

# Serena McKenna

*Peterborough, Ontario, Canada*



Serena is entering her 23rd year of teaching, and the majority of those years have been at Holy Cross Secondary School in Peterborough, ON, Canada, where she is Chair of the Languages Department. Serena has had the opportunity to introduce grade 11 English courses that are focused solely on writing by Indigenous people: Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices. Choosing texts for this course and exploring them with students had a profound impact on Serena's personal life and her teaching. Students who declared themselves as non-readers and who admitted English was their most dreaded subject were incredibly engaged in the texts and the course! Many commented on the fact that they loved the texts because they believed the voices were relevant to our current culture and social issues. The overwhelmingly positive responses of the students, combined with Serena's determination to provide texts that represent diverse cultures and people fueled her

energies to acquire more relevant books that would appeal to students. She sought texts that students would consider to be interesting, relevant and in as many cases as possible, representative of who they are.

The Book Love grant allowed Serena to significantly increase her personal classroom library to include numerous new titles, and multiple copies of some titles. Often students, not necessarily enrolled in a class Serena teaches, visit her classroom to borrow books to read on their own time! Sometimes small groups of students want to read the same book so they can talk about it! In addition to the expanded classroom library, Serena's next goal is to introduce book clubs within the English courses she teaches. She is incredibly grateful for the Book Love Foundation Grant for supporting her goal to see students reading self-selected books and reading. She cannot imagine a greater gift to a teacher or to students!