

Editorial

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Éditorial/Editorial

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‘Ask not for whom the bell tolls’

As I contemplated what I might write concerning the five anglophone papers that appear in this issue of CJE, I found myself recalling the closing words of John Donne’s poem *For Whom the Bell Tolls*: “For I am involved in mankind/Therefore, send not to know/For whom the bell tolls/ It tolls for thee.” Each of the papers, in their own unique way have reminded me that I am a member of the continent of global educators and that I too, have experienced on more than one occasion through a career that now spans six decades the ‘heavy loads of emotional labour’.

Since the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) in 2015, I must admit that I have struggled with how to implement more Indigenous content and ways of knowing into my Bachelor of Education courses. I take note of the efforts of the University of Winnipeg to recognize that education is central to the work of reconciliation and require all students, including pre-service teachers, to take an Indigenous Course Requirement (ICR) as part of the conditions for graduation. Siemens and Neufeld report that after taking ICRs, non-indigenous undergraduate students from across faculties in the University, who come from a predominantly settler-colonial context, acknowledged an increased recognition of the injustices and discrimination that continually impact Indigenous Peoples in Canada. They also recognized a personal and professional responsibility to advance the issues of social justice in respect of reconciliation and to support systemic change within public education. However, they evidenced a rejection of individual complicity and demonstrated a limited desire for ongoing self-critical reflection. Siemens and Neufeld conclude their study by observing that disruptive knowledge is essential to framing a mutually beneficial relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and the land. But surely, we can acknowledge that ICRs are a tolling of

the bell that calls us as Canadian educators to further through meaningful action reciprocal connections with all our relations.

Three papers in this Issue sound with deliberate strokes the heavy burdens of emotional labour that can and too often do result in mental and emotional health issues. Ferguson, James, and Bourgeault investigate the impact of teacher mental health and leaves of absence. Key words in their writing such as, emotional labour, mental health, teacher absences, occupational stress, role overload, and burnout sound the alarm that mental health is a serious issue among today's public-school educators and one that requires immediate attention. The overburdening of classroom teachers through lack of support from administrators, increased workload, decreased resources and increased student violence result in increased teacher isolation, turnover and leaves of absence that negatively impact home, family, and social life. The authors suggest that mental health coping strategies such as mindfulness, increased sense of efficacy, emotional regulation, and self-care can greatly enhance personal and professional well-being. However, none of these coping strategies will be fully attained without an affirmative school culture, supportive administration and colleagues, adequate resources, manageable workloads, community support and meaningful targeted professional development.

Babb, Sokel and Eblie Trudel engaged 1600 Canadian teachers in their study focused on the impact of COVID-19 on teacher burnout and resilience levels as well as job demands and resources. The tsunami of COVID struck public education in Canada catastrophically and forced the majority of classroom teachers into teaching by and through remote technology. The writers identify many of the mental health issues particularly burnout as delineated in the Ferguson, et al. paper commented on above. The researchers found that depersonalization and burnout increased over time but surprisingly teachers reported their sense of accomplishment concurrently increased over the same pandemic period. I applaud the teachers in this study and those across Canada who heard the bell toll and responded to its clarion call in a personal, professional, and relational way for, as, of, and with their students. The authors posit that burnout increases when individual and organizational roles are in opposition or in conflict with each other and reliance increases when individual and organizational roles are supportive and scaffolding of each other. They recommend an alignment of interventions that are most effective when they address structural causes of burnout and include multiple levels of appropriate response and do not treat individuals in the same way. Unlike adjustable hat bands, one size does not fit all.

In their paper, Williams, Tingle, Morhan, Vos, Murray, Gereluk and Russell-Mayhew examine teacher burn-out as a pre-existing narrative in pre-service teachers. Their contention is that if a pre-service teacher perceives teaching as a ‘heavy load of emotional labour’ that inevitably leads to burnout and to departure from the profession it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In short, such a perception hard-wires pre-service teachers for failure and convinces them that teachers are inevitably expected to work in a culture of high stress that challenges their ability and capability to cope and ultimately leads them to question their fit for the profession. Williams, et al., found that pre-service teachers who participated in their study have bought into the burn-out narrative and are anticipating stressful working conditions and setting exaggerated expectations for themselves to cope with and eventually fail to achieve the perceived daily demands of their professional role. The writers recommend a toning down of the knell, a call for the disruption of the over-emphasis of burnout narrative and a sounding of the tonality of teaching that establishes an authentic, protagonist voice of personal achievement, self-fulfilment, and longevity in a rewarding and meaningful profession.

The paper, written by Edmundson and Jenson deeply resonated with me as a reader and as an educator who, for the past fifteen years, has espoused in undergraduate and graduate courses the essential importance and necessity of Imagination Creativity Education (ICE). I have often taught my students that if they can get their children/youth to see it, hear it, and do it simultaneously they have achieved 3D facilitation of learning. Edmundson and Jenson in their unique conjoining of the principles of mindfulness and maker-space (making) have introduced readers to an integrated pedagogy that promotes well-being among students and increases their engagement in authentic, deep learning tasks. The merging of conceptual and experiential learning requires the full extension of imagination and creativity as students work in collaborative groups toward the production of a shareable artefact. Some children understandably struggle with mastering the principles of silence and stillness associated with mindfulness but persistence and consistence incrementally leads to a sense of ownership and recognition of the multiple intelligences that serve as a means of artefact production. The writers conclude by sounding the arrival of a new call to examine the merging of mindfulness and maker-spaces into a pedagogy that engages students in an active and exploratory process of designing and building that is often described as ‘tinkering’. And, isn’t tinkering enactive participation in imagination creativity education; and, does the bell not toll for thee?

As a final thought, this is the last Editorial that Nancy Maynes, Thomas Ryan and/or I will write for the Canadian Journal of Education. Our term as Anglophone Editors has run its course and we would like to individually and collectively thank our Managing Editor, Sharon Hu, and the CJE Editorial Board for their consistent support throughout our tenure. But most especially, we want to thank the hundreds of writers who have submitted their scholarly writing to CJE. Without your informed and sustaining endeavours in research and inquiry, we would not have had the wide-ranging topics and informing issues that have graced the pages of our Journal for the past three years. Lastly, we individually and collectively recognize the new Anglophone Editorial Team for CJE from Winnipeg: Ee-Seul Yoon and Jeannie Kerr. We know you will do well and take us as readers of and contributors to CJE down new paths of scholarly inquiry, research, and engaging writing over the next three years. Thank-you for hearing and responding to the clarion call of the CJE bell. Fiat!

Slainte!

Blaine