

# THE EARLY YEARS

## RhiZONES

*a celebratory  
community space for continuous learning,  
reflection, and connection*

### *Rhizomes:*

horizontal plant stems that produce roots  
below and shoots above; simultaneously  
grounding the plant and reaching in many  
new directions towards light



### Upcoming Invitations

- Building Communities of Inclusion, equity, diversity and Belonging with Natalie Royer and Think, Feel and Act, Dr. Kathryn Underwood
- RIRO online Summer Session
- Save the Date: Early Learning Celebration

### The Importance behind the concept RhiZONES

Our RhiZONES publications aim to reflect our foundations and the many pathways of possibilities we encounter across our Early Years community in Dufferin County. #DCECEmatters

THE  
EARLY YEARS

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**RhiZONES**

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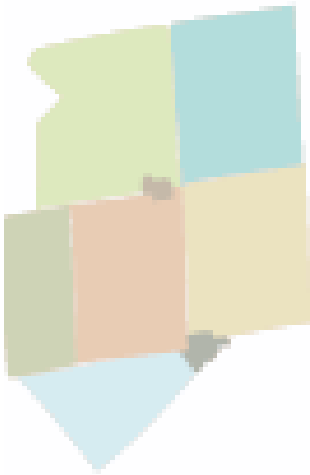


What stories do we desire for Early Childhood Education? What stories do we each bring, what links them?

In search of pathways for connection; opportunities to elevate educators and their contributions; ways to notice and celebrate each other and the groundwork happening in our community; and ways to reflect on our encounters and experiences together, Dufferin County's Early Years and Child Care (EYCC) Division has embarked on a journey of producing RhiZONES publications as an instrumental method to facilitating connection, celebration, awareness, reflection, learning, growth, and evolution in the Early Years and Child Care community within Dufferin County. This publication has been carefully curated by Lisa Taylor, Chelsea Raven, and Susie Amos, with a special mention to Emily Amos for her aesthetic contributions.

"It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories"

Donna J. Haraway



## EYCC Community Roots and Shoots

The County of Dufferin celebrates our early learning and child care community and the Early Childhood Educators who provide outstanding care, connection and learning environments for Dufferin County's children, families and fellow educators. Educators across the county are "thought leaders" and "change-makers!" Our desire is to carve out curious spaces for conversations and exchanges. Spaces of thought and engagements with education, offerings of expression, narration and professional experiences for us to encounter as we wonder together:

"What might be possible when engaging childhood, knowledge and worlds?"

In this RhiZONES issue, we spotlight the blog "Building a Child-Friendly City: Prioritizing Safety, Inclusion, and Well-being in Orangeville and Dufferin County" by our very own Treisha Dinsdale, RECE Dufferin County, and we spotlight the article "Revisiting Paper" Our unwinding relationship with the language of materials by our very own Heather Jackson of the Sunflower School published in the Summer edition of Exchange Magazine.

## EYCC Community Roots and Shoots



Recently published in Exchange Press, Heather Jackson invites us to revisit our unwinding relationships with the language of materials. Curl up and have a read:

<https://www.dufferincounty.ca/sites/default/files/rtb/270%20EXCHANGE%20JACKSON.pdf>



"The possibilities became endless and magical. All of a sudden there was joy again in our schools"

Heather Jackson

What is a Child-Friendly City, and how child-friendly are Orangeville and the surrounding Dufferin County? As a child advocate and an RECE graduating with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Early Childhood Studies, Treisha Dinsdale had the opportunity to explore the future of education and its impact on our youngest members of society.

She shares her perspective with us [HERE](#):

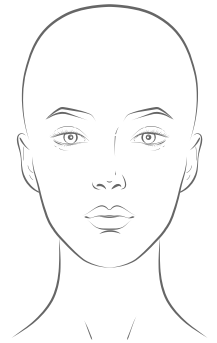
<https://www.dufferincounty.ca/sites/default/files/rtb/Building%20a%20Child%20Friendly%20City%20Treisha%20Dinsdale.pdf>



Treisha Dinsdale, RECE

The Island Lake's natural playground, located in Orangeville was opened in October 2020 <https://www.orangevilletoday.ca/2020/10/06/photos-new-island-lake-wooden-playground-provides-children-a-natural-oasis/>

Early Childhood Leaders  
of Dufferin County's  
Early Years and Child Care Community



*#DCECEmatters*

Do you know an Early Childhood professional who:  
lifts others (colleagues, children, community etc) up?  
inspires others?  
ignites curiosity?  
provokes reflection?  
invites new ways of thinking and being?  
elevates the rights of children and families?  
is continuously learning and evolving?  
is a great mentor?  
shines bright in some unique way?

Perhaps this person is a leader in thinking alongside pedagogical practices of inclusion, belonging, well-being, resilience, democracy and social justice, creative arts and aesthetic knowledges, expression and voice, culture, language and literacy, environmentalism... or otherwise.

We invite you to nominate a RECE, ECA, cook, or any other professional working in/alongside licensed childcare in Dufferin County, who is a thought leader, a change maker, or someone who inspires and lifts others up. If you wish to shine a light on an Early Childhood Leader in Dufferin County, please fill out the following nomination page, found on Raising the Bar under Resources:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=ZmaO1tjJRUGhU6cxJZhRM82iAVTNKfxOn9\\_D1jWLF1BURTFMVzRTSDhOQk8wTVE4RzhZUjM5MjZZRS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=ZmaO1tjJRUGhU6cxJZhRM82iAVTNKfxOn9_D1jWLF1BURTFMVzRTSDhOQk8wTVE4RzhZUjM5MjZZRS4u)

If your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then, you are an excellent leader." - Dolly Parton

"Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flowcharts.

It is about one life influencing another." - John C. Maxwell



Dufferin County  
Service System Manager  
(SSM)

Meet Dufferin County's  
Program Manager of  
Early Years and Child Care

Lori-Jane Del-Medico



## What is a Service System Manager (SSM)?

In Ontario, Service System Managers play a central role in the planning, funding, administration and operation of early years and licensed child care services

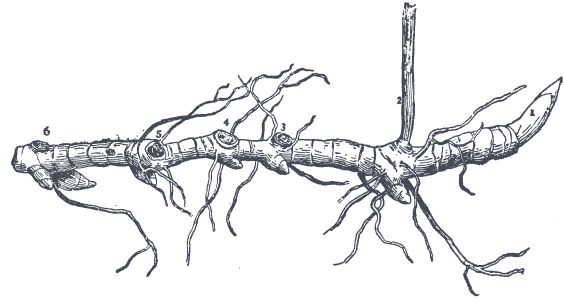
Across Ontario, Service System Managers are responsible for:

- Planning, administering and operating licensed child care and early years programs, through direct service provision and/or third-party service agreements
- Coordinating and administering the delivery of Ontario's Child Care Fee Subsidy program to Ontario families
- Administering Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) in their communities to allow children with special needs to participate in early years and child care programs at no additional cost to parents
- Co-funding the delivery of local early years and child care programs
- Planning, managing and funding Ontario's Child and Family Centres (EarlyON)
- Developing local early years and child care service plans to meet their communities' long-term needs, in coordination with school boards and local service providers
- Planning, negotiating and maintaining service contracts with local child care service providers
- Providing capacity-building support to local early years and child care service providers in areas such as governance, finance, operations and service planning
- Playing a key role in oversight, by ensuring that local early years and child care services and service providers meet a high standard of quality and safety

Service System Managers (SSM) are Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs), or upper-tier (regional) and single-tier municipalities across Ontario (such as Dufferin County), and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) in areas where there are no regional municipalities in Ontario's north



Dufferin County  
Service System Manager  
(CMSM)



## The Value of Service System Management in Early Years and Child Care

Ontario is unique within Canada

in that municipalities (as Service System Managers) play a central role in the planning, funding and administration of early years and licensed child care services.

Service System Managers bring a deep level of local expertise, experience and knowledge to the table. As local governments and service leaders, they are tapped into the broader community planning process, bringing a long-term vision and a sophisticated level of local data, research and local economic analysis to guide their work.

They understand the unique social, economic, regional and demographic forces that shape their communities, and their strong relationships with local service providers help them deliver the right mix of services – with the right community partners – to address specific local needs.

For Ontario to achieve the vision of a high-quality, accessible, affordable and inclusive early years and child care system that is flexible and able to meet the unique local needs of each community, Service System Managers must continue to play a central role.

Service System Managers' extensive local knowledge and well-established community relationships enable them to play an important coordinating role – leveraging local connections to align service delivery, minimize duplication, and maximize available resources to meet local needs in efficient and effective ways.

They can also leverage other municipal services and expertise, in areas like public health, libraries, recreation, economic development, transportation, poverty reduction, newcomer settlement and others, to strengthen and support their work. Their work is furthered by the strong relationships they have built with school boards, child welfare agencies and service providers in their communities. These connections – along with their ongoing work to integrate and streamline the delivery of all human services at the local level.



# Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy



In August 2021, the Federal and Provincial governments signed a new Early Childhood Workforce Funding Agreement, which provided funding to support the retention and recruitment of a high-quality child care and early years workforce in Ontario. The County of Dufferin, in its capacity as Municipal Service Manager of the local Early Years and Child Care system, is responsible to use the funding provided to develop and implement a 15-month Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy for the purpose of attracting, recruiting and retaining Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) to build a stronger and more robust workforce in the local licensed child care sector.

In 2022/2023 Dufferin's Child Care and Early Years workforce strategy action plan was created, and implementation began with the goal of addressing increased access to professional learning and creating the conditions for sustainable recruitment and retention of qualified educators. The following pages include a few examples of the multiple initiatives that have been implemented.

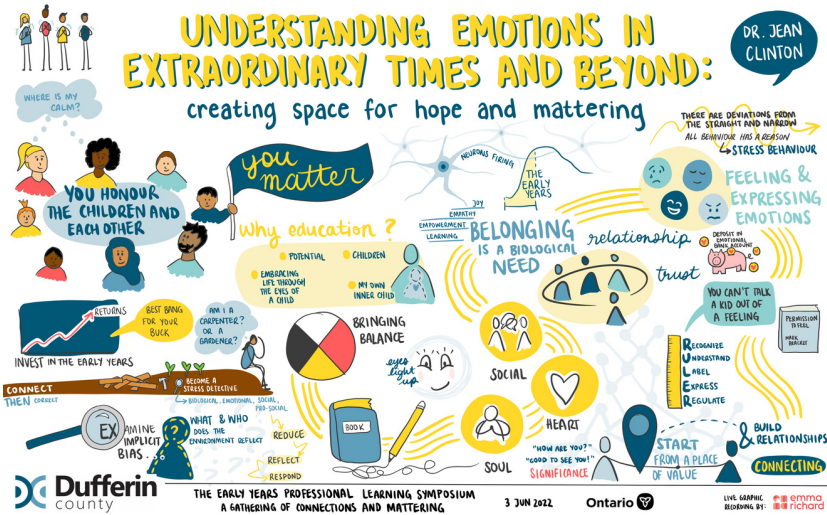


“This day reinforced feelings I had and helped give me the courage to say yes to an early learning environment I want to see”  
-Early Childhood Educator  
Participant

## The Professional Learning Symposium:

On June 3rd, 2022, Early Childhood Educators attended Dufferin's first-ever Early Years Professional Learning Symposium. This event was a key component of Dufferin's implementation of the Child Care and Early Years Workforce strategy. The day had a focus on connection, mattering, and the important role our educators play in the lives of young children and families. This event invites possibilities to respond to and to think with - the question of What Matters in the Early Years Now?

# Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy



Graphic created at The Early Years Professional Learning Symposium

## Videos: Life as an ECE and the Child Care Centres in Dufferin County

Supporting students and Early Childhood Educators in their pursuit of meaningful placements and future employment is important. Through thoughtful and connective environments, mentorship, and relationships, the number of qualified educators can grow, and new educators can be attracted from a diverse cross-section of the population. A series of videos were created highlighting individual child care centres throughout the Dufferin community. This series of videos will offer ECE students and current ECEs to come into relationships with the diverse child care organizations within Dufferin County as they search for placements and employment. In addition, RECEs looking for employment across Ontario will have access to discover and gain a unique insight into “the life as an ECE” in Dufferin through a community video.



These videos will be displayed on our Dufferin County website, and are shared through social media platforms and community partners. To

View Videos click here:

<https://www.dufferincounty.ca/raising-bar>

# Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy



## Reaching In...Reaching Out (RIRO)

### Resiliency Skills Training

As everyone learns to navigate within our post-pandemic world, it has become even more important to know and understand the importance of resilience, relationships, self-/co-regulation, and connection. It is the desire of Dufferin County's EYCC Division and partners to support educators across Dufferin in their own wellness and resilience and to strengthen the community's culture of resilience.

To aid in these desires, several educators participated in Reaching In... Reaching Out (RIRO), a training program that holds close the value and importance of relationships and role modeling in creating a culture of resilience. RIRO has been developed for educators working with children from birth to age 8 to help build the knowledge and skills participants need to model and engage with resilience-building approaches in their day-to-day practice with children. The training uses relationship-based, cognitive-behavioural, and social problem-solving and self-regulation strategies.



Meet your authorized RIRO Facilitators  
(from left to right)

Victoria Buckingham, Chelsea Raven, Treisha Dinsdale, Lisa Taylor, Dana Ness, Shelly McDonald, Ann Wilke (lead resiliency trainer from Wellington County), Lisa Prochilo



“Thank you for the support you bring to the ECEs of Dufferin. I really meant what I said when I was answering and saying that your support for us is so strong! You provide resources, PD, acts of appreciation, and you are always there for us!”

- Dufferin County Early Childhood Educator Participant

## Reaching In...Reaching Out

More sessions coming Fall 2023

Do you have the desire to:



Invest in your well-being and self-care practices, and improve your resilience?

Increase your self-awareness and regulation, your ability to return to calm?



Value presence and play instead of remaining stuck in a state of stress and exhaustion?

Be a part of a community where wellness and resilience are prioritized, shared responsibilities?



Be a part of a community where self-care is accepted, expected and prioritized?

Role model and practice a healthy relationship with self and others alongside children and families?



If you said yes to any of the above, then RIRO is for YOU!

Our RIRO facilitators in Dufferin County are working towards offering at least one series in the fall of 2023, starting late October to early November.

Teams/centres who are interested in participating together are invited to reach out to [craven@dufferincounty.ca](mailto:craven@dufferincounty.ca). We have a collective of authorized RIRO facilitators in Dufferin County and will do our best to accommodate scheduling RIRO training for your team in a way that is most suitable for you.

Did you know? RIRO can be offered in the following formats:

- 2 full day sessions in person
- 4 half day sessions in person
- 6 two and a half hour sessions in person or online
- 12 one hour sessions online

More information about RIRO can be found here:

<https://www.wellington.ca/en/social-services/riro.aspx>

## Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy



“Qualified early learning and care professionals like Registered Early Childhood Educators are a vital part of high quality child care. Without a vital workforce, there is no child care. We’re committed to supporting the next generation of ECEs, and are proud to continue to invest in these Georgian College bursaries.”

- Lori-Jane Del Medico, Program Manager, Early Years and Child Care, Dufferin County

### Dufferin County Bursaries

Dufferin County is committed to supporting and investing in the next generation of Early Childhood Educators. Beginning in September 2022, Dufferin County funded 18 new bursaries with Georgian College to diversify its local ECE workforce in that sector throughout the region. Only five bursaries were distributed in 2022, thus the remaining funding will be rolled over into future years and enrollment dates. This initiative supports ongoing efforts to retain and recruit high-quality child care and early years workforce.



#### Calling all future early childhood educators!

Dufferin County is proud to support a renewable bursary program to encourage Dufferin County students pursuing early childhood education in collaboration with Georgian College. Residents of Dufferin County enrolled full-time in the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) program at ANY Georgian campus may be eligible to receive up to \$5,000 towards their education.

Learn more by visiting [georgiancollege.academicworks.ca/donors/dufferin-county](http://georgiancollege.academicworks.ca/donors/dufferin-county).

#### About Dufferin County

Dufferin County delivers a wide range of programs, resources, and services to support early childhood development and child care in the community.

For more information, please visit [dufferincounty.ca/services/early-years-and-child-care](http://dufferincounty.ca/services/early-years-and-child-care) or contact the Early Years and Child Care Division at [communityservicesinfo@dufferincounty.ca](mailto:communityservicesinfo@dufferincounty.ca) or call 519.941.6991.



“Georgian College is proud to partner with Dufferin County. The County’s generosity will result in a more positive learning experience for students and ultimately grow our early learning sector of quality educators. Thank you Dufferin County for your commitment and support to students now and into the future.”

- Deb Bumstead, Georgian ECED Coordinator

# Early Years and Child Care Workforce Strategy



## Knowing our Numbers A community approach to Understanding the ECE Workforce

The County of Dufferin's Early Years and Child Care Division is participating in Atkinson Centre's "Knowing Our Numbers," a community collaboration for municipalities to come together in collecting and reporting data related to the Early Childhood workforce, in order to better understand the state of the Early Childhood workforce at a regional level and support the County and province wide partners in policy development, planning, investment decisions, or developing stronger workforce strategies which will support the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) System.

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

Multiple sessions were offered to all early childhood educators to provide a dialogical space for critical thinkers to explore ways to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in early childhood education. It has been a pleasure to witness the high impact that these dialogues are generating in such a brief time. The sessions have offered a space for educators to pause and wonder about their well-being and what that entails for themselves and others.



“It impacted my train of thought and allowed me to look at ways to improve and co-create the life we want to live in as our part of Humanity.” -Early Childhood Educator



## Ecosystems of Belonging

### Community Capacity Building and Critical Conversations

The last few years in the sector have been challenging. We have been privy to low retention and declining morale. In spite of all this I am excited that with the support of Lisa Taylor, we were still able to build an ecosystem of learning and community to support our amazing early childhood practitioners that work in Dufferin County.

For the last year, I've had the pleasure to work with Lisa and Dufferin County practitioners through professional development training sessions. During this time, we've discussed topics and have done hands-on exercises to illustrate the application of equity, diversity and inclusion in ECE settings. We've discussed how these concepts are seen in practice as well as in our everyday interactions. We are all unique individuals who come with different lived experiences which creates engaging dialogue and a space where practitioners can bring their authentic selves.

Through our Communities of Practice (CoP), we have created a hybrid model so practitioners can have the option to join in-person and virtually. Through scenarios, discussions and integrated theoretical frameworks, we are able to engage in critical conversations that elicit a space where practitioners feel comfortable in asking sensitive and difficult questions free of judgment. Our topics include but not limited to critical reflection, identity, race, supporting disabilities, intersectionality, equity, culturally responsive pedagogy, relationships, leading with compassion, belonging, etc. This platform allows us not only to be critically reflective in our practice but allows collaborative learning, active listening and entry points to building empathy.

As we continue this work, practitioners will have a voice on what they want to learn during our time together while setting goals for curriculum, pedagogy and professional practice. The overarching goal of these training sessions is for ECEs and practitioners to feel more equipped with skills, knowledge and materials in their practice but ultimately cultivating spaces of belonging for the children and families they serve which will support the Dufferin County community at-large.

It is so exciting working with this dynamic group and I feel rejuvenated after each session! I want to thank all of the participants that have made these sessions such a success!

To the journey.....

Natalie Royer



Strengthening and re-imagining connections of belonging through story telling and story making. An opportunity to learn with curiosity, synthesize with reflection, and take action for growth.



## Upcoming Invitations and Encounters

JOIN US!

Building Communities of Practice: Setting the Stage for Inclusion,  
Equity, Diversity and Belonging

### Leading with Love: A Discussion about Disability and Race

Co-presenter (Dr. Kathryn Underwood, Associate  
Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University)

In these workshops, educators will begin conversations on disability and inclusion. Dr. Kathryn Underwood will co-present in both sessions and facilitate scenario-based discussions. We will provide practical strategies on disability and inclusion and how it intersects with race and how we can support educators in the classroom.

**PART 1 - ONLINE**

Date: Wed. Sep. 27th 2023  
Time: 6:30pm-8:00pm

**PART 2 - IN-PERSON**

Date: Wed. Oct. 18th 2023  
Time: 6:30pm-8:00pm

### Meet Your Facilitators



**Natalie Royer**

Natalie Royer is the founder of Saroy Group. She is a belonging consultant, facilitator and speaker. She supports organizations on cultivating spaces of belonging using an EDI lens.



**Dr. Kathryn Underwood**

(Session on Disability in September)

Kathryn Underwood is a Professor in the School of Early Childhood Studies at TMU and director of the inclusive early childhood service system project (IECSS).

"Leading with Love and Compassion"

"Creating spaces of belonging where  
everyone can thrive"

Natalie Royer

Register at:  
<https://www.dufferincounty.ca/raising-bar>





SAVE THE DATE  
OCTOBER 5 2023

Celebrating each other, at Dufferin County's 2023

**EARLY**  
**LEARNING**  
**CELEBRATION**

Celebrating each other's sparks  
Exchanging expressions of gratitude  
Honoring each other's stories  
Elevating our relationships  
Exploring our creativity together  
Awakening our curiosity



*#celebrateanotherDCECE*  
*#DCECEmatters*  
*@DufferinRTB*



## Podcast Invite

There's a new podcast in town—and it has a lesson for everyone!



Join Stephen Hurley, voicEd Radio, and Michelle Schurter, Millennial Strategist, as they bring the theory, practice, and policy of Early Years education into one conversation.

The birth of this podcast will bring listeners unique experiences as they hear from both practitioners who work directly with children every day and those behind-the-scenes who conduct early childhood research and shape Early Years policy. Merrily—whose name reflects one of the earliest songs we learn as children—takes an upstream—downstream approach, putting early years educators in conversation with thought-leaders in the field (upstream), and encourages those outside the early years to think about how the learning in these earliest stages of life is critical for all citizens today and tomorrow(downstream).

After months of planning and creating, Merrily is ready to create honest and robust conversations about the importance of early childhood education not just for early childhood educators, but society as a whole.

Join Stephen and Michelle as they paddle merrily upstream and down with delightful guests diving deep into early years' conversations! Listen now! Merrily podcast can be found on Spotify, iTunes, and voiced Radio Click on the link below:

<https://voiced.ca/project/merrily/>

## Igniting Inspiration

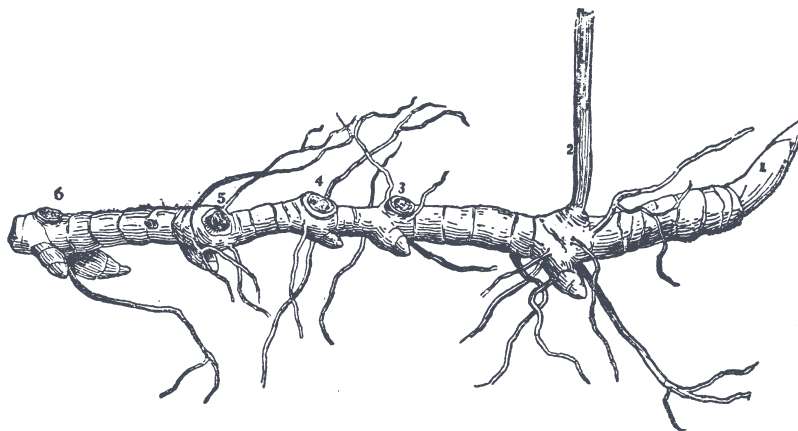
"Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you. Spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life"

- Amy Poehler

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who is *your* group of people?  
how do *they* change your life?

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*a celebratory  
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thank you for reading and  
engaging with this publication

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