendance that often they are the most trusted adult in children's lives.

"We have a voice and a platform, and we need to do more because we are in these kids' lives every day. The impact education can have on these kids is huge. I believe it's the key to breaking the cycle. Throwing money at it is not the answer. If we get them across that stage and able to graduate, so many doors open for them."

Chronicling his own journey, O'Soup said the one constant factor for him has been a strong desire to fundamentally change the current system. That desire was only heightened when he was sent to lead the response team in place in La Loche following the horrific school shootings in 2016.

In his view, O'Soup insisted that primarily kids need to be safe and protected, and in the future, there needs to be some critical conversations that can ensure there are allies working towards that commitment rather than just adopting a façade.



"I'm challenging different government agencies like health, social services and education to invest in people and to be part of the solution. The road map is there. This report can potentially open up the North, but we can't sit here and think we know better from the perches. The folks in these communities need to be empowered, and we can turn it around. We need to create genuine hope. We have to now go from talking about it, to doing something about it."

In addition to O'Soup, six research teams shared their project findings with the 80 teachers and pre-service teachers in attendance.

**Save The Date** – Learning From Practice 2018-19 is set for February 1, 2019. More details will be available in the fall of 2018.

# 2017-18 McDowell Research Award – Time, Place, Place: Using Flexible Design to Support Student Learning

A team of teachers at John Paul II Collegiate in North Battleford has found a way to help more students achieve their high school graduation credits by making instruction, content and learning materials accessible through a Moodle management learning system.

“We don’t have 100 percent graduation rates. Until we do, we need to be looking at means and opportunities and tools for these students,” was how Tracie Harty, one of the teachers on the team, summed up the importance of the work being done and the challenges therein.

The team found their understanding of time and collaboration was challenged and enhanced through this project. While release time funding was provided through the McDowell Foundation, time remained a constant challenge for participating teachers. They had to ensure their planning was up-to-date and negotiate time away from their classrooms so they could conduct their research.

One teacher on the team noted that her struggles with time were impacted by her students’ needs. Even though students appreciated the individual pacing of classes and additional ways to access learning materials and instruction, they still required the time and attention of a teacher.

Through their research, the team found teachers need time to plan, reflect and learn before any change becomes part of ongoing practices. In relation to time, the research team recommends staff focus on one key area of improvement over several years, instead of trying to implement several initiatives at the same time.

The team also identified their own professional growth as a significant benefit of this project.

Harty indicates that this experience assisted her in “being comfortable to take risks, to ensure organization and planning is up-to-date and to give students the option of working at their own pace.”



“I have enjoyed being involved in the experience because I have grown as a professional in many areas,” she says. “I have reached out to colleagues and also had to learn new methods of teaching, which will allow for student success,” colleague Roxanne Stynsky echoed.

Creating programs to help students achieve the necessary credits to graduate will have a huge impact on those students. This research demonstrates that providing teachers with the time to plan, collaborate and learn, as well as the ability to focus on a single goal, can positively impact both staff and students.

The teachers involved in the research project were: Frazer Donahue, Cheryl Dunits, Jean Fauchon, Shalen Fox, Carlo Hansen, Ramona Stillar, Janet Benoit, Anne Crozier, Shelly Fransoo, Tracie Harty, Nate Jurgens and Roxanne Stynsky.

# Lessons From the Land: Salon Series Conversation from Prince Albert

**Lisa Squires, STF Communications Officer**

When Renée Carrière asked why fur harvesters in her northern community were no longer setting fire to the lakeshores in early spring, she had no way of knowing it would impact her teaching practices and open her eyes to local scientific methods and ways of collecting data and knowledge. When one of her students asked why the water was brown and where all the muskrats were going, she saw an opportunity to build relationships with her Indigenous students, the environment and community through land-based learning.

"This was the start of my research and my new journey in learning," says Carrière, a teacher at Charlebois Community School in Cumberland House. The research project, funded by the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research into Teaching, gets students out of the classroom and out onto the land. Entitled *The Muskrat/Wascask Project*, her research has students examining the impact of fire-burning practices on the land.

"It takes the land to raise a child," says Carrière. "Land-based education is about answering big questions. What is knowledge? How does the land teach values? How do we collect data? How can we pass on knowledge about ethics, independence, language, humour, generosity and kindness?"

Carrière shared her experiences with more than two dozen educators at an event near Prince Albert called Around the Campfire. Elder Wilma Felix-Schreder of Sturgeon Lake opened the conversation with a prayer. Carrière facilitated the event and was joined



by Leda Corrigan, First Nations and Métis Education Consultant at Northern Lights School Division; Pauline McKay, Provincial Facilitator and Aboriginal Liaison for Following Their Voices; and Ellen Whiteman, Manager of the McDowell Foundation.

This September, Carrière is participating in a four-month pilot at Charlebois Community School where she will be helping Grades 3 to 6 children, Elders, experts and other teachers to facilitate land-based learning opportunities. Northern Lights School Division #113 is drawing on her research to incorporate land-based education into the curriculum. Carrière is also planning to write a short children's book about her research.

The Salon Series event was organized by the McDowell Foundation, a non-profit organization that funds teacher-led research in the province.

For more information about the Salon Series, how to access research funding or support teacher-led research, please visit [www.mcdowellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca).

McDowell Foundation **NEWS**

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