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LEADERS & LEARNERS

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SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS/L'ASSOCIATION
CANADIENNE DES ADMINISTRATEURS ET DES
ADMINISTRATRICES SCOLAIRES

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Upcoming CASA Events

- The 2008 CASA Annual Summer Conference will take place in July, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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

Message From The President: Favourable Recollections Of Conference

The 2007 CASA Annual Summer Conference in Whitehorse focused on the theme of experiential and Aboriginal education.

I have been to many conferences over 30 years as an educator and I can truthfully say that this ranked at the very top.

Why? Because we, as learners, were totally engaged.

We were able to experience the beauty and reverence of the Great White North: the culture and art of its First Nations peoples and the changes brought about by the Yukon Gold Rush. And we were able to place ourselves in the shoes of others through the engaging stories of Ontario Lieutenant Governor **James Bartleman** and musher **Frank Turner**.

We were given many opportunities to dialogue with children, youth and adults of the North, and to try to understand what is important in their lives.

To do this, we first learned that it is more important to listen than to speak.

We were also given many examples of caring educators who have built programs around the strengths and needs of Aboriginal



Jim Gibbons
CASA president

learners, rather than having students change to fit the system.

I was struck by the story that His Honour James Bartleman told of how finding a book at the local dump and the caring interest of a particular teacher changed his life. He remembers his humble beginnings and the opportunities provided by education.

Now he is taking his opportunity to “pay it forward” by spearheading a broad effort to provide books to northern Ontario Aboriginal children.

We know that learning occurs in an environment that is safe and caring, in which the learner is engaged and where programs are built upon personal strengths and individual needs. We experienced all of these in a conference truly worth remembering.

Please join me in thanking the organizers of this conference and our wonderful Yukon hosts.

Editor's note: Extensive coverage of this conference appeared in Leaders & Learners, Volume 3 Issue 18, and two special summer newsletters. Newsletter archives can be found at www.casa-acas.ca.

Message From The Executive Director: Improving Awareness Of Aboriginal Needs and Contributions

In this issue of *Leaders & Learners*, you will find a broad description of initiatives for success with Aboriginal students in Alberta. You will also find a feature on a partnership project bringing together students from Toronto and Nunavut. These are good examples of well-developed, positive programs led by superintendents who are making a difference.

In Ontario this year, the Ministry of Education has targeted \$4 million to programs in over 25 district school boards with the goal of improving awareness of Aboriginal needs and contributions. Some of these programs are aimed at staff development, some are aimed at development of better curriculum; all programs involved Aboriginal partners. In many of these programs, strategies are used to involve principals and teachers with Aboriginal cultural leaders.

This government initiative follows upon the good work done by a number of directors of education and superintendents at local levels.

One significant initiative has been the programs for increased awareness and positive improvement of student achievement.

It was developed by the Northern Ontario Education Leadership consortium of several district school boards based in northern Ontario.

On November 26 to 28, the Ontario Ministry of Education is hosting Circle of Light: A First Nation, Métis and Inuit Conference in Toronto.

This conference will be presented in partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Many of the programs mentioned above will be featured at this conference.

When the 2007-2008 school year draws to a close, each of these programs will be evaluated and best practices published for sharing.



Frank Kelly
CASA executive director

Consider Nominating A Colleague For The 2008 EXL Award

CASA members who show exemplary leadership ability and who enhance school administration are eligible for the EXL Award. 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?

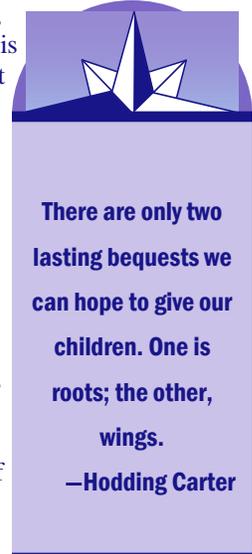
They will have brought honour to themselves, their colleagues and their profession. They have given exemplary service to their provincial or national professional association. They have made significant contributions to the field of education through their service, writings or other activities.

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 winners include **John Darroch** (2002), **Roy Seidler** (2003), **Ed Wittchen** (2004), **Edie Wilde** (2005), **Ron Canuel** (2006) and **Carol Gray** (2007).

The submissions from the provincial associations for this year are due at the CASA office by the end of June. Nomination forms can be found on the CASA website. Completed forms should be sent to the CASA office care of Leslea Wylie, by email care of leslea@opsoa.org or by fax at (905) 845-2044.



Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program: Three Perspectives On The Experience

In this issue of *Leaders & Learners*, we share the perspectives of three staff members from the Toronto District School Board who are engaged firsthand in the Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program. CASA members who attended the 2007 conference in Whitehorse may recall the presentation on this program. For those who were unable to attend the session, we hope you find the following contributions enlightening.

Catherine Pawis is the Toronto District School Board's first central principal responsible for Aboriginal education.

Beverley Muir is the principal at Humberwood Downs Junior Middle Academy, a TDSB school serving students from junior kindergarten to grade 8. She is also the TDSB Point Person for the Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program.

Trevor Ludski is the superintendent of education for the TDSB. He is also the program coordinator for the Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program.

Catherine Pawis: In January 2007, the Ontario government launched Ontario's new Aboriginal Education Strategy. The strategy will help support learning and achievement for Aboriginal students. In addition, it will help raise awareness about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' cultures, histories and perspectives in schools.

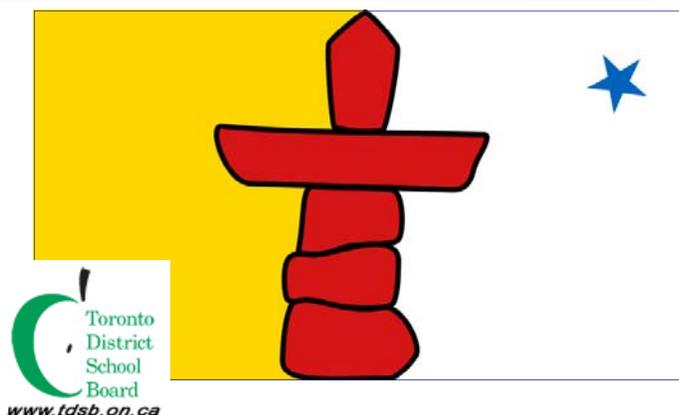
The *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* is the foundation for delivering quality education to all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Ontario.

The overriding issues affecting Aboriginal student achievement are a lack of awareness among teachers of the particular learning styles of Aboriginal students, and a lack of understanding within schools and school boards of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives.

It is also important for educators to understand the First Nations perspective on the school system, which has been strongly affected by residential school experiences and has resulted in intergenerational mistrust of the education system.

It is essential that First Nations, Métis and Inuit students are engaged and feel welcomed in school, and that they see themselves and their cultures in the curriculum and the school community. It is equally important that all students in Ontario acquire knowledge and an appreciation of contemporary and traditional First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives.

The Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program facilitates intercultural dialogue, so that students and staff in Toronto schools learn about contemporary and traditional Inuit cultures, histories and perspectives. Additionally, the



program creates learning opportunities for students in Nunavut schools that support improved academic achievement and identity building. Accordingly, the Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program supports the implementation of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*.

Beverley Muir: How wonderful visions are! They beckon us on to venture into new areas of self-discovery and in turn discovery for our students. The Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program is rooted in His Honour **James Bartleman's** vision and it allows us to begin this discovery process.

The implementation of the vision has many steps. In the Toronto District School Board, schools responded to

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**If we don't stand up
for children, then we
don't stand for
much.**

**—Marian Wright
Edelman**

Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program, continued

(Continued from page 3)

an invitation to be twinned with a school in Nunavut. Through a contact with the Nunavut Teacher's Federation, this program took root there.

Due to the size of TDSB, schools in a given geographical area were grouped into clusters, with a principal being a cluster coordinator to provide leadership for the cluster of schools.

Putting a schedule in place to facilitate the twinning is just one part of the implementation. The building of trusting relationships is another.

With so many wounds of distrust and disappointment present in the Aboriginal community, we needed to take time to do this. As dialogue started to occur, circles of trust were formed. So the question for the schools in Toronto to the schools in Nunavut was no longer "What can we send you?" but "Tell us about your school and the values of the community." Common understandings started to emerge.

The exchange of information started to include artwork; biographical sketches of our respective communities; sending a DVD; and sending shoes, backpacks and disposable cameras so Nunavut schools could send us photos that students had taken of their schools.

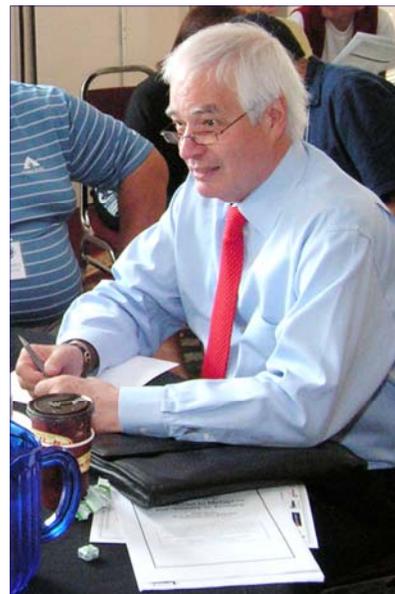
One Toronto school sent a grade 8 teacher, a rep from IBM and a principal to Resolute Bay to have a computer camp for a week with their twinned school. It included a video conference with their home school in Toronto where the students exchanged web pages and the Lieutenant Governor spoke to the students in Resolute Bay.

Two independent schools in Toronto are also involved, and they have sent a considerable amount of hockey equipment to their schools. The Toronto Catholic School Board has had system events to help students understand life in the Arctic such as the Arctic Games, and two classes have visited their school in the north and have had a return visit to Toronto.

As we step back and reflect on the beginnings and early implementation of the Twinning Program, we realize that we have been afforded a rich opportunity to enter into the lives of our Aboriginal students and their communities. Gratitude is our song. We believe this is our moral imperative. We can do no less...and we will do more.

Vice-regal Assistance: TDSB's superintendent of education **Trevor Ludski** was invited by the Honourable **James Bartleman** (right) to develop the Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program.

The former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, as well as his current successor, has pledged to continue to contribute to this program on a voluntary basis.



Trevor Ludski: The Honourable James K. Bartleman, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, included support for Aboriginal youth as part of his mandate. His Honour envisioned a cultural twinning program between Toronto schools and Nunavut schools.

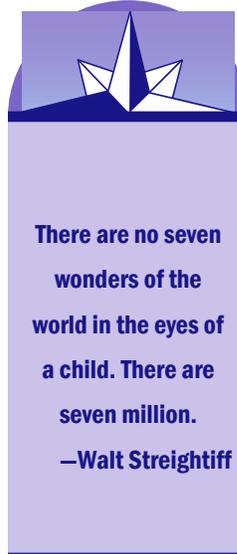
As superintendent of education for TDSB with responsibility for supporting Aboriginal education, I was invited by His Honour to develop and coordinate a program that included the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, two independent schools in Toronto and 42 schools across the territory of Nunavut.

I embraced His Honour's vision by sharing the potential for learning among students, staff, parents and community members with my colleagues.

Together, we grew His Honour's vision by communicating it to others and by building support for the vision. We did this by providing forums where the vision could be caught and shared.

For example, over 160 inner city students from both the elementary and secondary panels at TDSB schools spent a summer at York University where they participated in drama, dance, art and music activities based on the theme Journey to Nunavut. A student-led

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A Journey For Northern Gateway Public Schools, A Vision For First Nations, Métis And Inuit Students

The division of Northern Gateway Public Schools spans nearly 375 km from end to end. Its schools are in the communities situated around the Highway 43 corridor northeast of Edmonton, which include Alberta Beach, Onoway, Rich Valley, Darwell, Sanguda, Mayerthorpe, Whitecourt, Fox Creek, Valleyview and Sunset House. The district also has two Hutterite colony schools at Twilight Colony and Valleyview Ranches Colony. It is a primarily rural area with a mixed agricultural- and resource-based economy.

Schools in the division range from an 11-student, one-room Hutterite colony school to a junior/senior high school with nearly 700 students. The K-12 student population is 5,300.

Roger Lacey is the division's learning services coordinator. **Michelle Brennick** is Northern Gateway's assistant superintendent. This is their first contribution to *Leaders & Learners*.

This is the story of a journey; a journey that has begun. The story has neither a climax nor a denouement—yet.

In the year 2006, the freshly appointed superintendent for Northern Gateway Public Schools discovered something about his new school division that both opened his eyes and caused him concern.

He found that he had in his care over 800 registered students who fulfilled the qualifications for First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) learners. This significant portion of the student population required support in areas of curriculum, instruction and counselling that would answer the needs of children from an Aboriginal cultural background.

The superintendent directed the division Learning Services team to begin an initial investigation. This investigation led the team to several foundational documents produced through Alberta Education. Among this compilation, one book stood out. The volume, entitled *Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners* (Aboriginal Services), provided insights and direction for the journey.

It was clear that Northern Gateway needed a vision for the education of its FNMI students. However, before a sustainable vision could be built, there was considerable research to be done. A survey of the FNMI population of the school division revealed that students, while generally spread out along the 375 km corridor of Highway 43, were concentrated at either end in Native communities near Onoway in the south and Valleyview in the north. Both of these communities sent students to the public schools as a result of signed agreements with Northern Gateway.

Near Onoway is the Alexis First Nation of the Stoney or

By Roger Lacey
and Michelle Brennick



Nakoda Sioux people whose traditional language is Nakoda/Stoney. Near Valleyview, the Western Cree live in the community of Sturgeon Lake. Research showed that the schools of Northern Gateway could serve the needs of FNMI students through awareness and pedagogy. This realization sharpened the focus for the Vision Document and led to the undertaking of a journey toward two goals.

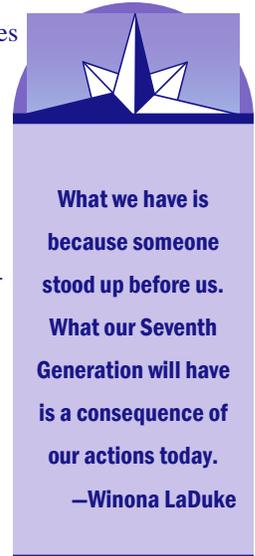
The goals that Northern Gateway has adopted align with those outlined in the Alberta government document *First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*. The two goals emphasized in the Vision Document are:

1. high quality learning opportunities that are responsive, flexible, accessible and affordable to the learner
2. excellence in Learner achievement

The goals have become division priorities, expressed in the Vision Document as “Priority Number One: Student Achievement” and “Priority Number Two: Culturally Relevant Learning Opportunities.”

It has been a combination of focused effort on good pedagogy and just plain serendipity that allowed the

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A Journey For Northern Gateway Public Schools, continued

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beginning stages of implementation of the strategies that would help Northern Gateway move toward achieving the stated goals.

Alberta Education has done two things that have had an impact on the direction taken by Northern Gateway. The government has introduced new curricula in Social Studies and in Mathematics. Both of the new Programs of Studies pay special attention to FNMI learners. At about the same time, the Alberta government put out a call for school divisions to submit proposals to run pilot projects in the area of mobile computing technology. Northern Gateway embraced both of these opportunities.

Impact of Curriculum on FNMI Education in Northern Gateway

Northern Gateway brought the education of FNMI students to the fore in all the in-service sessions facilitated in the division.

In the professional development sessions, the use of Aboriginal artifacts is an integral part of showing teachers how they can fulfill the curriculum. The artifact display reveals that everything has a history and Native artifacts reveal the story from an Aboriginal perspective. This sharing heightens the awareness and understanding of Native peoples among teachers.

When teachers return to their classes and use these artifacts, two things should occur. If there are Aboriginal students in the classroom, the use of Native artifacts creates a pride in their heritage because it creates a pride in their story. If on the other hand there are no Aboriginal students in the classroom, the artifact raises an awareness of a founding peoples' perspective—the Aboriginal perspective.

Embedded within the teaching are the goals of citizenship and identity. In one of the Social Studies professional development sessions, guest speaker Angie Hall, Aboriginal Coordinator with the Edmonton Catholic School District, shared her personal Aboriginal story and demonstrated a method by which all children can be encouraged to share their stories. The teachers of Northern Gateway learned about the use of the storybag—a person's collection of small, significant items that aid the memory for oral storytelling. Teachers were excited to take this Native method for storytelling back to their classrooms.

The teachers of Northern Gateway learned about the use of **the storybag**—a person's collection of small, significant items that aid the memory for oral storytelling.

As the teachers saw the value of using artifacts in the classroom, they suggested that a travelling collection of artifacts be created to help them use the techniques they had learned.

They understand the power of the objects to encourage an understanding of the oral tradition of Aboriginal peoples, thus bringing together the use of artifacts and the storybag. The fur-trading kit, relevant to many areas of the Social

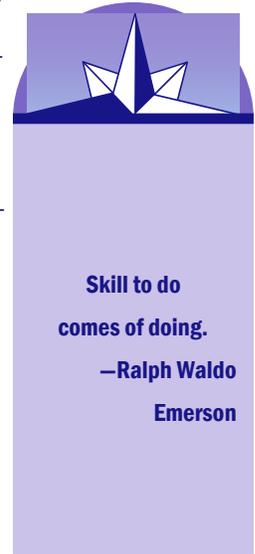
Studies curriculum, is making its school debut in the latter part of November 2007.

In tandem, Northern Gateway hosted a session that was facilitated by two Alberta Education FNMI specialists. The entire administrative team—superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent, learning services coordinators, principals and assistant principals—was exposed to the background and possibilities for Aboriginal education. The education managers focused on key Alberta Education documents to highlight their message of student success through engagement. This information built on the understanding gained from attending The Spirit of the Children provincial conference in March 2007.

The educators of Northern Gateway found that a study of *Our Words, Our Ways* served to reinforce their conviction that good pedagogy is good pedagogy no matter what the context. Areas of emphasis in Northern Gateway's Professional Development Plan included Differentiated Instruction, Assessment for Learning and Student Engagement. These were also in *Our Words, Our Ways* as useful pedagogical practices when helping the Aboriginal learner.

Impact of Technology on FNMI Education in Northern Gateway

When Northern Gateway's project *Learners Without Borders* was accepted, it provided an excellent op-
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A Journey For Northern Gateway Public Schools, continued

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portunity to better serve FNMI learners. The project is based on the premise that mobile computing (laptops) given as teaching and learning tools to grade 4 students and kept for three years by these students will move them toward excellence in achievement, foster 21st-century skills and provide a way for diverse student cultures (FNMI) to become part of the learning community.

Our FNMI students in grade 4 at schools in Onoway and Valleyview would now have the means to learn anywhere, at any time.

The target schools are searching for ways to improve the achievement of their FNMI students. They understand that Aboriginal students may not respond to the traditional ways that non-Aboriginal students are taught. They also realize the benefit of assistive technologies to FNMI students:

Although assistive technology for learning may be aimed at the needs of a particular student, it is also possible to use assistive technology to benefit a wide range of students.

(Our Words, Our Ways, p. 40)

Existing research provides a hopeful vision for the teachers and students in the two schools. The “Main Learning Technology Initiative” showed that “students have more choice, opportunity and flexibility within the one-to-one, high speed, wireless computing classroom.”

It is the elements of choice and flexibility that can enhance the Aboriginal student’s learning. The ability to take their learning tools with them in the form of laptop computers allows the students to learn in many different locations and at diverse times.

The use of mobile technology has had positive effects for all students according to the research summarized and confirmed by James Gulek and Hakan Demartis in their article, “Learning with Technology: The Impact of Laptop Use on Student Achievement” in the *Journal of Technology, Learning and Assessment* (January 2005):

Past research suggests that compared to their non-laptop counterparts, students...with their own laptops spend more time involved in collaborative work, participate in more project-based instruction, produce writing of higher quality and greater length, gain increased access to information, improve research analysis skills, and spend more time doing homework on computers.

Of special interest with regard to FNMI students are the benefits reported from the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPR) including “‘students’ engagement and attendance were up, behaviour referrals were down” (Muir, 2004).

This is month three of year one of this project. The five teachers and two principals who are directly involved in this initiative are exploring new ways of teaching and learning.

Impact of FNMI Coordinator on FNMI Education in Northern Gateway

As the superintendent gained a deeper understanding of the need to enhance the delivery of FNMI education in Northern Gateway, he dedicated funding to support a school division FNMI coordinator.

This new position has given the division a person who can focus his energy on providing educational services across the division.

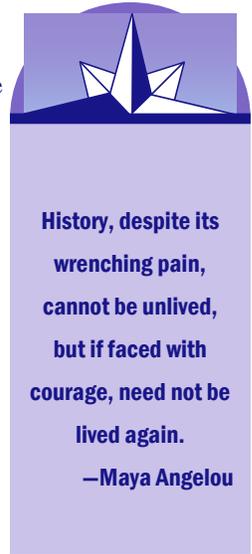
His first mission is to assess what every school is currently implementing in the way of educational services for Aboriginal students.

His next assignment will be to collect and collate hard data so that an accurate FNMI achievement picture can be drawn. The information gathered from principals will be compiled, and common themes, queries and concerns will be identified. The goal is to have a comprehensive package ready to present to Northern Gateway administrators by the end of February 2008.

Northern Gateway, as an entire division, has become acutely aware of the challenges presented by the need to serve the education of a significant FNMI population. Background work has been done with much still left to do. Initiatives have begun that will need to be sustained and assessed.

Northern Gateway’s journey is not that different from any taken when there is a realization of the need to take that journey.

Northern Gateway has a vision for where it must go and has taken the first steps to get there.



CASA PEOPLE: Faces In The Crowd



Lucie La Ferrière
Quebec

Lucie is the assistant director general of the Lester B. Pearson School Board in Montreal, a post she assumed after having served as director of Pedagogical Services. In her 30-year career, she has been a teacher and a principal at elementary, secondary and alternative schools. She also served as a pedagogical consultant in elementary education.

She has shown particular interest and skills in youth education and in those children with special needs. She has also worked with the board's infrastructure needs and in all matters of pedagogical interest. She holds firm her belief in the wonderful abilities of all children and her conviction that all children can learn and succeed. She is committed to teamwork, collective leadership and youth.

She is the loving wife of Claude and mother to two wonderful children.



Robin Shepherd
Ontario

Robin is on a secondment to the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education. In her Ministry role, Robin is the lead writer for the new secondary policy document. She also has the co-lead for the new Ontario policies around equivalent learning.

Since 1980, Robin has taught secondary school subjects ranging from Physics to English to Guidance. This diversity of curriculum knowledge supported her success as vice principal and principal in the former city of York, and as a supervisory officer for the last 11 years with the Toronto District School Board. She has had a variety of Family of Schools responsibilities and central positions in the Program Department of the board.

In between revising policy, Robin loves to travel the world with her husband Angelo, a retired principal.



Lorne Rachlis
Ontario

Lorne is director of education and secretary of the board for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

In the early years of his career, Lorne was a chemistry and math teacher, then principal and finally head of adult education at Bathurst Heights Secondary School in North York. He then held a number of education leadership positions in the Ottawa region, and lectured at the University of Saskatchewan. From 1998 to 2003, he was director of education and secretary-treasurer for the Avon Maitland District School Board in southwestern Ontario.

Lorne has sat on many education organization executives and community boards. He has received numerous awards throughout his career and has been published a number of times in education journals and newsletters.

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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.

Toronto-Nunavut School Twinning Program, continued

(Continued from page 4)

presentation of their summer program was shared with His Honour in the fall.

Another example of building support for His Honour's vision was a Winter Arctic Games Day organized by the Toronto Catholic District School Board. Inuit students from Ottawa were invited to lead the activities. His Honour was the special guest for this day.

Principals and teachers have demonstrated strong leadership both at the district level as well as in their schools by developing partnerships with their counterparts across Nunavut. Furthermore, partnerships with corporations such as IBM have resulted in wonderful communication opportunities for students, staff and community members using broadband technology.

One of the challenges faced by all of us is maintaining the program and building succession due to the annual turnover of administrators and teaching staff in Nunavut schools. We continue to work with the president of the Federation of Nunavut Teachers to address this challenge.

The Honourable James K. Bartleman, along with support

from the newly appointed Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable **David Onley**, has agreed to continue this work on a voluntary basis.

To conclude, as an educator I view this program, along with all the accompanying experiences, as a highly enriching professional development opportunity.

It teaches me to build trust, to learn to challenge my ethnocentrism, to reflect on who I am and what I value as a Canadian when my world view collides. I am learning to be more patient, to take ownership for what I do, to challenge my own assumptions, and most importantly, I am learning to continue to move myself along a continuum that teaches me to strive to be a better human being.

I cannot lead where I have not been.

I believe that the seeds we sow today will continue to grow in the hearts and minds of all that support the vision of the Honourable James K. Bartleman because of the strong moral imperative attached to this program. I believe that the program will continue to take root in our schools.

I live in hope.