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LEADERS & LEARNERS

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Upcoming CASA Events

- CASA Annual Conference, July 2007, in Whitehorse, Yukon

Details on CASA events will be posted at www.casa-acas.ca.

Message From The President: Think Of Our Colleagues In New Orleans

Happy New Year! I would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you and your family warmth, happiness, prosperity and fulfillment for 2007.

As we consider our good fortune of living in a free and flourishing country, let us also consider what public education does to enhance the lives of children around the world.

Specifically, I invite you to consider your support for the public schools of Louisiana as they try to rebuild from the devastation of



Jim Gibbons
CASA president

Hurricane Katrina. Our sister organization, the American Association of School Administrators, is holding a silent auction at its March National Conference in New Orleans to raise funds for Louisiana schools. They are seeking donations for this silent auction in the form of gift certificates, hotel stays, autographed items and so on.

For further information, please visit their website, which you can find at www.aasa.org.

All the best for 2007.

Message From The Editor

This is the start of my third year as editor of *Leaders & Learners*. I normally like to stay behind the scenes and let you, the educators, fill these pages with your news and views.

Jim's editorial, however, hit close to home. What is happening in New Orleans is unbelievable, unfathomable, heartbreaking. Since the storm hit in 2005, I've worried about those families living there who, under the best of circumstances, were barely getting by. How are children supposed to learn their ABCs and 123s if their schools and homes

are in disrepair, if their air and water is hazardous to their health, if they are surrounded by violence?

In early 2007, I lost a friend to the chaos that is post-Katrina New Orleans. Helen Hill was a respected experimental animator, artist, activist and an educator; you can learn more about her at helenhill.org.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Helen, and to her surviving family: her loving husband, Dr. Paul Gailiunas, and their beautiful little boy, Francis Pop.

Message From The Executive Director: A New Year, Two New Innovations

In the last issue of *Leaders & Learners*, we highlighted the value of public education and various dimensions of how it impacts our lives and the lives of students. Many of CASA's speakers and contacts believe passionately that public education can shape the future of learning and provide a community coherence that leads our society.

This contribution to the future direction for public education intrigues me and is an emphasis that I feel our leaders must adopt as central to their philosophy.

The senior administrators of school districts have a responsibility to look for and test learning improvements. They have a responsibility to upgrade curriculum and to make certain that what is taught in our schools meets the needs of society and equips our young people for the demands of a changing world.

Every month we hear of new practices and innovations for learners. Investigating these, considering their application in public education and sharing opinions is something that CASA members can do effectively.

In the past month, I have become aware of two innovations that I feel will affect learning significantly into the future.

The first is an international tutoring service offered from India for a monthly fee on a 24-hour-a-day basis. It is avail-

able to learners from kindergarten through university over the internet with unlimited use.

The second is an announcement from the Michigan Department of Education that new secondary school graduation requirements include evidence of completing one course online to qualify for a diploma. These requirements go into effect in September 2007.

These two innovations increase the horizons of learning and have the potential to expand the management sphere of the supervisory officer, the principal and the teacher. Both are influences on public education and as leaders, we need to think about their potential or whether we can support such change.

There is no end to the parameters of the delivery of public education. The implications of such change are challenging and exciting.

All the best for 2007.



Frank Kelly
CASA executive director

CASA 2007 Annual Conference Update: Yukon Ho!

In July, CASA members will come together in beautiful Whitehorse, Yukon, for the organization's annual conference. The event will feature inspiring sessions, invigorating day activities and entertaining evenings.

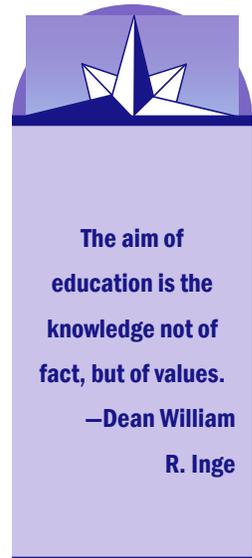
If you've been to previous CASA conferences, then you know how special these events truly are. If you've not had the chance, then make sure this is the year you—and your family—join in. You'll return home with personal and professional development memories of a lifetime.

This year's theme is "Experiential & Aboriginal Education—A Different Perspective." By now you should

have received by email your information package, which includes details on sessions, breakout sessions and mini-institutes; pre-conference activities; and accommodations, flights and car rentals.

There are 11 formal pre-conference activities available to choose from. Activities range from fishing, hiking, camping, hands-on visits with sled dogs, ATV trips, historical site and museum visits, canoeing, horseback riding and more, and include locations such as the Chilkoot Trail; Haines, Alaska; Montana Mountain; and Carcross Desert.

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The aim of
education is the
knowledge not of
fact, but of values.

—Dean William
R. Inge

Reconciliation, Rebuilding And Respect: A Feature Interview With Cindy Blackstock

Cindy Blackstock has worked in child and family services for over 20 years. She worked as a social worker for the Ontario government and a First Nations child and family service agency. She was executive director of a regional indigenous professional development agency for indigenous social workers in 1998. Cindy has published widely on the welfare and rights of First Nations children. She is a board member of the Child Welfare League of Canada and of the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of the Child.

Currently Cindy is the executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCS). This organization seeks to promote and support First Nations child and family service agencies in Canada by offering research, professional development and public education services. CASA members may recall Cindy gave an excellent presentation at the 2006 Annual Conference in Winnipeg. Here she shares her thoughts on the experiences of First Nations children in the Canadian public education system. Cindy can be contacted care of FNCFCS by phone at (613) 230-5885 or through fncaringsociety.com.

What is your general assessment of how First Nations children and First Nations culture are treated within the Canadian public education system?

Canadians have very little understanding of the wisdom, resilience and contributions of Aboriginal peoples in the ancient lands now known as Canada. First Nations peoples lived on these lands for millennia prior to the arrival of the first Europeans and have contributed much to the Canadian identity and prosperity, and yet too often First Nations peoples are excluded and marginalized in Canadian society and in Canadian education.

A major contributing factor to this problem is the dearth of meaningful history instruction in schools across Canada. In too many provinces and territories, history is not a required part of the curriculum and when it is taught it often begins with the arrival of John Cabot and focuses on the story of the settlers. Where First Nations are mentioned, there is rarely any meaningful attempt to understand the rich history, knowledge, cultures and traditions that predate the creation of Britain or France, let alone their arrival on the shores of Canada. Even in universities, Native education courses usually focus on colonization and residential schools, and pay little heed to the resilience of the cultures or the gifts that First Nations peoples have given to Canada.

A byproduct of marginalizing the history of First Nations peoples is that the gifts of First Nations peoples that fundamentally shape what it is to be Canadian get marginalized. First Nations are therefore dehumanized and thrust into the category of the “takers” from Canadian society. Restoration of respectful relationships between First Nations and Canadians is not only necessary to improve the well being of First Nations, it is essential to breathing life into the Canadian identity. Canada’s relationship with First Nations stands in contradiction to its espoused values of democracy,

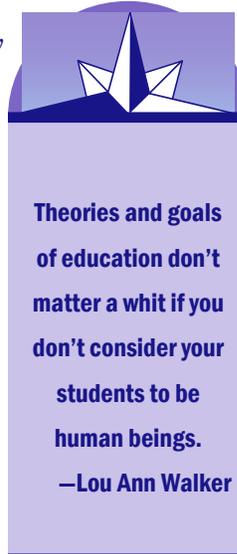
fairness, respect for multiple cultures and freedom. Can Canada be any of these things if it continues to operate the only race-based piece of legislation in the western industrialized world (*Indian Act*) and not follow recommendations of the *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples*?

I believe reconciliation means that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples can, in respectful coexistence, have our respective rights recognized and affirmed. *RCAP* set out a pathway for reconciliation. The federal government has not followed the recommendations of *RCAP* nor has it set out a meaningful alternative strategy. After 10 years it is now time for Canadians to do what government has been unable to do: to reach out in respectful friendship to First Nations peoples and begin the process of reconciliation. Educators can play a key role by advocating for the mandatory inclusion of the history of First Nations peoples, both historic and contemporary, in school curriculum at all levels.

What is the most pressing issue today for First Nations children in public schools?

The dropout rates for First Nations children and youth are unacceptable across the country, but dropout is only a symptom of broader issues such as poverty, poor housing, increased health risks, and the marginalization and discrimination facing First Nations peoples. In my profession of child welfare, we were confronted by a similar challenge—after forcibly imposing western systems of child welfare on First Nations peoples for over 50 years, the results

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A Feature Interview With Cindy Blackstock, continued

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were far from impressive. There have never been more First Nations children in care than at this moment, and the key reason is neglect. When researchers unpacked the definition of neglect they found that poverty, poor housing and caregiver substance misuse were key factors, and unfortunately very few child welfare neglect-focused services adequately respond to these risks. The end result is that First Nations children are more likely to come into child welfare care, receive irrelevant services to their needs and stay in care permanently than other children. It seemed that if child welfare really wanted to improve outcomes for First Nations children, then its first responsibility was to look into the professional mirror, taking full account of what we were doing that was helpful and harmful to First Nations children. As Terry Cross of the National Indian Child Welfare Association has said, it is a difficult realization for we “the good guys” to believe that we may be doing part of the harm, but if we really believe that children come first then even our need to “do good” must come second.

Leaders in Aboriginal child welfare came together in Niagara Falls in 2005 to spell out the principles and process for reconciliation in child welfare—the first step in setting out a mechanism for the look in the professional mirror and the redevelopment of child welfare services. These principles are now being implemented at community, provincial and national levels. You can learn more about the reconciliation in child welfare movement at reconciliationmovement.org.

Interestingly, a reconciliation process has also taken hold in Aboriginal child health, based on a separately generated, but very similar, set of principles to the Touchstones of Reconciliation in child welfare. For information on this movement, please see manyhandeddream.ca.

What can education leaders, such as superintendents and supervisory officers, in Canada do right now to improve the quality of the educational experience for First Nations children enrolled in the public school system? Can you recommend some long-term goals they should adopt?

The good news for many Canadians, and in particular Canadian educators, is that there are things you can do both in the short and long term to help First Nations communities



“Educators can play a key role by advocating for the mandatory inclusion of the history of First Nations peoples, both historic and contemporary, in school curriculum at all levels.”

consider supporting these five initiatives that would all significantly improve the well being of First Nations children and young people.

Over the long term, educators may want to look at the reconciliation in child welfare and child health movements to determine if education would benefit from a similar process. Early indications are that the principles of these two movements have applicability across disciplines and even across cultures as they are meant to act in a constitutional way, allowing for adaptations to diverse contexts and peoples.

What can education leaders do to keep themselves informed and sensi-

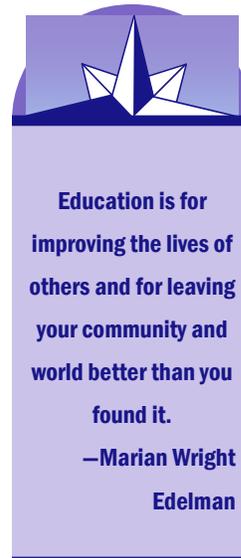
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make a significant and positive difference for their children and young people.

The first is to build respectful relationships with First Nations and First Nations organizations to find out more about the situation, what strategies have been developed and how educators can become involved in implementing the solutions. Too often, there are recommendations that are developed but for one reason or another they are only implemented piecemeal or not at all.

The second is to begin working with First Nations to meaningfully include First Nations content in the school curriculum for all students and to consider a focus on reconciliation.

In terms of immediate assistance, our organization has listed five ways Canadians can make a difference for First Nations children in under 15 minutes (see our website at fncfcs.com). We invite all educators and members of the public to visit the website and



A Feature Interview With Cindy Blackstock, continued

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tive to these issues? What do you believe are the most respectful and responsive methods in which to address these issues?

The most respectful response for educators is to understand that Aboriginal peoples are the best decision makers for Aboriginal children, and that non-Aboriginal educators can play an important role as active allies to implement and support the implementation of these solutions. Again, I would refer to the reconciliation materials available in *RCAP* (particularly the chapter on education), the Touchstones of Hope reconciliation movement in child welfare (reconciliationmovement.org) and Many Hands One Dream (manyhandsonedream.ca).

I would also strongly encourage forming relationships with First Nations education experts, communities and organizations so as to keep abreast of the latest developments. National Aboriginal organization websites such as the Assembly of First Nations (afn.ca), the National Métis Council (metisnation.ca) and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (itk.ca) are also valuable sources of information. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has a virtual cyber school bus education program with rich resources on Indigenous peoples worldwide at un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/aboutPFII/secretariat_home1.htm.

What kind of strategies can education leaders develop for their staff to make sure First Nations children do not suffer harm or neglect in public schools in Canada?

Looking into the professional mirror is, in my view, the first place to start. In child welfare, we are not that great at learning from the past—we simply look back and decide that those who came before us were either uninformed or misguided but that we know better now. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests we don't know better now so we need to explore the past in a way that teaches us as individuals and as a profession.

I strongly recommend a reconciliation process designed in partnership with First Nations experts in education to develop a comprehensive reconciliation movement agenda for educators that can be rolled out in partnership with those in child welfare and child health. By working within each profession and across professions, we maximize the opportunity to deal with the structural factors such as poverty and discrimination that undermine the success of First Nations children in school, health and child maltreatment prevention.

For previous generations of school children, First Nations history was only taught as just that: a historical past and

not a living diverse culture. How can current First Nations culture, achievements and knowledge best be successfully integrated into public school curriculum? How can education leaders best support the inclusion of First Nations-appropriate curriculum?

As before, the key is to work with First Nations in the local area to design holistic curriculum for First Nations and non-First Nations students that is integrated throughout the school curriculum using a reconciliation framework. I also think every Canadian school teacher should read at least three books on First Nations:

- 1) The *Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples Executive Summary* and the chapter on education (available online)
- 2) Jack Weatherford's book *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World* (to get a sense of the great contributions of Indigenous peoples to Canada and the world)
- 3) John Milloy's *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System*

Educators need access to materials that develop their knowledge and then they will be better prepared to work respectfully on a reconciliation agenda and curriculum development.

Are there programs or efforts you've seen in action (for example, the First Nations Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework developed by the Alberta government) that could be recommended as good models for other leaders to adapt and follow in their own districts?

I am not an expert on education per se so I leave this to the Aboriginal peoples in Alberta to comment on this initiative and Aboriginal education experts and organizations more broadly on what are considered best practices nationally.

What is your greatest hope for the next few generations of First Nations children?

Reconciliation that leads to recognition of their distinct rights, equal opportunity and a full recognition of the gifts that First Nations have made, and continue to make, to Canada and the world. We can get there, but it will take all of us to reach out in friendship, and the courage and fortitude to engage in the reconciliation process.



We owe the Aboriginal peoples a debt that is four centuries old...and the reconciliation required may be less a matter of legal texts than of attitudes of the heart.

—Romeo LeBlanc

CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd



Mario Tirelli
Quebec

Mario was born in Italy and arrived in Montreal at age six, where he began his education career. He has spent most of his life in the Montreal-area school system as a student, teacher, vice-principal, principal and board administrator. He is the current regional director at the English Montreal School Board.

He has been involved in professional associations and has organized workshops and conferences at the school board, provincial and national level. He is the new affiliate director of CASA representing the Association of Administrators of English Schools in Quebec.

Mario enjoys his work and dedicates himself to supporting the school administrators and teachers. He believes that educators must respond to the ethical challenges they face every day with courage and compassion.



Terry Grand
Ontario

Terry has been a superintendent of education for the London District Catholic School Board since January 2003. He is a graduate of Western University and Niagara University.

This is his 30th year in education. He has held a variety of roles within the Niagara Catholic District School Board, Carleton Catholic District School Board, Simcoe Catholic District School Board and London District Catholic School Board. Presently he has responsibility for Program Services (Special Education), Safe Schools and a family of schools. He sits on the board of directors for Investing in Children and is a former board member and coach for Disabled Sports.

Terry and his wife Darlene have four children: three daughters and one son. He enjoys outdoor activities and fitness training.



Dean Lindquist
Alberta

Dean (pictured—yes, in the fish mascot costume—with colleagues Alvin Johnson and Judy Grigat) is the superintendent of schools for the Grande Yellowhead Regional Division No. 35. He graduated from the University of Saskatchewan, San Diego State University and University of San Diego.

He is a member of the College of Alberta School Superintendents and has served on a variety of CASS and Alberta Education committees. In addition to GYRD, he has held positions with Aspen View Schools and Buffalo Trail Regional Division.

Dean lives on a small acreage north-east of Edson with his wife Edith and daughter Shelby. He enjoys all sports and watching Shelby participate in soccer, hockey, singing and other activities. He is the Edson Ice Senior Men's Hockey Club director.

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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.

Sled Dogs, Canoe Trips, Fishing And More: Join Us In Whitehorse This Summer

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Bring the whole family for an experience you will never forget.

The CASA Annual General Meeting, open to all CASA members, starts at 7pm on Wednesday, July 11, at the High Country Inn.

The conference begins in earnest the following day, on July 12, with an Experiential Education panel.

This panel will be followed by a series of mini-institutes. Most of these sessions are limited to 20 participants each. Registrants are encouraged to list their top three choices, which range from canoe and biking trips to birding and pond water study expeditions, from a wildlife preserve visit to a performing arts workshop.

Thursday evening there will be a reception at the Transportation Museum/Beringia Centre. All are welcome.

Friday is "Experience the Yukon Day." This will feature the

following ticketed options: White Pass and Yukon Railway Tour, Whitewater Rafting on the Tatshenshini River, Yukon History Tour, and Mukluk Kennels Hike 'N' Howl.

Saturday is all about First Nations Education, and includes a number of interactive breakout session activities such as carving, drum making, horn rattle making, traditional food gathering and more.

We'll wrap up the conference on Sunday with a variety of informative and sometimes interactive sessions, concluding with a one-of-a-kind closing keynote address, "Treat Your Staff Like Dogs." This leadership and team-building exercise features Yukon Quest Dog Race veteran Frank Turner. The evening concludes with your choice of either the Klondike Follies Evening or a Midnight Twilight Golf Scramble.

Registration forms are included in the email package. Contact Marion Holmes from PD PROs at (403) 386-3860 or holmes3@telusplanet.net for additional registration information. See you up in the land of the midnight sun!