

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Through Kindness and Stories

Many Principals can attest to a love of literature.

Principals embark upon their careers with the ongoing commitment to inquire, read, learn, and improve. Literature is a core part of their lives, from professional development to relaxation time.

Elementary Principal Angelina Gauthier has been surrounded by literature all her life, creating stories since the age of three, when she would recite them out loud, and her Dad would type them on his classic Royal portable typewriter.

“There is a black-and-white photo of me sitting at the typewriter at the age of four, typing one finger at a time. That is my first memory of physically writing. I am certain that I wasn’t forming any words, but was creating my own kind of story,” she says.

Angelina says that her mom furthered her love of words through songs and stories. “She was always singing songs or nursery rhymes. It is a very fond memory I have of my childhood,” she recalls.

Angelina continued to put pen to paper throughout her elementary and high school years and, upon graduation, she decided not to go into teaching like all her friends, but instead entered the field of journalism, as a sports reporter.

Despite the love of writing, photography, and sports, Angelina’s calling as an educator pulled her away from her career as a reporter. She returned to university and received her degree in Elementary Education from the University of British Columbia, in

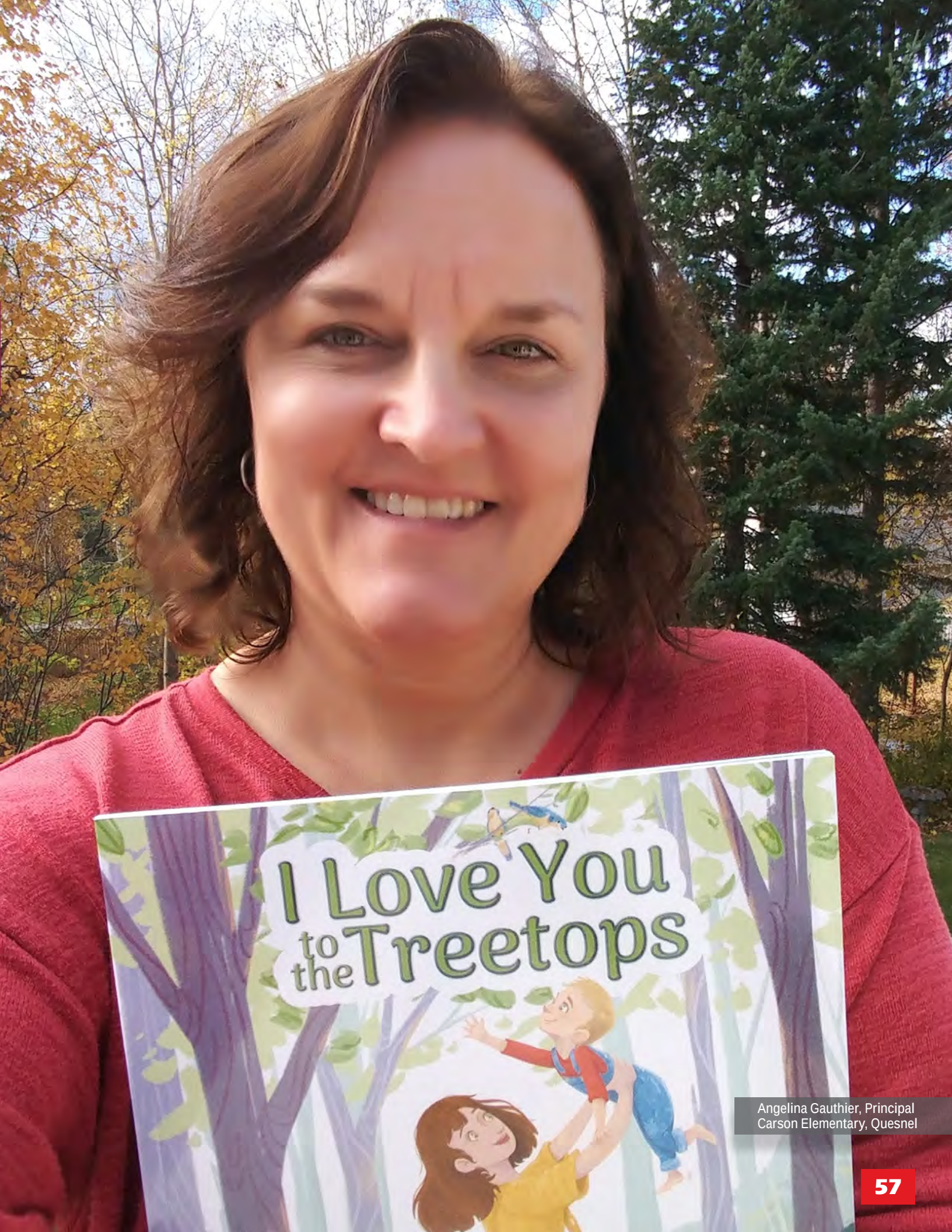
1995, in association with the University College of the Cariboo (now Thompson Rivers University).

“I still continued to write. I wrote articles for college newspapers, and magazines. I created my own fictional books as gifts to family members, but I always had the dream to have a book published,” she reflects.

Through the years, Angelina attempted to get her stories traditionally published, and would mail manuscripts to various children’s publishers, only to receive rejection letters. Then, in 2019, she was reading a picture book and the opportunity to publish presented itself.

“I was reading a children’s book that I had purchased for our school, and saw that the author, Laurie Wright, offered some free resources for the book, so I went to her website. From there I discovered she was Canadian, and that she also offered a course on how to self-publish your own book. I didn’t even know that was possible!” she said.

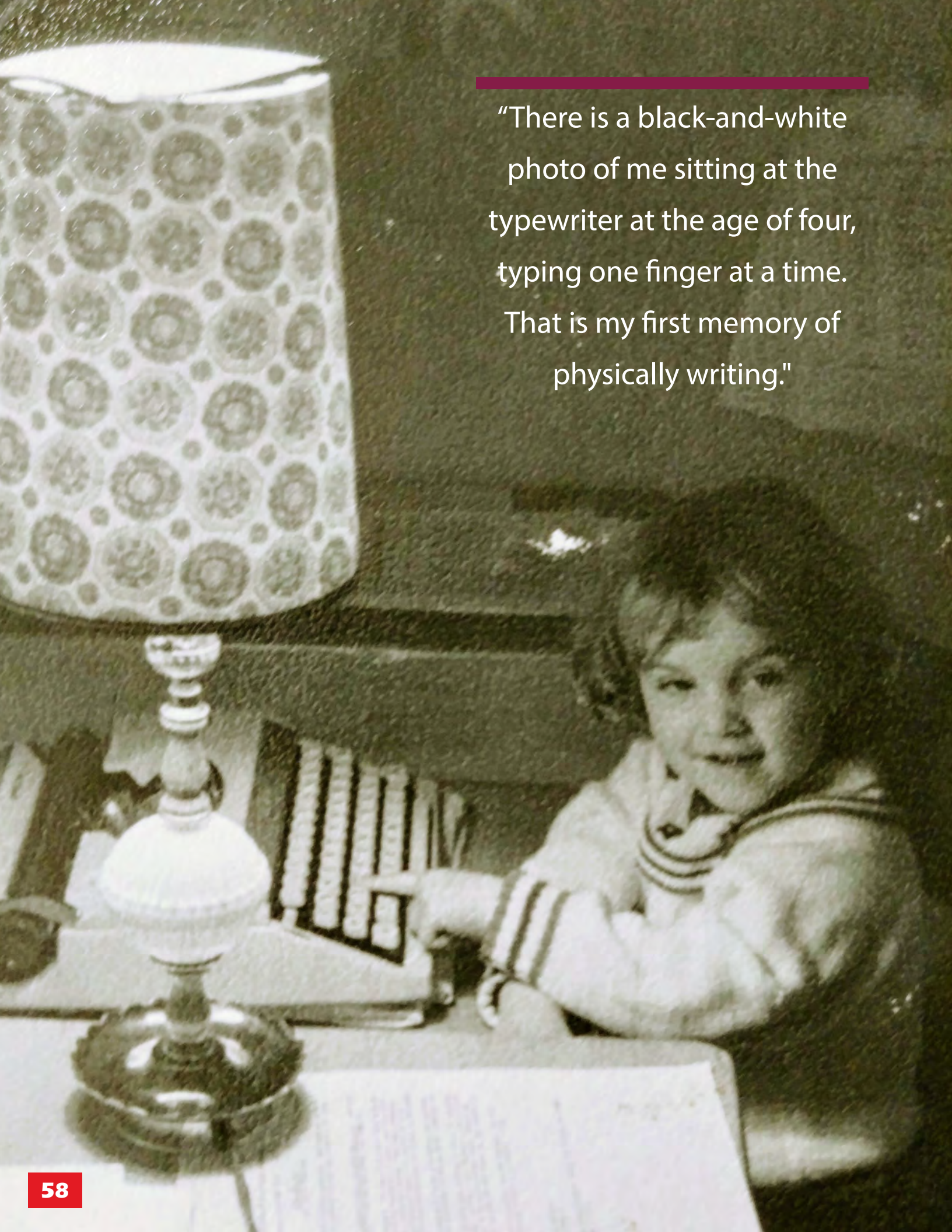
Angelina enrolled and completed the course, determined to finally publish a book on her own. Despite having many stories written on scraps of paper, old floppy discs, tattered foolscap, or her



I Love You to the Treetops



Angelina Gauthier, Principal
Carson Elementary, Quesnel



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present desktop computer, the first book she set out to publish was a new title that she was inspired to write for her current students at Carson Elementary School in Quesnel, about kindness. What started out as a poem, called “A World of Kindness”, turned into her first manuscript.

“A key character trait that we talk about at our school is kindness,” Angelina states. “It is the foundation for our school goals, the social-emotional learning we teach, and the values we encourage. I had been searching for a new book on kindness, and couldn’t quite find something that had the message I was looking for, so I decided to write it.”

After writing, the next step in the process was editing. Her editor assisted in helping focus on the key theme of the book, and resulted in a title change in to ‘What Kind of World Would It Be?’, since that was the recurring question throughout the book.

Once the manuscript was complete, Angelina had to find an illustrator. The main obstacle in finding an illustrator is expense. A quality illustrator can charge approximately \$5,000 to illustrate a book. Angelina did find a cheaper illustrator on the website Fiverr, but soon realized, after a couple of pages, that the cost for that illustrator reflected the quality. She wanted a book that looked professional, so she continued her search and ended up finding – for a reasonable price – a new, young, keen graphic artist and illustrator, Hayley Moore from North Carolina. The illustration process took five months to complete, starting with storyboards, colour palettes, sketches, and regular daily communication back and forth.

“I am a strong believer that children need to see representation of themselves in the books they read, and provide young people with exposure to diversity through reading to develop a compassionate, kind world,” Angelina states. “When creating this book, I created a storyboard of children I wanted represented, and my illustrator enthusiastically included them. We have children with diverse hair and skin colours, with glasses, in a wheelchair, with a prosthetic leg, wearing a Patka, wearing a hijab, and a child with Down Syndrome.”

In October 2019, Angelina published her first book, “What Kind of World Would It Be?” with Kindle Direct Publishing.

“I still remember the day that my book arrived in the mail,” Angelina says with excitement. “It was like an out-of-body experience, seeing the words I wrote, along with the illustrations by Hayley. I had done it! I was a published author.”

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Shortly after publishing, Gauthier, who is the Principal of Carson Elementary School in Quesnel, had the opportunity to read the book to the whole school at an assembly.

“The response was really positive,” she recalls. “Students were so excited to learn the steps it took to write a book, and one class had me come in as a guest to discuss the publishing process. The nice thing was that I shared the poem with my students in the Spring, and they saw it transform into a book in the Fall.”

Local students and families supported Angelina by purchasing her book at local bookstores, a library

reading, and a local Christmas Farmer's Market, while other readers around the world started to purchase it on Amazon.

The recurring question in "What Kind of World Would It Be?" is, "If everyone acted just like me, what kind of world would it be?" It is a book that encourages kindness, cooperation, generosity, and empathy, and inspires dialogue about how to make the world a little kinder. It challenges children to reflect on their actions and inspires meaningful discussions about how actions and words impact others.

"It shows how simple, daily social interactions such as a kind word, helping hand, or selfless act can have a huge impact on others, and can fill the world with kindness," says Angelina.

Last year, Angelina had the desire to publish again. Her next story, "I Love You to the Treetops", was developed more than 15 years ago as a bedtime routine with her husband and daughters, where they would play a game before bed to say how far they loved each other every night.

"It was very easy to write," Angelina recalls, "As it came from my family's memories, and a place that celebrates our love. It's something that a lot of people can relate to, no matter what your family looks like."

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With this story in particular, Angelina wanted a new look for her illustrations. She discovered some artwork online by Elizabeth Osborn, an illustrator from Arizona, and knew her work was a wonderful match. Angelina also wanted representation and diversity in the illustrations of her book.

"The illustrations had to have a 'wow' impact for the diversity of geography, people, and cultures. I wanted to represent all kinds of families in the illustrations, and I feel she complemented the words beautifully," Angelina commented. "Families are so diverse. We no longer just have the traditional family unit of mom, dad, and kids. I wanted to ensure our illustrations also showed the diversity of the caregivers and families of our children, and I still wish I could have included more."

The illustrations got underway immediately, and "I Love You to the Treetops" was published in September 2020 through Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing. This book shares the vast, unconditional love between a parent, grandparent, or caregiver, and child, and compares their love to the distance of treetops, deserts, waterfalls, forests and savannahs.

"The hard copy of this book drew even more emotions, as it was a strong family memory," Angelina shares. "We have a family video of one of my daughters at a young age, reading her Dad his Father's Day card, using many of the phrases from the book. It was a treasured routine in our house."

Since Angelina self-publishes her books, the work doesn't stop after the book is published.

"There's an even bigger process after publishing," she says. "When it's done, a publisher doesn't take over the advertising and marketing; it's all up to me. My marketing plan involves using my social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and my website, www.kindnessandstories.com. I regularly post on my "Kindness and Stories" Instagram and Facebook pages, write on my author blog, have done live video readings, book giveaways, have been featured on book blogs, and approached by the CEO of kindness.org."

This Spring, Angelina did class visits in her school,

and thought it was time to read her book, “What Kind of World Would It Be?” to the primary grades again.

“I had the most heartwarming moment reading the book to our grade 2/3 class in March. When I held up the book, half a dozen hands went up, and students started calling out ‘I have that book!’” Angelina said. “When I started to read, the students joined in and read the book along with me. Once it was done, they all applauded. It made my week!”

Angelina knows that there is a pool of literary talent in the BCPVPA, with potential authors in the ranks. She strongly encourages colleagues who wish to pursue writing a book to take a course in self-publishing to help guide them through the process.

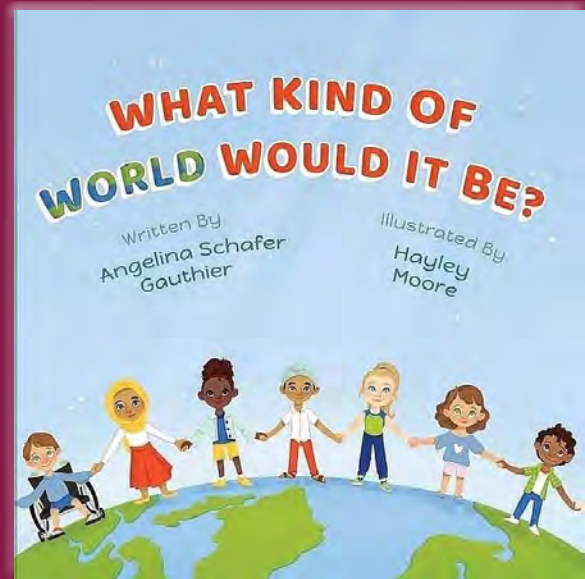
“The self-publishing course was the key to giving me the tools and confidence to take my work from my computer to a bound book,” she said. “There are

many steps involved, but I know so many Principals have valuable stories to tell and, with self-publishing, it is possible.”

Angelina hopes to publish another children’s book next year and is currently working on the manuscript. Her passion is kindness and social-emotional learning, so she feels that she will continue to use them as inspiration for future books.

“Today’s parents and educators are looking for books on character education to help them teach children the important values they need to live in this world, and I believe celebrating kindness and love is the way to do that,” Angelina said. “As an educator, I spend a lot of time encouraging students to be helpful, respectful, kind, and responsible. I hope that my books can help teachers and families build those valuable character traits, and develop our future citizens and leaders through stories.”

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