

Table Talk for Presentation 2:

Core Theme

- Wellness in education is shaped by systemic factors, not just individual effort.
- Teachers are urged to prioritize well-being, but contradictions exist due to lack of control over working conditions and limited leave support.

Key Challenges

- Resource Gaps: Shortage of sports coaches and other supports increases stress.
- Negative Narratives: Media portrayal of teaching contributes to disconnection and low morale.
- Isolation: Particularly affects young, single teachers in rural areas.
- Gender Dynamics: Female teachers and administrators face authority undermining.

What Supports Wellness and Retention

- Community Connections: Foster belonging and purpose; critical for rural retention.
- Collective Agreements: Provide stability and influence decisions to stay.
- Agreements must reflect unique rural challenges: isolation, limited resources, cultural inclusivity.

What factors influence educators' decisions to stay in the rural and remote space?

Global Teacher Recruitment and Retention Crisis

- Many countries are grappling with complex classrooms and its impact on educator well-being.
- Challenge includes training new teachers while retaining existing ones.
- Persistent lack of representation in First Nations schools and Indigenous education.
- For Indigenous teachers, decisions to stay or leave are deeply tied to cultural roles and identity.

Working Conditions in Rural and Remote Schools

- Adds an extra layer of complexity for staff, teachers, and administrators.
- Need for system-wide conversations to identify gaps in working conditions.
- Key issues:
 - Cybersecurity concerns and rapid changes in digital environments.
 - Dysregulated adults and students; online harassment (e.g., doxing via fake accounts).
 - Difficulty disconnecting from private life means a poor work-life balance.
- Many teachers leave for government roles perceived as less stressful and better supported.

Factors Influencing Teacher Decisions

- Community Connections: People choose communities for relationships and support.
- Lifestyle and Cost: Climate and affordability attract teachers.
- Challenges: Transportation, healthcare access, and small-town dynamics.
- Impact and Purpose: Knowing they can make a real difference motivates teachers to stay.

Supports for Retention

- Access to high-quality professional learning and growth opportunities.
- Embrace Indigenous ways of knowing—land-based learning and outdoor education to attract local Indigenous teachers.
- Address negative public perceptions of teaching, lingering from past political narratives.

Does the education workforce, at both teacher and leadership levels, adequately represent the cultural diversity of the communities it serves?

Core Message

- Progress on equity and representation has been slow and often covert.
- Racism shifted from overt aggression to microaggressions and systemic fatigue.

Key Challenges

- Rural education offers escape in nature, but isolation remains.
- LOPs not completing work often reflects systemic/environmental factors, not individual failure.
- Teachers feel always on call with heavy expectations.
- Ministry roles seen as an escape; many teachers apply for these positions.

Structural Issues

- No quick fixes:
 - Some resist 4-year programs due to lower pay compared to 5-year graduates.
 - Even PhDs apply for lower-level positions.
- Ministry hiring principals for unionized roles.
- Far from having enough Indigenous teachers, a representation gap persists.