

JANE MACLEOD

ARBOS FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION



Jane Macleod was born and educated in Nova Scotia, where she received a bachelor of arts degree. She enrolled in the University of Saskatchewan's two-year teacher education program and began her career in Saskatchewan, teaching with some amazing and legendary

educators during an internship in Saskatoon and again while working in Radisson and Asquith.

Her interest in professional issues, and the influence of mentors such as Heather-jane Robertson, Ruben Richert and Harold Schultz, saw Jane become involved in Federation activities. She spent 14 years with Saskatoon Public Schools as a teacher, vice-principal and principal, during which time she completed a master's degree in education administration.

Jane's passion for professional learning brought her to the Federation as Director of the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit where she worked closely with inspirational educators such as Gwen Dueck, Kit Loewen and Ken Moore, among others.

She embarked on an international career in 2005 as a consulting principal with the International Education Agency in Papua New Guinea. Over four years she worked closely with local principals and staff delivering education in remote communities. During the same period, Jane commenced doctoral studies with the University of Calgary, studying the connection and adaptation required of traditional Papua New Guinean school leaders when working in a western educational environment. She successfully defended her doctorate in 2013.

In 2009, she joined the Abu Dhabi Education Council as a cluster manager, working closely with Emirati teachers and principals for eight years. In addition to supporting school improvement in government schools across Abu Dhabi, Jane was responsible for the recruitment and onboarding of hundreds of English-speaking teachers from all around the world. Her final year in Abu Dhabi was spent working with

Vanderbilt University as the project manager for a principal leadership development program.

Jane rejoined the STF as a member of the research and policy unit upon her return to Saskatoon in 2017, working as senior manager until retirement in 2022.

In retirement she continues to be involved in professional research, educational consulting and strategic planning, school reviews or evaluations, and professional editing.

A CONVERSATION WITH JANE MACLEOD

What inspired you to pursue a career in education?

My mother and grandmother were educators. In fact, in the early 1900s, my grandmother travelled by train from Nova Scotia to Edmonton to teach music at the University of Alberta. More than half a century later, I imagined that I was following in her footsteps when I boarded the train in Amherst, Nova Scotia, heading for Saskatoon.

I always wanted to be a teacher. I recall that as a young child, I would hold chalk in my hand and stand beside the blackboard on the back of my bedroom door and teach my stuffed animals whatever concept I was learning in school at the time.

What do you love most about being a teacher?

I love the energy and the joy of connecting with students, colleagues, teachers and school leaders. I love the process of learning and the sense of possibility and opportunity for both the student and the teacher.

What challenges did you face during the course of your career?

Certainly, the first three years as an itinerant teacher across many schools was a challenge. I still have moments of regret when I think about some of my less-than-stellar moments during those first few years. Since then, I believe that

I've encountered similar professional challenges that teachers deal with today: classroom overload (enrolment and curriculum), conflicting and often unrealistic expectations, lack of resources, ethical dilemmas, questionable leadership decisions, societal pressures, etc. I ask myself, with so much research and lived experience out there, why aren't policy makers and parents demanding the best for their children?

I believe society needs education and an educated public now more than ever. And yet, I see confidence in teachers and public education eroding and minimal effort from decision makers to fight for high-quality public education. To me, the dots do not add up and unless we (the public) speak out and call attention to what's happening, teachers will continue to struggle, students will pay the price and our social fabric of acceptance, exploration, innovation and democracy may disappear.

What career accomplishments are you most proud of?

My personal memory book has a few examples of my 'proud moments.' My work with the women in education committee in the early '80s always brings smiles. I was one of 'those women' who travelled the province leading women's assertiveness training workshops. I'm pretty sure we sparked some lively conversations in staff rooms on Monday mornings following the weekend's training!

I've been involved in three McDowell Research Into Teaching projects and each one has brought not only a sense of accomplishment to the research team, but also a sense of pride knowing that we had contributed to the wider field of action research.

I'm proud of the professional learning SPDU provided to teachers and school administrators across Saskatchewan as well as across Canada. I believe our facilitators modelled a learning process that truly reflected the principles of active adult learning – for teachers, with teachers and by teachers.

Thanks to my University of Calgary doctoral supervisors, and especially Jackie Ottman, I'm proud that I was able to complete my dissertation in a way that reflected and respected the Indigenous identity of the participants rather than presenting them as cultural and stereotypical Melanesian 'others.'

I'm proud of the team I built in Abu Dhabi. Again, the recruiting and on-boarding of so many teacher families from around the world took commitment and long hours of helping hundreds of educators navigate the challenges of being successful in another country.

Finally, I'm proud of the work we did on STF's Relmagine Project. I believe that each of the reports invited people to reconsider traditional assumptions about the purpose and delivery of education in Saskatchewan today.

What advice would you give a new teacher?

Hold your head up. Stand proudly for what you do. You will have many people looking over your shoulder and telling you what to do. Trust your good judgment and your instincts, rely on your knowledge of children and learning and surround yourself with trusted voices. As a good friend once said to me, "Look for those whose eyes light up."

What is one lesson that being a teacher taught you?

I've learned many lessons from my teaching and leading experiences; however, the one that stands out is the value of pausing and taking time to rethink or reframe a situation. There have been times when I was sorely tempted to act or judge in haste and in those instances, I expect I would not have been the professional I aspired to be. I've learned that when I take the time to reflect and reframe a situation, it becomes more manageable and more likely to result in a manner that is respectful to me as well as the profession I love.