

What's Next?

By Ellen Whiteman, McDowell Foundation Manager

September always feels like a new beginning. Much as I love the long days and warm evenings of summer, I can't help but approach September each year with excitement as classes begin for another year, fall activities return, the mornings are crisp and clean and the newly funded research projects get underway.

Fall always feels like a transition – no longer summer, but not yet the cold days and long nights of our Saskatchewan winters. This year, as we transition into a new school year, it feels like even more of a transition. Will this be the year we are able to put the pandemic behind us and re-engage in teaching and learning without the constant stress and worry of things outside of our control? How can we ensure our colleagues, our students and our communities are supported in this re-engagement process? What have we learned over the past three years that we can pull forward and make part of our new normal in classrooms and communities?

The Foundation is pleased to support teacher-led research teams that will be exploring these big questions. Research on student and teacher well-being from our special directed call will take place

through the fall, with initial findings expected by the new year. Projects focused on student sense of belonging, reconciliation, culturally responsive pedagogy, and inclusive learning will continue through the year. Teachers will continue to ask the big questions and work together to support ongoing collaboration and learning as we continue to transition to the post-pandemic new normal.

Here at the Foundation, we too are in transition. After three years of service, Colleen Ostoforoff has finished her term as our fundraising coordinator. We want to thank her for her ideas, enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment to stewardship.

As I look forward to my first pumpkin spice latte and the renewed energy only the start to a new year can bring, I want to thank our donors, researchers, volunteers, and friends who continue to support the work of the Foundation and allow us to continue to impact teaching and learning in Saskatchewan. Together we will respond to whatever is next and work to provide our best to the teachers and students of Saskatchewan.

Until Next Time, A Fond Farewell

By Colleen Ostoforoff

During my pilot project term with the McDowell Foundation, I have had the great opportunity to get to know many of you personally. I want to share with our faithful donors that although it was difficult to connect during a pandemic time, I will always be grateful for the opportunity we have had.

As my time with The McDowell Foundation now comes to an end, I want to thank you for your generous gifts to the Foundation. Through your donations we have been able to support professional research, inquiry, and the sharing of information that focuses on teaching and learning within the publicly funded PreK-12 education system. As we continue working towards supporting, celebrating, and promoting educational research for the betterment of students, teachers, and society, we have an

ongoing commitment to social justice, inclusion, and equity. We support passionate, engaged teachers in exploring new and innovative ways to best meet the educational needs of students.

We continue to attempt to reduce inequalities and injustice through researcher and professional learning. Your support brings us closer to the goal. I want to personally thank you for your selfless support donating to the Foundation. If you have not had the chance to connect with Ellen Whiteman, I am sure you will have a wonderful conversation with her soon. Ellen will continue with the advancement of fundraising for the Foundation.

Thank you again for your support – I will miss you all!

McDowell Foundation Funded Projects - 2022-23

The McDowell Foundation is pleased to announce the following projects have been approved for 2022-23. Congratulations to all the recipients and we look forward to sharing the results of this work next year.

#327 – A Critical Participatory Action Research Project: Improving Teaching Practices Through Professional Development in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Researcher: Jessica Madiratta

This proposed research is a critical participatory action research project that provides educators with the opportunity to participate in an online professional development group on culturally responsive pedagogy. The uniqueness of this study is that the research aims to explore how building a community of educators engaged in professional development over multiple sessions can impact the teacher's practice in the classroom. One outcome of this research is building a community of practice for the teachers involved.

The two overarching research questions for my proposed study are:

- 1) What are the experiences of participants in an online professional development group on culturally responsive pedagogy?
- 2) How do participants perceive their engagement in this group in terms of influencing their teaching practice?

This proposed study is significant because educators in Saskatchewan will benefit from having professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and build a network of colleagues through an online setting.

#328 – The Journey As Physical Education Teachers Navigate Indigenous Perspectives: A Narrative Inquiry

Researcher: Julie Andrews

Decolonization is the process of undoing colonizing practices. Within the educational context, this means confronting and challenging the colonizing practices that have influenced education in the past, and which are still present today.

This study will examine the perspectives of settler and Indigenous teachers in their implementation of Indigenous perspectives in Physical Education 20 and 30 in Saskatchewan. The study will aid in our, the researchers and participants, understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and allow us to see other's perspectives as we move along on this journey.

This study is significant because it challenges teachers thinking of how and why they incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching. Although teaching Indigenous perspectives is mandatory in Saskatchewan, I want to examine other motives teachers may have.

There are four main objectives to this study:

- First, I want to facilitate discussions around the challenges and successes of teachers' experiences in incorporating Indigenous perspectives into their classrooms.
- Second, to further my own learning and understanding of Indigenous perspectives, as a researcher and consumer of research.
- Third, to connect the experiences of settler and Indigenous teachers by the examination of the similarities and differences among the two perspectives to find a way forward.
- Lastly, I seek to remind colleagues that it is their imperative responsibility to teach Indigenous perspectives.



#329 – Ahkamîmotân To inspire Continuous Learning

Researchers: Lois Keller, Jacqueline Helman, Elaine Favel, and Sharon Hoffman

“How can an elementary school and high school community create a shared pathway of responsive learning opportunities for student success?” is the central inquiry question posed for this research study. Teachers, staff, and students of Rossignol High School and Rossignol Elementary School, Île-à-la-Crosse, SK., are questioning the artifacts and traditions that have shaped their existing practices and learning experiences. They wish to explore how to activate and coordinate differentiated instruction, especially in light of recent Covid impacting events. School leaders hope to partner with students and the staff from their community elementary and high schools to explore how to create a shared pathway of opportunity for students from Grades 4-12. This pathway would recognize the nuanced realities and opportunities in learning as students move through the grades and disciplines.

This research study uses an appreciative inquiry lens and participatory action research methodology to create opportunities that authentically reflect Métis community beliefs and values and provide opportunities for student and staff growth and success. Participating in a shared action research project would further offer an opportunity to realize capacity and foster leadership participation.

#331 – Supporting Neurodiverse Students by Incorporating Visual Strategies and Supports as a Tier One Intervention in Kindergarten Classrooms

Researchers: Mary Barrow and Angie Balkwill

Supporting Neurodiverse Students by Incorporating Visual Strategies and Supports as a Tier One Intervention in Kindergarten Classrooms will examine what can be learned by incorporating visual supports, as a Tier One (whole class) intervention, in kindergarten classrooms for both neurotypical and neurodivergent students.

Researchers will examine possible impact (benefits, challenges, possible barriers and possible solutions, pedagogical implications, curriculum implementation impacts, and other impressions that may emerge as a result of the research) to the use of visual supports, possible alternatives to use of visual supports, and possible information on what teachers and school staff members need in order to successfully introduce and use visual supports as a Tier One strategy with early learners.

#332 – Inspired Writing in the Primary Grades: Stories From the Forest

Researchers: Denise Heppner and Tirzah Reilkoff

This research will investigate how participating in outdoor education (Forest School) can be a springboard for exploring and creating written texts (e.g., expressive texts such as personal recounts of outdoor adventures, imaginative narrative texts such as drawing/writing stories, and/or informative expository texts such as maps or instructions).

This study will explore Brayboy and Castagno’s (2009) recommendation that the “oral traditions and storytelling central to many tribal communities can and should serve as foundations for the written and text-based literacies required by and developed within schools” (p. 43).

NORA WORBY’S SPECIAL DIRECTED CALL

#330 – Exploring Indigenous Students’ Sense of Belonging in a Saskatchewan High School

Researchers: Raquel Oberkirsch and Melanie Pauls

The proposed participatory action research explores Indigenous students’ experiences of belonging at a Saskatchewan high school over one school year. We will examine the effects of implementing culturally relevant initiatives such as a beading club, painting workshops with local Indigenous artists, land-based learning opportunities, and Cree or Nakota language classes. We will plan these initiatives based on the interests and suggestions of Indigenous students and open them to all students who want to learn from Indigenous role models and participate as allies and friends.

We will also investigate the effects of an “opportunity room” where students can take a break, eat a nutritious snack, catch up on classwork, or connect with a positive adult, such as an Elder, community member, the community education liaison, or the school counsellor. Finally, we will study the barriers to a strong sense of belonging for Indigenous students at this high school.

We will use qualitative data collection methods, including observations, field notes, sharing circles, one-on-one open-structured conversational interviews, audio/video recordings of activities, and artifacts. We aim to centre Indigenous student voices and add student perspectives to the literature on Indigenous student school engagement and belonging through this project.

Call for Research Grant Applications



Notice of Intent 2023-24 Funding

The McDowell Foundation Call for Research Proposals is now open! The Foundation is inviting PreK-12 teachers and other educators to submit a Notice of Intent to begin the grant application process for research projects funded in the 2023-24 school year. Foundation grants provide funding, guidance, and release time to support recipients' project goals and activities.

We are looking for teachers interested in making a contribution to teaching and learning through exploring their own research passions. Prior research experience is not necessary. The Notice of Intent and overall application process assists applicants in developing a meaningful and achievable research project which supports professional development through reflective practice. Grants totaling \$85,000 are available.

The McDowell Foundation provides research grants to explore new and innovative ways to best meet the educational needs of students in Saskatchewan. A range of topics have been funded over the past 30 years and can be viewed on our website at <https://mcdowellfoundation.ca/grants/>.

Notice of Intent submissions are due November 30, 2022 and can be submitted to mcdowellfoundation@stf.sk.ca or by calling the Foundation.

Grant Application Process

1. Submit a Notice of Intent by **November 30, 2022**.
2. Applicants are invited to participate in a grant proposal development workshop in **December 2022**.
3. Applicants develop a draft grant proposal for review by **February 6, 2023**.
4. Applicants may revise the draft grant proposal based on the feedback and advice received and shall submit a final grant proposal by **April 21, 2023**.

The Notice of Intent should be emailed to mcdowell@stf.sk.ca by the **November 30, 2022** deadline. The Notice of Intent can be submitted orally if the research team prefers.



Please contact the Foundation for further details or visit www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/grants.



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