



Spring 2007

Volume 3, Issue 17

# LEADERS & LEARNERS

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

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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](http://www.casa-acas.ca).

## Message From The President: Highlights Of Our Upcoming Conference

If you haven't already registered, let me invite you to what promises to be one of CASA's most spectacular summer conferences.

Set in Whitehorse for the first time in our organization's history, this conference combines an educational focus on Aboriginal education, with real life experiences of the Yukon and its breathtaking views.

You will have an opportunity to examine a unique part of Canadian history that took place at the turn of the last century during the Klondike Gold Rush. You will be able to follow the trail of these gold diggers by hiking the Chilkoot Trail or riding the narrow gage White Pass Railway to Skagway, Alaska.

If you are adventurous, be sure to take the opportunity to follow a part of the famous Yukon River that took gold seekers to Dawson City. Animal lovers won't want to miss the chance to meet the friendly, hard-working sled dogs at Muktuk Kennels.

Throughout the conference, you will have the chance to experience the social aspects of the Yukon. One event sure to be remembered by southerners is the reception at the Transportation Museum/Beringia Centre,



Jim Gibbons  
CASA president

where you'll have the chance to enjoy northern culinary delicacies.

You'll want to stay until the very end of the conference weekend so as not to miss Sunday night's Klondike Follies performance, set at a time when Whitehorse was the largest city north of Vancouver, or the chance to play in the Midnight Twilight Golf Scramble.

You will also have the opportunity to encounter the culture and education of northern Aboriginal peoples through hands-on experiences such as carving, drum making, horn rattle making, traditional food gathering and more.

Conference sessions will focus on examples of challenges and triumphs of Aboriginal education, with panel presentations providing a pan-Canadian perspective and speakers such as Ontario Lt. Governor James Bartleman focusing on issues, successes and unique forms of leadership development.

Remember, we'll have our CASA Annual General Meeting on July 11 at 7 pm. All members are welcome to attend.

Please join me and your many CASA colleagues from across Canada to experience this unique event.

## Message From The Executive Director: Helping First Nation, Métis And Inuit Students Succeed

In our last issue, I mentioned that initiatives are underway to enhance the quality of program in our public schools as it relates to Aboriginal students. Many school districts are considering ways of researching and promoting effective practices for helping First Nation, Métis and Inuit students succeed.

They are developing professional development packages with Aboriginal partners to inform about Aboriginal history, culture and perspectives. And they are trying to find the most effective ways of communicating awareness of these cultures to staff and learning communities.

In a number of cases, universities and colleges are involved as partners.

Chiefs and leaders, Elders, speakers, Friendship Centres and advisory committees are being asked to participate as genuine resources. Native counsellors, coordinators and support workers are brought in as coaches, tutors and mentors for Aboriginal students.

Most projects start by gathering information on numbers of

Aboriginal students through self-identification programs and, using this data, proceed to enhance local programs.

These initiatives are timely and are a concentrated effort to improve the achievement gap and make public schools welcoming institutions for Aboriginal students.

None of these should be short-term fixes—their value will rest in a progressive cultural change from which our schools and our society will benefit.

In this newsletter, you will see examples of effective programs. We welcome feedback about similar initiatives underway in your jurisdictions.



Frank Kelly  
CASA executive director

## Join Us In The Land Of The Midnight Sun

There is still time to register for CASA's annual conference in Whitehorse, Yukon, from July 11 to 15. All the information you need can be found on the CASA website.

If you would like to register either yourself or members of your administrative team for this once-in-a-lifetime conference experience, contact **Marion Holmes** from PD PROS at (403) 386-3860 or holmes3@telusplanet.net.



Above: Magnificent Yukon views. Photo by Meagan Perry

Lower left: Carcross Desert. Photo by Ed Wittchen



Left: Riding the White Pass and Yukon Railroad.

Photo by Ed Wittchen



**Who dares to teach  
must never cease to  
learn.**  
—John Cotton Dana

## Enhancing Aboriginal Presence In Schools: Initiatives In Thunder Bay's Lakehead Public Schools

**T**erry Ellwood's optimism and passion is palpable over the phone line.

"We've really got Aboriginal student successes on the front burner," says Ellwood, the director of education for Lakehead Public Schools. "We're working hard to raise the bar and close the gap for our Aboriginal students."

This is an exciting time of positive changes in his school division. It wasn't always like this.

"There's a very clear and common recognition that our Aboriginal students, whether they were from First Nation communities coming in on tuition agreements or whether they were urban Aboriginal students, were not succeeding in our system. Some were, of course, but many were not."

Lakehead Public Schools wasn't the only division failing to serve Aboriginal students, not by a long shot. The public education system in Canada has traditionally not taken into account the needs, values, cultures and identities of Aboriginal peoples. Too often this has resulted in poor success rates for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students, including significantly lower graduation rates. With Aboriginal youth making up the fastest-growing segment of Canada's population, change is long overdue.

Fortunately, change is underway. Initiatives designed to improve Aboriginal student success rates are being developed and carried out in school divisions across the country. Take Ellwood's division, located in the Thunder Bay area in northwestern Ontario. Education administrators and staff

are working in partnership with Aboriginal community leaders, parents and Elders to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and youth.

One such initiative is Lakehead's voluntary self-identification policy, where students of First Nations, Métis or Inuit descent

can identify their Aboriginal heritage. It plays an important role in improving Aboriginal students' chances for academic success, says Ellwood.

"I think it's an important thing to do because every decision we make should be driven by data and supported by research," he says. "In order to get data on how things are actually taking place, we need to know who our Aboriginal students are and we need to know if the programs we are putting in place to support them are working. It's important to have that data in order to make the next decision."

Ellwood says they already know from school boards that have been able to segregate the information that about 60 per cent of all students in Ontario were succeeding according to the province's EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) standardized test results, but only about 25 to 30 per cent of Aboriginal students were succeeding.

"We were seeing about 80 per cent of students in grade 9 achieving all eight credits," he continues. "We were seeing less than 50 per cent of Aboriginal students achieving all eight credits, which is a very strong

*(Continued on page 4)*



*Photo courtesy of Lakehead Public Schools, from Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools: A Guide for Staff, 2007*



*Photo courtesy of Lakehead Public Schools, from Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools: A Guide for Staff, 2007*



**Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.**  
—Albert Einstein

## Enhancing Aboriginal Presence In Schools, continued

*(Continued from page 3)*

indicator of whether or not they'll experience secondary student success."

Key to the success of this initiative is support from the local Aboriginal community and from the provincial government.

"There are three lines in the Ontario budget dedicated to supporting the needs of Aboriginal students," Ellwood says, audibly pleased. "This is the first year they've acknowledged this need." The Ministry of Education is also making available a resource guide and other supports to school boards wanting to develop and carry out policies for voluntary self-identification.

Support from the Aboriginal community is there too.

"There was wide-ranging support for it once people understood that this information was not about profiling the Aboriginal community, but that this was about collecting data to show where the Aboriginal students in aggregate, not as individuals, were succeeding on some of our standardized testing."



*Photo courtesy of Lakehead Public Schools, from Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools: A Guide for Staff, 2007*

Having the ability to collect data, and the funding and support in place to carry out such initiatives, means school boards can go from just talking about student success in general terms to targeting student success, tracking results and working toward specific goals.

"It's not too early to say I feel optimistic," Ellwood says. "I've said this publicly at a convention of directors of education a few weeks ago: If I had imagined and envisioned five years ago when we were starting this process where I thought we'd be in five years, I never would have thought we'd be this far."

The challenge now is to gather enough data to determine what is improving and what needs work. As of the 2006-2007 school year, seven school boards in Ontario have a voluntary student identification policy in place. Early results, Ellwood says, indicate programs put into place to increase Aboriginal student success rates are doing well.

"We're certainly documenting progress but we want to be able to say 10 years from now not only are all of our students in Ontario achieving at a higher rate, but our Aboriginal students are achieving at the same rate as everyone else."

"It's not a pipe dream," he adds. "It's very definitely a possibility."



*Photo courtesy of Lakehead Public Schools, from Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools: A Guide for Staff, 2007*

To learn more about the initiatives underway at Lakehead Public Schools, read *Aboriginal Presence in Our Schools: A Guide for Staff*. This is an informative 40-page guidebook launched this April to help build Aboriginal culture awareness for LPS staff and administrators. Terry Ellwood encourages others to borrow the publication or use it as a template. It can be found online at [www.lakeheadschoools.ca/public/aboriginal\\_ed/AE\\_Guide\\_Feb07.pdf](http://www.lakeheadschoools.ca/public/aboriginal_ed/AE_Guide_Feb07.pdf).

For more on initiatives in Ontario, read the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, published in 2007 by the Aboriginal Education Office of the Ontario Ministry of Education. It is available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/fnmiFramework.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/fnmiFramework.pdf).

**Education costs money, but then so does ignorance.**  
—Sir Claus Moser

## CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd



**Marcello Bottiglia**  
Ontario

Marcello (Mars) is the superintendent of Continuing and Community Education for the Ottawa Catholic School Board. He has led a distinguished career in Catholic education for 32 years. He emigrated from Italy at the age of nine and has spent his entire life in the Ottawa-area school system, progressing from high school teacher to superintendent of schools in 1997.

He has been involved in the Catholic school board amalgamation, leadership development and professional associations, and has organized national and provincial workshops and conferences. Mars is past president of the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association. He is Ontario's CASA representative.

Mars and his wife of 29 years, Pina, have two grown children: Tessa, an elementary teacher, and Tommy, who works in the construction industry.



**Ken Robertson**  
Quebec

Ken is the director general (superintendent) of the New Frontiers School Board. He started his career in villages on Quebec's Lower North Shore, and later taught in Montreal and Sept-Îles. He has been a high school principal, vice principal and curriculum consultant.

He spent six years working and studying in western Canada, where he was a regional director for Alberta Learning, a superintendent and deputy superintendent. Ken received his post-secondary education at McGill and the University of Alberta. He was an adjunct professor for the McGill University Centre for Educational Leadership. He was recently appointed to the Quebec Superior Council on Education.

Ken credits his success to the endless support of his wife Carmen and their daughter Candice.



**Barry Wowk**  
Alberta

Barry is the superintendent of St. Albert Protestant Schools, a position he took on in the fall of 2005. He started his career as a teacher in the Bonnyville School District (now Northern Lights School Division) in 1972. He then served as vice principal, principal and deputy superintendent of the County of Vermilion River School District (now Buffalo Trail School District).

In 2000, he was appointed deputy superintendent of St. Albert Protestant Schools, where his responsibilities included human resources, labour negotiations, policy development and serving on a number of internal and external committees.

He holds a Bachelor of Education degree, a Diploma in Administration and a Master of Education degree. Barry is married with four children and one grandchild.

## CONTACT CASA:

1123 Glenashton Drive  
Oakville, ON  
L6H 5M1  
Canada

T: (905) 845-2345

F: (905) 845-2044

frank\_kelly@opsoa.org

gillian@opsoa.org

[www.casa-acas.ca](http://www.casa-acas.ca)

Editor: Tara Lee Wittchen

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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.

## Recognizing Excellence In Leadership: Last Chance To Submit 2007 EXL Award Nominations

**D**o you know a fellow CASA member who demonstrates exemplary leadership ability and who should be considered for the EXL Award? It's time to get your nomination in, as the deadline is fast approaching! Submissions from the provincial associations for this year are due at the CASA office by the end of June.

The award, jointly sponsored by Xerox Canada Limited and CASA, has been presented since 2002. It includes an honorary life membership in CASA.

If you work with an outstanding CASA member or know a leader in our field who deserves to be recognized, why not nominate them this year? You can share your suggestion with the executive director of your provincial association.

What kind of qualities should an EXL Award nominee have? They will have brought honour to themselves, their colleagues and their profession. They have given exemplary service to their provincial or national professional association. They have made significant contributions to the field

of education through their service, writings or other activities.

These are individuals who are recognized as role models and teachers to those around them.

Each provincial association of CASA elects a nominee to represent their province. The national award recipient, selected from these provincial nominations, is announced during the opening ceremonies at the CASA Annual Conference.

Previous recipients include **John Darroch** (2002), **Roy Seidler** (2003), **Ed Wittchen** (2004), **Edie Wilde** (2005) and **Ron Canuel** (2006).

Completed forms should be sent to the CASA office care of Gillian Van Zant, by email care of [gillian@opsoa.org](mailto:gillian@opsoa.org) or by fax at (905) 845-2044.

The names of the provincial nominees and national award winner will be published in an upcoming newsletter.