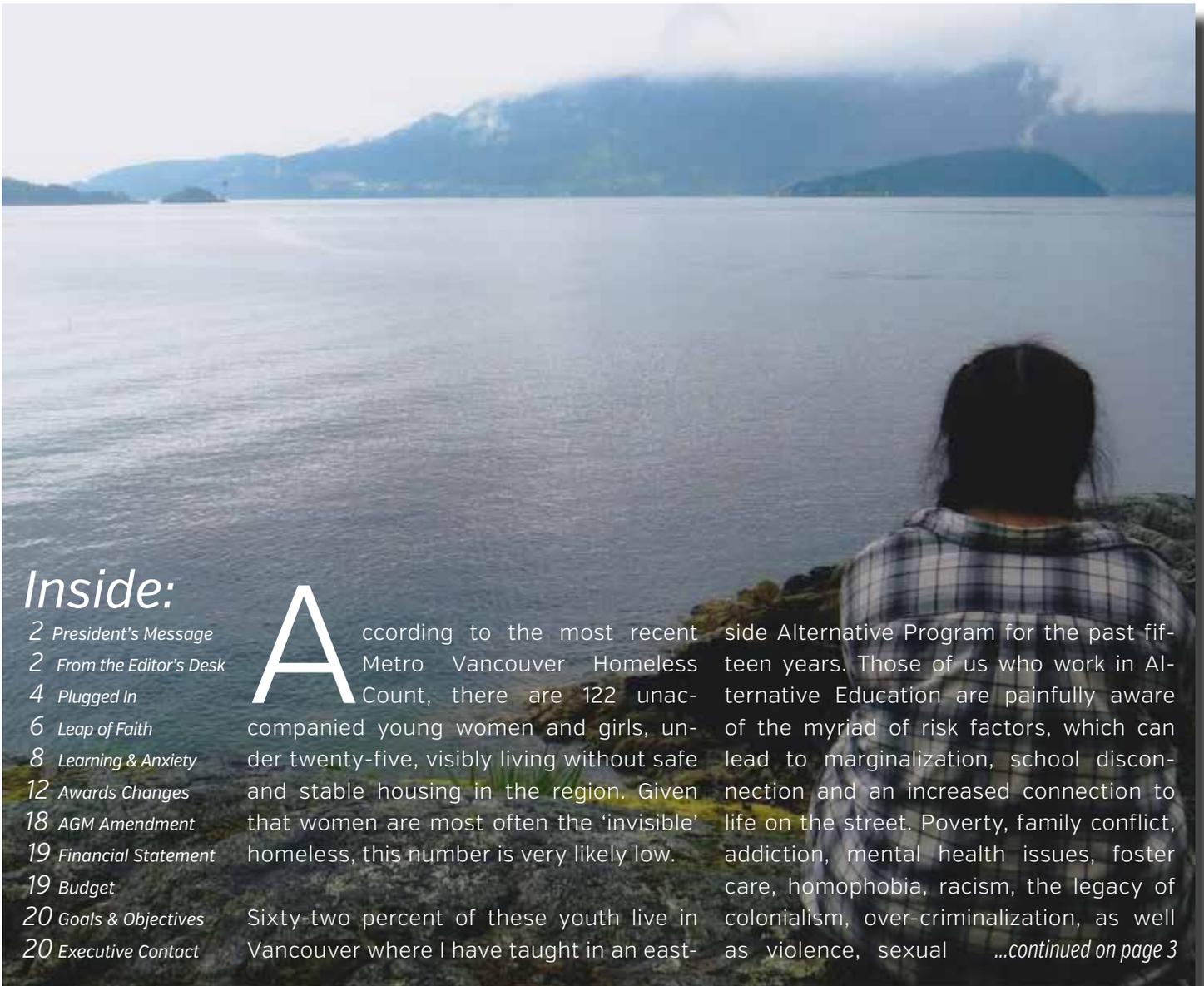


Creating Alternatives For Young Women

Tracey McIntosh



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According to the most recent Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, there are 122 unaccompanied young women and girls, under twenty-five, visibly living without safe and stable housing in the region. Given that women are most often the 'invisible' homeless, this number is very likely low.

Sixty-two percent of these youth live in Vancouver where I have taught in an east-

side Alternative Program for the past fifteen years. Those of us who work in Alternative Education are painfully aware of the myriad of risk factors, which can lead to marginalization, school disconnection and an increased connection to life on the street. Poverty, family conflict, addiction, mental health issues, foster care, homophobia, racism, the legacy of colonialism, over-criminalization, as well as violence, sexual ...continued on page 3

From the Editor's Desk:

Greetings from Leanne Hagglund, the newsletter editor! This issue contains several thought-provoking articles related to alternative education.

Our feature story, written by Tracey McIntosh, former teacher at East Side Alternative School, Vancouver, is about educational possibilities for homeless girls and women.

The second article, written by Deborah MacNamara, Neufeld Institute, explores the implications on youth of growing up in a digital world.

Our third article, written by Danielle Pawelchak, Frank Hurt Secondary School, Surrey, takes a look at the important life skills developed through the Ropes Course.

The final article, written by Dr. Margo Watt and Samantha DiFrancesantonio, analyzes the effect anxiety disorders have on learning experiences.

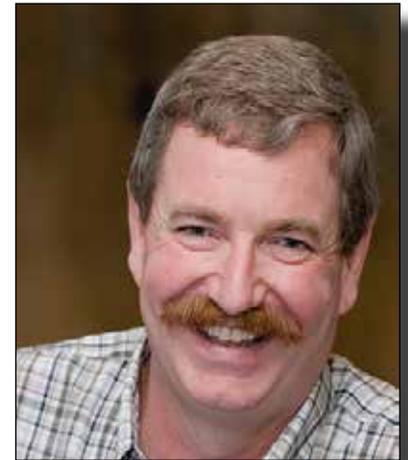
The newsletter also contains information about exciting changes to the BC Alternate Education Awards and Grants.

We are constantly on the search for thought-provoking articles to include in upcoming issues. My contact information is on page 20, so feel free to contact me with questions, ideas and articles.



President's Message

Mike Shaw



Have you ever had one of those moments that crystallizes for you the passage of time? For me it happened several times this fall. The first time was when I was looking at the demographics of one of my new students in MyEDBC (don't get me started on that one!), and there was something strange about what I was seeing that I couldn't immediately put my finger on. And then it suddenly struck me! After nearly 25 years of teaching in Alternate, it was the first time I had encountered a kid with a birthday that didn't start with 19xx. The student I was looking at was born in 2000. It was a bit jarring at first, but I quickly came to terms with it. I've got Millennials on my class list now!

Shortly after that incident, came another one, even less subtly than the first reinforcing the passing of the years. A new student in my class asked me how old I was. When I asked her why she wanted to know, she explained that when her mom was in my class as a pregnant 16-year-old expecting my new student, she thought I was really old then, fifteen years prior, and so she was curious to know how old I was now, all those years later.

The hair is getting greyer, (I tell my own children I earned every one of those grey hairs the hard way), the white in my moustache is unavoidable, and as my student Tristan said, I have a Dad shape.

Yet despite the advancing years, Alternate is still where my passion lies. I still enjoy going to work each day. I love working with the kids, trying to find a way to make a connection with each of them, and help them a little further down the road to better lifestyle choices, employment, or graduation. Each is a puzzle you think at the start of the year will be too tough to crack, but you try your best, employing the techniques picked up over the years in an effort to make a difference in the life of a kid that many would give up on. And along the way you collect and celebrate the little successes, the amusing anecdotes, the heartwarming and often heartwrenching stories that make teaching such an addicting vocation.

I commend you all for all you do for your kids, whether you have been at this forever, or are just new to Alternate. Enjoy the year!

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to lie down and take a nap! ♦

Creating Alternatives For Young Women

(continued from page 1)

assault and sexual exploitation - the obstacles some girls face are overwhelming. The greater the marginalization and the larger the barriers, the more difficulty young women have to be successful. Grades drop, attendance falters and they often quietly fade out of the school system.

Studies confirm that girls are most likely to disengage from school between 13-15 years old when they are in grades 8 to 10. [Dhillon, 2005; Novac et al, 2002; Smith et al, 2007]. Sometimes, they are caught by an Alternative Education Program, where adjusted programming and a greater staff-student ratio halts their disconnection. But for some, this is not enough.

Young women who are on the street describe harsh day-to-day lived realities of survival and courage. Often their primary focus is daily survival as they struggle to find their next meal and shelter for the night. This struggle leads to an increased interdependence on other street-involved youth, further entrenching them into street-culture and away from mainstream services and support. Stories of unstable and unsafe housing, forced economic survival strategies, violence and sexual exploitation, trauma, poverty [21% report no income], isolation, addiction [47%], mental illness [32%], over-criminalization and deprivation shed light on the enormous challenges they face. [Dhillon, 2005; Higgitt et al, 2003; Novac et al, 2002]. Young women and girls who identify as Aboriginal

[40% of the homeless youth population] or lesbian are significantly over-represented amongst street-involved and homeless girls [Basi et al, 2012; Dhillon, 2005; Kraus et al, 2010; Novac et al, 2002; Smith et al, 2007, Metro Vancouver Homeless Count 2014]. They are highly vulnerable to victimization and have less access to support than other young women and girls.

All too often, our educational system is complicit in exacerbating the conditions that can lead to school disconnection and failure. Too often, our institutional failings are attributed to a youth's individual or social problems, pathologies or even choices. Yet, systemic biases, a Eurocentric pedagogical model, hierarchical underpinnings, restrictive policies, and economic expectations in our educational system are experienced as insurmountable barriers for some young women and girls. In addition, these same girls may be in schools where they are routinely subjected to sexist content, materials, stereotypes, attitudes, judgments, interactions, harassment, and sometimes violence. If unchallenged, these sexist attitudes are naturalized, reproducing and reinforcing the social inequities of the larger society.

For street involved girls, those living in precarious housing and those who are homeless, remaining connected to their educational future is next to impossible within the current context. To ensure that these girls continue their connection with school as a means out of social, ...*continued on page 14*



Girls are most likely to disengage from school between 13-15 years old



Plugged In: Growing Up In A Digital World

Dr. Deborah MacNamara

“
What
is lost
when
screens
and
devices
become
part of
their
play?”

I remember being overjoyed when my parents bought our first dishwasher. Overnight I was rescued from the drudgery of washing dinner plates. I was even more ecstatic when my parents bought our first colour television. I still laugh when I tell my children, “Mommy used to watch television in black and white”.

Board games, record players, paper books, air guitar with tennis rackets, and outdoor play were the substance of my weekends and summer vacations. I feel a sentimental attachment to these experiences, especially as I watch them being transformed by technology. My kids have their movies on demand and can find their way around an iTunes library. When they are playing I overhear their Barbies talk on cell phones and their Polly Pockets invent devices that navigate a miniature terrain. In these moments I feel as if I am standing between two worlds. I am an immigrant to this new digital world but my children are its true digital natives. They have never known a world without internet, computers, handheld devices, and screens to navigate by.

We love our technology and who couldn't – it has given us tools to do things we only once imagined. The fact is, though, with every step forward there are losses left in its wake. As a parent raising children in a digital world I am left to contemplate whether all these technological devices are what my children really need? What is lost when screens and devices become part of their play? How do I

make sense of these new tools and the role they serve in my children's life?

David Suzuki suggests when a new tool is introduced, it takes one to two hundred years for new rituals and customs to form around its use. I don't have two hundred years to figure this out and neither do my kids. Parents continuously face questions whether they should allow their kids to have a Facebook page, cell phone, play video games, or post content and surf on the Internet. The problem is we will never find our answers if we keep asking these type of questions. We need to consider the heart of this issue, that is, how do these new tools help or hinder our children's development?

The irreducible needs of children are very clear from a developmental perspective. First, our children need to become their own person and develop their own ideas. The way they start to develop this sense of agency and become an actor in their world is through play. It is here they play fight, play house, and play at figuring out the world around them – consequence free. This unscripted, unmitigated play is critical to eventually figuring out who they are. The question is whether technological devices foster this type of play in our children.

The type of devices our children have in their hands have the capacity to rob them of their expressive and exploratory play. Our children are often at the mercy of other people's ideas, which only serves to limit theirs. What can possibly compare to the stories they can cre-

ate and the adventures they go on with their trains or dolls? There is so much that needs to come out of them. We need to stay cognizant to what gets lost when they are bounded by a device, an algorithm or another person's ideas. Their expressive and exploratory play is the vehicle for growth into personhood and without these spaces they cannot make their internal world emerge.

One irreducible need of children is that they need rest in order to grow. As an adult I

often feel overwhelmed with too much information bombarding me. My attentional systems are often overtaxed and I have taken multitasking to an all-new level. I don't need any more information, I just need some time, space, and rest so I can process it. Our children need the same so they can find their own questions and develop their own meanings before being introduced to other people's answers. Our children need spaces free of distractions, information, and en- *...continued on page 13*



Their expressive and exploratory play is the vehicle for growth



Leap of Faith

Danielle Pawelchak



There are just some things you cannot teach in a traditional classroom setting



The Life and PSI programs students at Frank Hurt Secondary recently participated in the Ropes Course led by Omada Teambuilding. I am the Special Programs Counsellor attached to both of these programs, and had the opportunity to take each of these groups to Fort Langley along with their teacher and youth worker.

The LIFE program is for students who require additional support for their mental health in order to be successful in school. The PSI program is a similar alternate class within our school, except it is for students who have difficulty managing their behaviours.

For anyone who is unfamiliar with the Ropes Course, in small groups, students spend the day participating in low and high ropes challenges that require trust, communication, and healthy risk-taking in order to successfully complete them. In the low ropes portion,

students engage in teambuilding activities on the ground in order to prepare them for the high ropes. During the high ropes portion of the day, students complete their challenges approximately 20 to 30 feet up in the trees, challenges that combine the need for social support, along with opportunities to test one's boundaries and learn to take healthy risks.



One of my students in particular (we'll call him Joshua) has been working hard to overcome significant obstacles in his life. He returned to school after being away for a long period, and has been trying his best to make things work at school, despite difficulties managing the various, complex challenges that he faces.

At the Ropes Course Joshua was shaking at the thought of climbing up a 30 foot telephone pole in the trees. Once students get to the top, they have to climb onto a small platform and attempt to jump and grab a trapeze in the air. The trapeze is quite some distance from the platform, so most of the students end up doing a free fall from the pole (harnessed and supported by belayers of course). After watching a few other students do this, Joshua reluctantly volunteered to climb.

There are just some things that you cannot teach in a traditional classroom setting. The youth we work with don't fit into the proverbial box of mainstream society, so why would we try to teach them in one? As a counselor, I listen, offer strategies and support, and try my best to instill hope and inspiration in my students. But there are some situations where words alone may not be enough, situations in which an experience may lend itself to a greater learning opportunity.

When I think about some of the best days of my life, my wedding day, the births of my children, these are events that can be talked about with others, but it doesn't have nearly the same power as sharing or living that experience. Many of the students we work with

have struggled and learned through personal experience that "my life sucks" or "I'm never good enough", words that become unhealthy mantras that they come to believe as true. It is through experience that one connects their thoughts and feelings to create their own reality, which subsequently influences their beliefs around humanity, relationships, morals, and life in general.

At the Ropes Course, Joshua made this experience his reality. As he nervously sat on top of the telephone pole platform, he looked down at me with tears in his eyes. "I change my mind, I can't do this" he shouted to me. "I can't do this", a line that he tells himself in his head over and over again, a line that he has come to believe in himself through his past lived experiences.

Some other students heard Joshua yell down at me and started cheering for him, "You got this buddy, You can do it" they shouted back. Joshua took a few minutes, and slowly stood up onto the platform. "Ok, I'm going to jump," and he did.

Joshua didn't catch the trapeze that day, but he caught something much more valuable by completing that challenge, he caught the ability to believe in himself, and to believe in the possibility of a better life. As Joshua was slowly lowered to the ground I ran to him and asked him what it felt like. A smile on his face, and tears in his eyes he replied, "It feels good to be alive." ♦

Danielle Pawelchak is a special programs counsellor and co-creator of the LIFE Program at Frank Hurt Secondary School in Surrey.



**Words
that
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mantras
that they
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believe
as true**



Learning Experiences and Anxiety Disorders

Margo C. Watt & Samantha DiFrancesantonio

Anxiety disorders are the most common of all mental health problems, affecting approximately one in 10 people, both children and adults [CMHA, 2010]. Various factors have been implicated in the development and maintenance of anxiety disorders including biological [e.g., genetics, psychophysiology, temperament], personality [e.g., anxiety sensitivity or fear of arousal-related sensations], interpersonal [e.g., attachment], cognitive [e.g., information processing], preparedness, and behavioural [learning]. Research indicates that environmental factors, such as learning, contribute more to the etiology and maintenance of anxiety than do genes [Eley, 2001].



Most people cannot recall a traumatic conditioning event when their phobia began



Learning theory models suggest that the etiology and maintenance of anxiety disorders rest on three primary mechanisms: [1] classical conditioning, [2] vicarious conditioning, and [3] operant conditioning. Classical conditioning involves the pairing of a neutral stimulus, event, or situation with a meaningful unconditioned stimulus [US] that elicits an unconditioned response [UR]. After enough pairings, the individual will respond to the neutral stimulus, which is now referred to as the conditioned stimulus [CS] because it produces the conditioned response [CR]. For example, if an individual experiences arousal-related sensations, such as dizziness or heart palpitations [CS], at the time of some intrinsically frightening event, such as an unexpected panic attack coming 'out of the blue' [UCS], then the individual might learn to fear the occurrence of such bodily arousal

sensations [CR] in the future. Bouton, Mineka, and Barlow [2001] have argued that the conditioning that may occur in a vulnerable individual [e.g., someone with high anxiety sensitivity or low perceived control] during initial panic attacks may set the context for the development of panic disorder with and without agoraphobia. Direct traumatic conditioning experiences [e.g., severe teasing in childhood] have been implicated in the development of social phobia, as well as specific phobias [see Mineka & Zinbarg, 2006]. On the other hand, research shows that most people cannot recall a traumatic conditioning event when their phobia began. Murray and Foote [1979] found that most college students who were afraid of snakes could not recall a bad experience with snakes; indeed, three who had been bitten by snakes reported no fear at all. Instead, students reported learning their fears through vicarious conditioning [see Barlow, 2002].

Vicarious conditioning refers to learning by observing the consequences of others' behaviour [Bandura, 1986]. Information acquired through vicarious learning could be conveyed through either physical demonstration or verbal transmission. Observational learning could account for the development of anxiety if a parent modeled fear reactions to particular stimuli [e.g., spiders, public speaking] in the presence of their child, and/or verbally transmitted their beliefs about the harmfulness of these stimuli to the child. Mineka and Zinbarg [2006] cite the case of a boy who developed

a strong and persistent vomiting phobia after witnessing his grandfather vomit while dying. As an adult, the severity of his phobia caused him in one instance to contemplate suicide when he was nauseous and feared vomiting. Maternal modeling of fear has been shown to impact young children's fear and avoidance behaviour. Dubi et al. [2008] found that toddlers [aged 15-20 months] showed heightened fear and avoidance to both fear-relevant (rubber snake or spider) and fear-irrelevant stimuli (rubber mushroom or flower) following negative [vs. positive] reactions from their mothers.

The verbal information pathway seems to be a particularly potent means of fear acquisition. For example, a recent study by Muris, van Zwol, Huijding, and Mayer [2010] found that fear beliefs of children aged 8-13 years were influenced by information provided by the parent. Parents were provided with information about an unknown animal, and instructed to describe a series of imaginary confrontations with this animal to their child. Results indicated that changes in children's fear of the animal were a function of the type of information provided by the parent. Children of parents who received negative information showed a significant increase in self-reported fear, whereas children of parents who received positive information showed a significant decrease in self-reported fear. Parents who appeared anxious when depicting negative information were more likely to transfer a fear of the unknown animals to their child.

With operant conditioning (or instrumental learning), the individual's behavior is 'instrumental' in getting something he/she wants [i.e., positive reinforcement] or removing something he/she does not want [i.e., negative reinforcement]. Reinforcement increases the probability that the behavior will occur in the future. Instrumental learning could contribute to the development of anxiety if a child displays or complains about anxiety symptoms and is rewarded in some way, such as being allowed to miss school [i.e., negative reinforcement] or being afforded special attention [i.e., positive reinforcement].

Harvey, Ehlers, and Clark [2005] investigated the role of learning experiences in the development of social phobia. As compared to a control group, adult participants with social phobia rated their parents as less likely to encourage them to engage in social events [exposure] and as being more emotionally cold. Similar results have been found with children and adolescents. For example, Bogels, van Oosten, Muris, and Smulders [2001] found that low family sociability and perceived overprotectiveness were associated with social anxiety in a sample of eight to 18-year-olds. Barrett, Rapee, Dadds, and Ryan [1996] found that avoidance behaviour increased significantly in anxious children following family discussion of ambiguous stimuli. The authors concluded that avoidant behaviour may be reinforced in families with anxious children, what they called the "family enhancement of avoidant response" [FEAR] effect.

...continued on page 10



Low family sociability and perceived overprotectiveness were associated with social anxiety



Learning and Anxiety

(continued from page 9)

“
Clearly,
learning
plays an
important
role in the
development
of anxiety
disorders



Of course, learning pathways are not mutually exclusive. In a study of children aged 6-8 years, Field and Storksen-Coulson [2007] found that direct negative experience [without prior information] or threat information [without a subsequent negative experience] produced similar effects. When combined, however, the effect was significantly magnified.

Clearly, learning plays an important role in the development of anxiety disorders. Models of learning will be refined as research clarifies the relative contributions of learning, genetics, and other factors such as culture. For example, Essau, Leung, Conradt, Cheng, and Wong [2008] found a significant correlation between anxiety symptoms and learning history [instrumental, vicarious and informational] with anxiety-related behav-

our among German, but not Chinese, adolescents, which might reflect differences in socialization practice. More research is needed to delineate the respective contribution of these various factors, as well as to understand how they interact. Better understanding of the underlying factors and mechanisms of fear acquisition should lead to improvements in the assessment, treatment, and prevention of anxiety and its disorders. ♦

Margo Watt and Samantha DiFrancescantonio [2010]. *Childhood learning experiences in the development and maintenance of anxiety disorders*. Invited submission for *Strides*, newsletter for AnxietyBC, Editor Ron Norton. Reprinted by permission.



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Changes to Awards & Grants

Jim Lawson

The BCAEA runs a very successful conference each year, and one of the things that success allows us to do is provide a number of financial awards to the students of our members, and provide funds that teachers can apply for to use for the benefit of their students. Amongst these are the five Student Bursaries we offer, and the fifteen Student Achievement awards.

The Student Bursary is awarded to a deserving student who has attended an alternate program and is now going on to further education and training. Starting in 2016, the amount available for each of the five bursaries is doubled to \$1000.

The Student Achievement Award recognizes the positive changes a student has made since enrolling in an alternate program. It is disbursed as a gift certificate jointly chosen by the student and teacher. We have doubled the amount of each of the fifteen awards to \$200.

As well, the Association provides up to four Student Activity grants that teachers can apply for to partially fund an activity of benefit to their kids. We have doubled the amount of money available there, too, so now the maximum amount is \$4000 split between four winners, or \$1000 each.

Kathi Hughes was a long-serving member of the BCAEA Executive and we offer the Kathi Hughes Innovative Programming

Award to honour her contributions to the Executive, the Association, and alternate education. We have doubled the amount of money available for this award as well, now offering \$1000 to the successful applicant.

And finally, we offer a regional Conference Grant to help offset the costs, provided one of the goals of the conference is to increase membership in the Association. It, too, has now doubled, offering \$1000.

As always, please make sure you use the latest versions of the application forms by going to our website, www.bcaea.com and downloading the pertinent forms. The requirements do change from time to time, and regrettably, the volume of applications we receive means we must disqualify applications that don't follow the current rules, are incomplete, or miss the deadline [March 15 each year for all awards except the Student Activity Grant]. Don't let that happen to you!

So fire up your favourite web browser, navigate to our site, click on the Awards page and download the latest versions of our application forms. I look forward to reading your or your student's submissions when the Awards Committee meets in the spring. ♦

Jim Lawson is the BCAEA Vice President and Chair of the Awards Committee. His contact information is on the last page.

Plugged In

(continued from page 5)

tainment so they can focus on what interests them. When the focus is on putting information into them, we lose sight of the questions that were meant to come out first.

The other irreducible need of children is to experience their world in a vulnerable way where the losses and lacks of life are truly felt. From the checker games they never win against their grandfather to the sports activities where winners and losers are clearly defined – these all serve to teach them something. These small losses are what prepare children for the big upsets that will be part of their life too. There will be jobs they don't get, people that don't love them back, and constant reminders of the unfairness of life. Does a video game world with a reset button and endless lives prepare our children for the world they will live in? I fear not. We cannot possibly exchange the lessons learned in the real world, in real time, with the world that is created on our screens. There is too much lost and so little that is learned when the futilities of life come with a reset button.

I love my technology but this isn't about love. It is about developmental readiness that needs to be considered when putting these tools into our children's hands. Our children need to be full of their own ideas before we introduce them to the ideas of so many others. They need to have the space to attend to the questions inside of them instead of the distractions posed by

too much information and entertainment. They need to be able to accept the futilities of life in the real world and with people that were meant to be their life teachers.

To keep this new world in perspective, I view my children's new tools on the same level as all the other treats they desire. As Gordon Neufeld says, "there is nothing wrong with cookies but every parent knows there is a time and a place for them". Cookies are treats and we ought to savour them – their sweetness need not blind us. Treats are just cheap substitutes for the real things that were meant to nourish and grow us. Parents have always been the ones to decide when cookies are in order. Treats shouldn't be eaten on an empty stomach and before all of the other good stuff goes in.

Healthy development is always a matter of timing. Parents were meant to act as buffers against the outside world and determine when children are ready to experience it. Before we plug our children in, we need to consider what they will be unplugged from. Helping them become their own person is the goal and parents are still the best devices that help them get there. ♦

© **Dr. Deborah MacNamara** a Counselor and Educator in private practice, and on Faculty at the Neufeld Institute. Please see: www.macnamara.ca, Facebook: KidsBestBet or www.neufeldinstitute.com for more information.



There is nothing wrong with cookies, but every parent knows there is a time and a place for them



Creating Alternatives

(continued from page 3)

political and economic forms of deprivation, it is imperative that they have educational options that honour the complex nature of their lived experiences and their lives.

Working in Alternative Programs, we are uniquely situated to lower the numbers of girls who experience homelessness. We are allowed a small measure of autonomy, as there is an unspoken understanding that the youth we serve require more flexibility than students in the mainstream educational system. We have a smaller staff-student ratio and can offer adjusted scheduling and programming. But before we imagine how we can create a 'transformative' experience for the girls in our care, I challenge us to transform the experience.



It entails giving of your heart and spirit as well as your mind and body

Transforming education to create an alternative for girls who are marginalized, street-entrenched and/or homeless requires looking first to the staff team. It is a widely accepted belief that the long-term success of any educational venture can be attributed to the strength of the staff team. The research, my observations and my own experiences confirm this belief. Employing a staff team that shares passion and commitment, and whose members work equitably together is critical, as is employing a team who are representative of the youth being supported.



The structure of the school and the practices of the staff team must be guided by a common underlying philosophical and po-

litical framework. In particular, each staff member must have a shared understanding in theory and in practice of the social and political context that led to the young women's marginalization and disconnection from their education that influence their current choices and behaviours, and that are systemic barriers to their future stability and success. Instead of focusing on what can be done to 'fix,' 'maintain,' or 'adjust' the young women and their behavior, the staff will be aware of where the behaviors are coming from and can focus on creating the social and economic conditions that can lead to success.

A high priority must be placed on the value of the team. Therefore, each staff member must be valued equally. Their voice and vote must count equally. Their input, initiatives and personal expertise respected and encouraged equally. With this in mind, it is important to emphasize that this is not an entry-level position. Only those experienced and successful in working with at-risk and marginalized youth can comprehend the rigor and all encompassing demands placed on the staff. It entails giving of your heart and spirit as well as your mind and body. It entails inventing creative, innovative and imaginative solutions and responses to insolvable problems and crises. It involves flexibility and openness to new ways of being and thinking. It involves being willing to learn as well as teach, to letting others share the lead, to listening instead of talking, to admitting

when you are wrong and being willing to make things right. It entails working collectively within a competitive society and a systemically hierarchical system. And it sometimes involves actively forgetting what you learned at school. The most vulnerable of our young women and girls deserve this much, and more.

They also need a staff with training in supporting young women who have experienced male violence with a feminist approach to supporting them. The young women need to know they are not to blame for the actions of the men who have hurt them and they need help to unravel the damage done to them by years of oppressive beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that have marginalized them, led them to the street and kept them there. They need a staff team that is knowledgeable of the community supports and resources available to them and those with the ability to advocate within the social services, housing and criminal justice systems on their behalf.

Co-creating an intentional, inclusive, equitable, welcoming and self-sustaining community where each girl is a valued member and all experience a sense of belonging is core to a transformed alternative. In keeping with this belief, it is imperative to decolonize our programs by naturalizing Indigenous epistemologies ('ways of knowing') into the school's structure, practices and pedagogy. By 'braiding' western and

Indigenous knowledge systems, we will give both systems equal value and equal weight. Without this shift, we will continue to alienate Aboriginal learners.

Experience has taught me that a grounded political analysis will allow staff to connect with each young women from a place of honour and respect, and that this will develop further into a deep sense of admiration for each young women's courage, tenacity, survival strategies and daily resistance, as the relationship grows. But the staff must understand that it will take time, patience, and understanding for these young women to risk opening themselves up to trust again. We must listen to both their words and actions, be available when they are ready to connect and take their lead on the way forward. We must believe they know what will work best in their lives. Only then will we gain their respect and trust.

The significance of this relationship cannot be underestimated. For some young women and girls it can mean the difference between staying in school and dropping out, or connecting with services and staying on the street. Most researchers agree and point to having a relationship with a significant adult as one of the most important factors to ensuring that young women and girls succeed in school or in helping them transition off the street. [Bazyluk, 2002; Dhillon, 2005; Higgitt et al, 2003; Smith et al, 2007].

Given the fluidity of ...continued on page 16



*It
sometimes
involves
actively
forgetting
what you
learned at
school*



Creating Alternatives

[continued from page 15]

“
There
is no
rulebook,
no course,
no policy
that
adequately
addresses
what we
do

”

street-involvement, the difficulty of accessing stable housing, and the understanding that youth are more likely to reach out when they are in crisis, we must be available to connect when they are ready to connect, support when they are ready to be supported, and teach when they are ready to learn. Eliminating systemic economic and policy barriers to enable youth to freely access education is also imperative. As is providing on-site holistic supports, such as advocacy and accompaniment, medical and dental attention, counseling and food. This, along with a flexible delivery model and a schedule that reflects and responds to the needs of individual students' lives, will greatly impact girls' likelihood of success.

Finally, it is crucial to offer an educational option that values self-determination and self-empowerment as its primary objectives. Being the authors of their own successful action counters the oppressive internalized voices of the broader community that describes marginalized young women and girls along deficit lines. This

journey of self-discovery, in turn, can lead to self-empowerment, as they reclaim their self-identity, entitlement and hope.

An innovator, by definition, is someone who is the first to introduce into reality something better than before: new ideas, creative solutions, new ways of doing things. In my experience, Alternative Program Staff are innovators every day. There's no rule book, no course, no policy that adequately addresses what we do daily, nor that prepares us to confront the complexities of the challenges we face. Instead, we have a passion, a commitment, and a drive to change the status quo for every youth who walks through our doors. It's this kind of innovative love that I believe can alter the outcome of future homelessness counts. ♦

Tracey McIntosh has taught in Vancouver for the past 27 years, and at East Side Alternative Program since 2000. She is on the Board for the Vancouver-based organization, Justice For Girls Outreach Society, and is currently working with them to make this alternative a reality

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Proposed Constitution Amendment

Mike Shaw

A number of years ago at the 2006 AGM, the BCAEA amended its constitution to combine the then separate roles of Secretary and Treasurer into the combined position of Secretary-Treasurer. At the 2016 AGM, held February 19th during our annual conference, a motion will be presented to split that position apart once more, in order to better serve the needs of the Association and the members it serves.

The rationale behind this move is that the amount of work required to properly manage each position, both for the workload throughout the year and behind the scenes at the conference, has become more than can reasonably be expected of a single vol-

unteer. Splitting the roles apart allows us the flexibility to have two people do the two jobs, but doesn't stop us from having one person be elected to do both jobs if changes to the BCAEA Executive roles and responsibilities in the future make that a viable option once more.

As always, I invite you to join us for our AGM, held in the Blue Whale room (near the Registration Desk) at 11:45 am on February 19.

I look forward to seeing you there! ♦

Mike Shaw is the BCAEA President and Publications Manager. His contact information is on the last page.

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2015 Financial Statement

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements¹ for the Year Ended June 30, 2015

Balance, July 1, 2014		205,304.58
Receipts		
BCTF grant	6,340.00	
Membership/subscription fees	18,484.87	
Sale of Back Issues	380.05	
Interest	2,001.15	
Exhibits/Sponsorships	2,575.00	
Conference fees	76,347.12	
		106,128.19
Disbursements		
Meeting - Executive	14,054.30	
Meeting - AGM	998.14	
Meeting - TOC costs	4,837.90	
Publication - Newsletter	2,774.11	
Operating	425.97	
Scholarships	3,600.51	
Miscellaneous	225.63	
Conference-operating	6,009.88	
Conference-facilities	3,913.00	
Conference-catering	12,190.52	
Conference-printing	2,038.60	
Conference-promotions	1,896.44	
Conference-committee costs	3,347.20	
Conference-entertainment	10,513.68	
Conference-equipment rental	4,756.77	
Conference-speakers	24,281.06	
Hold for Future Conference	6,400.00	
		[102,263.71]
Balance, June 30, 2015		\$209,169.06

¹ Note: This statement reflects only funds held by the BC Teachers' Federation on behalf of the BC Teachers of Alternate Education.

2015-16 Budget

Income

99921	Income surplus	209,169.06
99923	Conference surplus	5,161.69
99930	Membership	18,427.50
99931	BCTF Grant @ 20.00 each	5,780.00
99932	Back Issues	500.00
99934	Interest	1,100.00
99940	Conference fees	75,000.00
99943	Conference Exhibitors	2,500.00
	Total Income	317,638.25

Expenses

99950	Meeting - Executive	15,000.00
99953	Meeting - Subcommittee	2,000.00
99954	Meeting - AGM	2,000.00
99958	Meeting - TOC	8,000.00
99961	Publications - Newsletter	5,000.00
99962	Publications - Other	100.00
99970	Operating	500.00
99972	Chapter support	1,000.00
99973	Affiliation fees and meetings	0.00
99978	Scholarships	10,000.00
99979	Miscellaneous	500.00
99980	Conference - operating	7,000.00
99981	Conference - facilities	5,000.00
99982	Conference - catering	18,000.00
99983	Conference - printing	3,000.00
99984	Conference - promotions	2,000.00
99985	Conference - committee	5,000.00
99986	Conference - entertainment	15,000.00
99987	Conference - equipment rental	5,000.00
99988	Conference - speakers	30,000.00
99989	Conference - start-up costs	5,161.69
99998	Conference - hold	177,376.56
99999	Conference - misc	1,000.00

Total Expenditures 317,638.25

2015-16 Goals and Objectives

Goal	Objectives	Activities	Evaluation
To promote alternative education programming and services provincially.	Network with other PSA's and programs that support the Association's goals.	Free conference registration for PSA presidents. Send Newsletter to interest groups. Maintain website.	PSA Presidents attend conference. PSAC receives newsletter. Website updated on BCTF server.
	Network with organizations that deal with alternative education programs and students.	Respond to Ministry and BCTF re: policy and program direction. Liase with MCFD.	Network with members via membership listserv. Network with MCFD maintained.
	Promote local chapters of BCAEA.	Provide local chapter start-up grant. Provide maintenance grant for LSA's based on membership.	LSA information provided to interested groups. LSA's established and maintained.
To support and promote professional growth and networking for alternative education teachers.	Support professional growth.	Hold annual conference. Provide information about exemplary programming and services.	Conferences held. Exemplary program and services workshops in conference program.
	Promote membership.	Include membership fee in conference registration.	Membership increased or maintained.
	Support regional development.	Provide expertise and financial support for regional conferences and activities.	Representatives at regional conferences and other conferences.
To advocate for appropriate programming and services for alternative education students.	Advocate for students in alternative education programs.	Provide student awards. Publish 1-2 newsletters.	Student Achievement Award(s) and Bursaries given. Newsletter published and distributed.
	Enhance programming and services for alternative students.	Provide Student Activity Awards. Provide Innovative Programming Award.	Student Activity Award(s) given. Kathi Hughes Innovative Programming Award given.
	Promote observable opportunities for students in alternate programs.	Provide opportunities for alternate students to prepare food, cater, bus, and bartend at conference.	Students are visible working at the alternate conference reception.
To engage new members and communicate with existing members.	Engage new members.	Send welcome letter to new members. Invite to join ListServ.	Welcome letters sent to new members. New members invited to ListServ.
	Communicate with members.	Respond to ListServ comments/questions. Invite comments/questions in newsletter.	ListServ actively used. Comments about newsletter noted.

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