

Ed Service Officer Report
November 2023
Julia Rowe

On October 27 & 28th the Educational Services Conference was held in Toronto. Jorge Moreno (District - representing ESS) and Julia Rowe (TBU) attended. The theme this year was VOICES of CHANGE- Our Role in Evolving Narratives in Education.

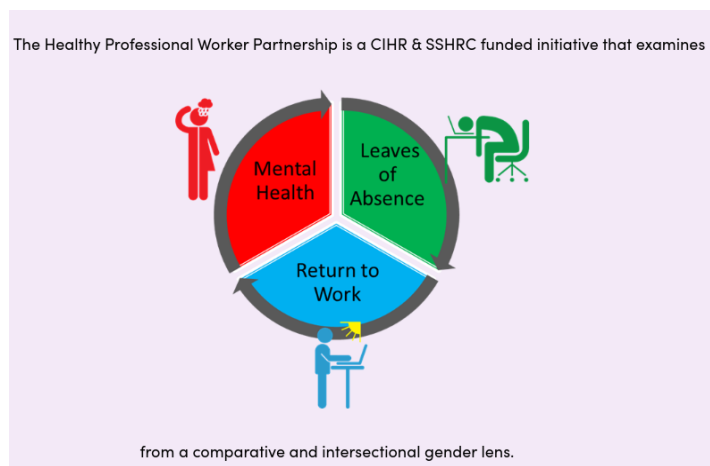
Our first session was a very quick introduction to the Ed Services Officer Handbook. It was a good reminder that we can access provincial funding to provide training for our members and that there are also free workshops that we can bring in and have presented to members. There was brief mention of the classroom resources that are available on the OSSTF website. My report from last year detailed and outlined how to access both the free workshops and the classroom resources. Let me know if you would like me to send that to you again. juliadr76@gmail.com

Protecting Your Mental Health: Exploring Resources for Teachers and Education Workers

This session started by explaining a data driven research project that has led to a website that is aimed to be user friendly and curate some of the 'best' mental health resources. The term 'Presenteeism' was explained as the issue of being present when you really shouldn't be. This fueled some of the research looking at the cycle of Mental Health, Leaves of Absences and Return to Work. You can find links to Kristen Furgeson and Nicole Power's research at healthyprofwork.com.



The Healthy Professional Worker Partnership is a CIHR & SSHRC funded initiative that examines



As a result of their research www.mhcaretoolkit.ca was created and outlines different resources depending on need, location, ability to pay, and specific situations. Health care workers were a focus of the study so there are resources for Health Care Workers as well as Education Workers. One of the driving forces in creating this tool was when talking to administrators predominantly the response to the question “How do you support your workers mental health?” was they have access to the EAP (Employee Assistance Program.) While this is a vital and important program it was felt that was not enough.



Once you select the Healthy Professional Workers Toolkit you will be brought to a page that includes a video on how to use the Toolkit.



It does take a bit of navigating to find all of the resources but they are varied and easily accessible. One tool that was mentioned that was thought to be very practical and useful was the “Get Rid of Stupid Stuff.”

Another take away was a strategy to help you sleep. The strategy was to think about your happy place and concentrate on all the little details of your happy place. There has been research that shows this helps a large percentage of people go to sleep/get back to sleep and that upon waking there are also wellness improvements.

Panel: Voices of Change

The panel included Aishah Salim, Tina Lopes, Troy Maracle and Ruqayyah Alibhai. This was a dynamic question and answer time. Aishah Salim graduated from high school in June of 2023. Aishah had us laugh, come close to tears, shake our heads in disgust of our society but also left us with a sense of hope for the future.

Dr. Vidya Shah: Story telling, Being Storied, (Re)Storying

The concepts described in her keynote address subject line really drove home the idea that we each have our own story to write but many people groups have had their stories written for them for a long time. One of the concepts of (re)Storying is that we don't have to follow the plot path that has been laid out for us by anyone else. Here are two of the quotes that she shared:

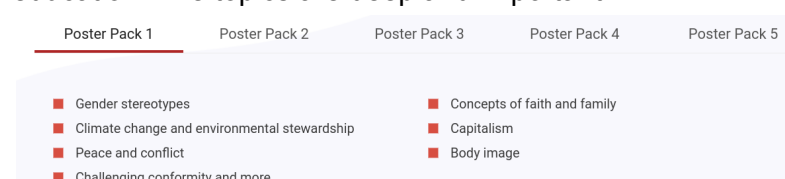
"All that we are is story. From the moment we are born to the time we continue on our spirit journey we are involved in the creation of the story of our time here. It is what we arrive with. It is all we leave behind. We are not the things we accumulate. We are not the things we deem important. We are story. All of us. What comes to matter then is the creation of the best possible story we can while we're here; you, me, us, together. When we can do that and we take the time to share those stories with each other, we get bigger inside, we see each other, we recognize our kinship - we change the world, one story at a time..." -Richard Wagameses, *Medicine Walk*, 2014

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together." - Lilla Watson

Dr. Shah left us with Myths that Perpetuate Racist and Oppressive Schooling Practice and Structures. A few of the Myths include: Charity over Justice, Focussing on Difference with Cause Division/Future Oppression, Dialogue is too Difficult!, Intent Matters More than Impact, Missteps and Mistakes Derail Dialogue, and Anti-oppression is a Noun. The challenge was the four questions she left us with after explaining these myths. 1. Which of these myths have you personally benefited from? 2. Which of these myths have been harmful to you? 3. How do these myths play out in your thinking and your work? 4. How do you challenge them?

Abhi Ahluwalia: Unlearn - Critical Thinking by Design

Abhi reminded us that learning is not always positive. The vision of the Unlearn company (unlearn.com) is 'to inspire people to see the humanity in everyone.' Their goal is to help break down systemic barriers by helping to facilitate meaningful conversations. They have clothing and classroom resources that help provoke thought and discourse. Abhi outlined some conditions for unlearning and they included: Stay engaged, Be okay with discomfort, Speak your truth and Accept non-closure. Unlearn.com has several poster packs that include discussion guides. Each poster has an image that has many features left for interpretation. These poster packs can be used with students from primary grades right through adult education. The topics are deep and important.



Common Threads: Rosemary Judd-Archer

Common Threads is a program in which OSSTF members take part in some research and then create curriculum on critical issues. If you are selected to be a part of a Common Threads team it will require a multi year commitment. It will include international travel. Past projects have included Globalization, Sweatshops and the Clothes We Wear, Tapped Out: The World Water Crisis, and the current project is entitled Human Movement.

The anticipation is that the next team will be selected in April of 2025 so if this type of project appeals to you make sure to start checking for applications early in the 2025 year.

Rosemary also mentioned that they were doing training for workshop presenters. These are the free workshops that are found on the OSSTF website. They were looking for people for two workshops: Addressing Poverty and The Science of Learning. I have been selected to be trained for The Science of Learning workshop on Dec 4 & 5th and will be attending that learning opportunity pending board leave approval.

The training for Workshop Presenter was mentioned in DBU #032. If you are looking for some PD opportunities and further union involvement make sure you access the DBUs through myOSSTF.