

Adminfo

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School Culture

Independent Study

& international experiences

Look back in pleasant surprise

BCPVPA President Jameel Aziz writes about the pleasant surprises and challenges encountered during his first year as President.

When we transition from one position or profession to another, I think, we all have an idea of what we believe that change will look like and how we will go about doing our business. I certainly thought I

knew what was ahead when I moved from Principal at Chase Secondary to President of the BCPVPA and to some extent I was correct ... that's not to say that there weren't surprises and challenges along the way.

To begin with I was fortunate that the BCPVPA has a great model to support this transition — with the President-Elect working with the sitting President for a year before assuming the new job full-time and then, in the new President's first year, the Past-President stays on to provide advice, continuity and an understanding of Association directions. I know other organizations would love to have a similar model. However, even with that great model and built-in support, the role can be challenging as it is very different compared with the school principalship that many of us come from.

Early in my first year, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of BCPVPA members engaged with the business of the Association and actively involved in the work that we do. The regular feedback that I receive from members after our events, Chapter Councils or when the weekly eNews is distrib-



uted is gratifying. Regular feedback, whether positive or negative, is welcome. I often think about how nice it would be to receive more feedback in our schools. We provide regular feedback to those we work with but, often, we do not receive anything directly ourselves. The communication with members has been a huge plus for me and I thank those of you who provide it for taking the time and the energy to do so.

I was also struck early on by the challenges involved in speaking to partners and the media. The public opinions of the BCPVPA President must reflect a spectrum of beliefs and philosophies. I have never forgotten that when I speak I am speaking on behalf of the entire membership. Although there are issues that will never find consensus among the entire membership, the Board and I do our best to ensure that our statements represent principals and vice-principals well and enhance the public's image of them.

I have also been pleased by the level of engagement we have had this year with our partner groups and the government. Our conversations and interactions remain positive and professional. There is recognition from

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A Rwandan experience

After 18 months in Rwanda, a BC educator and his family, abruptly return to Canada, but the experience has enriched the Thiessens and will shape the way they look at the world.

by Mark Thiessen



Mark addresses a class in a rural Rwandan primary school.

Looking back on it, I would have rather been Medevac'ed out of Rwanda in a helicopter. Two paramedics would have jumped out of the chopper with their heads ducked low to avoid the propeller as they rushed a stretcher to the waiting ambulance. There, they would have found their

patient on death's door, whisking him off to Kenya or South Africa or maybe, *just maybe*, to a jet that would take him home to Canada.

Alas, it was not to be. My family's early exit from our two-year sojourn to Kigali, Rwanda would be far less glamorous and hardly the stuff of a novel the

reader just can't put down.

Seventeen months into my stint as the Program Director for The Wellspring Foundation for Education, I woke up one November morning with a left eye that wouldn't stop tearing, was extremely sensitive to the sunlight sneaking through the curtains, and was more pain-



Mark and Dr. Piet at the Kabgayi Eye Unit in Gitarama, a day before returning home.

ful than any eye ailment I had ever experienced before. Over the next five weeks, I would see five ophthalmologists (half of the eye specialists in the entire country) and visit three hospitals and a medical clinic in two cities. I would also receive three different diagnoses as well as numerous other speculations.

Finally, I met ophthalmologist number five. His name was Dr. Piet, and he was a Belgian eye specialist working in Gitarama, an hour away from our home in Kigali. Dr. Piet was in the middle of a three-year contract in Rwanda, conducting mostly cataract surgeries for locals who

often walked many hours, sometimes even days, to see him. After a careful examination, Dr. Piet suspected that I may have contracted a parasite, but he had no way of conducting a lab test to confirm his suspicions. For a week, he treated a few of the symptoms, but nothing

substantially changed. Two days after Christmas, my wife and I could no longer live with the uncertainty of a condition that could conceivably be worsening by the day without treatment.

A week later, I had returned to Canada on regularly scheduled flights with no emergency medical evacuation necessary. Upon seeing a corneal specialist in Vancouver and the appropriate lab tests finally being carried out, I was diagnosed with a rare affliction called *acanthamoeba keratitis*.

The *acanthamoeba* parasite is a single-celled organism that normally feeds on bacteria and

yeast. It does not usually need a host, but if it finds one, its appetite becomes voracious. Lucky for my parasitic friend, I was the perfect host. First, living in Rwanda, I likely gave the parasite many chances to stop by for a visit. Unclean water is generally where the parasite hangs out, so we could easily have had our first blind date (pun intended) in our bathroom shower, swimming in Lake Kivu, standing under a brown waterfall or even swimming at a local hotel swimming pool.

After that initial meeting, I remained very hospitable to my guest. Substandard contact lens care – wearing my daily wear lenses for too many days and not completely changing my solution everyday – allowed the parasite to create a comfortable home for itself. For good measure, once the intense pain and light sensitivity arrived on that fateful November morning, I made him feel even more at home by wearing my air travel blindfold, thereby ensuring my

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Editor

Richard Williams

visitor had a warm, moist and cozy existence.

Acanthamoeba was first established as a cause of human disease in the 1970s, and the parasite can cause three clinical syndromes, based on how the parasite gains entry into the human body: granulomatous amebic encephalitis or GAE (the brain), disseminated granulomatous amoebic disease (skin, sinus, and pulmonary infections), and acanthamoeba keratitis (the eye). Fortunately for me, the acanthamoeba parasite entered door number three. While acanthamoeba keratitis can be vision threatening, GAE is usually fatal (nearly 100% of the time). In none of my research have I found that the acanthamoeba in my eye could eat its way through

my eye and into my brain, so upon diagnosis, my wife and I were able to rest assured that I wouldn't be pushing up daisies anytime soon.

Some friends put it best when they commented on the irony of it: "With all your preparations, all the shots, and after a year and a half in Africa you didn't get malaria, you weren't attacked by a mountain gorilla or a lion, and you didn't succumb to a weird insect bite. No, you were felled by daily use contacts. That's not much of a scar to come back with and hope for any bragging rights."

With my diagnosis came the advice from my corneal specialist that I should not return to Rwanda. Instead, he prescribed a daily regimen of 34 eye drops

(four different medications) taken at least 15 minutes apart, including through the night. I had appointments every three to four days at the beginning so the parasite could be closely monitored. I was taking a plethora of eye drops, my specialist was becoming my new best friend, and most crushing, I was not going back to Rwanda.

Five weeks after my return, my wife and children followed me to Canada. While I spent the month in Vancouver close to my specialist, Tracey, with the help of my parents, packed up our lives in Rwanda. Expecting to spend another six months in Kigali, it was an emotional departure as the family said goodbye to colleagues and friends, many of whom we may never



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The Thiessen family is surrounded like celebrities as they check out a Wellspring construction project.

see again.

As difficult as the farewells were, the transition back to life in Canada was no easier ... especially in the middle of frozen February. It can be a bit of a shock to the system to come from 30 degrees above to 30 degrees below in the space of a few days.

A few months later, we are still adjusting, and as we reflect on our 18 months in Rwanda, in spite of my present health issues, we have absolutely no regrets.

For our Rwandan adventure to be deemed successful for our family, it had to be successful for our children. They would agree that it was. It was essential that their school experience was positive. Their time at Kigali International Community School will give them lifelong memories. They were fortunate

to be in the presence of passionate teachers who brought with them a global perspective to much of what they taught. The kids were equally privileged to make friends from all over the world. In one of our son's classes, there were 15 nationalities represented by the 18 students in the class.

Our children were also able to see and experience a world that few of their Canadian peers will ever get to experience. Every day, they saw those so much less fortunate than themselves who were happy, hopeful and generous in spite of their life circumstances.

Another important part of family life in Rwanda was just that – family life. Life in a developing country meant fewer activities for the children at school and outside of school. It was a

refreshing break to have no hockey, no soccer, and no music lessons. Instead, we could be more purposeful in planning activities within our family and with other families. We actually had time in our daily calendar. It was good to have time to take a weekend drive through some of the rural villages or play a game of Frisbee golf on the compound where we lived.

Africa has come by its reputation of a much slower pace of life quite honestly. In my work life, the slower tempo often drove me to insanity. When meeting with Ministry of Education officials, it was not unusual to wait two to three hours after an agreed upon appointment for someone to be available. I soon came to learn that schedules meant little to my African counterparts. If I had booked an appointment a week before, I would call the day before to remind the person that we had scheduled an appointment and then I would call the morning of the meeting to again make sure something else had not taken priority over our meeting. Even with all of the precautions taken, I sometimes arrived at the meeting to find out that the Minister of Education had summoned all of the managers to an emergency meeting. If that was the case, the entire process would start all over again the next week.

Spending a year-and-a-half

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in Rwanda also reminded me how much we have to be thankful for in our education system. I have written in previous articles about class sizes and low wages in African schools, but the general disrespect given to educators by parents and community members is something that will stick in my memory. While we sometimes feel undervalued by our students' parents, comparatively speaking we are held in high esteem in Canadian schools.

Each and every day in the beginning of our time in Rwanda, I fought off my natural instinct that had me believing that I was the expert and the people with whom I worked were the empty vessels. Of course, in most ways, it was certainly the reverse. I learned much more from both my Rwandan and international colleagues than I was able to offer them in return.

On top of our experiences in Rwanda, we were also fortunate to safari in Uganda's Queen Elizabeth Park and relax on the shores of the Indian Ocean in Mombasa, Kenya. On top of that, I checked one off my personal bucket list when I visited Cape Town, South Africa to attend a World Cup match in June 2010.


My wife and I would highly recommend an international experience as a part of your career. I was fortunate to have a spouse who shared my dream and to be able to volunteer for a fantastic organization that supported



Eli Thiessen (in the red Canada shirt), 5, poses with students from all over the world in his Kindergarten class at Kigali International Community School.

our family during our stay and long before we left Canada in the summer of 2009. If you're thinking about the possibilities, please do not allow your children to be an excuse to delay your adventure until they have left home. In fact, including them will only enrich the jour-

ney tenfold.

They say that once you have lived in Africa, the continent will remain in your blood. I'm not sure Africa is now in my blood, but our time in Rwanda will be a rich part of our family story forever! 

Mark Thiessen was on leave from the Cariboo-Chilcotin School District when he worked in Rwanda. This is his fourth article about his experiences. Mark has returned to Canada and can be reached at mark.thiessen@sd27.bc.ca

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Book Review: Pyramid of Behavior Interventions

A vice-principal in Lake Cowichan reviews a new book by a trio of educators and discovers new ways 'to do the right thing.'

by Dani Garner

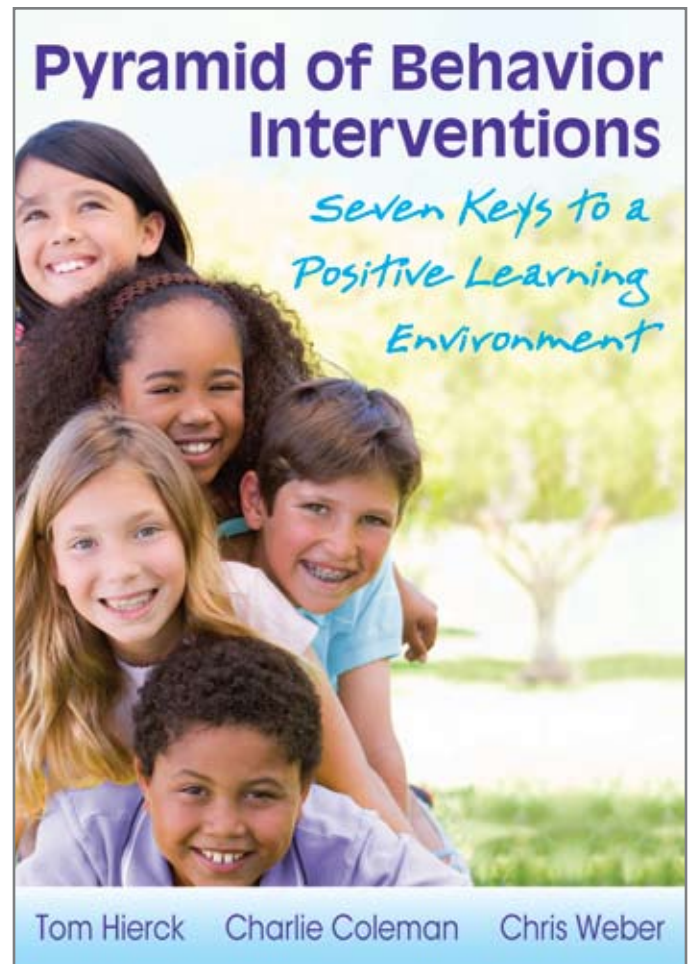
Ever since I was a teenager, I've collected quotations or lines from books that have stuck with me. I'm picky; not just any quote is going to get a spot in the cranium. The quote must be relevant to my current reality, must inspire me to do "right," and must be short enough to remember.

"If we can predict it, we can prevent it." This line, from *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions: Seven Keys to a Positive Learning Environment* by Tom Hierck, Charlie Coleman and Chris Weber, is the latest addition to my collection. Ever since these words have burrowed themselves in my brain, I can't have conversations with parents, teachers, students, or educational assistants (*okay, maybe even my husband too!*), without thinking, "if we can predict it, we can prevent it" for whatever situation we are troubleshooting. And, as it must do to find a place in my collection, the quotation must inspire me to actually do the right thing, not just think about it. As a result, I now have some students who I have convinced to stay in for

Homework Club twice a week (*that certainly wasn't happening in the first semester*), some teachers who are thinking outside of the box regarding their struggling learners, and some parents who are checking with teachers about their children's progress on a regular basis (*and a husband who has made the fence double-secure to prevent escaping dogs!*). It was a good sign for me, a self-declared nerd about professional reading, to find such a line in the prologue of this book. I took this as a sign that the rest of the book would be worth a read. I was right.

Tom Hierck, Charlie Coleman and Chris Weber have, through their new book, taken what many of us know

about the benefits of professional learning communities (PLC) and positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), and provided real-life stories and strategies that show what these well-known acronyms can look like in actual schools and classrooms. *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions*



tions showcases stories from all across the continent, spanning all grade and subject areas.

As I have been trained to do when presented with new information about teaching strategies or leadership ideas, the first thing I did when I opened up the book was skim for information regarding the effective size of PLCs and PBIS. When I didn't find the numbers or the data I was looking for, I was surprised. But then, after some careful thought (*and maybe a conversation or two with author Charlie Coleman*), I realized that Hierck, Coleman and Weber didn't need to provide me with the numbers, because I already knew them. And like myself, those educators who pick-up a copy of *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions*, will do so because they already know that these things (PLC, PBIS) work and are ready to explore tried and true strategies in which to plan and support PLCs and PBIS in schools. *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions* doesn't tell readers again, in different words from new people, what we already know. It provides readers with a variety of ways to try these things. It is these stories behind the data that the authors have found and shared that will inspire and support educators as we move forward in our schools and classrooms.

The authors identify PLCs and PBIS as two areas in which to focus on for supporting a positive learning environment in schools. From there, they pinpoint seven "keys" to making this happen:

1. Common Expectations
2. Targeted Instruction
3. Positive Reinforcement
4. Support Strategies and Inter-


ventions

5. Collaborative Teams
6. Data-Driven Dialogue
7. School-Wide System Approach

These "keys" are each outlined in detail within six chapters. Each chapter contains a description of the key and a number of real-life stories that demonstrate different ways the key might look in a variety of settings. The authors then make connections between the stories and the research that has been done in the fields of education and leadership related to that particular key. For example, in my favorite chapter, *Collaborative Teams and Data Driven Dialogue*, readers will find what we've all heard before from any number of other books, conferences, keynotes, etc: Leaders must establish a climate of trust in order to foster powerful collaboration.

After the description of what Collaborative Teams are and what Data Driven Dialogue looks like, the authors share a number of stories related to one or both of these concepts. One such story follows a principal as he took the time to talk privately to an individual teacher about her high failure rates (85% in one term!). The story outlines ways in which the principal made sure the teacher felt supported and the ways he kept her from feeling that she needed to be defensive about her marking or assessment practices. The story also describes a number of specific actions that he and the teacher took after their conversation that helped turn her failure rate around to an 85% pass rate the

following semester. And, like the other chapters, the authors follow-up the story with an exploration of how the keys and the stories are connected to what we know about education and leadership.

What I like best about the stories in *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions* is that they can be read in any sequence. The first time I read the book, I did so in the traditional way: from start to finish. Since then, I've flipped through it forwards, backwards, and sideways and always stopped at a story or two. Even though the stories span all ages and grade-levels, I have been able to find something in each of them that I can connect to my own professional setting or myself. For instance, in the above-mentioned story, the authors summarized the interactions that the principal had with a teacher with high failure rates. Presently, my principal and I are having similar conversations with our staff around school-based data. While we don't have any staff with such high failure rates, we are navigating our way through these conversations for the first time. *Pyramid of Behavior Interventions* offers not only advice and stories, but also a reminder that many of our daily hurdles are not ground breaking situations or unique only to us or to our school; there is someone out there somewhere who has been through something similar. Tom, Charlie, and Chris have found these people for us and through their book, provided us a venue in which we can gain insight from the work of others. 

Dani Garner is vice-principal at Lake Cowichan Secondary School. This is her third article for *Adminfo*. Her previous article was *A Collaborative Force* (February, 2011). She can be reached at dgarner@sd79.bc.ca

Pyramid of Behavior Interventions will be available from Solution Tree (<http://www.solution-tree.com>) beginning in July.

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Getting rights to the heart of school culture

A school in Coquitlam becomes the first in Canada to adopt a UNICEF initiative designed to improve school culture for students and adults.

by Bill McGovern and Kelly Quinlan

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS), a new initiative of UNICEF Canada's Global Classroom program, promotes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for enhancing an inclusive, participatory and respectful school culture for children and adults.



Involving students in decisions are vital to a Rights Respecting School.

Learning based on respecting rights

As a framework for educational improvement, RRS helps schools address the whole learning environment through a consistent, rights-based approach. Building on what schools are already doing, RRS brings children into early contact with the universal ideals of respect for oneself and for others in the school community and in an interdependent world.

Connecting the Convention to the classroom

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) outlines the rights all children (under 18) have for optimal survival, development and protection — and to participate in family, school and community life.

Canada ratified the *Convention* in 1991, committing the federal and

provincial government to prioritize the best interests of children, and use the tools at their disposal to provide for and protect these rights. But next to families, schools are the social institutions that are closest to the daily lives of children, in which the protection and provision of children's rights so profoundly shapes their potential.

The Rights Respecting School is premised on the understanding that for children to want to achieve, they must feel included



Benefits for Students and Staff

- There is a decline in bullying and less disruption.
- Children's approach to resolving conflict with each other and with adults is less adversarial.
- Children show greater concern for themselves, for each other and for children around world.
- Children's language becomes more sophisticated and they are more likely to use higher-order thinking.
- Children are less likely to be excluded.
- Attitudes toward diversity improve and become more positive.
- School attendance rates improve.
- Children begin to behave like citizens.
- Children actively participate in decision-making around the school.

Benefits for Teachers

- Teachers feel empowered and many are reminded of why they entered the profession in the first place.
- Teachers have more time to teach, achieve better results and higher standards for children.
- There is less low-level disruption.
- The classroom and school atmosphere is healthier.

One School's Story

As the first Rights Respecting School in Canada, students and staff at Cape Horn Elementary School in Coquitlam, have been teaching and living the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* for the past two-and-a-half years.

At Cape Horn, teachers worked on a Learning Team to write and implement the curriculum suited specifically to their students' needs. Then, teachers, students, parents and the

Connecting one child to another

The Rights Respecting School is premised on the understanding that for children to want to achieve, they must feel included, and that they matter. Children can then begin to make connections with the needs and rights of other children in their school and around the globe, beginning the journey of learning about rights and responsibilities and the values that underpin them. This brings children into early contact with the ideas of interdependence and cooperation.

Learning that how things are done in school is based on the rights and responsibilities drawn from articles in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* resonates with all children because:

- it appeals to their self-interest
- it connects them to children everywhere
- it derives from a higher authority (all but two of the world's nations have signed the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*) and is not simply created by the school's rules or mission statement.

Students and staff from Cape Horn School sharing about RRS with the BC Representative for Children and Youth.

Connecting Leaders: Learning for Changing Times

October 21-22, 2011 • Hyatt Regency Vancouver

Keynote Speakers:

Dennis Shirley, Professor of Education at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, author of *The Fourth Way* (with Andy Hargreaves) and *The Mindful Teacher* (with Elizabeth MacDonald).

David Warlick, a 34-year educator (teacher, district administrator and staff consultant) and author of four books on instructional technology and 21st Century literacy.

Skilled BC practitioners will lead the breakout sessions.

Information/registration/hotel accommodation

<http://www.bcpvpa.bc.ca/node/66>

Cape Horn School Charter

We have the right to our own culture, to express our beliefs, and to be proud of who we are.

We also believe it is important for us to have the right to learn, to eat healthy food and to be safe from not being hurt by adults or our friends ... so that we can all live peacefully, be happy and feel safe.

District Coordinator for Social Responsibility were invited to form a steering committee that recommended a year's worth of projects with involvement by the entire school.

Students took on more leadership within the school, including organizing and leading monthly assemblies; participating in student government; mentoring younger students and welcoming new students. Through their participation on these committees and articles written in the monthly school newsletters, students had a voice in decision-making and were able to express their opinions knowing they would be heard.

Last June, Cape Horn organized a "Walk for Water" event in which students learned about the need for clean water in developing countries and raised money to purchase a well for an impoverished community.

Each class has also participated in conversations using the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* as a guideline to create their own class charter, signed by all members of that class. The steering committee has also writ-

ten a school charter that was presented at an assembly by student leaders (see box, left).

As a staff we continue to lead the way in developing, presenting and evaluating *Rights* lessons, however, our focus has shifted to embedding the *Rights* within our existing curriculum so that they are not a separate entity, but inclusive in our daily life. Students are reminded in the classroom, on the playground and in the halls of expectations based on the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* that they have a responsibility to be respectful of their own rights and the rights of others.

Students were invited to share their stories at the 2010 BC Representative for Children and Youth Summit. Information and contest galleries can be found at <http://www.rcybc.ca/content/home.asp>



Bill McGovern is the principal at Cape Horn Elementary School, in Coquitlam. Kelly Quinlan is the Education Manager for UNICEF Canada in British Columbia. This article has been adapted from the article *The New 3 Rs* (Teacher Dec.08) by Thomas Hanley. For further information on UNICEF Canada's Rights Respecting School Initiative email kquinlan@unicef.ca

JUST KIDDING



Rod Maclean is a former Surrey principal. For a weekly cartoon email Rod at ramaclean@shaw.ca

Cover story



Our cover art this month is by Kaylee Turvey, a grade 8 student at Rutland Middle School in Kelowna. We thank Kaylee, her teacher, Jeanne Parker, and her principal, Sandra Sellick, for submitting this work.

Note to BCPVPA members: If you are interested in having one of your students' artwork on the cover of Adminfo during the 2011-2011 school year, email rwilliams@bcpvpa.bc.ca as soon as possible.

Leading for Learning

ShortCourse₂₀₁₁

July 11-15, 2011



The University
of British Columbia

Information <http://www.bcpvpa.bc.ca>



Connecting Leaders:

Learning for Changing Times

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Skilled BC practitioners will lead the breakout sessions.

Register to join your colleagues

Information <http://www.bcpvpa.bc.ca>

Bearing down on independent study

The nearest airport is two hours away, Vancouver is a 15-hour road trip, but the isolation doesn't hinder achievement in Tumbler Ridge, where student leadership is strong and independent study opens a world of opportunity.

by Leslie Dyson

Tumbler Ridge is unique in BC. The remote northeastern town has a population that fluctuates with the fortunes of the coal industry. A road trip to Metro Vancouver takes up to 15 hours. The nearest airport is a two-hour drive away. Returning home to Newfoundland, as Principal Blaine Broderick does periodically, takes a full day.

The town was built in the early 1980s by the mines to support the Northeast Coal Project. The population rose to 5000 but plunged below 2000 when the Quintette Mine closed in 2000. "We're experiencing a bit of a resurgence with the growth of new families," said Broderick.

At the moment, Tumbler Ridge Secondary School (TRSS) serves 200 students in grades 7 to 12, but fluctuating enrolments make budget planning difficult.

"I'm a little anxious because I don't know what to expect and you can't base your budget on anticipated stu-



With mentorship from his science teacher, Keenan (above), a grade 10 student, is on an independent study program about black bears.

dents." Two years ago, a budget was prepared based on 170 students showing up, but 195 arrived. Last year, he worked on a number of 160, but 205 showed up.

The coal and natural gas industries are the main employers. High employment and salaries draw people north. Many parents work shifts of seven days on, seven days off. Parent

attendance at school events is "hit and miss," he said.

"We are fairly isolated, especially in winter where it can be a month or two when you don't get out of town. But we have great cross-country skiing and a good golf course. People really rally in times of tragedy and celebration."

There's a strong leadership program

and 30 students from School District 59, including six from TRSS, made the long drive to Vancouver to attend the *Me to We* event last fall. The track and field team has qualified for the provincials over the past four years. Basketball is popular and 15 per cent of the students are in the drama club.

Thanks to technology and the 21st Century Learning Model, students have access to many of the same opportunities as those offered by high schools in large metropolitan centres — and in a spectacularly beautiful natural setting.

“I absolutely love it here,” said Broderick. “We’ve got the mountains and the beautiful streams. It’s a wonderful town to raise children. We don’t have buses, but the longest someone has to walk to school is 25 minutes.”

For Grade 10 student, Keenan Rander, Tumbler Ridge is the fifth town he’s lived in. His father is with the

RCMP. He’s lived in Selkirk, Chilliwack, New Hazelton and Prince George.

“Tumbler Ridge is kind of cool,” he said. “It doesn’t feel like a small town. There’s a lot to do here. There’s a huge rec centre and there are loads of opportunities that I’ve never been presented with before. We have a mix of all these activities and a tight-knit community feel.”

Keenan, with mentorship from his science teacher Mark Deeley, has embarked on an independent study program to find out whether the height of the Rocky Mountain Range affects the speciation of black bears. He expects to find that the foothills near Tumbler Ridge, compared to the peaks around Jasper, will still allow the exchange of genes on both sides of the B.C./Alberta border.

He Skypes with a biologist in New Brunswick who specializes in this area and who sent him the protocol

for doing proper scientific research.

“The amount of knowledge going back and forth is amazing,” said Deeley.

The school purchased \$1000 worth of equipment to allow Keenan to carry out his research, but it will be used by other students as well.

Over spring break, Keenan Skyped for several hours with the equipment manufacturer to try to determine why he wasn’t getting any readings. “I was staining and destaining but nothing was coming through and this happened several times,” he explained. “I was able to find out I was a bit off with the buffers.”

Keenan’s project began with extracting protein samples from goldfish, unraveling the proteins and using the molecular weight standards to categorize the size and weight of the blue bands that are produced.

He then did a comparison between a goldfish and a cichlid, another spe-



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cies of fish. After taking photos and enlarging and adjusting the contrast on a SMART Board, he learned that cichlids have three fewer bands than goldfish.

He is now talking to hunters and conservation officers to come up with the most efficient way to collect samples from bears in the Tumbler Ridge and Jasper areas, on either side of the Rockies.

Deeley said, "We have a whole school of kids like this. I'm very impressed by the students." He already has his eye on another student who would probably also do well with an independent study project.

"I have students coming up to me saying, 'Why can't I do this too?' And I tell them, 'Come do it!'"

"Independent study is very useful for motivated students because it gives them freedom," he said. Students like Keenan "sit in class and learn and are polite but they're not challenged. This way, they're treated like adults. They set their schedules and explore areas they're interested in. They're motivated. But they have to be the right students," he cautioned. "All they really need is principals to back them and teachers to help."

Deeley was a marine biologist but discovered his true calling when he worked with students on a scientific boating trip. "I realized I should be teaching. When you're helping kids and they see the possibilities, it's amazing. They're just so fired up! Critical thinking kicks in. You need to know what you believe and why you believe it.

"I really enjoyed the science career I had, but I adore teaching. You're pushing a life in a positive direction. If you want to make a difference, it will happen in a public classroom."

After he got his teaching degree, he and his new wife were looking for a place to start their careers. "I wanted

a nice safe town. I was raised in the military and a pre-made town is like a military base" with its sense of conformity and orderliness.

Deeley recognized Keenan's enthusiasm for science during a science fair a year ago. He started talking to the student about speciation even though it wouldn't come up in the curriculum for a couple of years.

The idea captured Keenan's attention. "The fleshing out was all Keenan," Deeley said.

The project is getting considerable attention. "You're looking at naming your own subspecies if you discover it!" said Deeley.

Broderick has been a key player in the success of the project, Deeley added. "He has a scientific background too and he's been 100 per cent supportive."

The school is now planning to create an outdoor classroom "to teach biology in nature where it should be taught," emphasized Deeley. It will be dedicated to the school's first principal, George Hartford.

Tapping into Deeley's knowledge of fish health, the school is also looking into starting an animal husbandry program to raise rainbow trout for the lakes in the area. Deeley started listing the learning outcomes: biology, genetics, plumbing and stewardship, among them.

Northern Lights College has a campus in the high school and a dual credit heavy duty mechanic course is available at its main campus in Dawson Creek. Next year, it will offer wind turbine technology.

"With all the modern technology, you really don't feel as isolated as you are," Keenan said.

"We're not cut off from the world," added Deeley. ^{bcp}_{vpa}

Leslie Dyson is a regular contributor to Adminfo. She can be reached at Leslie@F2Fcommunications.ca



PENSION QUESTIONS

Arnie Lambert,

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Director of Income Security
at the BCTF,

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Working to educate the impoverished in a troubled land

Two retired principals from Abbotsford lend their time and skills to bringing educational opportunities to students in Haiti.

by Bruce Nicholson and Stan Petersen



It was a sweltering 43 degrees when we stepped onto the tarmac at Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. This was our first trip back to Haiti since the devastating January 2010 earthquake that ravaged most of the country and left more than 300,000 people dead. The oppressive heat, while typical for a July 7th, was not the most noticeable part of our

trip from the airport to the city of Grande Goave about 70 kilometers away. Standing on the open deck of a truck rolling along almost impassable roads, the scenes of destruction were hard to comprehend. How could buildings still be leaning; why were there still piles of rubble on the streets; and why was the new looking machinery, that filled a football sized parking lot, sitting idle behind locked

fences? The fact was, more than six months after the earthquake, only 5% of the rubble had been cleared and damaged buildings were still tilting dangerously over crowded streets.

Just as noticeable as the destruction were the fields of tent cities that lined the highway along our route. Thousands of blue tents were now the new homes of more than a million Haitians.

Even before all these crisis Haiti was the most impoverished country in the western hemisphere. Add in a fierce storm that has recently hit the country, political unrest arising from a troubled election, and a cholera epidemic that still rages through the population and it is hard to believe that people can endure such hardship in such a short time. So what is the answer to the troubles in this impoverished and troubled land? It is the same as the answer that has led to positive change in our world since the start of civilization; that answer; education.

Since retiring we have been busy as volunteers for Heart to Heart Haiti. Heart to Heart Haiti is an

Abbotsford-based registered charity that since 1993 has operated a school, church and children's home in the community of Grand Goave, Haiti. Besides the many people who contribute monthly to Heart to Heart, key assistance has come from the Abbotsford School District 34, the Mission School District 75, and the Schmidt Family Foundation. Along with these groups many administrators, family members and friends have helped out. The Heart to Heart school has just over 500 students with about 100 students living in the children's home.

Over the past several years our focus has been in providing teacher development programs for staff each summer and school supplies for every student each September. Since the earthquake we have also provided input on school reconstruction and expansion.



The Heart to Heart school, church, and children's home were destroyed by the earthquake. Students now sit on recovered church benches under tarps with classrooms divided by recycled blackboards. For most students the midday meal provided by the school will be their only food for the day and the school uniforms provided are the only 'nice' clothes they own.

We continue to be amazed by the resolve of the children and teachers at Heart to Heart School. They continue

Jameel Aziz, continued from page 2


all stakeholders that our shared goal of wanting the best public education system possible is never in dispute. The road to getting there often is however.

The BCPVPA is evolving, as all organizations must. There are major shifts occurring in our workforce and this has us examining how we go about doing our business. As of this fall, 50% of our members will have been in their roles less than five years. This type of significant change is occurring in other sectors as well and we are noticing that in our work with our key partners.

The Association is undertaking exciting work following the direction of members and we are excited about the possibilities as we begin the work of enhancing the understanding

of the role of the principal and vice-principal, continue to revamp our operational structures to best meet the needs of today's members and work on programs to support members in their current roles.

Our biggest challenge is how to stay connected with you when we know how incredibly busy all of you are. We want to connect with each of you to hear about the issues facing you and the things we can do to help.

This fall promises to bring some change and disruption to your daily work. We are preparing a variety of tools to help guide you through the potential troubled waters ahead. Please remember we are just a call or email away. Our job is to support you, please allow us to serve you when you need us. 

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is delivered in French. We thank Joanne Neveux, Principal at École Sandy Hill in Abbotsford, and Dr. Ron Dufault, former District Administrator, for helping with the delivery of our program.

your students to help our students and other students in the community.

If you would like to collect supplies here are the needed materials:

- lined paper, notebooks/ scribblers, duo tangs, pencils, erasers, individual sharpeners and pens;
- calculators, French children's literature; and
- geometry sets and rulers.

to see education as the means to help themselves and to help their country.

In July of 2011 we will present the third of five Teacher Development Modules to the Heart to Heart staff. Also this July, as a result of an innovative partnership with the Ministry of Education, we will present Module One to a new group of teachers from the region. Our goal is to expand the program and have teachers who eventually complete all five develop modules become the program presenters.


The Teacher Development Program

How you can help:

We only send new, newish or slightly used school supplies. We want the students at Heart to Heart School to have good supplies, so we can ensure maximum use of the supplies we do send. Over the last four years we have collected unused supplies at the end of June in Abbotsford and Mission schools and processed and shipped them to Haiti.

Students at many Haitian schools have never had supplies before this program started. Helping with supplies is an easy way for you and

Because of shipping costs we do not need textbooks or binders. We ask that supplies are sorted, boxed, weighed, and labeled.

To donate school supplies or make a financial contribution go to the Heart to Heart website at: <http://www.hearttohearthaiti.com/> 

For more information or if you have any questions, email Stan at stan_petersen@sd34.bc.ca or call Bruce at 604-852-3184.

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