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ELSA Net Newsletter is available in PDF format on the ELSA Net website:

www.elsanet.org

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A Message from the President

Welcome back everyone. It has been a busy fall getting back up to full speed after a quiet second half of the summer. Before we knew it, the activities of the fall took over and a series of regional meetings and professional development events were held in September and October. Janet Massaro's and Alison Norman's workshops, as always, traveled well and were very welcome in Prince George and Kelowna. The Lower Mainland instructors, childminders, program support staff and administrators attended a successful PD event on October 25. The turnout was great, the event well planned, and the workshop palate most varied!

I realize we are all still whirling from the RFP process, and congratulations to everyone for getting through it and carrying on. We should all feel proud of ourselves as we are doing good and important work and I am sure all our students appreciate it.

We wish to say thank you and goodbye to Jas Parmar who has resigned her position as vice-president and has moved on. She contributed a lot to ELSA Net over the years and we will miss her. Alison Norman will no longer be representing VCC for ELSA as of January 2005. Alison has been extremely important in ELSA Net since its inception and we will really feel the loss of her expertise and support in the Board and the Executive. Thank you for all your work and energy Jas and Alison.

Loree Phillet, President, ELSA Net

From the Desk of the ELSA Net Term Coordinator

As I review the final contents of ELSA Net News Fall 2004, I cannot help but reflect back to the AGM 2003 and the trepidation with which I approached what, at the time, seemed to be the professional challenge of my lifetime. Little did I know that I would receive the most expert, reliable and generous support from all of you: the Officers, Board of Directors, Advisory Committees members, ELSA providers, administrative assistants, the Ministry, Brenda Lohrenz, colleagues at the Western ESL Services and our community of dedicated settlement services providers.

Taking with me all that I have learned from this experience and the utmost belief that your competence and resilience will overcome the challenges of the changing times ahead makes me feel proud that I have been a part of ELSA Net and somewhat sad that

this eventful year is drawing to a close. As I look forward to what is next in my own professional life, I sincerely hope that our paths will cross again and wish you all the best. I welcome back Brenda and give special thanks to Thi Vu, our administrative assistant and the magician behind the computer screen.

Nina Karamehmedovic, ELSA Net Term Coordinator



Welcome to Thi Vu, ELSA Net Administrative Assistant



Updates from the Ministry

Results of BCSAP Client Satisfaction and Outcomes Survey

By Alison Dudley, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services

The Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch is pleased to announce that the results from the province-wide client satisfaction and outcome survey of BC Settlement and Adaptation Program (BCSAP) clients are ready to be shared with survey participants, agency staff and sectoral organizations. The overall response from ELSA students was very positive about the program and its service providers.

The survey was conducted earlier this year (between May and June) with former ELSA students and clients in other BCSAP streams in order to measure the impact of services on clients and to set baselines and future performance targets. This was the first time BCSAP clients were surveyed at such a broad level. The results will provide the branch and service providers with critical information on how well programs are meeting client needs. Theoretically, the results could also provide an initial indication of whether any adjustments to BCSAP streams should be considered in the future in order to better meet desired outcomes.

Survey Methodology

A random telephone survey (with an on-line internet option) was conducted with clients who had left Stream 3 ELSA classes between April 1, 2003 and February 28, 2004. A total of 844 Stream 3 clients were surveyed from listings obtained from the STaRS database system. In addition to English, the survey was administered in seven other languages: Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin), Farsi, French, Korean, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese. Paper questionnaires were translated into the corresponding language, and telephone surveys were conducted by staff from a professional research company in the languages listed above.

Survey Results

The following is a sample of the findings with respect to the intended outcomes of the program:

- When asked if ELSA helped them improve their English, virtually all Stream 3 clients reported that ELSA improved their English either very much (43%) or somewhat (52%). As for using English in everyday life, 77% of Stream 3 clients reported that they are better able to accomplish activities such as answering the phone in English and filling out forms since taking ELSA.
- In terms of improving client integration into Canada, most clients reported now being able to use a library, community centre or recreation centre and said they have met people who speak English. 41% reported that they have attended a social group or meeting where most people speak English and 35% started a job with people who mainly speak English.

ELSA Progression and Exit Test Usage Survey

By Norah Cameron, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services

Results are in from the ELSA Progression and Exit Test Survey conducted in May. The survey compiled data collected from 54 of 57 agencies sampling 347 classes. The purpose of the survey was to determine key questions: how many organisations apply formal testing to determine student progress or to determine exit levels; how many organisations were using test resources developed by VCC for ELSA; what alternative test methods were being used and were these alternatives CLB aligned; and how many organisations did not use formal progress or exit tests?

The results showed that 46% of respondents use VCC designed progress tests for all students; 24% use progress tests for some students and 19% use other progress tests. 5% of respondents did not use formal tests to determine progress between levels and 6% of agencies did not respond to the question.

For Exit Test usage, the survey discovered that 66% of providers used the VCC designed exit test for all students; 11% used the exit test for some students and 8% used other exit tests. 9% did not use formal tests and 6% of providers did not respond to this question.

Organisations which used alternative tests to measure progress or determine exit levels most commonly identified internally developed tests or utilised "On Target! - A resource book of stage one assessment tasks referenced to the CLB."

- When it comes to improved understanding of life in Canada, more than two-thirds of clients reported that their ELSA classes helped them become more familiar with the Canadian way of life, cultures of others who are also new to Canada, services available to help them live in Canada, and Canadian expectations for social behaviour.

Complete results of the survey are being made available electronically to all service providers and sectoral organizations. Summary, non-agency specific results will also be posted on the Branch website at <http://www.mcaaws.gov.bc.ca/amip/sam/>. During the fall and winter, Branch staff plan to work with Performance Measurement Framework Advisory Committee (PMFAC) members to interpret the responses, identify where improvements can be made to the surveying methodology and content, and prepare a revised survey for distribution in 2005/06.

The Branch wishes to thank all agency staff and members of the PMFAC for helping to make this survey possible.

From Our Community of Service Providers...

National Network Update

By Brenda Lohrenz

The National Network for LINC/ELSA/MIIP-ESL Providers has received funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada to continue its work. Desired outcomes of this project include:

- Increased opportunities for providers nationally to share information relating to resources, research and best practices;
- Identification of priority items nationally to better inform government and non-government decision makers;
- Shared information on meeting the needs of our clients to better assist in their adaptation and integration process.

National Network provincial representatives and members of the advisory committee as well as six learners from LINC programs in the Greater Toronto Area are participating in a workshop and one day meeting at the TESL Ontario 2004 conference (which will have already taken place in Toronto as of the printing of this newslet-

ter). Kathryn Richards, ELSA program coordinator in Abbotsford; Brenda Lohrenz, ELSA Net coordinator and TESL Canada representative; and Therese Neufeld, assessor and project assistant are attending the Toronto face-to-face meeting. Jennifer Walsh Marr, although not participating in Toronto, is also a current representative for BC on the National Network.

Feedback from this gathering will inform discussion at the 2005 TESL Canada/Learners Conference in Ottawa next May. The six participating learners will also be in attendance at the TESL Canada Conference to add personal perspective and insight regarding their own adaptation and integration process.

This project provides participants in the settlement language field (program administrators, instructors, assessors, childminding staff and learners) a valuable opportunity to communicate and share nationally. If you want to get involved, please contact project manager Angelique Shinas at tesleducation@yahoo.ca

“Partnering in Health: A Multicultural Healthfair”

By Lynn Moran, Executive Director, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC

On February 17, 2005, during BC Multiculturalism Week, AMSSA’s Multicultural Health Committee and community partners will be putting on a day-long fair at the Italian Cultural Centre. The fair will provide a venue for health care institutions and agencies, and immigrant settlement organizations, to exhibit their activities related to multicultural health. A panel discussion will bring together province wide health organizations, health care providers, multicultural and settlement service agencies, and government decisions makers to discuss current multicultural health initiatives, access barriers and service gaps in BC’s health care system and make recommendations for policy change.

Opening to the public in the afternoon/evening, the fair will broaden its audience to also give the public and media an opportunity to inform themselves about key multicultural health programs and issues. Exhibitors at the fair will showcase their many different existing in-language resources and services available through community and health agencies. This will be an opportunity for the Lower Mainland multi-ethnic population to be empowered by the dialogue sessions on specific medical subjects such as Diabetes presented in Spanish/Vietnamese, Heart Disease presented in Punjabi, Cancer presented in Chinese and Mental Health presented in English. These dialogue sessions will be held from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

There will be many prizes to be won by participating in fun activities. Attendees of the Fair will be able to check-out their own level of health at the blood pressure, body density, blood sugar, eye testing, nutrition, and many more testing stations that will be at the Fair.

For more information on the upcoming Fair visit is the AMSSA website at www.amssa.org or by calling (604)718-2777.



Professional Development Events 2004



Janet Massaro: Grabbing the attention of instructors in Kelowna Pat Steiner and Ming Berka: Working hard to register participants

Vancouver Island ELSA

By Liz Bloomfield, ELSA Coordinator, Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria

Vancouver Island held its second regional ELSA professional development event on March 12, 2004 at the Inter-Cultural Association in Victoria. Nineteen ELSA Instructors and eight ELSA Childminders from Up-Island and Victoria came together for a day of workshops, sharing ideas, and networking.

The event was a great success. Instructors participated in two workshops. In the morning, Alison Norman, ESL Department Head at Vancouver Community College, delivered a workshop on the VCC developed ELSA Level 1 and Level 2 Progress Tests and Exit Level 3 Test. Alison focused on helpful hints for administering, marking and preparing students for the tests. In the afternoon, Janet Massaro, ELSA Instructor at Immigrant Services Society, presented a workshop on "Handling the Multi-Level Classroom" with special emphasis on the needs of literacy students. Janet has particular expertise in ESL literacy instruction and was the author of the recent ELSA Net project,

the "Adult ESL Literacy Resource Survival Guide for Instructors".

Victoria ELSA Childminding Staff attended a workshop on "Best Practices in Working with Parents from Diverse Cultures" given by Sarah Chapman-Chen, Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre: Multicultural and Diversity Services. For the first time, three seats were made available to child care professionals from mainstream community daycares to increase awareness among the child care sector of the needs of new immigrant families.

Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive. All those who attended found the workshops stimulating and informative and came away from the event with practical material they could use in the classroom and childminding service. Equally important was the opportunity that the day provided to connect with colleagues and share their experience and ideas.

The creation of ELSA Net has lessened the isolation that instructors in semi-rural areas experience through provision of events such as this. I would like to thank Nina Karamehmedovic, ELSA Net Coordinator, and the Ministry, particularly our Service Agreement Officer, Joe Nguyen, for their support of this event.

Lower Mainland/Surrey/Delta/Fraser Valley

Progress Tests with Alison Norman

By Kim Richards, Instructor at Global Village - Surrey

"No matter what, it's always good to stick your head up and have a look around at what's happening."

My colleague nodded back towards the hotel, and the ELSA conference we'd just left. During our time at the Pro-D day, the weather had turned foul and we now walked through pelting rain that was flung back by passing cars. We were headed towards the Skytrain station.

"Yah," I replied. "We've always got our noses to the grindstone, especially these days."

She laughed at my reference to the progress and exit tests, which have taken over our night time program. With only three classes per week and students exhausted by hard and often unpleasant daytime jobs, we've put all of our effort into the tests, to give our students an equal chance at passing them. That's why we signed

Professional Development Events 2004



up for the workshop, *Marking the Progress Tests*, with Alison Norman.

There we learned things we already knew: unlike us, some schools have extra staff to assist in testing, the tests aren't going away and, according to Alison Norman, "...these tests need revision."

We had suspicions confirmed: some instructors embrace the tests but others don't, and instructors other than ourselves aren't happy with some of the content.

And there was new information too: marking can be much more exacting than we'd thought, and tests should be conducted by paired instructors, to avoid subjective marking in the speaking component, which brought us back to things we already knew.

The workshop went quickly—a lot of learning was going on—and the rest of the day was spent at the plenary session and, for us, a workshop centred on Meyers-Briggs classification, a personality classifying system that was new to some. After that, with all our workshops done, we left to face the pelting rain outside.

Our Skytrain car was half filled with ELSA instructors, all of whom talked quietly, one on one. But despite our decorum, we stood out as a group because we shared the energy you get with a respite from the grindstone. Even with rain pelting the windows, we smiled.

Emma Hamer's "Accessing the Canadian Job Market" Workshop

By Roslyn Hart, Global Village English Centre - Coquitlam

One of the most frequently asked questions students in my ELSA 3 classes ask is: "How can I find a job here?" In her ELSA NET workshop "Accessing the Canadian Job Market: Cultural and Networking Challenges for New Canadians", Emma Hamer provided some invaluable answers that go beyond the standard "cover letter and resume" strategies suggested by most ESL texts.

Rather than simply listing facts, Hamer emphasized prospective employees should say and write stories about themselves, answering the questions: Why did you come here? What do you hope to achieve? What is special about you that the employer won't find in someone else who applies for this job?

Resumes are important, said Hamer, but stories are unforgettable. Students can tell their stories in resumes by including them under the category **Selective Achievements**.

Other suggestions for students included:

- Volunteer outside your cultural

or religious group

- If you have a profession, join a professional organization and volunteer in it
- Learn how to introduce yourself to Canadians
- Share success stories; get connected with immigrants who have successfully found employment here

In some cultures it's considered wrong or humiliating to seek work by networking, Hamer pointed out, stressing ELSA teachers need to help their students overcome any cultural bias against networking. "Getting to know people is the best way to a new career and the smartest way."

The workshop itself provided an excellent opportunity for networking. After I posed a question on where a teacher could get in touch with immigrants who have found employment and would be willing to speak to ELSA classes, several people approached me with offers to share their success stories as new Canadians with my students. Here was a perfect example of networking in action!



Loree Phillet: Finding out what's new at the Display Area



Enhanced ELSA 4/5

Students' Reflections on Enhanced ELSA 4/5

By Rossana Chisholm, Enhanced ELSA Instructor, Abbotsford Community Services

After agreeing to do a newsletter article on the success of this pilot project, I decided that instead of reporting on what I thought were perceived "successes," the successes would be more truly reflected if the students talked about what was useful for them. With this in mind, I asked them to write about how this program has helped, motivated or encouraged them to enter the Canadian workforce, and if there were anything that we, as a program – teachers, coordinators, funders – could do more of or better. Their responses were varied and below are some of the comments that were made.

Li tells us that she now has more confidence in "showing off" her skills and strengths, something she would never do in her country.

Alice now has a part-time job as a nurse because she was well prepared for her interview. In the interview, she was asked almost all of the questions the life skills teacher, Karen Penner, had practiced with the class.

Shirley has more confidence in her communicative skills, particularly in speaking, because she is given so many opportunities to practice in class. She was reluctant to do her first class presentation because she was very self-conscious about her oral language skills. She did her presentation, which was successful and well received by her peers, and now feels more confident speaking up in class and in groups, and she does so more often giving her the practice she needs. Shirley says that the next time she is in an interview, she will not feel that English is her biggest weakness.

Ropesta says she had no idea how to look for a job in Canada before the course. The information she has been given has been helpful in terms of Canadian culture in the workplace as well as preparing her for job interviews. She is looking forward to her job shadowing experience with a florist.

Marta, a young woman very new to Canada says, "I want to let you know that before the course I was a very shy person, and now I'm not afraid to make mistakes... This course also helps me to find out what I really like doing and to explore many options."

Most of the students enjoy the emphasis placed on communicative skills and have welcomed the opportunity to interact with volunteers in a conversation club. This idea, given at an ELSA 4/5 instructor workshop at VCC in September, has also been tailored to what these particular students want, which is correction and feedback from the volunteers on how to communicate more accurately.

Part of the success of this program is the input that the students, as a team, have been able to share when solving the problem of learning to be more fluent in English. The classroom becomes a venue to practice employability skills in a

Enhanced ELSA 4/5 Pilot A Big Hit with Learners!

By Alison Norman, Vancouver Community College

Feedback from the learners in the first two classes of Enhanced ELSA 4/5 with a labour market focus is overwhelmingly positive. All of them felt they had gained a lot of confidence in using English, had a much better understanding of the culture of the Canadian workplace, and had acquired a lot of useful information about the labour market. They all said they would recommend the course to their friends, and indeed, a lot have already. At Burnaby English Language Centre, for example, there were a hundred applicants for 16 seats in the third pilot class! A lot of credit goes to their hard-working, dedicated and creative instructors : Diane Cartwright – ISS Richmond, Ryan Drew-Findley – SUCCESS Surrey, Inge Lewerentz – Burnaby English Language Centre, Michelle Wong – ISS Coquitlam, Shannon Johnson – College of New Caledonia, Prince George, Anne O'Brian – Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, Nanaimo, Sandra Fragiadakos – Kamloops Multicultural Association and Marilyn Morrisson – Abbotsford Immigrant Services. (Note: Les Barclay has replaced Anne in Nanaimo, Pat Hanki has replaced Shannon in Prince George and Ros Chisholm has replaced Marilyn in Abbotsford for the second class this fall.)

Vancouver Community College's role in the pilot project has been to develop curriculum and exit tests; support instructors; and collect data to measure language acquisition gains, satisfaction with the curriculum and tests, and the overall value of the pilot project to the ELSA delivery system in BC. To date, the curriculum has been completed and the exit tests have been field tested. Test revisions are underway. VCC's support of instructors has mainly been through two 2-day workshops, and the provision of VCC instructors to help with exit testing and marking. Data collection and analysis are on-going. Working on the project has been exciting and rewarding for several ELSA faculty members at the College.

All in all the Enhanced ELSA 4/5 Pilot Project is proving to be a winning situation for the students, instructors and curriculum/test developers. Let's hope that next year when the pilot is completed, the Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch will find a way to continue offering language training with a labour market focus to eager immigrants at the Benchmarks 4 and 5 levels.

safe and fun environment.

Much of the success is also due to the teamwork among all involved: the ESL, life-skills, and computer teachers and the ELSA coordinator who work closely together to deliver a program that meets student needs and fulfills government outputs.

Enhanced ELSA 4/5

The Instructor's View

By Inge Lewerentz, *Enhanced ELSA Instructor, Burnaby English Language Centre*

As a teacher, it gave me a great sense of satisfaction to see the change in my students' attitudes and abilities over the course of the six months of Enhanced ELSA Levels 4 and 5. Many entered the class feeling very insecure and doubtful of their abilities to enter the Canadian workforce. They were focused on and often spoke of

their "not good English". After receiving information about the labour market and a better understanding of Canadian workplace culture, as well as many opportunities to practice the target language and behaviours, I began to clearly see a sense of self-assurance building up. By the end of the class, the students had a new found confidence in being able to communicate who they were, and what they could contribute to Cana-

dian society. The atmosphere of doubt and timidity which had been such a large part of the early level 4 days had been replaced by a definite air of anticipation as to what lay ahead for each of them as they stepped out into the work world on their own. The reports that I get from them now, about their successes and further development continue to give me great joy.

A Graduate's Letter

The following letter was written by a student from Romania on the day of his graduation from the Level 4/5 program. He completed his ELSA Level 3 at Burnaby College and then attended both levels 4 and 5 here at Burnaby English Language Centre. As someone with 2 PhD's he has spent many years as a student and so his praise of the course is especially meaningful. Kudos to VCC staff for a great curriculum framework and to his teacher, Inge for her dedication and creativity in bringing the curriculum to life for these students.

Dear Inge, our wonderful teacher, and dear classmates,

I would like to say few words that I hope represent all of you, my classmates, my friends, who are now graduating from the ELSA program level 5 at Burnaby English Language Centre.

This course was very significant for us, because the English language will help us to succeed in Canada. We have now the door open for many new opportunities. Remember, education is a possession that stays with us wherever we go.

While we have studied in this school, we not only gained self-confidence and new friends from many countries, we also had the experience of knowing very helpful staff, wonderful teachers and one of the best managers we've ever met. A last century writer once wrote "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his/or her influence stops." This is so true, Inge has taught us much more than the textbook curriculum. **Inge has given us something we will use or remember for the rest of our lives.** I know all of you understand or appreciate the time and effort Inge has put into us.

Today, even if it is the last day of this program we should be happy, because being together everyday; we have passed over a difficult time of the beginning in Canada. As it is known, we all left our native countries; we left our families, our friends or our comfortable jobs. Like courageous adventurers, we came to Canada, a faraway land, . . . and in the mean time, faraway from all we have ever learned in our lives. Christopher Columbus, reflecting on his voyage, which led him to the discovery of America, said, "Following the light of the sun, we left the Old World." . . . We have to follow the light of the sun as Christopher Columbus said.

Thank you . . . and remember: This is not the end of learning English. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

Sorin Barzoi [Enhanced ELSA 4/5 graduate]



From Our Community of Service Providers...


continued from page 3


BC HealthGuide Provides 24-Hour Health Information and Translation Services

By Betty Watson, BC HealthGuide Program

The BC HealthGuide Program provides current, reliable health information and advice to all British Columbians 24-hours, seven days a week. To help increase awareness and use of this reliable self-care resource, BC HealthGuide offers workshops and presentations to employers and community organizations throughout the province. For more information, call the BC NurseLine toll-free at 1-866-215-4700, or send us an e-mail at hlth.bchealthguide@gems8.gov.bc.ca.

In these workshops, practitioners and their clients can learn about the comprehensive BC HealthGuide Program and the four easy, convenient ways to get health information and advice to make better health decisions for you and your family. The workshops provide an overview on each of the components of the BC HealthGuide Program. All workshop participants are provided with a copy of the BC HealthGuide Handbook, a Participant Workbook, a BC NurseLine fridge magnet and other resource materials.

 In the workshops, participants learn how to use the **BC HealthGuide Handbook** and develop a plan of action for a specific health concern. The BC HealthGuide Handbook covers more than 190 common health concerns with information on how to prevent and manage illnesses, home treatments, and advice on when to seek help from a doctor or other health professional.

 Participants are also given information on the 24-7 **BC NurseLine** through which a registered nurse provides health information, advice and triage services. A pharmacist service answers medication related calls from


5 p.m. to 9 a.m. daily. Translation services are available in over 130 languages.

- In B.C., call toll-free 1 866 215-4700
- In Greater Vancouver, call (604) 215-4700
- Deaf and hearing-impaired, call 1 866 889-4700

This portion of the workshop covers such things as the disclaimer BC NurseLine callers hear when they first call the line, the reason the nurse asks for personal information such as your Care Card number, the database used to provide triage services, and how to access translation services.

In addition, workshop participants are provided with information on BC HealthFiles and BC HealthGuide On-Line.

 The **BC HealthFiles** are a series of fact sheets on a range of public health and safety issues, such as SARS and West Nile Virus. These are updated regularly and are available at www.bchealthguide.org. Many of these fact sheets are available in Chinese, Spanish, Punjabi, Vietnamese and French and at the province's health units.

 **BC HealthGuideOnLine** is a comprehensive Internet site that links British Columbians with a world of practical health information that is up-to-date and reliable. Visit BC HealthGuide OnLine at www.bchealthguide.org.

The BC HealthGuide Program is provided by the Ministry of Health Services and endorsed by the British Columbia Medical Association, the British Columbia College of Family Physicians, the Registered Nurses Association of British

Upcoming Events and Activities...

- **ELSA Net Brochure:** A new ELSA Net Brochure will be revised and translated into 13 languages. It is expected to be posted on the ELSA Net website for providers to download in early January. For more information, please contact ELSA Net at elsanet@telus.net or (604) 876-5758.
- **Directory of ESL Courses in British Columbia:** ELSA Net is hoping to initiate revision, updating and expansion of the scope of the 2005 Directory of ESL Courses in British Columbia early in the New Year. The revised edition would include updated information on ESL services providers as well as information on labour market access related services in the province.
- **Association of B.C. Teachers of English as an Additional Language (BC TEAL) Annual Conference:** BC TEAL will be holding their 37th Annual Conference entitled, "Empowering Visions for Language Learners" on Thursday, April 28, 2005 to Saturday April 30, 2005 at Columbia College, Vancouver, BC. Plenary speakers will include Dr. David Nunan and Dr. Murray Munro. Registration information will be available in the New Year (2005). Additional information can be obtained by visiting BC TEAL's website at www.bcteal.org.
- **BC Settlement & Integration Workers' Association (BCSIWA):** Upcoming workshops include **BCSIWA Provincial Workshop** and workshop on **Data Collection and Management**. For more information, please consult the BCSIWA website at www.bcsiwa.com.

From Our Classroom to Yours...

Idiom reinforcement activity

By Lynn Letchford, ELSA Instructor/Coordinator, Immigrant & Multicultural Services Society Prince George

Understanding idioms is often difficult and frustrating for students. Here is a communicative activity that is great for reinforcing students understanding of learned idioms. Best of all, the students never tire of this activity!

Set-up:

- Divide the class into two teams (Team A & Team B)
- A member from each team sits in a chair with their back to the blackboard facing their teammates.
- A teammate from Team A writes an idiom on the board above the member from team B.
- Similarly, a teammate from Team B writes an idiom on the board above the member from team A (Members in the chairs do not look at the idioms on the board).

Play:

- When the instructor says go, the teammates give clues to help the member in the chair figure out what idiom is written above their head.

A Student's story about ELSA Program:

A Student's Letter from the Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS)

My name is Surinder Lubana. Today is my exiting day after upgrade my level. So, I want to share my feelings about ELSA program with you. When I came here from India about 10 months ago, I found that life is totally changed here. First few days, I enjoyed very much and had fun with my relatives. Than they suggested me to join job finding club at PICS. I did my job finding training in Sept. 2003. There staff was very co-operative and they gave us much knowledge about Canada & jobs. I gained more confidence in me and after completion. I got job, not so much good, but satisfied. There I got information about ELSA program and I joined it. This is the one and only program which helps these people who come from other countries and wants to learn good English speaking skills. When I joined this program, I had less confidence about English. But after a few months, I gained confidence. Here staff is good and they give us good knowledge. They help us in speaking English. Finally, I feel that ELSA is a good program and it should be continued so that people get to know how to read, write, speak and listen to English. Thanks.

Scoring:

- The first person at the board that figures out the missing idiom receives two points and then is able to try and figure out the other teams idiom. Who ever figures out the other idiom on the board receives one point.

This activity encourages students to use related expressions, contrasting expressions, and develop a good understanding of the idioms.

When the Classroom and the Community Come Together

By Assunta Rosal, Executive Director, Penticton and District Multicultural Society (PDMS).

This spring we cancelled classes in Oliver at the end of March. In Oliver, the growing season begins early and many of the students are actively employed in the agricultural sector. The Sikh temple in Penticton had previously asked if we'd consider running a class there. So an opportunity emerged that allowed the Penticton and District Multicultural Society (PDMS) to work with the community and to pilot an evening class. We ran the classes three nights a week – from the middle of May to July 1, 2004. The class ended with a Canada Day field trip. Attendance was constant with 10 regular students, our goal was eight. We received a thank you letter from the students, who said they had really enjoyed the class and hoped we try this project again. We are going to try running our evening class this winter at the Sikh temple. We want to ensure that all immigrant students interested in evening classes benefit so we will monitor the class to see if it has broad access by all students.





From Our Classroom to Yours...

In Memory of a Student and Classmate

By Liz Bloomfield, ELSA Coordinator, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

As I begin to write, I realize how difficult it is to express adequately what transpired in my class. I do, however, feel it is important to try because what happened is the best of what our program is about.

Our Level I Literacy class lost a student recently. My student had only been attending class for a month when he passed away suddenly, but he had touched our lives profoundly in that time. He and his wife both entered my class last September and quickly won the respect and admiration of all in the class. He was 78 years old and she was 79. They would have been married 60 years this fall. After living in Canada for the past three years, they had decided that the time had come to learn English.

He had been an elementary school teacher in his native country. It was clear from the way that his eyes lit up in class that he loved to be back in the classroom again. She had never been to school in her native country. With enormous courage and good humor, she undertook the difficult task of learning a new language. They had embarked on a new adventure together, supporting each other as they had many times before in their lives.

We received the news of my student's death when we returned to school after Thanksgiving. Our class was in shock, but what was amazing to me was how the students rallied so quickly to support each other and my student's family. As a group we had only been together for four weeks but the bonds that had formed were strong and made stronger through our shared grief. With limited language, we managed to communicate that we would attend the funeral as a class the following afternoon. And at the end of the class my students presented me with enough money to buy a beautiful bouquet of their classmate's favorite flowers.

We held class the next morning as usual. At coffee time I noticed that one of my students had disappeared. She arrived back just as class was ending with a hot lunch for everybody. We ate together and then walked to the funeral chapel. The service was Christian and in the student's native language, a language shared by only one other member of the class. Yet we all felt as one. One by one, my students from all different faiths and cultures walked up and placed a flower on the casket and paid their respects to the family.

My student's wife came back to class two weeks ago. We rejoiced in her return. And last Wednesday my class all took the bus out to her home for lunch at the family's invitation. We admired photos of the couple's 50th wedding anniversary and their native country. We ate, played

the piano and sang.

I know that stories such as this are not unique to our school but happen all the time in classes across the country. The ELSA Program breaks down the barriers of isolation for new immigrants. It provides a place where newcomers can receive support and a feeling of belonging and, most important, fulfill the deep and universal need of people to contribute and feel of use.



Terry Fox Run

By Susanne Kira, Instructor, Kwantlen University College

The ELSA students at Kwantlen University College at the Richmond campus wanted to participate in the worldwide effort of following Terry Fox's dream to find a cure for cancer. Susanne Kira (ELSA instructor) was a member of the Kwantlen team running at Garry Point Park in the community of Steveston. Each ELSA class had read a story illustrating Terry's courage and determination. The students were inspired to help continue his Marathon of Hope and as a group succeeded in raising over \$350 for the Terry Fox Foundation. This joint effort to work towards the realization of Fox's dream gave the students an opportunity to play a significant role and achieve a sense of belonging. By taking part in Terry's goal, they were able to experience pride and accomplishment.





New Resources and Teaching Tools

New Web Based Employment Assessment to Help Immigrants

A new self-assessment tool launched by Chilliwack Community Services has the potential to make a big difference whether a skilled immigrant finds work and makes the successful transition into BC society.

Known as the Skilled Immigrant Employment Readiness tool, it is a user friendly, web based self assessment developed with the intent to alert skilled immigrants to the necessity of careful research and preparation before coming to BC. Many immigrants who arrive in Canada come with little preparation. They believe that they will find employment easily, that their credentials will be readily accepted and that lacking an understanding of Canadian culture is not a barrier.

"The reality," says April Neave, Program Manager for the project, "is that it may take months and years in volunteer or minimum wage positions before the newcomer obtains work in his or her chosen field." Chilliwack Community Services wants to make sure that skilled immigrants really know that this is a possibility and the extent of advance

preparation required.

Focusing on six predictors, the tool assesses the user's readiness to enter the BC workforce based on

- English language proficiency
- knowledge of the labour market
- knowledge of the credentialing process
- awareness of job search strategies
- awareness of community resources and
- knowledge of Canadian culture.

These success predictors are arranged in a matrix that allows the user to monitor their progress towards reaching the greatest stage of readiness for entering the workforce.

The tool is also beneficial for skilled immigrants who are already in the province and want to assess their readiness to enter the workforce. It is highly interactive and offers countless links to the information and resources needed to find work in the province. English language testing, labour market profiles and links to regulatory bodies like those for professional engineers are also easi-

ly accessible.

Service providers, like employment counselors and settlement workers, and ESL teachers can use the tool too. They can help the skilled immigrant understand the importance of the six identified predictors of success and determine the area in which they want to start. They can also show them how to work through the various levels of preparation and if necessary, click and link to the web sites and assessments at each level.

Sheila Wallace & Associates of Chilliwack developed the Skilled Immigrant Employment Readiness Assessment tool. The web site was created by River Creative Design, also from Chilliwack. It can be accessed at www.comserv.bc.ca/bridges/index.html.

Inquiries regarding the Skilled Immigrant Employment Readiness tool can be directed to Sheila Wallace and Associates at smwallace@dowco.com. For background on the project, contact April Neave at neavea@comserv.bc.ca or (604) 793-7242.

Evaluation of Educational Freeware and Shareware and Free Literacy CD

By Yvonne Chard, Delta School District Continuing Education

There are free CDs available for literacy learners provided by the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD). The programs include English, Math, Typing, and some other miscellaneous topics. Most are for fairly low level readers. The CD contains 108 freeware or shareware programs which need to be installed. It is up to the user to pay any necessary license fees that apply. Many don't require a license.

A total of 438 programs were evaluated by learners and instructors at adult literacy centres across Canada and 108 were the choice of students in 6 adult centres: the Aboriginal Literacy Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba; the Brother T.I. Murphy Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador; the Delview Adult Centre in Delta, British Columbia; the Hawkins Neville Community Academic Services Program in Fredericton, New Brunswick; The Learning Centre in Edmonton, Alberta; and Parkland Regional College in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Evaluations were conducted as part of a two-year project entitled *The Evaluation of Educational Freeware and Shareware Software Programs as Effective Resources for Adult Literacy Training Programs*, which was funded by the Office of Learning Technologies.

The comments the evaluators made are online and provide insight into how they felt about the program. Visitors to the website can view the evaluation forms, which contain the evaluators' opinions about how easy it was to use the program, how interesting and educational it was, and more.

Besides producing an annotated list of low or no-cost educational software, another objective of the project was to provide adult literacy learners with the opportunity to participate in a pan-Canadian project. They gained experience in evaluation techniques, enhanced their familiarity with computers, and also benefited from working through the educational components of the software.

For those with limited internet access or slow connections, NALD has also developed a CD-ROM version of the project, which is available free of charge. To order a copy, please contact NALD at 1-800-720-6253, or by e-mail at softwarecd@nald.ca. If a number of staff and students in one organization want to order CDs I suggest that one person put together a composite group request.

Full details are available at <http://www.nald.ca/software/overview.asp>



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