

THE  
bulletin

---

*Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher's Association*

---

*Vol. 40 No. 3 December 1996*

---



# Table of Contents

[Banner](#)

[Tis The Season](#)

*by Lesley-Ann Browne*

[Christmas Greetings](#)

*by Art Baggs*

On Location

[Provincial](#)

[National](#)

[Service Purchase](#)

*by Wayne Noseworthy*

[Impact On CPP](#)

*by Wayne Noseworthy*

[Severance Pay And Taxes](#)

*by Wayne Noseworthy*

[Equity vs. Equality](#)

*by Barbara Lewis*

[RTF Report](#)

*by William Abraham*

[Coping With Loss](#)

*by Kathy Burford*

[Critical Perspectives](#)

*by Bernie Froese-Germain  
and Marita Moll*

[Resources](#)

[Calendar](#)

# TIS THE SEASON

*by Lesley-Ann Browne*

Did you ever awaken at 2:00 a.m., glance out the bedroom window and see those big, soft, fluffy snowflakes lightly falling in your back garden? You know the ones you caught them on your tongue as a child and they melted on your eyelashes. And once you saw the kind of evening it was, did you hurriedly dress and go outside frolicking in the snow? You didn't? Me either, but doesn't it sound great to have the time and extra energy to do that? Many evenings I've been awakened by my face-licking, shoe-chewing dog in need of visiting the back yard, usually just to bury the rawhide stick that she'd been slurping on since bedtime. And I've stood in the patio door impatiently waiting while she sniffed every blade of grass, every stick, and rock, and plant, and oops, sorry! Anyway, I've often wished I was energetic enough at 2:00 a.m. to take advantage of the quiet tranquillity before daybreak when the daily routine starts again. But thus far I've just stood there quietly cursing the little animal for her basic needs. Perhaps I'll make this a New Year's resolution. I can add it to last year's list.

Has anyone asked you lately if you're ready for Christmas? Someone asks me daily and I'm never sure how to reply. I don't have my presents bought, the house isn't clean, I haven't mailed any Christmas cards, and the decorations are still in storage. But we will, like every year, pull it together and have everything ready when Santa arrives.

And, speaking of Santa. My daughter was writing her letter to him last week which included the toys she wanted. One of these was a toy my husband and I were not familiar with and we asked her to describe it. This involved a long convoluted description that did not put us any further ahead so her Dad thought of the Sears Wish Book and asked her to show him the picture. She responded by promptly telling him that it wasn't in the catalogue and that, anyway, he would see it on Christmas morning. Well you can see the potential problem here, but we will, like all parents, search and search department store shelves until the toy is found. And on Christmas morning watch with pleasure her delight and glee, and quietly refrain from speaking as again Santa is credited for knowing exactly what to bring.

Tis the season! May all your Christmas wishes come true and have a safe and happy holiday season.

# CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

*by Art Baggs*

Christmas is here again! I've been attempting for some time to complete this Christmas greeting for The Bulletin. When I get a few free minutes, I reflect on what I might say in this article. As I complete the message, I'm sitting at a hotel room desk in Ottawa on a Sunday morning. It's a beautiful, cold and sunny morning with the ground lightly covered with snow, similar to what we might expect on Christmas morning. However, it's only late November as I complete this message to meet The Bulletin deadline.

I'm here in Ottawa on this Sunday morning as your representative on the Canadian Teachers' Federation Board of Directors and to attend a national conference called "Canada's Children Canada's Future". At the board meeting just completed I take some comfort in knowing that we are not the only provincial group to be struggling with problems in education, but that doesn't make it any more acceptable. One of the real positives of this national link is that we can learn from each other to deal with these common problems that confront us in education.

I also look forward to one of the conference sessions entitled Better Outcomes for Children. One sentence in the introduction of this session reads: "Most parents agree that they want the following outcomes for their children: good health, good education, good self-esteem, a good job, a personal sense of security and an ability to be an active citizen." I believe most teachers would agree that we could easily substitute the words "parents" with "teachers" and "children" with "students" and the sentence would be an equally valid reflection of what we want.

As we enter this festive season, it's time to rekindle the spirit of giving, which for teachers should be relatively easy. We give of our talents and time every day to try to make this life better for the students in our care. We try to ensure that they receive the gift of a quality education something they will take with them for the rest of their lives.

This is my second and last Christmas greeting to teachers as the President of our Association. The timeline on the great opportunity I've been given to represent this association is passing quickly. On August 1, 1997, some other fortunate member of the NLTA will have the unique opportunity to represent all of us. By this time next year I'll be back in my new board working as a proud teacher and feeling privileged for having been given this opportunity for a unique two year experience.

I recommend the path of working to help colleagues through the structures we have in our association. It's unfortunate that all our members cannot witness the level of dedication that every volunteer or staff member gives. Christmas is a time to give thanks to these people. To our dedicated staff, thanks for another year of quality and professional work. For those in a volunteer capacity as Branch officers, Special Interest Council members, committee members, Provincial Executive members, a special thank you for the gift of your energies and talents during the past year.

This will be a different Christmas for our family. It will be the first that our family will be separated on Christmas Day. Our daughter married since last Christmas, so we have one less around the family table. It's not an exciting prospect to think that soon there may be only two of us on Christmas morning. Hopefully, we will get to share part of the festive season with our family and friends.

Christmas is a time when we especially think of the less fortunate in our province and beyond. Most of us are fortunate because we'll be able to provide for the needs of our families, but there are many in our communities who are far less fortunate. All of us want a child's Christmas to be one that is memorable, but not one memorable because of the poverty in which the child lives. Studies have shown that in this world of

great resources, 500 million children do not get enough food to develop mentally and physically. A recent study in our province has shown there is a far greater level of poverty than we might expect.

During the Christmas season we also look ahead to the New Year and make our resolutions for 1997. I still hope for a better year ahead and refuse to let the doom and gloom we have faced in the years of this decade dampen my spirits. We live in a province with people of pride who are accustomed to a struggle for existence. Hopefully, we will work cooperatively in the year ahead with our partners in education to ensure a quality education for the students in our schools.

And if we can achieve a positive economic climate in our province, maybe we'll end that out-migration of our young people.

The New Year will still bring challenges to us individually and collectively. We'll meet those challenges through our collective strength within NLTA. It has been our collective strength that has kept us progressing for more than 100 years. We will continue far into the future to positively impact present and future generations of students and teachers in the classrooms of our province.

On behalf of the Provincial Executive and staff of NLTA, I certainly wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a new year filled with good health and prosperity. Enjoy every minute of the Christmas season and beyond.

---

HALIFAX

---

## **Math upgrade for university entrance**

Students requiring math for entrance to university can now register for College Algebra. This course will be offered through distance education from Mount Saint Vincent University from January to April 1997. The course will be broadcast on the ASN network and is also available on videotape.

The course begins with the basics and is taught by Dr. Charlie Edmunds of the Mathematics Department at Mount Saint Vincent University. Dr. Edmunds has many years of teaching experience and was the winner of the Mount Saint Vincent University President's Award for Teaching Excellence.

College Algebra is a television based course with regular assignments to help you master the fundamentals of algebra: real numbers, polynomials and factoring, rational and radical expressions, equations and inequalities, rectangular coordinates, and systems of linear equation. Students can develop a renewed interest, confidence and enthusiasm in their mathematical abilities as they work their way through the course.

Other distance courses offered are Psychology, Business Administration, Human Ecology, Gerontology, Intro Psychology, Parent-Child Relations and many others. Further information on any of these courses can be obtained by calling 1-800-665-3838.

---

OTTAWA

---

## **Teachers attend Institute on Parliamentary Democracy**

This past November, three educators from Newfoundland and Labrador attended the first Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy in Ottawa. Rick Thorne, Program Co-ordinator for Social Studies with the Labrador West Integrated School Board and President of the Social Studies Special Interest Council; Ern Condon, Guidance Counsellor at J.R. Smallwood Collegiate in Wabush; and Peggy March, Department Head of Social Studies at Macdonald Drive Junior High in St. John's attended the institute which was sponsored by the Honourable Gilbert Parent, Speaker of the House of Commons, and organized through the Public Information Office.

Sixty teachers and 10 presidents of provincial social studies associations from across Canada attended the institute. Entitled "An Insider's View of Parliament", the objective of the institute was to enable teachers to better understand the process of government. Participants met with Members of Parliament, Senators, pages, clerks, employees of government departments, parliamentary assistants, lobbyists, and representatives of the press in various information-filled forums. Major results of the institute workshops will be the design of curriculum materials to facilitate the teaching of parliamentary democracy to Canadian junior and senior high students, and the collation of resources available from government sources which may be applicable to classroom use. A second institute for elementary teachers is planned for next year.

---

CANADA

---

## **National award invites students to explore Canadian diversity**

The Department of Canadian Heritage, together with the Canadian Teachers' Federation, is pleased to announce a new National Award Program to encourage and stimulate all Canadian students to explore and recognize the nation-building efforts of groups and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Named in honour of Mathieu Da Costa, a Black navigator, explorer and interpreter of the early 17th century who played a significant role in the development of Canada through facilitating trade and cultural understanding between the French and the Mi'kmaq cultures, the Award provides an exciting opportunity for students and teachers to learn more about Da Costa and others who followed in his footsteps.

All Canadian elementary and secondary school students are eligible to participate by submitting an essay, short story, poem or piece of art celebrating the contributions of people from diverse cultures to the development of Canadian society. Detailed information and entry forms have been mailed out to all school principals. Deadline for submissions is January 24, 1997. Awards will be presented in February 1997.

For further information about this program ask your principal or contact Susan Korah, Coordinator, or Ian Fall, Assistant Coordinator, Mathieu Da Costa Award Program, Canadian Teachers' Federation, 110 Argyle Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K2P 1B4, Tel: 613-232-1505; Fax: 613-232-1886; e-mail: skora@ctf-fce.ca or ifall@ctf-fce.ca.

## **Cable in the Classroom**

Over 6,000 schools are receiving free cable service as part of Cable in the Classroom, an educational initiative fully funded by 70 Canadian cable companies across Canada. This doubles the number of schools which were connected when the program was launched across the country last September.

Through the cable connection, teachers now have access to more than 300 hours a month of specially selected educational programming such as Discovery, Life, The Weather Network, CNBC, TLC, A&E, and the provincial educational broadcasters: Knowledge, Access, TVO and TFO. This gives teachers access to a variety of copyright-cleared, commercial-free television programming. A Cable in the Classroom magazine, as well as a website at [www.cablededucation.ca](http://www.cablededucation.ca), provides teachers with complete listings and actual lesson plans to support them in the use of the programming.

"Canadian students must be exposed to the widest possible range of values, viewpoints and political orientations Cable in the Classroom can (do this)," says Maureen Morris, president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. Support for Cable in the Classroom amongst teachers is growing. Teachers' associations in Ontario, Alberta and Prince Edward Island have endorsed the program while parent-school associations in Nova Scotia, British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador have also lent their support.

For information on Cable in the Classroom, contact Shari Baldwin, Executive Director, Tel: 613-233-3033 or Participating Members in Newfoundland and Labrador: Brian Dawe, Andromeda Cable Cablevision, and Community Cable, Tel: 709-596-7302, and Dean MacDonald, Cable Atlantic, Tel: 709-753-7583.

TEACHERS' PENSION PLAN

# SERVICE PURCHASE

*by Wayne Noseworthy*

---

**"We urge members to act immediately to exercise any purchase option that may be available to them."**

---

The Teachers' Pensions Act makes allowance for the purchase of certain leaves of absence, and other types of recognized service, and describes the appropriate cost and conditions regarding purchase. Summarized below are items that would be of particular interest to the general membership.

### *Types of Service*

1. Maternity Leave (adoption leave) may be purchased in accordance with the provisions of the Act, such leave not to exceed one year for each pregnancy or adoption. This period of leave is recognized as worked service under the Pensions Act and the cost is based on the contribution rate and salary in effect at the time that the leave was taken. As well, teachers who were required to quit their jobs for reasons of childbirth, prior to the advent of the Collective Agreement in the early 1970's, may want to check with a member of the Benefits and Economic Services Division of NLTA or a Pension Benefit Specialist at the Department of Finance regarding their possible eligibility to purchase this period of absence. For example, a teacher who was required to quit her job at the end of October 1967 in order to have her child would be faced with the following scenario. She would have worked and paid for 0.2 of a pensionable year in the fall of 1967 and would now be able to purchase the remaining 0.8 of the 1967-68 school year even though she was unemployed at that time and have it count as worked service under the pension plan. Given the volatility of circumstances surrounding the Pension Plan at the present time, we urge all teachers who think they have purchase options with respect to maternity or adoption leave to exercise such options without delay.

2. Sick leave with pay is automatically recognized as worked service under the Teachers' Pensions Act.

Sick leave without pay may now be purchased as worked service under the Pension Plan as well. This change came about in the Collective Agreement which took effect on April 1, 1994. If the purchase of unpaid sick leave is made within 90 days of return to work, the cost would be at the current contribution rate on current salary, matched by Government. If the purchase is arranged after 90 days of return to work, then the cost is based on full actuarial value. Consequently, members are urged to make any applicable purchases in this regard without delay upon return from a period of unpaid sick leave.

3. Paid educational leave (or sabbatical leave) is available for purchase as worked service under the Teachers' Pensions Act. In fact, the teacher applicant would really be applying to "top-up" the period of paid leave so that he or she gets full credit for the leave of absence under the Pensions Act. The cost of purchase is on the basis of the rate of contribution and salary in effect at the time that the leave was taken.

4. Periods of time spent teaching outside the Province or the country (to a maximum of five years) can be purchased under the Act, even when such time did not occur during a leave of absence, and would be recognized as worked service for the TPP. In order to take advantage of this particular purchase option, the teacher must have a minimum of 10 years of pensionable service within our plan. The cost of purchase is based on the rate of contribution in effect at the time that the service was given, based on the salary earned at the same time.

5. Service under the Deferred Salary Leave Plan (DSLPL) is also recognized as worked service under the Teachers' Pensions Act. In fact, teachers who enroll in the DSLPL are automatically deducted pension



contribution, at the full rate, for each year enrolled in the plan, including the year of leave. Government matches this particular contribution. This ensures that teachers gain full pension credit for all years they are a member of the Deferred Salary Leave Plan.

*Federal Income Tax Act*

Eligible periods of temporary absence or periods of reduced pay (Salary Deferral Arrangements) are subject to maximum amounts under section 8507 of the Income Tax Act. Specifically, such periods are subject to a life time limit of five years, plus, in respect to maternity or parental leave, up to 12 months per child, to a maximum of three years. This results in an overall lifetime of eight years eligible leave.

As already referenced, the Teachers' Pension Plan is undergoing some very close scrutiny and changes may be introduced in the foreseeable future with respect to some or all of the items referenced above. For that reason, we urge members to act immediately to exercise any purchase option that may be available to them.

Inquiries of a general nature may be referred to an Administrative Officer in the Division of Benefits and Economic Services. Specific advice as to the exercise of a purchase option can be obtained by contacting a Pension Benefit Specialist at the Pensions Division at the Department of Finance, P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NF, A1B 4J6. Telephone numbers for the Pensions Division are 709-729-3931 or 709-729-3932.

*Wayne Noseworthy is Administrative Officer, Benefits and Economic Services, with the NLTA.*

DIVORCE OR SEPARATION  
**IMPACT ON CPP**

*by Wayne Noseworthy*

Are you divorced, separated or ending a common law relationship? If so, a division of the Canada Pension Plan credits could mean more money to you now or in the future. However, depending on your circumstance, it could also be to your disadvantage.

CPP credits earned by either or both spouses, including common law spouses, can be equally shared when the relationship ends. A division of pension credits may increase the amount of a benefit or even create eligibility where none previously existed.

Take the example of Mary and John who divorced last year. They were married for 20 years. During their marriage, John stayed home and cared for their three children. He didn't work outside the home and therefore didn't contribute to the Canada Pension Plan. During the divorce, John learned from his attorney that the Canada Pension Plan would give him half the pension credits Mary earned during the course of their marriage. John contacted Human Resources Development Canada and provided information to them which allowed the Income Security Branch to proceed with a credit split.

When John retires, or if he becomes disabled, these pension credits will translate into retirement or disability payments for him; his children may also receive benefits in the event of his death or disability. Although the benefit may be reduced, Mary will also continue to be eligible for Canada Pension Plan Benefits.

Are you eligible? If your marriage ended in divorce or annulment, or if you separated following a marriage or common law union after January 1, 1987, you could be eligible for a credit split. Eligibility for credit splitting depends on a number of factors, including the length of your relationship when it ended, or if there were any spousal agreements. In some cases, there are time limits involved in applying.

To find out how this provision might affect your situation, please contact an Income Security Programs Office through Human Resources Development Canada, 120 Torbay Rd., P.O. Box 9430, St. John's, NF, A1A 2Y5, or P.O. Box 2004, Corner Brook, NF, A2H 6J6. The telephone number for both the St. John's office and the Corner Brook office is 1-800-277-9914 (English) or 1-800-277-9915 (French). Inquiries of a general nature may be directed to an Administrative Officer in the Division of Benefits and Economic Services.

*Wayne Noseworthy is Administrative Officer, Benefits and Economic Services, with the NLTA.*

# SEVERANCE PAY AND TAXES

*by Wayne Noseworthy*

In 1995 the Federal Government announced changes with respect to the tax implications of investing severance pay/retirement gratuities into registered retirement savings plans. In essence, the Federal budget limited the severance pay rollover into RRSPs by declaring that service accumulated from January 1, 1996, onward could not be considered for rollover into a registered retirement savings plan.

A number of misconceptions exist within the field relative to this particular reality. Some people have drawn the mistaken conclusion that severance pay could not be rolled into an RRSP after 1995; this is not correct. Severance pay rollover is possible after 1995 but with the following conditions prevailing.

Retiring individuals will be credited with all service prior to 1996 with a rollover limit of up to \$2,000 for each year of service, plus \$1,500 for each year prior to 1989 while not a pension plan contributor. An example of the impact is provided below.

A teacher retiring at the end of the year 2000 with 30 years of service would have 25 years of rollover credit (i.e., up to and including 1995). With the \$2,000 per year rollover credit, there would still be a total of \$50,000 of space available into which severance pay could be deposited for purposes of protection from taxes. As years go by, however, this credit (rollover space) will decrease in an obvious fashion, because rollovers are permitted for only those years up to and including 1995.

*Any questions with respect to this item may be referred to an Administrative Officer in the Benefits and Economic Services Division.*

Is There a Difference? You Bet!

# EQUITY VS. EQUALITY

*by Barbara Lewis*

In June 1995, the NLTA Executive Council endorsed a publication on Employment Equity re Staff Hiring entitled "Staffing the NLTA Office.

An Employment Equity Strategy Towards Work Place Excellence". This was not only a landmark for the NLTA, but also a first for any agency involved with K-12 education in this province. It also marked the NLTA's understanding and appreciation of the "equality vs. equity" debate, a debate which has plagued the public and private employment sectors for decades. Let's talk about "equality vs. equity".

For most of us, let's admit it, we always assumed that equal treatment of individuals would, in turn, bring about equal results. However, research and common sense tells us otherwise. For example, a child born into a privileged financially and emotionally stable family, with positive role models as family members, surrounded by love and support, will have "stacked" advantages vis a vis a child born into a family with a history of poverty, illiteracy and dysfunctional family relationships. Of course there are exceptions. These are miracles. But they are not the norm. To apply equal expectation and treatment of the children in both these categories, both in school and society, will most certainly not bring "equality of results". Research and realities confirm otherwise.

So what does this have to do with the NLTA's policy on Employment Equity Hiring? A lot. It has been well documented that the success of women and minorities in leadership positions in the educational system of Newfoundland and Labrador has been, to date, dismal. The old arguments: i) they are not qualified; ii) they didn't apply; are challenged by equity hiring initiatives. We have to consider who was writing the rules. Who was setting the expectations. Who was deciding on "suitability" and "qualifications", etc. Not the members of the excluded groups. Current human rights legislation is written to address these past prevalent practices. "Inclusion" of under represented groups and minorities is the thrust of "equity" thinking, policy making and legislation. Treating everyone the same does not create equality, because the starting bases are unequal.

Let's look at an example from the classroom. If a teacher has two students, one with excellent vision and one who is visually challenged, then treating both students equally and not adjusting teaching strategies to accommodate the visually challenged student, will most probably, in the end, not produce achievement results which are equal despite the cognitive ability of the visually challenged student. In this case, equal teaching strategies and treatment could be interpreted as discrimination against the visually challenged student. To realize equality, a different approach in teaching strategies, one which will compensate and accommodate the disadvantaged person must be applied. That is the essence of "equity treatment" as opposed to "equal treatment".

Now back to the NLTA and its Hiring Policy for staff. The Policy, originally ratified at AGM 1991, was researched and studied by the NLTA Standing Committee on Equity Issues in Education. Despite there being a preponderance of females among the fee paying members, the office staff alignment did not reflect that percentage. Senior staff was top heavy with males and support staff with females. The balance was wrong and needed to be corrected. To assume that "equal access and opportunity thinking," as was the case in the past, was sufficient to correct this imbalance was denied. It had not worked, it could not work, either at the NLTA or elsewhere.

A pro-active employment equity hiring policy is the only answer and that was the position adopted by the NLTA. The emphasis now is on attaining a much more diversified and balanced staff to serve the needs of

all NLTA members.

"Equity" policy making and strategies are about a process to eventually attain "equality". "Equity" is the means; "equality" is the targeted result. Between the equity commencement process and the eventual equality results, one must understand and accept that time, commitment, patience and common perspectives and goals are essential. The equity process is a change process. And with all change, conflict and different perceptions from the affected groups can be expected to emerge. The steadfastness with which all groups embrace and endorse the principles of change will determine the outcome. That outcome is "equality" for all, through "equity" strategies.

*Barbara Lewis is the Staff Consultant to the Equity Issues in Education Committee, as well as Administrative Officer, Benefits and Economic Services.*

# RTF REPORT

*by William Abraham*

The Retired Teachers' Foundation was the idea of the late Lloyd C. Buffett, who planned it, fervently promoted it, and was its founding and only Chairperson until his sudden death on March 19, 1996.

When he died, donations in his memory came to the Foundation in unprecedented numbers, a fact that would have no doubt pleased Lloyd very much. A dedicated teacher, with many other interests in the community, he was especially interested in the Foundation, and over the years was able to see it grow steadily.

As well as many personal donations in Lloyd's memory, there were also donations from various groups, among which was a donation of \$2,500, made in October by the Retired Teachers' Association.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Retired Teachers' Foundation was founded in 1982, incorporated in 1985, and registered as a charitable organization in November 1987. The Foundation's purpose is to assist organizations and institutions that are caring for or providing a service to children who, unfortunately, have been afflicted by serious illness or recuperating from severe accidents. The Foundation motto is: Where there is pain or despair among children, let us show our love and send some hope.

Donations are invested in secure deposits and the interest is used to provide a number of annual donations, usually of \$500 each. In most recent years the Foundation has been able to make five donations, totaling \$2,500.

A breakdown of the Disbursement of Interest from 1987 to 1995 shows the following donations:

The Janeway Hospital Foundation:	\$1,900
The Children's Rehabilitation Centre:	\$2,600
The Candlelighters of NF & Lab.:	\$3,100
The Children's Wish Foundation:	\$2,500
The Shriners' Children's Burn Unit:	\$1,500
The CNIB Children's Services:	\$ 500
Total to the end of 1995:	\$12,100

The Treasurer was able to report at the end of October 1996 that our capital funds are now \$44,256.63.

The Foundation each year considers the needs of various organizations and institutions, and invites them to come to its Board meetings and make a presentation about their programs and needs. From year to year the Foundation may make donations on a continuing basis, make new donations, or cease donations.

As presently constituted, the Board of Directors consists of a Chairperson (Heber E. Walters), Vice-Chairperson (William Abraham), Secretary (Margaret "Peg" Moore), and Treasurer (N. Ray Wight). These are elected at the annual meeting of the Foundation and are members of the Retired Teachers' Association. In addition, each of the following appoints a person to the Board: (1) NLTA (James P. Fox); (2) MUN (Dr. Ernest Cluett); (3) Department of Education (Allen Wright).

The Foundation enables teachers, retired teachers, and their families and friends to continue the interest in the welfare of children that the teaching careers of so many dedicated teachers showed. Many retired

teachers make annual donations to the Foundation. Some school staffs make donations in memory of a deceased colleague. Others may leave a bequest in their will.

All donations, large or small, are much appreciated and help to increase the capital funds, and thus the annual interest income.

Donations may be sent to the Foundation's Treasurer, Mr. N. Ray Wight, 43 Wexford Street, St. John's, NF, A1B 1W6. Receipts for income tax purposes will be issued.

*William Abraham is Vice-Chairperson of the Retired Teachers' Foundation.*

# COPING WITH LOSS

*by Kathy Burford*

Teachers are often confronted with situations where they must try to help their students cope with grief and loss. It may be a serious illness or death which has occurred among the student or staff population, and teachers are faced with the task of supporting and comforting others, as well as dealing with their own loss and grief. Outside the classroom, there are different kinds of loss that can occur in a person's personal life such as the ending of a relationship, divorce, illness, loss of income, or the death of a friend or loved one.

The Christmas season, in particular, is one of the most difficult times of year in coping with loss. Perhaps we are reminded more of our losses during this time of year because it is a time when getting together with friends and family occurs more frequently and when people connect on an emotional level; thus, feelings of loss are intensified. If you have experienced a loss, you may feel angry, depressed, guilty, or dissatisfied with your particular situation and find yourself asking, "Why me?". You can learn to cope successfully with loss but it does take time to grieve and eventually get beyond just feeling angry or sad. Perhaps you are not the one experiencing a loss, but someone you know is, and you are wondering what you might do to help support another in coming to terms with their loss and grief.

## **Different Kinds of Losses**

Losses come in many forms. The extent that you feel your pain depends on the meaning you place on what was lost, or the relationship you had if someone who was close to you dies. The loss of a mate or a special friend may mean no longer having the companionship and love of the person with whom you shared so many things over the years. One friend recently remarked that her father's death this past year meant that all the Christmas decorating and the special things Dad did to make Christmas a magical and special time for the family would be deeply missed this year. The family, still dealing with their grief, has decided to spend their holidays away from home this year. If you are coping with illness, you may only begin to really appreciate the time in your life when you were healthy and able to do things that you can no longer do or enjoy. Perhaps the loss is related to one of the many aspects of downsizing or restructuring such as the loss of a job or a change in work responsibilities. Any loss is difficult. Some losses are harder to deal with than others, but loss is a part of life and no one escapes from having to deal with it at one time or another.

## **Understanding Loss**

Any loss, and the grief that accompanies it, confronts us with feelings of helplessness and lack of control over our life. While we often hear that time heals all wounds, time is not our only option. It is what we decide to do with the time that can help the healing process. How do we become whole again, to make our lives full and to find a sense of purpose, when the bottom seems to fall out?

## **A Time to Grieve**

Initially, during the early stages of loss most people feel a sense of shock or numbness. Decisions are hard to make because there is an overall sense of confusion or lack of control. Physical symptoms may include anxiety, nausea, headaches, and a lack of energy. For some, it may be difficult to relax or to slow down. A lot of energy may be used up by keeping busy and active with little sense of completion or satisfaction from the tasks completed. When the numbness begins to wear off, a person might feel like they are on automatic pilot going through the motions outwardly, but feeling the real depth of pain inwardly. With the pain comes a wide range of emotions such as anger, guilt, sadness and grief. You might question whether life will ever be the same again. It may seem like life has come to a standstill and you may feel alone, fearful or misunderstood. All of these feelings are a normal part of grief reactions and they should not be ignored, shunned, stifled or pushed out of our awareness. Instead, once we acknowledge to ourselves what we are feeling, we can then begin to deal with our pain. It is only then that we can truly begin the grieving process. Over time, some degree of loss will always be there, but the feelings will occur with less intensity.



## **Stages of Grief**

The work of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross has identified five stages of loss and grief which can help a person understand the grief process. These are:

### *1) Denial*

You talk and act like the loss never occurred. You say to yourself and others that things aren't really that bad and don't admit that the loss or change has even occurred. "This is not really happening." "I'm strong and this isn't affecting me in any way." "I'm doing just fine."

### *2) Anger*

You are angry at everyone and with life in general. "I don't deserve this." "I've been a good person and after all I've done this happens." "It isn't fair and I hate the world." "It must have been something that I did." Blame and self-blame become such a primary focus, that friends and family may start to withdraw their contact because their support is not enough to counteract your bitterness and anger.

### *3) Depression*

You feel alone and hopeless and think that life will never be the same. Ongoing, persistent feelings of meaninglessness may stand in the way of a person who is trying to function in daily life.

### *4) Bargaining*

You begin to make bargains in your own mind that you hope will make the pain go away or will give you one more chance to change things back the way they were.

### *5) Acceptance*

This final stage occurs when you accept the loss for what it is. It is a reality to be lived with and you learn to live your life the best you can under a new set of circumstances.

It is possible for a person to "get stuck" at any one of the first four stages and not be able to come to an acceptance of the loss. If you find yourself "stuck," it may be worthwhile to reach out for professional help with a counsellor who can guide and help you through the grieving process so that you can come to terms with your pain and grief. But it does take time and it is not uncommon for someone to still be grieving over a loss a year or more later. For some, it may take even longer.

## **Tips for Coping**

Talking about loss is an important part of the healing and grief process. Through talking, a person is able to release pent-up feelings, perhaps cry, and to connect emotionally with others.

Share and talk about your loss particularly with close friends and family.

When others offer help (e.g., an outing, taking the youngsters for the day, invitations to visit), accept the offers instead of refusing.

Limit your use of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs that may numb your pain in the short run but cause greater difficulties in the long run.

Be honest with yourself and others. If you hurt or are sad, say so. If you need time to be alone and reflect, say so, but balance your time to be alone with time to be with others.

At some time, when you are ready, find a way to celebrate and share the important aspects of your loss by remembering the person, the job, or the relationship, with people you feel close to.

## **Tips for Supporting**

If you are helping others with their grief, some suggestions for helping are:

Be a good listener.

Avoid giving prescriptive advice or offering clichés.

Respect the person's need to cry, to be angry, and to grieve at their own pace. You do not need to "fix" their feelings.

If the loss is a death, be there for the person not only at the funeral but afterwards as well.

Tell and show the person you care about them through a phone call, card, or through random acts of kindness.

Dr. Rita Freedman in *Overcoming Loss: A Healing Guide*, provides hopeful advice for anyone struggling with grief. She says, "Every loss is a challenge to grow. Yet growth requires change, which is often very painful. Deciding to heal doesn't mean giving up your dreams or your memories. It does mean deciding not to give up on yourself and your future."

*Kathy Burford is an EAP Coordinator with the Employee Assistance Program for teachers. For confidential assistance contact Kathy Burford (Ext. 242), or Claudette Coombs, (Ext. 265).*

**Note:** A booklet entitled "Grief at Work", published by the American Hospice Foundation, is available upon request from the EAP.

# CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

*by Bernie Froese-Germain and Marita Moll*

"Information technology is seen as the modern engine of progress, and education is promoted as the means to realize the change from an industrial age to an emerging information age."

Predictions about the benefits of technology are usually connected to problems in the social and political context within which the prediction is located. In 1889, the *Scientific American* predicted that, "the improvement in city conditions by general adoption of the motor car can hardly be overestimated. Streets clean, dustless, and odourless, with light rubber-tired vehicles moving swiftly and noiselessly over their smooth expanse, would eliminate a greater part of the nervousness, distraction, and strain of modern metropolitan life."

While this prediction is laughable today, it is understandable given the times. At the beginning of this century, cities were ill-equipped to absorb the mass influx of agricultural workers displaced by new farm machinery. Conditions in cities were terrible. The automobile offered a means of escape, but not without a cost. Just as the automobile became an integral and necessary part of modern life, the unanticipated negative effects began to appear traffic congestion, destruction of inner city neighbourhoods, abandoned streets among gleaming office towers, noise, and pollution. Adopting the car as the general means of transportation led to changes well beyond the way in which individuals moved from one place to another. Marshall McLuhan, speaking of the changes technology brings to society in his book *Understanding Media*, noted that, "it is the framework itself that changes with technology, and not just the picture within the frame."

Today, economic instability, structural unemployment, globalization, and downsizing are the symptoms of another technological revolution. Information technology is seen as the modern engine of progress, and education is promoted as the means to realize the change from an industrial age to an emerging information age. A recent Industry Canada report stated that, "Changes to the Canadian economy, government cuts, demands from parents and critics are all factors influencing education reform. Surveys indicate that Canadians expect the Information Highway to provide a solution." In this context, schools are being pressured to provide access to the information highway as quickly as possible.

Concealed in the many government policy statements and newspaper articles connecting information technology and education is the widespread myth that technology is culturally neutral, that its impact on education is limited solely to how it is used in the classroom, that it is merely a new tool at the teacher's disposal. Michael W. Apple, professor of Instruction and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, notes that, "the new technology is not just an assemblage of machines and their accompanying software. It embodies a form of thinking that orients a person to approach the world in a particular way. Computers involve ways of thinking that under current educational conditions are primarily technical. The more the new technology transforms the classroom into its own image, the more a technical logic will replace critical political and ethical understanding. The discourse of the classroom will center on technique, and less on substance. Once again 'how to' will replace 'why,'..."

To make responsible decisions about introducing technology into the classroom, educators and policy makers must begin to take the "why" into account. This will require a great deal more critical thought and discussion about how information technologies might affect learning environments both positively and negatively than appears to be occurring at present.

The following principles of communications media presented by Edward J. Lias in *Future Mind* serve as useful benchmarks for such a discussion:

*New media reshape societies, their governments, bureaucracies, and institutions.*

In a chapter in *Technology and the Future of Schooling*, Joshua Meyrowitz emphasizes the importance of the work of media theorists. "[M]edia are not simply channels for conveying information between two or more environments, but rather are themselves shapers of new social environments." For example, consider the impact of television, through mass advertising and its ability to reach mass markets, on business and government. McLuhan called our current media environment the electronic age, as distinguished from the previous oral and print ages. Through his frequently quoted statement that "the medium is the message", McLuhan was conveying the idea that, "in terms of the electronic age, a totally new environment has been created." Each new medium changes the pattern of our lives, taking the content of the previous medium and reprocessing it, producing "psychic and social consequences as they amplify or accelerate existing processes." This of course raises important questions about how the computer and other new technologies will reshape the institution of education.

In moving from the print to the electronic age, McLuhan believed that the Western world was evolving, cognitively, toward a right-brain dominant society. As a result of the more holistic approach this brings to processes of knowing, as information structures become much more simultaneous, discontinuous, and dynamic, he predicted in *The Global Village*, that "new education will have no goals whatsoever." Was he suggesting that future students would find themselves embarking on a learning journey of endless but not specifically goal-oriented discovery? Are we prepared to give up our emphasis on measurement? However we interpret this, it is certainly not the cost-cutting, efficiency-driven agenda promoted by the current school reformers. McLuhan noted that, "'Back to basics' is the last bugle call of the diehards."

*New media often generate their own market, their own need for existence.*

According to Lias, "the original reason for embracing a new medium may be lost as the medium 'suggests' other uses for itself. Some media seem to generate their own markets." He notes that many corporations originally purchased computers with little idea about what they might be used for. Now of course they couldn't do without them. Dependency on a particular medium (such as computers) grows with increased use of the medium and as that medium continues to suggest other uses for itself. This raises questions about the nature of some of these uses for example, has it become a matter of, "since it can be done, it is required to be done"?

With respect to schools, are computers and other new technologies, or perhaps more to the point, those who produce and market such technologies, in search of educational uses? It is certainly in their self-interest to convince us of the educational worth of technology. Schools represent an enormous market for computers and other such technological tools relentlessly in search of other uses. By way of students and their classrooms, access to the potentially more lucrative home market is opened up. Paul Olson notes that, "computer companies gear much of their advertising to the educational possibilities of computers." The home market is created by coupling "particular computer usages to schools where parents especially middle class parents with the economic wherewithal and keen motivation [to insure mobility] purchase machines compatible with those in schools."

The advertising and marketing strategies linking information technologies and education have found fruit among politicians, bureaucrats, and the public searching for a route through difficult economic and political times. Despite drastic reductions in public spending on education, the words "information technology" have opened the purse strings of governments everywhere. While the benefits of these costly initiatives remain unclear, we nevertheless keep forging ahead.

*New media cause underlying social values to change through the metaphors which they instill.*

In her 1989 Massey Lectures, *The Real World of Technology*, Ursula Franklin notes that the objectives of any new technology are imbedded within the technology itself and, once the technology is created, these

objectives become non-negotiable. This idea is echoed by Neil Postman who stated in a recent address in New York that, "imbedded in every technology, there's one or more powerful ideas or philosophies. These ideas which give each technology a unique view of the world have been hidden from our view because of their somewhat abstract nature. However, these ideas are given expression in how the technology makes people use their minds, bodies and 'in which of our senses it amplifies and in which of our emotional and intellectual tendencies it disregards.' "

For example, the linear nature of print-based media promotes "a one-thing-at-a-time and a one-thing-after-another world." These traits of linearity and sequentiality have come to dominate much more than the printed page they are also evident in the grid-like nature of city streets, in the factory assembly line, in classroom desks arranged in rows. Ronald Ragsdale in *Permissible Computing in Education: Values, Assumptions, and Needs* describes some of the dominant traits of computers as instantaneity and rational, logical approach to solving problems. Postman in his book *The End of Education* wonders if, with respect to computers, the "speed of response [will] become, more than ever, a defining quality of intelligence?"

At this relatively early stage in the introduction of computers into schools, perhaps all we can say about the impact of computer technology is the following:

- We don't yet know what the ultimate effects will be.
- "It is almost certain that there will be major effects which have not been anticipated." (Ragsdale, "An alternative analysis of computers in education a response to Edmund Sullivan", *Interchange*)
- "There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening." (McLuhan & Fiore, *The Medium is the Message*).

[Note: This article is also available at the CTF web site ([www.ctf-fce.ca](http://www.ctf-fce.ca)). It is a part of a substantive document review that presents the work of educators and researchers exploring the social, cultural and political impacts of technology on education from a critical perspective.]

*Marita Moll is Head of Research and Technology and Bernie Froese-Germain is Research Assistant with the Canadian Teachers' Federation.*

---

# Resources

---

## **THE GREAT CANADIAN TRIVIA BOOK**

The Great Canadian Trivia Book is a collection of compelling curiosities from Alouette to Zed, written by London's Mark Kearney and Randy Ray of Ottawa, award winning journalists and former newspaper reporters at the London Free Press.

What do the phrase "Beatlemania", the man who invented the Academy Awards, and dotted white lines down the middle of highways have in common? They're all connected to Canada and included in this book.

In this new book, you can read about the London, Ontario, doctor some thought was Jack the Ripper, the military plan Canada had for invading the United States earlier this century, why Great Britain almost traded Canada back to France in exchange for the island of Guadeloupe, and do you know what the message that Canada once left on the moon said?

For further information or interviews, contact Mark Kearney, Tel: 519-472-4509 or Randy Ray, Tel: 613-731-3873. For bulk orders of the book, please call 1-800-565-9523 or Fax: 1-800-221-9985.

---

## **THE TOP 10 OF EVERYTHING 1997**

Where do people live the longest? Get divorced the most often? Commit the most murders? Have the most public libraries? Drink the most coffee? The answers to these and thousands of other questions can be found in the 256 pages of Reader's Digest Books' recently published The Top 10 of Everything 1997. Covering every aspect of human achievement and the natural world, The Top 10 of Everything 1997 is a compelling mix of facts and trivia to surprise and intrigue readers of all interests. With over 1,000 lists divided into more than 100 subject areas, The Top 10 of Everything 1997 teaches Canadians new facts and trivia about themselves and their country on almost every spread.

The Top 10 of Everything 1997 is available for \$24.95. For further information or to receive a complimentary copy, contact Diane Hargrave, The Reader's Digest Association of Canada, at 416-467-9954.

---

## **THE CANADIAN JOURNEY**

The Canadian Journey is a teaching unit designed to help Social Studies students in Grades 4 to 7 learn about the diverse human and physical geography of Canada. While "traveling" in each province and territory, students can examine how Canadians from different areas meet their physical, social, and psychological needs. They can discover the role geography plays in determining where and how Canadians live, recognize the cultural differences and similarities among the regions, and become aware of individual issues each region faces.

The Canadian Journey is organized in four sections. Introductory Activities are designed to give students conceptual understanding of general geography; On-going Activities includes a current events component and a trivia game; The Journey, is a simulated journey which allows the physical and social features of Canada to become evident to students; and Culminating Activities gives students an opportunity to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate their knowledge and understanding by completing an artistic project which presents information in creative ways.

For more information about The Canadian Journey, contact Reidmore Books Inc., Tel: 1-800-661-2859, Fax: 403-441-9919, e-mail: reidmore@compusmart.ab.ca, or on the internet: <http://www.reidmore.com>.

---

## **MACLEAN'S IN-CLASS PROGRAM**

Maclean's magazine offers Canadian educators a special resource package complete with free educational material. Maclean's In-Class Program is used by hundreds of teachers every year in Social Studies, English, Media, Business and other curricula.

Teachers subscribing to Maclean's In-Class Program will receive a copy of Maclean's magazine for each student, a free instructor's copy of the magazine with weekly lesson plans based on a series of articles published in each issue, a Current Events Quiz and a Language Skills Worksheet, a poster for the classroom and a Maclean's Resource Binder a collection of Maclean's articles complete with lesson plans on a specific theme. The package is available for 65¢ per student copy.

Maclean's In-Class Program is a division of Maclean Hunter Educational Services. Their Website (<http://www.mh-educational.com>) offers samples of materials available to teachers through class subscription. For information or a free Introductory Package, contact Laura Colero at 1-800-668-1951 or 416-596-5499, e-mail: [info@mh-educational.com](mailto:info@mh-educational.com).

---

## **INFORMATION HIGHWAY VOCABULARY**

The Linguistic Services of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) would like to take you on a trip around the electronic world in 365 terms or so. Their purpose is to provide some landmarks in a linguistic universe which is being revolutionized.

Techies and newbies alike, are interested in teleshopping, accessing shareware, consulting clickable image maps and using a BBS.

As a matter of courtesy, they want to be conversant with netiquette and, in addition, they must be familiar with the multitude of new terms related to the information highway in general and to the Internet in particular. This can be doubly challenging for people who wish to communicate in both official languages. The CTF, having recently undertaken research in a wide range of North American and European materials to meet their own translation needs, decided to disseminate their findings as widely as possible.

Their Information Highway Vocabulary contains the most commonly used English terms, with their French equivalent, synonyms in both official languages and, wherever appropriate, French definitions in plain language. Included are a French-English index and a bibliography listing the sources of the terminological and technical data.

A copy of this publication can be ordered for \$9.35 plus GST. For more information contact CTF, 110 Argyle Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1B4, Tel: 613-232-1505 or Fax: 613-232-1886.

---

# Calendar

---

## **CANADIAN CHESS CHALLENGE 1996-97**

January 31, 1997 (Registration Deadline)

### Tournament Schedule:

October 1996 - March 1997: School Championships every elementary and secondary school in Canada is invited to participate; March 8-22, 1997: Regional Tournaments qualifiers from participating schools play off to qualify for the Provincial Championships; April 12, 1997: Provincial Championship this tournament, to be held at St. John's City Hall/Key-In Technical College, determines provincial representatives to the National Finals; May 18-19, 1997: National Championship the National Finals, to be held in Montreal, will be organized by the Chess & Math Association.

---

## **FREEDOM TO READ WEEK 1997**

February 24 - March 2, 1997

The 13th Freedom to Read Week is a campaign, sponsored by the Freedom of Expression Committee of the Book and Periodical Council and is committed to the defense of intellectual freedom. Plan events in your community to participate in Freedom to Read Week 1997. For more information contact Sarah Thring, Freedom To Read Coordinator, Book and Periodical Council, 35 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON, M5R 2S9, Tel: 416-480-2533.

---

## **11TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM FOR ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

May 13-17, 1997

Le Château Frontenac, Quebec City. This symposium allows researchers, professionals and clinicians to share their knowledge, know-how and expertise for adapted physical activity Active Living Differently. Contact: 11th ISAPA, Centre François-Charon, 525, boul. Wilfrid-Hamel Est, Bureau A-102, Quebec City, Quebec, G1M 2S8; Tel: 418-429-9141, ext. 6271, Fax: 418-529-7318.

---

## **ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION**

July 3-17, 1997

Two weeks designed to perpetuate the remembrance of Canadians who fought and died for Canada. Tour includes England, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Participants must be Legion members and must be active as leaders of youth groups. Contact: Karen Mackarous-Reitano, Tel: 613-235-4391.

---

## **BRIDGING THE GAP CONFERENCE**

July 6-11, 1997

Vancouver, BC. Sponsored jointly by the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) and the Association for Teacher-Librarianship in Canada (ATLC), this conference is for teacher-librarians, school library media and technology specialists, library educators and school district administrators, on emerging issues for schools and school libraries. For further information or to request a registration package, contact: Lynne Lighthall, Conference Coordinator, 4093 West 14th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6R 2X3; Tel: 604-822-2704, Fax: 604-822-6006, e-mail: [iaslatlc@unixg.ubc.ca](mailto:iaslatlc@unixg.ubc.ca), Conference Web Site: [http://www.rhi.hi.is/~anne/conf\\_van.html.html](http://www.rhi.hi.is/~anne/conf_van.html.html).



---

**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE REUNION '97**

August 15-17, 1997

Silver Star Mountain Resort, Vernon, BC.

This DND reunion, Star Trek '97, is taking place for teachers who served on military bases in Europe. For more information, look under DND Reunion '97 on the internet at [www.schdist21.bc.ca](http://www.schdist21.bc.ca) or contact the Veenstras, 8215 Westkal Road, Vernon, BC, V1B 1Y4.