

Thought Leaders Podcast  
Weekly Discussion & Resource Guide

Background

The connective, inclusive nature of the Alliance is focused on removing barriers and establishing a strong cross-disciplinary network of relationships between scientists, experts, practitioners and professionals across multiple sectors within our Region - but we don't want to sing to the regular choir, we want to actively engage and include those who aren't usually singing with us. And that's where you and this podcast come in...

The Thought Leaders podcast features locally-based conversations that flowed out of world-leading expert conversations. We hope you are inspired to keep the conversation going - at your workplace, within your community, and with friends and family.

We'll provide a couple of conversation starters for each episode (a full series discussion guide will follow). Use these or come up with your own based on your knowledge and life experience:

Podcast Series Conversation Starters

- ◆ What are some of the biggest challenges that are facing the children in our community and their families today?
- ◆ Are there any that are specific/unique to the community you serve?
- ◆ How do these challenges/issues intersect with one another?
- ◆ How might conversations impact the work you do?
- ◆ Who is missing or would add value to your conversations?



Episode #4  
 “How We  
 Read Now?”  
 Available Now

How We Read Now started by exploring the role of digital text on how we read - the good and the bad. It quickly became something much bigger. A conversation between professional, moms and grandmothers as they talk, yes, about screens vs. paper - but so much more. How you read to your children could very well be changed by listening to this discussion. It affected our guests too - Moraa Mochama, a local app developer/writer and Marjorie Knight of the Friendship Centre brought insights to the table that left them and Dr. Jean Clinton with new ways of thinking - the best kind of discussion. When our host Olga Vigil Letang brought her own personal experiences and reflections to the conversation the impact of the written word and story in all of its forms became crystal clear.

Thought leaders:

- ◆ [Moraa Mochama](#), Product Owner, Digital Pre-school division (DPS), Secret Location Media, writer and mom
- ◆ [Marjorie Knight](#), House of Friendship, local politician, mom & grandma

Host [Olga Vigil Letang](#), Supervisor of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Services · City of Cambridge Ontario and mom

Suggested Discussion prompts:

- ◆ Were you aware of ‘dialogic reading’? Moraa said that she felt like ‘she didn’t have the tools to help her children succeed in reading - how common do you think that is? What kind of tools might help? How can we get them to those who need them?’
- ◆ If literacy is a basic human right why are so many of our children failing to succeed at it?
- ◆ How might we change systems and structures to better meet the needs of struggling readers?

- ◆ There was a great deal of discussion about guilt and shame as parents and caregivers during this discussion. How might we create programs and services that alleviate guilt and shame (or at least don't worsen it)?
- ◆ Dr. Baron spoke about the importance of your first language, for confidence, for emotion, for connection. How do we make people aware of this? How can we make it easier for people to find resources to read in their first language?
- ◆ Moraa talked about the importance of 'learning more before going to resolution'. What are ways that we can express cultural humility and acknowledge lived experience and wisdom in our systems?
- ◆ How might we change the conversation around digital and print from either / or to 'yes, and'?

## Diving Deeper



### Moraa Mochama

Product Owner, Digital Pre-school division (DPS), Secret Location Media  
Delivery Expert | Enthusiastic Leader | Passionate About Children's Media

Moraa fell in love with Waterloo Region soon after moving here in 2013 for work. She worked as a project manager for a local insurance company. And now enjoys a new adventure at Secret Location as a Product Owner in their Digital Pre-school division (DPS). DPS's mission is to boost meaningful screen time experiences for kids, a message that resonates strongly with me as a mom of two young kids always looking for quality apps for those moments where I need a break. Moraa has a bachelor's degree from Brock University, a master of business administration degree from Queen's University and is passionate about the advancement of women and people of colour in corporate spaces. She lives in Waterloo with her husband and two-year-old son. In her free time, Moraa likes to cook, and watch "Murder, She Wrote." She is also regularly published in local newspapers such as the Waterloo Record and the Cambridge Times.

<https://www.secretlocation.com>

<https://www.therecord.com/opinion/community-editorial-board/2022/04/07/this-is-jackson-please-handle-with-kindness-and-empathy.html>

<https://www.cambridgetimes.ca/opinion-story/10389117-i-love-you-waterloo-but-you-didn-t-make-it-easy/>



### Marjorie Knight

Family Outreach Worker, House of Friendship, Politician, Housing advocate

As a family outreach worker Marjorie Knight fights on the frontlines of community advocacy, working to remove the gaps that families face. It's a role that comes from lived experience as she had to fight to lift her own family out of poverty and homelessness in the past. Through her work Marjorie sits on the board of directors at ACCKWA, and the Cambridge Shelter, providing support and leadership in our community. Her lived experience of homelessness, and work in family outreach led her to join and advocate as a leader in the \$15 and Fairness campaign, fighting for decent wages and better working conditions for all Ontario workers. As a community advocate Marjorie has stood up to cuts in education, healthcare, and social services. Her work in the community includes empowering younger generations to excel, and this brought her to collaborate with other community leaders in creating a space to celebrate Black History Month in Cambridge.

<https://byblacks.com/content/search?searchword=Marjorie+Knight&Itemid=2527>

<https://www.cambridgetoday.ca/2022-provincial-election-news/getting-to-know-cambridge-ndp-candidate-marjorie-knight-5280133>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F15lwH1Z1Us&t=10s>



Naomi Baron's research interests include language and technology, reading, first language acquisition, the relationship between speech and writing, the history and structure of English, and higher education.

Naomi S. Baron is professor emerita of linguistics in the Department of World Languages and Cultures in the College of Arts and Sciences.

She is the author of nine books, including *How We Read Now:*

*Strategic Choices for Print, Screen, and Audio;* *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World;* *Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World;* and *Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It's Heading.* David Crystal wrote of *How We Read Now* that "Naomi Baron has done a huge service to everyone involved in the study, teaching, and practice of reading – which means all of us." Nicholas Carr called *Words Onscreen* "essential for educators, parents, and everyone who loves to read. The late William Safire described *Always On* as his choice for "most influential and seminal language book of the year." The book was winner of the 2008 English-Speaking Union's Duke of Edinburgh English Language Award competition. Baron's research focuses on the effects of technology on language, social interaction, and learning. She has conducted cross-national studies of mobile phone use and of print versus digital reading practices. A Guggenheim Fellow and Swedish Fulbright Fellow, she was also a Visiting Scholar at the

Stanford Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Among her news media appearances, Baron has been on ABC's Good Morning America and 20/20, CNN, PBS's News Hour, National Public Radio, BBC Radio, CBC Radio, and Voice of America. She has been interviewed by such newspapers as the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, and Boston Globe.

[Medium Matters for Reading: What We Know about Learning with Print and Digital Screens, 2021](#)

<https://www.american.edu/cas/faculty/nbaron.cfm>

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/how-we-read-now-9780190084097?cc=ca&lang=en&>



**Dr. Jean Clinton** of McMaster University is one of four renowned experts to advise the Ontario government on bold reforms to the province's publicly funded education system. The clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioural neurosciences of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine is a specialist in child psychiatry. Her expertise is in the development of young minds and she is recognized internationally as an advocate for children's issues. Her special interest lies in brain development, and the crucial role relationships and connectedness play therein. She has authored papers on early child development and poverty, infant neglect, children's mental health, resilience, and on adolescent brain development.

Dr Clinton holds a Bachelor of Music Degree in Education and a medical degree and Fellowship in Psychiatry from McMaster University. Jean's greatest accomplishment is being the mother of 5 great kids who range in age from 21-31 years.

<https://drjeanclinton.com>

'Love Builds Brains' by Dr. Jean Clinton

<https://tallpinepress.ca/products/love-builds-brains>