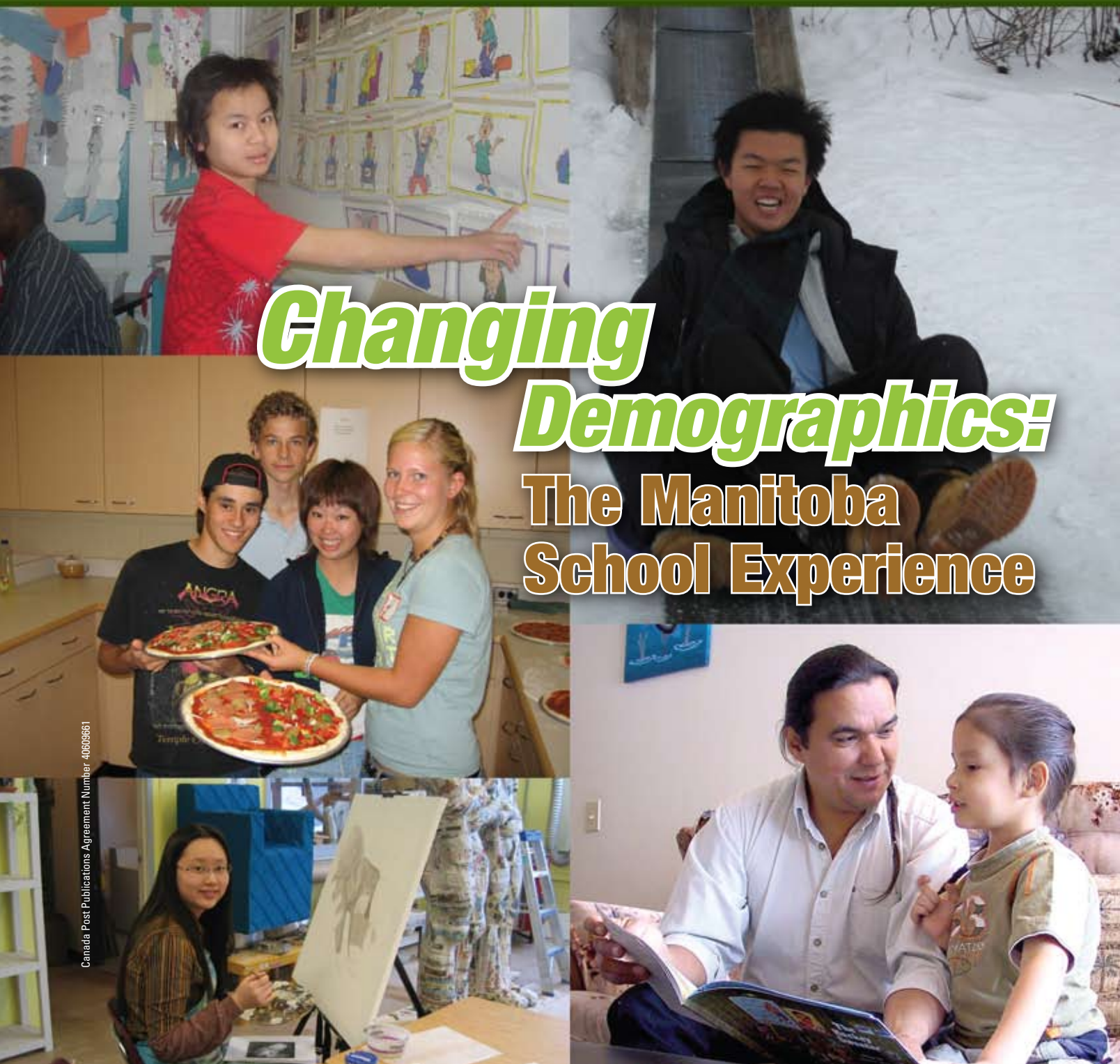
M.A.S.S. Spring 2008
Journal
The official magazine of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents



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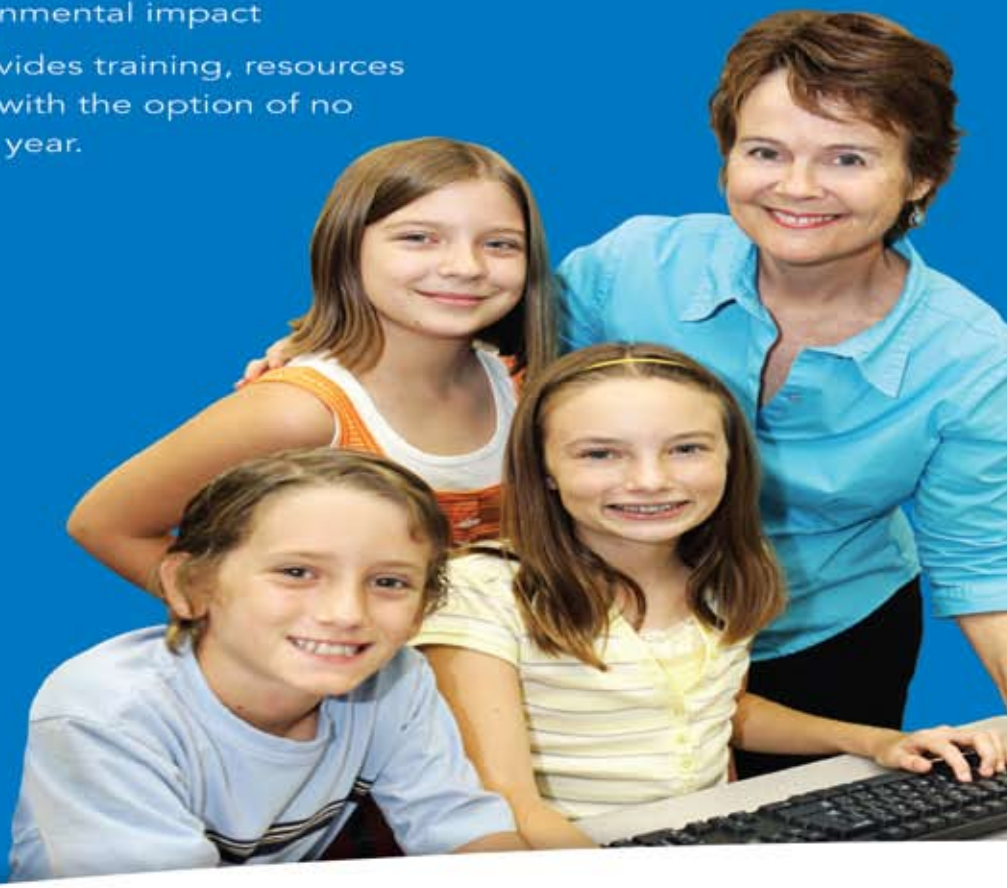

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Spring 2008
Volume 9, Number 1

M.A.S.S. Journal

M.A.S.S. Journal
Published For:
The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
375 Jefferson Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2V 0N3
Phone: (204) 487-7972
Fax: (204) 487-7974
E-mail: coralie.bryant@7oaks.org
Web: www.mass.mb.ca

Published By:
Matrix Group Inc.
Publication Mail Agreement Number 40609661
Return Undeliverable Addresses to:
52 Donald Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1L6
Toll free: (866) 999-1299
Toll free fax: (866) 244-2544

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On the Cover:

Public education in Manitoba is facing serious challenges. One of the most significant is the overriding reality of a declining population in both rural and urban communities. This, accompanied by an increase in immigration and a growing Aboriginal population, has created a never before seen educational environment to which school divisions have had to adapt. This issue of the M.A.S.S. Journal explores these issues, as well as offers home-grown Manitoba solutions from divisions across the province.

Peter Bjornson

Minister
Manitoba Education,
Citizenship and Youth

Ministre de l'Éducation,
de la Citoyenneté et de la
Jeunesse du Manitoba

A Message from the Minister

Congratulations to the members of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents for the ongoing responsibility you take in administering a public school system that consistently ranks highly among industrialized nations. Your contributions are essential in meeting the needs of Manitobans for a stable, affordable and accessible public education system.

Few career choices could be more meaningful than inspiring young people and seeing that they are empowered with the knowledge they need to become the leaders of tomorrow. I truly believe that quality public education is an institution fundamental to maintaining our democratic society. All Manitobans appreciate your accountability to your communities and your ongoing efforts to provide safe and productive learning environments.

I look forward to continuing and productive relationships with Manitoba's school superintendents as we work together on keeping education universal and sustainable for our citizens.

Message du ministre

Membres de la Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, je tiens à vous féliciter du travail que vous accomplissez en assumant la responsabilité continue de gérer un système d'écoles publiques qui se classe systématiquement parmi les meilleurs dans les pays industrialisés. Votre apport est essentiel pour répondre aux besoins de la population manitobaine d'un système d'éducation public stable, abordable et accessible.

Peu de professions sont plus valorisantes que celles qui donnent de l'inspiration aux jeunes et qui les enrichissent du savoir dont ils auront besoin pour devenir les leaders de demain. Je crois fermement qu'un système d'éducation public de qualité est fondamental à la préservation de notre société démocratique. L'ensemble de la population manitobaine apprécie votre responsabilité envers vos communautés et vos efforts soutenus d'assurer des milieux d'apprentissage sûrs et productifs.

Je me réjouis à la perspective de cultiver des relations productives et durables avec les directeurs généraux des écoles du Manitoba, alors que nous travaillerons ensemble dans le but de maintenir, pour les Manitobains, le caractère universel et accessible de notre système d'éducation.

Manitoba

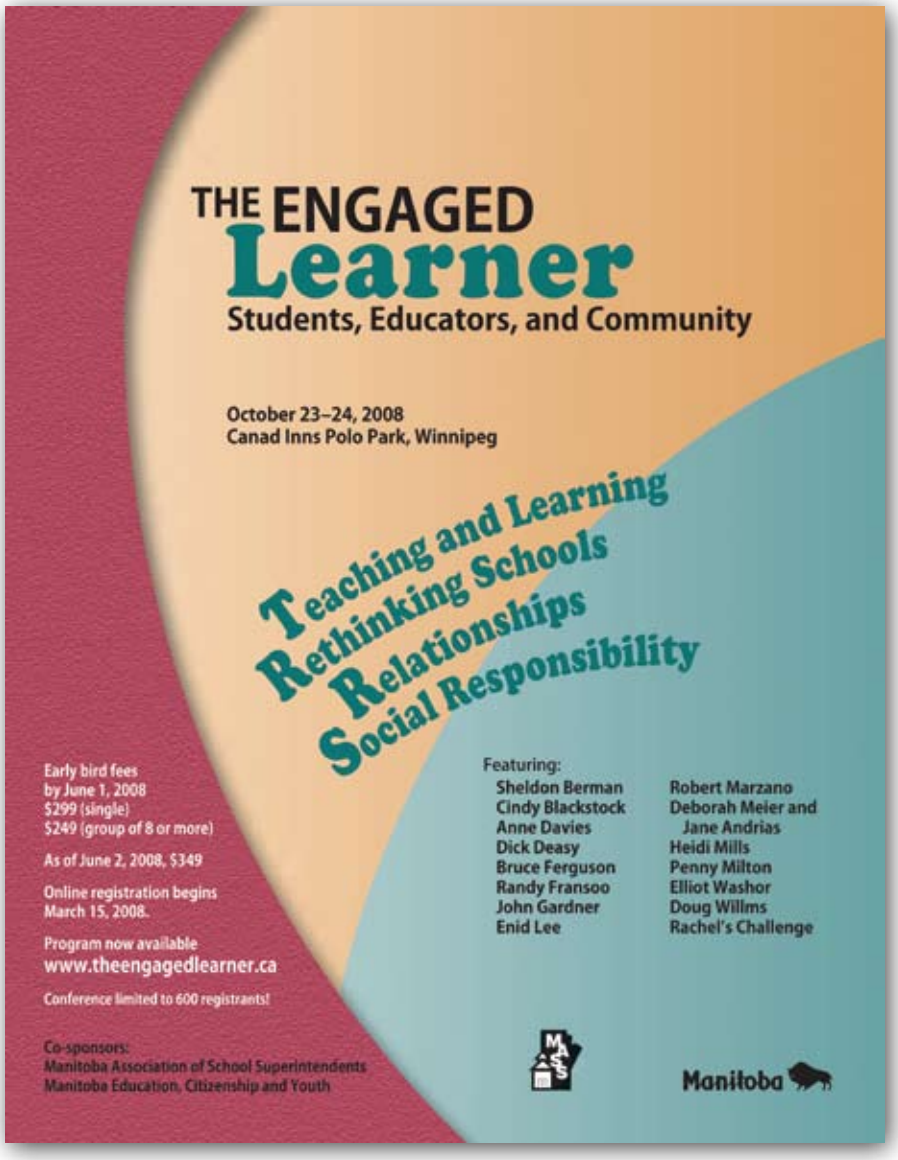
Lawrence Lussier
President of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents

This edition of the MASS Journal challenges all in educational leadership positions to consider the adaptations needed in education to respond to changing demographics in the years ahead. Our thinking is informed by our current demographic situation, our history and our projections as to future realities. We have seen a general decline in student enrolment in Manitoba over the years. The literature tells us that this rate of decline will be slowed and its direction reversed through the effects of two main factors: immigration, and the rising aboriginal population. International migration to Manitoba at a rate that currently exceeds 10,000 per year is planned to be increased to 20,000 per year by 2016. The Aboriginal population in Manitoba is expected to increase by 25 per cent between 2006 and 2017. An additional factor to consider is the intra-provincial migration from rural areas to cities, causing rural de-population.

The varying number of students we serve is only one of the demographic factors to be considered by the adaptive educational leader. Think about the pressures on schools to adjust to the escalation in the numbers of students with mental health issues, severe behavioural issues, and profound special needs. Consider the fact that international migration results in significant increases in the number of students requiring English as an Additional Language instruction, some of whom have limited school experience and have been affected by war in their country of origin. Ponder the reports which tell us that too many Manitoba children continue to experience a level of child poverty that is unacceptable. These are only a few of the pressures that currently push schools to the limits of their capabilities and challenge us to creative adaptations for the future.

As you read through the various articles of this edition of the MASS journal on changing demographics, I encourage you to meet the challenges of the future with hope and to create new ways of nurturing learning in this changing environment.

Lawrence Lussier



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Rural Education in Manitoba:
Defining Challenges, Creating Solutions

Jointly produced by The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents and The Manitoba Association of School Trustees

INTRODUCTION

Public education everywhere in Manitoba and indeed across North America faces serious challenges. This is especially true in areas where significant economic and cultural changes have made rural communities, and the educational systems within them, particularly vulnerable. "Rural communities have become peripheral to the world economy" [Wallin], and with the decline in Canadian dependence on the rural economy has come economic instability, dwindling populations and increasing levels of poverty in rural and remote communities.

Shifting economies and increased immigration to some communities have created bulges in enrolment and a tremendous need for educational resources. The change in demographics includes a burgeoning Aboriginal population and issues for aboriginal reserves and band-operated as well as provincial schools. Amalgamation of school divisions over the past ten years together with decline in rural population has led to a reduced sense of community ownership and community voice. Society's increasing reliance on technology as a vehicle for communication and access to information affords opportunities, but access is uneven. The decline in rural economies has resulted in greater inequities in commercial assessment and in Manitoba, therefore, increasing pressure on local property tax levies for the support of public schools.

A discernible shift in Canadian society—to a stance of individualism over community and the perception of education increasingly as a private rather than a public good—appears to limit the options before us. Indeed, there is a significant decline in public support for public institutions generally, including public schools. But that is in itself a challenge that must be met head-on. And while urban and rural alike share that reality as well as other issues in common, the challenges are particularly acute in rural areas with less capacity to draw on resources.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to name the particular challenges faced by rural school divisions and to identify actions which might be taken to address them. In so doing, and recognizing that these challenges are all important and in many instances inter-related, no effort has been made to suggest any order of priority among them.

CHALLENGES

Social values and public attitudes.

Periods of rapid social and economic change are often characterized by significant shifts in social values and public attitudes in multiple arenas. In the realm of public education, these forces have extended the role of teachers far beyond the realm of academic instruction (Elkind, 2001) and often made public schools the scapegoat for all of the social ills within the broader communities which they serve (Manafo, 2006).

More specifically:

- School programs and service mandates continue to expand to address student learning needs with regard to social and emotional behaviours, physical and mental well-being, physical and cognitive disabilities, cultural diversity and social inclusion, human sexuality, life skills acquisition, technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills development, etc.;
- Increasing population diversity has the effect of multiplying demands and expectations and rendering consensus and agreement on shared priorities more difficult to achieve;
- Schools in rural and remote regions of the province often have neither the fiscal nor the human resource capacity to respond fully and adequately and sometimes not at all to these expanding program and service mandates and expectations;
- Large segments of the population are disconnected from Manitoba's public schools and have little understanding of the realities and challenges in public education and object to the increasing costs of program and service delivery to meet expanded education mandates;
- There is declining trust in and support for public institutions, including public schools, and a growing perception among citizens that "private" is more effective, efficient and less costly than "public"; and
- There is growing resistance to property taxation and local school board taxing authority in support of public schools.

Infrastructure needs

Dwindling population numbers in some regions and the influx of significant new immigrant populations in others have created both boom and bust scenarios in many rural school divisions. Emerging infrastructure concerns include facilities, technology and transportation systems.

- With population declines, correspondingly reduced enrolment numbers threaten the viability of many small schools. Additionally, projections of declining enrolments call into question the advisability of significant investments in facilities renewal initiatives.
- In some rural divisions experiencing population increases, there are insufficient instructional and ancillary spaces to accommodate all students.
- As school buildings become filled to capacity or closed due to enrolment declines, students must be bussed even greater distances to the next nearest school facility. Transportation costs continue to increase, as do length of routes and rider times for students.
- Lacking a coordinated provincial

strategy for technology infrastructure and connectivity across the province, opportunities are limited for cross-divisional partnering around course development and delivery for students and professional development for teachers. For the most part, divisions work independently of one another in these areas and the potential for economies of scale are therefore reduced or limited.

Recruitment and retention of qualified staff

The most important determinant of student learning is the classroom teacher, and yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and to retain qualified teaching staff in rural school divisions.

- Many rural school divisions cannot provide the same "amenities" offered by larger, more urban divisions and teachers are therefore often hesitant to relocate to rural areas.
- Owing to lack of critical mass, school configurations and classroom groupings in rural school divisions often necessitate that teachers be assigned "out of field" or in challenging contexts which may create health and wellness issues for individuals.
- Teachers in rural divisions are often more isolated than their urban counterparts and have fewer opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in same grade levels or subject area specializations.
- Professional development opportunities for educators are often more limited in rural and remote areas and participation costs greater where travel to other locations/centres is required.
- Rural divisions are frequently unsuccessful in attracting specialist teachers in particular subject or service areas, resulting in engagement of "non-certified" individuals or position vacancies and reduced program/service options for students.

Jurisdictional and policy issues

Creative and innovative approaches to the challenges experienced by many rural school divisions necessitate local freedom and flexibility to explore options, pursue partnerships and institute changes geared to addressing the uniqueness and particularities of any given situation.

- Mandates and policies of community agencies and government departments sometimes prohibit resource sharing and collaboration between school divisions and other entities.
- Research about effective policy in other jurisdictions is not always readily available or easily accessible to inform decision-making at local school division and community levels.
- Monitoring and tracking processes are not sufficiently well developed in many instances to assess the effectiveness of new policy directions and/or program innovations in rural school division settings.
- New provincial policy directions and legislative changes may necessitate increased workload and expenditures in school divisions, but provincial financial support is often absent or inadequate.
- Gaps in inter-departmental communication and coordination at the provincial level sometimes result in confusing and/or contradictory direction to school divisions.

TOWARD SOLUTIONS

The complex challenges facing rural school divisions in Manitoba, in many instances, surpass both the authority and/or the capacity of individual school divisions to respond fully and adequately. Collaboration among school divisions, the provincial Government and community agencies is essential to the articulation and implementation of effective strategies and actions which will ensure a high quality of educational opportunity for all students in rural and remote areas of our province. While not an exhaustive list, the following ideas provide a beginning point for discussion of possibilities and alternatives for consideration.

For local school divisions

- Develop a comprehensive program to educate constituents about the value of public education, the current realities in Manitoba schools, the importance of local control in education matters, and the necessity of local property tax revenues to support programs and services delivery;
- Explore partnership models and the creation of cooperatives to address services and programming needs; and
- Engage in action research, data collection and on-going tracking to assess the impacts of provincial education policy and initiatives in rural and remote schools in the province.

For the provincial government

- Develop a revised equalization formula which captures more effectively the geographic and financial disparities among school divisions;
- Articulate and implement a provincial strategy to provide broad-band width access in all school divisions and communities;
- Increase consultant capacity within Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth to service rural and remote divisions which lack consultants and specialist teachers;
- Review and revise provincial policies and ministry department mandates which impede inter-organizational collaboration and joint initiatives;
- Provide adequate financial resources to school divisions to support full implementation of provincial education policy directions (i.e. appropriate education, community schools, additional required physical education/health credits at grades 11 and 12);
- Revise certification requirements which prevent employment of qualified education professionals from jurisdictions outside of Manitoba; and
- Increase flexibility for local school divisions in the management and delivery of education programs (i.e. school day, school week, vacation schedules).

For school divisions, government and post-secondary sector

- Work collaboratively to address issues of teacher preparation and recruitment and retention of qualified education professionals at all levels;
- Provide increased professional development opportunities and supports for aspiring school and divisional administrators (i.e. mentorship programs);
- Consider incentive programs to develop candidates and retain

professional staff in "hard-to-fill" positions;
- Utilize research expertise in universities and government department to collect and analyse data and to inform discussions about potential solutions to identified challenges; and
- Develop and provide appropriate professional development opportunities to address emerging social and demographic trends/changes (i.e. aboriginal issues, immigrant and war-affected students, aggressive and bullying behaviour).

For education stakeholder organizations

- Work to ensure internal organizational cohesion on requests of the recommendations to the provincial Government;
- Share information, data and perspectives to develop consensus and ensure coordinated lobby on education issues of common concern; and
- Create and implement a public relations campaign to increase understanding of and support for local education governance and retention of meaningful taxing authority for school boards.

CONCLUSION

Given the complexity of education systems and the diversity of school divisions and communities across Manitoba, there is no single answer or solution to the various dilemmas and challenges confronting public education in rural and remote regions of our province. Rather, effective responses to the challenges outlined in this discussion paper must be tailored to the particular realities of individual circumstances. While provincial policy direction and resource supports to school divisions may be generic in nature and apply broadly to all jurisdictions, it is more importantly the creativity and collaboration among local school authorities and community organizations and agencies which will shape the strategies and actions to ensure robust and high quality public school education in all rural Manitoba school divisions. School boards and divisional administrators must assume a critical leadership role in marshalling community support and facilitating meaningful community engagement in the quest for solutions to the pressing needs and challenges of rural education in Manitoba. ■

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Respecting Rural Education: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth's Commitments to Teaching and Learning in Rural Manitoba

By Jean-Vianney Auclair

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) believes that every student in the province should have the opportunity to access a high quality education. In this regard, MECY identifies and sets priorities on issues and concerns in partnership with its education stakeholders. The continuing and significant decline in enrolment province-wide, and the correlating issue of dispersed populations in many rural school divisions have been identified as the priorities needing to be addressed respecting rural education.

Rural schools experience a particular challenge because of population sparsity. This has become a concern in Manitoba (and across Canada) as student enrolments continue to decline. Many rural schools are finding it increasingly difficult to operate in a traditional manner because of low enrolments and the steady decline of student numbers.

Background

Over the past decade, education stakeholders have raised concerns regarding the equitable distribution of and the sustainability of services provided to rural Manitoba, and considerable effort on the part of Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth has been made to address these challenges. Because of out-migration in most rural areas and the subsequent decline of their economies, particular attention has been paid to small rural and remote Manitoba schools. There have been numerous discussions among educational stakeholders on improving educational opportunities for all K–12 students, as well as ensuring these opportunities are distributed equitably.

Although a small number of rural school divisions in Manitoba are growing because of immigration, most school divisions, whether in rural, northern, or urban areas, have been experiencing a steady decline in enrolment for a number of years. In many rural and northern school divisions, declining enrolment has been persistent and significant. Enrolment has declined by an average of 1 per cent per year since 2003 and is projected to decline by 1.3 per cent annually to 2011 with about two-thirds of divisions expected to decline by more than the average.

Activities

The following activities over the past two years have generated ideas and provided information that have been fundamental to the development of an MECY rural education action plan:

- MECY has been participating in a number of partnership efforts to address these challenges, including initiating discussions with partner organizations such as the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees (MAST).
- MASS has created a rural education committee that includes representation from MAST and MECY.
- MASS commissioned Dr. Dawn Wallin from the University of Manitoba to present a research paper on rural education for discussion at the annual MASS Summer Institute in August 2006.
- MASS, MAST, and MECY collaborated through the Manitoba Education Research Network (MERN) on a rural education research forum, held at Brandon University in November 2006.
- MECY held a Rural Education Roundtable, facilitated by the Rural Development Institute, in January 2007. MASS and MAST shared a position paper as a basis for discussion and many partners contributed ideas for new directions.
- MECY hosted a Rural Education Seminar at the April 2007 Rural Forum, where challenges and opportunities were discussed with over 150 participants.
- MECY is co-sponsoring a research project, in partnership with the Canadian Council on Learning, to investigate and examine further actions that may be taken to address issues related to declining enrolment.

Impacts on policy, funding and planning

MECY has consulted with partners to discuss challenges facing rural education in the context of their impact on policy, funding, and planning. A number of policy-related issues were noted in these consultations, but the central concern was the perception that provincial policies and practices occasionally create challenges and barriers that impede the local resolution of problems. It was also noted that aspects of current funding can cause difficulties.

For instance, areas of declining student population can be negatively affected by enrolment-based funding in that such funding goes up or down depending on the number of funded pupils. However, when student population declines, not all costs decrease at a similar rate.

MECY attempts to mitigate the effects of enrolment-based funding in a number of ways. Previous-year enrolment is used for base grant purposes so that there is no in-year funding loss when enrolment declines. There is also a decreasing enrolment grant to further assist in the transition. A Formula Guarantee grant ensures that each division receives at least a 2 per cent increase (2008/09) in formula funding which further mitigates decline enrolment impacts. Also, a Small Schools Grant provides funding to assist divisions with the costs associated with small schools.

This funding model includes factors to account for sparsity and distance in a number of areas. Transportation funding changes have been applied more to distance factors rather than enrolment factors to sustain transportation funding in divisions with declining enrolment.

The Equalization grant now uses a moving average enrolment for per-pupil assessment calculation purposes.

Focus areas

As a result of these MECY activities, five focus areas have been identified as offering potential opportunities for partnership and innovation:

1. *The learning experience:* Given an increasingly diverse student population, rural education must strive to offer individualized instruction. Content and strategies must be tailored to students' interests and needs.
2. *Schools are integral to the broader community and to rural revitalization:* In facing the identified challenges, schools must consider re-defining their priorities and be flexible in program delivery when faced with the loss of the "critical mass" needed to provide schooling in traditional ways. The local community context must also be considered with respect to the meaning of rural, and finally, joining the dialogue on rural revitalization is necessary for school divisions to ensure that they are among the considerations in community planning. Expanding the joint use of community infrastructure, and collaborating with MECY to identify and work to remove cross-sector barriers at the community level are other activities school divisions may want to consider.
3. *Educational culture:* To meet the challenge to create and sustain a strong learning culture in rural communities, schools must maintain an inclusive process in their planning and create the sense that the school is the centre of, and a major contributor to, community life. As schools are facing broader catchment areas, it is increasingly challenging to create schools that are safe, welcoming, and familiar for students and parents, while maintaining a stable staff complement.
4. *Infrastructure:* Community partnerships are required to support connectivity and a provincial data network, to effectively plan for innovative and multiple-use facilities, and to ensure the most effective usage of this new infrastructure.
5. *Dealing with change:* Key initiatives to help schools as they deal with change include fostering collaboration among all levels of government, establishing threshold numbers for program and service delivery, improving provincial interdepartmental policy coordination, revising education funding, re-examining the breadth of a school's mandate to do what is reasonable and achievable, and establishing partnerships with the post-secondary sector.

MECY commitments

Having identified these focus areas, MECY has made commitments to address the issues related to rural education with a variety of actions including the following:

- Work with school divisions to enhance distance learning opportunities for students;
- Work with schools and school divisions to provide more professional development to better support the needs of teachers in remote communities;
- Hire professional staff dedicated to assisting rural school and school division staff in designing and implementing programming for students with special needs; and

- Work with school divisions and communities to ensure the most efficient and effective use of surplus school space.

Although the Manitoba education system is often recognized for the extent of collaboration among its partners, specific consideration for collaborative planning is integral to address rural education challenges. The research and discussions cited earlier raise a number of collaboration challenges. For example, it is clear that rural leaders value a holistic community approach to addressing local challenges. Educational issues should not be isolated from such issues as community development and economics, recreation, culture, social services, and health. MECY is prepared to research and plan across these areas in the hopes of facilitating the dialogue on local educational needs into the more global discussion of a local community.

Conclusion

There are a number of issues, concerns, questions, and challenges regarding rural education in Manitoba that have become better defined through discussion and dialogue with education stakeholders. MECY has responded to these discussions and dialogues by developing a plan of action that will be shared with education partners in spring 2008. MECY's annual planning will continue to reflect a consultative approach and systematic implementation of cross-government, cross-sector strategies and partnership solutions.

This article has conveyed the shared concerns, questions, and challenges respecting rural education in Manitoba. The intent here is to continue a dialogue focused on practical solutions and to encourage educational partners to participate in discussions, to consider both current and proposed practices, and to make productive suggestions that MECY can turn into a plan of action. The greater the consensus and partnership amongst education partners there is, the greater success as an educational community, we will have.

Notes

1. Dr. Wallin's brief to the MASS 2006 Summer Institute hypothesized that rural communities become increasingly vulnerable as their educational leaders attempt to implement "standardized (and standardizing) provincial requirements" as opposed to responding to local context and needs. Her major recommendation was that both the provincial government and local communities make every effort to work in a collective, collaborative fashion that respects the more holistic nature of rural communities.
2. The MASS and MAST (2006) paper, "Rural Education in Manitoba: Defining Challenges, Creating Solutions," was distributed at the January 2007 Rural Education Roundtable. The paper identified the major challenge areas as:
   - Social values and public attitudes;
   - Infrastructure needs;
   - Recruitment and retention of qualified staff; and
   - Jurisdictional and policy issues.

Jean-Vianney Auclair is an Assistant Deputy Minister, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Immigration and its Impact on Schools in **Hanover School Division**

By Val Schellenberg

The faces, sights, sounds and even some canteen choices are changing in Hanover schools. In just ten years, our EAL student population has grown from 23 to 1201 students. Non-English speaking new students are identified as EAL (English as an Additional Language) and are funded for their first four years. Over these ten years, more than 3000 students in HSD have been identified as EAL learners. This recent influx of non-English speaking students into our classrooms has presented new challenges and opportunities for our teachers to extend their professional skills. As well, our Canadian-born students now have the opportunity to expand their world view by learning with and from classmates who come from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Four years ago, Hanover was the ninth largest school division in the province. Our division has grown by 25 per cent over the last ten years and is now the sixth largest in the province, due mainly to this new wave of immigration. Hanover now has one of the largest EAL populations in Manitoba, second only to Winnipeg S.D.

Newcomer demographic

Hanover is now the largest rural school division in Manitoba. Many newcomers have come to Hanover, Garden Valley, Western, Seine River and Sunrise school divisions explicitly because of their rural environment. Although the Steinbach Immigrant Settlement Program has identified forty-nine source countries for our newcomers, over half have arrived from Germany and a large percentage of these German newcomer families had only resided in Germany for a few years after moving from Russia.

Many families decided to come to southern Manitoba because our rural area offered what they could not find in Germany—something similar to what they had experienced and valued in Russia. The settlement workers have indicated that the farming countryside and the opportunity to live on a small acreage, with a large house for a growing family, a small barn for animals and a place to store wood for the winter, is similar to the rural environment in Russia and supports the lifestyle these families desire. As well, the proximity to opportunities for hunting in the Sandilands Forest and fishing in nearby lakes and rivers is very important to their love of nature. Furthermore, the Mennonite German-Russian history and language, along with the conservative culture and religion still found in this region, are familiar and attractive to many newcomers. These are the lifestyles and the values that many parents are hoping to preserve in their children's education and their families' futures.

Another smaller group of German speaking newcomers that also finds southern Manitoba attractive is a group of families coming from Central and South America. They often have family ties to our area and tend to settle near where these families can support each other. As this cluster of families is predominant in one of our communities, the schools there are finding ways to support these students and families in unique ways tailored to the specific needs of many of these households.

The MB Provincial Nominee Program is attracting skilled workers to ease the labour shortage in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, transportation, and farming in our region. Local companies are even recruiting foreign workers and facilitating their immigration. Professional and skilled workers and their families come from the Pacific Rim, the United Kingdom, India, Africa, Asia and elsewhere, bringing many different languages and cultures with them. Some families are also coming for post-secondary studies and intend to return to their home country after a parent has completed their term of study at a local seminary.

Getting to know our newcomer students

Specific planning for instruction and learning begins by taking into account the prior experiences, background knowledge, literacy skills in a first language, academic strengths and challenges of each individual student. Although all of this is difficult to assess when students first arrive, teachers soon recognize through personal contact and observations where their instruction needs to begin.

We need to be aware of the kind of school experiences associated with countries where students have come from. This would include such things as instructional methods, the use of English in schools, what emphasis is placed on academic content and literacy skills, the level of expectation

regarding student behaviour in schools and the degree of parental involvement. We also need to be aware of cultural and family values and expectations that can influence our students' motivation for social integration and academic success.

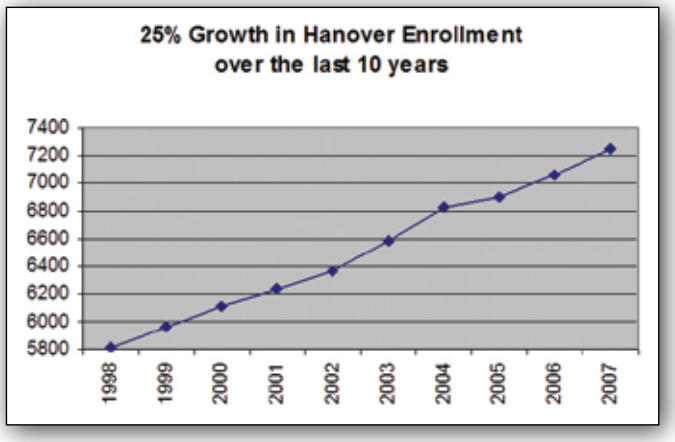
Our student demographic differs from Winnipeg schools in that our rural region does not currently include a large number of recent refugees. Since most of our current EAL students do not come from refugee camp or war-affected backgrounds, they generally have experience with some kind of formal or home schooling. They arrive with a range of English language skills, academic content knowledge, literacy skills, and behavioural patterns. As well, some students come with special learning needs that are difficult to assess when there is no common language for communication. Since appropriate instruction begins with knowing the strengths, challenges and background schooling experiences of each student, MECY is encouraging schools to develop an Education Plan that outlines the educational background and skills of each student and the teachers' goals for that student.

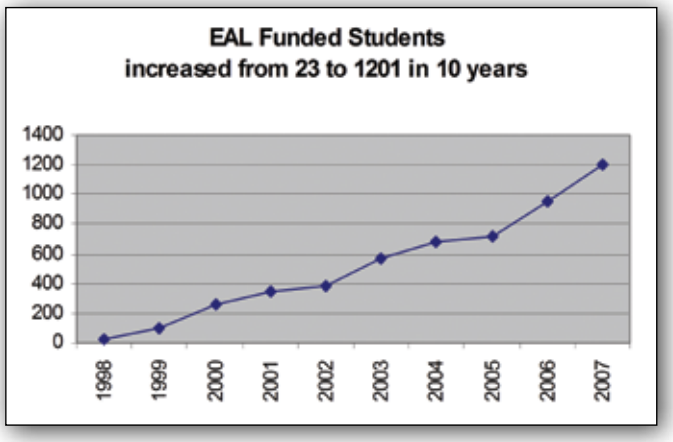
Hanover's approach to support

The recent influx of non-English speaking students required a response from all levels of our divisional structure. HSD Board of Trustees, superintendents and school administrators have endeavoured to provide support for teachers, newcomer students and their families in several ways.

At first, Student Services discussed the needs of language learners with resource teachers and provided time for educational assistants to work with students in schools where there were several non-English speaking students. As newcomers began to arrive in increasing numbers and with the help of funding from the province, a formula was put in place to provide EA time according to the number of newcomers in each school. In schools where there are a large number of EAL students, principals can choose to acquire an EAL teacher in place of educational assistants. This system, which allots EAL funds in a transparent and clearly defined way but with some flexibility at the school level, seems to be working well. The percentage of EAL students in our 17 schools ranges from 0 to 38 per cent of the student population. Approximately half of our schools have chosen to hire a half-time EAL teacher.

In 2004, an EAL Curriculum Support Teacher (CST) was hired to provide direction and support for administrators, teachers, EAs, EAL students and their families, as well as to liaise with the Steinbach Immigrant Settlement Program and MECY. The EAL CST also participates in various working groups within MECY, such as: the MB EAL Curriculum Framework development team, MB EAL Advisory group, Divisional EAL Leaders group and EAL Learning Resources reviews. Participation in these areas provides the broad base of knowledge and networking required to effectively guide administrators, teachers and EAs who are working with culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse learners.





Since a majority of our newcomers come from one language group, we have taken the opportunity to create and provide supports for students and families in the German language, such as:

- *A Handbook for Newcomers; a Guide to Success in our Schools* includes information on general school culture and expectations, such as the use of: computers, field trips, group and project work and extra-curricular events;
- Registration, immunization and consent forms for Internet use and participation in field trips and the divisional Grade 2 swim program;
- "Language Development" report cards and reporting comments; and
- Brochures covering topics such as bussing regulations and behaviour expectations, and study skills.

Professional learning opportunities led by the EAL CST for classroom teachers, EAL and resource teachers, administrators and EAs, include:

- In-servicing to highlight language learning background information, cultural awareness and appropriate instructional strategies and materials;
- *Hanover EAL Guidelines* with suggested procedures for reception, orientation, initial assessment, instructional differentiations, reporting and beginning language learning lessons;
- EAL web page on the Hanover website that includes informational and procedural documents, report cards, and other documents for downloading; and
- EAL CST blog (http://eslcst.blogspot.com) which includes topics such as, "What's a teacher to do?" and provides links to numerous useful teacher and student web sites.

A very important part of on-going support is provided through our Hanover EAL Team. The EAL teacher or resource teacher responsible for EAL students in each school is part of this vital team that meets several times through-out the year to share information, concerns, procedural and classroom teacher support strategies and instructional materials. Classroom teachers in each school can readily turn to their EAL Team member for assistance who can in turn receive support from the CST and this broader network.

Classroom teachers

More than anything else, educators want to feel confident in their respective roles. Administrators, EAL or resource teachers and classroom teachers want to know that their approach to supporting language learners is grounded in what we know about language learning and what we know is appropriate practice for accelerating language, literacy and academic learning.

The first step to our collective learning was to recognize that when working with EAL students, we need to briefly set aside the pressing concern for teaching and learning and begin our work with newcomers by lowering the "affective filter". Stephen Krashen (1982) introduced this term to remind us of the need to reduce the anxiety that is a barrier to learning for students when they are confronted with an unfamiliar school culture, confusing schedules and expectations, and an often incomprehensible language.

Teachers must do everything possible to ease this very disorienting transition by ensuring that newcomers feel welcomed and valued by their classmates and school staff. Then, in order to prepare for effective teaching and learning, teachers need to get to know something about the cultural, linguistic, academic and experiential background of each student. The notion of allowing new students the time for a "silent period" (Krashen, 1982) before they are ready to participate orally was the beginning of a steep learning curve for teachers new to working with EAL learners.

The next step for teachers was to realize that the written social studies test being given to the whole class was inappropriate for beginning language learners. Teachers needed to recognize the very real need to get to know their EAL students, giving them time to adjust to the new environment and to acquire some English skills before being able to determine how to differentiate instruction appropriately. After several years of working with large numbers of EAL students, teachers have come through their own informal action research experience and are much more relaxed and confident in their skills to differentiate instruction effectively.

The anxiety that many teachers felt when first introduced to non-English speaking students in their classes has now been replaced with genuine respect for how quickly newcomers can learn and succeed in social contexts and academic class work.

On-going challenge

Our major challenge is one that was highlighted in the fall M.A.S.S. Journal, entitled, *High School Completion: The Challenge of Success for All.* We are concerned for students arriving during the senior high years. They often need to work to help support their families financially but their work schedules interfere with the already over-whelming task of acquiring credits for graduation in a new language within a very short time frame. MECY is preparing a guide to programming options for high school and young adult EAL speakers to address this concern.

Conclusion

In just ten years, Hanover S.D. has grown dramatically in numbers of students and staff as well as in experience, knowledge and understanding of the challenges and opportunities that a culturally diverse student population brings. We look forward to celebrating the success of all our newcomer learners as they become multi-lingual, multi-literate and multi-cultural. While our newcomers are adding English to their repertoire of skills, all of our students are acquiring new relationships and a new respect for peoples and cultures from around the world. ■

Val Schellenberg is EAL Curriculum Support Teacher for Hanover School Division.

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Manitoba Schools and Linoleum: a Natural Fit

The natural advantages of linoleum have made it the flooring material of choice in recent years, particularly in public buildings such as schools, hospitals and shopping malls. An all-natural product, linoleum is made from Canadian linseed oil, tree rosin, wood flour, limestone and jute.

Thanks to its organic roots, linoleum offers significant health and environmental advantages. Unlike vinyl or VCT (vinyl composite tile), for instance, linoleum doesn't emit hazardous fumes and is completely biodegradable. And unlike many other flooring surfaces, linoleum prohibits the growth of several disease-causing bacteria and fungi. The environmental benefits of linoleum flooring can also help buildings earn LEED certification—the internationally recognized standard for environmentally sustainable construction practices.

In high-traffic public buildings, linoleum typically outperforms other flooring materials. It lasts longer than vinyl, and costs less to install and maintain than granite or wood. As a resilient material, linoleum is also more comfortable for walking and standing. Thanks to these properties, linoleum is now commonly installed in primary and secondary schools, along with universities and colleges.

Airports, malls and hospitals opt for linoleum

The characteristics of linoleum also made it the obvious choice for a massive expansion project at Montreal's Pierre Elliot Trudeau International Airport. Marmoleum™, a product from Forbo Floor Coverings, now covers some 25,000 square yards—about the size of 2.5 Canadian football fields—of the airport's departure and gate areas.

Le Château, one of Canada's largest clothing retailers, also installs Marmoleum™, particularly in its stores located in malls. Marmoleum™ floors can be found in approximately 80 of the chain's stores. Managers like how Marmoleum™ stands up to heavy traffic without requiring extra maintenance; employees, who tend to spend entire shifts on their feet, appreciate the softness of the floors.

Marmoleum™ is also popular with a growing number of healthcare facilities. The recently completed Alberta Children's Hospital, for instance, includes some 40,000 square feet; the Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre installed 3,000 square feet in 2003. Both facilities took advantage of the material's design attributes—various patterns and colours Marmoleum™ were cut and combined to create handsome and practical designs, such as logos and signs.

The Manitoba flax connection

There's an additional incentive to choose linoleum for construction and renovation projects based in Manitoba: the province is a leading grower of flax, the primary ingredient in Marmoleum™. Canada, the world's leading producer of flax, supplies about 80 percent of the international market. The largest growers by province are Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta, respectively.

As the markets for flax-based products grow, so, too will the social, economic and environmental benefits. At present, approximately 24,000 Canadian farmers grow flax each year; strong demand for this crop boosts local and regional economies.

Flax 2015

To promote the benefits of flax, Forbo has joined with a consortium of other groups, including Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, to create Flax 2015, a non-profit group. Flax 2015 works to increase both supply and demand; it strives to stimulate the markets for flax-based products such as linoleum, and it encourages farmers to adopt efficient methods to grow and harvest flax.

Flax is an incredibly hardy, versatile and valuable crop. Drought- and disease-resistant, flax grows well in a variety of soil conditions and climates. Flax is an essential ingredient in a long list of products—from human and animal foods, to linoleum and paint. The health and nutritional benefits of flax oil have been well documented. Rich in omega 3 fatty acids, flax oil helps to combat heart disease.

The environmental, health and performance advantages of linoleum products such as Marmoleum™ make it the natural choice for Manitoba schools.

Peter McKinnon lives and works in Ottawa.

forbo
FLOORING SYSTEMS

Searching for Sustainable Educational Practices in **Rural Manitoba**

By Jack Sullivan

Communities in the Mountain View School Division engage in dialogue to prepare for the future.

Photos courtesy of the Dauphin Herald.

Mountain View School Division was established by legislation and resolution in the summer of 2002 as part of the restructuring of Manitoba school divisions. There are sixteen schools in the division that encompass various configurations for programs and services for students.

The region now served by Mountain View School Division has maintained a powerful connection to the importance of education for most of its history. Soon after land was cleared and villages created, one room schools were built, teachers were hired and rural settlements became literate.

In the intervening decades, consolidations occurred, school buses were added and educational delivery became more centralized in the towns and villages of the region. The desire and ambition instilled in children meant that many left the region to pursue further education and careers. Now many of the children born in this region no longer live here. Family size has steadily decreased over the past fifty years; the concept of a two parent, mother at home family has all but disappeared. Tracts of rural farmland that once supported numerous large families of school-aged children now support perhaps one or two families (that may or may not have children in school), farming several sections of land.

The population of many of the regions, towns and villages is aging and declining. School-age populations have fallen approximately sixty percent in the last thirty years. At the same time, the world is demanding greater and more intensive preparation of students entering post-secondary education and/or the work place. Mountain View School Division's capacity to respond to this challenge is being systemically eroded by rapidly changing demographics and the lack of economies of scale in many of our schools.

A re-thinking of the kind of schools we need that will embrace and improve student learning is required. The average decline in Mountain View School Division population over the past quarter century is just under two per cent per year. This trend represents a significant management challenge in relation to the delivery of programs and services in the school division. It is worth noting that while overall enrolment is in decline, the aboriginal (status, non-status, Metis, Inuit) population in the division is growing and now exceeds forty percent of the division's total student population.

In the spring of 2006, the Board of Trustees for Mountain View School Division released a discussion paper entitled "*Pathways to Success,*" which proposed a shift from the educational delivery models that were currently operating in the division. It promoted principles of educational planning that invited innovation and vision, while at the same time recognizing the realities of a declining population base and a limited ability to increase revenue required to maintain the status quo. More importantly it advocated for the redistribution of resources to maximize learning opportunities for students.

This draft plan proposed an alternative to the current model used to deliver programs and services to students. It proposed:

- Reducing the number of high schools in the Division to increase program options and services for students;
- Creating seven (7) K-8 community schools;
- Creating a Talent Development Centre that will house both Mountain View High (an alternative and a Student Support Centre; a therapeutic intervention program for behaviourally challenged students);
- Offering a comprehensive curriculum in each school as described in MECY Curriculum and Program documents;

- Providing appropriate support services to enable schools to achieve the highest standards for learner outcomes;
- Maintaining efficient, cost effective maintenance and transportation departments;
- Creating Early Learning and Child Care Centres in each community school as space becomes available;
- Establishing opportunities for partnerships with community groups, industry and government agencies; and
- Developing opportunities to attract International students to Mountain View School Division.

The Pathways to Success discussion paper was intended to generate the ideas, knowledge, leadership and passion necessary for making Mountain View School Division a vibrant, progressive school system that could serve as a model for excellence and sustainability in rural Manitoba.

Many rural school divisions in Manitoba face similar challenges, placing decision-makers with an unenviable task of closing schools. Unlike urban areas where several schools may exist in a given neighbourhood, in a rural setting the next school may be 50 kilometres "down the road." In the eyes of many, when you close the school, you are closing a community.

Recognizing this, it was the desire of Trustees to proceed cautiously with the consultation process. In the fall of 2006, consultative meetings were held in all communities that currently had schools in operation. These meetings were organized utilizing a "town hall" style. Parents and community members had an opportunity to respond to the information contained in the Pathways document.

Communities that perceived they would be largely unaffected by the suggested re-structuring options were for the most part apathetic in regards to turnout and input. On the other hand, communities that viewed the various restructuring scenarios outlined in Pathways as a threat to the continued operation of their school were predictably emotional. All feedback was collated by the Board and another round of meetings was scheduled for the spring of 2007.

In the second round of consultations, the Board presented information related to the issues facing public education, with specific emphasis on how these issues were impacting the delivery of educational programs and services for students in the division. It became obvious that the issues varied greatly from community to community; a more meaningful, non-threatening engagement of communities would be necessary in order to build trust and to have communities better understand the challenges as well as the limited options available to solve them. The current process produced an unintended consequence of placing communities at odds with each other depending on their perceived vulnerability for possible review and closure of their school.

In the summer and fall of 2007, new rounds of consultations were scheduled utilizing a format that marked a significant departure from previous forums. Seven focus groups were established that included students, teachers and parents. Trustees and senior administrators did not play an active role in these focus groups. Secondly, facilitators were chosen from each of the seven largest communities as well as an assigned recorder for each group. Perhaps most interestingly, the make-up of each focus group required that representatives from all communities be included in each unit.

The groups were requested to address three questions around the issues of delivery of high school programs, catchment areas and transportation. These issues had been identified as the "common threads" that evolved from the first two rounds of consultations. The focus groups, which consisted of approximately 120 individuals, met several times in October 2007 and each group prepared a report for the Board of Trustees. Once the focus groups completed their work, each facilitator formally presented their report to Trustees at a duly-called Special Board meeting, held in November 2007.

Trustees held a series of meetings to study the feedback from the focus groups with the intent of responding to the community prior to the end of the calendar year. On December 21, 2007, the Board of Trustees released a report to the community. Even though there were seven focus groups operating independently of one another, there were essentially three similar directions the groups advised the Board to consider as it moves forward in their decision making.

The Board was first of all advised to pursue **technological solutions** to assist particularly small high schools in accessing the necessary credit options required to fulfill graduation requirements. It was generally agreed that technology was a better approach to ensuring that students gain the course offerings they require as compared to transporting students to other locations a long distance from their home community.

As part of the recommendations, it was conveyed that the medium to be used should be video conferencing as opposed to the web-based course offerings in use by some schools. However, this recommendation also advised the board that it should do what is necessary to make technology a viable option for course delivery. Included in that would be the adjusting of timetables throughout the division so a common timetable would be in place to better facilitate the use of technology. This would require a harmonizing of student timetables in all six high schools. In

essence one virtual high school is created in six separate buildings, in six distinct communities.

Secondly, the recommendations from the focus groups requested the Board to address the **transportation of students** within the division. The Board had proposed that an alternative approach to the transporting of students be investigated. It called for a maximum length of bus rides to be no longer than one hour through the possible introduction of a feeder bus system. The focus groups were generally supportive of altering the transportation system to enable shorter bus rides by using a feeder system or additional routes. Secondly, while some Mountain View students are given the option of transportation for vocational programming not offered within their home school, not all students are. It was strongly recommended that the Board address this need for students in all areas of the division.

The last common recommendation to the Board from the focus groups was in regards to the **school catchment areas**. The board raised the option for the groups to consider the changing of catchment areas through either redrawing them or eliminating them all together. The prevalent response from focus groups was that the current configuration of school catchment areas should remain as they are. Adjustments or elimination of current boundaries would create an unmanageable situation for an already complicated transportation system.

In preparing the 2008/2009 budget, The Board of Trustees approved the restructuring of Division Schools into K-8/9-12 arrangements; this restructuring may take several years to achieve in the City of Dauphin due to "bricks and mortar" issues. The concept of K-8/9-12 schools has strong support in all communities served by MVSD. Beginning in September 2008, the six high schools in the Division will have harmonized schedules, enabling students to access credits offered by teachers in other divisional schools. The Board's transportation review committee will examine transportation links within the division to enable improved accessibility to vocational education programs. In addition, Mountain View School Division's International Education program expects to welcome 75 high school students in September 2008, and another 75 beginning in the second semester, February (2009). It is anticipated that this influx of students will help stabilize high school populations in the division.

The community consultation process will continue, with a particular emphasis on strategies to sustain the viability of high schools. The Board of Trustees has agreed to review their Long Term Planning document with its recommended parameters which would automatically cause a school to be placed on a list for review and possible closure. Current procedures will be reviewed as part of the Board's continued dialogue with the community.

Perhaps the most significant positive outcome from the Pathways to Success consultations is the recognition that the challenges confronted in Mountain View School Division do not solely belong to The Board of Trustees; rather the challenges are recognized as a shared

responsibility with the community. There is also a realization that solutions are both complex and elusive.

It remains to be seen whether the strategies being implemented as a result of the consultation process will produce the desired outcomes. That being said, there is a renewed interest in developing and expanding partnerships to strengthen community economic development initiatives. Already a number of communities have begun the process of implementing immigration programs to help rebuild their local economies while attracting young families to live in their community. Further, communities are excited about welcoming more International students, recognizing that we live in a global community and that an International component will enrich the educational experience for all concerned.

The ideas generated by the Pathways to Success consultations have become a catalyst for creating the vision necessary in developing a plan for educational renewal and sustainability in Mountain View School Division. A fundamental shift is occurring in how communities are responding; the days of admiring the problem have disappeared; on the contrary, communities are embracing change while encouraging innovation. It will be interesting to monitor where these initiatives will lead as the process of educational renewal and community sustainability continues in this beautiful region of Manitoba. ■

Jack Sullivan is Superintendent of Mountain View School Division.

Addressing the Challenges of Youth With Disrupted Schooling From **War-Affected Countries**

By Val Georges and Isle Slotin

"I am very happy to come to school every single day… because I hadn't had a chance to go to school." [14 year old female student from Sierra Leone who speaks Timli and Creole—translated]

In 2003, the provincial Department of Labour and Immigration set a goal of 10,000 immigrants per year to respond to demographic challenges, economic objectives and labour market shortages in our province (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2006). The provincial effort has resulted in changing demographics which have implications for all levels and functions of the Winnipeg School Division (WSD). The number of students who require EAL (English as an Additional Language formerly referred to as E.S.L.) support continues to rise. Just over 37 per cent of the newcomers to our province in 2006 were children under the age of 19 years. The province has revised its target to 20,000 by 2016 (Manitoba Labour and Immigration).

In February 2005, delegations were made to the WSD Board of Trustees regarding the need for additional resources for the growing number of EAL students. Specific concerns were raised about the needs of families emigrating from war-affected countries. Some students entering the Winnipeg School Division were arriving with non-existent or disrupted school experiences and families had limited experience with the formal school system as it exists in Canada. Many of those students requiring EAL support come into our school system speaking more than one language. In 2005, about 750 of the identified EAL students were from areas that are considered war-torn, such as many African countries: Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, The Congo as well as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, The Palestinian Authority, etc.

In the fall of 2005, all schools in the Winnipeg School Division were surveyed regarding current EAL programming and recommendations for EAL students. The survey found that most students at the junior and senior high school level received specialized EAL programming for varying time periods during the school day, sometimes only one time slot per day. The student is often enrolled in regular courses for the remainder of the day with minimal support. In addition to the survey results, discussions with school personnel revealed and research supports the concerns that large numbers of war affected EAL students at the junior and senior high school level drop out for a variety of reasons, but most notably: the inability to cope with the academic demands; pressure from family to work (often to assist with repayment of airfare, medical examinations and other costs associated with immigration); and difficulty adjusting to new culture (post-war trauma, feelings of isolation, etc.) (MacKay & Tavares, 2005).

EAL Literacy Centres

Winnipeg School Division established four Senior high (grades 9-12) EAL Literacy Transition Centres in September 2006 to meet the unique learning needs of EAL youth who have had no prior or extremely disrupted schooling. These learners are referred to the district EAL Literacy Transition Centres by the school where they first register. With the assistance of interpreters, schools meet with new students and their parent or caregiver to gather pertinent information through the EAL Initial Reception Protocol and consider placement options. The EAL Initial Reception Protocols provide schools with a consistent format for receiving new learners and assessing their educational and linguistic background and needs. Students are referred to and are eligible for EAL Literacy Transition Centres if they are newly arrived students between the ages of 14 and 21 years with limited schooling experience and are illiterate in their spoken language(s).

The EAL Literacy Transition Centres at the senior year's level provides a multi-age, multi-grade integrated approach to a maximum of 75 per cent of the school day, centred on:

- Intensive English language arts (literacy);
- Intensive Mathematics (numeracy); and
- Orientation to school, community and independent living including

knowledge about the world of work and educational/career counselling.

Opportunities to acquire language skills in a more experiential context (e.g., art, physical education, music, etc.) are provided through regular course enrolment for a minimum of 25 per cent of the school day. Ongoing assessment occurs and as students acquire additional English language skills they are provided with more learning experiences in more advanced EAL courses and in grade level classes. Rutter (2001) highlights the importance of a flexible approach and the circumstances where withdrawal is appropriate during part of the school induction process.

To promote optimal use of learning time, student to teacher/education assistant (15:1/1) ratios are maintained and up to 60 students can be accommodated at any one time at the EAL Literacy Transition Centres. Students can take between 5 to 10 months to increase their literacy and academic preparation skills to the beginning of Stage 2 Senior Years Intensive Literacy and Academic Preparation level (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Training, 2006). Once students have completed the program, students may either remain at the school where the Centre is located depending upon availability of space and resources, or may return to the home school.

Cross cultural support workers

Four half time cross cultural support workers were hired in the fall of 2007 to enhance existing collaborative efforts between junior high (grade 7-8) teachers and senior high level (grades 9-12) teachers, schools, and community. The support workers were placed in schools where large numbers of students from war-affected backgrounds were in attendance. Individuals in these positions have fluency in languages and experiences or knowledge of the effects of war and interrupted schooling. As these positions are tied to schools, support workers have opportunities to build relationships with students, their families and the teaching staff. The cross cultural support workers help to improve families' understanding of the school and enhanced means to access supports within and beyond the system. To negotiate the cultural differences that are becoming far more common in our schools, greater cross-cultural knowledge is becoming highly valued by staff. They are becoming more accustomed to knowing when and how to access services to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers.

Students are supported as they transition from EAL Literacy Transition Centres to higher levels of EAL programming by educational assistants and cross cultural support workers. After a year and a half of programming and continuous intake 70 per cent of the students have gone into regular EAL programming and 24 per cent remain in the program. Five percent of the students have gone to alternative or special education programs and 1 per cent of the students are unknown at this time. As the program is in its initial stages of development, tracking methods and acquisition of student feedback are being considered.

When students are asked to comment on their experiences in an EAL Literacy Transition Centre, a female student from Sierra Leone, "prefers one teacher over so many" and a male student from Burma adds," good program, practicing…learning more English, teaches us about food and how to do [manage] our lives" at school in Canada. When asked what it would have been like if they had gone directly into regular high school classes, a female student from Sierra Leone said, "it would be really tough to go into grade level classes" and another female student from Burma adds, "[I] may not be able to catch up with other students." Finally a third female from Iran states, "[I'd] stay home". ■

Isle Slotin is the EAL Consultant/ Support Teacher, Val Georges is the Director of Aboriginal Education, for the Winnipeg School Division.

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Open Doors, Open Minds: The Role of International Students in Manitoba School Divisions

By Darcy Rollins

"*My friends from China, Iraq, Mexico and India, together with my Canadian-born buddies, make me see the world as a wonderful reality where all these diverse cultures can harmoniously live together…Diversity and tolerance are merged in a fluid atmosphere that characterizes the Canadian lifestyle…I will leave Canada not only holding an academic degree. Among my paperwork, I will take back unforgettable accounts, new flavours, words, horizons, a global viewpoint, and certainly a more open-minded person.*" [Alex Anton, Canada's 2007 International Student of the Year]

As the above testimonial illustrates, international students who come to Manitoba take away invaluable experiences and knowledge from their time studying here.

However Manitoba also receives a great deal in return. International students add to our multicultural mosaic, bring unique perspectives to our classrooms and provide Manitoba students with experiences in cross-cultural settings. They also contribute to our economic and community development through their tuition fees, living costs and discretionary spending. International students can occupy classroom spots in school divisions that are experiencing declining enrolments. Those who decide to immigrate are excellent candidates to quickly become part of the province's skilled workforce. Students who return to their homelands establish businesses or careers in government, join alumni associations in their countries and maintain links with their Manitoba connections. In short, they become unofficial ambassadors for Manitoba which can, in turn, create positive foreign policy and trade spin-offs.

Although *exchange* students—international students who attend school on a reciprocity basis and "exchange" places with domestic students—have been a part of Manitoba classrooms for years, it is only within the last 13 years that school divisions have formally established programs designed to attract and support *fee-paying* international students. While still relatively new, international student programs have grown from 335 K-12 students enrolled in 1998/1999 to over 788 in 2006/2007.

Students from other countries seek out learning opportunities in Manitoba for a variety of reasons. For most, their motivation is to learn English or French—many are seeking an internationally-recognized western credential and a style of teaching that is student-centered; some are looking for an opportunity to experience another culture—and many simply want to be able to learn in an environment that is tolerant, clean and safe.

For all of these reasons, Canada presents a compelling option for many prospective students and has long been viewed internationally as a desirable education destination. It is something that Dwayne Zarichny has been able to see first hand. Zarichny, a long-time educator and administrator in rural and northern Manitoba, is the Director of the new International Education Program in the Mountain View School Division. His duties lead him to contacts in Korea and Mexico where he credits Canada's reputation in piquing the interest of parents looking for a safe and rigorous English academic program for their children. He says, "parents and students from around the world are recognizing the high quality of education Canada has to offer."

Canada's good reputation is a major asset for all Manitoba institutions, but in particular for those facing challenges with initiating international programs. Zarichny relishes the possibilities for international students from Mexico and Korea to experience life abroad in a rural context and speaks of how the addition of international students increases motivation and imagination in domestic students within the division. The track record of success of international student programs in Winnipeg justifies Zarichny's excitement.

Welcoming students from around the world

Karen Strobel's son thinks she has the

best job in the world. As Director of the St. James Assiniboia School Division's International Student Program, Strobel gets the opportunity meet people from around the world, facilitate lifelong friendships and memories between students, teachers and homestay families, all while working towards the ultimate goal of enriching the classroom experience for both international and domestic students.

Strobel first became involved in the division's international student program in 2000 and since that time, the program has quickly expanded from nine students during the 1999/2000 school year to 100 students from Brazil, Mexico, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Switzerland, Thailand, Taiwan and Germany in 2007/2008.

Strobel has noted that while most students come for a specific period of time, more are choosing to extend their stay. "A large proportion are coming for a cultural experience but are now looking to attend university in Canada," she noted, adding that international students within her division have gone on to attend the University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg and eastern universities such as Guelph and the University of Toronto.

Not only are international students reaping the academic benefits from their experience within Manitoba schools, domestic students gain valuable insights and alternative perspectives within the classroom from their international counterparts. As Strobel notes, "international students do want to experience the various aspects of Canadian culture and education in its broadest context. It is equally important to them, however, to share aspects of their own culture and education with their Canadian peers." This level of information sharing of culture, experiences and customs allows all students to sharpen their critical thinking skills and inter-cultural competencies, which ultimately enriches their classroom experience.

For Strobel, the most rewarding aspect of her job is to see international students flourish amongst their peers during their daily school activities and within their homestay environment, becoming more confident and independent. The relationships developed between international students and homestay parents often lasts a lifetime; many home stay families even travel to their international student's home country for vacations or major life events such as weddings.

International students within the St. James Assiniboia School Division are not only provided with a rigorous academic schedule, they also participate in a very active social calendar consisting of three to four social activities per month ranging from outings to Winnipeg's various sports teams to cooking nights. Recently, two Brazilian students volunteered to help hone the skills of a local soccer team, teaching the younger children the fundamentals of their favourite game. Such activities, notes Strobel, create a sense of belonging while helping students integrate into their local communities.

One of the other significant benefits of international student programs to school divisions is that they are financially self-sustaining. Most international students coming to Manitoba can expect to pay $10,000 per year for tuition in a public school division. Though allocated differently in each division, these funds typically go to supporting the activities of the international student program, e.g. recruitment, orientation, guidance support services, homestay placement, and EAL. After covering the staff and operational costs, there is usually a dividend that is disbursed to the schools hosting the students and the division overall. In this way international student programs can generate all of the positive impacts previously noted in a sustainable manner that provides school divisions greater financial flexibility.

To demonstrate the sustainability of a well-run program, one need only ask Birgit Hartel, Managing Director for the International Education Program in the River East Transcona School Division and the President of the Manitoba Council for International Education (MCIE). Hartel manages one of the largest international education programs in the province and has overseen its expansion to 165 students from 18 countries.

While Hartel notes that her international education program is a net benefit to the school division and employs not only administrative staff, but also a number of staff at the school level, she is quick to add that the added impact international students make on local economies is significant. International students provide homestay families approximately $600/month to assist in covering basic costs such as food and accommodation, and many also engage in significant discretionary spending on entertainment, goods and services. As well, many students will often have one or more family members visit during their stay in Manitoba. According to Hartel, "this brings revenues to hotels, restaurants, retail outlets, tour companies and bed and breakfasts."

This model of sustainability and community economic development has a unique twist in many rural areas of Manitoba as international students not only support the local economy but also help combat dwindling enrolment rates, creating a stabilizing effect in rural schools and throughout the province. Although international students have excellent potential to address some of the challenges of shifting demographics, the recruitment of international students should never be used solely for this purpose. On that point, Zarichny clearly emphasizes that a rigorous pedagogical emphasis always comes before a focus on enrolment numbers.

Finally, the potential for economic benefits does not end when the student returns to his or her home country. Many students return home with positive stories about their time in Manitoba, which often makes the decision to send other family members to Manitoba to study an easy one for families.

For those directly involved in international education, the social impacts for both international and domestic students are visible every day. Exposure to different cultures and perspectives of international students allows domestic students to understand that an international experience is not a far away dream but a forthcoming reality. As Hartel states, "these 'local' international interactions and personal connections have opened previously uncharted vistas for our students. They have provided unimagined opportunities for them to become 'real players' in the global marketplace and society in an interactive context."

A plan for the future

As the pool of internationally mobile students continues to expand—one report predicts the number of international students worldwide in 2000 will quadruple by 2025—the environment in which Manitoba's international education programs operate is becoming more competitive. Other provinces such as BC, Alberta, Ontario, and Nova Scotia are ramping up their efforts to attract students while international competitor countries are much more aggressive in promoting themselves. Australia, for example, has made international education such a high priority that is it now its third biggest services export with a total value of AUS $12.5 billion ($11.6 billion CAD.), slightly larger than that of tourism.

While Manitoba has had many successes in this field, we will have to be even more nimble and resourceful in the future. Educational institutions should give due consideration to international education for the academic, social, cultural, and financial benefits. Greater institutional involvement will have the added benefit of keeping Canada on the map as an attractive study destination for high quality education, low cost of living, safe environment and a place where a multitude of opportunities exist.

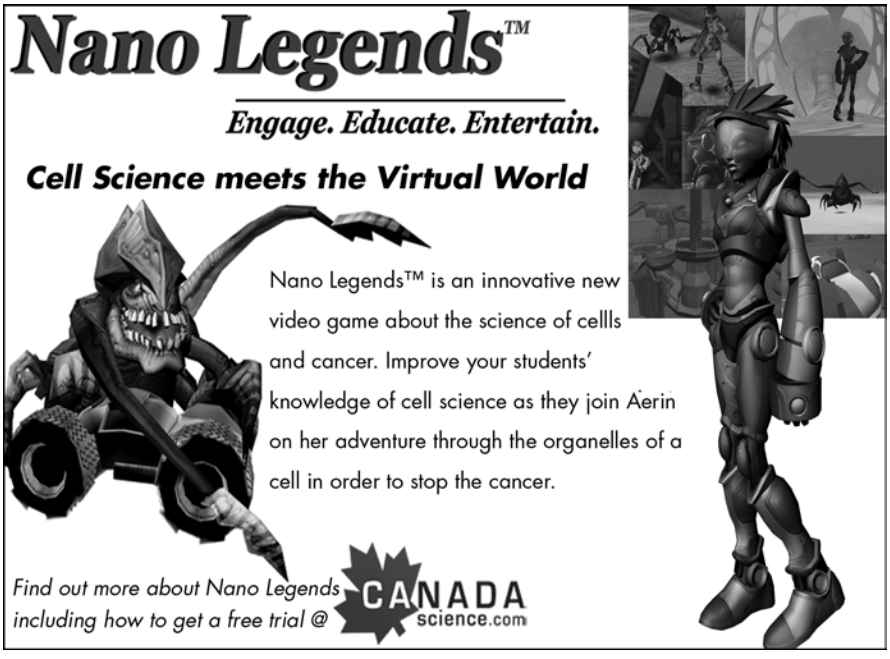
Along with institutional and government efforts, there must be greater capacity for the international education sector in Manitoba as a whole to work across institutions. Precedents for this kind of collaboration exist and the clear example is the Manitoba Council for International Education (MCIE) which provides a forum for networking and information sharing, but is volunteer-based and has limited capacity for advocacy, programs or promotions. For some Manitoba school divisions to move forward in the area of international education, educational institutions either as a sector or as a smaller consortia must act collaboratively to create efficiencies, build capacity, and remain competitive.

Finally, more work needs to be done to encourage a broader and more holistic approach to international education. As more school divisions look to internationalize their schools they will have to ensure they look to more than international student programs as the sole vehicle. This can come in a variety of ways including fostering opportunities for students and faculty to have an experience overseas, seeking out international partners for joint projects, or simply taking steps to ensure that international perspectives are shared and celebrated in classrooms and at school events.

Although these challenges remain on the horizon, Strobel, Hartel and Zarichny confidently look forward to the future of their international education programs, which undoubtedly will continue to open doors and minds to a world of possibilities. ■

Darcy Rollins is the Director of International Education for the Government of Manitoba. He can be reached at darcy.rollins@gov.mb.ca.

Special thanks to Courtney Edmundson of the Manitoba International Education Branch for her assistance with this article.



Bridging Two Worlds:
Enhancing Aboriginal Education in the Winnipeg School Division

"It was through personal reflection that I realized that Winnipeg School Division afforded me the opportunity to develop in ways that mattered most, drawing me back to school at a time when education was not a priority in my life." [Rebecca Chartrand]

By Val Georges

Imagine the workforce ten years from now…every fourth person between the ages of 20 and 24 could be an Aboriginal person. This population projection resonates with many in the education system as an opportunity to strengthen and improve academic outcomes for Aboriginal students today so that they are equipped to participate fully in the economy less than 10 years from now. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to ensure that non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students are prepared to work side by side.

New statistics released from the 2006 Census show that 15 per cent (175,395) of the total provincial population reports Aboriginal identity. Among urban areas in Canada, Winnipeg has the highest percentage of Aboriginal people: 10 per cent or 68,380 people (Statistics Canada, 2008). Winnipeg's Aboriginal population has grown 49 per cent over the past 10 years and almost half (48 per cent) consists of children and youth under the age of 24. Demographically the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations are heading in opposite directions and this has implications for everyone in our province.

There would be little reason to be concerned with the figures if Canadian Aboriginal people's levels of educational attainment were consistent will all other Canadians. We have seen some improvement over the years but a sharper reduction and eventual elimination of this gap would contribute to growth in the labour market and overall economic well-being of all people in our province.

Winnipeg School Division

In Winnipeg School Division, 33 per cent of students with a declared ethnicity were Aboriginal. Of these, the largest Aboriginal groups were Métis (35 per cent), Non- identified Aboriginal (29 per cent), Ojibway (17 per cent), and Cree (13 per cent). Ten (10 per cent) per cent or 1, 218 students reported that Aboriginal languages were spoken in their homes (Winnipeg School Division, 2007). Some Aboriginal students continue with strong ties with their First Nation or Métis community of origin while others have lived in Winnipeg for generations. Today fewer students come to school with an Aboriginal first language and some students learn their Aboriginal language as a second language. The data speaks to the diversity of Aboriginal students attending Winnipeg School Division.

Winnipeg School Division acknowledged the necessity of addressing the needs of the growing Aboriginal population as early as 1979 with the hiring of the first Native Education Consultant. Since then we have seen many people contribute to making Aboriginal Education what it is today. The approaches have varied from program and resource development to the development of policy that incorporates most aspects of the educational process.

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Today the Aboriginal Education department consists of a director, two half time consultants/Aboriginal Academic Achievement support teachers, a cultural advisor and four district support teachers. Many other Aboriginal people work as administrators, teachers, education assistants and support staff at the school level.

The overall approach to Aboriginal Education in Winnipeg School Division is based in policy:

> The Winnipeg School Division recognizes that it serves a diverse population and is committed to making education meaningful and responsive to, and inclusive of, the cultural diversity that characterizes the Canadian Society; One aspect of that commitment is the recognition of the significant Aboriginal population within the Division and the development of initiatives which will enhance the education of Aboriginal students as well as be of benefit to all students (Winnipeg School Division, 2005).

Aboriginal Education is a continuing division priority and is viewed as a shared responsibility with teachers, schools and districts, and community partners contributing and benefiting from the learning that takes place.

Meeting the challenge

According to the findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Aboriginal people want two things from education. They want to learn the skills necessary to participate fully in the economy and they want schools to help provide their children with knowledge of their languages and traditions for cultural continuity (RCAP, 1996).

How do we encourage Aboriginal student engagement in learning and encourage non-Aboriginal students to become informed about Aboriginal people? Portraying positive contemporary images of Aboriginal people and symbols in the classroom contributes to an Aboriginal child's sense of inclusion. It helps to counteract negative images and other students often express interest in the portrayal. Teachers may have students read literature written by Aboriginal people, provide varied perspectives of historical events, explore different world views, encourage the inclusion of Aboriginal languages, include Aboriginal songs or instruments in the music program, or consider Aboriginal artistic expression in the arts. Learning goes beyond the infusion of Aboriginal content through a variety of means to the construction of new understanding. All students are taught the skills to gather information, think creatively and critically about the world around them and to develop informed opinions about matters relating to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal students benefit greatly by these experiences as they construct a stronger sense of who they are as Aboriginal people.

Schools interpret Aboriginal education in a variety of ways. School-based initiatives are often shared at the district and division level, strengthening learning and inspiring others to begin their journey. Division-wide initiatives take place on a regular basis. Some projects such as the introduction of the

Seven Teachings to support pro-social skills development, art, and oral history continue to expand and grow as more elementary schools promote the Seven Teachings. Others, such as The First Nations Music Project (2005) are more challenging. This collaborative effort between consultants, teachers and members of the First Nations community aimed to infuse First Nation song and language into the music curriculum. The project was based on very successful model implemented at a few schools and it has become clear that it requires the commitment of key staff members and community members with specific knowledge to achieve sustainability.

Promoting and providing appropriate learning resources in the area of Aboriginal education is an ongoing effort. Many internal and external challenges must be overcome as learners and teachers become confident with Aboriginal content. One division-wide example, the introduction of a mandatory grade 10 English Language Arts Human Rights Unit, *Emerging Aboriginal Voices*, was introduced in 1995. Resource materials were provided to all 13 high schools and regular updates continue. All new grade 10 English Language Arts teachers receive training and implementation is required. As more Aboriginal authors find their voices and begin to capture and share their stories through publication, new multimedia and text resources are becoming more readily available. As teachers implement the unit and become confident with the incorporation of Aboriginal texts, they begin to explore and suggest updates, ultimately enriching the learning experiences of all students.

As Winnipeg School Division continues to strengthen existing and promote new initiatives in Aboriginal education, some excellent returns are being acknowledged as former students take their places as teachers, consultants and administrators. Rebecca Chartrand, Aboriginal Education consultant, writes:

From personal experience I am fortunate that I have had the opportunity to move through the Division wearing different hats, gaining various perspectives and more importantly being given the opportunity to contribute to what might make a difference in the lives of future students. It was through personal reflection that I realized that WSD afforded me the opportunity to develop in ways that mattered most, drawing me back to school at a time when education was not a priority

in my life. Today I use these experiences to provide opportunities for all students to create a stronger foundation on which to attain success by using Aboriginal education as a starting point in bridging two worlds (2008).

Winnipeg School Division adopted an employment equity program in 1993 which strives towards a division workforce composition that reflects the composition of Aboriginal people living within the boundaries of the Winnipeg School Division (2004). Initiatives such as the Aboriginal Leadership Program which was intended to enhance the school administrative skills of Aboriginal teachers has resulted in gains of Aboriginal principals, vice principals, and senior administrators.

To assist in the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal teachers, the Winnipeg School Division is a partner in the implementation of the Community Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP) which began in 2005. Approximately 30 Aboriginal Educational Assistants per year are supported to attain teacher training over a six year period. These teachers will be invaluable, as it is through their experiences that the system will be supported, renewed and continually strengthened.

The future

Although improvements have been made, there is no time for complacency. Educators need to continue to take steps to infuse Aboriginal perspectives across the curricula. Aboriginal student attainment will be strengthened as students become more meaningfully engaged in education at all levels. In fact, a report from the Canadian Council on Learning (2007) goes beyond graduation rates to advocate for a broader understanding of how success of Aboriginal learners might be measured—to reflect their articulation of holistic, life long learning. Ten years from now the results of our work will be evident in our provincial economy and the impact will be felt by generations to come. ■

Val Georges is Director of Aboriginal Education, Winnipeg School Division.

Educational Leadership as Educational Teaching

By Betty Ash and Lydia Hedrich

What is educational leadership? Why does it exist? What does educational leadership look like in practice? How do we foster educational leadership? It is not our intention to "answer" these complex questions but rather to share some of our thinking and outline how we in Seven Oaks School Division attempt to create the conditions and structures that invite others into this professional inquiry.

Educational leadership

We understand that teaching and leadership depend on the purposes they aim to promote; consequently, educational teaching and leadership must be grounded in what counts as education. The critical word is "education." Educational leadership is not military leadership or business leadership: generals succeed when they win battles; CEOs succeed when their company earns profits. Educators succeed when they contribute to the education of other people. Quite simply, teachers succeed when they help their students to learn some of the knowledge, attitudes and dispositions that will enable them to lead good lives both now and in the future. Principals and superintendents succeed when they contribute to teachers' efforts. The key is education, a very messy, confusing and always controversial concept.

Seven Oaks attempts to take education seriously, that is, we self-consciously explore what we mean by education. Fifteen years ago the Seven Oaks Superintendents Team developed an activity that aims to facilitate a broad conversation about what we understand by education—The Educated Person Exercise. In brief:

> Think of someone that you know whom you would consider to be an educated person. In your group share your stories. Once the stories have been told talk about the qualities that are common to each educated person.

Group members tell stories about wise and caring people. They describe people with depth and breadth of knowledge and varied life experiences. Common to the responses are the abilities to think critically and reflectively, to question and exercise good judgment, to be attentive and imaginative, and to make a difference in the lives of other people. Participants describe people who are deeply curious about the world and challenge their own and others' understandings. Ironically, while much current educational discourse is about the acquisition of particular forms of knowledge, many (if not most) of the qualities identified by our groups are traits of character, including care, respect for others, tolerance, open-mindedness, humility, passion. What strikes us time and time again is the consistency of these qualities: in essence, they describe people who attempt to lead good and worthwhile lives—and contribute to the lives of other people.

At first glance this exercise seems to generate consensus. The narratives are compelling and told with great emotion. There often appears to be general agreement about what it means to be an educated person. Yet, how these understandings are acted out is the subject of spirited, ongoing debate in Seven Oaks. Tensions arise when we begin to consider what it means to educate and how these understandings are enacted. We can agree that educated people treat others with respect, but what this means for particular people in specific contexts is always in the process of being decided. For example, a young child acts out on the playground and hurts a classmate and a teacher. What is the right thing to do? For whom is it the right thing? Who gets to decide? On what basis? How do they justify their decisions? To whom? When? This is complex work that may involve choosing between competing values or "two goods." For example, we have a collective responsibility to create and maintain safe schools for everyone; at the same time we have a collective responsibility to respond to the needs of each and every child in a way that enables her/him to participate fully in the life of the school community. The challenge is not to create rules or policies that become decision templates, but to provide the opportunity for educators to exercise their judgment—and accept responsibility for that judgment. As we understand our responsibility as educators, we are charged both with acting well and being willing to provide justification for that action.

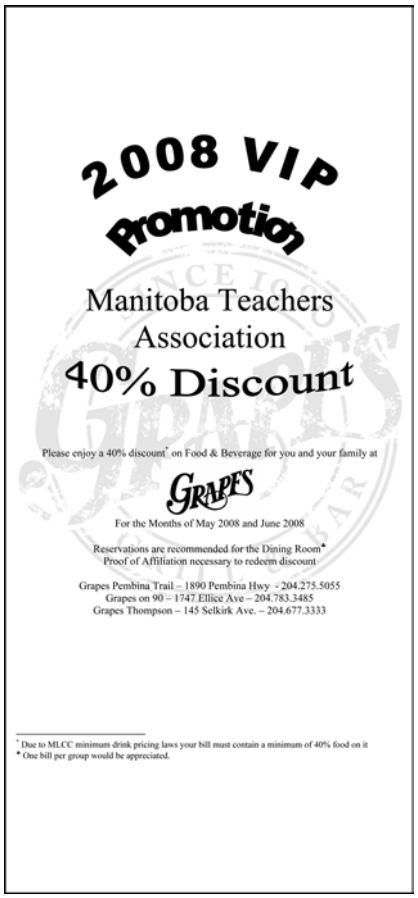
There are numerous policies, courses, programs, research papers and books dedicated to educational leadership. Most, however, treat leadership generically or define educational leadership in limited forms to fit schooling templates. We are interested in helping people become educated, not just schooled. Multiple images of educational leadership therefore necessarily coexist side-by-side. No "best practice" will ensure success when success itself is always open for interpretation—and

argument. Images are always contestable and contextual. Within a school system it is our responsibility to carve out time and space for ourselves and others to explore the values and beliefs that underpin these images. Below we outline some of the structures we have created that assist us in this effort.

Opportunities to talk about education

We have created our own *educational leadership courses*. Teachers express their interest to participate by writing a statement of educational leadership. One of the first assignments involves asking members of the group to respond to the question, "What intrigues you about educational leadership?" Their responses are often articulated as questions. The content of the course is negotiated between the facilitators (members of the Superintendents' Team) and participants.

We remind ourselves that our fundamental purposes are educational and that all our actions need to be tested against what we understand by education. During one of our sessions, for example, we invite our Secretary Treasurer to speak on the topic of educational finance. A teacher asks, "With limited resources how do principals decide where to spend money?" We begin to discuss: "What is in the best interests of the children?" "Who gets to decide?" Participants begin to realize that budget decisions are not about number crunching, but about finding resources to make possible what we deem educational. What appears to be a managerial issue such as budgeting quickly becomes part of a much broader dialogue.



Similarly, a *New Administrator Group* (affectionately known as NAG) meets monthly for two years. The discussions are facilitated by two superintendents and provide a forum for new principals or vice-principals to step back from the day-to-day and to think about their work in connection with the larger purposes of education. Liaison Superintendents meet regularly with administrators of individual schools and in "family" groupings to provide a space for all administrators to deepen understandings and to explore questions and dilemmas that arise in their work.

Broadening the conversation

Education, the way we understand it, is not solely an individual, school, professional or community concern. Education is a human concern. It cannot be delegated to teachers, administrators and trustees. Indeed, the systemics of schooling promote time-honoured habits, routines and traditions that are rarely open to examination. What prompts us to think about things differently? How do we interrupt our thinking so as not to become prisoners of our own beliefs? While many of our efforts to talk about education involve engaging our community, we also invite voices from outside the division to our conversation.

More than fifteen years ago we began the *Seven Oaks Symposium Series*, a cycle of lectures in which we invite people who have thought long and hard about education to share their thinking with us. Over time distinguished scholars, such as Gary Fenstermacher (Michigan), Nel Noddings (Stanford), Larry Cuban (Stanford), David Hansen (Teachers College), Joe Dunne (St. Patrick's College, Dublin), Kieran Egan (Simon Fraser), Joannie Halas (Manitoba) and Wayne Serebrin (Manitoba) have helped us think differently about what we understand by education. Through their research, lectures and interactions with teachers they have provided a basis of critique, encouraged critical reflection and discourse and informed our practice. To reach a wider audience *Teaching Today for Tomorrow,* our on-line professional journal, features articles written by our visiting scholars as well as our teachers.

In Seven Oaks, we hope that, "academic" loses some of its pejorative meaning and instead captures some of the excitement and passion that we hope to promote in our schools (and we find in the Educated Person Exercise). To that end, we have formalized educational dialogue by offering an off-campus Masters of Education program in partnership with the University of Manitoba. An excerpt from our initial proposal to the University:

> A Masters' cohort enables us to generate an educational experience for teachers that would not otherwise exist. The professional relationship between the division, the university and the teachers creates a learning community where the link between action and thought is continually negotiated.

Seven Oaks and the University of Manitoba have now offered three Masters of Education cohorts.

Teachers have further opportunities to make sense of their world through action research, divisional curriculum committees, an aboriginal education research project, educational leave and numerous other study groups. All of these structures enable us to simultaneously construct and modify our own theories and practices.

Continuing the conversation

The above structures are based upon the underlying belief that, as teachers, we

must seek to understand our practice by linking the generalities of theory (including our own formal and informal theories) and the particularities of our practice through reflection, dialogue and the exercising of educational judgment. These are not only intellectual exercises but discourses that lead to ethical action with the intention of making a difference in the world.

How one conceptualizes educational leadership depends on beliefs, experiences and understandings of education. In Seven Oaks School Division we attempt to invite all to participate in a respectful, passionate and exciting community, a community in which we are trying to build a world in common. What does it mean to live a good and worthwhile life? Educational leadership is moral endeavour; it is about human action undertaken toward other human beings and

> [w]hat matters is an affirmation of a social world accepting of tension and conflict. What matters is an affirmation of energy and the passion of reflection in a renewed hope of common action, of face-to face encounters among friends and strangers, striving for meaning, striving to understand. What matters is a quest for new ways of living together, of generating more incisive and inclusive dialogues.[1] ■

Lydia Hedrich and Betty Ash are Assistant Superintendents in Seven Oaks School Division.

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Buyer's Guide

First Nations Perspectives:

THE JOURNAL OF THE
MANITOBA FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE

The inaugural issue of *First Nations Perspectives* is intended to create an interdisciplinary dialogue about First Nations education in the Province of Manitoba and western Canada. The journal will be comprised of scholarly essays and research papers from university students, teachers, researchers, scholars, and those affiliated with the field of First Nations education including those involved in public and band-controlled schools, post-secondary education, and community educational contexts. The journal will publish theoretical essays, discussion papers and research articles dealing with historical, philosophical, curricular, and administrative issues. In order to create a broad dialogue, manuscripts from other fields that are relevant to First Nations education have been considered.

First Nations Perspectives will be published in conjunction with the annual *Lighting the Fire* conference (May 21-23, 2008) hosted by the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. The journal will be available online at www.mfnerc.org/fnp at the end of May, 2008.

For more information please contact Frank Deer at MFNERC
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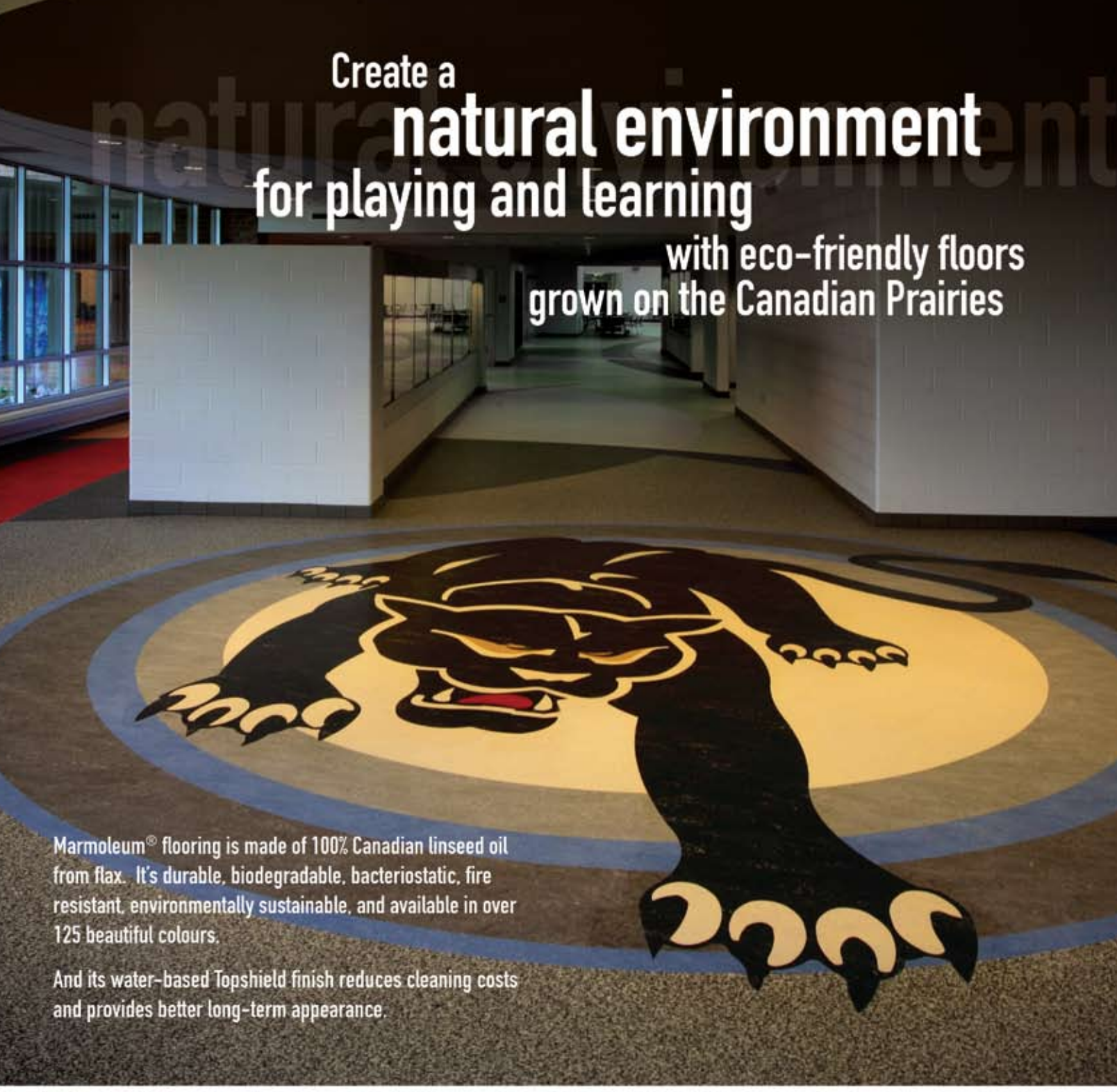

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