

*Proceedings*_____

**“Opening Doors in
Public Education:
A Forum on Diversity,
Equity and Human Rights”**

**An invitational symposium sponsored by
The Alberta Teachers’ Association**

**May 25–26, 2001, Barnett House
Edmonton, Alberta**



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Foreword

May 25–26, 2001, the Alberta Teachers' Association hosted the invitational symposium "Opening Doors in Public Education: A Forum on Diversity, Equity and Human Rights." The purposes of the symposium were (1) to help the Association identify strategies to build human rights cultures in schools and (2) to establish a network of educators, community leaders and advocates committed to principles of human rights in school communities. Approximately 100 delegates from across Alberta participated in the symposium. These proceedings reflect the formal record of this important gathering.

In fall 2000, the Alberta Teachers' Association directed its Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee to explore ways to build coalitions with individuals and groups committed to building inclusive learning communities in Alberta's schools. The "Opening Doors" symposium represents a key step in this process. As several symposium speakers reminded us, growing economic disparity, public sector downsizing and privatization have exacerbated the challenges facing our schools. Without a commitment to public education, equity and justice will never be realized.

These proceedings illustrate how important it is to not talk of human rights in isolated and abstract ways, separated from the material conditions that give shape to the everyday lives of Albertans. For example, consider that one in five Canadian children lives in poverty; that only 2.3 percent of the technical trades apprenticeships in Alberta are held by women; that the aboriginal population is growing by more than 2 percent annually and by 2016 Alberta and Ontario will have the largest aboriginal populations in Canada; that gay and lesbian students face homophobia; that Canada has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world; and that of all teens who commit suicide, about one third have a homosexual orientation.

Whenever people gather to discuss human rights issues, be they questions of race, class, gender or sexual identity, unspoken questions often circulate as a subtext to what is publicly discussed. Two such questions are: *Who/what should be at the centre?* and *Who/what should be at the margins?* How we answer these questions daily in our schools determines both who gets included and what counts as worthwhile knowledge. From the young Alberta woman attempting to break into technical trades to the gay or lesbian teenager confronted by the heteronormativity of our schools, answers to the questions *Who is included?* and *What knowledge is worth knowing?* have very real consequences.

In reviewing the symposium proceedings and the recommendations for further action presented here, it is evident that in our efforts to build inclusive school communities we cannot afford to work in isolation. The months ahead will be critical as we reflect on the recommendations that emerged. We look forward to your continued involvement.

Jean-Claude Couture,
Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee

Symposium Agenda

Friday, 2001 05 25 (eve)

1900–1930 Registration (Barnett House rotunda)

1930–2100 Keynote Address: *Tolerance and Understanding in Alberta 16 Years Later—Better or Worse?*—Ron Ghitter, QC
Respondents:

Toh Swee-Hin—Centre for International Education and Development
 Linda R Bull—University of Alberta

2100–2300 Reception

Saturday, 2001 05 26

0900–1015 *Human Rights Work in Alberta Schools: The Legal and Moral Imperatives*—Gail Forsythe, Executive Director, Cultural Diversity Institute

Respondents:

Doug Jones—Calgary City Police Cultural Response Unit
 Usha Procinsky—Principal, Edmonton Public Schools
 Sandra Marcellus—Economic Consultant, Alberta Teachers' Association

1015–1030 Break

1030–1115 Circle of Successes/Concerns
 Symposium participants will share activities and initiatives under way in school communities and other organizations across Alberta and will discuss emerging concerns.

1115–1200 *Institutional and Organizational Responses: The BC Experience and the Social Justice Initiative*—Anita Chapman, British Columbia Teachers' Federation

1200–1300 Lunch

1300–1400 *Equity and Human Rights Work in Alberta: Building Common Places*
 —Arlene Chapman, Director, Edmonton Social Planning Council
Reflections and Response—Nicholas Ameyaw, Human Rights and Citizenship (Alberta Community Development)

1400–1500 Priorities and Action Plan Recommendations (small group work)

1500 Closing Remarks/Farewell

Opening Remarks

Sharon Armstrong

(Chair at the ATA's Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee).

On behalf of the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee and the Alberta Teachers' Association, it is my pleasure to welcome you to "Opening Doors in Public Education: A Forum on Diversity, Equity and Human Rights." The symposium title captures the committee's two goals, as outlined in the invitational letter you received some time ago:

1. To assist the ATA in identifying priorities and strategies that will build human rights cultures in our schools
2. To build a network of educators, leaders and advocates committed to diversity, equity and human rights in school communities across the province

We are very pleased to see you all here this evening. As you look around the room, you will see some faces you recognize and some that you do not. If our organizing committee has done its homework, we have people from across the province and diverse communities and sectors.

In planning this symposium, the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee wanted to open a dialogue with potential partners and members of our school communities. The theme "Opening Doors" may evoke a variety of images; as with any good metaphor, there may be some ambiguity. A positive interpretation is that "Opening Doors" implies a greeting, an invitation. Another, less complimentary interpretation is that the doors have been closed and need to be opened.

I hope you will agree that the Association's doors have never been closed. This symposium is part of the ATA's ongoing commitment to working in partnership with others to build our school communities. To this end, we have brought you together to assist and advise us. Like many of you, we are struggling to face the challenges of globalization and change. We do not pretend to know the answers; more importantly, we are not even certain what the questions are. We like to think that all of our programs and policies are somehow linked to the broad goals of equity and human rights. As an organization that represents 33,000 teachers in the province, we are unique. Let's pause for a second and think about who Alberta's teachers are:

- We are on average 42 years of age.
- We typically have 12–13 years of teaching experience.
- Two thirds of us are women.
- Seven out of every 10 of us teach in an urban setting.
- 15 percent of us teach part-time (of this group, 91 percent are female).
- 40 percent of us will be retiring in the next 10 years.

So here we are—and we are here to listen.

Our symposium agenda includes opportunities to listen to leading human rights advocates and the province's educators and to build connections based on a common commitment to public education in Alberta. Our draft working paper,

Building Common Places, outlines some of the committee's early thinking. We invite your comments about this document. The next document, *Alberta Teachers' Association Gender, Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Policies and Principles*, outlines the formal commitments that Alberta teachers have made to this area. Again, we invite your feedback.

Two sessions during the symposium will provide you with an opportunity to tell the Association what your interests are and how we might work together: "Circle of Concern/Successes" and "Priorities and Action Plan Recommendations."

We look forward to the dialogue that will take place over the next day and a half.

Keynote Address

Tolerance and Understanding in Alberta 16 Years Later— Better or Worse?

Ron Ghitter

Thank you for inviting me to be with you this evening as you embark on a very important examination of such matters as diversity, equity and human rights. I'll try to deal with these subjects in fewer than 20 hours.

The topic this evening is "Tolerance and Understanding in Alberta 16 Years Later—Better or Worse?"

On June 27, 1983, the Minister of Education, the Honorable David King, at the request of the Premier of Alberta, Mr Lougheed, established the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding. The main directive to the committee was to bring forward a series of recommendations or options with a view

- to have a special review undertaken forthwith of the curriculum to ascertain if there are any practical changes that could be made that would foster greater tolerance and respect for minority groups in our society; and
- to establish new procedures in our schools to provide better communication with our parents to reduce, if not eliminate, the recurrence of such offensive events.

The offensive events referred to in the directives were the now infamous actions of James Keegstra, a mayor, pastor and public school principal in Eckville, Alberta, who was discovered promoting and teaching antisemitic and racial hatred in his school and community.

Ron Ghitter received his LL.B. from the University of Alberta in 1959. In 1971, he was elected MLA for Calgary Buffalo and was re-elected in 1975. In 1978, he received an appointment as Queen's Counsel. In March of 1993 he was appointed to the Canadian Senate, a post which he filled until his retirement from the Senate in March 2000. Ghitter served as chairman of the Minister's Consultative Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, received the Canadian Human Relations Award from the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews (1985) and was the founding director of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. In 1990, he chaired the Mayor of Calgary's Task Force on Community and Family Violence and received the Alberta Human Rights Award. He is a member of the Federal Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women and co-chair of the Dignity Foundation, which supports research and educational activities that promote diversity.

A broad cross-section of 13 wonderful Albertans was assembled under my chairmanship that included teachers, administrators, business leaders, a physician, the chair of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, a representative of the disabled community and an MLA. Thankfully, there was only one lawyer. Me.

As we embarked upon our 18-month journey into the psyche of Albertans, little did we know of the road we were on and the conflicts, divisions, tragedy and beauty we would discover along the way. Many an hour I have spent since the filing of the report in December 1984 reflecting on our experiences and the findings in the report—and the state of tolerance and understanding in the ensuing years. So for me to come before you this evening to examine tolerance and understanding some 16 years later and come to the conclusions I will share with you is a mixed bag of disappointment, concern and minor satisfaction.

For you to understand my observations, it will be necessary for me to provide you with a brief overview of the committee's adventure, experience and findings. For some 18 months, the committee travelled into every corner of this province. In schools, meeting halls, Hutterite colonies, reserves, basements and homes we delved into the innermost feelings and attitudes of Albertans. Much of what we saw impressed us immensely, while some of our experiences were deeply disappointing, leaving us at times wondering how it could be that some hold such hatred and ill feelings in their souls. Frankly, it was an experience like none I had faced ever before or since that time. It was an experience at times apparently pitting those with deeply held religious views against the more secular responsibilities of the broader pluralistic community, while bringing an awareness to Albertans that behind our aura of prosperity and comfort were very disturbing signs of prejudice and discrimination.

While vivid memories remain of the continual bruising we received from publications like *The Alberta Report* that for some reason always referred to me as the Jewish chairman, I recall an example of other bruising comments, this one made in Lethbridge: "All Buddhists, Hindus and Moslems are wicked, satanical and evil." Or there was also the time we visited a school presided over by a pastor with no accredited teachers and following a curriculum from Texas that was all based on biblical teachings, where each student was placed in a cubical facing the wall. And when we inquired as to how these children would fare in the outside world with their limited doctrinaire education, we were told that God would care for them. And I recall on many occasions receiving submissions from those with dictionaries in one hand and the Bible in the other who invoked the holy scriptures in such a way as to insult, demean and ridicule those of other religions, cultures and color.

However, more than this, more than anything, I recall the fairness and goodwill of the vast majority of Albertans, concerned for the welfare of all and the promotion of a just and equitable community. In the chairman's letter that accompanied the final report of the committee I said,

In so many varied ways, Albertans have shown us that they are compassionate and caring for others.

They make us proud to be Albertans.

That is not to say that we have not experienced on the fringes of Alberta society examples of injustice, intolerance and tension. This is not unique to Alberta, but unfortunately can be found in any society.

We met with those who, on a daily basis, face the indignity of prejudice and discrimination.

We met with those who, whether they realize it or not, display racist, prejudicial and bigoted attitudes that cause great harm to innocent individuals.

The history of Canada and this province is spotted with events which should stand as examples to all of us of the dangers of intolerance and prejudice, and a warning that we must not be smug or self-righteous in dealing with the freedoms which are enshrined in our constitution.

Tolerance and understanding and respect for others occur when people learn to cherish, comprehend and enjoy each other's similarities and differences. Tolerance means a respectful attitude to others and to their inherent human right to hold opposing viewpoints even though one may not agree with those viewpoints.

The education system can only do so much to fulfill our aspirations.

The family, the social and spiritual communities and the workplace have vital roles to play.

However the role of the school is immensely important in assisting our children to become more understanding and aware of the basic concepts of tolerance and respect for all people, understanding their origins and philosophical attitudes.

If I were to be asked to provide the underlying thread throughout the report, it would be to emphasize the importance of shared experiences. Meaning that we must not separate our children into cultural, ethnic or religious cubbyholes. We must find ways to bring them together, respecting their differences, cherishing their cultures but stressing that they are Canadians learning together. This is the way to break down the barriers and achieve tolerance and understanding.

The committee adopted six principles that were the cornerstone of its deliberations and they are worth repeating, for as I read them again for the first time in many years, I was struck by how appropriate they continue to be.

Thus we were led by our contacts with the people of Alberta to formulate six principles that serve as the supporting structure for our analyses and recommendations.

There are times that these principles may overlap; there are times that these principles may be somewhat in conflict; however, that is natural when one considers the continual striving for balance that is inherent within the tensions that ebb and flow within a democratic society.

The six principles of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding are as follows:

1. Alberta is an open democratic society. One of the pillars of our strength is our commitment to permit and to encourage, if needed, the development of the diverse cultures, religions and philosophies that we embody into a vibrant, energetic and respectful society. In an open democracy, choices must not be denied by government edict unless they run clearly contrary to the overall public harmony.
2. It is the obligation of parents to ensure that the best education is available for their children.
3. It is the duty of society to provide maximum educational opportunities for its children and it is the right of the child to receive a compulsory education of no less than minimum acceptable standards.

4. The basic mission of education is to instill in our children:
 - a sense of self-esteem
 - an ability to recognize and pursue personal excellence to the extent of each child's potential
 - a desire to seek truth in all factual aspects of life
 - the ability to develop critical thinking skills characterized by values based on openness, inquiry, imagination, original ideas, dissent, rational thinking, creativity and independence
 - the appreciation of our democratic traditions, symbolized by an attitude of tolerance, understanding and respect for others
 - an attitude of creative citizenship characterized by a sense of responsibility that must flow back from each citizen to society.
5. The public education system, which includes separate schools, is the prime vehicle by which Alberta society meets its duty to its children in the endeavor to achieve basic goals of education. Wherever possible, the public education system must be strengthened and society must not permit it to become unnecessarily weakened, eroded or fragmented. Financial priorities must be given to the assistance of teachers, school boards, their administrations and libraries, in order that they may fulfill their responsibility of educating our children. School boards, as a matter of policy, must provide maximum educational opportunities for all students resident in their jurisdictions.
6. In order to enhance tolerance and understanding and respect for each individual within the ever-changing mosaic that is so characteristic of Alberta, we must, wherever possible, encourage shared experiences among the diverse population in our schools.

And so the committee filed its report with its many recommendations designed to bring Albertans together . . . hopefully propelled by the strongest public education system providing an array of programs responding to the challenging diversities that the teacher faces every day in the classroom.

And now some 16 years later, one may well ask, Are we better off or worse?

To answer this question, one must first place us in the context of the political world in which we live. There have been many political changes in ideology since 1984 that have had a major impact on our educational system in this province. Fueled by justifiable concerns as to the financial state of affairs of our governments throughout North America, and to such other issues as crime, morality and violence, a new wave of conservatism swept the political landscape. It spoke to fiscal prudence, no debt and balanced budgets, but it also spoke to other things, to the so-called return to moral values and spirituality.

In Alberta, it meant immense reductions in spending in education, health and social assistance. I recall speaking in Edmonton and Calgary under the sponsorship of St Stephen's College on the topic "The Alberta Advantage for Whom?" and enraging some of my former government colleagues and friends when I berated the Alberta government when I concluded, and I quote,

Great societies and great governments are judged not only for their fiscal prudence, but for their balance, their fairness and for how well they care for the most vulnerable in society, the arts and the education of their youth.

In this regard, it is my view that the policies of the Klein administration, laudatory as they have been in the fiscal management area, have been

one-sided, corporatist in their nature and have been exclusive rather than inclusive.

Unless there is a change in direction and there is time . . . these present policies place in jeopardy the fundamental structures in Alberta.

It is abundantly clear to me that the Klein revolution is being carried out on the backs of seniors, the ill, youth and minorities, who all face reduced services and added user fees, which have little impact on the well off.

My comments were not well received in some circles in 1996, but they were reflective of concerns certainly in the field of education, which is still trying to recover from that period of extreme budgetary restraint. Fortunately, thanks to oil and gas, and general prosperity, more funding is becoming available.

Within this movement to conservatism can be found many shades of ideology, with all its nuances and extremes. We have small-C conservatives, Progressive Conservatives, neo-conservatives and theo-conservatives. It is within the last categories of the neos and the theos that we find the immense challenge to public education and human rights. It is from the neo-conservatives that we hear the arguments for less taxation, less welfare, less government and more self-reliance.

It is from the theo-conservatives, such as Pat Buchanan and Jerry Falwell in the United States and Stockwell Day in Canada and their followers, that we hear a more scolding and moralizing conservatism that is far less economic and that replays older conservative themes of cultural decline, moralism and a need for more social order. It is a strained version of a neo-religious revival. Their agenda relates to morals, infidelity, honesty, abortion, family cohesion and homosexual legitimacy. They have no time for human rights and they savage our public education system. They tell us that the public education system is a failure, that our schools are secular and teach left-wing values without discipline or standards. Their solution? Private and charter schools—oddly, not to strengthen public education but to weaken it. They seek and receive tax credits as recently announced in Ontario, or vouchers or financial assistance—all of which allow the wealthy to send their kids to private schools or religiously oriented schools, removing them from the alleged failing, dangerous and ill-equipped public system.

Could this be a self-fulfilling prophesy?

But the truth of the matter, which they do not care to hear, is that any objective study that has been undertaken in the United States or Canada does not illustrate a catastrophic decline in the quality of education, as alleged, in most public schools. In fact if the neo-conservatives who bemoan the supposed inferiority of Canadian schools to Japanese and German schools were sincere, one would expect them to favor Japanese and German remedies: national funding to local schools, national standards and little if any role of the parents in the selection of curriculum—certainly not a decentralization of the system.

Yet these conservative forces at this time in the history of North America are immensely dedicated and influential. From the president of the United States, George W Bush, to Premiers Harris and Klein in Canada, we see added emphasis on funding for private schools. And who is pushing for this funding? There can be little doubt that it comes from religious organizations wishing to cocoon their youth where they will not be contaminated by those of other belief systems . . . and by the wealthy, who do not need the financial assistance but

who will take it anyway, and who wish to free their children from inferior education and the perceived dangers in our public school system.

And who are the losers? All of us.

For if our public school system is to become the mere depository for kids from poor families, the disabled, the slow learners and those with uncaring families, then what does that say of our society? What ever became of the basic democratic principle of equal opportunity for all? And what will become of these ill-equipped children when they become adults? And what a loss of potential talent that is being wasted and unfulfilled due to lack of opportunity because of an inferior education.

My position in this issue is simple. If parents wish to send their children to a private or charter school they have every democratic right to do so—but public monies should only be allocated to the public school system. That is the obligation of government and their only and primary obligation; namely, to provide the strongest public school system available to prepare our children and our society for the future.

Advocates of public funding for private schools believe that private schools respect diversity, when in fact they offend our principles of respecting diversity, because instead of bringing children of diverse backgrounds together under the same tent to learn and respect each other, we separate them, indoctrinate them and send them into the larger community with little or no experience in sharing with others and little understanding of what diversity is all about.

In my earlier remarks I suggested that the bottom line of the recommendations of the committee was what we called shared experiences, where we build bridges of understanding in order to break down the hatred and divisions that come from religious and ethnic intolerance.

When I went to school in this very city, at Oliver and Garneau, Scona and the University of Alberta, we knew little of private schools. Across from me in the classroom were Christians, Muslims, Italians, Greeks, Chinese, Blacks, disabled and poor. But in the classroom or on the basketball court, we were all the same. Some were of course smarter or more athletic than others, but the distinctions were on ability, discipline and commitment . . . not religion, race or color.

That is how it should be. But sadly we are moving in the other direction—a direction in which we compartmentalize our children, segregate them, indoctrinate them, shelter them and then turn them loose in society and expect them to understand and accept those they have never met and who come from different cultures and religions or may look different.

This is no way to create a tolerant and understanding community.

This is no way for us to treat the majority of our children, by placing them in cash-strapped schools with inadequate facilities, computers and equipment, without the best teachers (who are attracted to better-paying jobs and conditions in the private schools).

In the deliberations of our committee no other issue generated more heat than the issue of funding for private education. We were berated, intimidated, urged, deluged with a barrage of speakers and material at our public hearings, all basically coming from the same sources—the religious right. Meaning well, devoted to their cause, espousing morality and goodness, reading from the Bible with deep conviction, they were pleading for the democratic right to teach their

children their belief and value systems in their surroundings, with public money. We resisted and called for no new money for them and said to the government, “Put your money into public education.” They did not listen.

As the *Globe and Mail* (2001) wrote in an editorial entitled “How to Undermine the Public Schools,”

Public schools are the place where children from diverse backgrounds learn to live together as Canadians. Walk into any schoolyard in Toronto, the most multicultural city in the world, and you will encounter children from scores of different national, religious and ethnic backgrounds: Vietnamese and Jamaican, Hindu and Muslim, Slav and Tamil, all mingling together as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

That is not because public schools are forcing them into a single rigid mould. Ontario schools go out of their way to celebrate Black History Month and to mark religious festivals such as Diwali and Hanukkah. It is because by playing and learning side by side, children learn to respect each other. . . .

That is just one reason why a province such as Ontario should be shoring up its public schools. The government’s private-school tax credit would do just the opposite. It would cost \$300 million, money that would be far better spent training teachers or buying books. Worse, it would encourage parents with means to pull their children out of the public system and put them in private schools, hastening an exodus that is already well under way. . . .

Any democratic society must balance the rights of the minority against the interests of the majority. In Ontario, the minority has an unmistakable right to its private schools, but the majority has a strong interest in thriving public schools. Whatever Mr. Morgan may say, it is the public, not the private schools that are the true guarantee of a working multicultural society.

So when I ask whether or not 16 years later the situation in Alberta is better or worse in the area of tolerance and understanding, I sadly respond, unquestionably worse.

There is no doubt that there are better programs in our public schools in our underfunded ESL programs and no doubt that there is a higher level of awareness of the issues raised by our growing diversity, and there is no doubt that many of our teachers and school boards are committed to existing and future programs to overcome the continual challenge to create harmony amongst our numerous differences.

But there are other convergences beyond the question of funding for private schools that make the challenge more difficult, and that is in the area of human rights generally. Never doubt that the quality of education is a human rights issue. You bet it is. What could be more basic than the right to similar educational opportunities for all our children?

What about our commitment to a human rights agenda? In 1972 the government of Alberta distinguished itself in passing the first primacy human rights legislation in Canada: The Bill of Rights and the Individual Rights Protection Act. Primacy means that the legislation stood in priority to any other act on record in the province. These enactments were the actions of a Progressive Conservative government. They were proud moments—laws that were readily accepted by Albertans.

Since the late 1980s the government has continued to call itself Progressive Conservative, but it is a much different brand of conservatism. It is a conservatism

that has been usurped by the same neo-conservatives who have dramatically changed the political landscape in Alberta.

The stated justification for the relegation of Alberta's Human Rights Commission to a has-been status is the rhetoric that human rights means special rights for certain individuals. It is an argument that seemingly proposes that any legislation that endeavors to overcome decades of discrimination and prejudice against a group of Canadians is creating special rights. It is an argument that defies logic and is merely a smoke screen behind which lie the very prejudices we are attempting to erase.

Yet in the province of Alberta these arguments have gained some currency. Cabinet ministers have called for the abolition of the Human Rights Commission, suggesting that the costs are hard to justify and that the founding legislation creates special rights.

In 1996 the government set up a special public review panel to provide advice relating to the Human Rights Commission. The report made sweeping recommendations to strengthen and properly finance the Commission. The government ignored the advice of its own panel and refused to implement the major recommendations.

Today the Alberta Human Rights Commission is seldom heard. It is mired in the backwater of some government department, much to the joy and satisfaction of the theo-conservatives who were instrumental in putting them there.

Why, one might ask, should these theo-cons, all highly moral people, seek to undermine the basic tenets of fairness and compassion inherent in the advancement of human rights?

The answer is simple. They do not accept the concept that human rights are for everyone. Human rights are only for those who are acceptable to them. Gays, lesbians, aboriginals, the poor and visible minorities need not apply.

The lightning rod in Alberta is sexual orientation. This is the issue that brings out the theo-cons in remarkable force and visibility. When the Human Rights Commission timidly proposed that gays and lesbians should be treated the same as everyone else, and should be included in the Individual Rights Protection Act, the moral majority screamed foul and acted to stop such heresy. In Alberta they won, but thanks to the Supreme Court of Canada their victory was short-lived.

In 1992, Stockwell Day, former evangelical pastor, then a Tory MLA, now leader of the Canadian Alliance, was quoted as saying: "Homosexuality is a mental disorder that can be cured by counselling." Day made his distaste for this element in our community very well known. He was not alone in his political caucus.

During the same period that Day was making his statement, an intriguing legal case was wending its arduous way through the legal system.

Delwin Vriend was employed as a laboratory coordinator by a college in Alberta. Throughout his employment he received positive evaluations, salary increases and promotions for his work performance. In 1990 in response to an inquiry by the president of the college, Vriend disclosed that he was homosexual. In early 1991 the board of the college adopted a position statement on homosexuality, and shortly thereafter the president of the college asked Vriend to resign. Vriend declined, and was fired. The sole reason for his dismissal was his homosexuality.

Vriend went to the courts for relief. It was his only recourse because Alberta was one of the few provinces in Canada that did not include sexual orientation as a protected ground in its human rights legislation.

The Government of Alberta appealed and won in the Alberta Court of Appeal, and Vriend in turn appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. I should add that, in the finest traditions of the legal profession, Vriend's lawyers acted on a "friends of the court" basis for no fee.

I vividly recall sitting in the Supreme Court of Canada in November 1997 listening to the lawyers for the Government of Alberta arguing that it is acceptable for the government to discriminate against an identifiable class in my province and thinking how far we had gone backwards in the past 20 years from the days when we proudly introduced our first human rights legislation.

As we all know, in April 1998, the Supreme Court in a lengthy written judgment held for Vriend. The court stated:

The rights enshrined in s.15 of the Charter are fundamental to Canada. They reflect the fondest dreams, the highest hopes and finest aspirations of Canadian society. When universal suffrage was granted it recognized to some extent the importance of the individual. Canada by its broad scope and fundamental fairness of s.15 has taken a further step in the recognition of the fundamental importance of the innate dignity of the individual. That it has done so is not only praiseworthy but essential to achieving the magnificent goal of equal dignity for all. It is the means of giving Canadians a sense of pride. In order to achieve equality the intrinsic worthiness and importance of every individual must be recognized regardless of the age, sex, color, origins or other characteristics of the person.

These noble words of our highest court were not so well received by the theo-cons in Alberta.

The Alberta Civil Society Association went on air with paid ads with a plea to Albertans to stand up to Ottawa's judges and invited them to call Premier Klein to stand up for democracy and tell him to use the notwithstanding clause to overturn the effect of the Vriend decision.

Klein himself was shocked by the vile messages he received in an orchestrated campaign by those who promoted their views of intolerance by excusing their actions under the rubric of "hate the sin, love the sinner."

Members within Klein's caucus publicly urged him to invoke the notwithstanding clause, and shout radio had a field day catering to the theo-conservatives who filled the airwaves with their anticourt, antigay, anti-human rights crusades.

Others argued that the courts and the Charter were usurping the powers of the provincial legislators who should have the right to determine what is appropriate human rights legislation for Albertans. This is a tenuous argument at best, which would result in our inalienable human rights being at the mercy of the varying political inclinations in each province, an unacceptable situation.

Sadly, through all of this raging debate, the Alberta Human Rights Commission was silent, other than to issue a press release to suggest that the court's ruling had very limited application.

Premier Klein to his credit and to the utter dismay of the theo-cons refuse to invoke the notwithstanding clause but he was under immense pressure, and the issue is far from finished.

In the area of human rights commitment Alberta in 2001 is generally recognized throughout the nation as having the weakest, most underfunded and most poorly led human rights agency in Canada.

Yet the struggle in this particular area is far from over as the government announced that it was going to build a fence around the issue of sexual orientation.

There is no place in our province for fences.

We saw fences in Quebec City.

We need bridges, not fences.

We must not permit the ghettoization of our community or our schools on ethnic, racial or religious fault lines. How can we bring our children to understand the beauty and depth of other cultures and religions if we shelter them and isolate them from the mainstream of Canadian life in our pluralistic society? To achieve the goals so eloquently stated by the Supreme Court of Canada we must strengthen our public school system so that all our children have an equal opportunity to gain their potential.

A two-tiered educational system segregating the rich from the poor, the secular from the religious, the ethnic from the ethnic, the handicapped from the able, will not set the foundations for a healthy and solid future for harmony and progress in our society.

Yesterday's newspapers in Calgary carried reports of increasing violence against visible minorities. Literature, including books such as Warren Kinsella's (2001) *Web of Hate*, speaks to the organized racism that is growing at an alarming rate throughout this country. Studies disclose a growing element of crime within certain visible minorities in Canada.

How do we overcome these clouds hanging over our society?

In my view it is by bringing people together, in our schools and communities. It is by bringing dignity and fairness to all our citizens. It is by ensuring that equal opportunity is available to all to prove themselves. These are lofty objectives.

Sixteen years have not brought us any closer to realizing them. That is no reason for dismay or giving up. It is time to speak out and remember that it is not the most vocal who win the battles. Battles in the long run are won by those who use reason, compassion, courage and fairness in their pursuits.

In Canada, notwithstanding the scolding conservatism that is in vogue, but now losing steam, we are blessed with fair and compassionate people who will continue to reject the extremes in political movements, from the right or left.

But we must always be vigilant.

We must always speak out when prejudice and discrimination rear their ugly head. We must identify and challenge those who exclude others because of their differences, and we must cherish the freedoms we enjoy and ensure that they exist for all Canadians, not merely a privileged few.

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Keynote Respondents

Opening Doors for Intercultural and Antiracist Education

Toh Swee-Hin

I would like to express my appreciation for Ron Ghitter's direct, passionate and challenging commentary on Alberta's progress since the report of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, which he chaired some 16 years ago. I, too, strongly believe that expressions of diversity and choice in the field of education should not undermine the crucial principles of diversity, human rights and social justice that must be reflected in democratic societies such as Canada. It is, indeed, appropriate and significant that the Alberta Teachers' Association is sponsoring this timely symposium to share and catalyze ideas and best practices for promoting diversity, equity and human rights in public education.

To begin on a personal note, I look back at my first experience of Alberta nearly 30 years ago and recall the not-so-good memories of being called racist names and of lonely bus rides during which other passengers seemed reluctant to share a seat with me or other nonwhite people. During this time, I also became acutely aware of the marginalization of First Nations and aboriginal peoples. Not all my social and cultural experiences in Alberta were negative: certainly, many Canadians of diverse backgrounds expressed respect, goodwill and friendliness, and showed how there can be unity amidst diversity.

Returning to Canada in the early 1990s was sobering: after two decades of official multiculturalism and multicultural education, racism and discrimination were still evident. Human rights violations, intolerance and inequities on the basis of gender, physical/mental challenges, sexual orientation and even economic inequities in affluent Canada and oil-rich Alberta prevail despite some steps forward in legislation and societal conduct.

Toh Swee-Hin is a University of Alberta professor and researcher who helped pioneer and promote peace education in many countries, such as Uganda, South Africa, Jamaica, Japan, the United States, and, importantly, Mindanao in the Philippines, a site of longstanding armed social and cultural conflicts. As director of the University of Alberta's Centre for International Education and Development from 1994 to 1999, Mr Toh was able to integrate peace education into several bilateral educational development projects in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Last year, Toh Swee-Hin was awarded the prestigious UNESCO Prize for Peace Education.

I will endeavor to complement Ron Ghitter's keynote address through the perspectives of my fields of interest and commitment: peace education and global education. The ATA is serving the public interest very well in focusing on the values and principles of diversity, equity and human rights. Surely, these principles should underpin teaching, learning and all dimensions of education. The active engagement of a cross-section of society in this dialogue is also encouraging. Recent decades have indicated that, worldwide, society is awakening to play indispensable roles in building a better, more peaceful and more just world. The United Nations declarations of 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and of 2001–2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World set an urgent context for this symposium.

In his remarks on Alberta's progress, Mr Ghitter focused on local expressions of equity, human rights and diversity that have been or need to be affirmed through education. However, it is also vital to focus on global perspectives, for Albertans are not only Canadian citizens but also global citizens who must be sensitive to the implications of human rights, equity and diversity for educational initiatives, whether formal or nonformal. I will, therefore, raise issues of global citizenship through the lenses of peace and global education.

First, with regard to the cultural/ethnic/racial marginalization that still marks Canadian society, it is clear that educators need to be challenged by the task of assessing the impact and outcomes of policies and of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Certainly, it is appropriate to acknowledge positive results and the dedication of teachers who try to integrate multiculturalism into their curricula and pedagogy. Nevertheless, we need to acknowledge that multicultural education can be rendered less effective and holistic by a superficial festival or 4-D (dance, dress, diet, dialect) approach. Celebrating diversity in such ways can be an effort to construct harmony without acknowledging the discrimination, exclusion and marginalization (for example, harassment, stereotyping, racist assaults, and institutional or systemic racism) of others—those outside the dominant cultural/ethnic/racial groups. Recent research has shown how ethnic/racial disparities are often reflected in what one author has called a "creeping economic apartheid" (Galabuzi 2001). Also vital in this discussion is a deep recognition of the long-standing injustices suffered by First Nations and aboriginal peoples, who experience racism as part of everyday life—racism perpetrated not only by members of majority groups but also by minorities themselves despite their own experiences of discrimination.

An antiracist education or, alternatively, a critical multicultural education paradigm, will enable teachers and learners to challenge personal racism and discrimination through conflict-resolution skills and empowerment. It will also examine and transcend curriculum omissions and irrelevancies, ethnic- and race-oriented streaming, lack of role models among teaching staff and parental marginalization in encounters with teachers and schools. Such an education will include history as seen from the eyes of different groups and will emphasize the peace and global education principle that all cultures have strengths and weaknesses and can enrich each other by sharing wisdom, engaging in dialogue and showing respect. In turn, teacher education programs need to ensure that such critical multicultural perspectives are integrated into their core, rather than serving merely as electives for the interested or for specialized minors or majors.

We also need to help students become critically aware that cyberspace is increasingly a source of racist and intolerant attempts to indoctrinate or espouse supremacist ideology based on skin color or fundamentalist beliefs. Groups such as the Media Awareness Network have done much to work with students, teachers, schools and parents in challenging and rejecting such narrow-mindedness and intolerance. Similarly, educators and concerned citizens should send strong signals to mainstream media that still engage in profiling or racializing groups or promoting discourses that stereotype racialized minorities as inferior.

In the field of intercultural and antiracist education, it is my hope that collaboration between teachers and members of groups and movements will expand, given the benefits to learners. Associations such as the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR), the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA), the Edmonton China Town Multicultural Centre and the LINGAP (Learning for Interdependence and Global Awareness of the Philippines) Institute have a rich pool of resources to share with schools and other stakeholders. In turn, the educational community can help strengthen the advocacy of such groups for governmental policies and programs that better reflect critical multicultural and antiracist principles.

I now turn to issues of diversity and equity in the social and economic contexts. Although Canada has been ranked at the top of the UN Human Development Index for a number of years, there are increasingly visible indicators, in the much-heralded era of globalization, of not only increased poverty but also increased inequalities between rich and poor. Despite governmental promises to end child poverty by the end of the last century, significant proportions of children continue to live in poor conditions. Homelessness is increasing in urban centres, and economic growth has been accompanied by the hardships and insecurities of unemployment or underemployment. In its recent report on the status of Canadian society, the Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development emphasizes that budgetary cutbacks in areas such as education and health are diminishing the quality of life of many Canadians, including Albertans.

The implications of these social and economic contexts for more equitable and diverse schooling, and the responsibilities of teachers, schools and teacher education institutions, are quite clear. We need approaches to and paradigms of education that are sensitive to the effects of social and economic disparities and marginalization on the capacities of learners to succeed in school. More resources must be available to inner-city schools, and other relevant strategies recommended by the Joint Stakeholder Committee on Children and Poverty must be implemented.

In the area of gender equity, educational institutions and individual educators may note the steady progress in such areas as employment equity, especially among professionals. Curricula, textbooks and other learning resources are likewise becoming gender-sensitive and nonsexist. Teachers are becoming better versed in pedagogies for enhancing full participation of women in classrooms, schools and family life. Nevertheless, it is clear that challenges remain in areas such as physical violence, sexual harassment and equitable participation in high-level management roles. Furthermore, education for gender equity needs to consider the complex interactions between gender,

class and ethnicity/race, so that future students can see that nonwhite women, especially newcomers, can suffer not only racism but also economic marginalization in low-status, low-income jobs (for example, domestic work).

Mr. Ghitter's address cogently reminds us that homophobia exists in Alberta and Canada; hence, another urgent task for education for diversity and equity is to sensitize all stakeholders to the crucial and legitimate role that schools can and must play in transcending homophobia.

In regard to people who are physically or mentally challenged, schools have a continuing responsibility to face the challenge of meeting their special needs. Schools, professional associations such as the ATA and teacher education programs need to be lauded for their efforts and further encouraged to fulfill this important role.

Finally, I return to the earlier-mentioned theme of the global dimensions of diversity, equity and human rights, and its implications for education. A clear consensus among peacebuilders and educators worldwide is that all human rights are universal, and that social and economic justice is a universal value and principle on which a humane, peaceful world is built. All humans are interconnected and interdependent in the web of life. Amidst the wealth, affluence and mass-industrialized consumerism that a minority of nations and elites (even within poor societies) enjoy, a majority lack the basic needs of food, shelter, dignified work, literacy and healthcare. Among these casualties of structural violence due to economic inequities, children and women are the most vulnerable. Global economic systems and institutions (for example, International Monetary Fund [IMF], World Bank, World Trade Organization [WTO], debt, transnational corporations) are widening the rich-poor/North-South gaps.

Compounding poverty is the persistence and, in some areas, increasing incidence of wars and armed conflicts, accompanied by inevitable human rights violations and innumerable refugees. Ecological destruction runs apace, undermining sustainability of food security systems and the very fabric of life itself. And amidst affluence and consumer materialism, alienation, loss of meaning and a lack of personal peace abound.

Given these global realities needing urgent attention if humanity and earth are to survive, schools and other educational institutions clearly have vital responsibilities and roles. As the initiatives of the ATA (for example, the Global Education Project of the 1990s) and other stakeholders (for example, the global education activities of the Learning Network and college/university peace and global education programs) have shown, students can develop a critical consciousness about global issues. There is the inspiring example of teenager Craig Keilburger, who has galvanized thoughtful advocacy for the rights of child laborers through his student-run organization, Free the Children. Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have also created creative and constructive initiatives to challenge Canadian foreign policies and the activities of corporations that lead to increased marginalization of the poor (for example, exploitation of workers in Mexican free trade zones under the North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] regime), ecological destruction, human rights violations, displacement of indigenous peoples and even directly or indirectly fueling arm conflicts. The growing movement for global justice has also shown how citizens can exert democratic power (for example, consumer boycotts) to foster fair trade and ethical business practices.

In this regard, classrooms can become fruitful and creative spaces for learners and teachers to discuss the causes of world hunger, poverty, environmental destruction and wars, and to undergo processes of empowerment that may lead to assertive advocacy as global citizens for peace, justice, human rights and sustainability. A continuing challenge for teachers, curriculum developers and policymakers is the need to consistently integrate such issues into all areas of the curriculum. Also, useful and mutually enriching collaboration should be fostered between schools and NGOs. Students need not feel hopelessness or despair about these overwhelming world problems. Rather, global and peace education teachers are bearers of hope, examples of ordinary people worldwide struggling to overcome inequities and human rights violations with dignity, courage and determination.

Recently, as part of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, local NGOs, including Change for Children and the Learning Network, organized a Painting Peace project in which Canadian and Central American youth joined minds, hand and hearts in a youth peace summit and also produced inspiring peace murals and artwork. Many teachers and schools were involved in this successful summit. Presently, the Green Map project, supported by the City of Edmonton, engages elementary students in thinking critically about their understandings of ecological sustainability and applying their enhanced consciousness to the design of a Green Map of their local community. Hopefully, this will foster personal and social advocacy to save the local and global environment, including living more simply and compassionately.

Finally, but not least, there is a rapidly expanding movement of educators and institutions in many countries to integrate values, principles and strategies of nonviolent conflict resolution into curricula and into classroom and institutional practices. The ATA's Safe and Caring Schools (SACS) Project and similar initiatives across Canada and other countries have shown how children and youth can learn to resolve conflicts through negotiation, mediation and a win-win philosophy. NGOs such as Project Ploughshares and the Mahatma Gandhi Canadian Foundation for World Peace have conducted workshops and conferences that provide space for youth to think critically about their social lives in terms of nonmilitarism and nonviolence, as peacebuilders such as Gandhi have advocated and inspired.

In conclusion, "Opening Doors" in ways that promote equity, justice and human rights in the realm of education is a multidimensional and holistic challenge. Ron Ghitter has urged us to be vigilant and to continue to meet this challenge in diverse areas of educational, social, political, cultural and economic life. Hopefully, my response may be seen as affirming his plea and as complementing his consideration of local implications with a call for integrating the global dimensions of education for peace, justice and human rights. Given the diversity of this symposium's participants—spanning all levels of formal and nonformal education, numerous stakeholders and representatives of NGOs—I am confident that this symposium will yield fruitful and assertive outcomes for Albertan and, indeed, Canadian education.

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Indigenous and Aboriginal Peoples

Linda Bull

Thanks to our Creator for life on Mother Earth, which we take for granted. I honor the memory of my ancestors by using the voice as gifted to us by Creator. We indigenous peoples were to have become extinct by policies of assimilation, integration and other colonialist buzz words; I am here to prove otherwise. “We” are here more by the grace of God than by the grace of man. Welcome to Cree country.

Thanks to the Alberta Teachers’ Association, especially J-C Couture, who invited me to participate in this symposium.

Much thanks for the keynote address by Ron Ghitter. That was excellent. In addition, my thanks to Toh Swee-Hin for his illuminating response.

It is with great difficulty that I attempt to address a topic that has been the experience of the total indigenous population in the Americas for the last 500 years (and longer). And I say Americas because the experience has touched the lives of all my indigenous brothers and sisters who inhabit this part of the continent, whether they are aware of it or not. Incidentally, it is not my intention to offend anyone; I am only sharing the experience and the reality of indigenous and aboriginal peoples.

I am also aware that the keynote address was to reflect on “tolerance and understanding in Alberta during the past 16 years.” Looking back on 16 years is barely a drop in the bucket; coming from an indigenous perspective, one needs to reflect on the past 500 years and more to really understand where the indigenous/aboriginal peoples are coming from. In addition, the topic also needs to address diversity, equity and human rights.

Tolerance, to me, is a derogatory, insulting word, which implies that I put up with you for the moment and that the minute your back is turned I can carry on with my old ways (status quo). That does not change anything. *Acceptance* is preferred because it is a word in which understanding comes from a practical application, a conscious effort, a discipline, a way of life, a commitment and from seeking “truth,” not of who is right but what is right. It does not belong to any one discipline but is a part of all disciplines.

Linda Bull is Cree, a First Nations’ educator and an advocate of indigenous peoples’ rights worldwide. She is completing doctoral studies related to issues facing First Nations peoples in Canada in the context of global and peace education. She has participated in numerous international peace networks and forums and was recently awarded the Mahatma Gandhi Millennium Graduate Scholarship by the Mahatma Gandhi Canadian Foundation for World Peace.

I brought statistics of aboriginal peoples today but due to the time constraint I will not be able to show them. Statistics do not always reveal the total truth; they show trends and are usually worse than they indicate. There is a better understanding when qualitative methodology is the research method employed.

If statistics indicate that there are problems within the aboriginal community and this symposium is addressing issues such as diversity, equity and human rights, and if there are 30,000 members in the ATA, then where are the aboriginal members? By a show of hands, I would like to see how many aboriginal people are participating at this conference (I see three people have raised their hands). It is those people that you must approach and involve in your search for correcting the wrongs and injustices. They are the voice. They are the answer.

Imagine a map of North America in 1492. Now imagine that map all in black. That is all indigenous peoples' land. Now think forward to today. That same map is now almost all white, except for a few dark spots, a few grains of pepper on a white tablecloth.

Today, indigenous peoples are the most marginalized and the least appreciated of peoples in this continent. This is the biggest human rights violation inflicted on indigenous peoples: how much indigenous lands have been lost. Further, indigenous peoples were neither recognized nor acknowledged for the largest contribution they made in the total history of the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Treaties endorsed on a nation-to-nation basis to allow for peace and European settlement have been either ignored or undermined, yet all citizens benefit from the use of indigenous lands and resources.

I would also like to refer to an editorial by Dr Carl Urion (1992, 2) that was published in the *Canadian Journal of Native Education* in which he talks about the paradox of the educational system, as follows:

. . . in the past 25 years, the demographic changes in Native education appear to reflect dramatic improvement. That improvement has been hard won, and it is not an exaggeration to say that some people have given up their lives to the struggle. It has not been enough. Demographic description cannot capture individual experience, and as Cora Weber-Pillwax points out, to perpetuate a system that so traumatizes and alienates a child that he sits in a classroom and eats his shirt cuffs is to perpetuate a form of child abuse. The paradox is between gross measures of improvement and the individual lived experience of too many children.

Here is another. The hallmark term of the past 25 years is some permutation of "Indian control," and hundreds of bands have begun operating their own schools. Yet during this period of "devolution" an overwhelming majority of First Nations children have been registered in non-First Nations educational institutions. There is a paradox enough in that observation. It is compounded by the realization that despite whatever non-Native governments profess about their agenda for First Nations control, the real agenda remains what it has been for the past 120 years, containment and control.

It is not only governments that create paradox. Local institutions can articulate a good-sounding policy but define the terms of administration of that policy so that the intent of the policy is violated. Another major paradox is that in the face of concerted institutional effort all over North America to deal with matters of equity, racism thrives here.

Now on to other violations—interests from energy companies, multinationals, logging, mining, publicly owned utilities and so on continue to invade and exploit remote areas, usually indigenous lands. Dams are built, roads flooded with tourists, waters and lands poisoned. In every case, human rights violations precede these invasions. Development forces indigenous peoples to relinquish their cultures, economics and claims to their lands. In the words of Robert Kennedy Jr, environmental destruction merges with the struggle for human rights.

In *It's a Matter of Survival* (Gordon and Suzuki 1990), David Suzuki stated that if we continue to allow multinationals and transnational corporations to exploit Mother Earth at the rate they are going, we have something like 25 years left before they completely deplete the earth's resources. At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, over a thousand scientists, including Suzuki, collectively signed a declaration for the world to take action on protecting the environment. It was not important enough for the media to report on its implications to all humanity. In November 2000, I did a water fundraiser with David Suzuki; this time, he stated that the rate of environmental destruction and the depletion of the earth's resources now gives us 10 years. In addition, you are asking, how can we best teach young people?

One need only look around. I used to read articles in which "development" allowed the remains of ancestors to be washed away by dams, disturbed and desecrated (somewhere in the South or Central Americas). Today, open your paper or television. This is happening in our backyard. The University of Alberta is housing remains of six bodies excavated somewhere in the city of Edmonton that have been on display since 1967. Whose responsibility is it to act on this injustice of digging up remains of those who have been laid to rest and, moreover, to keep them for purposes of tourists and curiosity seekers.

We have never been as close to doomsday as we are today. Humanity stands at the crossroads in which resonates greed, materialism, "development," self-centeredness and "me-me" individualistic philosophy, ingrained even in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Yet, have we taught our future generations how to survive in a world that cannot sustain itself? Is it fair? It is just? It is no longer only indigenous peoples that will suffer because of human greed, but all of humanity.

Our elders teach us to look ahead seven generations. Can we really do that? Do we even have two generations that can sustain themselves? My concern is, what kind of world are we leaving behind to our grandchildren? Is that justice? Can we really leave behind the kind of world that we have created with a clear conscience?

There is a definite need to look behind historically, to learn the lessons that have created the world today and to use the wisdom of ancient cultures that have lived in balance and harmony with nature. We need to correct the wrongs and injustices of the past to empower *all* peoples. We are in desperate need of healing *all* peoples. We are *all* connected to Mother Earth. We have only one planet.

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Human Rights Work in Alberta Schools: The Legal and Moral Imperatives

Challenges Facing Today's Educators

Gail H Forsythe

When I reflect upon the many teachers and role models who had a positive impact on my life, I think of four outstanding people. First, the teacher who, in Grade 1, sent me a postcard from an exotic place called Trinidad. I kept that postcard with me for many years and always admired the mysterious beauty of the landscape it portrayed.

A second person who had a strong impact on my education was a woman who taught a work-related course. She is now a justice of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta; I am certain that it is only a matter of time before she is appointed to the Court of Appeal or the position of chief justice. I will always remember the passion that she communicated about wills and estates. She brought that subject to life! She does not know it, but she is my most significant role model.

Third, in law school, the professor who spoke with great enthusiasm and analytical ability about a subject that others might find dull: contract law. She is now Canada's minister of justice; I watch her career with interest and admiration.

What made each of these teachers stand out? Three things come to mind. First, they were passionate about their subject matter. Second, they made the content relevant and personal. Third, each teacher reinforced the fact that learning is a life-long process. They taught me that through learning, I could make a difference. If we go back to the example of my Grade 1 teacher's postcard, it was more than a picture of a beautiful place. It was symbolic. It said to me: "*there is an exciting, meaningful world out there—you can, and should, always seek it!*"

Gail H Forsythe is a lawyer/mediator whose law practice includes human rights issues, corporate conflict preventions system design and ombudsman services. In her previous position as the first discrimination ombudsman of a law society, she focused on promoting cultural diversity within the legal profession. She has consulted extensively across Canada with various clients to develop and deliver equity training programs and encourage equity practices in the workplace, and to raise awareness of equity issues among organizations and professions. From 1989 to 1991, she was assistant dean of law of the University of Calgary. She is the executive director of the Cultural Diversity Institute, University of Calgary.

As an educator first, and lawyer/mediator second, I try to use these principles in my work. By considering issues from the participant's perspective, I try to deliver a message that is relevant to that person's experience. By doing so, I observe that the "lightbulbs of understanding" go on more readily. You have probably observed the same result with your students and colleagues. I have also learned that this principle applies equally well in the courtroom. Judges sit up and listen attentively when legal arguments are framed to reach across barriers and dispel stereotypes.

I cannot help but wonder why these teachers were so important to me. Why were the lessons they taught so easy to absorb? and so long lasting? Were these people simply great teachers? Or, were they more meaningful to me because they mirrored the very essence of my sense of self: my gender and my ethnicity? How important was it to my career development that I could see my future through them?

Because of these teachers, I had living proof that, as a woman, "it could be done." This was important to me because my family was not privileged with respect to access to education. My father was a coal miner at Rabbit Hill, Alberta, and my mother was, and is, a homemaker. Their parents were immigrants who struggled as farmers in western Canada.

Would the impact of these teachers have been as inspirational if I was an aboriginal woman, a young woman of color, a person with a disability, of a non-Christian faith, or nonheterosexual? To whom do these students turn when they need inspiration and role models? Do mainstream teachers validate each student's unique sense of self that is integral to the student's culture, race, religion, disability or sexual orientation? Or, does the education system marginalize these students by silently implying that one must be mainstream to succeed in life?

Is the education system preparing teachers and students to value our diversity? It is increasingly imperative that Alberta educators foster a climate of human dignity in the classroom. I believe that by doing so, educators can make a life-long difference to students in these challenging times. We can "turn on the lightbulb of learning" by embracing our diversity.

Teachers, administrators and school board trustees face numerous challenges in today's classroom. Putting aside the obvious issue of funding, a key issue is how to remove systemic barriers to create healthy learning and work environments. The courts are full of cases that illustrate the personal and professional costs associated with this issue.

Cases of this nature affect educators, administrators and students on a daily basis. They illustrate that educators must be proactive to meet their legal and professional obligations as they relate to human rights in the classroom and diversity.

As these cases unfold, the courts strive to apply legal principles to ensure that case outcomes are consistent and fair.

The Right Honourable Chief Justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlin (2001) stated,

Through thousands of decisions, the Supreme Court of Canada has woven the tissue of Canadian justice. If one searches one can find missed stitches. But usually one finds that they have been taken up and reworked to make a fabric that is strong, serviceable and satisfying to our sense of how things should be in this, our part of the world.

I now turn to a very recent Supreme Court of Canada decision. I will leave it to you to decide if this case, which is now part of the “fabric of Canadian justice” woven by the Supreme Court of Canada, defines “how things should be” in the educator’s world. Does the reasoning in this case create a sufficiently strong fabric to address diversity issues in the classroom?

To illustrate, I would like you to think of one of your attributes that makes you unique and special. For example, it may be your gender, your cultural perspective, your religion or your sexual orientation. I imagine that special sense of self is unique to each of us. It is undoubtedly fortunate that we differ in this significant way—or it would be a very dull world, a world in which ideas are all the same and we stagnate due to a lack of different perspectives.

Now, imagine yourself as a small child. How strong is this aspect of your sense of self identity? How easy would it be for you, as a small child, to lose that sense of self? How important is it to you, as a small child, to have role models who exhibit your specific sense of self? If you do not have role models, will you gain by interacting with teachers who send the signal that it is all right to value and develop this unique aspect of your sense of being?

Let us take this example one step further. You have the option of taking your small child and placing that child in one of two classrooms. The teachers assigned to both classrooms believe that the foundation for your sense of self is morally wrong. They believe in this view so strongly that they signed a contract that required them to promise to never embrace this sense of self as part of their personal value system. The contract was a condition of entry to the university where they obtained their teaching degrees. The university also believes that your sense of self is contrary to its philosophy.

You must now place your child in one of these teachers’ classroom. There is one final factor to consider. Teacher A attended all five years of teacher training at the university that required the contract that denounced the attribute that is key to your sense of self. Teacher B attended four years of teacher training at that same university but one year at a public university. The public university welcomes diverse people, including people like you.

My question is: in whose classroom do you place your child? Both teachers have the potential to set aside their personal views of your identity to welcome you, make you feel included and respect your unique strength. With a show of hands, how many of you opt for Teacher A? How many opt for Teacher B? Did Teacher B seem preferable because you feared that because of the contract opposing your lifestyle that Teacher A would be less tolerant, even discriminatory?

This concern is what prompted a case between the British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT) and Trinity Western University (TWU) that found its way to the Supreme Court of Canada.¹ The case centred around an administrative law issue regarding the college’s jurisdiction. It came forward because the British Columbia College of Teachers refused Trinity Western University’s application to assume full control over its five-year teacher training baccalaureate program.

Trinity Western University is a private educational institution in British Columbia. It is associated with the Evangelical Free Church of Canada. TWU requires its students to sign a community standards “contract.” This contract was

required of all students, faculty and staff; it prescribes the expected conduct of members while attending TWU. The signator must promise to uphold and promote the Christian lifestyle while refraining from a list of “practices that are Biblically condemned,” which include “sexual sins including . . . homosexual behaviour.”

Trinity Western University wanted to end the requirement that it was necessary for its students to attend one year at a public university where diversity was mainstream. This change was considered necessary by the university so that it could more fully address its religious mandate. The BCCT refused to approve the application because it was concerned that it was contrary to the public interest for it to approve a teacher education program that adopted the discriminatory practice of excluding or marginalizing homosexuals.

The university challenged the college’s decision in three courts. It argued, successfully, that, without evidence that TWU teachers discriminated against their students, the college had gone beyond its power to assume that the educational program would produce teachers who were detrimental to society’s interest in valuing and respecting diversity.

In an 8-1 majority decision, the Supreme Court justices agreed that under the *Teaching Profession Act of British Columbia* it was not within the college’s jurisdiction to consider whether the program follows discriminatory practices. The court concluded that it was wrong for the college to interpret the TWU “contract” from a human rights perspective. By doing so, it went beyond its mandate to address educational matters; it concerned itself with human rights instead. The court stated that the college’s expertise does not qualify it to interpret the scope of human rights nor to reconcile the competing rights of religion and sexual orientation.

The majority of the Supreme Court of Canada indicated that “at the heart of this appeal is how to reconcile the religious freedoms of individuals wishing to attend TWU with the equality concerns of students in British Columbia’s public school system, concerns that may be shared by society generally.” It noted that TWU is a private institution that is exempt, in part, from the British Columbia human rights legislation. Nor does the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms apply.

The majority wrote that neither freedom of religion nor the guarantee against discrimination based on sexual orientation is absolute. The proper place to draw the line is generally between belief and conduct. The Supreme Court expressed the view that the freedom to hold beliefs is broader than the freedom to act on them.

It concluded that, in the absence of concrete evidence that training teachers at TWU fosters discrimination against homosexuals in the public schools of British Columbia, the freedom of individuals to adhere to certain religious beliefs while at TWU should be respected. Therefore, the program proposed by TWU was not discriminatory and should be approved by the college.

The court cautioned that acting on those beliefs, however, is a different matter. If a teacher in the public school system engages in discriminatory conduct, that teacher can be subject to disciplinary proceedings before the college. The court expressed the view that, in this way, the scope of the freedom of religion and equality rights that have come into conflict can be reconciled.

The Supreme Court of Canada Decision— The Lone Dissent

The only dissenting justice, The Honourable Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dube, viewed this case from a different perspective. She stated that the presence of discrimination is a relevant factor and within the college's jurisdiction and expertise. She noted that

Equality is a central component of the public interest that the BCCT is charged with protecting in the classrooms of the province. The BCCT was required to consider the value of equality in its assessment of the impact TWU's program will have on the classroom environment.

Her view was that, by signing the contract, the student or employee becomes complicit in an overt, but not illegal, act of discrimination against homosexuals and bisexuals. In that circumstance, she stated that it is not patently unreasonable for the BCCT to treat TWU students' public expressions of discrimination as potentially affecting the public school communities in which they wish to teach. Her view is that, although tolerance is a fundamental value stated in the TWU community standards document, the public interest in the public school system requires something "more than mere tolerance."

She opined that the college could reasonably conclude that, without a fifth year of training outside the supervision of TWU, there would be an unacceptable pedagogical cost. That cost would be expressed in terms of reduced exposure of TWU students to diversity and its values. She stated that it is reasonable to insist that graduates of accredited teacher training programs be equipped to provide a welcoming classroom environment, one that is as sensitive as possible to the needs of a diverse student body. Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dube stated,

The modern role of the teacher has developed into a multi-faceted one, including counselling as well as educative functions. Evidence shows that there is an acute need for improvement in the experiences of homosexual and bisexual students in Canadian classrooms. Without the existence of supportive classroom environments, homosexual and bisexual students will be forced to remain invisible and reluctant to approach their teachers. They will be victims of identity erasure.

She stated that the courts, by trespassing into the field of pedagogy, dealt a setback to the college's efforts to ensure the sensitivity and empathy of its members to all students' backgrounds and characteristics.

Conclusion

The Trinity Western University case is likely to be the subject of controversy. One journalist noted that the decision was "so much at odds with earlier rulings of the court" that "something has changed. . . ." (Byfield 2001). Is this case a departure from a trend toward tolerance within Canadian society? Or, is it an attempt to ensure that professional bodies have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and areas of expertise?

On the one hand, it could be argued that the Supreme Court did an excellent job of recognizing that people are capable of *not* acting on their beliefs in the

classroom in a discriminatory manner; therefore, educational programs like those at TWU are entitled to freedom of religious protection. On the other hand, the dissenting voice of Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dube casts a strong signal of doubt on society's ability to separate belief from action. She cites the case of *Egan v. Canada*, [1995] 2 S.C.R. 513 at para. 174, where Justice Cory states,

Canada has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world. . . . Of all teens who commit suicide, about one third appear to be homosexual in orientation. Many such youth become depressed in the ongoing struggle with social fear and rejection. . . . Cognitive, emotional and social isolation, ongoing external and internalized homophobia and lack of support may lead homosexually oriented adolescents to perceive suicide as their only means of escape. . . .

Madam Justice points out that it is the human dignity of students that is truly at stake. I cannot help but wonder, if the facts of this case were reframed in the context of race, gender or a non-Christian religion, would the outcome have been the same?

The majority decision implies that people will treat others with dignity regardless of their personal views. Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dube's dissent implies that putting a child's sense of self and identity at risk is simply too high a price, particularly for those groups who have generally experienced "pre-existing disadvantage, vulnerability, stereotyping, or prejudice."

By the way, for those of you who keep track of details and who noted that I referred to four role models in my introduction but only spoke about three people, did I mention a woman who, as a single parent, fought hard to attain her legal education and rise to the Supreme Court of Canada? Her name is Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dube.

Note

1. *Trinity Western University v. British Columbia College of Teachers*, 2001 SCC 31, File No.: 27168. Heard: 2000 November 9; Judgment: 2001 May 17. On appeal from the Court of Appeal for British Columbia.

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Human Rights Respondents

Police Response to Human Rights and Cultural Issues

Doug Jones

I am a member of the Calgary Police Service, Cultural Resources Unit, which is made up of eight constables and one sergeant. Our unit members act as ambassadors for the police service and reach out to Calgary's diverse communities. We establish a strong rapport by attending special events and educating ourselves on their religion and their cultural customs. Committees composed of police and community members have been established to ensure we provide appropriate service to all of Calgary's diverse communities. Our unit members are also responsible for providing 31 hours of diversity training to all police recruits. We have also answered requests to present to small companies and to teachers on professional days. Our unit has been involved in mediations between our service and the community and has also mediated within communities we serve.

I look after two portfolios, Hate/Bias Crime Coordinator and the Gay/Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgendered Communities. The portfolios fit well together as the gay and lesbian community is the second leading targeted group for hate and bias crime. Last year Calgary had 133 crimes committed that were motivated by hate or bias, with race being the primary target. I have presented at numerous community agencies and schools on this subject and encourage victims and witnesses to report all hate/bias crimes and incidents. The Calgary police will soon be releasing newly developed hate/bias crime pamphlets and posters that will be placed in all junior and senior high schools, community agencies and several other public locations.

The Calgary police now respond to hate/bias incidents. In the past, when someone was a victim of a hate/bias incident that was not criminal in nature, it was not considered a police matter. That has now changed. When a hate/bias incident is reported to police communications, details will be passed on to the hate/bias crime coordinator including the victim's information and a description of what happened. The appropriate portfolio holder in the Cultural Resources Unit will follow up with the victim, the victim's family or, if appropriate, the victim's entire community. Hate/bias incidents and crimes will be collected together for comparison so the two can be linked. Suspects are often involved in hate/bias incidents before they commit hate/bias crimes.

Doug Jones has been a member of the Calgary Police Service for 20 years. He is the police liaison with the gay/lesbian community in Calgary and has been the hate/bias crime coordinator for two years. Doug Jones also works creating proactive programs with Calgary schools through the Calgary Police Service's Cultural Resources Unit.

Re-Creating “Community” in Schools

Usha Procinsky

Over the past 20 years, educators have worked at creating “community” in school. The concept of community in school has been based on bringing people together to share a common set of values, beliefs and preferred practices. This concept of community may in actual fact be divisive rather than unifying. It can bring some people together and leave others out. Further, this notion of community can exaggerate differences from others and cause fragmentation, disengagement and conflict.

As our society becomes increasingly diverse, schools leaders face many challenges. One important dilemma is, How do we reconcile the paradoxical problem of creating distinct school communities that are held together by common meanings and a shared sense of common good within a society that is increasingly multicultural and also has a strong history of individualism?

Shields (in press) suggests that the very definition of community must change. She suggests that it is imperative that as school leaders we work to create “communities of difference.” This type of community does not try to homogenize its members into an established set of shared values, beliefs and practices. Instead, the commonalities are values of inclusiveness, respect and a desire to understand diverse perspectives. The norms are commitment to dialogue, reflection and critique, and all members of the school community are constantly in the re-examination and renegotiation of these norms to best address the needs of all.

This concept of community is based on an ethic of acceptance of others with respect, justice and appreciation and on peaceful cooperation within difference. Acceptance and cooperation are necessary to guarantee feelings of trust and safety, which in my view are essential to building community. The building of a community of relationships then becomes central to a school community’s heart and mind.

I share a deeply rooted conviction with many other educators that in much of the industrialized English-speaking world, education systems do not offer equal opportunities for representation, participation and legitimation of all groups that come together in schools. Bishop and Glynn (1999) assert that to make school more just, educational change needs to begin by addressing the inequitable

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power relations in schools. Their model for change requires that school leaders ask the following questions about five activities in schools:

- Initiation—Who establishes the goals?
- Benefits—Who will benefit directly or indirectly?
- Representation—Whose reality is depicted?
- Legitimation—Whose realities and experiences are considered legitimate?
- Accountability—To whom are we accountable?

Bishop and Glynn suggest that these questions can help us to re-examine and renegotiate our beliefs and practices to make them inclusive, respectful and understanding. If we use these questions every time a problem is posed, a solution presented, a policy advocated or a curriculum selected, we may be able to ensure that schools are welcoming, accepting and engaging places for all students.

Several dilemmas face school leaders in creating communities of difference, including the following:

- How can we be just to each child as an individual and as a learner and create a just and disciplined school as well?
- What is justice? Ackerman, Donaldson and van der Bogert (1996) define justice as doing the right thing. But what is the right thing in a school that has a wide range of diversity?
- How do we get adults in the school community to think and act in morally responsible ways so that the children experience a just environment at school?

Katz, Noddings and Strike (1999), Barth (2001) and Sergiovanni (2000) tell us that the most effective way to assure just treatment of all children is for adults to act together in shaping the school community around principles of justice.

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Barriers to Women in Organizations

Sandra Marcellus

The information presented here in draft form is based on a study undertaken to determine what barriers exist to women's participation in the Alberta Teachers' Association. The results of the study reflect on the gender divisions that exist in the teaching profession and, as well, are applicable to other democratic organizations.

Participation in the Alberta Teachers' Association

Of the approximately 30,000 teachers employed in Alberta during the 1999–2000 school year, 67 percent were female (ATA¹). Nationwide in 1996–1997, the percentage of female teachers was 62, up from the low of 56 in 1980–81 (CTF 2000). Despite the increase of women in teaching over the past 20 years, women are not participating in the business of the Alberta Teachers' Association in numbers that match their participation in the teaching profession. This is true of paid positions on ATA staff as well as elected positions at both local and provincial levels. Of the positions identified in Table 1, nowhere is the participation of women proportional to the number of female members of the Association, with the exception of the position of local secretary.

Table 1

Participation in Selected Association Positions by Gender 1999–2000

	Female	Male
Provincial Executive Council	9 (47%)	10 (53%)
Executive Staff	12 (43%)	16 (57%)
Local Presidents	15 (29%)	36 (71%)
Local Secretaries	37 (73%)	14 (27%)
Local Treasurers	15 (29%)	36 (71%)
Local Economic Policy Committee (EPC) Members	217 (36%)	394 (64%)
Local Negotiating Subcommittee (NSC) Members	70 (11%)	167 (89%)
Local EPC Chairs	13 (21%)	48 (79%)
Local NSC Chairs	11 (18%)	50 (82%)

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Local Economic Policy Committees (EPCs) are responsible for collective bargaining activities within a bargaining unit. They may include representatives from schools or divisions, as well as subgroups such as substitute teachers or administrators. An EPC executive may be made up of a chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary. The actual contract negotiations are carried out by the Negotiating Subcommittee (NSC). These subcommittees have an average of five members, all elected from the EPC. When EPC and NSC participation rates are analyzed by gender (see Table 2), it can be concluded that

1. female teachers are underrepresented on economic policy committees and
2. female EPC members are less likely to hold executive positions or sit on negotiating subcommittees.

Table 2

Ratios of Memberships and Chairpersons: Economic Policy Committees and Negotiating Subcommittees (1999–2000)

	Female	Male
NSC members/EPC members	70/217 (32%)	167/394 (42%)
EPC Chairs/EPC members	13/217 (6%)	48/394 (12%)
NSC Chairs/NSC members	11/70 (16%)	50/167 (30%)

The barrier research involved a telephone survey of 63 out of approximately 150 female teachers who were on EPCs but who did not hold an executive position on that committee or sit on the negotiations subcommittee. The research question, in its most general term was, Why not? Why were these women on EPCs but not on NSCs or in executive positions? Specifically, the study had three goals:

1. Identify characteristics of women on EPCs
2. Determine type and strength of barriers faced by female EPC members
3. Develop suggestions for the Association to ease or eliminate these barriers

Subject Information

Because of inaccuracies in the ATA's membership list, some women were contacted who did not fit the subject profile and were thus eliminated from the survey. The information profile for all other participants is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

A. Years Teaching

Years	Participants	Percent (%)
0–9	16	28.1
10–19	21	36.8
20–29	15	26.4
30+	5	8.7
Total	57	100.0

B. Rural vs. Urban* School Divisions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rural	32	56.1	56.1
	Urban	25	43.9	100.0
Total	57	100.0	100.0	

**Urban* was defined as the large urban and suburban school boards in Edmonton, St. Albert, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge and Grande Prairie.

C. Division Taught[†]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Elementary	32	56.1	69.6	69.6
	Secondary	14	24.6	30.4	100.0
	Total	46	80.7	100.0	
Missing	both	1	1.8		
	System	10	17.5		
	Total	11	19.3		
Total		57	100.0		

[†]This question was asked of 47 of the 57 respondents.

D. Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	9	15.8	15.8	15.8
	Married	41	71.9	71.9	87.7
	Divorced	6	10.5	10.5	98.2
	Other	1	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	57	100.0	100.0	

E. Age of Children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0–6	13	22.8	22.8	22.8
	6–12	5	8.8	8.8	31.6
	13–17	10	17.5	17.5	49.1
	18+	13	22.8	22.8	71.9
	None	16	28.1	28.1	100.0
	Total	57	100.0	100.0	

F. Employment Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Full-time	54	94.7	94.7	94.7
	Part-time	3	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	57	100.0	100.0	

Barriers

During the telephone interviews, respondents were asked to rate 18 factors as to how much effect each had on respondents' participation in the Association (see Table 4). A rating of 1 meant that the factor was not an issue, 2 meant that it may be an issue but did not interfere with participation, while 3 meant that the factor made it somewhat difficult to participate or made respondents hesitant to participate. A rating of 4 meant that the factor made it difficult to participate or made respondents not want to participate and 5 meant that the factor had been a reason not to participate.

Tables 5–7 compare the results for the total sample with results for several subgroups. Table 5 contrasts the total responses with those from women who have children under age 18 and children under age 13. Table 6 shows the variations in responses between the full group and those who work as elementary teachers. Finally, Table 7 compares the total results with the results for respondents with less than a decade of experience.

Table 4
Barriers to Women's Participation in the ATA

Total Sample (n=57)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Ranking
Expense of babysitting	1.421	0.8853	16
Time to arrange babysitting	1.333	0.740	17
Family obligations	2.035	1.052	7
Travel away from home	2.158	1.162	5
Maternity leave	1.597	1.252	14
Knowledge of issues	2.333	1.091	4
Knowledge of procedures	2.456	1.166	2
Lack of confidence	2.509	1.151	1
Aggressive nature	2.439	1.240	3
Only woman	1.877	0.983	9
Punishment from employer	2.130	1.327	7
Lack of support (Association)	1.565	0.911	15
Lack of support (Local)	1.825	1.151	10
Lack of support (teachers)	2.140	1.315	6
Lack of support (family)	1.702	1.118	13
Lack of role models	1.965	1.164	8
Lack of ATA effort on issues	1.825	0.984	10
Little positive effect	1.825	1.020	10

Table 5
Barriers: Comparison of Total Sample (n=57) with Children Under 18 (n=28) and with Children Under 13 (n=18)

	Total	With Children <18	With Children <13
Lack of confidence	2.509 (1)	2.179 (5)	2.167 (7)
Knowledge of procedures	2.456 (2)	2.750 (1)	2.778 (1)
Aggressive nature	2.439 (3)	2.071 (7)	1.889 (12)
Knowledge of issues	2.333 (4)	2.464 (2)	2.611 (2)
Travel away from home	2.158 (5)	2.464 (2)	2.389 (5)
Lack of support (teachers)	2.140 (6)	2.143 (6)	2.222 (6)
Punishment from employer	2.130 (7)	2.040 (7)	1.941 (11)
Family obligations	2.035 (8)	2.357 (4)	2.500 (4)
Lack of role models	1.965 (9)	2.0357(8)	2.167 (7)
Only woman	1.877 (10)	1.607 (16)	1.556 (18)
Lack of ATA effort on issues	1.825 (11)	1.929 (10)	1.833 (13)
Little positive effect	1.825 (11)	1.714 (13)	1.778 (15)
Lack of support (Local)	1.825 (11)	1.786 (11)	1.722 (17)
Lack of support (family)	1.702 (14)	1.714 (13)	1.944 (10)
Maternity leave	1.597 (15)	2.000 (9)	2.556 (3)
Lack of support (Association)	1.565 (16)	1.680 (15)	1.765 (16)
Expense of babysitting	1.421 (17)	1.750 (12)	2.111 (9)
Time to arrange babysitting	1.333 (18)	1.571 (17)	1.833 (13)

Table 6
Barriers: Comparison of Total Sample (n=57)
to Elementary Teachers (n=32)

	Total	Elementary Teachers
Lack of confidence	2.509 (1)	2.6563 (1)
Knowledge of procedures	2.456 (2)	2.438 (4)
Aggressive nature	2.439 (3)	2.594 (2)
Knowledge of issues	2.333 (4)	2.469 (3)
Travel away from home	2.158 (5)	2.344 (5)
Lack of support (teachers)	2.140 (6)	1.938 (8)
Punishment from employer	2.130 (7)	2.097 (7)
Family obligations	2.035 (8)	2.188 (6)
Lack of role models	1.965 (9)	1.906 (9)
Only woman	1.877 (10)	1.813 (11)
Lack of ATA effort on issues	1.825 (11)	1.688 (13)
Little positive effect	1.825 (11)	1.875 (10)
Lack of support (Local)	1.825 (11)	1.625 (14)
Lack of support (family)	1.702 (14)	1.750 (12)
Maternity leave	1.597 (15)	1.590 (15)
Lack of support (Association)	1.565 (16)	1.548 (16)
Expense of babysitting	1.421 (17)	1.406 (17)
Time to arrange babysitting	1.333 (18)	1.375 (18)

Table 7
Barriers: Comparison of Total Sample (n=57) to
Teachers with Under 10 Years' Experience (n=16)

	Total	Under 10 Years
Lack of confidence	2.509 (1)	2.125 (2)
Knowledge of procedures	2.456 (2)	2.250 (1)
Aggressive nature	2.439 (3)	1.750 (8)
Knowledge of issues	2.333 (4)	2.125 (2)
Travel away from home	2.158 (5)	1.688 (5)
Lack of support (teachers)	2.140 (6)	1.938 (4)
Punishment from employer	2.130 (7)	1.933 (6)
Family obligations	2.035 (8)	1.938 (4)
Lack of role models	1.965 (9)	1.813 (7)
Only woman	1.877 (10)	1.563 (13)
Lack of ATA effort on issues	1.825 (11)	1.563 (13)
Little positive effect	1.825 (11)	1.688 (10)
Lack of support (Local)	1.825 (11)	1.313 (17)
Lack of support (family)	1.702 (14)	1.563 (13)
Maternity leave	1.597 (15)	1.750 (8)
Lack of support (Association)	1.565 (16)	1.533 (16)
Expense of babysitting	1.421 (17)	1.625 (12)
Time to arrange babysitting	1.333 (18)	1.311 (17)

Limitations

This sample is not truly representative of the female members of the ATA. To narrow the scope of the study, I purposely selected women who were already involved in the Association. There may be women who do not participate because they do not agree with the Association's policies, political stance or very existence. There would be many barriers to their participation. For the purpose of this study I was interested only in the barriers faced by women who were interested in the Association's business. This study then may help answer the question, What keeps women who are interested from becoming more involved in the Association?, but it does not answer the question, What keeps women from being involved in the Association?

Second, there are no studies of male teachers to compare these results to. For example, fathers with young children may feel family obligations as much as did the mothers in this study and the participation case may be one of division by time in life rather than gender.

Conclusions and Commentary

1. The teaching profession in Alberta is a reflection of the gender roles still being played out in the larger society, and it is no wonder that those gender-based behaviors and mind-sets are also manifested in the teachers' professional organization.
2. There is danger, but there is also hope.

Engendered Culture, Profession and Association

The 1996 census figures from Statistics Canada detail the amount of unpaid childcare and housework done by men and women. Women were four times more likely than men to do 60 hours or more a month of unpaid childcare and four and a half times more likely to do 60 hours or more of unpaid housework per month. The same census found that the average wage for women was 64.4 percent of the average wage for men. The culture in which teachers live influences their participation in their profession and their professional association.

Belonging to the teaching profession is an engendered experience (Griffin 1997, Kaufman, Westland and Engvall 1997). Teaching is "structured in a patriarchal manner . . . while women continue to be excluded from the decision making experience" (Griffin 1997, 7). This is clear in the barriers felt by women EPC members, particularly elementary and part-time teachers.

"The union and the household are in competition with one another for the commitments of women workers while household involvements detract from women's capacities to become active union members" (Cornfield, Cavalcanti Filho and Chun 1990). Looking at characteristics of women involved in EPCs, the struggle between family and profession is clear. Almost 51 percent of the female EPC members who responded to the barriers study had either no children (28 percent) or adult children (23 percent). Assuming that teachers do not differ substantially from other Albertans, this number is significantly larger than the number of Albertans with no children or no children at home, which in 1996 was 38 percent (Statistics Canada 1996). Teachers without children to

care for are more likely to participate in their professional association than are their colleagues with young children.

The barrier of family obligations was a significant one for many women in this study, particularly those with children at home. Sixty percent of women indicated that family obligations worked against their increased participation in the Association. Thirty percent indicated that it made being involved at least “somewhat difficult.” For women with children younger than 13, family obligations ranked fourth in strength with only 11 percent of respondents in this category reporting that it was not an issue for them. Fifty-six percent indicated that this factor made them at least “hesitant to participate.”

In comparison to family obligations, the barriers involving the time and expense of childcare ranked quite low in the list of factors, although it should be noted that this factor increases for women with young children. The expense of babysitting ranks 17th out of 18 factors for the total population but 12th for women with children under 18 years and 9th for women with children under 13. This is an unfortunate result for the Association’s attempts to eliminate barriers because the pull of family obligations is a much more difficult one to ease than providing babysitting would be.

At the end of the interview participants were asked what would need to change for them to take on a greater role in the Association such as running for an executive position on the EPC or NSC. In response, many women spoke about the choice they felt that they were forced to make between their families and their professional responsibilities. One respondent said that she had made her “kids the first priority.” Many stated that it was family or child responsibilities that kept them from becoming more involved, and several also indicated that they were interested in being on their NSC “once my family has grown up.” When asked what the Association could do to help women take on a greater role, one divorced respondent replied, “Find us better husbands.” Another with a young family answered, “Do my laundry and take care of my kids.” Many women indicated that a positive step would be to provide babysitting at meetings.

These women are also torn between their day jobs as teachers and their feelings of commitment to their professional association. The time away from family is spent on the work of teaching. Arranging for fewer school commitments was a common response to the question about what would need to change for women to increase their involvement in the ATA. One respondent stated that she did not have time to “do a good job at both” (teaching and negotiating). To women already pulled between family and profession, Association business can often feel like that one more thing they cannot become involved in.

These feelings are not unique to teaching as a career or to the ATA as a union (Chaison and Andiappan 1986, 1989; Cobble 1990; Cunnison and Stageman 1995; Cornfield, Cavalcanti Filho and Chun 1990; White 1993; Boehm 1991). In Chaison and Andiappan’s 1989 study of Canadian union officers, the barrier that “many women hold two jobs, at home and at work, and have not time for union activities,” along with barriers involving night travel and meetings and childcare responsibilities, received the highest ratings of importance and much higher ratings were given for these barriers by women than men. Similarly, in their study of a range of American unions, Cornfield,

Cavalcanti Filho and Chun (1990) found that the “chief gender difference was that household involvement was associated with only women’s participation. The more involved a woman was in child care, the lower her participation level.”

In 1994, Chester Cotton and John McKenna studied the voting patterns of unionized college employees. They found that, while for professional staff (faculty and academic support workers) gender made little difference in their participation in the vote, nonprofessional (clerical and maintenance staff) women were much less likely to vote than nonprofessional male workers or professional workers of either gender. The authors concluded that the nonprofessional and professional women “express different attitudes and self-perceptions” (p. 240) and that the attitudes of women with traditionally female jobs toward participation in unions may be part of a larger socialization into gender-specific roles.

The effects of socialization by gender and of teaching as an engendered occupation are observable in the statistics surrounding elementary teachers. The majority of female teachers are in elementary classrooms. Women held three quarters of elementary positions in 1996–97 and 44 percent of secondary teaching positions. These numbers have remained basically unchanged since the early 1970s (Canadian Teachers’ Federation 2000).

Sixty-nine percent of respondents in the barriers survey were elementary school teachers. The results for elementary teachers as compared to secondary teachers demonstrate that elementary teachers as a group have higher ratings for many barriers, in particular lack of confidence, lack of knowledge and the belief that negotiations are confrontational or adversarial in nature. Several elementary teachers commented that most EPC members were “male high school teachers” and that they felt out of place. One elementary teacher complained that there is a problem in the “public perception of a female taking on that role—you are looked on as tough, but if you stay in the classroom you are a nice, polite lady.”

Part-time teachers also face specific problems becoming involved in the Association. Currently 15 percent of teachers in Alberta work on a part-time basis, which is up considerably from 1.8 percent in 1970–71 (Statistics Canada 1996). Ninety-three percent of those teachers working part-time are women, meaning that one in five female teachers works part-time (Young and Grieve 1996). Therefore one would assume that of 57 female EPC members at least seven respondents would work part-time. There were three, a little over 5 percent of the sample.

As women’s time is squeezed between work and family, “these women are looking for ways to reconcile the multiplying demands for their professional and domestic responsibilities, as they—and significant others—interpret those responsibilities” (Young and Grieve 1996). Beth Young and Kathy Grieve, in the discussion of their study of Alberta part-time teachers, go on to argue that

This pattern of choices and assumptions sustains a particular gendered interpretation of what “family responsibilities” are, and how they differ for men and for women. The dominant discourse that men are the primary breadwinners is underscored. Thus, it is the middle class wives (supported by male breadwinners) who can “afford” to teach part time, voluntarily. These arrangements take for granted the rationale of the traditional gender order . . . where the ideology of the good mother appears to be shared by teachers and administrators alike.

Those administrators are still overwhelmingly male. In 1992, 72 percent of teachers in the United States were women, but 72 percent of principals and 95 percent of superintendents were male (Griffin 1997). When teachers in this barriers study talked further about the barrier of lack of support from other teachers, they often referred to a lack of support for their Association activities from their administrators. Women also rated the barrier dealing with punishment or reprisal from the school division higher than I had expected. This might have something to do with the power difference female teachers sense between them and their employers.

The structure and hierarchy of the teaching profession and the experiences of part-time and elementary teachers are also being played out in the ATA. If female teachers are feeling powerless and if part-time teachers are marginalized, these are significant barriers to their increased participation in the Association. The unequal participation also may serve to reinforce these power differences.

Danger and Hope

There are real and specific dangers to the Association if the participation levels of its women members do not increase. What is alarming for the Association is the potential for a future loss of leadership as more men who are active in the Association leave the profession and are replaced by less active women. It is expected that soon 80 percent of teachers will be women (ATA). At the same time there will be a great turnover in the teaching force because 45 percent of the current teaching force will be eligible to retire by 2008 (CTF 2000).

Second, there is the issue of the Association as a democratic institution. A study of the democratic nature of the Dutch teachers' associations identified 12 definitions of democracy and used these definitions to measure the democracy of teachers' associations. The researcher concluded that the Dutch association was democratic in structure but that democracy was compromised by members' lack of real ability to control policy (Leune 1977). The association was judged to be undemocratic because it was ruled by an "active minority" (p. 142) because of a lack of participation by a majority of members. This lack of participation was also observed in the length of the terms in office, which averaged seven years, though some were as long as twenty. The leaders' representation of members was also judged to be undemocratic because the leaders generally came from segments of the population, such as male administrators who were over represented in leadership (Leune 1977).

Three of the strongest barriers felt by women EPC members were lack of confidence, lack of knowledge about issues and lack of knowledge about procedures. If women do not participate because they do not feel confident that they know the rules, the ATA may be being led by a minority, made up of an over-representation of men, who do know the rules. When asked about changes necessary to increase their participation, a great number of respondents answered, "I would need to know more about it." Several used the phrase "old boys' club" when describing their EPC or NSC.

Some female EPC members indicated that they would like to join the NSC, "when there is a space open." One respondent observed that "three quarters of our NSC has been there for many years." Another teacher reported that there is no formal election process for her local NSC: "The same people just say,

‘We are continuing.’” Women reported that they “felt overwhelmed by people who had been there forever.” One teacher observed, “We will have to get past the local tradition of an all-male NSC.” The danger of not doing so is clear. As another teacher noted, “We have to begin the training and acceptance now. It will be very difficult when these 50+-year-old men retire and there will be a big gap.”

Another very worrisome barrier was that of lack of support from other teachers. This barrier ranked higher than lack of support from any other group and was the fourth strongest barrier for teachers with less than a decade of experience. In their comments women complained about the “incredible apathy” of their colleagues and about their colleagues’ “low opinion” of the Association. One woman who joined the EPC was asked by another teacher, “Why would you want to do that?”

Despite this barrier, there is hope. One source can be found in the consistently low ratings given the barrier concerning a lack of effort by the Association in dealing with women’s issues such as protection for part-time teachers, and family medical and maternity leaves. Women who make it to the EPCs believe that, generally, their interests are being served by the Association (although this is certainly not true of women in some locals). Forty-nine percent of respondents answered that this was not an issue for them.

They are unlikely to participate further not because they believe that their participation does not have the potential to create positive change. The barrier dealing with a perception that by becoming more active, they would not be able to have a positive effect on working conditions also rated quite low with half of respondents indicating that it was not an issue for them.

This is important because other studies on women’s attitude toward their unions had a direct relationship with how effective they felt the union to be (Cunnison and Stageman 1995; Cotton and McKenna 1994; Mellor, Barnes-Farrell and Stanton 1999; Boehm 1991). In their study of union participation of women and men in a large American union, Mellor, Barnes-Farrell and Stanton (1999) found that women, especially ethnic minority women, had stronger correlations between union participation and their view of the union as effective in promoting fairness than did ethnic or nonethnic minority men.

A rider needs to be placed on these barriers study results, however. These are the attitudes of women who have chosen to be somewhat involved in the Association as EPC representatives. These attitudes cannot be assigned to women, or men, who do not participate at all. Once women are active, however, they seem to be generally satisfied with their ability to have a positive effect on their working lives through their efforts in their professional association.

The results for women with less than a decade of teaching experience give hope for a greater participation for women in the ATA. Women with less than a decade of teaching experience seem to face fewer barriers than their more experienced colleagues.

Possible ATA Initiatives

The last goal of this project was to develop suggestions for Association initiatives. Although it is very necessary, policy alone is clearly not going to encourage women’s greater participation. Only two women in this study mentioned the Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) policy on encouraging women’s

involvement in collective bargaining that was passed in 1999. Women gave low ratings to the barrier concerning a lack of support from the Association, not because they feel they get a great deal of support but because they did not know what support they got. The actions of the provincial body are too far removed from their lives to have a noticeable effect on them. One respondent declared, "I don't think they do anything one way or the other, so, no, it doesn't affect me." What does affect them is in their locals and in their schools.

Locals need to be aware of parenting responsibilities.

- Schedule meetings directly after school or, even better, during school hours; this would allow parents to attend without making more than the usual childcare arrangements.
- Avoid the frequent use of supper meetings because this is a primary family time.
- Do not hold meetings consistently on the same night of the week when family obligations may be scheduled. Alternating meeting days would allow parents with family commitments to attend at least some meetings.
- Babysitting should be available at general meetings. Many parents do not need it, but those who do, need it a lot. It is also a way to very visibly demonstrate a commitment to families and teachers' participation.

It is also clear that these women want to learn more. One way to do this is through mentoring programs within locals, committees and the Teacher Welfare program area. Mentoring would help women to know more but also to feel that they know more. The barriers of lack of confidence and a corresponding perceived lack of knowledge are working together to keep women out of NSCs and executive positions. "I need someone to hold my hand," said one respondent. Others talked about "direct personal contact." Some women were looking forward to becoming more involved, and all of them had been encouraged by a staff officer or provincially or locally elected official. Those who had been encouraged saw fewer barriers, even though they were not yet on an NSC. One such respondent declared, "I have learned so much and now I know how much I know." Another wished, "If someone would just tell me I could do it then it would be easier to get more involved."

Mentoring is a popular initiative these days in education as more and more school divisions are organizing mentoring programs for their beginning teachers (ATA). Specifically dealing with unions, Cunnison and Stageman (1995) studied the results of one male staff officer in the [British] National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) who encouraged the involvement of several women in the union. He did this by identifying women with interest and ability, by personally encouraging them to become involved and by ensuring that they had access to training opportunities.

Role models are important for women. The participants who answered that the lack of role models was not an issue for them often added, with pride, "We have a woman president" or "We have strong female involvement in our local." Women's participation rates in the ATA are a cause for concern for the Association itself and the women it serves. As with the breaking down of all engendered power structures, along with the fear and frustration, there is also hope for the future. Surely a profession of teachers can overcome the barriers of lack of knowledge and lack of confidence—that is, if there are enough people committed to doing so on a personal and daily basis.

Note

1. References and information identified as coming from the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) are the result of conversations between the author and Teacher Welfare staff.

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Institutional and Organizational Responses: The British Columbia Experience and the Social Justice Initiative

Anita Chapman

In her presentation, Anita Chapman shared her personal journey in the social justice arena, as well as the struggles and accomplishments of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) in this area. Using her own story as an illustration, Chapman described how she grew up in rural Saskatchewan, where her brother's best friend was Native. This friend was like one of the family, and her mother taught the children from a young age, not tolerance, but acceptance of diversity. Chapman and her husband have lived that belief in adopting two teenage sisters from a different cultural background. Through their daughters they have lived the diversity issue first-hand and have grown richer because of it.

Chapman emphasized the importance of networking and realizing that connections exist between social justice issues. First Nations, racism, poverty, gender equity, and lesbian and gay issues are all areas in which BCTF continues to work to provide resources and support for their teachers and students.

In closing, Chapman reminded participants that the struggle ahead will be to engage those among us who do not share our same interest or passion for social justice work.

Anita Chapman identified the following programming strengths that have led to some successes in the BCTF Social Justice Initiative:

- Support for local initiatives has been provided through mentoring and networking.
- Focused work has been done on specifics before integrating diversity, equity and human rights (DEHR) into all work. Chapman said it is a real struggle to balance one's passion for focused work in a single area with the integration of the work.
- Many workshops are available. Chapman cautioned that, although the workshops are popular, it is difficult to assess their long-term effect.
- Grants have been provided to support numerous projects. Chapman reminded delegates that during the grant assessment process, it is important

Anita Chapman, a former secondary science and English teacher, is the acting director of professional development at the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. She was part of the team that developed British Columbia's performance standards for social responsibility.

to remember that the projects need to contribute to the development of a sense of community and foster peaceful and democratic values.

- Immersion in diversity is recognized as the only effective way to build respect for diversity.
- Programs go beyond tolerance and acceptance to stress valuing diversity.
- “Hero” behavior is seen as something to be normalized so that all people believe they can be heroes.
- It is accepted that work in diversity and social justice is very slow. Chapman suggested a 100-year plan!

Equity and Human Rights Work in Alberta: Building Common Places

Female Poverty: A Human Rights Issue in Alberta

Arlene Chapman

How Is Poverty Defined?

Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs are generally considered to represent the poverty line. These low-income cut-offs vary with family size and size of the community. The larger the family or community, the higher the line (National Council of Welfare 1990).

Factors Influencing Female Poverty

The causes of women's poverty differ in many ways from the causes of men's poverty. Male poverty most often can be linked directly to the labor market because of job scarcity or low wages for certain jobs. Women's poverty is more complex. It is linked to the labor market in the same way that men's poverty is, but there are other links as well. For example, the inadequate wages generally received by women as a group and women's systemic lack of access to well-paid employment contribute to female poverty. While there is a very real skills shortage in Alberta, women hold less than 8 percent of the 21,000 apprentice positions in Alberta. If the typically female positions in hairstyling and cooking are removed, this percentage drops to less than 2.5 percent.

Female poverty also results from social traditions, such as women's roles as mothers and homemakers, for example, and from the expectation that women should be economically dependent on men—an expectation that has disastrous consequences in cases of divorce and separation (Gunderson, Muszynski and Keck 1990). Some factors that influence women's labor force participation and earnings are

- family responsibilities,
- availability of child care and
- discrimination in the labor force and the nature of the labor market.

Arlene Chapman, former provincial coordinator of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, is the executive director of the Edmonton Social Planning Council. She is also working on establishing a Poverty Law Clinic and is coordinating Alberta agencies for a Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Centred Communities for the prairie provinces.

Poverty Among Specific Groups of Women

Single Mothers

Many single mothers are either underemployed or not in the labor force at all. In 1991, 16.8 percent of women heading single-parent families were unemployed, well over the rate of 9.6 percent for mothers in two-parent families. In addition, 37 percent of all single mothers were neither employed nor actively seeking work—that is, they were not in the labor force.

Personal and family responsibilities are a major reason why many single parents are unemployed. In 1991, 14 percent of unemployed female single parents said that they left their last job because of personal or family responsibilities (about the same percentage as wives in two-parent families, but well above the percentage of male single parents). Similarly, among the single mothers who were not in the labor force, 21 percent said that they left their last job because of personal or family responsibilities.

Aboriginal Woman

Aboriginal women face all the same barriers to well-paid employment as other women, plus additional barriers created by racism, geographic isolation and lack of educational opportunities. Often aboriginal grandmothers care for their grandchildren without adequate financial support. This further limits their opportunities to take paid employment.

Women Aged 55–64, Living on Their Own

About half of women aged 55–64 living on their own have low incomes. The incidence of low income is particularly high among separated, widowed and divorced women ages 55–64. This is the result of social norms earlier in the century. Most of these women married during the 1940s and 1950s when women's educational attainment and labor force participation were low. Thus, today, they have little work experience or job seniority or full employment (Burke and Spector 1991).

Many divorced women in this group would have gone through divorce at a time when divorce settlements tended to be biased against women. Their entry into the labor force may have been delayed by the presence of children. Thus, they would have had little time to build up assets or contribute to a pension (Burke and Spector 1991).

Women's Health

The Economic Council of Canada suggests that not only do women in general and single-parent families headed by women in particular fall into a greater depth of poverty, but they also remain in impoverished conditions for longer periods of time than any other group in our society.

Understandably the depth of poverty that is associated with women is often demarcated with high incidence of abuse (physical, mental and substance), poor health and loss of self-worth.

Poverty is also extremely isolating. It disconnects people from their families and from other supports that many of us take for granted. In other words,

poverty leaves people powerless and alone. That is why women's health is an extremely important issue and why it should be a critically important issue to politicians of this province.

Approaching Health from the Perspective of Women Living in Poverty

Women are increasingly being counted among the most impoverished groups in our society. The consequences are many and are generally debilitating in the long term. Poverty constitutes much more than a lack of income. In fact, poverty is generally the consequence of an entire history of degrading human experiences that have literally disabled people from their own personal development.

We have been able to observe a pattern of victimization, which begins with childhood sexual or physical abuse and then develops into problems in school that have sometimes been misdiagnosed as learning disabilities which lead to school dropout rates higher than average.

At this juncture, women lose their ability to develop healthy coping mechanisms to further their own personal growth, and we have found that at this early stage, many developed addictions to drugs, alcohol or other substances through which criminal activities are often also related. Regardless of whether or not they are able to overcome these difficulties, we have noted that the women who were in this situation were extremely vulnerable to acts of violence. By this time, there has been an internalization of the role of a victim from which there appears to be no outlet.

The deterioration of health in women, and especially those women who are poor, is one of the most profound manifestations of this condition and presents a formidable obstacle to the women who are attempting to overcome poverty and to the futures of their children. Since many are single parents, there is the additional challenge of providing care to their children without having role models to look to in their own lives. Unfortunately, the combination of a lack of a healthy concept of the role of the family and the experience of poverty generates a cycle that impedes the healthy development of another generation of human beings.

To encourage economic development the government of Alberta has implemented policies that are advantageous to wealthy businesses and corporations. Given the introduction of a new flat tax system that will benefit the province's most wealthy citizens, one can only conclude that the much-touted Alberta Advantage is for the wealthy at the expense of low- and middle-income families.

There is now extensive evidence on the effects of poverty to indicate that poverty should be attacked at its source. Many activities will involve the development and implementation of healthy public policies that will reduce the incidence of poverty that contributes so much to health inequities for poor families. Research done by the Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) told us that Albertans understand that poverty costs everybody more. They know that public programs reduce the effects of long-term poverty. When given all the facts, they support change.

Key Messages

This is an opportunity: The Edmonton Social Planning Council has been raising awareness of poverty and children's issues in Alberta. Because of those lobby efforts we have been invited to take part in the Children's Forum. This is an opportunity to work toward solutions for children in Alberta.

Basic needs—food, shelter and clothing—are an important theme that affects all themes: Basic needs should be our first concern. Children who live in poverty and do not have their needs met cannot participate in school and community and have healthy, safe lives.

The Government of Alberta has a leadership role to play: Although responsibility for the well-being of children and families is a shared responsibility, the government of Alberta has a leadership role to play. The government is responsible for welfare and child welfare and must ensure that children and families have their basic needs met.

Our goal is action for children: The final report from the Children's Forum will include a concise list of action steps. The actions we want include creating comprehensive school lunch programs, so no child goes hungry. We want welfare rates raised to 85 percent of average rents, so welfare families have some money left for food. And we want a subsidy program so poor families do not spend more than 35 percent of their income on rent.

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Equity and Human Rights Respondent

A Perspective: The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission

Nicholas Ameyaw

The ATA is to be commended for organizing this symposium—a fine example of the Association’s undertakings in the last few years to respect diversity and human rights in the classroom. That three of us from the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission are participating in this symposium shows how much we value it.

The work of the Commission may be summed up in three goals:

1. Protecting human rights for all Albertans
2. Reducing discrimination
3. Promoting fairness and access

We work to achieve these goals through

- public education,
- removing barriers,
- increasing the capacities of communities and organizations to change and
- building partnerships for change with organizations such as the ATA.

We have spent the past two days talking about what we need to do in the education sector to promote access, fairness and equity for all. Various speakers have given us many ideas and issues to think about. The challenge that the commission faces is how to reconcile the ideas and issues arising from this symposium and other sectors to reach a consensus on what needs to be done and the strategies to do it.

I want you to consider three issues in your discussions:

- How do we build knowledge and skills that lead to change?
- How do we change systems, structures, policies and procedures that are centuries old to make them more equitable and fair?
- How do we change attitudes and behaviors that do not support human rights?

Nicholas Ameyaw began his career in public service with the Department of Community Development over 13 years ago. He combines his knowledge and expertise on managing diversity through organizational change, community development and human rights legislation and issues to bring a comprehensive approach to building and sustaining human rights and diversity culture in organizations and communities. He is the education coordinator for the Human Rights and Citizenship Commission.

One word summarizes what we need to do to bring about change: *teachers*.

T is for Teach—Teach knowledge, model what you teach and teach enduring commitment to human rights and diversity.

E is for Environment—Consider the environment around you, including the schools in which you teach, the school as an organization and society. Change your environment.

A is for Attitudes—Identify the attitudes that need to change, effective strategies for inducing change and the actions needed in the short and long term.

C is for the four Cs—Commitment, curriculum/content, communication (purposeful, clear and concise) and connectivity.

H is for Harmony—How do we achieve harmony of purpose in what appears to be an arena of competition for resources and public attention?

E is for Education—Educate the old in addition to the young and the future generation.

R is for Resources—Do not neglect these resources: the parent, the child, the community, networking and partnerships.

S is for Sustainability: The attitudes, ideas and behaviors we are trying to change are centuries old. The journey to our goal of zero discrimination will be painful, discouraging and frustrating at times, but sustain your efforts.

I conclude with a poem, by an unknown author, that I received from a colleague. I have modified the poem slightly to reflect diversity.

Learn from the Crayons

Some are sharp.

Some are pretty.

Some are dull.

Some have weird names.

Some have different colors.

Some are used a lot and for lots of activities.

Others are used sparingly and for special activities.

But they all have to live in the same box.

Priorities and Action Plan Recommendations

As a culminating activity, symposium participants were invited to develop suggestions for further action that the Association and potential partners should undertake. To facilitate this process, participants developed action plans around 10 thematic areas:

1. Engaging youth in social justice issues
2. Internet and hate sites
3. Gender and sexual identity
4. Curricular connections
5. Internal ATA initiatives
6. Programs for parents
7. Racism education
8. Poverty and social class
9. First Nations
10. Networking and sustaining relationships within diversity, equity and human rights advocates

For each thematic area participants were asked to identify

1. suggested activities (priority initiatives that could be undertaken with joint partners),
2. potential sources of support (either their own group they were representing or outside individuals or organizations),
3. first steps (key strategies that need to be undertaken in order to coordinate efforts and avoid duplication of effort) and
4. indicators of success (clear and early signs that would suggest the initiative was on the right path).

Please note that these categories were used as a way to organize participants into small working groups. It was clear in our deliberations that overlap and connections across themes occurred. This situation was recognized as an opportunity for cooperation and coordination. The following chart summarizes the suggested activities for each thematic area.

Conclusion

In her concluding remarks, Sharon Armstrong, chair of the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee, assured delegates that the committee would review the action plan recommendations at its June 2001 meeting and that both the conference proceedings and the action plan would be used to inform the committee's planning. The need for continued dialogue and coordination of efforts was evident throughout the action plan recommendations. To that end, participants were reminded that the committee would continue to maintain contact with symposium participants to explore avenues for further cooperation.

Thematic Area	Suggested Activities	Sources of Support	First Steps	Indicators of Success
1. Engaging youth in social justice issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support student-initiated projects that are proactive and reflect the principles of diversity, equity and human rights • Cultivate student leadership across K–12 (ie recognize the strength in our students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student leadership groups (ie student council advisors) • School councils • Community groups • Universities and community colleges (ie international education centres) • Alberta government (ie a centennial project to establish a foundation to support student leadership) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to build partnerships with teachers working with student councils and other youth groups (ie church groups, World Vision) • Work with community stakeholders and school administrators in promoting student leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student leadership in Alberta schools is part of an integrated program of citizenship education committed to the principles of social justice • Within one year, a comprehensive action plan is in place to coordinate and support student leadership over the next five years
2. Internet and hate sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education programs that focus on the safety and human rights issues regarding use of the Internet and the new media • Create an evaluated list of anti-hate sites (race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality) for use as teaching resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial and federal government agencies (ATA; Alberta Learning) • Police forces (ie bias and hate crimes units) • International resources (ie <i>Nizkor</i> and <i>Virtual Auschwitz</i> websites) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a provincial steering committee to coordinate and obtain funding supports • Draft guidelines for evaluation of sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set of resources and lists of sites established • Ongoing updates made available to schools and other stakeholders
3. Gender and sexual identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the core human principles of inclusiveness and fairness • Address insidious nature of hate talk (ie use of the words <i>fag</i> and <i>gay</i> in school hallways) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATA and its subgroups • Locals • The ATA's Safe and Caring Schools Project programs • Federal and provincial grants (ie HRMC Education Fund) • PFLAG and other community support groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature issue of the <i>ATA Magazine</i> to help dispel myths and raise awareness (ie highlighting the ATA Code of Conduct and sexual orientation issues; the Trinity College case) • Ongoing feature column and articles in the <i>ATA News</i> (ie featuring successful practices; local initiatives) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools take up the challenge to complete diversity and human rights audits on their schools • Well-being of all students is monitored (ie dropout rates; teen suicide rates) • ATA is recognized by Albertans as a leader in the diversity, equity and human rights field

Thematic Area	Suggested Activities	Sources of Support	First Steps	Indicators of Success
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing professional development programs for Alberta teachers (ie workshops, action research, support for graduate study) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tired slogans like “gay rights” are seen as nothing more than providing what every school should become: an inclusive learning community
4. Curricular connections (ie through the ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools Project and through media and popular culture initiatives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate human rights issues across the programs of study especially in the area of visual culture Focus on diversity and human rights issues through media literacy initiatives across the grades Integrate these issues into school celebrations and religious occasions Continued support for the ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools initiatives (ie secondary school resources; ongoing communication with school leaders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist councils Alberta Learning Cultural and community groups (ie film and media groups and specialists across Alberta) Art galleries; visual artists and educators (ie Grant MacEwan College, the universities) Locals and school leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network of visual literacy educators ATA support with others, for visual literacy initiatives Build on current opportunities (ie new program of studies in social studies; visual literacy incorporated into Career and Technology Studies and language arts) Profile successes in key schools and locals Collaborate with curriculum developers and teacher leaders in developing human rights curricula (ie John Humphrey Center, the universities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students’ growing critical awareness of media stereotypes and globalization issues Student use of Internet is responsible and builds a civil society (ie zero tolerance on hate sites; critical web awareness growing) Alberta teachers incorporate media literacy into their teaching Every school in Alberta will have an active Safe and Caring Schools program with resources in place to hire full-time staff to support the program
5. Internal ATA initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and audit of professional services provided to students with special needs Ongoing review and audit of ATA human rights efforts (ie gender representation; hiring practices; investment practices in Teacher Retirement Fund) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta Community Development, Alberta Learning Locals and school representatives Cultural and community groups (ie Catholic Social Services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scan of current practices in schools regarding students with special needs (ie how effective do teachers see themselves in this area?) Identify current groups that are excluded and/or not active in local and provincial ATA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta teachers can unequivocally state that they feel children with special needs are well served in our schools Ongoing leadership from the ATA’s Provincial Executive Council (ie on ethical investing) All levels of ATA staff and Association subgroups committed to diversity

Thematic Area	Suggested Activities	Sources of Support	First Steps	Indicators of Success
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to broader communities (ie move beyond the ATA Christmas Card competition: other possibilities that celebrate diversity?) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate current investment practices in contrast to the Association's stated human rights commitments Expand Association research activities regarding changing demographic of the profession and shifting core values 	
6. Programs for parents (ie new arrivals to Canada or Alberta)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize the need for ESL programs for parents Help parents overcome language/culture barriers (ie mentoring programs; home visits; translate various ATA Guides for Parents and public education advocacy materials) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prairie Center for Excellence Community support agencies (ie Catholic Social Services) Health units, cultural groups Canadian Council for Refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community partners on developing support materials for parents Consult with school jurisdictions on possible collaborative support initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced understanding between parents-teachers-administrators about the role of the school Meaningful parental involvement and connection to the school
7. Racism education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic and ongoing communication about racism issues Professional development for teachers regarding successful practices in antiracism education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop development Integrating antiracism education into the curriculum Audit university teacher preparation programs in terms of racism education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A range of cultural organizations including Active Culture Against Racism; Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations Alberta Human Rights Fund; federal government agencies Other teacher organizations' resources (ie BCTF, STF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More resources made available to teachers that they can integrate into their work
8. Poverty and social class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ways to coordinate efforts of the Committee on Children and Poverty and the Committee on the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unions; professional and church groups private companies Canadian Living Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote social justice and activism in teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of teachers and the public of the full effects of poverty on student learning

Thematic Area	Suggested Activities	Sources of Support	First Steps	Indicators of Success
	<p>Well-Being of Children within the broad mandate of social justice work of the Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education of all professional groups regarding poverty in Alberta • Specific initiatives such as lunch programs need to be a priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edmonton Social Planning Council; • Catholic Social Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater awareness of the effect of globalization and social justice issues needs to be featured in ATA publications (ie <i>The ATA News</i>) and in other forums • Integrate globalization education into the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATA continues to be seen as an advocate for all children
9. First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of aboriginal education issues in teacher preparation programs and professional development activities • Focus on meeting the needs of local communities first (rather than provincial initiatives that inevitably fail) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community leaders • University-based aboriginal educators and emerging leaders • School jurisdictions where real needs are becoming apparent (ie more and more aboriginal students are now attending high school: huge program needs here) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on momentum to be initiated by First Nations Education Review report (due July 2001) • Collaborate with local community leaders and university researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness by new teachers and current practitioners of the needs of aboriginal students • ATA leads pilot projects in local communities (rather than reacting to proposals from others)
10. Networking and sustaining relationships with Alberta diversity, equity and human rights advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support ongoing communication and networking opportunities (ie clearinghouse; conference cosponsorship) • Focus on the needs of students and school communities rather than institutional or organizational boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invited symposium participants identified in mailing and contact lists • Universities • Other provincial teacher organizations • Private business (many of them are far ahead of the public sector on human rights issues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a provincial clearinghouse on a website (ie, speakers, resources and upcoming events) that targets the needs of youth and educators • Workshops offered to schools that raise awareness of diversity, equity and human rights issues • Joint conference to focus on the role of public education in dealing with social justice issues (ie, globalization) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider range of accessibility of speakers for schools and educators • Ongoing evaluation process in place to offer credible resources to teachers • Ongoing opportunities for meeting and exchanging ideas • A focus on a five-year plan (rather than quick fixes) • partners develop a culture of sharing resources and funding (ie avoiding duplication of effort)

Appendix 1

Building Common Places: Diversity, Equity and Human Rights in the Alberta Teachers' Association

(A discussion paper circulated at the symposium on behalf of Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee.)

Overview

The Alberta Teachers' Association, as the voice of the teaching profession, advocates for public education and the principles of diversity, equity and human rights within the broader values and principles of building a democratic society.

The work of the Association related to these issues is predicated on the principle that we need to work with our partners in advocating for diversity, equity and human rights.

For example, representatives of trustees, parents, superintendents, teachers and school business officials have modeled the cooperative process in developing a basic policy framework and making a submission to the Minister of Learning on directions for public education in Alberta. The product of this cooperation, the document entitled *A Vision and Agenda for Public Education*, contextualizes the Association's work related to diversity, equity and human rights. The document states that the mission for public education is as follows:

- To develop a foundation of learning that enables people to function effectively in work, further learning and life
- To develop citizens of a democratic society
- To develop the potential and gifts of each child

In April 2000, the Diversity, Equity and Human Rights Committee was given the mandate to advise and assist in coordinating the work of the Association across a number of initiatives. The immediate priorities of the committee included

- establishing a network of contacts within locals and learning communities;
- developing definitions of diversity, equity and human rights that considered the views of the broad educational community; and
- developing an action plan for Association activities (eg gender equity, anti-homophobia issues).

In the next couple of years the activities of the committee will see a sustained effort toward cultivating and supporting grassroots initiatives (in schools and locals). Specifically, actions that are being considered include

- developing a website that links innovative projects and school activities;
- providing workshops related to diversity, equity and human rights issues in schools;
- establishing a grant program to support innovative local and teacher initiatives; and
- forming working groups targeted toward specific issues such as gender in the workplace.

Vision

The Alberta Teachers' Association will work collaboratively with school communities, and private and public agencies to foster social responsibility and social justice within both the public education system and the broader society.

Guiding Principles

The Association's work in the area of diversity, equity and human rights will be guided by the United Nations Manifesto 2000 for Peace. Crafted by a group of Nobel laureates, the Manifesto's six guiding principles underscore the need to think of diversity, equity and human rights issues as interconnected.

1. *Respect all life.*
Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination and prejudice.
2. *Reject violence.*
Practise active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economic and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.
3. *Share with others.*
Share time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice, political and economic oppression.
4. *Listen to understand.*
Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.
5. *Preserve the planet.*
Promote responsible consumer behavior and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.
6. *Rediscover solidarity.*
Contribute to the development of the community with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles in order to create new forms of solidarity.

The Manifesto 2000 reminds us that we are continually engaged in an ongoing process of defining and giving shape to our understanding of diversity, equity and human rights issues.

Definitions

Respect for diversity is a commitment and adherence to beliefs and practices that demonstrate acceptance and understanding of and respect for

differences in people given their unique circumstances. Respect for diversity recognizes difference as a positive attribute around which to build appropriate educational experiences and democratic communities. While acknowledging difference as a crucial element of human life, it is important not to essentialize or fix on an individual's identity. Race, class and gender are all forms of identification that individuals take up in a variety of ways. As the well-known Alberta writer Myrna Kostash reminds us, "identity is invariably an attempt to build community."

Difference marked by race, class, sexual orientation, and other categories must be understood in terms of how these intersect with structural contexts of social organization such as the economy and the political system. For example, racial discrimination, which is invariably linked with forms of oppression motivated by economic values and relations, cannot be thought of as either a cultural or an economic phenomenon.

Equity is the fair and just treatment of all people given their unique circumstances and the assurance that every person has equitable opportunities to reach his or her full potential. Equity is an expression of a commitment to social justice and a recognition that we must critically evaluate how relations of power in institutions and society at large function to oppress and marginalize particular groups or individuals. At a policy level, commitment to equity means fostering inclusiveness by providing the necessary conditions that enable each person to benefit from and make a positive contribution to the community in a democratic society. Equity is manifested not in abstract principles but in actions that result in access to material resources and meaningful opportunities that reflect a belief in social justice.

Human rights are the equal and inalienable rights and responsibilities of all people to live in a free, just and peaceful society without regard to race, religious beliefs, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, mental ability, age, marital status, family status, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence and any other grounds upon which people may face discrimination. Human rights are based upon the recognition, protection of and commitment to the inherent dignity of all persons at the individual, organizational and public policy levels. Rather than being based on abstract principles, respect for human rights is measured and made evident by how we treat and regard other people.

Goal

To advocate for students and public education through a coordinated and systematic approach to dealing with diversity, equity and human rights issues aimed at

- educating children and youth in democratic values and principles of social justice and social responsibility;
- building positive relationships between teachers and students, colleagues, families and communities;
- reducing the number of marginalized students and teachers; and
- developing a common commitment to building a democratic, civil society based on a commitment to social justice both in our schools and our teacher organization.

Principles in Practice in Public Education

Respect for Diversity, Equity and Human Rights in Education *Is*

- curriculum and evaluation materials and practices that embrace the principles of diversity, equity and human rights
- seeing identity as fluid and changing

- every person treated with dignity and respect
- acknowledging the need for policies that recognize the needs of diverse groups
- social and emotional learning are integrated with academic achievement

- ensuring equitable opportunity while recognizing that some individuals may need more resources or different supports

- a barrier-free environment where everyone benefits equally

- a balance of power among school communities achieved through open discussion and democratic principles

- participants in education dedicated to the success of all students

- employment practices that ensure equity and fairness
- seeing identity as a fluid and dynamic human quality

- recognizing and addressing different ways of learning and teaching

- everyone having the opportunity to achieve

- a commitment to educate all children well
- personal and organizational commitment and transformation

Respect for Diversity, Equity and Human Rights in Education *Is Not*

- discrete instructional units or courses of study that preserve the status quo

- seeing identity as fixed, determining essential human qualities

- respect accorded on the basis of a fixed status that essentializes a person's identity

- policies that ignore the challenges of particular groups

- separating the academic achievement of students from the broader goals of schooling

- providing all people with the same resources and support yet expected to achieve the same results

- an environment where everyone is treated the same

- centralization of resource allocation, decision making removed from communities

- ranking and sorting of students

- hiring token representatives without addressing the causes of discrimination
- seeing difference as an essential or innate human quality

- a single approach to learning or teaching

- lowering standards to achieve quotas instead of questioning the narrowness of standards that exclude

- favoring certain students or groups over others
- reproducing the same social divisions over and over again

Respect for Diversity, Equity and Human Rights in Education <i>Is</i>	Respect for Diversity, Equity and Human Rights in Education <i>Is Not</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a coordinated and collaborative effort among all partners to meet the individual needs of each student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • every person for him/herself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of a learning and teaching environment that is free from violence in all of its forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, economic and social 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an environment based on survival of the fittest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a climate of mutual respect and regard for all, an environment that protects the most deprived and vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrowly defined standards of conduct, rules and procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a just, inclusive and open climate where freedom of expression is defended, dialogue and listening are encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subtle oppression through indirect methods of control and manipulation (e.g., testing programs that are not culturally sensitive)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing of resources in a spirit of generosity to end exclusion, injustice, political and economic oppression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a multi-tiered system of education based on sorting and exclusionary practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting the development of responsible consumer behavior and practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting the market economy as a priority above all else
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational leadership and stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational managerialism

Strategies

The overall goal of policy development and implementation strategies is to enhance commitment to and create conditions for the achievement of the principles of diversity, equity and human rights in Alberta's public education systems. Specific strategies are as follows:

1. Foster commitment to shared visions and policies on diversity, equity and human rights in Alberta's public education systems. Such commitment requires agreement on what diversity, equity and human rights mean at the individual, organization, system and provincial levels.
2. Define, secure and direct resources to develop and sustain the cooperative process as well as support actions directed at achieving the principles of diversity, equity and human rights. This includes sustaining and/or developing supports and resources for students, teachers, communities and government agencies.
3. Nurture and develop leadership at the school, community, organization, system and provincial levels that hold a commitment to the principles of democratic society infused with the values of social justice and social responsibility. Such leadership demonstrates further commitment to the cooperative process for reflective dialogue and action in building community.
4. Continue the cooperative process for reflective dialogue and action established among the education partners and extend this to create an inclusive, cooperative, community-based process that is valued and sustained over time. The focus of dialogue is on individual, organizational, system and provincial commitment to and action on diversity, equity and human rights. This involves engaging people in discussions about their values and aspirations for children and community.
5. Monitor, assess, adjust and communicate progress in policy development, implementation and practice.
6. Sustain commitment to the cooperative process and achievement of democratic values and principles, especially those relating to diversity, equity and human rights in schools and the education systems as well as in the broader communities and society at large.

Appendix 2

Summary Notes from “Circle of Successes/ Concerns” Session

For one hour, participants shared activities and initiatives under way in their respective communities or human rights advocacy work. The following informal summaries represent working notes posted by participants. (Where individual names of presenters have not been provided it may be helpful to consult the symposium participant list provided. These notes have not been edited for content. As well, please note that many participants addressed the symposium without posting working notes.)

The presentations and comments made in the Circle of Successes/Concerns session were used to formulate 10 broad themes that connected similar individuals or groups. These 10 broad areas were then used to develop working groups for the concluding session: Priorities and Action Plan Recommendations, the results of which are also provided in these symposium proceedings.

Addressing Homophobia in Alberta Schools

- Sharing our stories (breaking the silence)
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth and teachers speak to students and staff
 - Inclusion in the curriculum
- Professional development for Alberta teachers (empowering educators)
- Show your support (making the invisible visible)
 - Create a safe space
 - Gay/straight school alliances
- Implications
 - Creating safe and caring schools for all youth/teachers regardless of difference
 - ATA professional code of conduct/charter/Human Rights Act/School Act
- Support Agencies: PFLAG, Agape, Youth Understanding Youth

In My World

- Action research project, sponsored by CBE
- Focus: Integrating the charter of human rights into the elementary curriculum
- Goal: Valuing diversity through literature, the arts, discussion, core curriculum

All Colours Are Beautiful

- Teacher resource kit for grades 4–6; kit \$5
- Workshops available
- Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, Charlene Hay, (780) 425-4644

Active Culture Against Racism (ACAR)

- Action: Media work; working with refugee/immigrant youth; working on the question of economic barriers
- (780) 482-1364
- Cherie Moses—GMC
- Augustine Marah—refugee
- Christine Baghdady—immigrant/refugee women

Visual Culture Studies

- An important curricular area that could be included in human rights work
 - Transdisciplinary
 - Media literacy
 - Gender issues
 - Visuality vs textuality
 - Representation and the construction of meaning
 - We are becoming an image-based culture
- Cherie Moses, Fine Arts Program, Grant MacEwan College, (780) 497-4323

Central Alberta Diversity Project

- Antiracism TV public service announcement (PSA) contest
- Partnerships: Shaw TV, RDTV, schools
- More promotion among drama and English teachers
- www.mycommunityinformation.com/cadp

The Diversity Project

- Includes the Edmonton John Howard Society, the Edmonton Women's Shelter and the Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre
- "Strategies for Overcoming Barriers for Abused Immigrant Women" emerged from a recent conference
- Other key issues:
 - How do we, as mainstream agencies, become accessible to diverse groups?
 - Facilitate information gathering by culture brokers
 - Building Healthy Immigrant Families and Communities—pilot project
- Recent work in five immigrant communities
 - Issues identified
 - Intergenerational conflict

- Shared learning sessions
 - Conflict resolution and mediation
 - Sexual abuse
 - Family violence
- Summer Youth Project
 - Recreation
 - Video/theatre project
 - Youth leadership retreat

STOP, Red Deer

- What's working:
 - Ongoing positive media coverage of our antiracist events
 - TV/print/radio
- Challenges:
 - Scapegoating of "youth culture"
 - Negative stories get front page coverage
- Implications:
 - Let's engage the media
 - Give them positive stories
 - Write effective press releases
 - Meet their needs
- Issues:
 - How do we address social justice issues in teacher education programs, especially issues of gender?
 - Who enters the profession? (majority are women, successful in school, white and middle class)
 - How does this impact attitudes in schools, for all students?
 - Gender can be invisible, especially at elementary school level, yet it connects to school success, future careers, harassment and violence.
 - Need to change teacher education programs

Monitoring Committee, Essential Services and Equity

- Implementation of CBE policy on equity and essential service.
- Pedagogical issues
- Resource issues
- Staffing issues
- Organizational issues
- Develops implementation plan
- Monitors benchmarks
- Develops policies for board
- Supports initiatives
- Representation from: central admin, students, ATA, ESL, staff, student services, principals, aboriginal education
- (Discussion about cultural group presentation)
- Current issues: recruitment, teaching assignment, fine tuning of equity policies

Alberta Community Development, Human Rights & Citizenship

- Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Education Fund
- Human Rights & Citizenship Commission
 - Resolution of human rights complaints
 - Financial assistance to help community organizations to foster equality and reduce discrimination for systemic change
 - Educational materials (mostly available for free)
 - Consultation and support
 - www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca

Intercultural and Second Languages Council

- Formerly Multicultural Education Council and Modern Languages Council
- Need resources/people to support classroom teachers
- Conference mid-March annually (Edmonton 2002, Calgary 2003, etc)

Equity & Diversity in Teacher Ed

- What should teacher education programs include?
- What do schools and teachers expect of student teachers?
- What do schools expect of beginning teachers?
- Professional development activities?

Teach the Teachers

- Looking at their own biases (judges have/get this training)
- What are human rights?
- What is discrimination?
- Teacher active listening (skill useful for conscientizing/understanding “lived experience”)
- Important to stress that “them” and “us” thinking reinforces racism and systemic discrimination—THEM is US

Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre

- Human rights education project—public, legal, education
 - Resources for junior/senior high schools
- The Rights Angle: Human rights education using the newspaper
 - Free to all secondary schools
 - Shows how fits in curriculum (junior/senior high social studies, language arts, CALM, health, etc)
- (Sexual) Harassment in Schools
 - Video, student guide, teacher guides

- *Discrimination, Human Rights and You*
 - (Great for grade 10)
 - Video; teacher, junior and senior high guides
- *Freedom of Expression and All That Jazz*
 - Video, teacher guide
 - (Story re hate e-mail, what laws apply, how to balance)

Calgary Police Service (CPS)

Response to Hate/Bias Incidents: The CPS will now be responding to incidents motivated by hate/bias. These incidents will be entered on a database with hate/bias crimes. Proactive follow-up will be done by the cultural resources unit with the victim, the family and their community. The services communications section have been trained and receive all initial reports. Contact (403) 266-1234.

Aspen Foundation for Labour Education

- *Who:* Teachers, community members and unionists
- *What/Goals:* Inform students about
 - work,
 - labour laws,
 - labour history/culture and
 - unions/collective bargaining
- *How:*
 - Curriculum audit (done)—where can material on labour fit in
 - Missing perspectives—a binder of material to teach labour issues to junior/senior high students
 - Other material and website—to be developed
- Gary Hansen, (780) 986-1745, gbhansen@home.com

Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage Association (CCACH)

- Living history group
- We examine the ways in which knowledge is constructed about peoples of African descent.
- We organize meetings and present differing perspectives on peoples of African descent.
- In particular we highlight the social studies curriculum.

English as a Second Language Council

- Proposal to Alberta Learning for the establishment of guidelines for the identification of ESL students and standards for ESL programming across the province which do not currently exist.
- Lobbying for increased funding for ESL.

- How can many organizations join together with this work? eg immigrant serving organizations, ATESL and TESL Canada.

White Ribbon Campaign, November 25–December 6

- Raise awareness and actions against violence to girls and women
- M E LaZerte talent contest raising funds and donations for the Edmonton Women's Shelter
- Winner of ATA Public Relations Communications Award
- 500 to 800 increase # + \$

Head Start

- Initiatives:
 - Head Start builds upon health, education, social services and parental engagement for families living in poverty.
- Issues/challenges:
 - Misconceptions about poverty
 - Hostile environment to poor people
 - Policy that creates the mindset that social programs are cause of provincial debt
 - We need community/school cooperation not competition
- Implications:
 - Head Start is a community-based model that builds upon capacity
 - Need poverty education
 - People living in poverty need more than charity
 - Poverty and income inequity affects us all and degrades social capital

The ATA's Safe and Caring Schools (SACS) Project

- Focuses on consistency, collaborative, modeling, integration
- Role of organizations:
 - Contribute to curriculum resource—3 approaches
 - Website, grades 7–12
 - Binder, grades K–6
 - All subject areas
 - Parent/community workshops

St Albert Protestant Schools

- Functions as a “public” district
- Values issue
 - Addressed by preparation of manual for elementary students—committee of parents and district staff (2–3 year development).
 - Activities for each grade that address values in a nondenominational, ethnically and culturally appropriate manner.

- Junior high locally developed courses for girls
 - Girls empowered
 - planet Venus
 - Boys? Told no interest?
- Contact: Morag Pansegrau, (780) 459-6529

Hunting Hills High School, Advanced Acting and Touring Class and Fine Arts Department

The Diary of Anne Frank

- Concept:
 - The world of the Secret Annex is across time and boundaries—bullying and intolerance on a personal, community and national level.
 - Involve school and community groups in (i) creating a multicultural set, (ii) creating teachers resources, (iii) workshopping cast and crew
 - Integration into school course work
- This show will be followed by a touring production of *Skin* by Dennis Foon (Spring 2002), done with students from Notre Dame High School
- Show followed by student-led discussion with school groups
- Concerns/Challenges:
 - “Just another performance”
 - Lack of preparation/energy for integration

Human Rights in the New Millennium

- Teaching resource for high school from Human Rights Education Foundation, c/o The Learning Network, (780) 492-0391
- Workshop from ATA

Youth Against Racism

- Focus groups youth 15–30
- For UN conference
- Leads to youth group
- NAARR, (780) 425-4644

Global Education, University of Alberta

- Teacher education program
 - EDPS 425, undergrad elective
 - EDPS 525, graduate elective
- Promote critical perspectives on educating for peace/human rights/diversity/justice/sustainability in schools and wider society
- Appeal for teaching profession and citizens to advocate for bringing global education into core of teacher education program
- Toh Swee-Hin, Education Policy Studies, (780) 492-2556

Multicultural Association of Fort McMurray

- www.divnet.org/fortmcmurray
- Website built by volunteers to counteract “racist” sites
- Part of a 10-week workshop whereby participants from different backgrounds discuss the 4-Ds but goes further to values, traditions, culture shock, etc
- Participants learn to give presentations applicable to schools, community groups, etc
- Participants build this resource on a website again for community
- Teachers have been involved in workshops
- Some sites cover specifics of curriculum
- Teacher’s institute
- Multicultural Association has representation on the Professional Development Committee
- This was not an invitation in the beginning but a three-year struggle
- Still challenges in that committee and individual teachers at schools, have a preconceived idea as to what MCA should do (most 4-Ds) but there is progress
- Contact: Velma Lush, (780) 791-5186