

McDowell Board Appointments and Elections

The Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research Into Teaching Inc. Annual General Meeting was held November 29, 2019. The 2018-19 annual report was presented to the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Executive.

In addition to receiving the report, the Federation Executive, as the sole member of the Foundation, heard updates on the work of the Foundation and appointed Alexander Tawpimis and Jim Traves to three-year terms on the Foundation's Board of Directors.

Alex Tawpimis is a First Nations teacher from Muskeg Lake Cree Nation where he is currently teaching. He has seven years' experience teaching in federally funded schools across the province.

Jim Traves has over 20 years' experience in financial management at the Controller and CFO levels and 11 years' experience in the charitable sector. Jim has previously been a board member with the Saskatoon Health Research Foundation.



The Foundation Board is also pleased to announce the election of Sean Lockwood as President and Diana Jemieff Hayes as Vice-President. We look forward to Sean and Diana's ongoing leadership.

We would also like to thank outgoing board members Russ Mirasty and Darren Bird for their leadership and commitment to the Foundation.

Research Application Process Underway for 2020-21 Funding

The application process for the 2020-21 grants is underway. The Foundation is pleased to see a range of applications from across the province and looks forward to supporting these research teams as they develop final applications.

Research Focus: Parent Engagement in Rural Schools

How to include parents in meaningful and authentic ways in their children's education has been a hot topic in Saskatchewan over the past few years. Home visits, unpacking-the-backpack nights and new interactive applications such as ClassDojo and Seasaw have filled twitter feeds and other spaces exploring trends in education.

For three teachers in Sun West School Division, parent engagement is not just an event or an app but rather a core understanding of who they are as teachers and what kind of a relationship they want to have with their students and their families. Pam Sawatzky, Carly Robson Gilchrist and Amber Thompson have been collaborating on a McDowell-funded research project for the past year exploring promising practices for parent engagement in their rural communities.

Their project started out asking key questions including: what practices offer possibilities for the meaningful engagement of parents, and what are the critical elements of these practices that contribute to success?

Their hope was to identify possibilities for authentic and meaningful family engagement opportunities that recognize the vital role parents play in supporting the education of their children.

All three teachers live and work in the communities where they teach and believe that parent engagement may look different in rural areas than it does in the city. They see their students and their families at hockey games, the grocery store, and around town. Engagement can look different in small communities where everyone knows them as teachers.

"It is a bit of a fishbowl," says Thompson. "At the same time, I already know some of the families from my son's hockey team or from last year's baseball season."

For all three teachers, the goal of parental engagement is ensuring that families are knowledgeable and comfortable with their child's



Photo courtesy of Pam Sawatzky

learning and that parents and families are offering their own expert knowledge as the individuals who knows the child best to support and enhance that learning process.

However, the teachers also acknowledged the importance of ensuring there are healthy boundaries to ensure they do not feel "on" all of the time.

"Many of the practices to support family engagement that were identified by the research are not new or revolutionary but just good teaching," echoes Thompson.

The team indicated that their work identified a shift in thinking about the value of family knowledge, and how it can best be included, as a vital starting point when thinking about parent and family engagement, especially in rural areas where opportunities for engagement are literally just around the corner.

The team's full research report will be available at www.mcdowellfoundation.ca in the spring of 2020.

(This article previously appeared in the December issue of the *Saskatchewan Bulletin*).

What Gives Your Life Meaning?

By Colleen Ostoforoff



It is funny how we all start to think about our lives and how we go through difficulties, times of clarity and confusion along with joy and excitement. Yes, our lives hold rich meaning as we unfold our purpose of living. However, what really motivates you to do your best in everything in YOUR life?

Years ago, Krista McMillen decided to be a teacher. She found that it was a good place to learn, grow, and express herself. As Krista evolved in her teaching career, she found that she really wanted to reach out and help children with exceptionalities and their families as they struggled with learning in her classroom. This greater purpose aligned with what turned out to be a deeper passion and commitment to research and to promote student mental health. "As a learning resources teacher or a student support teacher, it means that I am the biggest impact on these kids and their education and how they can contribute to the workforce and society."

As a classroom teacher, you have an impact on children for one maybe two years, but as a learning resources teacher, Krista realized that her teaching influenced her students and their families for a lifetime. Krista fulfilled one of her purposes to become a bigger inspiration for Saskatchewan classrooms with the funding from the McDowell Foundation.

I constantly question my own life's purpose and legacy. Legacy giving simply stated is the process of an individual planning to facilitate a gift to a charitable organization covering the full spectrum of generosity by individuals now and for the future. What does your legacy look like? Have

you ever thought about the future of education for Saskatchewan's children by supporting the McDowell Foundation's endowment fund?

Legacy giving is honouring a loved one by using the value of your donation dollars, small and large, to help make a difference with the McDowell Foundation in your will. Legacy giving is people, people from all lifestyles and income levels. People like you, who want to and are making a difference in the world. People like you would want to leave a legacy you will never see, but will help add "tomorrows" for our future Saskatchewan students.

Planned giving is a way to make an impact and grow a meaningful legacy, both for yourself and for the McDowell Foundation, in ways that you likely had never imagined. Is the McDowell Foundation already in your will? Thank you! Please let us know about your plans as it helps the Foundation plan for the future.

If you would like more tools for your legacy planning, our website offers some guidance on bequests, life insurance, RRSPs, RRIFs, TFSAs, and real estate. Visit <http://mcdowellfoundation.ca/donations/> where the Foundation accepts gifts of many different kinds. For gifts of a more complex nature, we highly recommend always having conversations with your family, lawyer, financial advisor, or accountant. If you have any questions, want to talk about our Legacy Society, or would like to know more about remaining anonymous, you can reach me 306-373-1660 or by email at colleen.ostoforoff@stf.sk.ca.

Thank you to all of our donors that help us inspire and support many worthwhile research projects. We deeply appreciate the generosity of our donors and funders and encourage you to join our ongoing support for teacher-led research in Saskatchewan. Your support allows us to continue funding teacher-led research projects like inclusion for children with exceptionalities; reconciliation; developing sense of belonging through land-based education; practicing anti-racist education, and more. Each gift makes a difference! Your legacy gift will continue to be a transformative gift for our future students.

Learning From Practice – January 31, 2020: What is an Inclusive and Diverse Classroom?



Chris Scribe

In thinking about our theme and the projects that will be presenting at this year's Learning From Practice Conference, it is important that we continue to build on other conversations occurring throughout the province about the role of public education.

Throughout the consultations occurring over the past year, inclusion and diversity are a common thread.

You do not have to look far in the province to find teachers hard at work supporting inclusion and diversity in the classroom. The McDowell Foundation is fortunate to have Chris Scribe, Nakota/Nehiyaw (Assiniboine/Cree) from the Carry the Kettle Nakoda Oyade provide the

keynote address at the annual Learning From Practice (LFP) Conference. Chris is the director of the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) and the founder of Think Indigenous, a conference designed to inspire educators to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the everyday practices of teaching.

In addition, a number of McDowell researchers will attend to share what they have learned from their research projects.

Learning From Practice is an annual conference hosted by the McDowell Foundation to support teacher-led research in the province and will be held in Saskatoon on January 31, 2020 at the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation building. Register at <https://www.stf.sk.ca/professional-resources/events-calendar/learning-practice>.

To donate to the McDowell Foundation, go to:

www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/dr-stirling-mcdowell-foundation-for-research-into-teaching-i/ for online donations, or www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/donations/ for other ways to help.

McDowell Foundation **NEWS**

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