

Message From the TODOS President January 2024

Colleagues,

Happy 2024 to each of you. I am a fan of the writing of the late Richard Wagamese. Each time I read Wagamese's writings I am inspired and I learn something new. The writing I share with you today is coming from *One Drum: Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet* (2019), published by Douglas and McIntyre (2013) Ltd.

In the book Wagamese recounts a legend about a time when the animals decided they needed a leader. It was decided that a race would be held because "a race would show who exemplifies the qualities of leadership. A race requires perseverance, fortitude, strength, and a powerful will." (p. 48)

"There is a lake set between a circle of steep hills," Eagle said. "I have flown over it many times and have seen that it forms a perfect circle. The terrain is challenging, rocky and steep, with thick woods around it. The race will be four times around that lake. This will demand the utmost of the contestants and the winner will indeed be the hardest and most qualified to lead us." (p. 49).

Horse, Buffalo, Cougar, and Wolverine eagerly entered the race. When Eagle asked if there were any additional challengers - Rabbit said, "It would be an honour to contest with such magnificent beings." All of the animals were worried that Rabbit was too small to participate.

The race began. The bigger animals had completed two laps around the lake by the time Rabbit completed the first lap. Rabbit said, "Oh, the land is so lovely... There is so much to see and the feeling of being on it is beautiful." Eagle replied, "There is no way for you to ever catch up." (p. 50). Rabbit's response was, "Don't worry about me. I'm here to enjoy the challenge." (p. 50). Eagle suggested that Rabbit concede at the completion of Rabbit's second lap, but Rabbit's response was, "It is not honouring the challenge if I should stop, It is a noble pursuit and it asks everything I have. So I will continue." (p. 52)

The bigger animals were slower in completing their third laps and all started on their 4th lap. Rabbit, on the third lap, encountered each of the bigger animals. Each of the animals had encountered some trouble and required the wisdom of Rabbit to 'get out of trouble' in order to complete their 4th lap. As each of the larger animals 'got out of trouble', Rabbit encouraged them to join together to complete their 4th lap. All 5 animals returned to the starting point. The bigger animals having completed 4 laps, Rabbit completing three. Eagle announced that they had a leader, Rabbit. Rabbit's response was "Oh, I do not want to be the leader,... I entered to learn what I did not know. I did not enter to contend." "I understood the meaning of leadership, but I did not understand the territory." Now "I understand that when all our energies are directed toward the same goal there is no need for one to lead. We all help each other complete the journey." (p. 61)

Rabbit then starts the 4th lap and the animals wonder why Rabbit would continue with the 4th lap around the lake. Rabbit replies, "But there is much I have not seen or learned. It is in the journey that one comes to understand the territory. It is in the journey that one becomes wise, and I have one more lap to go." (p. 61).

I encourage you to read Wagamese's full account of this legend as there are powerful messages for who we are as teachers, educators, leaders, and humans.

I share this writing today as I think about "New Years", our individual dreams and goals for our classrooms, and for TODOS as an organization. I also think about how humans are seduced into thinking that we are in a race - so much of the discourse in educational systems is situated in time and in winning. I

wonder, how do we, as members of an equity-focused organization focus on the goals of mission of a high quality mathematics education for ALL?

I wondered, as an organization focused on equity then does it mean that implicitly our mission is assuming that each human will achieve in mathematics at the same time? Have we been bound in our thinking that learning is about meeting the state standards? Or provincial standards? Or the pressures of standardized assessments?

As I reflect more deeply on this legend I think about...what is the territory that mathematics educators need to come to understand? I see the role of Rabbit as a teacher leader. Rabbit teaches and leads the 4 bigger animals around the last lap in the race. Each of the bigger animals - with all of their strength and speed succumbed to the territory in different ways. While each of the larger animals navigated the territory successfully for 3 laps, they were not able to sustain their journey. It took Rabbit's wisdom to teach them to navigate the territory. What does this say to us about the journey of school? Or the journeys as leaders? Or the journeys related to high quality mathematics education?

Colleagues, what does this legend cause you to think about and reflect upon in your role as a mathematics teacher, educator, leader? I encourage you to use TODOS' resources, examples outlined by the PD Committee following this message in your journey and reflection on this legend - TODOS is a part of the territory!

With respect and gratitude for all of the diverse ways that you support the mission of TODOS: Mathematics for ALL!

Florence Glanfield, President
TODOS: Mathematics for ALL

Reference:

Wagamese, R. (2019). One drum: Stories and Ceremonies for a planet. Douglas and McIntyre (2013) Ltd.

January 2024: For the 2023 – 2024 year, the PD committee will send a monthly sample of some of the many useful and relevant mathematics education resources we have cultivated over the years. For our full offerings, make sure to visit our [TODOS website](#) and look around. Every month we have an opportunity to renew our commitment to antiracist mathematics teaching and remember we are stronger as a community. This month, the Professional Development Committee will be featuring TODOS Resources related to Rehumanizing Assessment. Enjoy!

TODOS Live! From October 2021

[Student and Family Centered Assessment in Practice](#)

Presenters: Trisha Huynh and Rosa Chavez

Drawing on the Student and Family-Centered Mathematics Assessment Commentary Paper, this webinar will consider ways that teachers are redefining what it means to assess with a focus on concepts and mathematical practices. We will share how one upper elementary teacher designed assessments to highlight assets of understanding during and post distance learning. We will also create space for teachers to consider the cycle of student & family-centered mathematics assessment with respect to their own classroom context to guide instructional decisions for the upcoming school year.

TODOS Podcast, Season 1, Episode 10

[Rethinking Assessment with Amanda Ruiz and Vanson Nguyen](#)

What is meaningful mathematics assessment, particularly for high school and undergraduate mathematics courses? Is our current pandemic a good time to rethinking assessment practices? This episode features audio from the webinar they hosted on April 9, 2020, as well as audio from a conversation they had a few weeks later. Dr. Ruiz and Dr. Nguyen stir up some ideas and share some examples.

TODOS TEEM, 2021, Vol. 12, No. 2: [Using Interviews to Identify the Resources of Multilingual High School Students](#)

Authors: Megan D'Errico & William Zahner

The resources that multilingual students bring to school mathematics are often ignored. During a teacher-researcher collaborative project focused on creating more equitable learning environments in high school math classrooms, we noted an initial tendency to focus on the challenges and barriers facing multilingual students. To counter this tendency, we worked with two teachers to engage in a structured teacher-student interview to identify and highlight secondary multilingual students' home and community resources. We adapted a module from TeachMath to guide the activity and facilitated surveys, debriefs and teacher-research conversations to unpack this experience. After the interview, the two secondary mathematics teachers reported they were more familiar with their students' resources in the areas of language, family, school/mathematics class and out of school activities. We close by discussing how other teachers might do this activity in their local context.

TODOS 2021 Conference Recording

[Changing the Narrative by Shifting Data Discussions](#)

Presenter: John W. Staley

How might we shift practices of static deficit labeling of students and schools to develop a culture that cultivates a positive mathematics identity and affect in students as doers of mathematics? During the session, participants will engage in conversations about the use of data and strategies to shift the conversations.