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LEADERS & LEARNERS

THE VOICE OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/L'ASSOCIATION
CANADIENNE DES ADMINISTRATEURS ET DES
ADMINISTRATRICES SCOLAIRES

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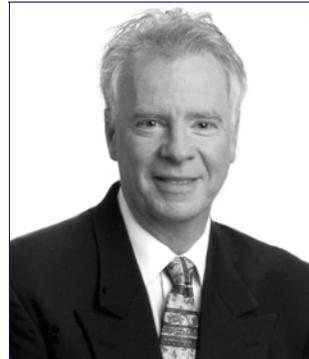
- We are holding the CASA Annual Conference at the Delta Quebec City in October 2005.

Details on other future CASA events will be posted at www.casa-acas.ca and listed in upcoming newsletters.

Message From The President: A New School Year Brings New Challenges

It is with a sense of humility that I find myself writing my initial message as president of CASA. I recognize the immense potential that we have, both as individuals and as an organization, to influence educational policy and direction locally, provincially and nationally. To this, I add my feelings of pleasure and anticipation in assuming my role as president.

At the beginning of every year, each of us faces excitement and challenges at our respective local levels. The challenges can take many forms; they can be energy sapping and time consuming. However, all demand attention.



Bob Mills
CASA president

It appears that there is consensus across our country that there must be a strong emphasis on all aspects of literacy and numeracy, that these are of primary importance. In addition, it's clear that second and even third language acquisition is of increasing significance.

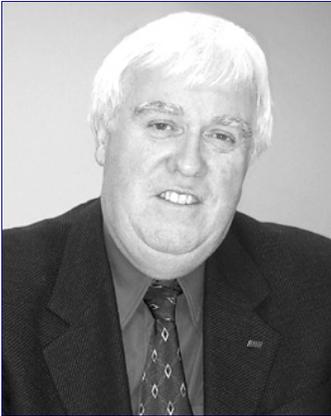
To have an effect on these issues, we must realize that in education, our strength is that ours is a profession that is rich in powerful, innovative people at all levels who are committed deeply to students in the classroom. Their passion is to help students learn as effectively as possible and to instill within them an unquenchable thirst for ongoing learning.

Although at this time in the academic year, we are looking ahead to the future, I know that we are more successful than ever in this trust that is given to us: to lead with integrity and to support with warmth and care. Good luck in the 2005-06 school year!

Getting To Know Our New President

Bob Mills is the assistant director of the Lester B. Pearson School Board, and CASA's newest president. His school board's territory covers the western half of the island of Montreal and then extends west to the Ontario border. Over the past 30 years, Bob has also been a teacher, school administrator and board-level administrator. He is the former president of the Association of Administrators of English Schools of Quebec. Read more about Bob in our feature interview on page three.

Message From The Executive Director: Essential Qualities For Today's Educational Leaders



Frank Kelly
CASA executive director

Another school year begins and supervisory officers across Canada are working hard to provide

staffing and programs for all of the students in their charge. Classrooms will open and students will continue the process of learning after a summer of freedom and personal pursuits.

One of the greatest challenges of the education leader is to make sure that students are involved at school and committed to the programs of the system. When students lack a connection to or respect for what is taught, this may ultimately lead to the considerable dropout rate and disengagement that is constantly referred to in the press.

Superintendents and directors of education must look to the "summer choices" of students, then try to incorporate the best of what appeals into the education offerings that will fill the next months and years of these young lives. There are lessons in sports, music, drama, crafts, technology and a multitude of skills that have appealed to students in the summer. And remember, young people have learned so many things fully in the summer. They can learn our curriculum just as fully during the school year.

Many of us are convinced that we do not push the limits of students. There is considerable evidence to show that with new techniques and improved technology we can achieve higher levels of learning, perhaps even more quickly.

The October conference offered by CASA deals with the learning capacity of students. Join us at the sessions in Quebec City where experts will present practical examples of programs that are working.

Bonjour, Tout Le Monde: Join Us In Quebec City This Fall

By Ed Wittchen
CASA PD director

This fall, meet up with your CASA colleagues from across Canada in historic Quebec City.

You can enjoy the sights of Old Quebec from your seat on a *caleche* (a horse-drawn carriage), or take the walking tour of the walled city. Re-visit the history of our country on the Plains of Abraham. Walk the cobbled streets of the Lower Village where Champlain laid the foundations of the city's culture, or the Promenade overlooking the St. Lawrence River.

The conference takes place from October 15 to 17. This year's theme is "Technology for Tomorrow." Apple Canada has sponsored several speakers, including **Angus King**, former governor of Maine. When King was in



office, he was responsible for putting a laptop in the hands of every grade 7 and 8 student in the state.

CASA's summer and fall conferences are quickly becoming "must attend" sessions for educators in every province. In addition to quality speakers and interesting and relevant sessions, there is the built-in attraction of the host locations. More and more leaders are bringing their families to enjoy the local culture of a conference location. Past conferences have had great success in spots like Whistler, Calgary, Niagara Falls, Hull, Halifax, Charlottetown and St. John's. Future events are scheduled for Toronto, Winnipeg and Whitehorse.

We'll also be celebrating Canadian excellence in leadership in Quebec City, as we present the 2005 CASA/XEROX EXL Awards. For more information, visit www.casa-acas.ca.

Ring the bells that can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.
—Leonard Cohen

Bob Mills: A Feature Interview With Our New President

This summer, **Bob Mills** replaced **Ruth Mattingley** as CASA's president. Prior to his position as assistant director of the Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal, Bob was the director of educational services. He also worked for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal for 25 years as a teacher, science department head, vice principal, assistant director of pedagogical services, and assistant director of adult and vocational education. A graduate of Concordia (MSc Biology), Bob was born and raised in the city of Montreal. He and his wife **Lisa Marie**, a teacher, have two children. Daughter **Shelby** attends the Baccalaureate International program and is in grade 8, and son **Taylor** attends grade 5 in a French immersion program. This is Bob's seventh year with CASA.

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Why did you decide to get into the field of education?

What sparked your interest?

I started my teaching career as a substitute teacher back in the early 1970s as a result of returning from a trip to Europe, as a means of earning some money. Little did I know that experience would redirect my life and see me return to university to obtain a teaching certificate, which set a process in motion of 30-plus years in the education field.

I feel that students have always been the central focus of my philosophy in education and I embraced, as a science teacher, an experimental approach to the teaching of science. [This] dovetailed with students taking an active role in their own learning by using inquiring methods of experimentation, all while learning basic concepts of science.

I feel that, for me, administration was a natural progression and I have maintained my basic philosophy of working as a partner with all staff members I have had the pleasure to work with.

How has education changed the most since you first entered the field?

I feel the most significant change in education has been a systemic change in the way educational services have been delivered in the past 5 to 10 years. Specifically, a change in the way teachers and administrators have moved away from the concept of teaching students to one of permitting students to be active learners.

I understand that is a small step in the lives of students but a major one when it comes to the end result of an education within the public school system.

What has remained essentially the same?

There is no doubt in my mind that the essential characteristic of warm and caring teachers who are professionally devoted to their students is one characteristic that has remained with us and is the foundation on which the trust of students is based.

What are some of your board's most notable achievements in recent years?

Our most notable achievement has been in the area of international education. We have an expanded program dealing with international students from North and South America and Europe, and our largest proportion is Chinese students from the Greater Beijing area.

We have a very strong belief for supporting all student learners in our board's territory and it is exemplified with our special needs policy: the global inclusion.

What sort of challenges has the board faced lately, and how is it meeting them?

Our most recent challenges revolve around declining student

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The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without his teacher.
 —Elbert Hubbard

Yukon Department Of Education: A Success Story

The Yukon Department of Education is a rather unique system within Canada. In some ways, it operates as a government ministry, similar to Saskatchewan Education or the Ontario Ministry of Education. In other ways, it is like a local school district. There are 28 schools in the system, with three basic structures: K-12 in many rural areas, K-9 in others, and a K-7 and 8-12 setup in Whitehorse. Rural students who do not have local access to grades 10 to 12 live and attend school in residences in Whitehorse. Administrators with Yukon Education face many of the same challenges as those across the rest of our country, but they also have some that are uniquely their own. Here, Yukon director of learning **Chris Gonnet** shares some of their strategies for success.

What are some of the biggest challenges that have faced educators in the Yukon in recent years?

We cover a vast geographical area with a small population. The entire territory has a population of 28,000. In that, spread among 14 different communities, we have a huge range in terms of schools, so geography is a challenge.

And with that, we have the spectrum of learning challenges. We have a broad continuum of student abilities and needs. We've really attempted to try and develop programming that will meet those needs.

It's a fact across Canada that our education system has not served First Nations people well. I think in comparison to other jurisdictions, though, we've done very well. We've tried to strategically focus our attention to address this.

One truly unique thing we have here is the whole status of First Nations and the self-government agreements. We're looking for First Nations to play a legitimate role in education as per their land claims agreement. We are in some sense of the words further ahead. We, as a government jurisdiction, are beginning a process of trying to find ways where we can work together.

The other unique feature is that we are a ministry of education. We serve the function as a ministry and as a school district. We have no other local school boards other than a Francophone school board; even our Catholic schools have not seen the necessity to form their own board.

How do you deal with the challenges you face?

First, information technology. We are the most connected territory in Canada. Our network system is second to none. We have an excellent computer-to-student ratio. Every school is part of a wide area network, with high speed connections. That was part of a Connect Yukon project from



An Elder shares a First Nations legend with students as part of the grade 3 language arts curriculum in the Yukon.

five or six years ago.

Second, we have fairly extensive pedagogical support. We have teams that travel to the schools, a large central staff whose main task is to provide pedagogical support to schools.

Third, we've really tried to focus our development in four key areas: literacy, numeracy, social responsibility and First Nations curriculum support.

We offer reading recovery as a mainstay of our program, and we're seeing positive results. We have ongoing mentoring and training specific to math at the intermediate grades and that's expanding to junior high grades.

We provide a lot of leadership in our schools. Teachers are en-

couraged to take students on field trips. In Dawson, for example, they take part in "The First Hunt," with Elders and teachers working together. We do a number of things with our Elders and community members through storytelling, including a storytelling celebration and a Robert Frost celebration.

Sometimes you don't necessarily have to be facing a challenge or obstacle in order to achieve success. What are some of the biggest successes to happen in the Yukon in recent years?

At the senior levels, we have an ex-

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**School is a building
that has four walls—
with tomorrow
inside.**
—Lon Watters

Yukon Education: Hands-on Strategies And Solutions

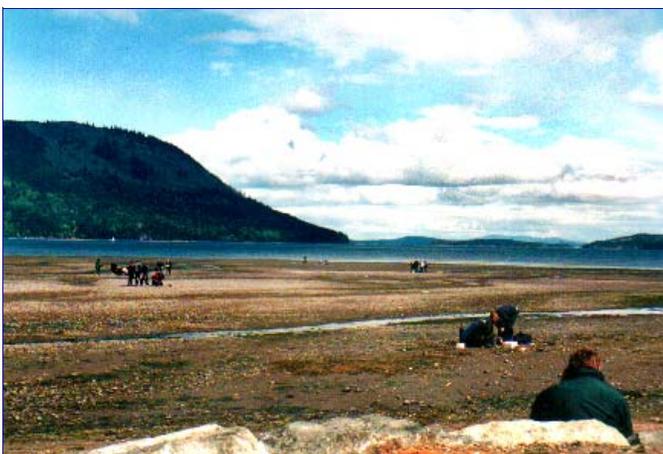
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tensive science program with field-based study. In fine arts, we have the MAD, or Music Art Drama, program, where two teachers take a group of students for a semester and integrate music, art and drama.

Students involved in that program recently wrote a play addressing issues of substance abuse. They then took it on the road, including to Ottawa where they were able to continue their studies on-site. There were all the historic tie-ins, all the historic sites there, for social studies.

Science students in grades 9 and 11 are focused on experiential science. There is one semester in grade 9 for French students, one semester for English, and then it's all English in grade 11. It's very hands-on.

We're very concerned about students in the 40 to 50 percent range, those who are on the verge of dropping out. They could go either way. Those are the kids that are just barely getting by and we're trying to get them to go the positive way. We're into a first full year—every jurisdiction in Canada has it—of an individualized learning centre. Its focus is



on kids who have dropped out. We're trying to help kids find career paths so they can see the purpose of education. A major component of it is kids developing their work skills, then when they get some focus, we can bring them up to speed with their academics.

We had eight graduates through that program last year. One has gone on to nursing. We've got another one doing the fish and wildlife resource officer path.

Are there individuals, teams of individuals or organizations that had direct affects on these outcomes?

Our staff at the experiential centre, what we call the Wood Street facility, we're very proud of them. We're very proud of the staff at our reading recovery centre; they really make a difference.

Please tell our readers more about the Yukon Department of Education.

It's a very progressive system. It's very student-centred with excellent resources, excellent teachers—that's really what makes a good system.

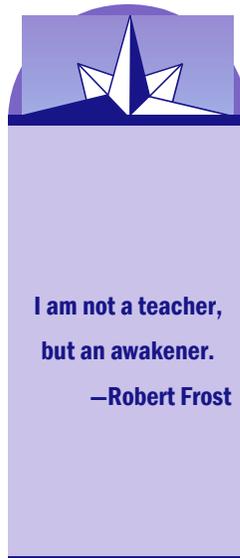
I think we have a system where we encourage people to take new approaches to learning, and then support them with the resources and tools they need. We don't always get everything perfect, but we do learn from our mistakes.

As a parent, I can tell you that students in the Yukon education system have far more opportunities to travel, whether that's with Encounters With Canada, the Terry Fox Centre,

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Left, top: A group of students take part in a beach transect lab as part of their marine biology unit in Biology 11. This type of field-based study is encouraged as part of Yukon Education's experiential science program.

Left, bottom: Through the Music Art and Drama (MAD) Program, Yukon students write scripts, design the sets, perform and take on all other aspects of a major stage production. This particular group toured Yukon and Ontario. The RCMP, as part of their youth harm reduction strategy, were a major sponsor.



**I am not a teacher,
but an awakener.**

—Robert Frost

Yukon Education: Addressing The Needs Of All Students

(Continued from page 5)

Lester B. Pearson College on Vancouver Island, field studies—some students do a battlefield tour in France as part of the social studies curriculum.

The Catholic schools in the system send students to the Dominican Republic to volunteer, to live with families there, to experience third-world conditions.

We have French language exchanges, and YMCA and band exchanges. We also host international students and we're a big supporter of the Rotary exchange program and other privately run exchange programs.

"It's a very progressive system. It's very student-centred with excellent resources, excellent teachers."

**~Chris Gonnet, director of learning,
Yukon Department of Education**

Are there any particular awards that the system has been recognized with in recent years?

Our experiential science program has been awarded the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Education, and we've received the Hilroy; we have many Hilroy Fellowship Award winners.

What goals does Yukon Education have for the future?

We'll be continuing to expand our efforts for early intervention in literacy and numeracy, working with First Na-

tions to see their students experience greater success in school and to continue to address the needs of students we consider to be at risk.

Getting To Know "Bobby" Mills

(Continued from page 3)

enrollment, and the board expects to have to reconfigure its programs and allocation of students due to shifts in population. These challenges are met in Quebec with great anxiety as community schools are a strong focus in the English-speaking communities within Quebec. Our board will be undertaking "Major School Change" consultations throughout the course of this year, and we look forward to involving all our stakeholders in this process.

What do you feel are some of your own personal achievements in the field of education? What are you most proud of when it comes to your work as someone in education?

Although it is hard to remember individual facts and figures that go back over 30 years, I feel that for me personally, I am most proud when a young adult comes back to me and says, "Mr. Mills, thank you for teaching me...."

I am humbled to realize that one person can and does have a direct influence on the life of another individual. Therefore the achievement of being a teacher is one, which in my mind has the greatest of rewards: that of making a difference in a learner's life, be it a child or an adult.

On a professional level, my involvement at the local, provincial and national levels dealing with colleagues has afforded me opportunities for personal growth, professional development and the ability to interact with fellow Canadians.

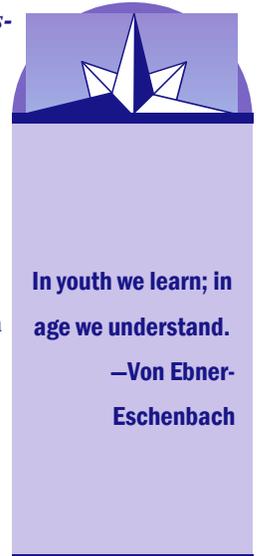
Outside of your work in education, what is your greatest achievement or most proud moment, and why?

Any time a child succeeds and shows extreme joy and that child happens to be a son or daughter, you cannot help but feel personal pride and great love. I can only say that when I see this in my children, I realize that these are my greatest achievements and my proudest moments.

What is the greatest lesson you have learned as a teacher/education administrator? How did you learn it, or who or what taught you this lesson?

My greatest lesson that I feel I have learned either as a teacher or education administrator is the ability to listen to what is being said and try to put it into a larger context rather than concentrate uniquely on the words that are being spoken.

This lesson is brought home to me on a daily basis because I am pleased to still have surrounding me and working with me teachers who taught me in elementary and high school, and who remind me about who I am and what I am doing, by referring to me as "Bobby Mills."



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Our Mission:

CASA will advance quality public education and excellence in system level leadership through advocacy and national collaboration.



Our Beliefs:

CASA believes that:

- Cultural diversity is a unique strength that enriches our nation.
- Communication and collaboration with parents and other partners is integral to successful student learning.
- Quality public education provides the best opportunity for a nation to enhance the lives of all its citizens.
- Effective system, provincial and national level leadership enables and supports excellence in teaching and learning.
- A comprehensive education, equitable and accessible to all, is the key to meeting the diverse needs and securing a successful future for our youth.

Specific strategies to advance the mission:

- Establish position papers on specific topics as they relate to the beliefs and interests of the association.
- Recruit new people.
- Establish a national representation.
- Establish a three-tier public relations and publications strategy.
- Establish a funding team to create an operating budget.

Your Voice, Your Faces, Your Ideas...Your Newsletter

Regular readers of *Leaders & Learners* will recall that in each issue we run a feature called "Faces In The Crowd."

It's a place in the newsletter set aside to allow our members to get to know one another a little better. This isn't always an easy task when CASA members are spread out across such a huge but sparsely populated country. We hope that this feature helps to bridge the great distances between us .

Do you know a CASA member who deserves to be in the spotlight? Is there a colleague that you'd like everyone to meet? Maybe you'd even like to share your own story in a future "Faces In The Crowd."

Don't be bashful! Please get in touch and share the news about your colleagues or yourself.

You can also share story suggestions and even contribute your own articles.

Maybe there's a little known success story happening in your neck of the

woods and you want to share it. Perhaps there's an issue in education you'd like to see discussed by a cross-country panel. You may want to share your reaction to what a panelist said at a recent CASA conference. Whatever ideas you have, *Leaders & Learners* would like to hear about them.

You don't have to worry about being a professional wordsmith to contribute, either; that's what your newsletter editor is here for. Your rough ideas can be written into full-length articles for you, and your submitted articles and photographs can be professionally edited.

Remember, just as the front page states, *Leaders & Learners* is the voice of the Canadian Association of School Administrators. We want to hear your voice, too.

If you have story ideas, questions, concerns or comments, please contact the editor, **Tara Lee Wittchen**, via email at tarawittchen@hfx.eastlink.ca.