

IMAGINE BC

Dialogues on the Future of British Columbia

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

YEAR 3

*Learning and Culture:
The Future of Education in British Columbia*

Bowen Island • October 15–18, 2006



CONSENSUS STATEMENT



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BACKGROUND

Under the leadership of Simon Fraser University's Dialogue Programs at the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, IMAGINE BC is a non-partisan program that invites creative and informed citizens to examine issues and trends that will affect British Columbia one generation from now.

With sponsorship from the North Growth Foundation, the Province of British Columbia, Western Economic Diversification, the Vancouver Foundation and Simon Fraser University, IMAGINE BC began its five-year initiative in 2004, engaging a small, but diverse group of experts in the examination of several broad questions: Is there a distinctive BC culture? How might we have economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and healthy communities? What should BC be in 30 years? And what are the choices we must make today to achieve that future?

That initial dialogue inspired and informed a series of larger dialogues throughout the year and across the province, engaging members of the public, as well as experts in economics, ecology, education, health, Aboriginal issues, and culture. It also informed a second formal dialogue in 2005, one that looked deeper into a central theme: What is the current state of the BC economy and ecology, and what might it become? What complex choices face us as citizens, policy makers, academics, sectoral leaders and legislators?

These hard questions again inspired a wide public conversation — a learning process that led us to the subject for our third dialogue, which occurred on Bowen Island on **October 15–18, 2006**.

IMAGINE BC gathered 18 British Columbians with a diversity of views, a range of expertise and a willingness to be open and reflective and to work together in a collaborative and constructive way to participate in a dialogue (See Appendix One: Delegates and Facilitators on page 20). We began with several core questions:

- What educational conditions and innovations are necessary to build durable economies and good communities?
- How do we create an educational system that will serve BC's diversifying social, cultural and economic systems?
- What skills, aptitudes and attitudes will best equip a new generation of creative workers and committed citizens?
- What does the student of the future look like?
- Are we using our educational resources to their fullest potential?
- What changes might we require in the operations and priorities of schools and post-secondary institutions to respond to the changing world?

The process of dialogue is not intended to achieve an inflexible set of prescriptive answers; rather it is to refine the questions, to discover new paths of inquiry. The 2006 Bowen Dialogue did that and more. After three days of testing the questions and sharing our expertise, our group achieved a broad consensus that you will find in the following pages. Our aim is that this document will inform a larger public conversation and, in a best case, inspire policy makers, academics, business leaders and educators in British Columbia throughout 2006–2007 and beyond.

APPROACHING DIALOGUE: A PHYSICAL (AS WELL AS INTELLECTUAL) EXERCISE

Dialogue can be influenced by geography, just as insightful human understanding can arise from the engagement of the body as well as the mind. This dialogue occurred on Bowen Island, in a forested retreat that is, still, immediately adjacent to the rich (and in some places poor) city of Vancouver. There are views of natural beauty, of development and of regeneration.

We broke bread together and took common breaks, hiking the forests and, on opening night, followed choreographer Judith Marcuse in a series of exercises designed to reconnect us to ourselves and to build relationships with one another. This, created the potential for deeper insights about the ability of physical action — even play — to open our minds to the potential for communication that goes beyond spoken language.

IN LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: EXPLORING THE TRENDS

It is not clear whether technology dominates our image of the future because it is impossible to ignore or because it offers so many avenues for exploration and effect. But when Joanna Ashworth challenged the group to talk about future trends, technology arose immediately and overwhelmingly.

Cynthia Whitaker began by presenting the promise and challenge of technology as a repository for information. For example, we can store huge amounts of information digitally, but the speedy evolution of storage mechanisms mean that some are quickly outdated presenting the risk that the information can be lost.

Suzette Meyers spoke of the incredible access to information that people can now enjoy on the internet and the world of educational opportunities it presents, but referred to the isolating effect of the medium. It is, in its way, casual and intimate, but can be devoid of human connection.

Judith Marcuse presented the image of floating information, unsorted and unconnected. She also reinforced Suzette's concern about disconnection, about the poverty of communication that occurs virtually and without the benefit of the full range of sensory input.

Bill Walters put that concern in a future context in which computer generated virtual reality will be able to connect us, in a convincingly physical way, to historical information or to fantasy. We will be able to don a virtual reality suit and walk into the court of King James, seeing,

feeling and smelling every aspect, connecting perfectly to the virtual reality and, potentially, withdrawing even more completely from the reality of the day.

Which prompted Anne Docherty to propose that people may, rather, choose to unplug.

The notion of overabundant information arose in a different way when Cynthia spoke to the trend in education to honour breadth over depth. She recounted a full year she spent in university studying the 230 pages of Plato's *Republic*, contrasting it to the hurried survey courses that are more typical today.

Mark Holland talked of the potential of remote sensing, of a world in which technology gathers an ever-increasing amount of unsorted data.

Sean Blenkinsop imagined a world without reading, a world in which books read themselves aloud. And Gina Wong talked about a return to (a very different kind of) oral culture. She also raised the technological literacy gap that is opening between generations, creating another kind of disconnection.

Janet Moore pointed to a trend to overcome boundaries, in which universities reach more deeply into their communities and schools open up more to their parents — a trend to reconnect.

And Rob Mitchell challenged whether the world, at least the world of education, is as different as might be suggested from the overlayer of technological gadgetry. "The world is different," he said, "but is the way we look at it that different?"

IN THE SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING, WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

It is critical in any new dialogue group to agree on the nature of dialogue itself. In this session, Charles Ungerleider defined dialogue as respectful conversation. And Bob Poole chose to define it in the negative. Dialogue, he said, is not a debate — not a game of one-upmanship. Anne Docherty suggested that it is potentially difficult — that true dialogue can occur only when you are prepared to engage in sometimes challenging circumstances,

if you are prepared to work harder to hear and be heard, and if you are willing to accommodate and celebrate diversity. Mark Holland said that dialogue is one of those things that only looks natural after it has been practiced for a lifetime.

A critical part of dialogue is its open-ended nature, said Charles. Any group communication that must produce a definitive result is inclined to engender a battle to make sure your point is recognized. But

WHAT IS THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN CANADA, AND IN BC?

Charles Ungerleider led a discussion on the evolution and current state of Canadian education. He described, in the early part of the 20th century, a view of education as a public good, but a system whose ambitions were only to provide basic literacy and numeracy. Through the Depression years, post-secondary education and to some extent even high schools were seen as places of privilege or training grounds for professionals.

In the post-war world, North American society turned to the challenge of developing human capital and the system's ambitions and achievements grew to the point where now, only Finland boasts a higher average level of literacy, only Hong Kong and Korea do better in numeracy and only Hong Kong, Korea and Japan outperform Canadian students' average scores in science. Our university degree holders increased thirteen-fold between the 1950s and the 1990s. Canada's current rate of post-secondary participation is double the OECD average.

Good news aside, it is clear that the Canadian system fails First Nations students as well as many immigrant populations. It is also clear that the secondary system is not accommodating students' four principal desires from an education system. They want: Meaningfulness (a system that engages them personally); Relevance (including material that applies to their world); Challenge (to rise above boredom and to achieve); and Depth (perhaps not a year of Plato, but more than a passing taste of everything).

Against this backdrop, Bob Poole offered a certain amount of ground-truthing from the performance of the worldwide International Baccalaureate program. Among 2,000 schools in 121 countries, Canada's IB students perform better than any others. Bob also pointed out that the IB system is moving away from credentialing toward a regard for education for its own sake. When the IB program first started, he said, the emphasis was on the Baccalaureate — the university entrance credential. Increasingly, the emphasis is on the International — on the education for citizenship and, especially, for global citizenship.

Cynthia Whitaker pushed the good news a little further aside with her analysis of the performance split between BC's urban and rural students. For example, while the average high school completion rate of all students in Richmond hovers around 93 per cent, the level for boys in Golden and Trail is just 46 per cent. When you include cultural as well as geographic barriers to education, things are even worse. Aboriginal students in the West Vancouver Island district are completing at an average level of only 24 per cent.

Cynthia concluded, "Context matters." We have created an education system that is knit tightly into our social system. It is designed around the values of a western liberal-democratic, market-based economy and it successfully educates a population not just to fuel the workforce of that economy, but also to reinforce the underlying social values. This benefits some but leaves others behind.

Tony Penikett countered that the "product" in this instance is the process itself.

Tony also offered the metaphor of the round table. We cannot, in life, equalize all power relationships, but we can create a forum and a moment in which all voices can make themselves heard. Joanna pointed out that good dialogue requires difference and a willingness to test assumptions.

But Alejandro Rojas proposed to go beyond the round table vision — an image that, for him, invoked

a gathering of experts. A true dialogue, he said, must make room not just for people's formal knowledge, but also for their experiences and their dreams.

It speaks to the quality of communication that dialogue should engender — the ability for speakers to realize the connections that make intellect inseparable from the personal and emotional. It explains why Martin Luther King didn't say: "I have an expert opinion."

IS EDUCATION EQUIPPING PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE?

“For historical reasons, education is preoccupied with academic ability... [which] promotes particular forms of intellectual activity. They are important, but they are very far from being the whole of human intelligence.”

— KEN ROBINSON

Is the current education system up to the task of preparing citizens for a knowledge economy or, ideally, an imagination economy? In response there was general agreement that the system is failing in many respects, but no consensus that overall, the system has failed.

Charles Ungerleider, setting context again, suggested that in the postwar period, running into the late 1970s, Canadian society struck a good balance in terms of supporting education as a public good. But beginning in the 1980s, that balance tipped to education becoming a private good or a personal privilege. Increasingly, post-secondary students especially were expected to pay more for the privilege, at least partly on the basis that they were receiving a social advantage by getting an education.

During the same period, the public school system began to drift away from the traditional teachings of social studies and civics and toward the training of entrepreneurship and consumerism. As Cynthia put it, the system turned to instructing “not just how to make the widget, but how to want the widget.”

Bill Walters noted that, more recently, there has been a corresponding shift of authority away from the centralized coordinators in the Ministry of Education and toward local boards.

At the same time, however, students continue to be subjected to a standardized curriculum and periodic standardized testing, a clear attempt to measure not so much the achievement of the students themselves, but the success of the system and the teachers and administrators within that system.

There was wide agreement that, for whatever reason, the system is often failing students in the classroom. And without the chance of unleashing their curiosity, Alejandro said, there is no hope of reaching them. He described teaching in Winnipeg at the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, where classes of about 30 First Nations students would come for a summer program. About half that class was healthy and high achieving, while the other half often consisted of “broken souls” who had neither interest

nor inclination to sit and listen to lectures about environmental philosophy. But when asked about their own “environment” — when asked, for example, if there ever was an animal that had made a difference in their lives and to share that story — they quickly engaged. The key was to validate during the learning process, their life experiences, stories and dreams as much as scholarly accounts of reality as “it is.”

“If the heart, the hands and the head are not validated in the classroom,” Alejandro concluded, “we cannot learn.”

Mark Holland observed that “we have lost the heart and hands, and appeal now only to the head.”

Lee Gass, who spent his career as an academic trying to close that gap, agreed saying, “Everything important I have ever learned I learned by doing something — not by talking or thinking. Science is about doing things.”

Lee and Alejandro also agreed that the one-way teaching format is also seriously flawed. Lee said, “Teaching is about listening. If you don’t learn to listen when you are with your students, you have no chance of knowing who they are.”

Judith Marcuse, reporting on her extensive work with young people between the ages of 15 and 25, insisted that the heart is not being validated. She noted that suicide is the second leading cause of death in that age group, and that our youth suicide rate is second only to Japan. “Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people aged 15–19 in Canada. We are third highest in the world for teen suicide when I last checked a few years ago. There is,” she said, “a degree of hopelessness, of cynicism and disengagement — and a conviction that the political system is so damaged that there is no point engaging.” While some young people are inspired and engaged, knowledgeable and connected to the global community, the most common attitude among another group is cynical and bleak: “My job is to survive; my role is to consume.” The disconnect between students and the imagined (and imaginative) future economy is particularly acute in some First Nations populations. Rob Mitchell

described attending a ceremony in Victoria, which featured the entire class of First Nations students graduating from Grade 12. “It was inspiring to see the students (80 per cent of whom were female) and hear the stories of triumph over adversity, but equally it was tragic to see that the group was so small, given the size of Victoria’s First Nations population.”

Rob also concluded that blame for this relative failure could not be placed solely on the school system, that rather it is a reflection of social determinants with which the system is not equipped to deal.

Anne Docherty again threw a personal light on the issues of suicide and social isolation, noting that “every week in our community, a young person attempts to die” by his or her hand. The cultural barrier is enduring even though most of the teachers in the Hazelton schools are now local and First Nations. They have gone away, achieved an education degree in some southern capital, and returned to their community, having missed an opportunity to learn and incorporate their own cultural traditions. Even now, students who join their parents on important annual hunting trips are reprimanded rather than accommodated for honouring their families and their traditions.

It’s clear, though, in these instances that “the system” is struggling to answer today’s needs, as well as repositioning itself to accommodate the needs of tomorrow. Mark Holland suggested that “the education system is the perpetuator of the market-driven paradigm,” and Herb Barbolet questioned whether you change the paradigm from within the paradigm given, especially, how large bureaucracies (both public and private) tend to distort even the best set-out goals and policies. But there were hopeful signs. Gina Wong argued that elementary schools are already succeeding when it comes to creating an imaginative and interactive learning environment. And Janet Moore spoke of the many positive experiences she had as a student, noting especially a calculus teacher who was determined that his job was to teach calculus to every student in his class, not to fill some expectation of a bell curve for success and failure.

There were also some international lessons to be considered. Lee Gass reported on a decision by the government of Singapore to refocus its whole system on creativity and problem solving. The Singaporean students had already been incredibly accomplished, outpointing Canadian students in their knowledge of math, physics and biology. But North Americans were consistently outperforming the Singaporeans when it came to innovating in their respective fields. The Singapore students had learned the material, “but they hadn’t been taught to think.”

Culture writer Max Wyman had described a similar program shift in Korea, where creative output has also lagged behind standards-tested academic accomplishment.

In the midst of what was otherwise a strictly theoretical dialogue, Suzette Meyers wondered if the group should think about how to package the ideas for solutions, into something tangible that might actually find funding.

Bill Walters soon after invoked one of the provincial government’s “Five Great Goals for a Golden Decade;” to lift BC’s literacy rate to the best in the world. A significant political commitment is clearly already in place. The question is what program will answer the literacy and creativity questions at once?

In a synthesis of the day’s discussion, Cynthia Whitaker offered an elegant three-point plan for an innovative system. It should:

1. Meet the learner where the learner is.
2. Be conscious of the underlying market-oriented paradigm and of its limitations.
3. Set a system-wide goal to build active citizenship and community engagement, as well as skills.

The current system, while fallible, still has much to offer, she said, adding that we may need something of a revolt, not a revolution — an evocative expression of a point that had come up again and again: that it is the unsustainable paradigm, more than the system itself, that is failing our students.

THE CONSENSUS: IMAGINE THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN BC

It is 2006 — already half a decade has passed in the new millennium — and we are living in a world at risk. As a super species capable of dominating the planet and all upon it, humans have designed a social system that appears to value growth and consumption above all else. Through technology, we have created comforts and (for a privileged minority) achieved longevity unprecedented in human history. But that same technology has left us disconnected from our natural environment and, often, isolated from one another. We also have created a series of markers and measurements that we know are imperfect; but we still celebrate when we pass milestones or achieve excellence by those same failed measures. We celebrate “improvements” in Gross Domestic Product whether the spending comes from job creation or disaster relief. We judge BC’s secondary school performance by marks-based

analyses that everyone agrees are flawed, but that we cannot resist taking into account.

Our education system is under constant pressure to serve that market-dominated economic system, under pressure to train workers and consumers — sometimes even in preference over engendering broad and adaptable knowledge.

Now, as biodiversity collapses, as war expands its toxic influence, as famine threatens Asia and Africa, as AIDS erases the prospect of old age in whole countries, and as climate change threatens the planet itself, we must ask ourselves whether we are learning what we need to learn; and teaching what we need to teach. We need to take a hard look at our current educational system and imagine a system that will deliver us into a preferable future 30 years from today.

IN EDUCATION: WHERE ARE WE NOW? AND WHERE MIGHT WE GO?

It is our duty as Canadians and, especially as British Columbians, to seek improvements in an education system that is, by many standards, one of the best in the world.

Our participation rates, our completion rates and the standards that we achieve for literacy, numeracy and for foundational knowledge in the sciences all place us among a handful of top educational performers in the world. Broader and more objective measures of success also suggest we are doing well. Canada has one of the most robust economies in the world — indeed, one of the strongest among the rich and powerful G8 nations — and our society is admired around the globe for tolerance, inclusiveness and the rule of law. Clearly, we have been doing something right.

But grave dangers lurk in this high-level snapshot of educational and social success.

First, like all snapshots, it tells us how well we were performing yesterday, not how well we may do tomorrow — or even how well we are doing today.

Second, in boasting about our high averages, we overlook weaknesses and failures within the system — we further isolate the students at risk.

And third, we have built our record of success within an economic system that has evolved from a post-World War II industrial era to one that in BC, at least, is largely resource dependent and continues to be in need of diversification. Within a global context, BC is doing well, but it is becoming increasingly evident that if we do not adjust our economic system, we will be deeply affected by a global environmental crisis from which no country, no region will escape. If we are to create and adapt to that new economy, we must start by creating an educational system that is up to the task.

The first question is whether the education system that brought us to this good place is the system that we have today — and the answer, arguably, is no. The Canadian system developed in a post-war period of growth and optimism, a period during which education was deemed to be an end in itself and a worthy public investment. But our society has grown increasingly skeptical of public investments, demanding tests and measures and squeezing budgets at every turn. While we have grown more inclusive — insisting that the public system accommodate all learners, no matter their personal challenges — we have done little to add the resources necessary to accommodate this new challenge. We acknowledge an increasing complexity in life and learning, and we can celebrate an increase in student accomplishment; we have regularly recalibrated standard tests to reflect how much more students know today than they did a generation ago. But knowledge and understanding are not the same thing and even understanding does not necessarily imply imagination, creativity or effective citizenship.

On the international scene, our potential competitors are eager to assume the Canadian advantage. In Singapore and Korea, for example, governments have noticed that high performance in standardized tests is not producing the creative graduates that their economies most need — the kind of creative graduates for which North America is famous. Thus, while Canada is hastening “back to basics,” limiting creative options in the classroom and relying increasingly on standardized testing, our Asian neighbours are refocusing their academic efforts to incorporate creativity into every possible aspect of education. While cash-strapped Canadian school boards are squeezing out educational “options” in music and art, even at the elementary school level, in Korea, the government is encouraging its officer corps to take up painting — a dramatic, if symbolic, acknowledgment of the importance of creativity in every undertaking and at every level.

The second question is one of risk assessment: Are we addressing the needs of the populations that are most at risk? Are we serving the students who, in failure, can increase the risk to our whole educational and social system? Again, the answer must be “no”. While our urban school populations flourish (Richmond has a high school completion rate of 93 per cent), rural school districts struggle (just 46 per cent of boys in the Golden-Trail district complete high school). We also continue to fail our aboriginal population (only 24 per cent of First Nations students in Vancouver Island West finish high school).

Our economy holds little promise for these students. The high-paying, low-skill resource jobs that were once so common in BC are in short supply today. So, every child lost to the education system is at much higher risk of becoming a significant cost to the social system down the road. What we fail to spend in education today looking after their needs, we will spend five or 10-fold in years to come — in social assistance or in jails.

We are also underperforming when it comes to accommodating English-as-a-Second-Language students — the immigrants that our society so desperately needs to replace and bolster a dwindling population base. ESL students’ performance in our schools looks relatively positive overall, but if you separate out the high achieving Chinese and Korean populations, the public record shows a problem area that is growing worse, not better.

The third question is one that must grip Canadians — in fact, all citizens of the world — at every level. Canada enjoyed an unprecedented increase in capacity and productivity through the 20th century, achieving a rate of consumption that cannot be maintained and that could never be matched by all the world’s populations. As the United Nations’ Brundtland Commission reported in the late 1980s, the human species has come to so dominate the earth that we can no longer think of ourselves as hunters and gathers; there are, on earth, no new environments into which we can extend our hunt. We are now gardeners, and we are exhausting our garden’s potential even as we are growing our population — and our demands.

“...the most important characteristic of an intellectual age is the questions it asks – the problem it identifies. It is this rather than the answers it provides that reveals its underlying view of the world.”

— KEN ROBINSON

“It is a matter of no small consequence that the only people who have lived sustainably on the planet for any length of time could not read, or like the Amish do not make a fetish of reading. My point is simply that education is no guarantee of decency, prudence or wisdom. More of the same kind of education will only compound our problems. This is not an argument for ignorance but rather a statement that the worth of education must now be measured against the standards of decency and human survival... It is not education, but education of a certain kind, that will save us.”

—DAVID ORR

The most pressing issue in this regard is energy which is deeply compounded by climate change. We are reaching a point beyond which the worldwide supply of our principal energy source will begin to decline. This is not just relevant for how we heat our homes or fuel our cars. Our food system is 100 percent dependent upon that dwindling fossil fuel. Our fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, our farm equipment and food transportation systems all rely on oil.

We must re-engineer our economy — quickly and creatively — to meet this challenge. We must impress upon the coming generation that they can no longer consider themselves residents of an isolated village or an autonomous city. We are all citizens of the same world — interconnected and interdependent. If we are to survive and thrive — if Canada is to attain a national standard and style of living that is enviable and replicable in the rest of the world — we must learn to live differently and to show leadership in that quest.

The resulting question, then, must be: How can we adapt the education system to accommodate these challenges? There is no single answer, no magic new curriculum that will address every problem and satisfy every interest group. In fact, the very notion of a curriculum cure points to yet another problem. It is necessarily limiting when curricular planning concentrates too heavily on a shopping list of things that must be taught rather than a dispassionate analysis of what we hope will be learned. There are successful exemplars outside the public system. For example, the International Baccalaureate program sets no specific curriculum, preferring a set of expectations for an optimal outcome. At the elementary level, for example, the curriculum is built at each individual school, based on six transdisciplinary themes:

- who we are
- where we are in place and time
- how we express ourselves
- how the world works
- how we organize ourselves
- sharing the planet.

This same broad-based, but locally tailored approach to curriculum building is used by successful organizations as varied as the growing school system of the Aga Khan Foundation and Outward Bound.

There is risk involved here. Curriculum, a sometimes inadequate term for day-to-day classroom content, is cast best by the people who will be delivering it — by the teachers. Only they can assure relevance. Only they can guarantee that the material will spark their own passions as educators. Thus, we should trust teachers to build lessons, even as we trust that their learners will take away what they need.

But principals, school boards, ministries of education — and everyone in the community — all have an interest in educational content. This has the capacity to lead to the creation of curriculum at a level that is inappropriate and in a way that frustrates creativity and flexibility.

The goal, then, may be a Canadian Charter of Educational Rights — a broad and broadly endorsed statement of values that will guide and protect administrators and teachers in the creation and delivery of material that is relevant and useful at the most local level, while still meeting the needs and standards of the wider community.

The mandate of IMAGINE BC is to look well into the future, to conceive a world 30 years out — a world beyond the scope of short-term planning. In the case of education, however, it is critical that we not wait 30 years to make a change. Rather, we must imagine what we can do today to ensure that those who graduate in 2036 are equipped with the foundational knowledge, the creativity and the sense of citizenship — the sense of commitment to community and environmental stewardship — that will be necessary in a strained and changing world.

Getting to that point will demand a new approach — or perhaps just a careful assessment and workable application of all that we know is good, in our system and in other systems around the world. We need a system that will spark creativity and inspire elementary students to begin lifelong learning — an educational adventure from which you never want to fully “graduate.” That system must honour the learner and, critically, connect to the community in every aspect and at every point.

We also need to instill, in all of our students, a sense of citizenship — a sense of the rights and responsibilities that attend every person in every community. We can begin at the earliest age by according them their rights and expecting that they assume the responsibilities as citizens of their school communities. It is through the exercise of such citizenship that they will come to understand possibilities and responsibilities of their role in their community, their country and the world.

Finally, we must look to those at risk. There are ample aphorisms about the strength of a chain being limited by its weak links; we must never believe that by educating and accommodating those who are most at risk, we are somehow doing them a special favour.

It has become increasingly clear in recent years — from acts of international terrorism, from the global spread of new diseases such as HIV/AIDS or SARS and from instances of ecological crisis — that we can no longer isolate ourselves from the suffering of others. Even aside from any altruistic motivations, it is in our own interest to attend to those in need, to address their poverty, their health and the condition of the global environment — the single environment in which we all must live.

The question we must ultimately answer is not: what will all this cost? Rather, it is: what will the costs be if we fail? And the answer is: more than we can ever afford.

ARTS INFUSED EDUCATION — MAX WYMAN

The need to foster, encourage, develop and bring forth the human imagination has never been more acute. And the answer to that need — in all its complexity — lies in the arts.

That, much simplified, is the message of Max Wyman, one of British Columbia's foremost culture critics.

Max, a journalist, member of the Order of Canada, past member of the Canada Council and now Mayor of Lions Bay, was the featured speaker at Imagine BC's 2006 Bowen Dialogues. He urged the group to imagine the arts in education.

Max began with the work of Carnegie Mellon Professor Richard Florida, who has discovered that innovative regional economies require more than conventional educational excellence. The most creative communities are also diverse and tolerant and have an unusually large population of artists and performers.

It makes perfect sense. Humans express themselves through art: in the West, that might mean painting or playing piano; in other cultures it might mean anything from stilt-walking (in Barbados) to baking ritual cakes (in Bhutan). Humans understand one another through art. Sharing music and art history is one of the easiest ways to build empathy between cultures.

Finally, humans acquire knowledge through art. As Simon Fraser University Professor Keiran Eagan has demonstrated, great educational success can be achieved through arts-infused learning — lessons that include story-telling, metaphor, rhythm and humour.

It is, however, difficult to measure the efficacy of arts education (compared, for example, to the mastery of mathematics). It's also difficult to jump-start a generation of teachers untrained in the educational potential of art.

Max counselled advocacy. "Develop high-profile ambassadors. Cultivate politicians who understand. Recruit sports stars, business leaders, music stars — people who have access to the hearts and minds of the broad general public."

The potential is huge and the need, again, has never been so great.

THREE VISIONS OF INNOVATION: PROPOSALS FOR EDUCATING THE CITIZENS OF TOMORROW

“The characteristics of a good school are easy to identify but difficult to create. They cannot be decreed from on high or sold as some kind of educational ready-mix. Good schools make themselves, one by one, and then stand alone, in spite of bad neighbourhoods, thoughtless educational policies, indifferent parents, and inept administrators. They hum with an energetic purpose and a moral vision. They offer their students a special counter-culture to the image-rich but spirit-poor consumerism outside their doors.”

— ANDREW NIKIFORUK

Having agreed upon a context, the IMAGINE BC group divided itself into three clusters, each of which tackled a set of themes emerging from our conversation. But even the themes themselves resisted easy classification.

The overarching theme might be described as “community” — a term that embraces immediate communities of friends and family as easily as it accommodates the whole community of humankind. Within that theme, the groups grappled with three questions:

1. How can the education system prepare individuals to assume their rights and responsibilities in the community? This speaks to the promise and the challenge of citizenship.
2. How can individual schools best serve their communities? This speaks to the promise of connectedness, the challenge of ensuring each school is rooted in its own community but contributing to the community at large.
3. What is the community's responsibility to its most vulnerable members? This speaks to the risk of leaving certain community members behind — the long-term costs to the community at large and to neglected individuals when the system fails those who are least able to help themselves.

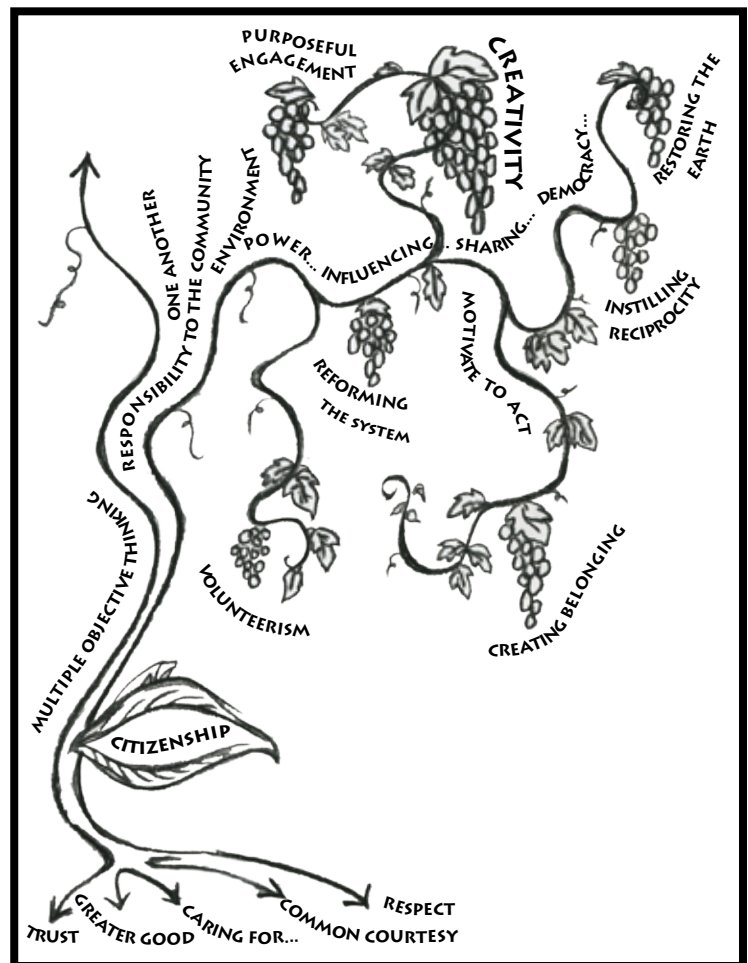


FIGURE 1: *The Student as Citizen: The benefits of citizenship flow out of the roots to bear the fruits of reciprocity.*

1) *The Student as Citizen: Building a Foundation for a Lifetime of Engagement*

The concept of citizenship appears to defeat the Concise Oxford's ability to mount a definition. A citizen can be more — or less — than a member of a state or Commonwealth. The original citizens were certainly “denizens of the city;” and the word “citizen” can be a useful synonym for “civilian.” Several members of the group spoke proudly of one specific identity — of their “Canadian citizenship,” including all the duties, rights and privileges that apply to official members of the Canadian body politic.

But citizenship in this context implies something more. It suggests a balance of rights and responsibilities in the immediate community and in the world. Citizenship promises a sense of belonging and it asks for a commitment to the common good.

It's a promise that is often recognized in the breach. Any newspaper will give an image of a society that is broken, a society in which crime, greed and selfishness are all too typical and a global environment that may be on the brink of collapse. We are sorely in need of a broad renewal of the sense of citizenship.

In the educational milieu, this discussion has already emerged at the post-secondary level, where the concept of “global citizenship” has been embedded in the vision statement of many post-secondary institutions in BC. And while the group agreed that it is never too late to prepare citizens, there also was a consensus that it is never too early.

Accordingly, we proposed that we begin recognizing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship from the moment that students first enter kindergarten or even pre-school. Lower Mainland schools take a step toward this position by developing the concept of Social Responsibility. Rooted in respect, trust and caring, citizenship animates the same goals. But it also honours the students' rights as members of the school community. It sets up a pattern of respect that must be mutual.

Children who accept their role as citizens will no longer be learning the rules of behavior merely to gain approval. Rather, they will have an opportunity to recognize the personal benefits that come from being part of a community, a society in which each individual is a conscious contributor and a fortunate beneficiary — in which the respect you accord to your surroundings and to your fellow community members is returned.

Using the image of a vine (see figure 1), the benefits of citizenship flow out of the roots to bear the fruits of reciprocity: responsibility to one another, to the environment, to the earth and to the cosmos; as well as the personal freedom that comes from sharing power in a functional democracy.

While it is impractical to offer elementary students full voting rights in their own education, it makes sense to invest them with responsibility, and to build in them a sense of empowerment. They are tomorrow's voters, tomorrow's volunteers, tomorrow's citizens. If, instead of being graduated into citizenship, they emerge from their school experience having internalized the characteristics of the citizen, they will be exactly the conscious community members that a civil society needs most.

“Learning to be socially responsible means learning how to live peaceably with others, cultivating compassion towards others, and acting in the world with a generosity of spirit and an open heart. The obligations identified by the BC social responsibility curriculum speak to the obligations human beings have to one another, as individuals and members of communities and societies, and as co-inhabitants of a fragile planet.”

— LINDA FARR-DARLING

2) *The Grande Jeté: Launching a School from a Supportive Community*

In the language of dance, a grand jété is a great leap — an action defined not by the landing, but by the taking off, and even more by that perfect moment in mid-air when the limits of gravity seem to apply no longer, when all is grace and beauty.

It's an impossible moment to maintain, in a ballet or in an educational system. You must strive for it again and again. You must begin, most critically, with good footing — with a stable jumping-off point. You must gather all your resources carefully and you must maintain absolute focus and commitment. You must also acknowledge that every leap ends with a landing — and that some will not be as graceful as others. The point is not to prevent failure in every instance; that's clearly impossible. The point is to promote and enable effort, innovation and experimentation. The point is to prepare an opportunity for ultimate and overall success, even in a system that tolerates (and learns from) little failures along the way.

This scenario — this environment that tolerates risk and encourages innovation — is unlikely in a system that is rigidly controlled from a central managing authority, no matter how regionally or locally that authority is empowered. There is also an increasing recognition that the kind of creativity that energizes economies does not arise purely from academic rigor in a core curriculum.

Thus, we need to leap from a system in which curriculum is defined and devolved to one where it is as flexible and experiential as possible — one in which teachers have clear goals for their learners but freedom to define that pathway to those goals in ways that take greatest advantage of the resources of the immediate community and the teaching opportunities that arise day to day.

With that in mind, the IMAGINE BC participants attempted a great leap: they attempted to define the circumstances under which this approach would flourish — and a school in which it could be continually reinvented.

Such a school would offer four things:

1. Choice — It would give the learner a sense of control over his or her own learning journey;
2. Relevance — It would ground the learner in his or her own culture and connect effectively to the wider community;
3. Meaning — Its teachers would strive to deliver lessons that are applicable and not purely theoretical; and
4. Challenge — because no learner deserves to be bored in school.

A great school must also engage the heart and the hands, as well as the head, in order for lessons to be effective. Most people learn best by doing, and learn most willingly when the knowledge speaks to them at an emotional and rational level.

The challenge, in designing such a school, is that every student is different and every community is different. The answer, then, is to engage the community, to involve parents and other community members in the preparation, design, and wherever possible, the execution of the learning process.

As suggested above, the individual elements of such an education are already known. Students need to feel engaged in their learning, choosing from educational options that are appealing and relevant — in addition to being designed to achieve teaching goals as well as learner satisfaction. They need to acquire proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic as tools for action, not ends in themselves. In a best case, students would actually be addressing current community issues — searching for answers to real problems — for relevance, for challenge and as a way to build a sense of community engagement, a sense of citizenship.

Creating this learning plan at arms length is impossible; it must reflect its community. And creating it quickly over the course of a summer would be similarly unmanageable. It may, however, be possible to develop an elementary-level template, an example that could be adjusted in other communities.

The best opportunity might arise in a community where a new elementary school is under construction. By engaging the entire teaching staff for a full school year (in a 12 to 15-teacher elementary school, the cost would be approximately \$1 million), a willing school district (with support

from the Province) and a committed group of parents — and students — it would be possible to embed a school deeply in its community in a way that inspired creativity, interdisciplinarity and a lively and relevant sense of citizenship. The theoretical goal would be a school fully integrated with its community and responsive to the specific desires and capacities of the children and families.

The practical goal would be to provide a school that was deeply rooted in its own community but that still had a sense of itself within the natural and political world. Imagine, for example, an elementary school setting out on a project to reduce childhood obesity. It might choose to create walking trails in the vicinity, through which process, teachers and students might discover that there was once a stream running behind the school. This could lead to lessons and discussions involving math, physics, writing, theatre — even to the practical work and political implications of stream restoration.

All of this would connect to community and would tie student learning to the implementation of solutions. The content would highlight the need to stay connected to the natural world. The interdisciplinary nature of study would help students integrate knowledge. And a learning process that validated student experiences, stories and dreams as much as scholarly accounts of the world, would inspire confident life-long learners who sought relevance through their education.

This is, of course, a hypothetical example. A new school would discover its own history and plan the voyage of discovery accordingly. But the methodology could prove useful. Additional participation of post-secondary educators and researchers would ensure that lessons learned would be recorded for use as other schools seek to adapt to this more creative, independent planning model.

The real promise of this proposal is that while the risks are small (unsuccessful experiments would affect only a small number of students) the rewards — the successful lessons — could be significant and could be applied more broadly. If the pattern could be extended across many schools, it would create an adaptive management system — a system in which individual students, teachers and schools are always experimenting, in which they are always isolating failures and always sharing success.

We tend now to look for big fixes, for educational guarantees, for broad promises that can be made in Victoria or in a school district's head office and then kept at the most local level. A system in which authority and responsibility are devolved — all the way to the students wherever possible — is much more likely to be resilient, open to change, and protected against widespread failures.

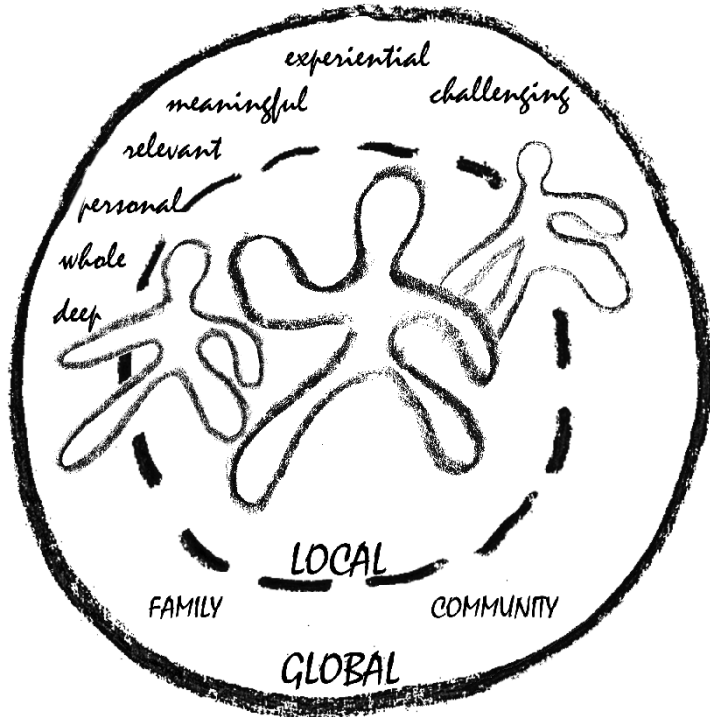


FIGURE 2 We envision an educational process rooted strongly in local communities, local economies, and local ecosystems, even while it explores connections between local, regional, and global concerns. Whenever possible, inspiration and examples are found close to home in current events, but we think of the boundary between local and global concerns as flexible, adaptive, and semi-permeable. Sometimes “local” will refer to something as small as each student’s home and family, and sometimes it will refer to whole watersheds or aquifers, or to relationships between sectors of provincial-level economies.

This approach engages educators in collaborating to provide a meaningful, relevant, personal educational experience for students and challenge them deeply. By engaging with each other to confront the challenge of understanding difficult problems that are real for them, students develop interpersonal skills such as teamwork while they master the knowledge and skills associated with all of the traditional disciplines.

3) Strengthening the Communal Chain: Working So No Member is Left Behind

While the BC education system has legitimate claims to a very high success rate in certain jurisdictions, in others, high school completion rates drop below 50 per cent. Alcohol and drug use, violence, disconnection from the family, community and society all challenge young peoples' capacity to thrive and the school system's capacity to serve. What can be done?

This question was answered with insight and experience and in a pointed and specific way. We offer a 10-point plan of action, the costs of which are negligible compared to the inevitable social costs of educational failure.

1. Be Willing to Invest Resources

We must recognize that students at risk require more resources than the general student population and that if we don't invest early, the system will run the risk of paying a much higher cost over the student's lifetime. Specific recommendations:

- a) Be willing to direct base resources to kids at risk (rather than spreading at-risk funding over the whole population)
- b) Bring back auditing to ensure that school boards spend specific funds on the specific purposes for which they were originally earmarked, rather than being able to take all monies into a more discretionary general account.

2. Identify the Learner's Challenges Early

There is a tendency to assume that learning variance will resolve itself as students progress through the early elementary grades, creating a situation in which at-risk students are already critically far behind before their plight is recognized:

- a) Start (low cost) screening at the Kindergarten level
- b) Develop plans for each child

3. Monitor Progress Continuously

It's not enough to only screen once; progress needs to be monitored continuously for individual students. Teachers must be engaged in the assessment process and (by virtue of reliable systemic response) convinced of its value.

- a) Keep records for all students
- b) Teachers should review students' progress collectively
- c) Ensure accountability for follow-up and action

4. Give Teachers Time and Space

Teachers want to do well and they know what to do. They should be better supported to do this (even if this means hiring extra teachers when the at-risk population is higher).

- a) Give teachers time for collaboration, for reflection with one another
- b) Provide relevant peer and professional development activities

5. Disrupt Negative Peer Cultures and Elevate Positive Peer Culture

Peer culture can be a powerful force in reinforcing the values of citizenship or a negative influence that draws at-risk students down to the lowest common denominator of aspirations and achievement.

- a) Build in more community engagement activities
- b) Schedule compulsory activities that mix students together
- c) Create learning experiences outside the classroom
- d) Combine school and paid work
- e) Move the children out of negative peer pressure environment earlier

6. Create More Fun! Lighten Up!

Low achievers are under immense stress, contributing to their disaffection.

- a) Be sure that expectations are reasonable and realistic
- b) Schedule more community celebrations for students
- c) Link school as a natural extension to community life

7. Facilitate Re-entry to School

School rules often don't accommodate students when they are ready to re-enter, forcing them to wait to fit in with the school cycle. Students should be able to re-enter at any time.

- a) Modularize the curriculum
- b) Provide teaching support for students who are prepared to re-enter mid-term

8. Implement Street Outreach Worker Programs

Out-of-school behaviour often disrupts students' attachment to school, as well as reducing their capacity to achieve.

- a) Initiate community outreach worker programs to monitor students at risk, offer support and help guide them back to school. (E.g.; Hazelton Informal Educator Program)

9. Implement Complementary Social Supports

Low achievers usually have compounding social

challenges (for example, transience, low income, families in crisis, etc).

- a) Create collaborative, multi-partner community tables (teacher, police, outreach workers) to meet regularly (weekly) to assess success and to plan actions needed to create healthy environments for kids.

10. Re-build the Person

The low achiever often has low self-esteem and a personal disconnection. It is important to re-engage the heart.

- a) Use programs like Roots of Empathy
- b) Implement cross-age teaching; using at-risk kids as teachers
- c) Celebrate the individual
- d) Use outdoor education to promote a connection to something bigger than themselves.

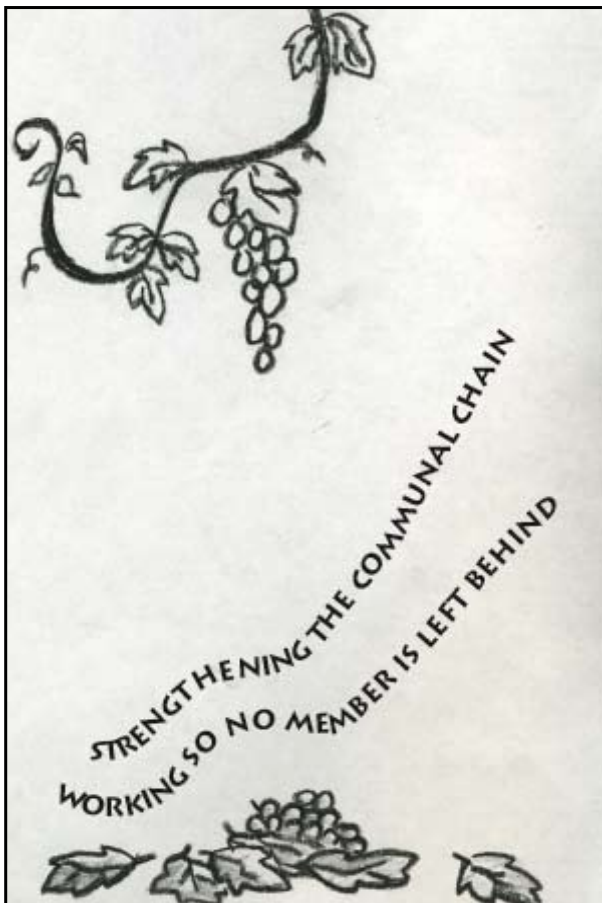


FIGURE 3 Our plan of action considers the value of all students, especially those who fall behind.

IN CONCLUSION

We are all, in some sense, involved in the “business” of learning or in raising the discourse on education and literacy. Our expertise and experience includes: sociology of education, natural sciences, public policy, vocational education, business, urban/ regional planning, media, community development, literacy, teacher education, university teaching, and environmental advocacy.

Although never charged with dispensing a “conclusion,” we agreed that education — teaching and learning — is not a discrete process appropriate only for the young or those in want of retraining. It is a foundation for civilized society.

Accordingly, we need an “educational system” that integrates learning in day-to-day life and that connects all practitioners and disciplines. We need a system that builds mutual respect among and between learners and teachers. And we need a system that treats all citizens as students — and all students as citizens.

What future do we face?

We face a future characterized by increasingly complex problems. Ever since the World Commission on Environment and Development issued the now-famous *Brundtland Report* in 1987, we have recognized that we cannot sustain current consumption levels into the future. Fish stocks are declining, biodiversity is collapsing, the climate is changing in an increasingly dangerous way — and our entire food system, dependent as it is on a resource (oil) that is also nearing a point of imminent decline, is also facing a crisis, an epidemic of malnutrition and devastating environmental impacts. Rapid changes in technology have brought incredible advances, but have also created information overload and increasing gaps between haves and have-nots. The future that we imagine on the current trajectory is full of threat and doubt — a future of increasing social isolation rather than one of connection among thoughtful active citizens.

What future do we want?

We want a future that is socially, economically and ecologically healthy and harmonious — a community that supports citizens in reaching their full potential without disadvantaging others or the environment. The desired future is based on three principles: A sense of stewardship for the earth; a robust and sustainable economy; and a society that places a premium on the quality and meaning of life.

What must we do?

We must honour the role of imagination, creativity and dialogue in bridging the ingenuity gap i.e., solving the most complex of social, economic and environmental problems. We must support the arts as well as the sciences, acknowledging the role that art, music and culture have in nurturing a healthy community, in attracting highly qualified people and in inspiring innovation in technology, business and industry.

How must we proceed?

We must engage as many citizens and experts, from as many sectors, as possible to imagine BC’s future, advocate for creative demonstration sites and share hopeful and holistic approaches to education that will help achieve that vision.

WIDENING THE DIALOGUE ON THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

What is the conversation we wish to engage in with British Columbians? Here are some questions to begin:

- What is your vision of the future in light of rapidly changing social, economic and environmental pressures in BC?
- What are the stories of hope, i.e., educational initiatives that demonstrate connected, interactive, real-world learning?
- What does it mean to be a citizen? Of the community, the province, the country and the world? What will be required to teach and to learn the core skills, abilities and dispositions of citizenship?
- Who are we leaving behind in terms of education and informal learning? What will be the cost to society in the future? What can we do to correct these inequities?
- What will it take for public schools and other sites of learning such as workplaces and community spaces to generate and nurture active, engaged and adaptive learners within BC's communities?

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APPENDIX 1

The 2006 IMAGINE BC *Delegates* AND *Facilitators*

Herb Barbolet

Associate in Food Security and Sustainable Community Development
Centre for Sustainable Community Development, Simon Fraser University

Sean Blenkinsop

Assistant Professor of Education
Simon Fraser University

Anne Docherty

Director, Community Learning
Storytellers' Foundation

Lee Gass

Professor Emeritus
Department of Zoology
University of British Columbia

Mark Holland

Planner
Holland Barrs Planning Group Inc.

Judith Marcuse

Artistic Producer
Judith Marcuse Projects

Robert Mitchell

Executive Director
Sierra Legal Defence Fund

Janet Moore

Assistant Professor
Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue
Simon Fraser University

Suzette Meyers

Documentary Filmmaker
Journalist

Bob Poole

Head of the Vancouver Office and Recognition Division
International Baccalaureate North America

Alejandro Rojas

Senior Instructor
Agroecology Program
University of British Columbia

Charles Ungerleider

Director, Research and Knowledge Mobilization
Canadian Council on Learning

Bill Walters

Director, Settlement and Multiculturalism Division
Ministry of the Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism

Cynthia Whitaker

Executive Director
Literacy BC

Gina Wong

Faculty Associate
Professional Development Program
Simon Fraser University

Max Wyman

Culture Critic
Mayor, Lions Bay

Facilitation**Joanna Ashworth**

Director, Dialogue Programs
Morris J. Wosk
Centre for Dialogue,
Simon Fraser University

Tony Penikett

Adjunct Professor
Master of Public Policy Program
Simon Fraser University

Staff

Nicole Crouch
Freydis Welland

Writer

Richard Littlemore

ABOUT THE DELEGATES

All participants provided formal biographies, but each also added some personal insights as they arrived to join the IMAGINE BC Dialogue. These are a few examples:

Cynthia Whitaker, a veteran of government and academia and the newly appointed Executive Director of Literacy BC, said that she has a clear vision of what education has given to her: curiosity, self-confidence, a sense of continuity and rootedness in the world. And she added, “I hope that education can continue to give those life resources.”

Charles Ungerleider, who has been a UBC professor, a senior civil servant and a noted and respected researcher in the field of learning and education, is now the Director of Research and Knowledge Mobilization for the Canadian Council on Learning. Ungerleider picked up the theme, offering the oft-quoted observation that education is the greatest gift that one generation can pass on to the next. It is, he said, a point of greater poignancy when he shares time with his granddaughter and grandson, who are both just a year old.

Several participants talked about the importance of place in their own education. **Alejandro Rojas** is an environmental social scientist and chairs the new graduate program in Integrated Studies in Land, Food and Community at UBC and is recognized for his innovative work on the integration of knowledge across disciplines and for linking teaching with community-based action research. He spoke of his upbringing in Chile, of the games and explorations of his youth. He talked of walking with friends, blindfolded toward a waterfall or of unstudied experiments of throwing rocks down a hill in the hopes of triggering an avalanche into the river, just to learn decades later that similar experiments led scientists to deliver Chaos Theory. You have to imagine a Spanish accent and a great dose of Latino passion to understand the impact of his concluding quote: “What a classroom!”

Herb Barbolet, a social activist, food policy specialist and the co-founder (and former Executive Director) of FarmFolk/CityFolk, agreed that the great lessons in life occur in the world, saying, “Education and learning is not so much about schooling.” And **Tony Penikett** took it a step further, saying, “Almost everything of value that I learned in life, I learned outside of school.”

Sean Blenkinsop, an Assistant Professor of Education at SFU with an extensive teaching background in alternative, outdoor, international and experiential settings, suggested a theoretical framework for that impression by quoting Paracelsus, who said: “Understanding and wisdom comes from walking the pages of the book that is the world.”

Lee Gass, a retired UBC Professor who was renowned for his teaching and for his program innovations, shared Alejandro Rojas’s joys of childhood discovery – down to the details of the waterfalls and the avalanches – but he introduced a note of anger and frustration with the failings of the formal education system. As a student – a good student for whom learning came easily – he said, “I didn’t like school. I didn’t like what I saw happening.” In later years, in university classrooms filled with elite students, he saw moments of revelation and invention. Now, he would like to see those rich and deep learning opportunities made available more widely.

Janet Moore, an Assistant Professor in the Undergraduate Semester in Dialogue Program at SFU, was even more passionate about the weakness of a post-secondary system. She, like Lee Gass, has chosen to recreate the system from within – to create change in one classroom at a time.

Suzette Meyers, a veteran journalist and an independent documentary filmmaker, invoked a great educational conduit that is widely available, largely informal and woefully fallible. The media, and especially television media, has an educational opportunity, but one that, functionally and professionally, is ultimately unsatisfying. Suzette said her switch to documentaries was, in part, a search for learning that is more in depth and tangible.

Anne Docherty, the Director for Community Learning for Storytellers’ Foundation in Hazelton, spoke up for people in her community who struggle with a system of formal education that is often at odds with the community’s culture and traditions. The disconnect leaves young people disillusioned and denied a clear vision of their own culture as well as an inclusive vision of the world. She also raised an interesting contradiction: in a room where the “best educated” speakers all agreed that they had learned their best lessons outside the academy, Anne complained that she was untutored — that she was only “a citizen” — which for all assembled was judged to be distinction

enough. Anne also gave the sharpest accounting of how high the stakes are in this conversation. In answering the question of what might be gained from the Imagine BC deliberations, she said, “I just don’t want any more of my kids (the kids in her community) committing suicide.”

Gina Wong, a Faculty Associate in SFU’s Faculty of Education Professional Development Program and teacher in the public system, introduced the importance of cultural education in an immigrant society. (Alejandro Rojas also touched on this issue, noting that he had been raised by an “illiterate native woman” and that the more highly educated he becomes in the formal context, “the more I am filled by her wisdom and her heritage.”) Gina Wong also said she has “a passion for literacy,” which in a diverse society must include cultural literacy. And she said she hopes that the IMAGINE BC deliberations may contribute to educating generation of teachers who are better informed and more open to personal and professional opportunities.

Among the most outspoken optimists, **Bob Poole** rose to trumpet the advances that distinguish the best of modern education. As the head of the Vancouver Office and Recognition Division of International Baccalaureate North America, and as one of the people who implemented the IB program in Vancouver, Poole has seen the benefits that can come from pointing young students to the far horizons. While a generation ago, most Vancouver students would have imagined their world to be confined by the mountains and the water, the best of today’s students are heading off to Sarajevo or Hanoi, accepting and acting upon global citizenship.

That said, Poole challenged the group to think about the education system as a metaphorical train in a world that had not yet discovered the airplane. There is much more discovery and development potential yet.

Bill Walters, Director of the Settlement and Multiculturalism Division in the provincial Ministry of the Attorney General (and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism), outlined his career in the civil service as a series of opportunities to help people at risk, whether they were First Nations, recent immigrants, impoverished or challenged by some other factor. He hopes that the IMAGINE BC session will help inform his policy interventions to come.

Max Wyman, a writer and cultural commentator by profession and a passionate advocate for the arts by avocation, has devoted much of his own time and efforts to integrating the arts and creative activity into education. He wondered when those in charge of the purse-strings of education will lose their fear and loathing of arts and culture.

Rob Mitchell, Executive Director of Sierra Legal Defence Fund, said he’s optimistic about finding solutions for current global environmental crises. Looking back at the successes of the civil rights movement in the United States, he suggested parallels with environmental advocacy today. He said he’s excited that through Sierra Legal he is able to take an active role in helping BC’s and Canada’s environmental future.

Mark Holland, who is a planner and educator in sustainable development, noted that in times of slow change, academics forge ahead of practitioners. But in times of rapid change, such as now, practitioners forge ahead because they have to. In this context, he wondered how to get practitioners to find the time and the venues to convey their growing wisdom to the education system.

Imagine BC research and coordination staff members **Nicole Crouch** and **Freydis Welland** both touched on the notion of education as more than simply informing the head. Freydis spoke of the benefits of balancing education of the mind with education of the heart. Nicole suggested that a meaningful educational experience necessarily engages the learner’s spirit.

Judith Marcuse, the renowned dancer, choreographer, producer, director, teacher, writer and lecturer, identified herself as an artist and social activist and made a very brief case for the arts as an important instrument of educational engagement. Judith also led participants in a series of physical exercises that forced them to rely on one another for success, an activity that caused everyone to recognize how completely trust is necessary for successful collaboration. In a few of the exercises, the key was striking balance, in a couple or in a group. In a few others, Judith inspired the group to make literal the figurative blindness that sometimes afflicts us all, and to rely on one another – or take responsibility for one another – to achieve a goal.

FACILITATORS

Simon Fraser University's **Joanna Ashworth** is a former career diplomat with the United Nations and educational planner. She is the Director of Dialogue Programs at SFU's Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue and the director of IMAGINE BC. Joanna clarified that the aim of the dialogue was to tap the collective intelligence of the group through dialogue – to share, discover and, perhaps to learn.

Co-facilitator **Tony Penikett** said in his introductory remarks, our task is not to arrive at fully formed answers, but rather to try to identify a few profound questions with which to provoke or inspire an ongoing conversation.



NORTH GROWTH FOUNDATION



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Diversification de l'économie
de l'Ouest Canada

IMAGINE BC is a series of annual dialogues presented by Simon Fraser University's Dialogue Programs, Continuing Studies that has set out to change the way British Columbians think and talk about the future of their province.

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