Our Multilingual Village Symposium

and

Storybooks Canada Public Launch

November 2, 2018

Organized by Dr. Janet Jamieson (ECPS/CECER) & Dr. Bonny Norton (LLED)

Report

Asma Afreen, Bonny Norton, and Janet Jamieson
The symposium on “Our multilingual village: Supporting refugee children and families in BC” and the public launch of Storybooks Canada were held on November 2, 2018, at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. UBC is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓̓əm (Musqueam) people. This event gathered an interdisciplinary group of professionals, including academics, researchers, administrators, practitioners, and policy-makers working to support refugee and immigrant children and families in BC. This report summarizes and documents the important conversations of the refugee symposium (35 participants) and the public launch (over 100 participants) to promote ongoing discussion and connection. It is hoped that this report will be useful for scholars, educators, students, researchers, and policymakers interested in supporting immigrant and refugee children and families. Contact information for the professionals who were present at the symposium has been included in the report.

About the Organizers

Dr. Janet Jamieson is a Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education at UBC, where she also serves as Director of the Center for Early Childhood Education and Research and Co-Director of the Concentration in Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Her research addresses the social-emotional welfare of deaf and hard of hearing children, their parents, and teachers, as well as the transition to school for children with special needs. Her website is ecps.educ.ubc.ca/person/janet-jamieson/.

Dr. Bonny Norton, FRSC, is a Professor and Distinguished University Scholar in the Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC. Her research addresses identity, multilingual literacy, and open technology across global sites. She is the Project Lead of Storybooks Canada (storybookscanada.ca) and Research Advisor of Indigenous Storybooks (indigenousstorybooks.ca) and the African Storybook (africanstorybook.org). Her website is faculty.educ.ubc.ca/norton/.

Sponsors

The University of British Columbia
Department of Language & Literacy Education
Department of Educational & Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Center for Early Childhood Education and Research
UBC Language Sciences Initiative
UBC Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies
UBC Community University Engagement Support
## Table of Contents

### Symposium

**Our Multilingual Village: Supporting Refugee Children and Families in BC**  4

**Participants’ Names and Contact Information**  5

**Panel 1: Organizations that Support Refugee Families**  6
- Mothers Matter Centre (formerly HIPPY Canada)  6
- Umoja Operation Compassion Society  7
- Pacific Immigrant Resources Society  8
- MOSAIC  9

**Panel 2: Transitioning to Schools: The Perspective of School Districts**  11
- Vancouver School Board  11
- Surrey School District  13
- Coquitlam School District  14

**Panel 3: Transitioning to Schools: The Perspective of Provincial Policy Makers**  15
- Ministry of Education  15
- Ministry of Children and Family Development  16

**Continuing Remarks**  17

### Public Launch

**Storybooks Canada: Local and Global**  18

**Keynote Panel: Storybooks Canada: Local and Global**  20
- Navigating the Storybooks Canada Website  21
- Downloading Storybooks Canada Stories and Using them in the Classroom  23
- Storybooks Canada and African Languages  24
- Storybooks Canada and Open Source  25
- Introducing Indigenous Storybooks  27
- Storybooks Canada and Ubuntu  28
- Closing  29
- Free digital publications  30
Symposium
Our Multilingual Village:
Supporting Refugee Children and Families in BC

Delegates were warmly welcomed to the symposium with opening remarks from its organizers, Dr. Janet Jamieson and Dr. Bonny Norton. The organizers highlighted the need for collaboration and conversations among professionals working to support refugee children and families in BC. Dr. Jamieson underscored that government and organizations need to work together to provide refugee families with the needed conditions for their resettlement and adaptation into Canadian society. This involves restructuring budget and actions oriented to support refugee families. Dr. Norton discussed important challenges refugee families encounter while integrating into Canadian society. She noted that when immigrants and refugees come to Canada, many do not speak the official languages of English and French. Hence, learning an official language becomes a priority not only for children but also for parents. Many come with young children and search for jobs, so they navigate multiple challenges. Therefore, there is urgency in reaching out to these families, and a collective conversation among community agencies, schools, and government is much needed to support refugee children and parents.

Over the course of the symposium, 12 speakers shared their perspectives on supporting and empowering refugees to integrate into an inclusive Canadian society. This event opened up much-needed space for dialogue, debate and critical engagement among participants, all interested in supporting refugee children and families in BC. This symposium had a series of three panel presentations. The first panel focused on community organizations and their initiatives to support refugee families; the second panel shed light on the perspectives of school districts on transitioning to school; and the third panel discussed the perspectives of provincial policy-makers on different policies related to the needs of refugee families and children.
Participants’ Names and Contact Information

**Faculty from UBC:**
- Dr. Marlene Asselin — marlene.asselin@ubc.ca
- Dr. Monique Bournot-Trites — monique.bournot-trites@ubc.ca
- Dr. Margaret Early — margaret.early@ubc.ca
- Dr. Margot Filipenko — margot.filipenko@ubc.ca
- Dr. Laurie Ford — laurie.ford@ubc.ca
- Dr. Janet Jamieson — janet.jamieson@ubc.ca
- Dr. Maureen Kendrick — maureen.kendrick@ubc.ca
- Dr. Mari Pighini — mari.pighini@ubc.ca
- Dr. Bonny Norton — bonny.norton@ubc.ca
- Dr. Ingrid Schechter — ingridschechter@yahoo.com
- Dr. Meike Wernicke — meike.wernicke@ubc.ca

**From school districts:**
- Caroline Davidson (Coquitlam School District) — cdavidson@sd43.bc.ca
- Lisa Dubé (Coquitlam School District) — LiDube@sd43.bc.ca
- Caroline Lai (Surrey School District) — lai_c@surreyschools.ca
- Candy Marvel (Surrey School District) — marvel_c@surreyschools.ca
- Le Van Chu (Vancouver School Board) — lvchu@vsb.bc.ca
- Ann Stewart Hunter (Vancouver School Board) — ashunter@vsb.bc.ca
- Jerry Wu (Vancouver School Board) — jcwu@vsb.bc.ca

**From community-based organizations:**
- Wazi Dlamini-Kapenda (Mothers Matter Centre) — wkapenda@hippycanada.ca
- Zelly Teferra (MOSAIC) — zteferra@mosaicbc.org
- Sung Sook Woo (MOSAIC) — swoop@mosaicbc.com
- Diana Jeffries (Pacific Immigrant Resources Society) — djeffries@pirs.bc.ca
- Martha Scully (Pacific Immigrant Resources Society) — mscully@pirs.bc.ca
- Amos Kambere (Umoja) — director@umojaoperation.ca

**From the Ministry of Education** (Inclusive Education):
- Martin Breuhan — Martin.Breuhan@gov.bc.ca

**From the Ministry of Children and Family Development** (Richmond/Vancouver Children & Youth with Special Needs; Early Child Development):
- David Phillips — David.Phillips@gov.bc.ca

**Graduate students from UBC:**
- Asma Afreen — PhD Student, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Esther Arquillano — MA student, Early Childhood Education Program
- Claudia Diaz-Diaz — PhD Candidate, Department of Educational Studies
- Liam Doherty — PhD Candidate, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Jonathan Feitosa — MA Student, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Michelle Gilman — PhD Candidate, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Amir Michalovich — PhD Student, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Nasim Peikazadi — PhD Candidate, Department of Educational Studies
- Monica Shank Lauwo — PhD Student, Department of Language and Literacy Education

Photographer: Tiffany Cooper: www.tiffanycooperphoto.com
PANEL 1: Organizations that Support Refugee Families

Amos Kambere, Wazi Dlamini-Kapenda, Sung Sook Woo, Ana Machado, Diana Jeffries and Zelly Teferra

Speakers (in order of presentation):

Wazi Dlamini-Kapenda Director of Multicultural Programs, Mothers Matter Centre (formerly HIPPY Canada)

Amos Kambere Executive Director, Umoja Operation Compassion Society

Diana Jeffries Education and Training Manager, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society

Ana Machado Children’s Program Coordinator, Pacific Immigrant Resources Society

Zelly Teferra Manager, Family Center, MOSAIC, Burnaby Centre for Immigrants

Sung Sook Woo Family Settlement Support Worker, Newcomers’ Centre for Children and Families, Children and Family Programs, MOSAIC

Chair: Dr. Laurie Ford Associate Professor, Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education (ECPS), UBC

Mothers Matter Centre (Formerly HIPPY Canada)

The Mothers Matter Centre (mothersmattercentre.ca) is a not-for-profit, registered charity incorporated in October 2001. This Centre was previously known as the Home Instruction Program for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Canada. It is a virtual, national consortium of organizations dedicated to serving socially
isolated and low-economic status mothers and their families using its proven mother-to-mother approach. There are two branches led by program directors: Aboriginal HIPPY in Canada and Multicultural HIPPY in Canada. Wazi Dlamini-Kapenda, who is the Director of Multicultural Programs at Mothers Matter/HIPPY, discussed the mission, vision, and different programs of the Mothers Matter Centre. She illustrated how HIPPY strengthens families and communities by empowering mothers to actively participate in Canadian society and prepare their children for success in school and life.

Ms. Dlamini-Kapenda explained that HIPPY is the foundational program of the Mothers Matter Centre. It was developed in Israel some 50 years ago, and today is offered in nine countries around the world. Since its debut in Canada, the HIPPY program has expanded to 30 sites in eight provinces and has supported 14,000 families. She further stated that HIPPY is based on the principle of the mother as the first and most important teacher of her child, and focuses on helping Canadian at-risk mothers with children aged 3, 4, and 5 years who, due to social isolation, poverty, language, or other cultural issues, struggle to prepare their children for school. Home visitors reach out to these at-risk mothers in weekly home visits to deliver child-centered curriculum activities to their children, using role-play as a method of teaching. Activities are divided into five domains (literacy, math, science, motor, and language) in which children develop some foundational skills before they enter school. Mothers who had previously been mothers in the program are hired and trained as Home Visitors.

Ms. Dlamini-Kapenda emphasized that HIPPY is an evidence-based program, and it has 45 years of research evidence attesting to its effectiveness in supporting the development of a firm foundation of growth. It is an overall goal that by the end of the program, HIPPY mothers will have become comfortable communicating with teachers and other community resources and will feel confident in their ability to teach their child. Evidence has indicated that children who have spent at least one year in the HIPPY program outscore their peers on reading, math, and language arts achievement tests, have higher classroom grades and have better classroom behaviour ratings from their teachers through to grade 6. In addition, HIPPY children perform better on standardized reading tests and are more likely than non-HIPPY children to perform at or above their age level on standardized vocabulary tests.

**Umoja Operation Compassion Society**

Umoja Operation Compassion Society of British Columbia ([umojaoperation.ca](umojaoperation.ca)) is a charitable organization formed in 2002 to work with newcomer immigrants and refugees living in Surrey, BC. It seeks to empower immigrants and refugees to successfully integrate into an inclusive
Canadian society. Internationally, it supports initiatives to improve the quality of life in global communities.

At the symposium, Mr. Amos Kambere, the Executive Director of Umoja, noted that Umoja provides a variety of culturally sensitive programs to help newcomers to Canada who struggle to integrate due to obstacles such as poverty, the challenge of learning a new language, unemployment, culture shock, isolation and feelings of hopelessness. He focused on an Umoja program called “First Steps: Hand in Hand”, run in collaboration with DIVERSEcity Community Resource Society and Options Community Service. The First Steps program also partnered with the Surrey School District three years ago. First Steps is an early childhood development-focused settlement and developmental support program for young refugee children aged 0-6 years and their caregivers, to enable them to gradually transition into mainstream services and resources. Mr. Kambere clarified that its main component focuses on kindergarten readiness. Due to the suffering refugee families previously experienced, both parents and children struggle to integrate into a new culture. Parents are not aware of the expectations of schools and how to best support their children entering kindergarten. Hence, the First Steps program was developed to help families with children entering kindergarten in September. Parents and children can join this program in July, which runs for two weeks.

Mr. Kambere noted that the transition program provides parenting support, a parent-child drop-in, Parent Child Mother Goose, orientation to parenting in the Canadian context, mental wellness information, etc. All activities revolve around attachment, bonding, play, and social interaction. Parents attend informational sessions in their first languages. Children are able to participate in a kindergarten class and experience what school in September will be like for them. The final day of Kindergarten Readiness is to celebrate the kindergartners who attended and completed the program. Each graduate is provided with a backpack full of school supplies and a certificate.

**Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS)**

Pacific Immigrant Resources Society ([pirs.bc.ca](http://pirs.bc.ca)) is a community-based, non-profit organization that has served immigrant and refugee women and their young children since 1975. It reaches out to vulnerable immigrants and refugees by means of programs designed to help women progress in and contribute to Canadian society. PIRS is a publicly funded charity, and recently Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has also become one the key funders of PIRS. It also works in partnership with community organizations such as Umoja, MOSAIC, Vancouver Community College, etc. and with schools that allow PIRS to use their classroom.
PIRS provides several early childhood education programs, English language learning programs for immigrant and refugee women, and women’s development programs.

Ms. Diana Jeffries, who is the PIRS Education and Training Manager, and Ana Machado, who is the PIRS Children’s Program Coordinator, shared how PIRS supports refugee women and their children who have experienced trauma in the settlement journey. Ms. Jeffries focused on EAL (English as an additional language) classes for women. She noted that these EAL classes are unique because they allow children under 18 months in the classroom. These classes not only focus on teaching English but also encourage the immigrant and refugee women to socialize and connect with other women in the community. The teachers in these programs are all trauma-informed. Ms. Jeffries explained that PIRS offers various levels of English instruction for immigrant and refugee women. Their classes focus on connecting with students’ communities, building support systems, and English language acquisition. The curriculum covers health, understanding government, community building, and social isolation. PIRS programs are community-based, offered in partnership with school boards, community centers, and Neighbourhood Houses in Vancouver and Burnaby. All of their daytime classes include free child minding, which contributes to a positive and engaging environment.

Ms. Machado discussed the Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs of PIRS. She noted that their early childhood educators always try to ensure physically and emotionally safe spaces for children participating in the programs. Children participate in various activities including circle time; story time; learning rhymes, shapes and colours; and pre-school science activities (learning about nature, seasons, etc.). The goals of the ECE programs are to introduce children to what is often their first group experience, while being in a supportive and culturally appropriate environment. The goals are to help the children feel comfortable being away from their parents and adults from outside the immediate family; to promote their sense of self-esteem and pride in their cultural heritage; to encourage them to learn how to make choices and to share and cooperate with other children; to provide them with opportunities to develop and thrive in the following areas: Social/Emotional, Cognitive, Physical, Language and Spiritual Development; and to prepare preschoolers for successful entry into kindergarten.

MOSAIC
MOSAIC (mosaicbc.org) is a registered charity serving immigrant, refugee, migrant and mainstream communities in Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley as well as throughout the province of BC and overseas via online programs. It delivers services and engages in community building and advocacy to facilitate meaningful participation of immigrants and
refugees in Canadian society. MOSAIC provides settlement assistance, English language training, employment programs, interpretation and translation services, counselling services, and community outreach for families and individuals, including children, youth and seniors.

Ms. Zelly Teferra, who is the Manager of the Family Centre at MOSAIC, Burnaby Centre for Immigrants, shared her experience of working at the Family Centre. She explained that the Family Centre was established in 2009, providing early childhood and settlement services to refugee parents and their children aged 0-6 years. The Family Centre provides information and guidance to refugee families with young children, to support them in learning more about parenting in Canada, and to connect them to family and community resources. In this program, children have the opportunity to participate in a variety of play-based learning activities, listen to stories, and have a healthy snack and lunch. This program encourages parents to learn and play with their children, as well as to receive counselling from local community partners such as the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) and Fraser Health Authority. Programs that are available in the Family Centre are Early Learning Orientation Programs (parent-participant program), Adapted Preschool Program, Newcomers' Group (parenting sessions), Teaching Kitchen, Volunteer Program, Outreach Program, and Home Visiting.

Ms. Sung Sook Woo, who is a Family Settlement Support Worker at Newcomers’ Centre for Children and Families at MOSAIC, discussed the Family Literacy Program and Love My Baby Program. The Family Literacy Program is an interactive literacy program that encourages mothers to interact with their children in their home languages. The Love My Baby Program encourages healthy relationships between moms and their babies aged birth-1 year. It helps mothers understand babies’ social and emotional development, and also addresses mothers’ questions and concerns. MOSAIC also provides a Family Play Day program that supports parents in building healthy relationships with their children through playing together and participating in activities through the Explore, Learn and Grow Program. Mothers engage in their children’ play and enjoy arts and craft activities, cooking activities, and storytelling activities with their children. The Family Centre also celebrates preschool graduation.
PANEL 2: Transitioning to Schools: The Perspective of School Districts.

Speakers (in order of presentation):

Ann Stewart Hunter  English Language Learners (ELL) Consultant, Newcomer Welcome Centre, Vancouver School Board
Caroline Lai  Manager, ELL Welcome Centre, Surrey School District
Candy Marvel  Settlement Worker in Schools, Surrey School District
Lisa Dubé  Principal at Encompass 10-12/COL K-9 and the Settlement Workers in School (SWIS) team, Coquitlam School District

Chair:  Dr. Maureen Kendrick, Professor, Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC

Vancouver School Board (VSB)
The Vancouver School Board ([vsb.bc.ca/](vsb.bc.ca/)) is a large, urban and multicultural school district, and is committed to providing the highest quality learning experience for all students, helping them to reach their intellectual, social, and physical potential in a safe and inclusive environment.

Ms. Ann Stewart Hunter, who is an ELL Consultant at the Newcomer Welcome Centre (NWC), Vancouver School Board (VSB), provided an overview of the different layers of support VSB provides to refugee children and families. She noted that there are just under 50,000 students in the VSB. Roughly 50% of VSB students primarily speak a language other than English in the home. Approximately 18% of VSB students are designated ELL. In addition, the VSB provides educational programs and services to full-time Adult Education students.
The VSB’s approach is multifaceted in its support of refugee families and children. Ms. Hunter noted that the NWC is usually the first contact newcomer families will have with the school system. It runs as a one-stop shop and helps newcomer parents with their children’s school registration. Since 2010, approximately 800 refugee students have been registered through NWC and come from various parts of the world. These numbers do not include the preschool aged children. Once parents register their children, the NWC assesses the children and places them in the appropriate program and school. While the children are being assessed, the NWC provides orientation (a friendly introduction to Canada, school systems, ELL programs, volunteer programs, and valuable resources) to the parents. The NWC provides translation services through its volunteer program, and the NWC website is available in various languages.

The VSB has a Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, which is a school-based settlement service for immigrants, refugees, and other eligible clients, to meet their immediate settlement or ongoing needs after they arrive in Canada. Currently the program has 19 settlement workers and 3 youth settlement workers. Ms. Hunter noted that the VSB has 23 Multicultural Liaison Workers who work as a linguistic and cultural bridge between schools and families. VSB ELL consultants work with ELL teachers in the VSB, and provide the teachers with resources, mentorship, and professional development.

Ms. Hunter also discussed the Preparing Refugee Students for Success in Schools Program (PRSS), which was conducted for two years. It was a VSB SWIS program that supported young refugee students. The objectives of PRSS were to reach out and support refugee families with preschool-aged and primary-aged children to work toward school readiness, both for the parents and their children; to build awareness of appropriate resources available in the community for the families; and to develop a strong support network for schools in welcoming refugee children and families. Forty-two families from eight different countries participated in the program. The program helped the families become aware of school activities such as school daily routines, parent/teacher conferences, and Canadian cultural celebrations. Ms. Stewart Hunter also noted that the VSB has a Vancouver Early Years Refugee (Strong Start) Program, which is a drop-in program for refugee families with children aged 0-5 years. In this program, children develop language, cognitive, motor, and social skills, and have access to art, music, activities, circle time, story time, and much more. The VSB also has programs to empower parents, such as Newcomers Parent Leadership Program and volunteer programs.
**Surrey School District**

Surrey School District ([surreyschools.ca/Pages/default.aspx](http://surreyschools.ca/Pages/default.aspx)) is the largest district in B.C. and one of few growing districts in the province. It serves children from kindergarten to Grade 12 in 125 schools, and serves Surrey, White Rock, and the rural area of Barnston Island. It offers a wide range of education and support programs to students of all ages and prepares learners for a world in which they think creatively and critically, communicate skillfully, and demonstrate care for self and other.

Ms. Caroline Lai, who is the Manager of ELL Welcome Centre at Surrey School District, and Ms. Candy Marvel, who is a Settlement Worker in Schools at Surrey School District, represented Surrey School District in the symposium. Ms. Lai stated that the Surrey School District also has similar programs to those in the Vancouver School Board. She noted that it is important to learn what refugee students and families have experienced before they arrive in Canada. To this end, she welcomed Ms. Candy Marvel and invited her to share her powerful journey of coming to Canada.

Ms. Marvel shared her personal refugee journey, which she called “21 Years of Statelessness”. She noted that it is crucial to understand journeys of refugee families in order to support them. Her family is originally from Burma (now known as Myanmar). She described different phases of her life and the challenging experiences she and her family went through in her hometown, in the Huay K’loke refugee camp, and in the Umphiem Mai refugee camp. She also explained how she overcame her struggles and arrived in Vancouver as a student refugee in 2006. She noted that it is important to appreciate the struggles every refugee experiences before that individual arrives in a safe place.

Ms. Marvel underscored that a refugee student often endures many deep challenges: long delays (e.g., months or even years) in transition and camps, disrupted education, accidental separation from family, purposeful separation from family as a strategy to keep the student safe, loss of close family and friends, loss of a sense of place (material, emotional, social, cultural, etc.), limited access to healthcare in refugee camps, complex health concerns, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Therefore, understanding their journey is crucial for providing refugee students with the needed supports for their resettlement and adaptation into Canadian society. She shared the following flowchart to sum up a journey of a refugee from refugee camp to Canada.
Coquitlam School District

Ms. Lisa Dubé, who is the Principal at Encompass 10-12/COL K-9 and the SWIS (Settlement Workers in School) team, illustrated some of the programs of her SWIS team. The team helps immigrant and refugee parents and children with their settlement needs through referrals and cross-cultural education. She noted that they also support and sponsor clothing giveaways and provide clothes to children aged 0-8 years. Through the federally funded Language Instruction for the Newcomers of Canada (LINC) program, they support parents with their language needs. They also provide free licensed day care to children aged 2-5 from registered immigrant and refugee families. The SWIS team helps families get involved in community activities, build new connections and relationships, and connect with other volunteer organizations. The team also provides workshops on parenting skills and access to free counselling to ensure parents’ physical and mental well-being. Refugee families with preschool-aged and primary-aged children also get support to prepare their children for success in school programs.
| PANEL 3: Transitioning to Schools: The Perspective of Provincial Policy Makers |

Speakers:

Martin Breuhan  
Inclusive Education Policy Analyst, Ministry of Education

David E. Phillips  
Director of Operations for Richmond/Vancouver Children and Youth with Special Needs, Ministry of Children and Family Development

Chair:  
Dr. Margot Filipenko, Professor of Teaching, Department of Language and Literacy Education, UBC

Ministry of Education

Mr. Martin Breuhan, who is an Inclusive Education Policy Analyst with the BC Ministry of Education, discussed some of the Ministry initiatives to support refugee children and families. He noted that Inclusive Education is part of the Learning Division, which consists of 40 professionals in various areas such as French education, Aboriginal education, early learning, etc. He explained that the Ministry of Education spends 6 billion dollars a year for K-12 education, and
the Ministry focus includes vulnerable populations. Mr. Breuhan also emphasized the importance of collaboration. He explained that most of their portfolio requires that they engage with colleagues from other ministries, and thus his portfolio consisted of ELL, CommunityLINK, adult education for upgrading courses (including collaboration with the Ministry of Advanced Education).

Mr. Breuhan discussed one of the current projects that he leads, which is trauma-informed practices resources development. These resources will be available on the new ERASE (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) website, which anyone can access. He noted that trauma-informed practice resource development is part of the ERASE strategy, which is a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to promote positive mental health and wellness and prevent bullying and violent behaviour in schools. This includes empowering students, parents, educators, and the community partners who support them, to get help with challenges, report concerns to schools, and learn about complex issues facing students. The website contains teacher tools and video infographics on topics including: online safety, mental health and well-being, bullying and violence, substance use, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). He clarified that these initiatives are perhaps not specific to children and families of refugee background, but are inclusive to all children and families supported by the Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)

Mr. David Phillips, who is MCFD Director of Operations for Richmond/Vancouver Children and Youth with Special Needs, presented some of the MCFD initiatives. He explained that MCFD works together with Delegated Aboriginal Agencies, Aboriginal service partners and approximately 5,400 contracted community social service agencies and foster homes, cross-government, and social sector partners to deliver inclusive, culturally respectful, responsive and accessible services that support the well-being of children, youth, and families. Currently MCFD does not have any specific program that targets solely immigrant and refugee populations, but all of its services and programs are focused on all children.

Mr. Phillips explained that the primary focus of MCFD is to support all children and youth in British Columbia, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to live in safe, healthy and nurturing families and be strongly connected to their communities and culture. MCFD supports vulnerable children and their families, emphasizing the principles of early intervention and prevention to keep families together, where possible, and connecting children and youth with permanent living arrangements when needed. Services include early childhood development and child care,
supports for children and youth with special needs, child and youth mental health, child welfare, adoption, youth justice, and support for youth transitioning to adulthood. MCFD only works at the provincial level. It collaborates with other ministries such as the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions. MCFD funds several programs to support children and family development such as MOSAIC’s Building Blocks Vancouver, which is an early intervention home-based parenting support program for vulnerable first-time parents. MCFD supports organizations to provide open-access programs which work on parent navigation, family support, cultural connections, and community connectiveness.

| Continuing Remarks |

Following the panel discussions, Dr. Jamieson and Dr. Norton pulled together “continuing remarks.” Dr. Jamieson noted that she was happy to see a lack of an ideological focus in the presentations. She believes this is positive because the people who are supporting refugee families are committed to a range of strategies and resources to support the needs of individual vulnerable families. Dr. Norton greatly appreciated the remarkable contributions of the community agencies, schools, and ministries, and discussed how post-secondary institutions like UBC can contribute to this conversation. She emphasized that we should never lose sight of the difference that institutions can make in the lives of communities and also the harm that can result when institutions are not responsive to the communities we serve. She invited the audience to the Public Launch of Storybooks Canada, to learn about some resources that the Storybooks Canada team has developed at UBC, which she hopes might be helpful to the wider community.
Following the symposium, Dr. Bonny Norton welcomed everyone to the Storybooks Canada Public Launch. Approximately 100 professionals, including students, researchers, educators, scholars, and policymakers attended the event.

Dr. Norton began her talk with two important takeaways from the morning symposium. The first takeaway is the power of stories. She referred to Candy Marvel’s talk in the symposium and noted that Ms. Marvel’s challenging journey to Canada reminded us of the journeys that many immigrants and refugees make to get to Canada, and of the importance of the welcome experience. She stated that according to the 2016 Census, more than 7 million Canadians speak a language other than English or French as a mother tongue; therefore, the second takeaway from the symposium is how to support these immigrants and refugees who do not speak either of the official languages. Dr. Norton emphasized that one of the ways to address the language learning needs of immigrants and refugees is to develop free and accessible multilingual resources with and for them. Therefore, her research team in the Department of Language and Literacy Education has developed a powerful digital platform called Storybooks Canada (storybookscanada.ca), which seeks to promote multilingual literacy for Canada’s diverse population—focusing in particular on the needs of immigrant and refugee children.
Dr. Norton then welcomed Dr. Gail Murphy (FRSC) UBC Vice-President, Research and Innovation, Dean Blye Frank, UBC Faculty of Education, and Dr. Janet Werker, (O.C., FRSC), University Killam Professor and Co-Director, UBC Language Sciences Initiative, to open the proceedings.

Dr. Gail Murphy explained that the new strategic plan of UBC has three cross-connecting themes: innovation, inclusion, and collaboration, and Storybooks Canada embodies all of these three themes. She appreciated and recognized the contribution of Dr. Bonny Norton, the Storybooks Canada team, and the multiple partners who collaborated to publicly launch Storybooks Canada. She noted that this initiative tackles fundamental questions around literacy, translation, culture, and identity, and has the potential to provoke energetic discussion in homes, in schools and in communities.

Dean Blye Frank noted that the vision of the Faculty of Education is to inspire people, ideas, and actions through education for a just and better world. He also stated that the Faculty’s purpose is to pursue excellence in research, teaching, learning and community engagement to advance education as a social good, with distinct attention to place. Given this vision and purpose, Canada’s multilingual landscape presents both challenges and possibilities, which resonate in other regions of the world. Literacy in the first language provides a firm foundation for the learning of additional languages, and helps newcomers become more successful students and engaged citizens. Further, the need to acknowledge and validate Indigenous languages is one of the calls to action in the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission report. He underlined that to respond to this call to action, there is an urgent need for resources that can be used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, teachers, parents, and community members, which help to promote Indigenous education and stronger communities. He commended the digital innovations, Storybooks Canada, Indigenous Storybooks, and Global Storybooks
developed by UBC faculty, students, and alumni as these innovations are helping to address these urgent needs around the globe. He concluded by saying that this is work to be celebrated and recognized for its innovation, scholarship, and most importantly for its contribution to marginalized communities, and thanked Dr. Norton and her team for this important initiative.

Dr. Janet Werker noted that goal of the UBC Language Sciences Initiative is to recognize the importance of language and to promote interdisciplinary research on language. She noted further that the Language Sciences Initiative welcomes people with incredible vision - like Dr. Norton - to come together and meet people who have similar vision. Storybooks Canada is one of the achievements that the UBC Language Sciences Initiative is proud of, and is certainly one of the most successful outcomes of the Language Sciences Initiative. She thanked the Storybooks Canada team, sponsors, and Ella Fund-Reznicek (Language Sciences Coordinator), for their support in organizing this event.

| KEYNOTE PANEL: Storybooks Canada: Local and Global |

Chair: Dr. Bonny Norton, FRSC, Professor, Department of Language and Literacy Education

Panel:
- Asma Afreen, PhD Student, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Dr. Ingrid Schechter, Team member, Storybooks Canada
- Monica Shank Lauwo, PhD Student, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Liam Doherty, PhD Candidate, Department of Language and Literacy Education
- Dr. Sara Davidson, Assistant Professor, University of the Fraser Valley

Discussant:
- Dr. Uchenna Okeja, Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies (PWIAS), and Iso Lomso, Invited PWIAS Scholar

Dr. Bonny Norton, who is the project lead for Storybooks Canada, chaired the panel presentation and introduced the speakers. The panel discussed diverse dimensions of Storybooks Canada, Indigenous Storybooks and the Global Storybooks initiative.
Dr. Norton noted that this presentation would be an interactive session and encouraged the attendees to take out their cellphones and visit the Storybooks Canada site. She explained that when the Storybooks Canada team developed this platform, with the help of the computer engineer, Mr. Darshan Soni, their intention was to make the platform as user-friendly as possible so that anyone can access the site's resources using their computers or cellphones. This innovation is part of the ingenuity of Mr. Liam Doherty (one of the panelists) and Dr. Espen Stranger-Johannessen, co-founders with Dr. Norton of Storybooks Canada. Dr. Stranger-Johannessen, a UBC alumnus and former LLED doctoral student, is now an Associate Professor at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and also the international advisor for Storybooks Canada.

Dr. Norton explained that Storybooks Canada leverages openly licensed digital stories from the African Storybook initiative, on which she serves as Research Advisor. The African Storybook makes free and open access stories available in multiple African languages, as well as English, French, and Portuguese. Storybooks Canada has repurposed 40 stories from the African Storybook and has translated them into the most commonly spoken immigrant and refugee languages in Canada. The digital platform thus provides much-needed resources for migrants and new refugees. More broadly, it encourages gradual change in the direction of global communication flows (e.g., shifting from North-South to South-North) while supporting both English/French literacy and mother tongue maintenance across Canadian communities and beyond. Using the Storybooks Canada modular platform, the UBC team has repurposed the digital platform for the Global Storybooks initiative, which now has over 40 sites across five continents.

Navigating the Storybooks Canada Website
Ms. Asma Afreen, a Doctoral Student in LLED, introduced some exciting features of Storybooks Canada, and demonstrated how to navigate the website. A member of the Storybooks Canada team, where her role is coordinating translation, Ms. Afreen is from Bangladesh and translated the 40 stories into Bangla (Bengali), and also recorded the audio of these stories. Her presentation is available on YouTube and is available on the Storybooks Canada website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjYOFzeRFjA

Ms. Afreen explained that Storybooks Canada is a free educational resource that helps to promote literacy and language learning in homes, schools, and communities. Storybooks
Canada identified 40 African Storybooks stories that represent a range of topics and levels of difficulty and would be suitable for the multilingual and multicultural context of Canada. She encouraged the audience to navigate the website along with her. She showed one of the level 1 stories, *Counting Animals*, and illustrated how one can read and listen to these stories in different languages. A unique feature of the program allows users to toggle between two languages in order to translate at the word, sentence, and story level. Currently all these 40 stories are available with text and audio in 19 languages. Ms. Afreen demonstrated the Bengali translation of the story, *Counting Animals*. She highlighted that one of the important aspects of Storybooks Canada is that everyone who is involved in developing the resources is acknowledged on the stories and on the website. At the top of the page of each story, the names of the author, illustrator, translator and reader of the story are acknowledged. She highlighted that Storybooks Canada is user-friendly, and one can simply scroll up and down the page or use arrow buttons to read any story. One can listen to these stories in any of several ways, and all these details are available on How to use this site. She showed one of the interesting ways to listen to the story on a laptop is by using the red autoplay button at the top of the page. Pressing this button autoplays the entire story one page at a time, and each page of the story will highlight as it is being read.

Ms. Afreen also demonstrated the Teachers resource page, which describes how different levels of these stories have been linked to the BC curriculum, and briefly talked about the high/low stories - in other words, high interest, low vocabulary stories. This page highlights how some of the Storybooks Canada stories can be used as examples of high/low materials, which can be valuable for immigrant and refugee English language learners who require low-level reading materials with age-appropriate content.
Ms. Afreen invited the audience to visit the Resources page and read Michelle Gilman’s article on the use of these stories in the classroom. Ms. Gilman is a PhD candidate in LLED, UBC, who has worked extensively in developing the Teachers resource page. Ms. Afreen also noted that she was so intrigued by her experience of translating these stories into Bangla for Storybooks Canada and Storybooks Bangladesh that she wrote her MEd graduating paper on her translator identity, which documents how she navigated the complexities of translation. She presented her research findings at an LLED seminar and the video of that presentation is available on YouTube and on the Resources page.

**Downloading Storybooks Canada Stories and Using them in the Classroom**

Following Ms. Afreen, Dr. Ingrid Schechter demonstrated how to download these stories and use them offline in the classroom. Dr. Schechter is a linguist trained at Oxford University and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. A former instructor in the UBC English Language Institute, she is now an active contributor to both the African Storybook and Storybooks Canada. Her focus is on community outreach, classroom methods for using storybooks, and the provision of illustrations. Using a level-3 story, *Chicken and Millipede*, Dr. Schechter explained how one can toggle between two languages. She showed the Persian translation and demonstrated how one can listen to this story in English and simultaneously read the story in Persian, and vice versa. She also showed different downloading options that are available on this website. To download any story as a PDF, one merely needs to click on the “download options” at the top or bottom of the page. One can download a story as monolingual and bilingual versions. These stories can be downloaded as imageless and wordless, which gives teachers opportunities to use them in various ways. The stories can also be downloaded in a booklet format for printing, and all different options of downloading (monolingual, bilingual,
wordless, monolingual and imageless, and bilingual and imageless) are also available as booklet PDFs. Because color printing may not be a convenient option in a low-resource setting, Dr. Schechter developed Storybooks Outline, which is a resource designed for teachers, parents, and community members that makes the 40 stories featured on Storybooks Canada available in black and white (colour-in) versions in multiple languages. Dr. Schechter mentioned that Storybooks Canada is always looking for translators, so she invited anyone whose language is not represented in the website to help Storybooks Canada translate or record stories, and to contact Storybooks Canada at globalafricanstorybook@gmail.com.

**Storybooks Canada and African Languages**

Ms. Monica Shank Lauwo, who is a Doctoral Student in LLED, UBC, demonstrated how stories from the Storybooks Canada site can be used in countries like Tanzania in the African context. Her presentation is available on YouTube and also on the Storybooks Canada website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vspX-7CceXU.

Ms. Shank Lauwo noted that one can find languages that are currently included in the scope of Storybooks Canada by visiting the Languages page. The story translations of some of these languages are still in progress. She indicated that several African languages (e.g. Oromo, Somali, and Swahili) represented on this page are illustrative of the ongoing collaboration with various African partners both on the African continent and in the Diaspora. She and her partner, Lauwo George, contributed to Swahili translations. She took the audience to the Global Storybooks portal that now includes over 40 sister projects of Storybooks Canada, one of which being Storybooks Tanzania. Using one of the stories in Swahili, Feelings, she demonstrated how one can toggle with English, switching back and forth to make direct comparisons between the languages to support the learning of one or both of the languages and the development of metalinguistic skills. She added an additional language, Maa (the language of the Maasai community in Tanzania and Kenya) and toggled between three languages.

Ms. Shank Lauwo noted that a multilingual Community Learning Centre in Tanzania that she runs printed out a number of these stories trilingually. Each page had three languages:
Swahili (the national language of Tanzania), English (language of instruction for all post primary schooling), and Maa (a language that has been marginalized in the Tanzanian context and is muted in formal learning settings). When the Centre gave these trilingual books to students, they initially began by reading in their dominant language of literacy, which for all of them is Swahili, but they quickly started reading the stories in two or three other languages and made comparisons among the languages.

Using their most familiar language enabled the students to position themselves as experts and make interventions in the texts. Students who did not necessarily speak Maa also became excited while sounding out words in Maa, making connections between the languages, and asking their friends with more expertise in the language to teach them more about the language. The literacy engagement and investment in these literacy practices were generative for these students. Reading these trilingual texts encouraged them to become prolific writers, bilingual and trilingual text authors, and illustrators. Youth and parents also became involved. Ms. Shank Lauwo demonstrated some of those texts written by children, youth, and parents from the Community Learning Centre in northern Tanzania. She noted that her mother in Ontario is also using these stories to learn Swahili, using the toggle feature going back and forth between English and Swahili. Ms. Shank Lauwo concluded that the principles of language learning are transferable to any context. The excitement, the literacy engagement, and the investment that are generated through accessing texts in one’s own language are definitely apparent in Canadian homes as well.

**Storybooks Canada and Open Source**

Mr. Liam Doherty is a PhD candidate at LLED, UBC. A co-founder of Storybooks Canada, he is also primarily responsible for the development of the Global African Storybook Project (Global ASP). A strong advocate for open educational resources, he is the technical advisor for Storybooks Canada. Mr. Doherty noted that Storybooks Canada is different from other digital literacy initiatives in the world because of its commitment to open source and to open licensing, underscoring why it is so powerful to base a project on open source. His presentation
is available on YouTube and also on the Storybooks Canada website: 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ww2JeOG7SaU

Mr. Doherty argued strongly that knowledge workers need to think how others can reuse their work, and not just cite the work, to construct further knowledge and create knowledge in ways that might not have been anticipated. Open source represents free and unfettered exchange of knowledge without boundaries or with as few boundaries as possible, and Storybooks Canada is committed to open source and to open licensing. Because Storybooks Canada stories were originally developed as open licensed, Storybooks Canada has tried to respect that through its commitment to maintaining open licensing and creating further open licensed resources.

Mr. Doherty illustrated open source in practical terms using the story *A Very Tall Man* which travelled digitally from Uganda, to South Africa, to Canada, to Norway, and beyond, where it underwent multiple translations. Storybooks Canada has created automated translation tools that make the process of translation and scaling up very efficient. For example, Storybooks Canada created a Spanish translator app for the Storybooks Mexico project because translators who are native speakers of Indigenous Mexican languages are more comfortable translating from Spanish into those languages. As illustrated in the story, *A Very Tall Man*, the power of open source is that the data flow freely between the sites where they are needed and there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Mr. Doherty noted that Storybooks Canada’s open licensed materials are shared on GitHub. One can download Storybooks Canada’s website framework, Nairobi CSS, build a literacy website, and upload new stories. One can also download all the audios instead of downloading them one by one, and download all the PDFs as well. Storybooks Canada’s audios are of high quality and have been carefully post-processed by sound engineers. People can also host the entire website on their own server. Mr. Doherty noted further that Storybooks Canada has an extensive amount of data (e.g. hundreds of hours of audio in many different languages), as well as a large number of text files that are all coded in a database and are easy to access. Therefore, one can use the text files in many creative ways. For instance, one can pair any two languages or two translations together to develop language activities. Storybooks Canada has generated cloze tests, wordlists, etc. using these data, and these resources are also freely accessible.
Introducing Indigenous Storybooks

Dr. Sara Florence Davidson is a Haida educator and Assistant Professor in the Teacher Education Department at the University of the Fraser Valley. She is also an UBC alumna and the project lead for Indigenous Storybooks. Her presentation is available on YouTube and is available on the Storybooks Canada website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXJgDRDA-Oo.

Dr. Davidson explained that the Indigenous Storybooks project started in Alberta through a language program and emerged from 12 stories from Little Cree Books. The Indigenous Storybooks project has two parts. One part of the website features open access stories that are not Indigenous stories but have been translated into Indigenous languages. She showed one of the stories, Little Bear’s Day, in Old Masset Haida (Xaad Kil). She shared this story and mentioned that her ancestors are Haida and her father is specifically from Old Masset. Having these stories available in Old Masset was tremendously exciting for her because her nieces and nephews can listen to and access these stories.

Another part of this project is the work Indigenous Storybooks has done in collaboration with other organizations including the Skidegate Haida Immersion Program (SHIP), which is a group of Elders. Dr. Davidson has observed much excitement among Elders because many Haida children in the lower Mainland who are away from Haida Gwaii - for example, 60 students who are Haida and living in Surrey - can now access their ancestral language even if they are not at home. She believes that this opportunity of accessing ancestral languages is amazing; reflecting on her own background, Dr. Davidson could not access her ancestral language and grew up without the Haida language. She noted that Elders also found this initiative exciting. Indigenous Storybooks is in the process of working with Elders to do translations and audio recordings. Dr. Davidson emphasized that working with Indigenous languages is sometimes more complicated than working with other languages because some of these languages,
particularly in North America and Canada, are on the verge of extinction. Hence, it is extremely important to be respectful of the communities and what their vision is for the project.

Indigenous Storybooks has developed a resource section to support educators and the stories in the Resources page include traditional Indigenous stories. Dr. Davidson explained that the new BC curriculum has changed to incorporate more Indigenous content, and in the hopes of supporting educators, Indigenous Storybooks is working respectfully to start to compile stories and resources that might be useful in classrooms, locally and nationally. The stories have been organized according to nations, so that educators can think about the traditional territories that is their current teaching focus, and prioritize the stories from those areas.

**Storybooks Canada and Ubuntu**

Dr. Uchenna Okeja, who is a Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies and Iso Lomso Invited Scholar, was the panel discussant. He is from Nigeria, and is currently based in South Africa, at Rhodes University’s Department of Philosophy. His presentation is available on YouTube and is available on the Storybooks Canada website: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKh046sepUU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKh046sepUU).

Dr. Okeja talked about the power of stories, and the ways in which the Storybooks Canada project harnesses the power of stories for educational purposes. He noted that it is important that children grow up with diverse stories, not a “single story” as noted by author Chimamanda Adichie. He was enthusiastic that stories from Africa can be appreciated and repurposed in other parts of the world. The power of stories is very fundamental to the way we see ourselves as human beings. He believes that the African Ubuntu expression “I am because we are” becomes apparent in this project, because this is not a project only of an individual; rather, it is a collective project wherein different people contributed from different parts of the world with different kinds of skills, curiosities, and ideas. This highlights the importance of intricate and intrinsic interconnection between the individual and the community.
CLOSING
Following the presentations, Dr. Norton thanked everyone involved in this initiative. She noted that Storybooks Canada has only been possible with the help of a large number of people, many of whom have volunteered their time because they are passionate about the value of the initiative. She gratefully acknowledged funding and in-kind support from the UBC Language Sciences Initiative; a UBC Community University Engagement Support (CUES) Grant; Education without Borders; Mitacs; the UBC Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies; UBC Studios; and the UBC Faculty of Education. She noted that this group of supporters keeps growing, given increasing interest in the work. She further stated that one of the strengths of open technology and Creative Commons is that the people who contributed to this initiative (e.g., translators, authors, illustrators, readers, proofreaders) are acknowledged and recognized for the invaluable contributions they have made locally and globally.

Dr. Jamieson thanked Dr. Norton and the Storybooks Canada team for their incredible contributions, and noted that Storybooks Canada has only been possible because individuals with talent, curiosity, and dedication collaborated and connected with each other. She noted that Dr. Norton talked about the power of stories at the start of the event, and Drs. Murphy, Frank, Werker and Okeja spoke about the power of community and community engagement. The power of stories and community engagement was also echoed in the symposium that portrayed powerful stories of refugee children and their families. Dr. Jamieson noted that those stories are multilayered and multifaceted; likewise, the community that surrounds and supports refugees is also multilayered and multifaceted. In the symposium, representatives from school districts shared how they support refugees as they transition to school; people from community agencies shared how they provide assistance to these families when they arrive in Canada; and policymakers explained how policies are growing more sensitive to the needs of refugee children and families. She explained that both stories and community engagement were apparent throughout the event, which is very fitting because one of the values UBC holds is community engagement. Dr. Jamieson concluded by saying that if the whole day had any theme at all, it would be “the power of stories and community engagement.”

Postscript:
On March 17, 2019, Vancouver’s Province newspaper identified Storybooks Canada as a leading digital resource for young readers, particularly given its multilingual stories and its links to Indigenous languages.
Free Digital Publications


Michelle Gilman: Using Storybooks Canada and Other Digital Stories to Honour Diversity within the Classroom (English Practice, 2018).

Espen Stranger-Johannessen and Bonny Norton: Storybooks Canada: A digital resource for multilingual education (BC TEAL Newsletter, Fall 2017)

Jan Hare, Ron Darvin, Liam Doherty, Margaret Early, Margot Filipenko, Bonny Norton, Darshan Soni, Espen Stranger-Johannessen: Digital storytelling and reconciliation (Reflections of Canada: Illuminating our opportunities and challenges at 150+ years, 2017).

Espen Stranger-Johannessen: African stories to get and keep kids reading during school holidays (The Conversation, December 2015)

Bonny Norton and Tessa Welch: Digital stories could hold the key to multilingual literacy for African children (The Conversation, May 2015).

Storybooks Canada team presenters, November 2, 2018

Storybooks Canada Team: Sara Florence Davidson, Monica Shank Lauwo, Asma Afreen, Bonny Norton, Ingrid Schechter, and Liam Doherty