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September/October 2023

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

50
YEARS
OF
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



Features

- 6 Programs and Services**
*Voluntary Activities:
 Making Choices for Work/Life Balance*
 by Ian Crewe
- 8 Violence in the Workplace:
 Basic Advice and Guidelines for Teachers**
 by Miriam Sheppard
- 12 Professional Development**
*Project Overseas 2023:
 Working in Solidarity with Ugandan Teachers*
 by Kristie St. Croix
- 16 Living Well**
The Sound of Silence
 by Lori Hewitt
- 18 An Interview With...**
NLTA Vice-President Dale Lambe
- 20 Autism in the Classroom**
Autism Society NL: What is Autism?
 by Paul Walsh
- 22 Beginning Teachers**
*Ceremony of Induction into the Teaching
 Profession: Thoughts from a Faculty of
 Education Graduate*
 by Karlita Herrera

Departments

- Up Front with the NLTA President* 3
On Location News 4
In Memoriam 10
News and Events back cover

Welcome back to all NLTA Members! We are pleased to share with you the first issue of *The Bulletin* for the 2023-24 school year. Throughout the year we encourage you to stay up to date with all the communications related to the Association through emails, School Rep Updates, and here, in *The Bulletin*. This fall will also see the relaunch of our Invest in Our Kids campaign – *Hidden Reality* – and we will introduce you to another member who is making a significant impact in our next Teachers Change Lives story. Please share each of these important public awareness campaigns.



In this issue, we will introduce you to the new NLTA Vice-President and hear from the Chief Executive Officer of the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador.

All the best,
 Jennifer

THE bulletin

Editor
 Jennifer Tulk
 jtulk@nlta.ca

Editorial Assistant/Advertising
 Melanie McDonald
 mmcdonald@nlta.ca

Design • Printing • Distribution
 John Bishop, Elliott Green

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ATTENTION! NEW TEACHERS

Information for New Teachers is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.ca. Click "Member Services" and then "Beginning/Early Career Teachers"

If new teachers wish to receive any of the information on the website on a flash drive, please email: newteachers@nlta.ca



UP FRONT WITH THE NLTA PRESIDENT



Morale is a state of mind. It is steadfastness and courage and hope. ~ George C. Marshall

Colleagues/Friends,

Another year has begun...whether you are somewhat seasoned in your roles or new to the ranks, welcome back! I hope nothing less for you than a school year filled with professional satisfaction and personal well-being.

The time has never been more important for us to stay united in solidarity, within our classrooms, the halls of schools, and throughout the province. There is an ever-growing uncertainty emerging within our province connected to the realities of the cost of living, widespread natural disasters, and societal pressures (e.g., increased violence and limited access to services). These stressors present themselves each day in our schools as our students enter through the doors as the representatives of their families. As teachers, we know that each of them brings this burden with them, resulting in subsequent behavioral symptomology and experiences for them.

Relatedly, it has been a regular comment of mine within the media and in face-to-face meetings with key decision-makers that our school populations are a cross-section of society and in response, the funding and supports within urgently need to reflect the same. This can be addressed through dedicated allocations for class sizes that are conducive to effective instruction and learning and reflect composition, extending access to mental health services in our schools, and ensuring that both internal and external services are in place that can assist with the health and safety issues that pervade.

Your Association continues to press heavily on these key items as well as those that impact your personal and professional well-being (e.g., workload, hiring, etc.). It is through your dedicated work on the ground, the collegial support of each other, and your willingness to share your individual experiences that make our profession stronger.

The proud history of our Association has been well-documented since 13 teachers met for the first time in Bay Roberts in 1890. That was the start of the entity that is now known as our Newfoundland & Labrador Teachers' Association. On May 31, 1973, our Association was recognized as the legal bargaining agent for all school teachers as enacted within the Newfoundland Teachers' Collective Bargaining Act. It is at this point that the NLTA expanded its influence in improving the working and personal conditions of its members. Given this pivotal date in 1973, we are this year (2023) celebrating **50 YEARS** of collective bargaining rights within our province. Our collective agreement has grown substantially through the years and stands today as an essential mechanism of strength and protection for our members. Thank you to all of the Association members and staff who came before us and contributed in some capacity to this document.

Below you will find updates on a few primary items for us:

Recruitment, Retention & Resources – We continue to pressure Government to move on a detailed plan for action for the staffing shortages and retention concerns experienced daily throughout the province. In my opinion, meetings (most recently on September 14) with the Minister of Education have proven valuable. Our messaging remains rooted in strategies such as the use of incentivization where possible, comprehensive external recruitment strategies, protection of our workplace experience, and building an educator workforce from within this province.

'No Space For Hate' – On June 9, 2023, members of your Provincial Executive and teachers participated in the 'No Space for Hate' counter-protest on the front steps of the Confederation Building in St. John's; a response to the presence of ideologies and

activities that sow hatred and blame. I had the privilege of speaking at this event, as well as another similar event on September 20. Thank you to our 2SLGBTQIA+ educators for your courage and commitment to your students; and to our educator allies who bring your support each and every day for your students, colleagues, and our school communities. We must continue our efforts to counter these movements but also to further strengthen the foundations of diversity and caring within our school environments.



Collective Bargaining – As you know, we have been engaged in negotiations with the employer since August 2022. You will have received a 'request for information' in the form of a survey during the second week of school. At the time of writing this article, the number of responses were quite strong in quantity and detail. This important step was taken by the Association so we could provide our negotiating team with the most current and frontline data. Our team continues to be diligent in their efforts to secure a fair and meaningful deal for all.

I look forward to pressing forward with you in a united effort toward an improved workplace and public education system.

Yours in Solidarity,

PROVINCIAL/NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

NEWS

HARBOUR BRETON

St. Joseph's Elementary and King Academy Students Improve Local Duck Pond

Students from the Grade 4 class at St. Joseph's Elementary and the Design and Fabrication class at King Academy worked throughout the year to improve the community duck pond in Harbour Breton.

Three new shelters and feeders were built by the students, along with the design and installation of signs to warn drivers of crossing ducks and what they should feed them. To raise awareness, the Grade 4 class bagged and distributed healthy duck food to local kids for free.

The improvements to the duck pond were funded through the Lead Learners Project offered by the NLESD, donations from the community and money from various lemonade stands held by children in the area.



St. Joseph's Elementary and King Academy students at the local duck pond in Harbour Breton.



ST. JOHN'S

NLTA Hosts National Presidents Meeting

In May 2023, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association hosted the national presidents from all the provincial and territorial teachers' organizations for two days of meetings in St. John's. Teacher retention and recruitment as well as school safety were discussed and are topics of vital importance across the country.



ST. JOHN'S

Provincial Executive Summer Planning Session

In August, your Provincial Executive met to set the direction and priorities for the Association for the next two years. During those sessions, Education Minister Krista Lynn Howell provided greetings to Provincial Executive members and outlined her priorities as Minister. Executive members had a brief roundtable discussion with the Minister and highlighted the successes and challenges currently in the education system.



ON LOCATION

No Space for Hate

In June and September, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association attended two counter-protests in St. John's to support safe, equitable and inclusive teaching and learning spaces. President Trent Langdon spoke at both events and reiterated that schools should be safe and inclusive environments for all students, including those who identify as gender and/or sexually diverse.



Members of Provincial Executive joined the June 2023 counter-protest to support members and students.



NTLA GSDSIC President Trevor Taylor and Vice-President Émile Sopkow attended the June event.



President Trent Langdon, pictured here at the September 20 event in St. John's, spoke during both counter-protests.



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Voluntary Activities

Making Choices for Work/Life Balance

by Ian Crewe

Life in general is pretty busy for most of us. Sometimes it feels like there is simply not enough time in the day to do everything we need, want or are expected to do. Balancing work commitments and personal responsibilities is important to overall wellness, and this can be difficult to achieve at the best of times. Submissions from NLTA members during preparations for the ongoing round of collective bargaining painted a clear picture of workload demands that continue to increase and intensify. So, as the 2023-24 school year begins, there is an opportunity to reflect on the year that has passed and consider the new one ahead. Professional and personal decisions should be made with the goal of establishing and maintaining a reasonable work/life balance in mind.

There are many opportunities for NLTA members to volunteer their time and talents in the workplace. Teachers and administrators volunteer as coaches, tutors and chaperones, they volunteer their time to serve on school and district committees, and they step in as organizers for school functions and activities. Some members even take on added professional responsibilities voluntarily, stepping up for roles such as lead teachers, unofficial (and uncompensated) “department leads”, alternate format materials advisors and athletic directors. Association members volunteer their time for both personal and professional reasons. For some, volunteering brings them a deep level of personal satisfaction; for others, they do so out of a sense of professional responsibility. Whatever the reason, and whatever the role, volunteerism is always worthwhile and has a positive impact on school culture. Clauses 29.03, 29.06 and 29.08 of the Provincial Collective Agreement protect the rights of members to choose to volunteer and to choose not to volunteer. Members therefore have the individual discretion to make choices in relation to taking on such responsibilities that respect the need for balance in their lives:

29.03 - *It is agreed that extra-curricular activities are a desirable part of a well-rounded education. It is also agreed that the principal and staff of each school will determine the extra-curricular activities to be provided in their school. Notwithstanding this, a teacher's participation in any extra-curricular activity requires that teacher's consent.*

29.06 - *No teacher shall be required to be present for school duties on Saturday or Sunday.*

29.08 - *A teacher's participation on a school-based or board-based committee requires that teacher's consent.*

It is important that members understand their rights in this regard. School districts may have policies requiring the establishment of school committees, the presence of teacher chaperones, or the availability of extra help for students; however, this does not mean that a member can be directed to serve on a committee, to coach or supervise students outside the regular work day, or to provide additional tutoring sessions after school or on the weekend. NLTA members cannot be required to participate in extra-curricular activities, or to be a member of school or district based committees. Coaching a school team, supervising a school activity, or serving on a school development team are all voluntary for members, regardless of their teaching assignment. At no time should members feel compelled to volunteer their time except in pursuit of their own personal or professional interests, and they cannot be penalized for exercising their right to choose not to participate in voluntary professional activities.

Members who voluntarily take on additional responsibilities in their schools as lead teachers, alternate format materials advisors, and athletic directors should be aware that the NLTA has repeatedly attempted to negotiate compensation and protection for these types of positions in past rounds of collective bargaining. Repeatedly, the employer has

refused. The employer will never be motivated to properly compensate or protect individual members for administrative work they are prepared to take on voluntarily without compensation or protection. The NLTA continues to receive calls from members seeking clarification on the issue of volunteer responsibilities. Many claim they no longer have time to volunteer due to increasing demands and intensification of their workload. Clause 29.01 of the Provincial Collective Agreement requires that principals consult with teachers regarding the assignment of curricular and non-curricular duties. The school district is responsible for ensuring that every effort is made to ensure this consultation is completed by the first instructional day of the new school year. While this clause does not address extracurricular activities, committee work, or other voluntary roles, if you have volunteered in the past and have decided that you do not wish to continue in the coming school year, this consultation period may be a good time to inform your principal of this decision.

It is an understatement that the coming school year will present many new issues, challenges and demands for NLTA members. As professionals, members should consider what they can reasonably take on, prioritize, and feel comfortable exercising the discretion they have to set professional limits on voluntary activities for 2023-24. Members seeking advice or assistance with such matters should contact an NLTA Administrative Officer in Programs and Services (mail@nlta.ca).

Ian Crewe is the Assistant Executive Director at the NLTA.

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Violence in the Workplace

Basic Advice and Guidelines for Teachers

by Miriam Sheppard

Incidents of work-related violence are a significant source of concern for NLTA members. Aggressive and sometimes violent student behaviour is an unfortunate reality that teachers sometimes face in their professional lives.

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and the Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial have employer policies relating to violence in the workplace. Further, pursuant to section 4 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), employers in Newfoundland and Labrador must, within reasonably practical limits, provide a work environment that ensures the health and safety of its employees. In the school setting, this means that, with respect to students, parents/guardians or other individuals who are physically aggressive/violent, employers have a legal responsibility to ensure that the proper preventive measures, supports and training are in place to enable teachers to work without unreasonable threat to their own safety. What is necessary to ensure employee safety is case specific and depends on the nature of the situation.

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2012 (Regulations) specifically address the issue of violence in the workplace as a health and safety concern. Section 22 of the Regulations defines violence as “the attempted or actual exercise of physical force to cause injury to a worker and includes threatening statements or behaviour which gives a worker reason to believe that the worker is at risk of injury.” Some teachers work closely with students who have behavioural challenges and have limited ability to regulate their own conduct. While the actions of the aggressors are not always within their control, an intent to act violently or to cause harm is not required to trigger the employer’s obligations. What is necessary to ensure employee safety is case specific and depends on the nature of the situation. Situations like this should be assessed and addressed on a “case by case” basis, and NLTA Programs and Services staff are available to assist teachers experiencing violence in the workplace. However, the following guidelines can assist in ensuring that cases of violence are appropriately addressed:

Get the information you need: If you may be exposed to risk of violence at work, you are entitled to know the nature of the risk, the precautions that may be taken, and information related to the risk from persons who have a history of violent behaviour and who you are likely to encounter in the course of your work.

Document, Document, Document: Promptly report and document all violence related incidents and accidents, regardless of the severity, to the school principal, manager or supervisor. Ensure that there are written records of the event in accordance with Board and school reporting protocols. Communicate to your administration, in writing, your concern for your safety, the safety of other employees, and others (such as students). The NLTA can assist you in drafting appropriate correspondence.

Request the risk assessment(s): Ask your administrator whether a risk assessment pertaining to the risk of violence in the workplace has been completed. If so, ask to see a copy. If not, ask when one will be done. Sometimes an already completed risk assessment needs to be updated.

Examine the assistance provided: If a risk assessment concludes that there is a risk of violence, the employer must implement procedures, policies and work environment arrangements to eliminate the risk to workers from violence, or to minimize the risk in cases where elimination is impossible. The age and cognitive ability of the student(s) in question will have an impact on the type of options that are appropriate in any situation. As well, it may be necessary to consider different approaches when the risk of violence comes from the behaviour of a parent/guardian as opposed to a student. Are the proposed measures reasonable and complete? Have they been implemented in a timely fashion? Seek school district support for matters that cannot be resolved at the school level despite administration involvement; sometimes District involvement is necessary to obtain required training, supports, resources or programming changes.

Use the Occupational Health and Safety Committee:

If a teacher believes that their workplace is unsafe, and school administration has been advised of these concerns, then a report can be made to the school Occupational Health and Safety Committee. The employer must respond in writing within 30 days following receipt of a recommendation from an OHS Committee.

Know your rights: Ultimately, if you have reasonable grounds to believe that specific work circumstances pose an imminent danger to your health and safety and have brought this to the attention of your principal, you have the right, pursuant to the OHS Act and the Regulations, to refuse unsafe work until remedial action has been taken. Advice and assistance from NLTA staff are available whenever an NLTA member has exercised or is considering exercising the right to refuse unsafe work.

Consider whether you need police assistance: Some violence and abuse may be considered criminal acts – if there is a question as to whether this is the case, or if you feel your personal safety is at risk, you should contact the police.

Access the appropriate benefits: In cases of workplace injury, WorkplaceNL benefits (including medical aid) may be appropriate – not sick leave. On application, a Long Term Disability top up is available to teachers who have long term disability coverage through the NLTA Group Insurance Plan, and who are injured at work.

Help us, help teachers: The Association has developed a Violent Incident Tracking Form, which can be accessed under the forms listed on the NLTA website ([NLTA – NLTA Violent Incident Tracking Form](#)). We are asking teachers to use this form to document violent behavior and/or conduct in the workplace. Information provided through the Violent Incident Tracking Form is being used ONLY for Collective Bargaining research and advocacy and the identities of teachers who use the form will not be disclosed.

Call your Association: Dealing with workplace violence can be complicated and stressful. Teachers and administrators who have questions or require assistance with concerns regarding workplace health and safety, including issues related to violence in the workplace, should contact an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services at the NLTA. Support is also available through the Employee Assistance Program for many stressful situations, including dealing with violence.

Miriam Sheppard is an Administrative Officer in Programs and Services with the NLTA, msheppard@nlta.ca.



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IN MEMORIAM

MARY DOLORES WITHERS
SEPTEMBER 6, 1945 – JULY 22, 2023



Passed peacefully away in the presence of her loving family on Saturday, July 22 at the HSC, Mary Dolores Withers (nee Cantwell). Predeceased by her daughter, Renata Elizabeth and her parents,

Frank and Margaret Cantwell. Leaving to mourn, her husband of 46 years, Vince, and her son, Chris (Tara). Two brothers, Gerry Cantwell (Dorothy) and Ted Cantwell (Donna). Three sisters, Helena Bragg, Agnes Cantwell, and Regina Angel. Nieces: Godchild Trini Bragg, Lindsay Boland (Dave), Andria Cantwell and Ashlee Angel (Paul). Nephews: Steve Bragg (Lori), Jason Cantwell (Miriam), Scott Cantwell (Stacy), and Craig Cantwell, as well as a host of grandnieces and grandnephews. Special sister-in-law, Patricia Withers and her two daughters, Ann Marie Bishop and Kathy Hare. Also, a special, life-long friend, Doreen Walsh Noseworthy. It was with Doreen in their carefree younger days that she began to travel – a journey that sparked a lifelong love and passion. Dolores' travels led her to all corners of the world and spanned all 7 continents, sharing these adventures with her son Chris.

Dolores spent her early years with her parents and siblings at Cape Spear, living first in the building that is now a National Historic Site and later in the dwelling that is now the Cape Spear Café. Her father carried on the Cantwell tradition as lightkeeper, which ended with her brother, Gerry, being the last lightkeeper when the lighthouse became automated. Privately taught by her mother until she completed Grade eight, she then attended school at Holy Heart of Mary Regional High School and went on to earn a teaching degree at Memorial University. Her teaching career spanned 35 years, many of which were spent as vice principal of Presentation Convent School.

With her husband, Vince, she helped form the Eating Disorder Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (EDFNL) almost twenty years ago. The organization was founded in memory of their daughter, Renata; and they have been the driving forces behind its success in providing caregiver support, in counselling them, and annual scholarships to deserving students who plan a career in the healthcare system.

From God – To God

(Submitted by Vince Withers)

School is in full swing, children are back, and breakfast is being served. For many, this time of year brings the excitement of seeing old friends, meeting new friends and greeting teachers. For many families, it is the return of the early morning routine, packing lunches and catching the bus. Unfortunately, this is not the case for everyone.

We know in Newfoundland and Labrador 1 in 4 children under the age of 18 live in a food-insecure home and come to school hungry. It is estimated that within the St. John's area alone, 1 in 6 families have no guarantee of where their next meal is coming from.

There are many reasons why children come to school hungry. Some have long bus rides, others can't or won't eat first thing in the morning, *sadly, some children do not have food at home.*

At Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador, our vision is that every school age child in Newfoundland and Labrador attends school well-nourished and ready to learn. Currently operating 275 Kids Eat Smart Clubs and serving over 40,000 meals every school day to students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, in schools from Labrador to Twillingate, Port aux Basques to St. John's, and everywhere in between, children start their school day with access to nutritious food, at no cost to families.

With the continued increased cost of living, families are struggling; we are experiencing an uptake in the number of children availing of breakfast at school, meaning an increased cost to our program.

Our Kids Eat Smart Clubs contribute to the overall well-being of a child and create a positive school environment. Principals tell us that many children come to school without breakfast. We know children learn better with a full belly and this is why our Kids Eat Smart Clubs are so important, providing an inclusive and safe environment where every child is welcome.

It is together with the support of our Partners, Donors, volunteers, and school communities that we look forward to the school year ahead.

If you would like more information, visit our website at www.kidseatSMART.ca or contact Celina Stoyles, Executive Director directly, at (877) 722-1996 or email cstoyles@kidseatSMART.ca

Every Breakfast. Every Child. Every School Day...we will be there.

Together, we will make it happen.

NLTA SPECIAL INTEREST COUNCILS

A Great Way to Get Involved in Your Association!

Special Interest Councils are professional learning communities dedicated to life-long learning and the ongoing professional growth of NLTA members. Their mandate includes offering a range of professional development programs, including conferences, institutes, focus groups, teleconferences, and e-learning initiatives. Councils communicate with their membership using a variety of current technologies. As part of their mandate, the councils will respond to curriculum and program concerns, develop position papers on critical issues, work with government on curriculum development and advise the NLTA on matters of importance.

There are **17 Special Interest Councils**:

- Council of Special Services (COSS)
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Blind and Visually Impaired (DHH/BVI)
- English Language Arts (7-12) Council
- Gender and Sexual Diversity (GSD) Council
- Health Education Council
- Math/Science Council (MSSIC)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Music Educators' Association (NLMEA)
- Newfoundland and Labrador Counsellors' and Psychologists' Association (NLCPA)
- Physical Education Council (PESIC)
- Psychologists in Education (PIE)
- School Administrators' Council (SAC)
- Second Language Council (SLC)
- Small Schools Council
- Speech Language Pathologists (SLP)
- Teacher Librarians Newfoundland Labrador (TLNL)
- Technology in Education Council (TESIC)
- **Social Studies Council *NEW***

Please make every effort to be an active member of special interest councils that are of interest to you. If you wish to become a member of one of the existing councils, you have only to contact the president of that council (go to the NLTA website for this information), and you will be sent the necessary membership information.

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas re the NLTA Special Interest Councils, contact:

DARLENE JOHNSON

Administrative Officer, Programs & Services, NLTA
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Project Overseas 2023

Working in Solidarity with Ugandan Teachers

by Kristie St. Croix

Welcome to Project Overseas and welcome to Team Uganda! These were among the most exciting words that I have ever received via email. I had always dreamed of someday having the opportunity to travel to Africa to volunteer with others in a sector in which I am so passionate – education. Since becoming an educator, I have developed a love and interest in learning about education throughout the world and have had the privilege to travel to other international locations in an effort to develop a stronger understanding of what education can look like. Through exploration, we learn and from learning, we develop understanding. It seems that each opportunity to explore education ignites my desire to have more experiences and presses me to ask more questions about what education looks like in other areas around the globe.

What is Project Overseas? Project Overseas is a project organized by the Canadian Teachers' Federation that promotes collaboration and solidarity between Canadian teachers and teachers in partnering organizations and unions in the Caribbean and Africa. The project requires Canadian teachers to travel to their assigned partnering countries in small teams during the month of July and the project also requires virtual meetings and planning sessions in the months prior to travel. This year's project included 59 educators from across

Canada, each being sponsored by their local association, such as the NLTA.

I can only recount my story and experiences of Project Overseas, as each person who participates in such travel will feel and remember the experience through their own personal lens.

So, the time had come, it was time for my departure. The school year had clued up and I had just enough time to pack my bags for an experience unlike any I had ever had, ensuring that my preventative malaria medicine was packed, alongside my new mosquito net! My first stop to begin my upcoming adventure was in Ottawa. There I would finally meet the other three members of my team in person, along with all the other participants who were participating in Project Overseas. I was excited about meeting everyone and gathering with other educators who had similar goals and curiosities as I did. In Ottawa, our teams had the opportunity to build and strengthen our relationships, before heading across the world to work with another team of four educators who were anxiously awaiting our arrival. While in Ottawa, we also had the opportunity to gather as a group to do training and preparation activities before heading to our assigned countries. There was a large focus on relationship building and conflict resolution, but also on important information to consider while traveling in a foreign country. All of these topics of discussion were extremely important, as they helped our teams with real-life scenarios while in the country.

Once our time concluded in Ottawa, we each departed in union with our teams to the airport and from there each team departed on their adventure together to their designated country. That was it, we were on our way and beginning our 27-hour trek to Uganda!

The excitement and anticipation to arrive in the country was strong and helped us persevere through the long travel and time zone difference we had yet to face. As a team, we were eager to arrive in the capital of Uganda, Kampala, where we would finally get to meet our team for the next 3 weeks. We were scheduled for meetings in the capital at the head office of the Ugandan National Teacher's



Kristie St. Croix and her team of Canadian teachers in Ottawa.



Kristie and Anthony, her Ugandan teaching partner, holding materials they created by hand to help deliver lessons in the classroom.

Union (UNATU) and during the first 3 days in Kampala, we were given time to develop and plan the professional learning we were to deliver with our Ugandan partners. Following our time in Kampala, we were then scheduled to travel to our final destination, the region of Soroti, a picturesque 6-hour drive, northeast of the capital.

Filled with emotion, I could feel a lump in my throat from holding back tears of joy and excitement as I stood from my seat to stretch my tired legs after our long journey, in anticipation of deplaning and discovering the next moments. As we arrived inside the terminal, I could feel the warmth of the African air on my face and my heart began to fill with love as I was met with friendly and helpful smiling faces all around. I could feel the energy that symbolized the experience that lay ahead, I could already tell that my life was at a pivotal moment and that my lens on the world would be different by the time I arrived back home.

Once through customs and the visa bureau, we were met by a gentleman named Geoffrey, who was employed by UNATU. Geoffrey was assigned to be our driver and part-time escort for the time we would be in Uganda. At that moment, meeting Geoffrey, I had no idea of the friend he would become to our team and the teacher he would be to us. But off we went, driving silently and tired through the night, through unfamiliar villages, to our first resting place in Kampala.

The following morning, there was no time to rest. It was time to begin our collaboration during full, long days, in preparation for the professional learning sessions that were to take place in the weeks that followed. We arrived at the UNATU office and were welcomed with African tea, freshly grown bogoya (banana), delicious Ugandan baked goods and most importantly, an overwhelming welcome to Uganda by the President of the UNATU and other team members.

The next three days were filled with hard work, collaboration and compromise. There were so many

things we wanted to plan, but the challenge of fitting everything into a tight PL schedule was sometimes a challenge. We were planning sessions on leadership, relationship building, instructional strategies and inclusion, and with the expertise of our Ugandan and Canadian teams, we were well on our way to providing plenty of learning opportunities for the educators who were registered to attend.

The next part of our journey continued immediately following the planning sessions in Kampala. Early the next morning, we were accompanied by Geoffrey, our driver, to drive us to Soroti, where we would pass the birthplace of the Nile and begin to experience rural Uganda. I do not believe our team spoke much on the long drive, we were all taking pictures with our eyes of the beautiful lush, green landscape, the red roads filled with people driving boda bodas (motorcycle road taxis), people gathering water at the community well, vendors drying their harvest for the market, children playing inside yards, and chickens and goats roaming freely within the villages. There was so much to see, so much to soak in. One thing that was very clear to me was the energy that was present. People were outside interacting and enjoying each other. The connectedness of the people was obvious – definitely something that we Westerners could learn from and reconnect with.

Once we arrived in Soroti and made our inn our home for the remainder of our stay, we settled in to rest before the first day of training began with our mosquito nets tucked tightly around our mattresses, not long after the setting of the sun.

African sunrises and sunsets seemed to have been a theme throughout the experience. The days were long, hot and filled with collaboration and learning. We could often be found sitting outside where we bonded and made friendships under the shade of the

(continued on page 14)



The Ugandan teachers sharing their culture by demonstrating a traditional dance.

mango tree on campus. We were working from the Soroti Core Primary Teachers College (PTC), where we began early in the morning and continued throughout the day until we returned home just before sunset. The long days were worth every part of the journey it took to get to Uganda. We worked with many educators from rural Uganda, who had never met a *mzungu* (a white person, derived from Swahili, meaning a traveler) before. We were all learning so much about each other and sharing our own lived experiences to help teach the other. Friendships were being created and international collaboration was underway. The real learning that was happening was more than what we had planned for in PL, it was the experiences that we could share in discussion in the classroom, under the mango tree, or in another area of shade in the beautiful outdoors.



Teachers engaged in an interactive activity on leadership under the shade of the mango tree.

Our team had the opportunity to visit an elementary school that was adjacent to the PTC. This was a day that we were all looking forward to. During our work with the educators attending the professional learning, we heard about their classrooms, their students and their challenges. It was hard to conceptualize some of their concerns and challenges, and it was hard to connect with the educators about these concerns if we hadn't had the opportunity to visit a school in session. Once we had visited a school, the



One of the buildings on the Primary Teachers College (PTC) campus which included a space for training in agriculture.

teachers attending the professional learning were happy that we could now understand and put into context their experiences.

The Ugandan teachers in the area of Soroti have deep concerns about working conditions, lack of replacement teachers, classroom size, inclusion practices and opportunities for professional learning. Of all the differences between Canadian experiences and Ugandan experiences, we share so much more. Though we are halfway around the world from each other, as united teachers in a profession working in solidarity, we share the love we feel for our students. We want what is best for them, despite the challenges that we face. We desire to improve our working conditions and overcome the challenges. We each deserve the representation of a union or association that will defend our rights as educators and strive to improve the work that we love - to teach.

This experience has taught me the importance of leadership in an international setting and it has reinforced the importance of collaboration and developing strong working relationships. It has also reinforced the importance of allowing others to guide and teach me. The richest part of this experience was letting myself really feel and connect with others while being led by wonderful teachers. These wonderful teachers were the people who surrounded me. My wonderful and amazing Canadian team, my strong and capable Ugandan team, the knowledgeable, talented and strong Ugandan teachers, the staff at the inn who greeted us at the end of each day with a smile, and Geoffrey, our driver who answered all of our curious questions!

Many people ask to see pictures and I can honestly say that I did not take many. I choose not to perpetuate stereotypes that we may see reinforced in Western media about our African neighbors but rather focus on the beauty of humanity and nature. It is important to me to focus on what we can learn rather than what we can teach. Living behind a lens can be blinding, instead, I chose to feel the beauty within my heart.

Project Overseas changed me and helped provide clarity in a world that can sometimes feel uncertain.

Kristie St. Croix is an Early French Immersion teacher at Elizabeth Park Elementary in Paradise. She has been a French Immersion/French Second Language teacher for over 20 years and is passionate about Equity, Diversity and Social Justice in education.

NLTA STAFF CHANGES

APPOINTMENT NOTICES

The NLTA is pleased to announce the following staff appointment:

Jody Saunders

Jody Saunders has been appointed to the position of Administrative Officer, Programs and Services, effective September 25, 2023.

Jody holds a Bachelor of Social Sciences from the University of Ottawa, an LL.B. from the University of New Brunswick and an MBA from Memorial University

Jody joins the NLTA from her most recent position as Deputy CEO for the NL Labour Relations Board.

Prior to taking her role with the Labour Relations Board, Jody was a Labour Relations Officer with the NL Health Boards Association and worked for a number of years as a lawyer in private practice. She has significant experience in labour relations, including grievance arbitration, mediation and collective bargaining. She has completed professional development in negotiations skills, dispute resolution and workplace investigations.



RETIREMENTS

The Association would like to wish the following NLTA staff member much happiness in their recent retirement:

Michelle Lamarche

Michelle retired from her position as Senior Assistant, Communications/Corporate Services, on June 30, 2023. Michelle worked at the NLTA for over 30 years. We wish you all the best!



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The Sound of Silence

by Lori Hewitt

“The busier you are, the more you need quiet time.” ~ Justin Zorn

Welcome back to another school year. We hope you all have had the opportunity to rest, relax, and restore over the summer months. While the start of the school year can be exciting and signify new beginnings, it can also bring forth challenges and uncertainty. I encourage you all to take a deep breath, assess where you are in this moment, and acknowledge your response and feelings. Try not to assign value to them (they’re not good or bad), just acknowledge them. I challenge you to do this daily and notice where you are during different times of the day. What’s happening around you that may be contributing to your response? Checking in with yourself regularly can be a very useful exercise and can go a long way in managing emotions, thoughts and actions. After all, we can’t adjust what we aren’t aware of.

I try to make a practice of doing this often and one thing I have noticed is that I could use some extra moments of peace, quiet and calm! So how do we bring this sometimes-elusive state into our very busy and hectic lives?

It may seem simplistic, but perhaps what we need is quiet time. Not necessarily the quiet time we provide to very young children (although this could be beneficial as well), but in essence, what I’m suggesting is the need for silence. I’m referring to getting a break from external noise in the literal sense as well as cultivating real sustained silence, the kind that minimizes inner chatter.

There is danger in excessive noise exposure. The world is literally louder now than it has been at any point in history. Today’s sirens are an estimated six times louder than they were a century ago, and, according to the National Park Services, noise pollution doubles or triples every three decades.

As teachers, I’m sure you have noticed an increase in noise in your schools and classrooms as well. Some of the noise comes from the typical physical environment of a school, for example, desks and chairs scraping the floors, students

moving around, bells going off, ventilation and heating systems running and high-tech equipment functioning. One of the downsides of a technologically advanced classroom is the associated low-level noise.

External noise can lead to internal stress, especially when we have little control over it. Mathias Basner, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania who specializes in sound processing and rest, states that after a singular period (one night) of noise exposure, our bodies excrete adrenaline and cortisol that can change the composition of our blood. In essence, noise vibrates through our inner ear, converting the movements into electrical signals which get transmitted to our brain and can trigger the fight or flight response... the opposite effect of what we want, which is peace, quiet and calm.

What’s the antidote? The sound of silence! “The power of silence helps to restore the nervous system, helps sustain energy, and conditions our minds to be more adaptive and responsive.” Not only does it help kick start our parasympathetic nervous system, but it is also associated with the development of new brain cells in areas associated with learning and memory. It’s a win-win!

“Silence isn’t just the absence of noise. It’s a presence that brings us energy, clarity, and deeper connection.”

~ Justin Zorn, Leigh Marz

Some of the other benefits of silence include:

- 1. Enhanced Concentration:** Silence creates an environment conducive to concentration and focus, allowing us to perform tasks more effectively.
- 2. Boosted Creativity:** Silence can activate our imagination and encourage out of the box thinking. Engage in this practice and you will be in good company. Albert Einstein and Sir Isaac Newton

were believers in the necessity of silence.

3. **Heightened Self-Awareness:** By immersing ourselves in silence we promote self-awareness and personal growth, factors important to minimizing stress.
4. **Inner Calmness:** A period of silence each day allows us the chance to relax and reduce stress levels, promoting peace, calm and mental clarity.
5. **Improved Learning:** Research shows that excessive noise impacts learning. As teachers you know firsthand that as a child is exposed to more noise, their school performance suffers and they experience greater struggles with concentration levels. The exposure of children to tablets, cell phones and video games has increased the level of white noise and hearing impairment which affects their ability to learn.
6. **Increased Productivity:** Even short moments of silence can help increase productivity by reducing distractions. Research suggests that doing nothing and remaining silent can be linked to an increase in the production of new brain cells... how's that for productive!
7. **Cultivated Patience:** Constant noise from the media and our day-to-day activities causes many of us to miss out on silence. Silence encourages patience and mindfulness which cultivates peace and calm.

How do we cultivate periods of sustained quiet time, especially in a world that's growing increasingly busy? It could be as simple as (notice I didn't say easy) sitting silently for 2 minutes during the middle of your day, taking a walk outside in nature (without your phone), or trying a social media fast. Here are some other quick tips to help get you started.

- Wake up 15 minutes earlier than usual. It may not seem like a lot of time, but beginning your day less rushed will make a big difference.
- Try meditating or engaging in a solitary gratitude practice.
- Turn off your radio while driving. Be present and notice the quiet.
- Take a silent walk (with no phone or headset).
- Turn off the noise and practice mindful eating with no distractions.
- Incorporate quiet time into your bedtime routine. Try gentle stretching and yoga poses that help to activate your parasympathetic nervous system.
- Use your time in the shower for quiet and focused reflection.
- Intentionally sit quietly every time you close your computer.

- Cancel one recurring commitment and replace it with solitude.

There will be certain times in your life when finding silence is easier than others. Remember, the busier you are the more you need quiet time. And on that note, I think I'll turn off my computer and benefit from the sound of silence!

If you feel you could use additional support in any area of your personal wellness, please feel free to reach out to your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). We're always here to help.

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Lori Hewitt is a Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for Teachers. For confidential assistance contact Lori Hewitt (ext. 242), lhewitt@nlta.ca or Kenda Riggs (ext. 265), kriggs@nlta.ca.

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An Interview With... NLTA Vice-President Dale Lambe

On August 1, 2023, Dale Lambe became the Vice-President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

Born and raised in Marystown, Dale Lambe is the Principal of Villanova Junior High in Conception Bay South. He started teaching English Language Arts, French and Technology in Bay de Verde in 1998-99, continuing to do so at Fatima Academy in St. Bride's and Ascension Collegiate in Bay Roberts. Dale moved into Administration at St. Catherine's Academy in Mount Carmel in 2004. He has served in Administrative Leadership roles at Brother Rice Junior High, St. Paul's Junior High and Hazelwood Elementary prior to moving to Villanova and has enjoyed all his experiences and the personal connections he has made.

Dale has been an educator for over 25 years and has been involved with the NLTA at various levels, including involvement with the School Administrators' Special Interest Council (SAC) since 2004, serving as President from 2020 to 2022. During this time, he was part of teams that worked hard to provide professional learning opportunities for all members, including a provincial conference in 2013. Dale has also been heavily involved with the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP). He worked on the organizing committee for the national conference held in St. John's in 2018 which hosted over 400 Administrators from across the country. Dale became CAP Vice President (Elect) and served his term from 2021-23 before shifting his personal and professional focus to the current NLTA Executive. He is the current Chair of the NLTA Negotiating Team.

As an introduction to the membership in his role, Dale answers a series of questions.

Q. *What is your main priority as Vice-President of the NLTA?*

A. As Vice-President of the NLTA my main priority is to serve the collective interests of our province's teachers and teaching and learning assistants.

Through exposure to outstanding Administrators and leaders in my career, I have learned that the best way to support our students is to offer favourable working conditions for our educators. My experience with leadership teams that are supported by the NLTA, especially at the Special Interest Councils' level, has allowed me to hear the issues across all sectors of our profession. We have incredible volunteers serving on these councils and committees who exhibit all that is positive about our collective strength. As the current chair of the NLTA Negotiations Team, this background experience has served me well as we strive to reach an agreement that meets everyone's needs and desires. The term "collective" is crucial to the ratification of a bargaining agreement. I am currently looking forward to working with an elected executive team that offers a different level of governance within our Association. I will listen and learn intently, as I always strive to do in my daily work.

Q. *What do you see as the biggest challenge/opportunity for the NLTA and its members going forward?*

A. The biggest challenge for the NLTA is quite simple in statement, but really complex in how we address it. We have to sell the nobility of our profession enough to make it appealing, while also advocating to improve current teaching and learning conditions. Recruitment and retention are huge issues right now. Public campaigns such as our "Teachers Change Lives" and "Hidden Reality" need to work hand in hand with one another to solicit the interest of our future workforce, while also letting key decision-makers know that they have a significant role to play in improving the model for educating our students. Currently, we have the challenge of getting enough educators, while simultaneously having the opportunity to sell the beauty of our profession. Finding the perfect balance between crisis and opportunity should be our goal right now.

Q. *What is your advice to members considering becoming involved with the Association in a leadership role?*

A. Embrace opportunity and keep informed of all NLTA initiatives. In 2004, when I became an Administrator it felt like a lonely place. By 2006, I was encouraged to become active and engaged with the School Administrators' Special Interest Council (SAC). This changed my outlook on my job and my role as an Administrator. I built a strong network of colleagues with whom I could trust to offer varying viewpoints so I could best support my staff and students. SAC also supported a collegial model of Administration which portrayed and continues to portray Principals, Assistant Principals and Program Specialists as co-workers to teachers, as opposed to a hierarchical view of leadership. This has helped me tremendously in my various administrative roles.

Read *The Bulletin*, listen to your school reps, follow the NLTA on social media and check their website. So many leadership and engagement opportunities are out there. Avail of them.

Q. *What do you consider your greatest achievement?*

A. My greatest accomplishment would be shared with my wife Kelli, and that is our family. I am lucky to be married to my best friend who knew how badly I wanted to become a teacher and who encouraged me to make the right moves to achieve and sustain the career that I have enjoyed so far. I have a 15-year-old daughter, Julia, and a 13-year-old son, Elliott. Through my extensive experience working with young people, I have always believed that young people who get enjoyment and fulfillment through involvement with activities are those that make the best decisions. For that reason, my wife and I feel fortunate to have two children who are involved in various sports and arts activities. Their respective schools, Holy Heart and St. Paul's Junior High offer many extra-curricular opportunities and an outstanding academic focus for both. Most importantly, we are working hard to raise two kind human beings who are empathetic and understanding. I am biased, but it feels like we are achieving success in this area.

Q. *What motivates you to work hard?*

A. My Students motivate me each and every day. I feel so passionately about supporting them and helping them succeed that I set extremely high standards for myself to make things happen. As a clear example, I am driven to offer opportunities to all students to avail of French programs. Second language acquisition has provided me with so many

opportunities and a career that I love. I would not have achieved that without my own teachers when I was in school in Marystown. I want to pay it forward to my students and you will find me heavily promoting Intensive Core French and Late French Immersion in my school community. If a student has learning needs, I will work hard with all parties to create opportunities and mechanisms to offset those gaps. My mind is constantly working on how to best meet the needs of the teachers so they can meet the needs of their students.

Q. *Which historical figure do you most identify with?*

A. I am far too humble to liken myself to a historical figure. However, there are figures that I have studied closely and hope to exemplify their best qualities. I love learning about Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi and their quiet commitment to advocacy and hope. Most recently I have been fascinated by the legacy of Barack and Michelle Obama. Reading "A Promised Land" by Barack Obama showed the clear sacrifices that Michelle made to help him gain prominence. But it was her recounting of her own narrative in "Becoming" that showed her outstanding leadership and accompanying perspective in making American history. I read both books back-to-back to explore their different points of view for the same journey.

Q. *What do you like to do in your free time?*

A. My free time is spent drinking good coffee, reading and listening to my Holy Trinity, the Three B's: Beatles, Bono and Bruce. Music has always been my salvation and key lyrical quotes have kept me grounded and focused. Whether it be "Abbey Road," a "Tenth Avenue Freezeout," or a place "Where the Streets Have no Name," music always provides a shift in thinking for me that I live for and love.

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If you would like to suggest someone in your school community that you think the entire membership should get to know a little more, send your suggestion to jtulk@nlta.ca.



Autism Society NL What is Autism?

by Paul Walsh

Greetings to all teachers and all associated with the NLTA! It's a pleasure for us at the Autism Society of Newfoundland & Labrador (ASNL) to be able to reach out to you through your Association newsletter. ASNL values its relationship with all teachers and sincerely appreciates the difference you make in the lives of children and youth in our province every day.

In today's inclusive classrooms, teachers and TLAs will have a diverse group of students with a wide variety of needs. For your autistic students, the level of need will differ depending on the individual. Working with the other supports in the classroom such as autism itinerants and student assistants, it is important that the need of every child – neurodivergent or neurotypical – be understood to maximize the learning opportunity to which each have the basic right, and that each person be treated with the dignity they deserve.

At ASNL, we are very proud of the definition of autism that is on our website. It talks about how, as an organization, our focus is to elevate and center autistic voices.

What is Autism?

Autism is a Neurotype and part of the range of natural variation in human neurological development.

Human beings have a diverse range of Neurotypes – Neuro meaning brain. This diversity in human Neurotype is what we call Neurodiversity.

Neurodiversity (Brain Diversity) includes other diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder (ADHD), Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Down Syndrome etc. and is a part of nature's normal biodiversity. This biodiversity ensures all species have healthy ecosystems to thrive in. Autism is a Neuro (brain) developmental (process of developing) difference and may therefore be on a different developmental timeline.

Autistics may avail of supports in different areas at different times in their life across their lifespan.

One of the most important things about this definition is how it is neuro-affirming. In the past, autism (and other disabilities) had definitions that were deficit-based and related to what a person is unable to do. This type of thinking and language has been replaced by the realization that nature's diversity comes in all forms and that variance is natural and helps to grow our cultural fabric.

In the classroom, the move away from behavioural approaches to autism is a logical step as autism is neuro-developmental and not behavioural which means that traditional approaches, often referred to as the compliance model, are recognized as no longer appropriate. For example, approaches such as forcing eye contact, long periods of sitting in one place or posture, and not permitting stimming behaviours (which are natural self-regulation behaviours for some individuals) are seen as not appropriate, a denial of the dignity of the individual student, and a significant cause of trauma.

The challenges teachers face in the classroom as they navigate the diversity of their students are many, but one of the key challenges relates to communication. If you have students who are non-speaking, it's important to realize that alternate forms of communication must be used. It's also important to presume competence and understand that non-speaking or selective mutism in no way reflects cognition or understanding. The recognition of the dignity of an individual is found when we eliminate any barriers to their full participation in society, or in this case, in the classroom.

Let's start with the words we use. Note that I am saying non-speaking and not non-verbal. Meghan Ashburn and Jules Edwards, co-authors of the book "I Will Die on This Hill" and keynote presenters at the 2023 ASNL Embracing Neurodiversity conference last May, use the term mouth words. Just because a person may not use mouth words (or is non-speaking) doesn't mean they are not verbal, it's just that their verbalization comes in a different format. Maybe they communicate through the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) software on their

device, another reason why denying a person access to a device as a means of leverage is trauma-inducing, or it's through American Sign Language (ASL). If that's the case, it's important that someone in the classroom understands how these forms of communication work so that the student who uses them can be (and feel) included in any discussion and more importantly, can clearly communicate their wants and needs. Autistic people, indeed, all disabled people, want to be recognized for their competence and be treated as equals. However, when incorrect assumptions are made based on observed behaviours or their means of communication, the result is disrespect, mistreatment, harm and abuse. No teacher wants this to be the outcome in their classroom which is why this level of understanding is important.

Again, it starts with the words. While it's a personal choice, most disabled people today, and most autistics, want to be known that way. Not as persons with autism. The former is known as identity-based language and reflects pride in one's identity as autistic just as we have pride in our identity as Canadians (we'd never say, "I'm a person with Canada.") It's a recognition that a disability doesn't reflect something wrong or is a deficit, it reflects normal diversity. To use the beautiful phrase of a member of the ASNL community, people are perfectly autistic.

ASNL realizes that some of these changes in approach may be overwhelming at first, especially as you deal with the beginning of another school year. We'd like to help. ASNL can deliver Autism Awareness and Understanding Sessions as part of a professional learning day or staff meeting. These sessions can be arranged by completing the request form: [Peer Acceptance and Understanding Sessions](#). There are also some great websites that provide lots of information from an autistic viewpoint. For example, NeuroClastic has many excellent resources to choose from. Of course, if there's anything in particular you'd like to discuss, please reach out to ASNL at any time. Our website is www.asnl.ca.

All of us in the ASNL community wish the members of the NLTA and all those involved in the delivery of quality public education to the children and youth of our province a happy, healthy and inclusive school year!

Paul Walsh is the Chief Executive Officer for the Autism Society of Newfoundland & Labrador.

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Ceremony of Induction into the Teaching Profession Thoughts from a Faculty of Education Graduate

by Karlita Herrera

The following is a speech given by Karlita Herrera, a recent graduate of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University, at the MUN Induction Ceremony into the Teaching Profession on June 2, 2023.

Greetings to everyone and a warm welcome to this gathering. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have joined us here today. I am also thankful to the Faculty of Education for giving me this opportunity to speak. It is an immense privilege for me to represent the graduating Education classes of 2023.

I must admit, writing this speech took longer than expected. Not because I lack things to say, because anyone who knows me, knows that certainly isn't the case. Rather, it is difficult to put into words how incredible of an experience these past two years have been. Each of us started with different life experiences. Some of us had already earned one degree and had been in school for at least 17 years (such as those in my class). I'm currently on year 21 and counting, which is no wonder I keep finding white hairs on my head. But in all seriousness, this is something that we should all be so proud of.

Before completing the education program, I was a nurse for three years. People often look at me in shock when I tell them this. The most common question I get is, why, why did I make the switch? I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. However, at 18 years old, moving away didn't seem like such an appealing option. I want to share a little story with you. About three or four years ago, I saw a video of a teacher surprising her students during Covid. When one little girl noticed her teacher, her little eyes widened, and she ran up to her teacher for a big hug. As I watched this video, tears began to stream down my face. It was during this moment I realized how badly I wanted to be a teacher.

I share this story because we all have different reasons and stories that led us here. Whatever that reason may be, we are all here today, celebrating ourselves and each other. I now want to take you back to two years ago when this entire journey started and when the long-awaited acceptance letters came out. I still remember sitting in my car when I got the email and the pure joy I felt when I read the words "congratulations." I cannot begin to imagine all the tears shed, all the happy dances performed, and all the smiles shared the day that we each found out we got accepted into the education program.

We all came into this program with the same goal: to learn how to be the best teacher possible. Our noble dream was made possible because of the Education program offered at MUN. As someone fortunate enough to complete their first degree close to home, moving away to attend MUN was a huge milestone. I had no idea what to expect, who would be in my class, or what the program would even entail. All I knew was that I was ready to begin this new chapter in my life.

The Education Building was not just a building. It was a place of community, a place of acceptance, a home away from home. You may be wondering; how can a school be like a home? Well, for many of us, with the amount of work we had to do, we practically lived there. All jokes aside, within those walls were the hearts and faces of those who wanted nothing but the best for us. I may be biased in saying this, but I believe that the education program has some of the best faculty and staff. We would not be here without the guidance, support, and instruction of every single faculty member. You all taught us something different and valuable. You provided us with high-quality instruction and helped shape us. Just as we will be role models to all our future students, you were role models to us, and you inspired us to become the best teachers possible. So, thank you,

for showing us what good teaching practices look like, for providing us with the necessary skills and pedagogy to work within a classroom, and for preparing us for what life has in store for us next. I feel privileged to have completed this program through Memorial, as I am sure we all do.

I also want to thank those who have stood by our sides since day one, our very own personal cheerleaders. Whether they be our mom, dad, siblings, significant other, friends, the list goes on. Your support, love, and words of encouragement have never gone unnoticed. You have also played an important role in helping us get here today, so thank you.

I also want to give a shout-out to the TLC, which also became my place of employment during my last semester. The TLC was the place to be. If you were having a bad day, you could always count on the friendly faces inside to cheer you up. The TLC holds many beautiful memories for each of us. It is where I spent 2 hours, after hours, attempting to record myself playing “You Are My Sunshine” on the ukulele as part of an assignment (that just goes to show how many times I had to start over), it is where one of our instructors had his wife make each one of us a cupcake so we could celebrate all 38 of our birthdays in one day, and it is where during Christmas the decorations made you feel like you had just stepped into a Winter wonderland.

As we sit here today, I am sure we are all overwhelmed with so many great memories. Whether that be purity parties in the TLC, to marching across the road with our homemade crustaceans, these are the moments that will stick with us the most. I hope we can all look back in 5, 10, or 15 years and think about all the wonderful memories created within those walls. I hope you hold those memories dear and smile when you think about the laughter and love that was felt every time you walked through those doors.

Many of us have had an opportunity to work inside a classroom over the past couple of weeks. In just one month of subbing, I have had an opportunity to work at 9 different schools. Each day is just as exciting as the last, and every day I look forward to working with familiar faces and new faces. When you wake up excited to go to work every day, that is when you know you have chosen the right career. I hope every day is a new and exciting day for you, and that you never lose your passion for this wonderful profession.

To all the graduates here today, I wish you all a lifetime of success and happiness as you create new adventures and experiences for yourself. Whether

you choose to substitute, land a permanent job here in NL or end up halfway around the world, I wish you nothing but the best. I hope wherever you go you touch the lives of hundreds of students, and you find joy with this special career that you have chosen.

Two years ago, I walked into a room full of unfamiliar faces. Today, I walked into a room full of people who have become a part of my life and with whom I share unforgettable memories. I do not doubt that each one of you will help create a better tomorrow, especially for the children of today. As Betty Reese once said, “If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in the dark with a mosquito.”

So, with that, I have one thing left to say Class of 2023... Congratulations, we did it! Thank you.

Karlita Herrera has spent most of her life in Newfoundland. She moved here from New Brunswick at the age of 7 and grew up in the small town of Mount Moriah on the West Coast. Karlita first completed a Bachelor of Nursing Collaborative Degree in 2018 at the Grenfell Campus in Corner Brook. She has always been passionate about working with children, so she decided to return to school and complete the Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary) as a Second-Degree program through Memorial University. Karlita has a deep passion for education and is excited to start her teaching career. She has enjoyed substituting upon completing the program and looks forward to landing a full-time permanent position one day.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For a full list of professional development opportunities, visit the NLTA website at www.nlta.ca/professional-development

Dates to Remember

October 2023

Oct 19 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
Oct 20-21 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting
Oct 26-27 Pre-Retirement Seminar (Gander)

November 2023

Nov 2-3 Pre-Retirement Seminar (St. John's)
Nov 16 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications
Nov 16-17 Pre-Retirement Seminar (St. John's)
Nov 23-24 Pre-Retirement Seminar (St. John's)
Nov 30 NLTA Provincial Executive Meeting

December 2023

Dec 1-2 NLTA Joint Council Meeting
Dec 21 **Deadline:** PD Fund Applications

Notice for Substitute Teachers

Information for Substitute Teachers is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.ca.

Click "**Member Services**" and then "**Substitute Teachers**"

For any questions re: substitute teacher issues please contact: BOB JOHNSTON

Administrative Officer, NLTA Programs and Services

709-726-3223 or 1-800-563-3599, ext. 239

bjohnston@nlta.ca



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APPLYING FOR EDUCATIONAL LEAVE?

Applications for Educational Leave for the 2024-25 School Year will be available soon on the NLTA website. Please check back at WWW.NLTA.CA

Application is made to the District.
DISTRICT DEADLINES are as follows:

NLESD: January 12, 2024

CSFP: January 12, 2024

Teaching and Learning Assistant Professionals

Information for Teaching and Learning Assistants is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.ca.

Click "**Member Services**" and then "**Teaching and Learning Assistants**"

For any questions re: teaching and learning assistant issues please contact:

GABE RYAN

Administrative Officer

NLTA Programs and Services

709-726-3233 or 1-800-563-3599, ext 232

gryan@nlta.ca

PRE-RETIREMENT SEMINARS 2023

Information on Pre-Retirement Seminars for 2023 is available on the NLTA website at www.nlta.ca/preretirement2023

