

## Looking back on 30 years of teacher-led research

By Ellen Whiteman, Manager, McDowell Foundation



In 1991, the McDowell Foundation was founded to support teacher-led research in Saskatchewan classrooms, staff rooms, and communities. As we reflect back on 30 years, we reflected on what else took place in 1991:

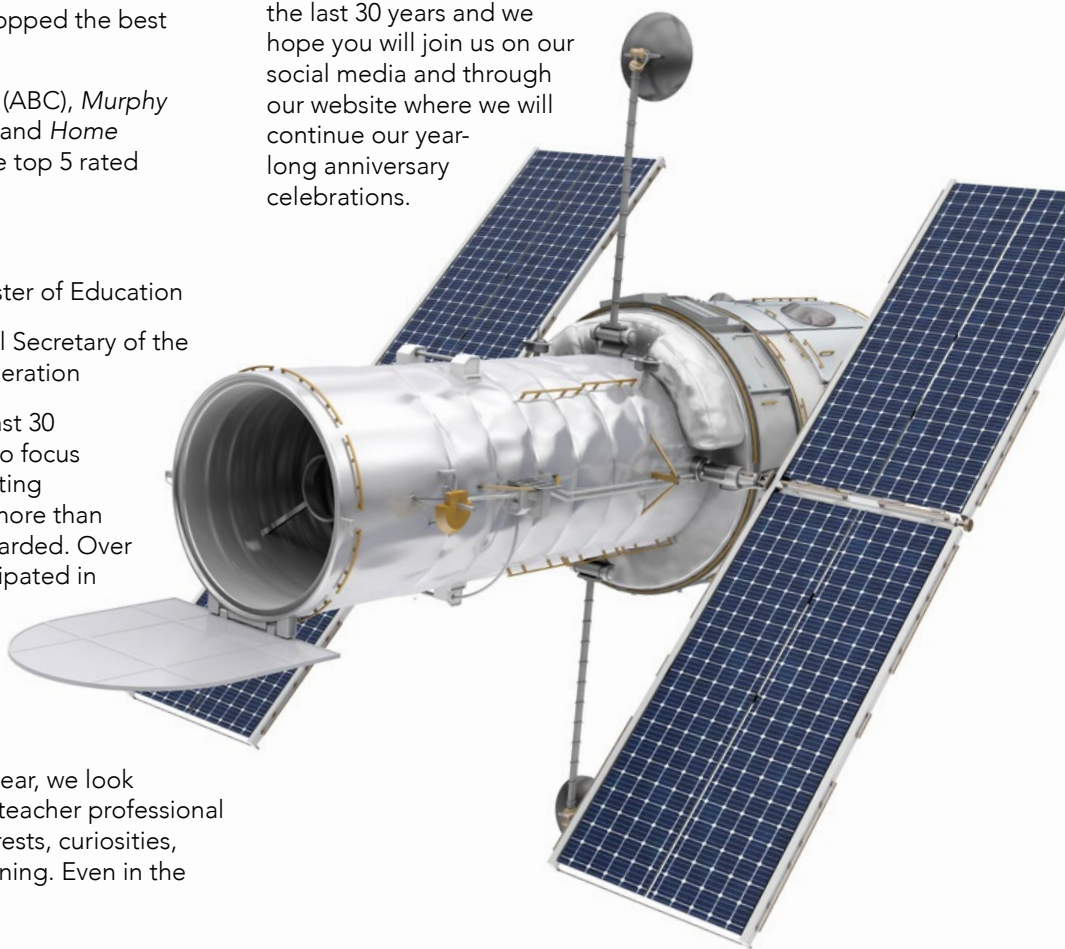
- The Hubble Space Telescope launched
- *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* was the number one movie at the box office
- *The Firm* by John Grisham topped the best sellers booklist
- *60 Minutes* (CBS), *Roseanne* (ABC), *Murphy Brown* (CBS), *Cheers* (NBC), and *Home Improvement* (ABC) were the top 5 rated television shows
- The internet was launched
- Carol Teichrob was the Minister of Education
- Fred Herron was the General Secretary of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation

While much has changed in the last 30 years, the Foundation continues to focus on supporting teachers in supporting students. Over 300 projects and more than \$2 million in grants have been awarded. Over 1000 teachers have directly participated in McDowell research and countless other teachers, educators, students, and educational leaders have been impacted by the work.

As we celebrate this anniversary year, we look forward to continuing to support teacher professional autonomy as we support the interests, curiosities, and passion for teaching and learning. Even in the

midst of the pandemic we continue to both support and disseminate research. Our Salon Series online presentations will kick off in late October and continue through the school year. Research projects are underway across the province even as the pandemic impacts our classrooms and schools. The work from last year's directed call focused on teaching in a pandemic, as well as this year's work, continues to inform teachers and decision makers as we navigate this together.

Thank you for the support over the last 30 years and we hope you will join us on our social media and through our website where we will continue our year-long anniversary celebrations.



# McDowell Foundation marked 30th Anniversary on World Teachers' Day

By Ellen Whiteman, Manager, McDowell Foundation

October 5, 2021, was the 30th anniversary of the McDowell Foundation.

Thirty years ago, teachers in the province enacted a vision for research to support teaching and learning across the province to highlight the innovation taking place in classrooms, schools and communities—work being led by professional, curious, and passionate teachers.

October 5 is also World Teachers' Day. Since 1994, the day was set aside to celebrate the contributions and achievements of teachers and to highlight the impact qualified and supported teachers can have on students and society. The date was chosen to recognize a recommendation made by UNESCO on the Status of Teachers passed in 1966, which supported teachers globally in defining and asserting their rights and responsibilities as trained, qualified, and passionate professionals.

It is not surprising October 5 was selected as the date to launch the McDowell Foundation. The Foundation's mandate is to support teacher-led research in the PreK-12 public education system that has immediate and direct impacts on today's classrooms. The purpose of the Foundation is to offer teachers the resources to bring their passions to life, to explore their curiosity and to have the professional autonomy and support to contribute to their profession in meaningful and exciting ways.

To celebrate 30 years of McDowell research, the Foundation will highlight 30 stories of past researchers, board members, donors, and friends over the next few months. Our #MF30for30 stories will be shared on social media on our new Facebook page and on Twitter at @STFmcdowell, as well as the McDowell Foundation website, and will celebrate the work of teachers.

Please join us in celebrating World Teachers' Day as well as the anniversary of the Foundation as we share the first of our #MF30for30 stories.

## How my involvement in the McDowell Foundation was a springboard to a wonderful career

By Sharlene McGowan, PhD

As I reflect upon its 30th anniversary, I think about how the McDowell Foundation has had such a profound influence on my career in education.

I embarked upon a solo project in the spring of 2000 to investigate how Saskatchewan teachers were keeping less-engaged students in school. Through their narratives, I learned that there are almost no limits to what Saskatchewan teachers do to help students, particularly those who were considered at that time to be "at risk" from completing high school. My project, number 61, was published under the title *Beyond Duty: A Compilation of Teachers' Roles and Responsibilities with "At Risk" Youth in Saskatchewan Secondary Schools*. My report was published in July 2000, and in November I participated in the Learning From Practice seminar to share my research findings.

In 2001, I was invited to speak as a researcher at the McDowell Foundation's 10th anniversary. This was a tremendous privilege and, from there, I found myself exploring other opportunities with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and my own local teachers' executive.

I was elected to the STF Executive for two years soon after and had the terrific opportunity to attend two Canadian Teachers' Federation meetings in Whitehorse, Yukon, and then St. John's, Newfoundland. I also served on the McDowell Foundation Advisory Board of Directors for two years and continued to serve on various committees and boards with the STF until my superannuation in June 2017. One of my treasured possessions is a personal note from Dr. Stirling McDowell, which I received some years ago.

I have no doubt that being a researcher with the McDowell Foundation was a springboard to further professional opportunities.

Later, in 2009, I was a research assistant to Dr. Blair Stonechild of First Nations University of Canada to produce a research project for the Saskatchewan Instructional Research Development Unit entitled

*More Holistic Assessment for Improved Education Outcomes*. Considering that I might have the capacity to continue in my role as researcher, I completed my PhD in education from the University of Regina one month after I superannuated from Regina Public Schools.

I hold the McDowell Foundation in the highest regard, and I don't miss an opportunity to tell pre-service teachers about the wonderful opportunities that are available to them through the Foundation as well as the STF.

Bravo to the McDowell Foundation for 30 years of teacher-led research. May it continue for decades to come.

### ***Beyond the Mouse and Modem***

By Wendy James

My first McDowell project was *Beyond the Mouse and Modem* (Henderson, James & Cannon, 2003), a survey of over 2,000 Saskatchewan teachers about their knowledge and use of technology in the classroom. We did an overall summary for the province that revealed teachers lacked the skill and knowledge levels needed to use technology to support learning, and that school divisions' investments in technologies were not being adequately matched with resources for teacher professional learning. I was teaching in Meadow Lake at the time and had not yet begun formal learning about research. The research showed up in Maclean's and got its most recent citation in 2019, but the thing I am most proud of is that the reports we wrote for participating divisions sometimes resulted in more support for teacher learning.

At the time we did *Beyond the Mouse and Modem*, Karen Henderson was working on her master's and interested in technology, but Rene Cannon and I were colleagues who simply had an interest in reflecting on our professional practice. The support from the McDowell Foundation helped all three of us step through the stages of a first major research project and present original research at a conference for the first time, opening so many new avenues of professional practice for exploration. It led all three of us into becoming consultants in different parts of the province, facilitating professional learning for other teachers, and transforming our own teaching practices using technology. I work at USask now, as a manager of the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning, after doing a master's and PhD. It all started with funding from the McDowell Foundation to ask, "What is happening?" and "Why might that be happening?"

I'd like others to know that McDowell Foundation grants are a critical way that we come to understand our work as professional teachers and the students we care for. The ongoing commitment to the Foundation expresses our desire to engage in research-supported and reflective practice, and our commitment to communicating with those who lead schools about what teachers and students need.

The two grants I received to study professional learning led to two advanced degrees researching teacher learning and a decade leading it in a research-informed way in Saskatoon Public Schools as a learning leader, consultant, and coordinator. The extended support that SPS gave me made the advanced degrees and leadership opportunities possible, but it was the process of conducting the research supported by the McDowell Foundation that sparked lifelong interests and ultimately influenced teaching practice for many teachers and students that I had the privilege to work with.



## **Volunteer Opportunity: Foundation Board Members Needed!**

The Foundation is currently accepting expressions of interest from people passionate about public education to sit on our Board of Directors.

Directors are appointed for a three-year term and provide strategic direction, fiscal oversight and risk-management leadership for the Foundation. The Board meets approximately four times per year.

Serving on a non-profit board can support the development of leadership skills, encourage professional research in the province, and be a great way to meet others who are passionate about public education. No previous research experience is necessary.

If you are interested, or for more information, please contact [mcdowell@stf.sk.ca](mailto:mcdowell@stf.sk.ca) by **October 25, 2021**.

# Celebrating 30 Years!

By Colleen Ostoforoff, Fundraising Administrator for Donor Engagement



Can you believe it? Wow! Over the last 30 years, the world has seen some incredible technological advancements. Did you know that back in 1991, the **World Wide Web was launched to the public**, Microsoft.com went online, and salsa sales surpassed ketchup sales for the first time!

In October 1991, here in Saskatchewan, the President of the STF was Gordon Rawlake, and the General Secretary (Executive Director) of the STF was Fred Herron, who is still one of our loyal supporters. Thank you, Fred! And, in the world of Saskatchewan politics, the provincial educational office changed hands as (Raymond) John Meiklejohn transitioned to Carol Teichrob who became Minister of Education when Roy Romanow's NDP won a majority, defeating Grant Devine's PCs.

It is incredible the changes in the world and with the Foundation over 30 years! Did you know that back in 1994-95, the McDowell Foundation's first project was awarded to the Regina researcher team of Lillian Forsythe and Vi Maeers for their research project: *Collaborative Manipulative Mathematics Research: Teacher Role?*

Just like our first research project, the McDowell Foundation is grateful to our donors to provide amazing opportunities for the future of our students and teachers. Did you know that the McDowell

Foundation's research projects alone have influenced **three different policy changes over the past five years**? We are very proud of the teachers' research produced over the last 30 years. Over the next year we will be sharing video stories celebrating 30 years of our research through our website, [www.mcdowellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca), and our **new** Facebook page.

We are committed to making a difference that will benefit Saskatchewan students. The McDowell Foundation continues to support an amazing legacy of teacher-led research with real, immediate, and lasting educational effects **funding almost 300 projects with over \$2 million in grants** awarded. We have funded creative and innovative projects influencing teachers and students **in almost every school division as well as in federally funded First Nations schools in our province**.

We are grateful for all our donor support. **Donations of all sizes make an incredible impact on our educational milieu**. Please help us continue to make it vital to our educational system as we continue to be sustainable in our future with our children. Thank you for continuing to support our worthy research projects. We are looking forward to many more years of professionally led research and celebrating many future milestones with you! #MF30for30

- Colleen



McDowell Foundation **NEWS**

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