

What's Happening?



April 2019

The NB View: TESOL International Convention

This year several TESL NB members were able to attend the TESOL International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Two members, Erica Thomas and Geoff North, received the *TESL NB Penny Carruthers Memorial PD Grant* to assist in defraying registration expenses. In this issue of "What's Happening", four of this year's attendees share their reflections and learnings with TESL NB colleagues.

Reflection from **Geoff North** of the English Language Programme, University of New Brunswick:

When I was working towards my Bachelor of Education degree, I was always told that, as educators, we are life-long learners. Although I never stopped believing this and always took opportunities to develop and improve myself, the message of this axiom has never rung as completely and undeniably true as it did during my very first TESOL conference.

I had the opportunity to travel to Atlanta this past March with my colleagues from the University of New Brunswick English Language Programme. The amount of learning that took place over my three days was unbelievable. I had notes in two different note pads, on my phone, on scrap pieces of paper. My head was absolutely full. On one hand, it was overwhelming - so much information to sift through and organize when I got home. On the other, it was exciting. I had a lot of new practical ideas to help engage my students. I learned about some tools to help create assessments. I heard stories and anecdotes from other educators that will undoubtedly play a role as I think about, and develop, the various programs and curriculums I am involved in. But most of all, what will stick with me the longest, what reminds me of why I am an educator in the first place, was the general feeling throughout the whole conference. There was curiosity and inspiration. There was passion and unity. There was positivity and hope.

The first keynote speaker on Tuesday, K. David Harrison, reminded me that there are no hopeless cases and that there is still so much to discover in the world. In an effort to preserve endangered languages, Harrison traveled the globe studying languages that are on the verge of extinction. In one case, he and his team helped rescue a language that was down to one lone speaker. In another, he discovered a language that the outside world didn't even know existed. In the words of Harrison, "If we don't know something, we don't care about it."

The last keynote speaker was no less inspiring. Pedro Noguera reminded me of the importance of what we do as educators. The importance of being student advocates. The importance of equity in the classroom. The importance of being curious and breaking down the barriers of complacency, low-expectations, and tradition - the inertia of the status quo.

Despite having fifteen years of experience as an educator, I am still amazed at the wealth of information I received. Although some presenters shared familiar practices and concepts or validated what I was already doing, I left Atlanta with a head full of new knowledge and inspiration. I have a new hope for the world of ESOL and education in general. A new hope for my students. I was reminded that many of the barriers I will be faced with in my career are often self-constructed. That it's better to be a bridge builder than a gate keeper. But most of all, I was pleasantly reminded that there is still so much to learn. There is still so much I don't know. And I am perfectly fine with that.



Geoff, back left, with colleagues from the English Language Programme at UNB, the Second Language Research Institute at UNB, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, on the last day of the convention

Reflection from **Paula Kristmanson**, University of New Brunswick (UNB) Faculty of Education, Second Language Research Institute of Canada at UNB, and TESL Canada President



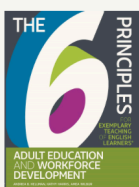
Paula Kristmanson with colleagues Kathy Whynot and Chantal Lafargue

I had the great privilege of being able to attend the TESOL convention in Atlanta, Georgia in mid-March. As those of you who have attended know, this is an extremely busy, well-attended, and lively professional learning opportunity. In addition to being able to participate in a “How to Get Published” session as a journal editor for the Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, I was also able to attend many informative workshops and inspirational talks. In terms of the latter, I was truly moved (and I don't often say

this!) by two of the keynote addresses. In the birthplace of the civil rights movement in the US, it was à propos that both of the speakers tackled head-on challenging topics related to social justice and anti-racism. Annelisse Singh's talk entitled "Everyday Teaching, Everyday Liberation" challenged us to think carefully about equity and inclusion. She said that our starting point should be our shared humanity and that teachers need to model values such as kindness, compassion and forgiveness. On Friday, Pedro Noguera from UCLA brought us a strong and poignant message about empowerment and strength-based approaches to support learners in reaching their potential. The key take-away for me was that resilience is not a matter of "individual grit", but about "community agency". If we want learners to be resilient, we have to build caring, collaborative, and supportive communities around them. Beginning the day with these kinds of uplifting presentations set all of us in good stead for the sessions that followed.

One session I was looking forward was an elaboration of the "6 Principles for exemplary teaching of English learners". As many of the principles already resonated with me, I found the more in-depth look at these ideas to be affirming and informative. Two new books based on the 6 principles were highlighted and both examined these pedagogical concepts from an adult learning lens. I was so pleased to hear that "The 6 Ps: Adult Education and Workplace Development" included descriptions of exemplary adult English teaching contexts from Canada.

The 6 Ps: Adult Education and Workforce Development



The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners®: Adult Education and Workforce Development
Andrea B. Hellman, Kathy Harris, Amea Wilbur, Authors and Deborah J. Short, Series Editor
This second book in The 6 Principles series is aimed at teachers of adult English learners who have general educational goals at their current life stage. These students need English for a job or for career training opportunities; they may be immigrants, migrants, guest workers, or refugees. Most likely, they are at the beginning and intermediate stages of building their functional language skills in English. The teaching applications featured apply to teaching adult learners worldwide.

I was also very pleased to take in two sessions focusing on a current interest area of mine: Intercultural Competence. Among others, Lynne Dias-Rico shared her passion for this topic and spoke about a concept called "intercultural effectiveness" and said that educators who possess this quality are "comfortable in novel and uncertain situations, inspire trust in others, and motivate those they work with to higher levels of performance". She and her colleagues shared their ideas for introducing these ideas to pre-service teachers and providing authentic experiences for them to interact in meaningful ways with diversity.

Participating in both the regular convention and the K-12 day gave me a broad and comprehensive look at innovative ideas, alternative perspectives, and diverse contexts that make up the very complex world of English teaching and learning. I really appreciated the fact that although TESOL focuses on English learning, there is a growing support and valuing of a pluricultural and plurilingual identities and communities. In the words of Deborah Short: "Knowledge of more than one language and culture is advantageous for all students."

As a final note, it was wonderful to have been able to share the TESOL 2019 professional learning experience with valued colleagues from TESL NB!

Reflection from **Erica Thomas** of the English Language Programme, UNB

In March I had the privilege of attending the 2019 TESOL International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. As this was my first time attending a conference of this scale, I was not sure what to expect. However, I knew for certain that it would be an extraordinary opportunity for personal and professional growth. The conference did not disappoint. I was not ready for the phenomenal amount of learning that would come out of this experience.

I have worked at the English Language Programme at the University of New Brunswick for the past 20 years. Currently, my primary teaching focus is in an EAP context. In attending this conference, I was interested in getting ideas for motivating and empowering students, encouraging critical thinking skills and incorporating technology into the classroom. The conference provided numerous sessions on all these topics. One particularly informative session in the Electronic Village featured a variety of fun and interactive programs, apps and websites to support topics covered in class while maintaining the personal interaction that is essential for our students. A session called "Grammar Through Music" also offered some excellent online supports for using music in the Grammar classroom.

Just as our students need motivation, we, as teachers, need motivation. Pedro Noguera, the keynote speaker of "The Power of Language, The Language of Power", was truly inspirational. His words resonated with the audience and reinforced the importance of what we do everyday. The session inspired me to think about what I expect from my students and what my students expect from me. It made me think about how we advocate for our students and what we do to help our students advocate for themselves.

Though I have mentioned only a few of the sessions which I attended, my four days were packed with insightful presentations, not to mention conversations with educators from around the world. I now have a seemingly endless supply of ideas to draw from to create meaningful learning opportunities for my students.

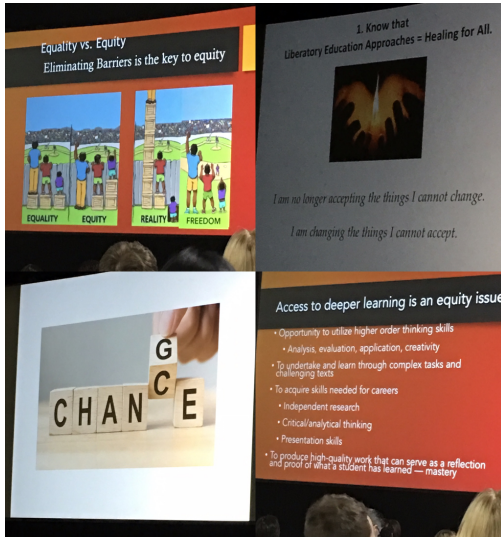
I would also like to take this opportunity to thank TESLNB for the bursary which helped make this trip possible. It was truly a gift to have been able to go the conference and something I hope to do again.

Reflection from **Chantal Lafargue** of the Second Language Research Institute of Canada at UNB, and the Anglophone West School District

Building on my colleagues' reflections, I would like to add that one of the most pleasurable memories at the conference was the dialogue that I was able to have with colleagues from New Brunswick who were in attendance at TESOL 2019. Prior to this experience, I had attended TESOL Boston in 2010, but I was on my own. Participating in a large-scale international convention can sometimes feel overwhelming, when one takes time to reflect on the rich programming, exhibitors' hall, cultural events, and networking opportunities. To illustrate this point: sessions ran from 7:00 am until 5:45pm and the conference program was the size of a telephone book!


For me, the most salient lesson that I learned from this conference is that our experiences in

New Brunswick are echoed across countless other communities in countries throughout the world. I could see 'our' stories in 'their' stories, with similar themes of challenge and success fuelling ESL/EAL/ESOL professionals' drive to provide quality services. Keynote presenters, Pedro Noguera and Annelisse Singh, both pointed to the liberatory aspect of our work, referring to us as "interrupters" of "oppression" and facilitators of "freedom". In their view, language has the power to reduce barriers to engagement in society, which in turn can enhance our agency to enact change, resulting in greater equity for all.



This transformative lens on our role was sobering, yet invigorating, as I learned about the power that we all have as individuals when we operate on principles of equity, especially in these times of global cultural tension and unrest. We are part of a larger movement of like-minded individuals who are providing a counter-balance to a very destabilized world. ESL/EAL/ESOL educators are part of something bigger and I was so glad to find myself in such great company, this time around; it made all the difference.

If you are now inspired to seek out your next learning and/or professional growth opportunity, join TESLNB members at one, or both, of these upcoming New Brunswick learning opportunities:

CASLT joins forces with the Second Language Research Institute of Canada (L2RIC) at the University of New Brunswick to host the **2019 Languages Without Borders (LWB) conference at the Fredericton Convention Centre, May 2–4, 2019.**  facebook.com/CASLT.ACPLS

TESLNB's Summer Learning Day and AGM: June 22nd in Fredericton, NB. Stay tuned to TESLNB's Twitter and website for more information.



Did you SWRL today? Speak, Write, Read, Listen - Every class, every day!