

resist and struggle to counter them. She urges us not to see the world only in terms of the personal, or only in terms of the political.

Another dichotomy (that we ought to avoid) is in the separation of the private and personal from the social and collective ... Must our solutions be private or collective? Can they not be both? Why do those of us who want social justice tend to ignore calls for private accountability? And why do those of us who call for so-called "family values" and personal morality not demand the social justice in which these can flourish? Let's begin to think in holistic visions, not split paradigms. (Jacqueline Barkley, p. 192)

I plan to take her advice.

Reference

Anderson, G.L. (1989) Critical ethnography in education: Origins, current status, and new directions. *Review of Educational Research*, 59(3), 249-270.

A Sense of Themselves: Elizabeth Murray's Leadership in School and Community. Carol E. Harris. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Press, 1998, 188 pages.

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It is a fitting time for a book such as Carol Harris' to arrive on the educational landscape. In a period when education is under assault in Nova Scotia as in other parts of Canada, this book is indeed timely. In Nova Scotia the assault on education has included forced amalgamation, which has seen smaller, community schools replaced by larger, modern but sometimes alienating facilities often further removed from the communities they serve. Decentralization and site-based management have become code words for justifying the reduction of staff and services to schools and communities. The neo-conservative agenda of the government that hopes to reduce education to "work training" and "basic literacy" has created an unfriendly climate for support for the arts and the humanities in schools. In such a time a book that stresses the importance of community and the arts and arts education is welcome. Moreover, the story of one woman who devoted her life to arts and community education provides hope and inspiration to those resisting reductionist forms of education and schooling.

In a reader-friendly style that will appeal to both practitioners and lay people, Harris chronicles the life of Elizabeth Murray, or Betty Murray as she preferred to be called. The story is a fascinating one of a woman who grew up

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on the North Shore of Nova Scotia in the town of Tatamagouche and who throughout her career as a teacher, adult educator, music educator, and community organizer managed to touch the lives of thousands of Nova Scotian children and adults in profound and lasting ways.

Murray entered teaching during World War II and quickly became engaged in pedagogy that was in its own day and by our present standards progressive. Murray's pedagogy sought to see the child as a unique individual who needed careful and thoughtful attention. Hers was a way of teaching that did not attempt to separate school from life, but rather drew life into schools. For example, she included care and beautification as part of the curriculum. Students' projects ranged from planning, designing, and building the steps of the school to taking responsibility for the landscaping of the grounds. Influenced by the ideas of John Dewey and William James as she had learned these at the Provincial Normal School in Truro and through the important translation of those ideas to the rural Nova Scotian context by her mentor-teacher Loran A. DeWolfe, Betty's vision enabled her to appreciate the rural one-room schoolhouse as a place of rich pedagogic and curricular possibilities. She recognized how the familiar and everyday objects and activities could be incorporated into curriculum by a skilled teacher.

For example, Murray brought the stories, the songs, the expressions, the oral tradition of the community into the language arts program. As a teacher, and throughout her life, Betty was guided by a faith in the wisdom and power of local rural people to create and maintain flourishing communities. The rich descriptions that Harris provides of Murray's work with her children such as leading them in singing, discussing topics with all the students from all the grade levels, working with older students who were building concrete steps for the schools, building a kitchen area so that the older students could prepare lunch for the younger ones, and painting the school buildings are but a few of the tangible ways in which the academics were woven seamlessly into the activities of life.

But beyond the academics Murray's approach affirmed the important role education could play in helping to socialize students into a community of lifelong learners. It affirmed the strides that could be made in learning in a classroom where teachers saw all of what the students brought into the classroom as richness to be excavated, or in Freire's words, as the richness to be "mined" by the teacher. As a teacher educator I look forward to sharing these vignettes with some of my preservice teachers who sometimes think that progressive education was born only in the last decade! Murray's book can help these beginning teachers understand the rich roots of progressive education that flourish and have flourished throughout this country at different times in our history. The book, through its rich use of illustrations and examples taken from the classroom and the community, can help students appreciate the difference teachers can make in communities. It can certainly help them understand that good ideas for education are not dependent only on having the proper facilities or the right budget. It can help them understand how limited our view of schooling has become and how little we really extend into the community of the school. And Murray does remind us what *attitude*

can do in terms of making things happen, suggesting that teaching is much more than simply the knowledge of technique.

Harris chronicles Murray's later moves from teaching in classrooms to working in the field of adult and community arts education, and this is certainly her most important and lasting legacy, at least in Nova Scotia. As a field worker for the Department of Education in the Adult Education Branch, Betty worked tirelessly throughout the province of Nova Scotia to facilitate community arts programs. She worked with women's institutes, folk schools, community arts groups, and community choirs, helping to reflect the best of themselves back to communities or, as the title of Harris' book suggests, to provide people and organizations with a true "sense of themselves."

Much of Murray's ideological foundation for such work came from the Anglican Fellowship for Social Action whose position was that mainstream churches needed to play an active role in creating the kingdom of heaven here on earth, a tradition that called for churches to translate the gospels on social justice into action. Nova Scotia is known as a leader in the field of adult education, dating back to the important work done by Tompkins and Coady beginning in the 1930s that saw St. Francis Xavier University involved with helping fisherman and farmers of northeastern Nova Scotia organize themselves around cooperatives, credit unions, and people's schools. The Anglican Fellowship for Social Action was a parallel movement that took its lead from social gospel and working in a variety of ways throughout the province. It is a movement less well known than the Antigonish Movement, and Harris' book illuminates this equally important movement through the story of Betty Murray's life. At this present time in Nova Scotia when the fishery is collapsing, the future of coal mines in Cape Breton looks bleak, and numerous small communities experience massive outmigration, *A Sense of Themselves* takes us back to us a time when the actions of many people at the grassroots level did make a difference. It also shows a way to talk about the richness that small-community life can provide when measured on dimensions other than strict economic sustainability and the role that education can play in sustaining vibrant communities.

Carol Harris has done a wonderful job of presenting an inspirational story about the difference that one individual such as Betty Murray can make in a lifetime. But there are lessons to be learned from her story. Harris reminds us that the experience of education and schooling needs to be deeply connected to students and their communities. The assaults on education have been about putting other priorities such as efficiency, global-regional competitiveness, and technology ahead of these emphases. Harris reminds us about what needs to be at the core of what we do. In doing so she also examines the social context of leadership that bases itself on relationships and connections and describes a leadership style that is inviting, inclusive, and respectful of others. The narrative of Betty Murray's work, then, serves as a cogent and much-needed reminder of the important and symbiotic relationship between school and community, and the fuller and broader aims that education ought to serve.