



# ELSA Net NEWS

English Language Services for Adults Network

Spring 2005 Issue 10

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

[www.elsanet.org](http://www.elsanet.org)  
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## A Message from the President

After finishing the grueling RFP process in July, ELSA providers were held in suspense for four months. When we finally received the word, there was a collective sigh of relief for some. For others there was stunned disbelief. The ELSA Net AGM, which occurred a week after the announcement, was a somber event. Many providers were saying good-bye to others with whom they had had a long working relationship.

Sadness was soon replaced with a frenzy of getting students from the unsuccessful proponents referred to other providers. When the Ministry realized that it would be physically impossible to find seats for so many displaced students by the end of the contract, a three-month extension was granted—a week before the Christmas break. However, successful proponents were allowed to begin their new contracts, which meant there were many empty seats in some classes. It has been a very busy few months, as providers try to help students make their decision to stay or transfer. Some students, trying to make the best of the situation, transferred back and forth.

To those who are leaving the ELSA program, we would like to thank you and acknowledge the valuable contribution you've made to ELSA Net over the past years, on the Executive Board and on various committees, such as the Newsletter Committee, STaRS Committee, Website Committee, HR Committee, and so on. I hope that we may meet again in another capacity.

*Ming Berka, President, ELSA Net*

## From the Desk of the ELSA Net Coordinator

It is with a mix of emotion that I come back to my desk in 2005 from a year of maternity leave. Working with ELSA Net colleagues is always rewarding, but losing some excellent partners to the recent RFP decision is difficult. Some of you have been with the program for a very long time, and ELSA Net will suffer the loss.

The *Vancouver Sun* Feb 22 issue noted that 'BC gets failing grade in services for immigrants'. According to a recent study released by Simon Fraser University, BC received the lowest mark in the country for its immigrant language services.

Although the report did not make mention of some excellent post-ELSA (fee for service) programming offered by school boards, colleges, and university colleges, our fully funded ELSA program (to a level 3) does seem to fall short in meeting the needs of newcomers with slightly higher levels of English when looked at from the national perspective.

This certainly is no reflection on the diligence with which providers in BC serve their ELSA clients. In no way does it tell the story of schools going above and beyond the call of duty when assisting their students in whatever way they can to make client integration efforts to a new community less daunting. I salute all the gifted and dedicated teachers of the ELSA program, particularly those whom we may be losing as schools close their doors.

What of the report card and its review? BC has to continue to look at ways to close the gaps that clients here face when graduating from an ELSA 3 level. The EASI project and the newly announced skilled immigrant initiative are positive steps in our province's immigrant integration efforts. Let's continue to work together with the aim to ultimately bridge those gaps that exist for the wonderful people from around the world who choose to work and settle here.

*Brenda Lohrenz, ELSA Net Coordinator*



## Updates from the Ministry

### New Funding Initiatives

*By Alison Dudley, Manager, Stakeholder Relations, MCAWS*

In February, MCAWS announced a new program aimed at improving labour market integration of new immigrants. The *BC Skills Connect for Immigrants* initiative will commit \$4.83 million annually for the next three years to support career assessment, planning, and employment-bridging services for skilled professionals and trades people seeking entry into the BC labour market. It is anticipated that approximately 5,000 individuals will directly benefit from this new program.

Terms and conditions for the program are currently being finalized. It is anticipated that a Request for Proposals process will be initiated early in 05/06 for third-party contractors with expertise in the provision of employment services for skilled immigrants. Partial costs will be recovered through user fees. Supported services will include the following:

1. Career Assessment and Planning Services
  - Assessment of English language proficiency (for participants at a minimum of Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 7), academic qualifications, essential skills, employability skills, career management skills, and technical skills
  - Assistance in completing individualized action plans to determine appropriate career options and developing rational employment attachment strategies
  - Information and referral to appropriate pre-employment bridging services or post-employment skill enhancements
2. Pre-Employment Skill Bridging Services
  - Limited academic upgrading
  - English for workplace and/or academic purposes (minimum CLB Level 7)
  - Essential skills and employability skills upgrading
  - Cultural orientation to the workplace
  - Job search training
3. Post-Employment Skill Enhancement Services
  - Work-based English language support (minimum CLB Level 7)
  - Work-based technical skills enhancement
  - Mentorship and workplace practice support

The program will be coordinated by a new Labour Market Partnership Branch that will be co-located with the Settlement and Multiculturalism Branch in Vancouver.

This branch will also be responsible for the continued delivery of the BC International Qualifications Program.

### Federal Budget

Announcements related to new funding for immigrant settlement programs were made by the federal government during its February 23<sup>rd</sup> budget speech. Over the next five years, the federal government intends to allocate an additional \$298 million towards settlement programming in provinces and territories outside Quebec. The SaM Branch is pleased about this announcement and looks forward to sharing more information with ELSA Net about BC's specific allocation and programming options as information becomes available during the year.

### ELSA Net Overview

English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) is a funding stream of the British Columbia Settlement and Adaptation Program. ELSA Net is a society of ELSA Service Providers, which consists of organizations such as settlement agencies (non-profit organizations), community and university colleges, school board continuing education departments, and private schools offering ELSA Programs.

The purpose of ELSA Net is to facilitate the effective delivery of English Language Services for Adults throughout the Province of British Columbia taking into account and recognizing regional differences and needs.

The objectives of ELSA Net are to carry out the following functions to assist in attaining the purpose of ELSA Net:

- (a) Recommend policies and procedures to the Ministry (Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services) regarding ELSA;
- (b) Provide a forum for networking by Members;
- (c) Provide professional development opportunities for employees of the Members;
- (d) Promote program research and development;
- (e) Establish and maintain an effective structure for communication and coordination among Members;
- (f) Provide representation of and information about ELSA and ELSA Net at the local, provincial and national level; and
- (g) Provide advice to the Ministry regarding ELSA.



## Network and Regional News



ELSA Net Board left to right from the front: Ming Berka; Brenda Lohrenz, Coordinator; Devinder Chattha; Yvonne Chard; Alison Dudley, Manager Stakeholder Relations SAMB; Nina Miller; Marion McCarthy; Flaury Bubel (Board Alternate); Sheryl Zehr; Val Macdonald; Carla Bullinger; Lynn Letchford; Dale Hunter; Wes Schroeder; Nita Jacob; James Harder; Todd Kitzler (Board Alternate for Vancouver Island)

### ELSA Net Board of Directors 2005

The new ELSA Net Board of Directors was elected at the Annual General Meeting in November 2004. The Officers are Ming Berka (President), Yvonne Chard (Vice-President) and Nita Jacob (Secretary-Treasurer).

### ELSA Net Projects

The ELSA brochure is now posted and available at [www.elsanet.org](http://www.elsanet.org) in Arabic, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, French, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Dari, Albanian, and Persian. Please advise others in the community who may find this information helpful.

Special thanks to our Administrative Assistant Thi Vu, who was a great partner and help at the ELSA Net office over the last year. We will be sorry to see her go at the end of March, but wish her well in all future endeavors. Keep in touch Thi!

### Exit and Progress Tests Update

VCC ELSA wants you to participate in the revision of exit and progress tests. Or, to be more precise, we want your school's or department's input. Instructors all over the province now have a good deal of collective experience in administering and marking the Exit and Progress Tests, and we are ready to get your feedback and undertake revisions. We're focussing on revisions to the Level 3 Exit Speaking and Writing Test, the Level 1 Progress Reading and Writing Test, the Level 2 Progress Reading and Writing Test, and the Level 2 Progress Speaking Test. (For the Level 3 Listening and Reading Exit Tests, and the Level 1 and 2 Progress Listening Tests, we'll take a different approach, using item discrimination analysis to identify items that need changes.)

We want the tests to work well for us and for other ELSA providers, and we would like them to be an enjoyable experience for learners and instructors. It's important for us to get your input. If your school/department would like to have input into the revision process, your program director can e-mail Dale Hunter at [dhunter@vcc.ca](mailto:dhunter@vcc.ca), and we will make arrangements for your participation.

### Report from Interior Regional Meeting

The Interior Regional meeting was held on March 4, 2005, at the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society in Kelowna. There was a feeling of spring in the air (until we heard that the flowers were blooming in Vancouver.)

All areas of the region were represented. Two areas, Revelstoke and Salmon Arm, will be using the Alternate Delivery model for language classes. There was much discussion around this at our meeting with Ministry SAO Linda Husband.

Enhanced levels 4/5 in Kamloops were successful. There is hope that the province will continue to work on funding to accommodate much-needed level 4/5 language classes in the interior. Previous ELSA providers were the successful proponents of the RFP process. This kept disruption of service to a minimum.

The region is reviewing the ELSA Operations Policy Manual with a view to adding a regional flavour to this document.

Spring Break and Easter are just around the corner and we are all looking forward to a well-deserved break.



## From Our Community of Service Providers...

### Diversity Week Opens Doors for VCC ELSA Students

*By Dale Hunter, Vancouver Community College*

“They just forgot themselves and started asking questions—in English!”

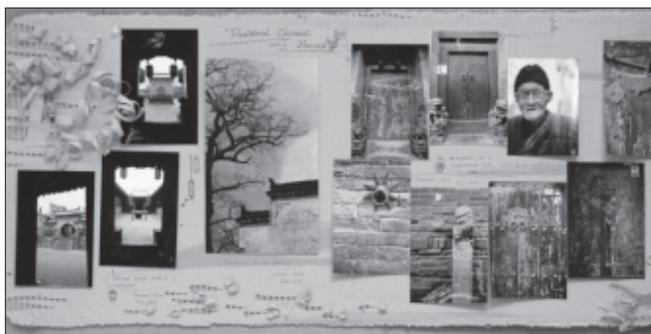
Paula Tang’s level-one class students are mostly from China, and haven’t been in VCC’s ELSA program, or in Canada, very long. Their sudden jump into communication was as surprising to them as it was to Paula. What grabbed them was a visit from a guide dog for the blind and the dog’s trainer during VCC’s recent Diversity Days. They wanted to know if the dog ‘can be angry?’ but within a few minutes they were all patting and stroking the patient animal, and they were full of questions.



Many similar kinds of connections were made by ELSA learners over the three days of events in mid-February. At the Department of ASL and Deaf Studies open house, students watched—

and participated in—American Sign Language lessons. Some went on blindfolded walks with a guide dog and trainer, and others attended a presentation on learning disabilities (including a simulation that showed them how it feels to be learning disabled.) These are valuable connections to make, and they are touching experiences for people who are struggling with communication in new environments and communities. The vividness of these interchanges helps break down language and cultural barriers.

A central event in VCC’s Diversity Week is the student Art and Fine Crafts Show. The show is open throughout the three days of Diversity Week and brings together students, instructors, and staff from ABE, ESL, Deaf and



Hard of Hearing, and Visually Impaired programs. Teachers, staff, and students from the ELSA Department worked hard at mounting the show, and many ELSA students exhibited their works.

The show is not juried, and there’s real diversity and a democratic approach to the kinds of works displayed. As was true last year, the show included very high quality pieces, in both the fine crafts and art categories. The excitement generated by the show was phenomenal: dozens of students came to our Department’s front counter (we were only one of the departments to handle applications) to hand in applications and drop off artworks. Staff, instructors, and I were all but-tonholed by students asking for help with artists’ statements—for ELSA students, a very challenging writing exercise!



We’d recommend this kind of event to any ELSA provider. The scale could be large or small; what is important is to work collaboratively with other programs and groups. The students get to show their impressive talents and skills, the application and planning processes generate a lot of interactive language, and there are all kinds of opportunities for students to volunteer and participate with each other and native speakers.

Shown here are some works from this year’s Art and Fine Crafts Show. I’m afraid they may not show up well in black and white, but you can see them on VCC’s website in colour if you go to <http://eslprograms.vcc.ca/ELSA/elsa.html>.

## From Our Community of Service Providers...

### Tsunami Disaster Counseling Professional Development at MOSAIC

By Nina Miller, MOSAIC

The tragic Tsunami that struck South East Asia this winter caused shock and sympathy throughout the world. At MOSAIC Language Centre, where we have 10 students from Aceh, Indonesia, and one student from Sri Lanka, staff and students felt the impact even more directly.

Teachers coming back to class after the holidays were faced with teaching students who had lost as many as 16 relatives, or who were unable to make contact with their families and learn of their fate. Teachers felt uneasy and uncertain about how to relate to these students in the face of such devastation: What do I say? How do I broach such simple ESL topics as family and country of origin? How can I help them? What must they be going through?

In response to these concerns, we brought in a grief counselor, volunteering on behalf of the disaster response unit of Coastal Health. The counselor facilitated a debriefing session with instructors and staff, listening to their feelings, perceptions, and reactions to the situation. Out of this discussion came the point that many of our refugee students have been through horrible experiences and are also struggling with grief and trauma. The ESL instructor is really on the front-line of support for these students. The grief counselor explained that it is important to be available to students to listen when they are ready to tell their stories. We must be sensitive to their cues and signals and learn empathic listening skills. This is not counseling, but it is an important part of the healing process. When these stories come out in class, the grief

counselor explained, it is a learning experience for everyone, and it is an important part of healing for the student who is telling his or her story. It is also important, however, to recognize our boundaries and know when to refer a case to a professional counselor.

In the end, we concluded that the Aceh students themselves have their own strong support group and that it would be inappropriate to offer them a Canadian model of counseling at this time. Instructors decided, instead, to show their support for the students by helping classes organize a variety of fund-raising efforts. Students organized a bottle drive, a silent auction, and a bake sale, raising over \$500. Instructors also organized a fund-raising dinner for staff and friends and invited the 10 Aceh students to come and speak about their country. It was clear from what they said that they have been through great hardship and they are very concerned that the Indonesian government is using this disaster as an opportunity to further repress the Aceh people. They are driven to tell their story, as they are desperate to promote world awareness of their plight.

This experience helped build community among our students. Students from other countries were able to show their caring and concern for another group of students. Through this, students also learned about the Canadian ethos of charity and fund-raising.

It is clear, however, that this question of supporting students in grief and trauma is still an ongoing concern and it will push us to further develop ourselves as teachers, as program support workers, and as caring human beings.

### AMSSA's Multicultural Health Fair

On February 17, 2005, the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA) organized the first Multicultural Health Fair with the objective of "initiating the process to bridge services for a culturally competent healthcare system in BC."

This was aptly done through an array of activities that included health information sessions provided in different languages throughout the day; on-site blood pressure and blood sugar clinics; cultural performances that encouraged audience participation and a wealth of information on health topics, and services from exhibitors. The wide variety of organizations represented at the Fair demonstrated the extent to which health care issues cut across communities and sectors.

Several ELSA Net members were present at the Healthfair including Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Immigrant & Multicultural Services Society of Prince George, Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society.





## From Our Community of Service Providers...

### A Multicultural Celebration

*By Pam Lawes, Canadian Center Office of Chilliwack Community Services*

I have been working as a social work practicum student at the Canadian Centre in Chilliwack for the past six weeks. During this time, I have been diligently working to learn all about the immigration services offered at this agency, such as ELSA classes and immigration settlement services. However, on February 17<sup>th</sup>, I was able to take a break from my studies to celebrate the wonderful diversity in our Canadian society during Multicultural Week at the Canadian Centre. All the students and staff brought a potluck of ethnic foods for the public to taste—about 75 dishes in all. I had thought that there was way too much food at this event but I found myself scrambling just to get a taste of some delicious curried chickpeas which were quickly disappearing. It was no problem for this crowd of about 100 people to

eat up all the wonderful food that the students and staff had so proudly made for this celebration. Pride in one's culture and how it enhances the community around us was what this public event was celebrating. This principle was noted by the two key speakers: Mr. Dale Cuthbertson, CCS Executive Director and Mrs. Dorothy Kostrzewa, Chilliwack City Councillor. Their message to the crowd was clear: Chilliwack's multicultural population has made our community a better and more enriched place to live.

Another guest speaker was a former level 3 ELSA student—Mala Kannaangara. Mala emigrated from Sri Lanka and started taking ELSA classes in February 2004. She states that these classes have been instrumental in her adjustment to Canadian socie-



ty. She is now continuing her education at the University College of the Fraser Valley, taking higher level English courses. Mala was a teacher in her own country of Sri

Lanka and is now working hard to be able to apply her professional skills here in Canada. Mala is an example of a new immigrant who is a valuable part of our Canadian Society.

During the celebration, the multicultural displays and events greatly exhibited the beauty of our diverse Canadian culture. The day's activities included the following: a fashion show, which had both adults and children wearing ornate clothing from many different countries; a guitarist, performing Japanese songs; a Spanish Dancer, a Henna Hand Painter, and a Multicultural Choir. From their own countries, the students and staff also brought in various works of art and ornaments to display.

I cannot express how fortunate I felt to be around such a dazzling array of art and culture. Now more than ever, I really do believe in the saying that Art is synonymous with Culture: it is representative of the people who create it. I, therefore, welcome the beauty of all art in my life. I have been greatly enriched by the many people I have met at the Canadian Centre and I rejoice in their uniqueness. I would like to thank the Canadian Centre in Chilliwack for a wonderful multicultural celebration.



## From Our Classroom to Yours...

### A Visit from the Office of the MP

*By Annemieke Wrijmoed, New Directions*

Last December the students and teachers of New Directions in Langley invited the local MP, Mark Warawa, to come to our school. Unfortunately, Mark Warawa was in Ottawa, but his secretary, Annette DeKraker, gladly accepted the invitation. Here are some of the questions the students had put together for the visit:

1. Why are criminals not punished more severely? Why is crime increasing in Surrey?
2. What is the best way to bring my fiancé here? (asked by Mehrnoush from Iran) What is the possibility of bringing my sister to Canada? (asked by Patricia from Columbia)
3. Why doesn't the Canadian government tell potential immigrants that it is very difficult to find a good job in Canada? Because of that, many husbands have to return to their native countries to support their families in Canada and it is therefore difficult for them to be in Canada for six months a year in order to remain a landed immigrant and to be able to apply for citizenship later on. (asked by several Korean women)
4. Why are there so many strikes and what can we do about this?
5. Why are there so many taxes and why are they so high?
6. Why are qualifications (diplomas, etc.) from other countries not recognized in Canada? Is Mr. Paul Martin working on this as he promised? (asked by Hassan, a pharmacist from Iran who came

*(Continued on page 8 )*

### My New Life

*By Simon Yeung, Former Vancouver Formosa Academy ELSA Student*

My family moved to Canada from Hong Kong two years ago. It is amazing that some of the places and streets in Vancouver sound very familiar to me. My house in Vancouver is close to Argyle Street. It is interesting to know that there is also an Argyle Street in Hong Kong. Other streets like Granville, Nelson, and Boundary are similar examples. I have the impression that Canada, especially British Columbia, still has a strong British connection. The similarities between Vancouver and Hong Kong helped me to settle down here in a relatively short period of time.

My wife Amy and I began our ELSA courses at Vancouver Formosa Academy in April 2003. It is wonderful that we had classmates from different parts of the world, such as India, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Morocco, Korea, Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong. We were lucky to have devoted teachers, Mr. Harder and Mr. Allison, for our class. Besides skills in language arts, we explored other aspects like culture, hobbies, and the values of Canadians. We were exposed to a wide range of topics, from ice hockey to safe injection sites in Vancouver. The course gave me insight into the social, economic, and political systems of Canadian society. It is the most practical course that I have ever taken.

Shortly after I finished my ELSA course, I found a job in a bakery shop where I was mainly responsible for making coffee and performing retail duties. My boss emphasized the soft skills much more than the hard skills (I took only half a day to become a competent coffee maker.) He demanded that we not just perform selling and cashier duties but also act friendly toward the customers. The things I learned from VFA helped me to present my ideas precisely and get to know many friends. The job offered me a chance to meet different types of people, which is essential for learning English and Canadian culture.

In my spare time, I took a course at UBC to prepare for the Real Estate Salesperson Pre-licensing Examination. The course covered a lot of topics, including law, ethics, economics, and mathematics. I was worried a little bit in the beginning about catching up with the tight schedule and the heavy workload. Luckily, I managed to meet all the course requirements and passed the examination with a mark of 81%! I am not working at the bakery any more; but I am now preparing to take on new challenges as a realtor.

When I shared my experiences with my friends in Hong Kong, they were surprised at the variety of opportunities for development I had in Vancouver. I must say that the ELSA course at VFA was a turning point in my life. It helped me to improve my English skills as well as to develop my soft skills. I feel that the more I understand the language, culture, and ways of thinking of Canadians, the more I love this country and enjoy my life in Canada. My thanks go to Vancouver Formosa Academy and the ELSA program that gave me a new start in my life.



## Community Recognition...

### We'll Miss You Liz Bloomfield

*By Val Macdonald, Vancouver Island Assessor*

Liz Bloomfield, the ELSA Coordinator at the Intercultural Association of Victoria, is leaving soon to take up the position of CEO of the Single Parent Resource Centre in Victoria. What makes this newsworthy is that Liz has been the "face, voice and hands" of ESL at ICA for many years, and yet she still has an enthusiasm and a freshness that endear her to both her colleagues and her students. I first met Liz almost 15 years ago, when I was taking my Applied Linguistics Diploma at the University of Victoria and doing some volunteering and observation in the classrooms at ICA where she was teaching beginners and working as the part-time ESL coordinator. Her enthusiasm and commitment were an inspiration to me and I later worked as Daycare Coordinator at ICA under her direction. Several years later, after I had moved to Comox, we met up again at ELSA Net where we have both served as Vancouver Island representatives. Liz's complete devotion to the job at hand has been demonstrated

through her involvement at ELSA Net, including her willingness to get up at 5:00am for yet another ferry ride (although we have lately "converted" her to flying—in a plane!). She not only took on the job of chairing the PMFAC Committee but she also tackled the organization of Regional Administration and Professional Development workshops for Vancouver Island ELSA with a zeal that has made them the highlight of the year for the teachers and childcare workers. What has made her a remarkable colleague, however, is the way in which she is able to convey her caring and concern for each person she encounters while wearing her various hats: teacher, administrator, Board representative, chairperson, and friend. We will miss your years of experience, Liz, but most of all we'll miss your smile, your sense of humour, your laugh and your willingness to "push on through" at the Board table and in the classroom. Thank you so much for all you've given us. We know that the Single Parent Resource Centre will just become part of your larger sphere of influence! (PS What is the phone number there, just in case?!)

### A Visit from the Office of the MP

*(Continued from page 7)*

here with a PhD, now working on a BA in Pharmacy)

7. Why are oil prices so high and who controls them? Why do prices fluctuate so much, even in one single day?
8. My brother was refused a visa to come to my wedding. The same happened to me when I wanted to go to Canada for a special occasion. Why? (asked by Edit, from Hungary, now married to a Canadian of Hungarian descent)

The students seemed happy with the answers they received. There was, however, a strong sense of importance placed on exercising pressure on the federal government to recognize foreign diplomas and qualifications. If we all push for these reforms, our students will one day face fewer obstacles and we may one day solve the problem of the shortage of Canadian professionals.

### English Connection

The English Connection is a 20-week full-time intensive language program offered by Douglas College that attempts to meet the needs of people who require English language and business communication skills to obtain work in Canada. The program includes 500 hours of full-time English language training, up to 100 hours of work experience in industry-specific organizations, as well as training in workplace computer operations such as Word, Excel, the Internet and e-mail.

The program also features integrated English language training that includes understanding printed text; presentation, communication and paraphrasing skills; professional language communication such as memos, reports, e-mails, letters and oral presentation skills; and workplace document use of manuals, charts and graphs.

The program also includes a focus on cultural transition and workplace orientation.

There are ongoing information sessions and student assessments available. Applicants require working knowledge of English (basic reading, writing, comprehension and speaking). Classes begin April 18, 2005.

The cost of the program is \$5,750.00 per person; this amount includes tuition, registration and supplies.

For more information on the program, contact Douglas College-Surrey Campus at (604) 588-7772.

## Community Recognition...

### How Long Did She Teach? She Taught a Looonng Time!

Helen Mobach was born to teach! Some teachers preach. Some teachers teach. Helen teaches to reach. Students remember Helen.

Helen was born of humble beginnings in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her parents were Mennonite immigrants from Russia. Her father taught in many rural one-room schools in Manitoba. He was a born teacher. Like many people from immigrant families, Helen has worked hard to be successful in Canada. In 1964, at the age of 24, Helen graduated with a Master of Science degree from the University of Manitoba. Truly a woman ahead of her time, Helen had a way of defying the odds.

Helen's teaching career took her down many roads before she discovered ESL. For 15 years now she has inspired students, teachers, and administrators with her dynamic teaching methods in the ELSA Program at Abbotsford Community Services.

Undaunted by continual entry, cutbacks, and difficult students, she

shines. Her formula is simple. "In my ESL classes, I don't like to push my students, nor do I like to let them stagnate. I like to challenge each person, to engage his or her mind, and to stimulate a love for the English language. Expertise in English will open many doors in Canada."

On a day-to-day basis, Helen is an expert at providing variety. No one falls asleep in her class. Beginning in a lively and relevant manner, she introduces the day's lesson. After a bit of seatwork, the class is standing up shouting out a jazz chant or singing a song with enthusiasm. (Her jazz chants, by the way, are the stuff of legend.) Her listening grid is a killer, yet students excel. Using competitive team learning and TPR, she challenges students to learn, and they rise to meet the challenge every time. A little journey into Canadian culture, history, and geography, complete with maps and realia, rounds out the day. Students love Helen and their learning is evident. "Helen is a brilliant and outstanding teacher," says Claudia, who has worked with Helen for many years. "Her students over the years have loved her and her unique teaching abilities. She has



taught them so much and given them laughter, despite their difficult circumstances. She has also given them hope. Their lives will be impacted forever."

Helen's retiring this year. No one can believe it. Her gift is so great. She runs into former students all over Abbotsford. Most are working. A few are managers. All of them are speaking English. Everyone has a story to tell about his or her success. Students are very grateful for her English classes. Helen knows how to meet the goals of the ELSA Program. She truly prepares our immigrants to survive well in our English-speaking country. Thank you Helen! You will be missed.

### 25 Years Recognition

Cathy Cave and Yvonne Chard were recently recognized by Delta School District for more than 25 years of service to the district. They were awarded silver pins and certificates. Working in Continuing Education, Cathy and Yvonne have both been very active in the development of ESL and basic education programs and curricula in Delta and were part of the team which received the 1999 Post Literacy Certificate of Accomplishment. Yvonne is known for ESL advocacy in Delta, and is currently the ELSA coordinator. Recently, she has branched out, adding English 1 and Computer classes to her role. For many years Cathy's niche was English 2, but in recent years she has added Fundamental English, and various levels of ELSA, to her schedule.





## **Upcoming Events and Activities...**

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### **ABE Conference – April in Merritt**

The primary activity of the Adult Basic Education Association of British Columbia focuses on excellence in professional development. Each year a conference is held in the spring to bring together instructors from around the province. Locations change annually to increase access for all.

April 27-30, 2005, you are invited to join adult educators from around the province at the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in Merritt, BC. This conference is for students, volunteers, and teachers, or anyone else who cares about education. This conference is open to anyone involved in adult education, including ESL, HSC, First Nations Education, Special Education, and Corrections. It is always lots of fun, and it is an incredible opportunity to network with others who are working with adults in many corners of the province.

This year's theme is "Celebrating Heritage, Culture and Education." Keynote speakers and presenters are still being finalized. Representatives from the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education will be there on April 28<sup>th</sup>. This event will include workshops from CABS, RIPAL, and Literacy BC.

When scheduling is completed, the agenda for the conference will be posted on the website, <http://www.nald.ca/province/bc/abe/confe.htm>. On this website you can also find a registration form and additional information.

### **2005 ABEABC Conference Workshops**

The following are some of the workshops that will be offered. For a full listing, please consult the conference website:

- Updates with Representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education
- "Adult Basic Education through a Cultural and Vocational Lense" with Monty Palmantier and Joan Ragsdale
- "Hardwired for Hope: Effective ABE/Literacy Instructors" with Evelyn Battell and Jan Sawyer
- "Oral Traditions and Literacy" with Dr. Gerry William
- "Basic Employment and Business Skills Program" with Judy Milchard
- "Everyone Can Be a Researcher: The Work of RIPAL BC" with Betsy Alkenbrack
- "Using Blended Learning for Creating Self-Directed Learners" with Tony Jeremiah
- "Case Conferencing: A Collaborative Model for Understanding and Effectiveness for Teaching Adults with Learning Challenges" with the Camosun College Group
- "Sovereignty Utilizing Education" with David Cole
- "Moodle: An Open Course Management System" with Devin Gambler and Sylvia Currie
- "Researching Your Ancestry On-line" with Yvonne Chard
- "The Decolonization Wheel: Strategies for Protecting Aboriginal Cultural Identity" with Gord Bruyere
- "Learning Disabilities" with Devinder Chattha
- "ABE Advocacy: Mobilize for the Marginalized" with Richard Allin and Allison Alder
- "From Promising to Best Practices in Corrections Education" with Pat Hodgson and Dianna Twiss
- "Helping Students to Reflect on their Learning and Improve their Writing" with Leonne Beebe
- "Corrections Education Discussion Group"

### **Food and Entertainment**

On registration night, Wednesday, there will be some entertainment and a wine and cheese gala. Thursday morning will feature a Rotary Pancake Breakfast. Thursday evening there will be a traditional pit cook on the patio, started with an elder's prayer and followed by entertainment by the Conayt Friendship Society Drumming/Singing Group.

Friday evening after the banquet, there will be two entertainers, including singer Shelby Lindley. On Friday morning there will be Entertainment with the Elders' drumming, singing, and smudging.

### **Local Tours**

Friday afternoon will feature some local tours to the Nicola Ranch, the Nicola Apiaries, or the Spius Creek Fish Hatchery.



## New Resources and Teaching Tools

### Book Review of Callan's Holiday Jigsaws

By Svetlana Mitrovic, Instructor, Vancouver Formosa Academy

One of the ways to meet government mandates for community connectedness in ELSA is teaching about Canadian holidays. As one of the testers in the pre-testing of Callan's Holiday Jigsaws Books One and Two, I feel that these books are ideally suited to this instruction.

Book One targets high ELSA one to ELSA two and Book Two targets ELSA two to ELSA three, using co-operative learning methodology. The structure of the jigsaw methodology kept all my students actively involved and the creative variety of follow-up activities kept them interested. Students recall the top news stories of the past year and practise making resolutions and predic-



tions in the New Year's jigsaw follow-up activities. The Earth Day jigsaw raises students' awareness of the need for reducing, reusing, and recycling with the blue box program. The Canada Day jigsaw teaches students some basic facts about Canada and invites them to share what is particularly special about their home countries. A great deal of discussion is fostered. The Labour

Day jigsaw raises awareness of the history of the labour movement in Canada and offers a forum for discussion of benefits and working conditions in students' own jobs. The Thanksgiving jigsaw teaches students about traditional foods for the holiday and invites them to

consider what they are thankful for in their lives. The discussion questions about belief in ghosts and spirits inspired a lively discussion following the Halloween jigsaw. The Remembrance Day jigsaw cleverly ties in an exercise on the time zones in Canada, not to mention discussion of military service in students' home countries. Boxing Day is tied thematically to the Canadian tradition of giving to charity at this time of year.

Overall, I was very pleased with how the jigsaws worked in my classes. If I had to list any limitations of the books, it would be the fact that some of the jigsaws in Book One worked well for my level-one class but were too easy for my mid level-two class, and I found myself having to pick and choose between the two books for my level-two class, which might mean having to purchase both books. Generally, with considerable pre-teaching, my mid level two-class was able to handle Book Two, but the book is clearly aimed for a higher level two or a level-three class.



This may be more a function of the need to have two clearly distinct levels between the two books and my mid-tuos falling between the two than a flaw of the books themselves.

I would not hesitate to buy both books and use them in my classes. There is no question that the students were interested, and the material promoted a lot of community connectedness.

### Employer Resource Guide

The Employer Resource Guide is a new online tool developed by Employment Access for Skilled Immigrants (EASI) to promote workplace diversity and recruitment of skilled immigrants among employers. The project is aimed at companies and employers and provides them with resources and information on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce.

The information provided includes resources on the rationales and benefits for retaining a diverse workforce, tools and resources for recruiting skilled immigrants, and strategies for retaining a diverse workforce based on training and professional development.

This online tool is available at [www.lookingahead.bc.ca](http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca).

### Sahaj Yoga

ELSA students at Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society enjoyed their yoga meditation with their teacher, Eva Touzard on February 27, 2005. Eva worked with her students to help them release stress through meditation. Students learned how to feel better and relaxed after working hard all day and studying English at night.



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