

Popular Podagogy: Episode 8

00:07 Nathan: Hello, and welcome to Popular Podagogy. I am your host Nathan Cheney. This podcast is brought to you by Queen's University, Faculty of Education. We are fortunate enough to be joined today by Caroline Reid. Caroline, how are you doing today?

00:27 Caroline: Good, thanks.

00:28 Nathan: So you just finished your BEd program, so what were some of the highlights of that, and maybe tell us the most interesting thing that you learned during that time?

00:38 Caroline: I think the highlight... Well, for most of us would probably be placements. It was so nice to get into the classroom for the majority of the time, especially because that's where you're gonna do a lot of your learning with students. It's also really hard once you get back into the classroom trying to not just do all those practical things again; you're learning about all the things you could do, and you just wanna get back into the classroom and start doing them, so those placements are really great. My placements in particular, I did my all prac at the NCTR in Winnipeg, so that was a particular highlight for me.

01:07 Nathan: And so can you tell us a little bit more about the experience that you had at the NCTR and what you were doing there?

01:12 Caroline: Yeah, so I am a student in the ATEP program, which is the Aboriginal Teaching Education Program. And so our all pracs are meant to be anything related to that field. So I went out there, it was really great, I worked under Kevin Lamoureux, who's the National Education Lead. He actually came down to Queens and did a keynote, so a lot of people caught that. And I worked mostly on their Imagine in Canada Campaign, which is a great campaign that spans from kindergarten to post-secondary, which collects all kinds of art work or any related pieces that talk about reconciliation.

01:43 Nathan: And how can teachers use that Imagine in Canada resource in their classrooms?

01:47 Caroline: There's so many ways. So we're really hoping next year we can get a bit of a gallery going, that would be a really great. I'm working right now with Queens on creating that. Because really the best way to get it going to your classroom is just to go on to the website, look up all the resources; there's so many resources, and just start talking about reconciliation in the classroom. Orange shirt Day is a great platform to start, and just start thinking about how students wanna express themselves. It's definitely a topic that can span throughout the year, it's not like a unit that you just get done, move on, and then do a match of candidates. Aboriginal Education is integrated through every subject all year round, and that's the best way to include it for sure, and just Imagine in Canada can be one aspect of that, definitely. And I think it also really brings kids together, because they're all actually submitting their pieces, like the process of doing that becomes really a global community, because everyone's sort of bringing, coming together and doing it all in a similar way, which is really interesting.

02:45 Nathan: So this is obviously a very hot topic in education right now, and it will continue to be as we move forward. So for some of the people that might still be a little bit skeptical about integrating First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies into their curriculum and education, what are some of the benefits, and what are some of the reasons that we should be doing this?

Popular Pedagogy: Episode 8

03:05 Caroline: So I usually, when answering this question, think about myself personally. I was 18 years old, and had received absolutely no education. I had no idea what aboriginal meant. I had no idea, I went to Trent university and my world blew part. They taught me so much, and I got very frustrated that I had not yet learned it, and I sort of lost the sense of Canadian identity very quickly and didn't really understand who I was in my own country and what that meant. And so I'm... Personally I realized the importance of education, then you get in with these students, and being with the students made me so hopeful, because I had grade threes that had a very well... Grasped understanding of all the issues, and that made me really, really happy. And also I think it comes down to... I think it comes down to a hot topic so often because there's a lot of, I guess, issues for lack of a better word. There's a lot of dark history, there's a lot of touchy subjects, you can get into very big concepts for little kids. And what I learned in the ATEP program is, instead of looking at it that way, just look at it as sharing a culture with anyone else.

04:21 Caroline: So just you wouldn't hesitate to ever bring in, how many classrooms do the things where they celebrate different holidays at months of the year to consider global holidays. People wanna explore other cultures, so I think because it has such a dark, dark history, and obviously that needs to be explored at one point, teachers shy away from it. But really it just comes down to sharing a culture.

04:45 Nathan: Yeah, I remember when I was in high school and the first time I had learned about residential schools and the impact that that had had, and it was actually one of the first inquiry-based classrooms. It was a social or a history class room at the time. And I remember I was doing independent research on this, and I was looking into it, and I didn't actually believe that it was a part of Canada. I was so surprised to actually see it. And even now when I go to workshops or conferences or things where we're touching on Aboriginal education and residential schooling, and everything that had happened in the process of moving towards reconciliation, you can still see that same feeling that I had on my face when I was in grade 10 and 11, when I was looking into these subjects on people who are 50 and 60 years old, and just didn't understand that this was even going on within their lifetime. And so I think it's a really interesting subject to continue to approach and to explore and to integrate into our curriculum that way.

05:47 Caroline: And I think one thing that's really important too, is that teachers can only teach what they are taught to teach. And so I think it's a very unreal expectation to send teachers out to do this incredibly, well done, integrated, indigenous education that is appropriate and culturally relevant, and making sure it's in keeping with all traditions, and making sure they're following all the guidelines they should without giving them that education. So, I get personally very frustrated when I'm in the ATEP program, so I feel I got that education, but there were only about 20 of us. And so I get really frustrated when I hear some of my teacher friends getting hammered down 'cause they're not including it, and I was like, "Well, how... They aren't required to take anything that's teaching them how to do that?" So they really need to make sure, and I think Queens is doing a really great job with the ATEP program, but the reality is, is you are only... We're not just expected to go teach math without being taught how to teach math, so it's something that needs to be taught to teacher candidates.

06:49 Nathan: So how do you think... How would you propose if you're already a teacher that you would go and get this knowledge because a lot of teachers that are already out there are having to all of a sudden, and not all of a sudden we knew this was on the way down the pipeline, but

Popular Pedagogy: Episode 8

integrating it into the curriculum is a huge push in education so how do you expect those teachers to do it now?

07:10 Caroline: I would say both professional development on a group and personal level. So I've seen some incredible professional development when they bring in speakers, elders, knowledge keepers, and they share that with teachers and that's a really, I think, an amazing use of a professional development day. I think we've all seen those days be used really, really well, and I think that's a really a great way to use them. And then I would say just personally take the time if you're... I think I kinda compare it to, if you're a teacher and you get a new grade, the first thing you're gonna go out and do is look at all the ways that you can teach that grade in math or in English, and you find the resources. And the resources are out there for indigenous education, so go to the NCTR list and you can look at it by age, you can really find anything you want. People... I have never once asked the help of an indigenous leader or an indigenous peer and asked for their help and not been welcomed with open arms and try to help me with any way I could. So network, reach out to your colleagues, and we always said on the ATEP program, there's 20 of us, so there's probably one of us in each section that could help one of our colleagues and that was something we all tried to do all the time. So I just think the answer really is try, if you can go out and try you can do it.

08:27 Nathan: Okay. Now one of the things that can be a challenge for these teachers is the fact that this is a very sensitive subject and it is very difficult especially if you have students in your class or individuals that this has touched upon. And I think that brings up a lot of fear in teachers because they don't want to make it so that it's not a welcome and inclusive environment for everybody, and that it is a very sensitive subject to touch upon. And I know that when I was teaching this was a big debate in our school because we had a lot of teachers who didn't wanna talk about reconciliation or integrate First Nations information into the younger grades because they were worried that it would be too graphic and too difficult on them. And I was of the mind where I thought that there was a way that you could teach it but teach it in a way that is still respectful and dignified isn't the word but using age-appropriate level of knowledge in there. So how would you wade through that with teachers to make it so that they were able to teach it throughout all the grades, so that their understanding is done throughout the school and they're not in my position where they're not learning about it until they're 16 or 17 years old.

09:44 Caroline: Yeah, so ATEP program, Lyndsey, our professor there, she's incredible and she just showed us so many resources. So when you're talking about really young kids, there is some amazing story books written that start to just get into the concept. So the reality is, yes, it's a very dark history and there's always going to be that hanging over the teachers head in terms of that potentially might come up. So the first thing I would say is when getting into this you need to maybe make sure how to check your classroom community, make sure you have open dialogue with your students, the parents, guardians to make sure that everyone around. I also think one of my personal tactics is if you can, bring in an elder, so if something comes up or you have a student who's feeling particularly triggered they have someone else in the room to turn to because you can't obviously leave all your students behind to go help a student. So if you had that extra pair of hands in your classroom.

10:41 Caroline: And then I think the other thing to always remember is that when dealing with residential school you're gonna let out the information that's appropriate to the grade level of the students you're with. So we talk a lot about reconciliation and people then obviously need to know

Popular Pedagogy: Episode 8

the history to reconcile, but also you can put this, with Imagine in Canada for example, you can put this idea in their head so, yes, we have this history but also how are we moving forward? What is the takeaway? What is the positive? How are you going to take this history and you're going to move it into reconciliation which is actually a very... Reconciliation is incredibly powerful and positive and really amazing thing, and it's something I learned at NCTR it's a gift that indigenous people have given us to take this time and use it and find a way to heal our history. And so I think when you consider it in that grand and beautiful thing that it is, you can make it a very accessible thing in your classroom, and you just need to keep everything age-appropriate for lack of a better word. You're gonna release the information that you feel is appropriate for the classroom you have, and you also just need to know your classroom. Every demographic is gonna be different and take that information differently, so you just really need to know your students.

12:08 Nathan: Okay, we're gonna transition a little bit here. So you've just graduated from your BEd program, and you are moving to Sweden to teach internationally. So can you take us a little bit through about how you made that decision and why you decided to go overseas?

12:26 Caroline: Yeah, so I think I was sort of toying with going right into a master's, and I decided I needed to not be a student for a little bit and take a mind break.

12:36 Nathan: Which is a reasonable feeling after a certain amount of schooling, it gets to that point for sure.

12:40 Caroline: Yeah, so I decided to teach and because I didn't know where in Canada I wanted to end up, and I didn't know... I really wanted to work in the field of indigenous education so I didn't know where that was gonna take me right away, and I decided just to take a little bit of time and I thought, "Well, I'll go abroad then because there's really no point of me setting up shop somewhere in Canada and start to build seniority when I didn't have any idea what I wanted that to like. So I decided to go abroad, I did do TORF. I actually... It's funny, though. I ended up with the Sweden...

13:12 Nathan: For people out there that don't know what TORF is, can you just give them a little bit of explanation.

13:15 Caroline: Yeah. So it's Teachers' Overseas Recruitment Fair. It happens, I think, it was January. And it's amazing, it's so efficient and well run. It's the most streamlined process I've ever seen to get a job, but I actually... And I got a few offers from there, but I actually went back and accepted an offer from the school board in Sweden that actually came to the Options Career Fair which happens earlier in the year that Queens also runs. And so that's where I came across them. And that's how I accepted it.

13:42 Nathan: And why did you decide on Sweden? What was the reasoning behind that?

13:46 Caroline: I was sort of torn about where in the world I wanted to go, but I'd ended up, I decided on Europe because I have previously lived in Europe and I knew that that was something I would be able to handle. I didn't wanna be that person that returns at Christmas or something because I couldn't quite handle the culture switch. So I knew I could do that and Sweden was a great offer, and it's actually known to be one of the best education systems, health care systems in the world. And so I thought, why not start at the best?

Popular Pedagogy: Episode 8

14:15 Nathan: Yeah. And are you doing anything to prepare for your experience over there?

14:19 Caroline: Yeah. So I'm teaching math, which is obviously when you're primary, junior, you're specialized in all areas.

14:26 Nathan: Right.

14:26 Caroline: But I didn't have a particular math background. So I've been working a lot on... We use a system called Singapore Math, which is becoming very widely used. It's manipulative-based and very inquiry-based. And so I've been kind of trying to do the best I can in getting familiar with that. They're actually sending me to a course once I am in Sweden. So that will be a little bit easier once I'm there, but... And then just obviously the personal getting together, finding a place, and figuring out how I'm going to bank, and how I'm going to do everything I need to do in my life. So just little things.

14:58 Nathan: And have you been reviewing the Swedish curriculum and identifying the ways that it's similar and different and how you're gonna prepare your resources for that?

15:05 Caroline: Yeah, it's interesting. It's so funny how every place you're expected to sort of go in to find Swedish curriculum or for the area just the way we do it here. It is a little different because they run their schools so different from each other. So I'm in a, what's called an IES. It's the board there and it's an international school, that's a public option. And so they run their schooling completely differently than, say, another public option. So it's not as cut and dry, it's just finding the Ontario curriculum. So actually, the easiest way for me to review it has been to use that Singapore Math because it's, in many ways, their math curriculum.

15:43 Nathan: Okay.

15:43 Caroline: So yeah. That's actually been sort of my guidelines which is nice because it's so universal.

15:47 Nathan: And one of the benefits of teaching internationally is that you actually get to see a little bit more of the world and do a little bit more. So what are some of your goals outside of teaching that you would hope to achieve being international that way?

16:01 Caroline: So my main goal is just deciding, first of all, I'm definitely a teacher right now. It's a little torn if I'm gonna spend 35 years in the classroom, that's sort of where I'm at. So my main goal is just to get into a classroom and decide if I love it or not. I've loved it, up until this point, being in placements but there's so much I wanna do, and I'm not sure it's always gonna be in the classroom. I think there's so many amazing ways to use an education degree and that's something that I've sort of learned this year at Queens. And so, my first goal was just to make sure I love the classroom and that's what I wanna do.

16:29 Nathan: Yeah.

16:30 Caroline: And then outside of that, I like the idea of seeing how different system works. I like the idea of already right off the bat, they have this different form with parents that you get a cohort of 15 students, and even though you don't teach them all subjects, if a parent wants to hear

Popular Podagogy: Episode 8

about how they're doing, their students are doing in English, they actually contact me. I go to their English teacher and then I report back. So you build this incredibly strong relationship with the parents and your students, and that's a very different model than here. So then maybe when I get back, I'll really value the relationship I build within my classroom community.

17:04 Nathan: Right.

17:04 Caroline: So just of sort of checking... I've been in the Ontario school system my whole life, done all my placements in Ontario school system. And then if I went off and taught, that's a very cozy way and I was surprised to see the difference when I was in Winnipeg, between Manitoba schools and here. So I just love that idea. Education, obviously, is so universal, but it's also so different. So I really wanna see those differences.

17:26 Nathan: Well, I can relate to that on two levels 'cause one, I was in the Ontario education system, did my teachers college or my Bachelor of Education here and then went to Alberta. And even though it was within Canada, it was a complete culture shock in the way that I had to learn an entirely new curriculum. I had students who had different experiences throughout their education system the entire way up. And then similar to what you've talked about earlier, you're finding a place, you're figuring out how you're gonna get all your stuff there, you're trying to identify what you need to do when you get there. And so, it's a big transition, especially as a first-year teacher when you're trying to also figure out what it is to be a teacher and what to do.

18:08 Nathan: But it comes pretty naturally and you'll realize that the first few months will somehow fly by, but also go really slowly at the exact same time. And then also, I obviously am no longer teaching and I had the experience in the classroom and I love teaching. So similar to what you said, but there are a lot of things for what you can do with an education degree. And I guess, I would say that I'm a testament to that as well because I'm now doing different things for the Faculty of Education and that's interesting. And I know there's a lot of different ways that you can use your education degree, and I see that all the time when I'm meeting people at conferences and doing other things and seeing people who have created educational apps or resources or companies, and it's a really interesting way of looking at the education field in a different light. And so I think that's a really good perspective that you have on that already. Well, I wish you luck internationally there. We're gonna take a quick break, but we'll be right back with our classroom confession.

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19:17 Nathan: Are you an occasional teacher looking to improve your job prospects? Are you an experienced teacher trying to reach the next pay scale? Are you interested in improving your overall teaching practice? Queens continuing teacher education has you covered. With easy to access online courses, you can log on to your course from anywhere you have access to the internet. Courses offered by CTE range from special education, to technological education, to safe and accepting schools. Queen's CTE Courses work with your schedule, have supportive expert instructors that want to help you to succeed. Registration is fast and easy with no commitment to pay until the Friday before the course starts. What are you waiting for? Visit coursesforteachers.ca for more information or to sign up today. That's coursesforteachers.ca.

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Popular Podagogy: Episode 8

20:15 Nathan: And welcome back to Popular Podogogy. We are now in our favorite segment, which is the classroom confession segment. For those of you that are tuning in for the first time, this is an opportunity for teachers to tell a story that is either something that happened to them while teaching, or something that happened to them as a student, or something that happened with their students that is funny, and other teachers can relate to so that we all recognize that funny things happen in the classroom, and not everything is always perfect. So, Caroline, do you have a classroom confession for today?

20:53 Caroline: I do. I was thinking about it, and right at my first placement when you're sort of still on edge and everything's new. I was in a classroom with a supply teacher, who was a recent grad. So, two very young teachers. And one of my students, he was always sort of, I guess, class clown for the typical term, and he had hit his head. Someone had thrown a ball and hit his head. And so if you go into this immediate head injury thing. And then I looked, and he was unconscious. And so I was obviously super panicked. Supply teacher, teacher candidate, not an ideal scenario. And so I go running down the hall. And I get the vice principal. And I was like, I told them what happened, obviously head injury. She comes rushing. Everyone's freaking out. They phone the parents. Very luckily, this is a neighborhood school. So, the dad's in about two-minute walking distance. So, the dad comes running in. And you know at this point, we've done all the checks. He's breathing, but he's still not awake. And we have an ambulance coming, but the fire truck got there first. There's two fire trucks lit up. The classrooms are right at the back door. So, firefighters are coming in. This kid's unconscious. I'm trying to keep the rest of the students back. The bells ringing. So, everyone's trying to run everywhere. And then the dad walks in and leans down and tickles the kid, and the kid wakes up.

[chuckle]

22:13 Nathan: So, we are now with firefighters. And just everyone is fully on deck ready to go. First aide 'cause everyone around this kid's just laughing. And now we're just standing in the room with firefighters.

[chuckle]

22:27 Caroline: So, yes. That was my first main head injury, which turned out to be nothing.

22:33 Nathan: Well, on the plus side, it wasn't just you. It was the supply teacher and the vice principal were all kind of fooled by the same trick, which it's always good to have some backup when you're being conned by an eight year old, but yeah. No, that's a good classroom confession. And I hope that that student doesn't fall asleep in class anymore. And we can go from there. Before we go, do you have anything that you want to say or promote before we leave you today?

23:04 Caroline: Yeah, so just say we talked a lot about indigenous education today that if you go to the NCTR list, and you hit on education, and you hit resources, there is a million and one resources there. And they're all incredible. And they're spanned from primary and junior, secondary. And then they even have a section for adult education. So if you're just a teacher and you wanna educate yourself, there's a never ending supply of resources there. I have not even cracked the surface on them. And they're all amazing. And they've all have been vetted. So, you know, we talked a lot today about teachers, making sure they do the proper thing. These have all been vetted. You can't go wrong with any of these.

Popular Podagogy: Episode 8

23:38 Nathan: Well, thank you for sharing that. And thank you for coming on today. We really appreciate it. And that'll do it for another episode of Popular Podagogy. If you like what you hear, make sure that you subscribe on Apple, Google Play, or Stitcher, or you can check us out on the Faculty of Education, or CFRC website at Queen's University. We'll see you next time.

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