Editorial

This second issue of LEARNing Landscapes is meant to build on Volume 1, which focused on student engagement, and turn attention to the topic of leadership theories and practices that is currently receiving considerable attention. The issue eschews leader-centric views of leadership (Higgs & Rowland, 2003) and rather focuses on broad, contextualized and collaborative types of leadership that " … move from passive discourse and involvement to a conscious, deliberate, proactive practice … that will produce socially just outcomes for all children … " (Marshall & Oliva, 2006, p. 27). This focus reminds me of two experiences that have helped me to think about leadership in different ways.

The first of these was a visit to an elementary school that was involved in a study in Nova Scotia conducted by Vibert et al. (1998). The school was old and situated in a poor area of the community, but was rich in the way it reached out to the community and welcomed parents to be present at all times of the day. It was infused with artwork, made mostly by the children, in an effort to give students alternative avenues for representing and voicing their ideas and acceptance of their differences. The pedagogy was constructivist in nature and students of all ages were involved in inquiry, displays and presentations of their work. Vibert et al. (1998) referred to the school-wide curriculum as the "curriculum of life," one that develops a "strong sense of communal identity … represents a conception of curriculum … deeply informed by the lives of the students and deeply connected to the life of the school community … " (p. 130). It was not a watered-down curriculum, or one that was only seemingly student centred, or that avoided facing and dealing with complex problems. Town Hall was how the students helped to govern their school. It provided a forum for confronting and dealing with issues, both sensitive and otherwise, that affected the lives of the students, the staff, and the community. The school leaders were present in all aspects of school life. They led quietly with sensitivity, creativity, and humour, and

in collaboration with teachers, parents and students. There was no doubt that this was an inclusive and engaged school, an example that speaks to the kinds of leadership discussed in this issue where " ... persons engage with others in such a way that … raise[s] one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Marshall & Oliva, 2006, p. 13).

The second was an International Professional Learning Community (IPLC) in which I had the privilege to be involved recently (Stoll et al., 2007). It was comprised of 12 principals from Quebec and 12 head teachers from South West, England and a facilitation group that came from two school boards, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS), the National Council of School Leadership (NCSL), McGill and Exeter University. Each of the leaders was assigned to a heterogeneous "learning pod" made up of approximately four people from both countries. The Quebec members in each group came from the two different school boards. The facilitation group participated in all aspects of the learning. Visits to schools, boards and local education authorities, the ministries and universities were held in both countries. Pod members got to visit schools in their own board, in their local educational authority (LEA) in the case of the UK, and in the other board and LEAs. Group presentations about lessons learned were given by each of the groups at a plenary session held in Montreal and in Exeter. The work extended well beyond the two visits that took place in two different years. Contact was maintained via videoconferencing, e-mail, reflective journals and regular gatherings at home in Quebec and in the UK. In Quebec, the work culminated at the end of year three with a group writing retreat that summarized the experiences. The success of this IPLC seems to be linked to the fact that the group was not mandated to be a learning community, but rather "grew it" over time. Ultimately, it provided a strong network for principals and heads both locally and internationally where they became comfortable about sharing their successes and problems, where they were able to juxtapose differences and learn from these, and where they could take comfort in the fact that leaders from varying contexts face many of the same challenges. They were able to work and share with colleagues who became "critical friends" who supported each other, helped to problem solve and eliminated some of the isolation that many leaders feel. One veteran principal from Quebec summed up the experience as "the richest and most profound learning experience of my professional career" (personal communication, December, 2005). This experience speaks to themes that emerge in the articles about the need for leaders to have support and collaborative communities in which to share, vent, reflect and grow.

The issue begins with commentaries from four eminent leaders. Their contributions provide similar yet distinct lenses from which to think critically about

leadership. These nuanced presentations give a fertile context for the articles that follow.

Professor Emeritus Dr. Myer Horowitz, an outstanding teacher and leader, was a professor in the Faculty of Education at McGill and subsequently the Dean of Education, the Vice-President and President at the University of Alberta. He is renowned for his innovations in the MEET (McGill Elementary Education Teacher) Program and is remembered by graduates across the country and beyond for the impact he has had on teachers and leaders. His oral commentary (with an accompanying written text) outlines his leadership experiences over more than five decades. It highlights the relational and participatory nature of good leadership and the importance of critical self-reflection in all leadership activities. Mr. Richard Pound, Chancellor of McGill University, lawyer, and former Olympic athlete, is recognized as a world leader for his work on the International Olympic Committee. He cogently outlines the links among learning, teaching, and leadership and argues with an interesting repertoire of examples that a true leader is one who has a vision, invites participation, communicates effectively, inspires confidence in others, and most importantly, acts ethically. The third commentary comes from Mr. Leo La France, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education of the Quebec Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). Well known for his exceptional leadership in Quebec education at the school and board levels and beyond, he recently returned from retirement to take on this extremely pivotal position with MELS. His commentary that is offered in both French and English outlines 10 important principles of good leadership that are grounded in his experiences. Finally, Mr. Julian Thompson, a leadership consultant and a former school head and regional director of the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), discusses the challenges faced by educational leaders in the UK. He discusses how succession planning has become a key leadership issue and describes an initiative in the South West that involves the development of leadership teams for building leadership capacity and dealing with leadership succession. His contribution provides helpful ways for thinking about similar leadership challenges being faced in Quebec and elsewhere.

The articles by Crespo, Walcot and Wall all take a look at the merits of distributive or shared/participatory leadership. Crespo eloquently traces the theoretical bases of various leadership perspectives in the 20th Century and links these to conceptions of organizational behavior and four leadership models. He builds a case for shared leadership based on recent research that suggests there is a link, but not a direct causal relationship, between distributive leadership and school effectiveness. He cautions educators against the wholesale adoption of distributive leadership as

yet another new trend without first critically examining and questioning the "profound theories of action that are at the root of learning organizations" and working as a team to create shared leadership rather than mandating it. Walcot reflects on a professional development initiative on process writing with secondary teachers for which she was responsible. She uses a "distributive leadership lens" to retrospectively interrogate why this initiative was not as effective as expected and concludes that teacher engagement in and commitment to change must be truly grounded in authentic decision making. Wall uses his experience as a professor/researcher in physical education and leadership to juxtapose sports expertise with leadership. This metaphor for thinking about leadership is illuminating as he outlines the essential components for leadership as a model comprised of key concepts, essential skills, and basic values that must be aligned with self-awareness and self-regulation. He advocates using a framework such as the one he describes as a heuristic device to help leaders make evident what they know and do not know in order to develop their leadership expertise more fully.

The articles by Fink and Hobbs speak to leadership and connections between policies and practices. Fink discusses in global terms and argues for a move that will make schools "centres of change" and "not blame" and concurs with Marshall and Oliva (2006) when they say, "Sometimes … it means reaching to the deep roots of injustice emanating from competitive market forces, economic policies, political practices and traditions that maintain elite privilege" (p. 5). Fink outlines how policy makers and policy implementers (school leaders and teachers) are often at odds because they view the world from quite different perspectives. To bridge the gap between what he refers to as the "two solitudes," Fink suggests it requires shared goals, responsibility for success, collegiality, continuous improvement, lifelong learning, risk taking, support, mutual respect, openness, celebration and humour, all focused on the main imperative which is student learning. Hobbs uses her personal experiences as a leader at various echelons in the school system over 35 years to tease out five important lessons. These include the need for caring and compassion, trust and risk taking, listening, collaboration and shared governance, and facilitating and mentoring. She makes a strong plea for using the expertise that exists in the large cohort of educational leaders that are currently reaching retirement to mentor and help develop leadership capacity among the future leaders rather than leaving leaders to learn by trial and error as she and others in her generation did.

Aitken, McKenzie-Robblee and Steeves and Bridges advocate building leadership ability and capacity during preservice teacher programs. Aitken describes a small study that she conducted with 22 preservice secondary level teachers in their

last year of study. She suggests that these preservice teachers construed leadership as an integral part of their professional identity, as collaborative and as flourishing in trusting and supportive contexts. She suggests that the kind of competencies teachers are expected to develop in preservice programs in Quebec are congruent with these notions of leadership and support the idea that leadership can be nourished early in teaching. This would help to build leadership capacity in schools, and not necessarily relegate leadership to veteran professionals. McKenzie-Robblee and Steeves use a narrative inquiry to listen carefully to preservice teachers and to show how they develop leadership capacity when they feel they truly belong in their field experiences, when they are able to see and understand the links between practice in their school settings and theoretical work they are involved in at the university, and when they are given the spaces and support to reflect upon and critically examine their work as professionals. Bridges examines her second year of teaching and suggests that teacher leadership is closely linked to successful classroom management and all aspects of good teaching. She provides interesting vignettes to show how she evolved as a teacher leader by connecting with her students and their interests, by involving the students in classroom decision making and by sharing and reflecting upon what transpired. Her story is a poignant one. It will resonate with other new teachers and should provide insights for teacher educators, school leaders, and school board administrators.

Domey, Ridley, Hawkins and Tremblay-Martin are all high school contributors to this issue of LEARNing Landscapes. Their work has been kept together purposely because as such it shows that students have some very important ideas about leadership, that there are good reasons for attending more closely to building student leadership in the early stages of schooling, and that our notions of student leadership need to be more varied and inclusive. Domey describes how she "stepped up" to take on a leadership role in continuing the Black History Club at her secondary school and "pushed back" against obstacles that might have impeded her work and against systemic omissions of identity and history in the curriculum. Ridley discusses how she found herself in a leadership role as an elite athlete and used her skills to connect with others. She learned that being a true leader was not about being a star, but rather meant encouraging herself and others, developing a positive attitude and listening to others to improve. Hawkins' poignant drawings show how stereotypical notions about student leadership need to be examined as they may be limiting leadership opportunities. They suggest that a broader definition of leadership, in this instance leadership as "students helping students," can make school contexts more inclusive. Tremblay-Martin recounts her experience of representing her high school on the 10-day Cape Farewell Arctic voyage during which time she, along with two

other Canadian students and a dozen students from the UK, worked with artists, scientists and educators to implement projects aimed to increase climate awareness that were developed at school prior to the voyage. Through creative and non-print activities she was able to find her voice as a leader and to gain the confidence to continue her leadership work on raising awareness about climate change.

Finally, Adler, Neilsen and Meyer show how the arts can inform leadership. Adler speaking from a business leadership perspective presents a convincing argument for integrating leadership and the arts. She discusses, using many interesting examples, how the time is ripe for developing a leadership of possibility and hope using the arts. Her rationale is that global interconnectedness, the domination of market forces, the complexity of the environment, advances in technology and the yearning for intrinsic signification are radical shifts that beg to rethink leadership directions. She argues that traditionally the arts have been used to bring "emotional truth to established principles" but now envisioning possibility using the arts is at the heart of the types of leadership that will forge the kind of world in which we hope to live. Neilsen's poignant poems show how an art form can mediate our understanding of leadership in different ways, and provide sufficient ambiguity for multiple readings and interpretations while retaining her signature as the artist. Her work attests to the interest that has steadily increased over the last decade in educational circles in using the arts as forms of inquiry and as representational possibilities. Last but not least, Meyer moves the discussion to the classroom context and shows how "theatre as representation" (TAR) can persuasively and engagingly portray an issue or conflict that then can be used successfully as a provocation for discussion and reflection. In this instance, the conflict revolves around varying perspectives of leadership and "shows rather than tells" the complexities of communication providing multiple avenues for further introspection.

It is hoped that the leadership stories, practices and the challenges presented in this issue will ignite conversations that will lead to innovative leadership initiatives to support leaders, develop leadership capacity, attract new leaders and create socially just leadership practices that will benefit all children, families, communities and society.

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