

VANIER COLLEGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
**NEWSLETTER**

Vol 24 N° 3  
Dec 2006



# **HOLIDAY HAPPY HOUR**

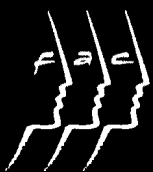
**Tuesday, December 12th**

**4 PM • JAKE'S MALL**

**COME AND ENJOY THE INDIAN CUISINE AND  
MICRO BREWERY BEER!**

**SUGGESTED DONATION FOR STUDENT  
EMERGENCY FUND - \$1.00 A DRINK**

Sponsored by the VCTA, the other College Unions and the College Administration.



**"We would like to take this opportunity to wish  
everyone a happy and safe holiday."**

- Hode, Janice, Iannis, Stephen and Susan

# Dear Readers:

At this time of year I know that everyone is exhausted and still trying to get their marking done. Still, I hope that you will have time to read some of the articles in this newsletter- if not right now then once your marks are in. We have an interesting collage of articles from students and a teacher in Modern Languages about their trip to Costa Rica this summer. It sounds like they had a wonderful time and did some great solidarity work at the same time. Some students are going back to Costa Rica during the break in January and are asking people to help them take a number of items to the people who they stayed with (and will stay with again). If you would like to contribute, please bring the items (there is a list in the article) to the VCTA office and we will get them to the students. We also have an article from researchers at Vanier who are looking at how to improve the retention rate in Science and information from the very active Native Awareness Group on presentations at the Social Science Festival. Association Council is looking at the question of military recruiting on campus. If you have websites, books, articles that might inform this debate, please send them to me so that I can list them in the next newsletter. Thanks!



**Janice Paquette**  
Editor

- Janice

## Calling All New Teachers!!!!!! Join the union

Vanier College works under the Rand Formula which says that anyone working as a teacher for Vanier College has to pay union dues because they benefit from any gains that the union wins. However, no-one is automatically a union member. To become a union member, you have to pay a \$2 fee and join the union. You can do this by going to see Susan in the VCTA office in C101. The VCTA has to protect all teachers' rights whether they are members or not. However, in order to have a voice in what we collectively decide to do as a local union, you have to be a member. This gives you the right to attend and vote at all VCTA meetings.

Deadline for Submissions to the next issue  
is January 20, 2007

Send contributions to Janice Paquette:  
paquettj@vaniercollege.qc.ca

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The NEWSLETTER is published by the Vanier College Teachers Association, 821 Ste-Croix Ave., St-Laurent, QC H4L 3X9.

Janice Paquette is the Editor.

Printing is by Vanier College Graphics and Printing.



Technical assistance by Jason Leonard

### TO CALL VCTA EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

Hode:7413  
Janice: 7416

Iannis: 7415  
Stephen: 7414

VCTA Office: C101  
Telephone Extensions:  
7053 / 7054

#### VCTA Executive 2006-2007

President: Hodé Erdogan

Vice-President/Info: Janice Paquette

Vice-President/External: Iannis Stavrianos

Secretary/Treasurer: Stephen Block

#### Executive Office Hours HO6:

Mon.	Iannis	10:30 - 1pm
	Hodé	1:30 - 4pm
Tues.	Janice	2:00 - 4pm
Wed.	Iannis	10:30 - 1pm
	Hodé	1:30 - 4pm
Thurs.	Stephen	10:30 - 1pm
Fri.	Janice	
	or Stephen	10:00 - 1pm



Susan Panneton first came to the V.C.T.A. in January 2003 when she replaced Pat Dichmann who was on a sabbatical leave for the H'03 semester to obtain

her silver accreditation in dance. From December 1, 2003 Susan and Pat shared the position of the V.C.T.A. Secretary. Pat has now retired and Susan will be working four days per week as the V.C.T.A. Secretary. Her efficiency and happy smile help to make our union office and lounge a good place to be.

Susan's office hours:

Mon.-Thurs. 8:30-4:30

Lunch: 12- 1 (approximately)

# From The Federative Assembly

## The Democratic Experience

### Stephen Block



FAC ( Fédération autonome du col-  
legial), the CEGEP federation to  
which we belong, is nothing if not  
democratic. To some that may con-  
note excessive and endless meet-  
ings splitting hairs over definitions,  
and overly indulged delegations  
from local colleges who feel empow-  
ered to discuss every last nuance of  
their current predicament. Marry  
that with a federative assembly\* to  
discuss the federation's very future

and one would think this would spell three days of boring  
bureaucratse mixed with irrelevant proposals ending in  
disaster. But that was not the case.

The delegations did indeed set out for themselves a daunt-  
ing task. There was a considerable amount of detailed and  
varied proposals concerning our future. But as we, the Vanier  
delegates, looked them over, we arrived at a consensus on  
their validity or completeness. One seemed to be out of  
balance as it mentioned only a link to one other federation:  
FEC (CSQ) while seeming to leave out the possibility of an  
equivalent link with the other major CEGEP federation  
FNEEQ (CSN). And so an amendment was proposed. An-  
other set of propositions seemed perfectly acceptable while  
a third posed a real dilemma because it seemed to compel  
us to publicly reassert our autonomy and some feared that  
would discourage any further discussions of cooperation  
with other college federations.

One could have anticipated that on the last day, the day for  
discussions on all the propositions and anticipated chal-  
lenges and amendments, an endless meeting would drag  
out far past the fixed hour of adjournment, and many hair-  
pulling speechifying would ensue from the floor; but that  
did not happen. As if we had in our hands a delicate roadmap  
to the future, one reasonable proposition after another re-  
ceived overwhelming to unanimous support, punctuated  
with a proposal from a delegate from the Gaspé to table the  
motion on autonomy we all seemed to be perplexed by.  
There was a rousing round of applause from the assembly  
when the Gaspé delegate said that she simply felt she was  
not ready to vote on this perplexing and potentially vexing  
proposition. And so once again, the most reasonable asser-  
tion seemed to win the day.

In the meantime, attention was drawn to CEGEP Gaspé,  
which as a college in regional Quebec, is facing severe pro-  
gram cuts and faculty layoff or dislocation. The sense of  
desperation on the part of our colleagues from this smaller  
CEGEP hardly went unnoticed. In fact we seemed to not only  
wish to rally round to provide support, we, as someone said,  
started to consider CEGEP Gaspé as the canary in the coal-  
mine: how soon would the government decide that if it had  
the power to cut programs, relocate teachers or even col-  
leges, how long after would the axe be wielded in other  
parts of the college network. And even though we are no

longer in (non) negotiations with the government over sal-  
ary and working conditions explicitly, this experience left  
us with the indelible impression that we are still up against  
it as the government still continues to make demands of us  
even after the negotiating period.

So the recent federative assembly of FAC colleges may not  
have ended with a definitive decision on how to collaborate  
with other college federations, but it certainly did make a  
statement that all colleges need to find a way to answer  
the government's demands and we need to do it fast. It is  
not just the democratic niceties of federative assemblies  
which are at stake; the acquired rights of teachers are also  
at stake. The refreshingly sensible and democratic nature  
of our recent federative assembly made that reality a whole  
lot easier to swallow but sometime soon the stark reality of  
it all may well have to be faced when program cuts or re-  
structuring begins to be demanded by the government.

Vanier College, we are told, is about to enter a period of  
renewal that will require the volunteering spirit of all its  
employees. Our union itself may want to call upon this spirit  
in its members to help in the process of responding to the  
plans and demands forthcoming from the Ministry of Edu-  
cation Leisure and Sports. (Yes that truly is its name now.)  
We, for our own part, will try as best we can to carry the  
democratic experience forward into our own local discus-  
sions, at Association Council, General Assemblies, brown  
bag lunches, and elsewhere and we look forward to hear-  
ing from you in the coming months.

*Dr. Stephen Block teaches Humanities and has a back ground  
in labour relations. He is presently the Secretary- Treasurer of  
the VCTA.*

## Military on Campus

The Social Justice Committee at Vanier has asked  
different areas in the college to debate the issue of  
having the military recruit our students on our cam-  
pus. The VCTA executive has decided to take the  
question to the Association Council before the holi-  
days for discussion. Whatever comes out of Asso-  
ciation Council will be taken to a VCTA General As-  
sembly, probably to be held in late January or early  
February. We hope that you will give some thought  
to this question before the assembly and we will be  
sending out some information in the new year. If  
you would like to submit something on this ques-  
tion, please send it to the VCTA newsletter editor.  
For more information and a different view of the  
Canadian military role in Afghanistan, there are sev-  
eral websites that give a critical view.  
[www.rabble.ca](http://www.rabble.ca) or [www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org) (go to Znet) or  
[www.tuaw.org](http://www.tuaw.org)



# Why General Studies Matters

Iannis Stavrianos



What type of collective soul do we want? Do we want one in which citizens have learnt how to live well? How to communicate to each other? How to achieve synthesis between body and mind? If the above are deemed essential qualities of a progressive and democratic society, then it stands to reason that a General Education matters. Courses in Humanities, after all, teach us, amongst other things, how to live well. English and French courses compliment this objective while emphasizing the need to communicate. But a society which works at a cognitive level only is one-dimensional. Physical Education courses provide the need for balance between mind and body, and this must consequently be seen as the glue of a healthy society. In sum, General Studies courses matter because they necessarily compliment each other in the achievement of a good life. At this point, however, a strong relativist or autonomist might doubt such Platonic and Aristotelian discourse. After all, he or she could argue that an objectively good life does not exist; that only individual preferences matter...and that only such preferences are "objectively" acceptable. Important questions then arise: is it objectively good to exploit people? Is it objectively good to oppress women, black people, or homosexuals?; and is it objectively good when a minority (1%) own the majority of wealth (85%) in the world? A more specific example may exemplify the paradox of relativism. If person x beats his wife daily but still tells her that he loves her, could he be seen as truly loving her? If the answer is negative, then it is fair to assume that some forms of action are objectively better than others.

Such a debate on General Studies must be contextualized. In the last three months we have received documents which put into question the present state of General Studies. The RREC document from the Ministry of Education, Sports, and

Leisure suggests that English, French, Humanities, and Physical Education courses must radically change their methodological approaches to teaching. Another document from the "Working Committee on General Studies", which is composed of fourteen democratically elected members, suggests the need for an exit profile for General Studies. That is, students-after the completion of a General Studies education-will now have a common look made up of twelve elements. Moreover, this committee has come up with a list of five universal competencies which are shared between General Studies courses and all other courses in a college. The competencies are: 1) problem solving; 2) to exercise creativity; 3) to adapt to new situations; 4) to exercise one's sense of responsibility; and 5) to communicate.

Debate at the local level has begun. The General Studies Committee at Vanier, for example, has received the proposed changes from the "Working Committee" favourably. There is a sense that the exit profile and universal competencies are harmless and can only help to solidify the role of General Studies well into the future. The same, however, cannot be said about the RREC document. Teachers of English, French, Humanities, and Physical Education have not yet been able to see the logic behind the proposed methodological changes. Many English teachers cannot see the good in reducing classes to grammar lessons done under a specific instructional paradigm. Grammar, they seem to be saying, is imperative because, after all, the main objective of an English course is to teach students the rudiments of communication, but they are also saying that Literature is a public educator which can help us all to understand what "the heart of the whole society" is or what the common good may be.

*Iannis Stavrianos teaches in the English Department and is presently Vice-chair of Academic Council and Vice-President of the VCTA. He is also co-president of FAC's Solidarity Committee*

## What is the Devis Scolaire???

Fred Andrews

The "devis scolaire" is a profile of student clientele (enrollments) used by the Ministry of Education for each CEGEP for each academic year to determine funding allotments. A reference profile is established for each college using enrollments by program from previous years. Essentially, this reference profile is just a total raw PES value. PES is the total of contact hours for all students in all courses. For Vanier this total raw PES value was calculated to be 230,370 based on a distribution of 5250 students in the programs at Vanier. Each college is allowed to exceed its raw PES measure by 10% for any academic year. For Vanier we can go as high as 253,407. During the past several years Vanier's enrollment has been shifting gradually toward more

pre-University students and fewer Technology students. Pre-University students, in general, have smaller PES values per student than Technology students so Vanier still is not close to its devis+10% limit. In fact the closest approach to devis+10% was in the year 2003-2004 about 244,000 PES. For last year (2005-2006) we were about 232,000 PES. So while our overall enrollments have been increasing gradually our PES-profile has been declining gradually after rising slightly. The "devis scolaire" is revised about every 10 years. The current devis was set in 2000-2001.

*The following link provides more details about this topic:  
<http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/ens-sup/ftp/reg-bud/Public/A007-v1.doc>*

# Student Retention in Maths and Sciences

The following article was written by Helena Dedic, Ivan Ivanov and Steve Rosenfield in an attempt to explain their past and future research efforts to union members. We are particularly pleased to have had a warm reception from the VCTA executive. Our apologies for the dense style of this article. We are more practised in writing articles for conferences, journals, grant reports, etc.

Research has shown that it is during the transition from high school to university that the greatest proportion of students with an aptitude for science and engineering studies decide to abandon those majors. In fact, the greatest loss of potential science students occurs just prior to, or shortly after, enrollment in CEGEP. In the United States, in the early 90's, between high school and the first year of college there was a 40% drop in the number of students intending to pursue careers in the sciences or mathematics. Our own study following the 2003 cohort enrolled at Anglophone CEGEPs demonstrated an even larger drop, and confirmed that the seeds of decreasing enrollment in university science and engineering programs are sown in high school and CEGEP. Amongst those students attending Anglophone CEGEPs whose high school academic record (grades and choices of courses) would allow them to pursue science careers, 48% do not intend to enroll in science programs in university after CEGEP graduation. Also, judging by their high school course choices, more female than male students expressed interest in studying science, but by the time of the transition to university this difference had evaporated.

Although many factors may contribute to declining enrollments in science and engineering programs, the proposed research focuses on the learning environment in science classrooms because, as educators, we know that the classroom is the main arena within which teachers can influence their students, indeed it may be the only arena within which they interact. A literature review indicates that students' persistence and achievement are indeed related to learning environments in science classrooms. More than one third of undergraduate students who leave university majors in science and engineering cite poor teaching as the

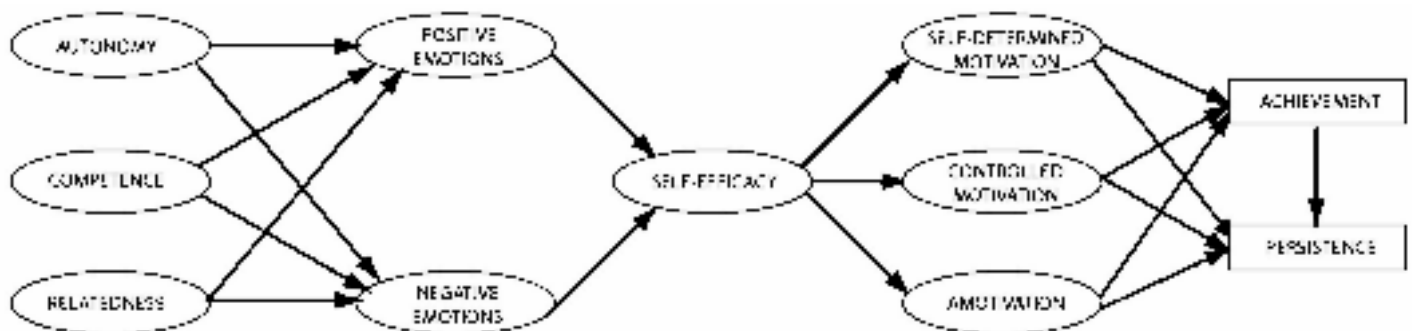
primary reason. The pedagogical approach used by a majority of instructors, driven by pressures to cover mathematics and science course curricula, "emphasize quantity over quality, and are all a mile wide and an inch deep" according to G. Nelson, Director of Project 2061 and may be "full of inert material" according to Peter Lax, the Past President of the American Mathematical Society. Over the years educational researchers have studied classroom environments and have provided important clues as to why current pedagogical approaches are failing to reach many students.

Anglophone CEGEPs admit many students whose mother tongue, or language used in daily life, is not English. (In our study of the 2003 cohort, 62% of students belonged in this category). Although their academic achievement in science courses was significantly lower than that of students whose mother tongue was English (65% vs. 68%), their persistence, in terms of their intentions to enroll in a university science program, was significantly higher. It would be interesting to determine what drives such students in the face of lower achievement. For this group with high persistence it is important to determine what type(s) of environments can be used to increase their achievement.

..women are more likely to leave science than men.

Our study of the 2003 cohort showed that women are more likely to leave science than men. Subsequently we developed models of how learning environments in mathematics and science classes impact on student achievement and persistence in science. The best fitting models for men and women differed in several aspects. We anticipate that further study will help us to explain gender-related differences in persistence, and more importantly, enable us to improve persistence and hence increase enrollment in university science and engineering programs.

Our newly proposed study has two main objectives. The first one is to develop models explaining how learning environ-



ments in mathematics and science classes impact on student achievement and perseverance as mediated by motivation. These models would provide understanding of which instructional settings help students to choose academic paths that lead to continued science and engineering studies at university. To this end, we aim to develop and validate, for CEGEP and university student populations, an instrument that assesses student perceptions of learning environments from the perspective of self-determination theory, and improve the models mentioned above in college and university populations stratified by gender and language. The second objective is to promote the use of innovative pedagogical practices that help students to choose careers in science and engineering fields. To this end, we aim to create a tool that instructors may use to formatively assess their practices, and then to work with our union partners to promote the use of this tool.

Guided by self-determination theory, we hypothesize a model where student achievement and persistence are dependent variables, and a three dimensional learning environment provides the independent variables (autonomy-, competence- and relatedness-supportive). Our previous study showed that although perceptions of autonomy and control correlated highly negatively, the best-fit model had a differential direct impact of autonomy and control on student persistence. We anticipate this new study will replicate this result. However, in agreement with self-determination theory, and in the context of studies on academic emotions and socio-cognitive theory, we initially hypothesize a model with mediating variables positive and negative emotions, self-efficacy, self-determined motivation, controlled motivation and amotivation (see diagram below).

Promoting the use of supportive pedagogical practices To accomplish this objective we will propose to our partners, in particular the Vanier College Teacher Association (VCTA), our suggestions to improve the formative assessment of teaching practices currently employed by colleges and universities. This will involve the VCTA lending its support in specific ways, such as encouraging the collaboration of teachers in the project in data collection, and later in use of the outcomes of the project.

Universities require (and colleges would like to require) summative assessment of teaching practices in terms of "teaching effectiveness". A large body of scholarly work examines the concept of teaching effectiveness within the framework of Student Evaluations of Teachers (SET). Ten years ago, McKeachie and Kaplan estimated that some 2000 scholarly papers had already been written on this subject. Because SETs positively correlate with student achievement, many authors believe these ratings are a useful tool for improving teaching practices. Others argue that student grades frequently are not a good measure of student learning, and therefore the correlation between SETs and student achievement (grades) should not be interpreted as a good reason for using SETs to evaluate teaching effectiveness. In this latter vein, many believe that SETs are largely popularity contests and have little to do with learning. Even supporters of using SETs as a tool for assessment acknowledge their limited impact on improvement of teaching, if only because they are difficult to interpret for formative purposes. There is ample evidence that fifty years of summative evaluation of teaching effectiveness has had a limited impact on improvements in higher education. We are still faced with a

"leaky pipeline" whereby talented students withdraw from science studies.

..teaching is a multidimensional concept...

Teaching is a multidimensional concept, so many argue that multidimensional SETs are valid tools for evaluating teaching effectiveness. Abrami and his colleagues Rosenfield and Dedic argue, on the basis of an analysis of 43 rating forms, that the use of global items (*e.g.*, "Overall, this teacher was excellent.") is sufficient to evaluate teaching for summative purposes. Their argument centres on problems arising from current versions of student rating forms measuring specific teaching acts which are either not relevant in the context of domain specific learning environments or which perpetuate practices often seen in teacher-centred learning environments. Filak and Sheldon have shown that perceptions of autonomy, competence and relatedness were significant predictors of positive global ratings of the course and instructor. They also found that perceptions of autonomy and relatedness were significantly lower in science in comparison to other domains, *e.g.*, the social sciences. This result has led us to focus on perceptions of autonomy and relatedness in this study.

After we have completed development of both our tool assessing students' perceptions of learning environments and models demonstrating how such perceptions impact on students' choice to change programs away from science, we will create a package for post-secondary mathematics and science instructors. This package will consist of: a diagnostic tool that instructors can use online to obtain feedback from their students; the results of a discriminant analysis that teachers can use to compute the likelihood of perseverance of their students. Further, we will approach our colleagues to collect domain specific examples of teaching practices that they feel increase student perceptions of autonomy-support and decrease those of control, and hence are likely to increase student achievement and perseverance. Such examples will be included in the package. We will work with our union partners to secure the widest possible use of this package so that more students are successful in science studies.

## Professional Development

The maximum amount available to individuals is \$500. Teachers with less than a full time workload receive the proportional funds, i.e. if you work half time, you can get a maximum of \$250.

Applications and guidelines are available at the VCTA Office, which is located in C101. You should submit the application three weeks in advance.

There is no need to submit an application for the Employee Fitness activities but, but you do need a receipt to claim your expenses.

# Native Awareness Group keeps you informed...



**Social Science Festival presentation  
The Impact of Climate Change on  
Northern Communities**  
*summarized by Myriam Mansour*

Sheila Watt-Cloutier presented the impact of climate change from the perspective of her Arctic homeland and her people. "There may be only 155,000 Inuit in the entire world, but the Arctic is the barometer of the health of the planet" is one of her famous quotes. Scientists indeed agree that environmental damages experienced on the planet's polar regions, especially through global warming, will have tremendous repercussions on other systems of the earth. In her own life experience, Sheila Watt-Cloutier went from traveling by dog sleds to traveling by turbo-jets: much change in a short time for the Inuit people. But the changes are not only technological. Early warning signs of climate change were noticed by the local elders as far back as 15-20 years ago. For example, one of the impacts on northern communities is that it is increasingly difficult to "read" the ice and predict its reliability, which means that the 5000 year old traditional knowledge of the land is quickly losing its significance.



Native panellists Chad Katsenhake:Ron Diabo and Ernest Webster with teachers Myriam Mansour and Nancy Leclerc.

Mrs. Watt-Cloutier also highlighted the threat to traditional hunting which among the Inuit remains important even today. It is more than a continuation of the traditional way or a means of getting fresh meat. Hunting is a powerful tool for the youth to learn to reconnect with the land, to make sense of their own cultural identity, and, more importantly, to learn precious life skills: patience, wisdom and reasoning. Hunting therefore became a crucial instrument in these communities to alleviate psychological and social stresses which cause social problems like substance abuse, violence and youth suicide, among many others. However, rapid cli-

mate change in the north makes the application of traditional knowledge and the use of hunting increasingly difficult.

Watt-Cloutier is entering a new phase in her active involvement to bring change. A former chair of the Circum-Polar Conference in Canada and internationally and winner of several awards for her hard work and continuous dedication to her cause, she is now writing a book entitled "The Right to be Cold". She hopes to have it completed within the next 2 years, just before the next US presidential election. Patience, wisdom and strategic reasoning are all qualities Sheila Watt-Cloutier has acquired during her youth on hunting trips; she is now transferring them into her activism for the Inuit people and the global community.

*Myriam Mansour has taught geography at Vanier since 1997. She also co-ordinates the Social Sciences Resource Centre Tutoring services and the Social Science Honours programme. Her Masters' thesis focused on Public Policy and Immigration, a sub-field of Human Geography and she now has a special interest in issues concerning the First Nations.*



**Social Science Festival Native Panel  
First Nations People: Community  
Renewal and Outreach**  
*summarized by Kim Matthews*

Ernest Webb, producer, writer, director and co-founder of Rezolution Pictures and Beesum Communications, and Chad Katsenhake:ron Diabo, Hepatitis C HIV/Aids outreach worker and Tiotake drum carrier with the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, formed the "First Nations People: Community Renewal and Outreach" panel as part of this year's Social Science Festival.

Ernest Webb shared some of his experiences as a Cree raised in Chisasibi and the way he adapted to life in Mon-



Guest Speaker Sheila Watt-Cloutier with Academic Dean John McMahon



treating. His films and television series are the means through which he is trying to raise awareness about traditional Cree ceremonies and legends as well as Native issues more generally. Ernest suggests that there is a need to change the way his people (Cree) look at themselves. Due in part to assimilation policies and practices, notably by clergy, some are ashamed of their way of life and ceremonies. He hopes that his work "provides a spark to inspire youth" and reframes how they view their culture. He also endeavours to change the perception of the general population, notably with his new series Moose T.V. a comedy that seeks to show a side of Native people that is rarely represented.

Chad Katsenhake:ron Diabo a Mohawk from Kahnawake, explained to the audience that Native people are victims of multi-generational trauma, and they have their own ways of healing, ways that mainstream social-services must recognize if they are to be effective. While Native people face

many challenges, the key is to focus on overcoming difficulties. Chad's work with The Native Friendship Centre of Montreal is focused on working for positive change. The Centre offers wide-ranging services for the Aboriginal community of Montreal, including referral, HIV/AIDS outreach, Drumming and healing circles. Chad encouraged students to become active in community affairs, explaining that the way we change the future is to learn, and get involved. He believes that the best way to learn about Native issues is to get to know people from the community; this may be accomplished by volunteering for one of the many Native organizations in Quebec. The dedication and passion each has for their work is a source of inspiration.

Kim Matthews teaches in the Humanities department, her research interests include race and ethnicity, identity, multiculturalism, immigration, diaspora and transnationalism.

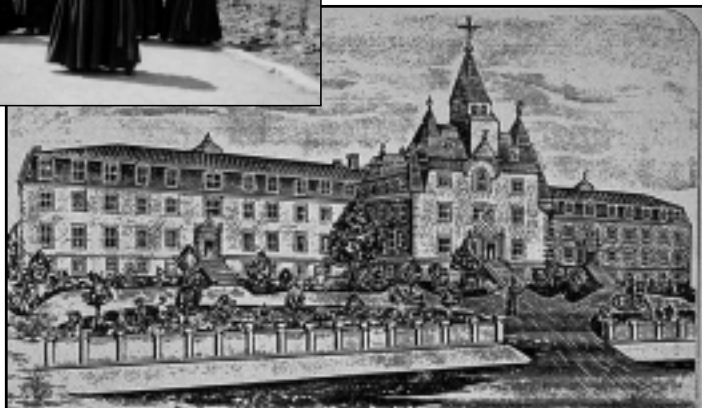
## STRATHCONA CREDIT UNION

The Strathcona Credit Union is a credit union set up by and for people employed by English teaching institutions across Quebec. You can reach them by calling 514 426-5111, on line at:

[www.strathconacu.com](http://www.strathconacu.com)  
or by emailing  
[scu@qc.aira.com](mailto:scu@qc.aira.com)



# The history of Vanier College comes alive!



To explore Vanier's past, log on to...

<http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/facilities/history/start.html>

On this web site, you will find a visual history of Vanier's many buildings, information on people who attended the college starting in the late 1800s, an overview of Vanier's many hidden secrets, as well as an historical overview in pictures of Saint-Laurent.

This web site is an excellent source of classroom material. You can also check it out just for the fun of it!

### INDECENTLY EXPOSED

Remember Blue Eyes? It was a very successful video of a workshop that shows how power works in a society and how certain people can be isolated and left powerless. A further video is now available showing a workshop that Jane Eliot did in Regina to show the racism against native people that is all-too-common in Canadian society. It is available in the Vanier AV. Call number: AV HT 1521 153 2005

# Pura Vida:

## Solidarity Work in Costa Rica

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Every year since 2000, the Vanier Modern Language Department has been organizing a team of student volunteers to go to developing countries and work alongside the villagers in service projects. These have mostly concerned visiting schools and orphanages with projects that directly benefit the children and the community.

By contributing to the noble cause of humanity with our limited time and resources, we live a meaningful life building a spirit of friendship and solidarity beyond the boundary of politics, religions, race and geography. During the humanitarian trips, our volunteers experience many new cultural opportunities. Depending on the situation, volunteers stay in rural villages, live in simple houses, work in physically demanding projects, eat local food, use outhouses and experience the hard realities faced by the 2/3 of the world's population living in the developing countries.

Our students acquire an interesting perspective on the importance of the environment and bring that enriching experience back to Quebec.

- *Francisco Theodosiadis*

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Initially, I could not understand why our teacher chose Costa Rica as a target country in need of his students' help, but after experiencing it, I have to say that our ecological and humanitarian trip, to this previously unknown country to all 13 of us, was very worthwhile; it was a fascinating experience.

The beauty of the country and its people was hallucinating, as were the various creatures we came into contact with in the jungle and on the beach while cleaning the area. The butterfly garden was also very interesting. We were granted a certificate testifying our knowledge about the reproduction of butterflies and the exportation and importation of these creatures between different countries.

Going to Costa Rica gave us all an opportunity to meet new people, face our fears while living our dreams, acknowledge a different culture from our own, develop our capacities, and get to learn more about ourselves while being confronted with the unfortunate realities of our world.

- *Melaney Salina Branco*

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Some of the most memorable moments that I can recall include the absolutely wonderful people from Costa Rica who welcomed us all with open arms, and warm hearts. Truly, the phrase "Mi casa es tu casa" was very visible amongst the families that we lived with over the course of 25 days.



Francisco Theodosiadis *teaches Spanish at Vanier.*

Not only friendships were made, but deep bonds were formed between several Canadians and Costa Ricans. Currently I am in constant contact with at least a dozen Costa Ricans, and communicate with them on a weekly basis.

An adventure that sticks out in my mind is the volunteer work that we were able to do in several communities. One, which touched me the most, was a day that we spent between two orphanages. One little boy in particular absolutely changed my outlook on life. I met a 4 year-old Nicaraguan boy who lives in one of the orphanages in Costa Rican after being away from his family due to aggression. He has Downs Syndrome and while we were there he was being treated for a scabies infection that spread from beneath his fingernails onto his face. He talked very little but the smiles that he gave us were among the most beautiful things that I have ever experienced in my entire life. It's a smile that can light up the world, as long as people are willing to take the time to see it shine.

A lesson that I took from our humanitarian trip to Costa Rica was that expressed by the phrase "Pura Vida". This expression impressed me so much so that I have now permanently inked it into the skin on my back along with the Costa Rican national flower (the "guaria morada"), and my personal favorite flower from the trip: the red amapola.

- *Julie (Julia-Maria) Collette is studying Spanish Intermediate I, as well as Russian Beginners I in the Modern Language Program at Vanier College. She has already purchased another plane ticket to Costa Rica for January 3<sup>rd</sup>, traveling with two other students who went on the trip. They will be staying with some of the incredible families that they met last summer. This time around they are better prepared in terms of knowing what to bring to their new friends, such*

*as feminine products (pads and tampons), shampoos, conditioners, alcohol swabs, soaps, razors, lotions, and common medications such as tylenol, midol, flu meds, etc. If anyone would like to donate any of these items to distribute to the families in Costa Rica, please bring them to the VCTA office and we will make sure that the three students get them to deliver in Costa Rica.*

Aside from living in Costa Rican homes, we also visited points of education in Costa Rica, namely a high school and an elementary school. We taught English and French in a high school, where the reality of education clearly contrasted the one we know of in North America. In Costa Rica, a high school on the rural Caribbean side was an immense room, where 3 different classes were given, separated by one mere cement wall. This was not our definition of a post-secondary institution, for the ones we see in Montreal usually have a few floors and are so big that kids can almost get lost in them. Rather than cutting classes, in Costa Rica, the kids waited impatiently for teachers to come teach to them, as the latter were not always available. Outside, they played soccer and a variety of recreational games. They drank from coconuts on their breaks and bought cut-up mango pieces from the local vendor. They wore uniforms. However, they still were the normal teenagers that we see around the world: curious, friendly, and somewhat immature. We had gotten to know them through interaction and games such as soccer, which we played with them once their classes, were over. In the elementary school, we visited the different classes offered to students and went over the facilities. In the days that followed, we scrubbed and cleaned the exterior walls of the school and its gates to prepare it for further painting.



Although this was not much and certainly did not change the whole country, it was a symbolic idea of how a little help can go a long way.

In addition, we visited the less fortunate in various institutions such as orphanages. In fact, knowing we would encounter kids who were not as lucky as we are, we had all brought a few school supplies for the kids. We brought them to two different orphanages where children who had been abused and abandoned stayed. The smiles on their faces were indescribable as they opened the mere crayon-box we had offered them, filled with stickers and crayons. We played with them, drew things and made different crafts with their

help. We built bonds and friendships with them. They had been abused and hurt in the past, and so we were not allowed to hug them or hold them in our arms for that reason. This was hard, as we knew that these little kids needed affection more than anything else, yet were not able to trust any one due to the terrible things that had happened to them. However, we connected with them by developing their artistic abilities and sense of creativity, all while encouraging the forming of new friendships. This was truly a heartbreaking yet unforgettable part of our trip.



We were also faced with ecological challenges; on our paths we cleaned the mess American tourists like us had left behind: right there, in the middle of this beautiful nature, lay dozens of used soft drink cans and wrap papers that had become soiled by the earth, but that were not going to disappear if someone did not remove them. We then made our way around with garbage bags, cleaning up as much as we could, trying not to ruin the beauty that we so seldom see in Montreal. We made teams and contests of who would pick up the most garbage. We sometimes stopped to take pictures, in order to never forget the remarkable beauty of our surroundings. We also worked in a butterfly garden where we cultivated butterflies and prepared them for exportation worldwide. We learned that the business that these people had was both beneficial for them financially, but also helped nature and did not pollute. This was our chance to learn about the possibilities for eco-friendly sustainable projects.

*Jelena Terzic is a Vanier Student in the Social Science Program and a member of the Vanier Key Society. She likes to travel, write, and is interested in a career in Law. She has also made a humanitarian trip to Peru in 2004, and finds interest in community involvement, social causes, and international help*

THE V.C.T.A. OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED OVER THE HOLIDAY PERIOD FROM FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2006 TO MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2007. IF YOU NEED HELP FROM THE EXECUTIVE DURING THIS TIME, YOU CAN CALL HODE'S CELLPHONE AT (514) 567-5813.

# Consensual Relationships Between Faculty/Staff and Students

## Can They Ever be Consensual

The relationship between faculty/staff and students is a professional one concerned with the preservation, expansion and dissemination of knowledge. This relationship involves a significant amount of trust. Sexual intimacy between a faculty/staff member and a student removes all professional boundaries between them and can be damaging to the learning environment.

Can consensual relationships between faculty/staff and students be an abuse of power?

People in authority have power by virtue of their position over students. Faculty members, for example, have the power to grade and evaluate a student's work. Because of this power differential can students ever give meaningful consent to an intimate relationship?

Shirley Katz, an associate to counsel at York University addresses the issue of abuse of trust in an article that appeared in *University Affairs*, January 2000.

*"The other problem for faculty who begin sexual relationships with students is the issue of conflict of interest and abuse of trust. It's well recognized both within and outside the academy that professors occupy positions of special trust and confidence. Professors enjoy autonomy to determine how and what they teach, how they go about their research activities and how they serve the university and the larger community. Because of that autonomy, they have been called fiduciaries under the law. As fiduciaries, they have a duty to avoid conflict of interest and to exercise their powers over students' interests and not their own interests."*

Most institutions of higher learning have policies that address this issue. Harvard and Yale, for example, prohibit consensual relationships between faculty and students. Vanier's new Human Rights policy states the following:

Romantic and sexual relationships between faculty members and students or between supervisors and employees or students are ones in which a power differential may exist. Those holding positions of authority shall not abuse nor seem to abuse the power with which they are entrusted. An abuse of that power differential creates a negative environment for work and study and cast doubt on the validity of the consent to such a relationship.

*The College therefore strongly cautions against romantic or sexual relationships between individuals in a position of authority and individuals with whom they have a fiduciary relationship.*

What happens when a consensual relationship involves a minor?

Many Vanier students are minors. If an intimate relationship between a minor and faculty/staff member is reported to the Department of Youth Protection, that department may take steps to ensure that the concerned minor is not being victimized. Such steps may include a report to the Crown prosecutor who in turn, may initiate a police investigation.

Those of us in positions of authority should think carefully before having an intimate relationship with a student. There is sufficient case law to caution us. Several Human Rights Tribunals have ruled in favour of the complainant, despite the defence that a relationship was consensual.

Intimate relationships between faculty/staff and students, particularly when it involves a student you are currently teaching are dangerous.

Marilyn More  
Human Right's Office

This article is a reprint of a flyer that Marilyn More sent out a few years ago.

### A CEO and a Teacher: Similar Pay

....except that it is the C.E.O.'s DAILY pay and a teacher's ANNUAL pay!

According to the New York Times (Sept. 3, 2006), the C.E.O. of General Electric, who earns 15.4 million dollars (U.S.!!!!) a year, makes about as much every single day, including holidays, as the average American teacher makes in a year.

## ATTENTION

PLEASE LET THE I.T. CENTER(D301)  
KNOW OF ANY REPAIRS TO THE  
EQUIPMENT IN THE CLASSROOMS AND  
THE STORAGE ROOMS.

DO NOT REMOVE ANY EQUIPMENT  
FROM THE CLASSROOMS

CALL US AT EXT. 7531

THANK YOU

