



*July 2009*

www.atesl.ca

## President's Message

by Judy Sillito

This year, ATESL is co-hosting the TESL Canada 2009 Conference in Banff, October 1-3, and at that time we will also be celebrating our 30th anniversary. I hope many of you have taken advantage of the early bird registration at Weaving Pathways: Interculturalism and Language. We are looking forward with anticipation to the two plenary speakers, Bonny Norton and Lionel Laroche who are sure to provide us with valuable information and perspectives. Through my involvement in planning this momentous conference, I am reminded about what a privilege it has been to act as president of this fine organization. Being a member of the executive on one of the more active boards I have known, is at once a challenge, an education, and a delight. I encourage any and all of you to consider the benefits of stepping in to the ring and having a voice in the continued anchoring and development of our profession.

ATESL values its close and productive relationships with government, both at the provincial and federal levels. The kind of dialogue that ensues between this professional body and government is rare and precious. As a result, in this year alone, we have been able to negotiate contractual agreements to support the TESL Canada conference, the ATESL 30th anniversary celebrations, a revision of the ATESL Best Practices Guidelines document, another initiative that will be revealed at the conference (wait for the surprise) and two more proposals that are currently in negotiation. This work actively supports ATESL's mandate to support professional development which can promote that highest level of teaching and English Language program provision, and we are indebted to our government partners for their continued support.

Last year we began an initiative to support professional discourse through special interest groups (SIGS) posted on the ATESL website. These SIGS have met with varying levels of response and I encourage you to check out and contribute to your own areas of interest.

As we move into the summer months of somewhat relaxed activity, I wish to commend and thank the locals for their superb commitment to providing professional development and networking opportunities for their colleagues. Truly a job well done!

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## Report from ATESL Representative on CCLB board

by Anna De Luca

I recently attended the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) AGM and board meeting in Ottawa. I'm pleased to report on some highlights that I hope will be of interest to ATESL members. The Centre has just appointed a new executive director, François Bélisle, therefore this coming year will most likely be another year of transition for the organization as a whole. However it is unlikely that this transition will affect the quality and quantity of activity at the Centre in the development of resources and in the training of assessors and practitioners.

In this report I will highlight two key areas that I feel will be of interest to the ATESL membership, namely, the national consultation on the CLB 2000 and some new materials developed by CCLB and widely available to the public.

### National Consultation on the CLB 2000 and NCLC 2006

The national consultation on the Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000 (CLB 2000) got underway in September 2008. In its first year the national consultation has taken a scan of organizations, programs, groups and individuals who use the CLB/NCLC. So far 12 forums have been held in 12 cities across Canada with a total of 382 participants. In addition on-line surveys targeting practitioners and learners were conducted. It is interesting to note that 31% of the respondents on the learner survey were from Alberta. Overall approximately 1300 people have been consulted across the country. The next steps in the consultation process are the analysis of feedback and preparation for a national forum of key stakeholders to be held in mid October and additional on-line discussions as required with the intention of identifying clear directions of recommended changes by winter 2010 and public announcements on changes by March 2010.

### What's new in Resources from CCLB?

1. The CLB Online Self-Assessment for Reading and Listening is available in English and French. The tool gives you a general indication, not an exact benchmark level, of language proficiency in each of the two skills. Instructors may find this to be a useful activity to introduce to learners either as an independent or classroom activity. You can access the tool at

## An Instructor Tool - Bennett's DMIS

Todd Odgers, NorQuest Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education

Crossing cultures can be threatening because it challenges our sense of identity and preferred ways of being (Adler, 1977 and Barna, 1994), and “entails some of the most stressful experiences we may ever face” (Kim, Y. in Landis et. al, 2004 p. 351). Language teachers support their learners’ process of adjustment and can benefit from intercultural research and tools such as Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). (A detailed description of the DMIS and the Intercultural Development Inventory -- a theory based instrument that measures intercultural sensitivity as conceptualized in the DMIS-- is available at [www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural](http://www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural).) While leading intercultural development retreats for teachers and faculty over the past few years, I have been struck by how powerful the DMIS framework can be for participants. Instructors have frequently noted how using the DMIS has transformed them, their teaching, and the way they create curriculum and instructional materials.

We have all known students who are adept and inquisitive in how they learn about and interact with the diverse world around them. These learners look for cues, shift their behavior, practice what they learn, and progress quickly. We have also met those who seemed to struggle, resist or take a defensive or superior orientation toward their classmates and adopted culture. A colleague many years ago referred to these learners as “bunker dwellers”: they tend to remain well entrenched in their own ethnic community and find it difficult to adopt and master the new language and cultural behaviors that the life in Canada requires of them. Familiarity with the DMIS can help instructors identify and support these different learners, and facilitate better cultural adaptation.

Many of us are familiar with intercultural models created by Hall, Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, Triandis and Gudykunst (please see the readings link below). These different models help us compare and contrast different cultural styles, values, and behaviors. They are useful tools to help skillfully identify and work with the range of cultures we encounter in classrooms. The DMIS differs from these models in that it is a developmental model that can help us promote adaptation.

Instructors can use the DMIS framework to identify the developmental stages (denial, defense, minimization, acceptance and adaptation) of students and then plan and facilitate interactions that are appropriate to the students’ requirements.

Instructors wanting to use the DMIS framework should pay attention to how each stage presents its own strengths and challenges. For example, the earlier idea of “bunker dwellers” points toward learners who are likely in the stages of denial and defense. Activities building common interest and a sense of shared experience can be very helpful at this stage. Effective activities include: sharing family information, stories of moving to Canada, missing home and the challenges faced. Fun activities around food and music are also recommended. The Heritage Days festival in Edmonton is a good example of an event designed to build a sense of shared community and is excellent for learners at this stage.

Learners like the inquisitive student, adept in interacting with the diverse world around them, will be receptive to activities that go into greater depth about the gap between their first culture and the plurality of Canadian culture. Bennett refers to these stages as Acceptance and Adaptation. Well facilitated comparison activities, critical thinking, analytical discussions and experiences, role plays, critical incidents, case studies, and internships are challenging and interactive ways to propel these learners’ adaptation and competence forward.

Next there are the learners between these poles who Bennett refers to as being in the Minimization stage. These learners have moved beyond the defensive, polarized ethnocentrism of the bunker to a more expansive and inclusive place that focuses on commonality. Key characteristics with this stage are discomfort with conflict

and a desire to avoid offending. Instructors should help these learners notice subtle but important differences in behavior and ways of thinking. Learning activities for this stage practice careful observation and engagement through critical incidents, film, interviews, surveys, and readings. It is important that instructors provide an opportunity to elicit and discuss these subtle but important differences in relatively safe ways. These kinds of activities help learners collect data and learn how to treat differences with respect and interest.

Minimization is a stage of development that strongly resembles some of the aspects of official Canadian multiculturalism from the 1980's in how it downplays differences for the sake of promoting a tolerant society. This can be a limiting stage for learners wanting to move toward a more complex bi/multicultural identity with the capacity to move effectively between cultures. In order to negotiate deeper, more complex issues of identity and appropriateness, learners need to move past this stage into acceptance and adaptation.

Experienced ESL/EAL teachers know that they teach much more than grammar and vocabulary. ESL/EAL teachers play an important role in helping people communicate and interact more effectively, authentically, and fully across cultures. Supporting learners' integration into Canadian society depends on their capacity to develop soft skills -- highly influenced by culture -- that will help them to transcend cultural worldviews and adapt (Laroche, 2003). Canada is diverse and growing increasingly so; the DMIS is a powerful tool we can employ.

Todd is the Associate Director of the Centre for Excellence in Intercultural Education at NorQuest College. The DMIS is used as a core framework at the Centre for designing curricula and facilitating training.

For a list of works cited in this article and other readings and resources please go to [www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural](http://www.norquest.ca/cfe/intercultural) and click on Resources for Educators.

Online Self Assessment, or go to [www.clb-osa.ca](http://www.clb-osa.ca).

2. The CLB 5-10 Exit Assessment Tasks is a resource that provides standardized tools to assess the learning outcomes of adult ESL learners in CLB levels 5 to 10. Practitioners will be able to use the Exit Tasks to supplement curriculum-based assessments to provide accurate reports of learning outcomes. Three trainers in Alberta are experienced in delivering workshops on using the Exit Tasks. Over the past year, 133 teachers in Alberta were trained to use the resource. Participants who attended the training found this to be a very useful tool.

3. Language for Work: CLB and Essential Skills is a series of guidebooks to support the effective use of Essential Skills. All materials are available in English and French. There are three guidebooks in the series and each targets a different audience: Job Analysts, Trainers and Counselors, and ESL/FSL Instructors. The new resources are available at [www.itsessential.ca](http://www.itsessential.ca). Workshops and training on these resources will be available in the coming year.

4. Workplace Language Assessment (WLA) is designed for placement of learners into bridge to employment programs where the national standard (CLB 7 – 10) is used to help determine eligibility. This tool will be piloted in Alberta this fall.

Information on all of these resources and much more can be found on the CCLB website [www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca). I encourage you to explore the wealth of materials for classroom use and beyond that is available through CCLB. Also, look for a number of informative workshops by CCLB staff and developers at the upcoming TESL Canada conference in Banff. Some of those workshops will focus on the introduction and effective use of new resources.

I'd like to thank ATESL for the opportunity to serve on the CCLB board as it has been an excellent learning opportunity for me. I'd also like to thank the Government of Alberta (GOA) for providing such strong and continued support to the CCLB. GOA funding of the Centre goes toward providing training opportunities for instructors in the province as well as towards the development and distribution of resources. I wish all of you an enjoyable summer.



## In Conversation with Jim Gurnett

Former Executive Director of Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN)

By Judy Sillito

On May 12, 2009, the face of Edmonton changed for our immigrant residents. That marked the last official day of Jim Gurnett's tenure as Executive Director of Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, a position he held for nearly eight years. Jim laughs warmly as he confesses that this is the longest time he has ever stayed in one job. Typically, after a few years he would move on to new challenges, but at EMCN there seemed to be plenty of challenges and dimensions to keep him enticed.

### ***Can you tell me a bit about the path that brought you to connect with ESL?***

I was teaching in Calgary and had the opportunity to move my family to Afghanistan where I taught ESL to children at an international school. This was my first exposure to ESL. We lived there for four years and really loved it. But with the Soviet invasion in 1979, the school was closed and I came back to Canada to look for work. I had an interest in the Peace Country, so decided to take a look around there and immediately landed a job as principal. I became involved with politics and when MLA Grant Notley died in 1984, I was elected as the NDP Candidate for Spirit River-Fairview. Eventually my work with the party led me back to Edmonton but when we lost all seats in the 1993 election, I found myself again in need of a job. At the time, the Hope Foundation was just getting off the ground and I was captivated at the idea that this thing called 'hope', which I had always privately recognized as a powerful force, was being given academic credibility. It was through my work at the Hope Foundation that I became interested in the urban core and the needs of the homeless. Eventually I moved to the Bissell Centre as Manager of Community Services and then on to EMCN. Of course my work at EMCN brought me back in close contact with ESL.

### ***And what trends have you witnessed in ESL over your eight years of service?***

Well, certainly there is an increased availability of funding for specific purposes that have a straightforward labour market 'benefit'. There is now room for more creative approaches in service delivery and that is a good thing. I am also pleased at the way the Province of Alberta has funded a lot of activity in the ESL area, not leaving it all to the federal government.

### ***What advice do you have for SPOs to address gaps or deficiencies in ESL program delivery?***

I hope to see a move in the direction of less rigid categories for funding so that we don't have to tell people needing language training that they 'don't fit the mandate'. I believe a more effective way to disburse funds would be for SPOs to listen more and learn from immigrants themselves and for funders to be more open to innovative ideas from SPOs that arise from this, rather than to set the criteria of what THEY think should be happening and only invite applications for those things. As I leave my direct involvement with ESL, I have some anxiety about the sense I have of a move to more closely equate official language proficiency and citizenship. I believe this is the tip of a much larger iceberg that will move Canada increasingly in the direction of seeing immigration not in broad social terms but in a 'utility' way - what's the 'value' of immigrants for the rest of us? - so this is something about which we need to be very vigilant. But that is not to say that I don't greatly appreciate the importance of offering every possible support and opportunity for newcomers to develop the greatest possible competence in both official languages.

### ***Tell me what you consider to be your primary accomplishments related to ESL.***

I have been intentional about stating that ESL needs to be fully integrated with all aspects of the lives of immigrants. When we teach English, we are teaching to whole beings, so our service should be holistic and fully integrated.



## Learning English: 1 2 3

by Xiaodong Gu

Chinese people usually begin learning English with “one, two, three”. When my daughter was about three or four years old she started learning English in kindergarten. She could only count from one to ten and only knew a few sentences like “Hi, How are you?”, and “I am sorry”. One day, she bumped into a foreigner in the street. She said, “I am sorry!” at once. The foreigner was very happy to hear English from a beautiful little girl. So he replied, “I am sorry too.” My daughter wondered, “Should proper English use numbers to express how sorry you are?” So she wanted to try, “I am sorry three.” The foreigner was confused, he asked, “What are you sorry for?” Oh, my poor daughter, now she was sure she learned the real English, so she added one more time, “I am sorry five.” Then, the foreigner understood what she was saying, he laughed out loudly.

I got a lot of problems with my poor English when I came to Canada. The first day my husband and I went to the LINC school, they asked me which grade I was supposed to be. My husband told them grade zero. They all laughed because they didn’t have grade zero in Toronto. After I took the test, we had to wait for their notice of the date to go to school. One day, when my husband was out, they called us. It was the first time I answered the phone in English. At first I just heard one word “school”, so I thought the call came from my daughter’s school. They spent a long time to let me know that it was from my LINC school. After that, they told me about the date and the time. Tomorrow, that was OK, at 9am. Nine, what time is Nine? Holding the phone, I began to count my fingers, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. When I got to nine, the teacher shouted on the phone: “Right. That’s it. Nine.” I was so excited I got it. As soon as my husband came back, I told him about the date and the time of the school. He couldn’t believe it, “How did you get it?” When he knew the truth, he laughed at me and said: “You are lucky, if they asked you to come to school at 12 am, would you take off your socks and count your toes to get the number?”

Although my son Ryan was born in Toronto, he learned Chinese first because we use Chinese all the time at home. When he came to our school’s daycare, he got a little problem with the language too, but he is a fast learner. Just several days later, he wanted to speak some English with us. Some experts say that two and half years old is the age of a rebel. It is true, if I said yes, he would say no and if I said no, he would say yes. One day, we were talking about something and I said, “I don’t know.” He answered at once, “I don’t yes!” We had to take some time to understand what he said, and then everyone laughed. The “I love you” game is our family’s favorite game. Every time we tell him “I love you.” He replies at once, “I love you too.” And we will say, “I love you three.” He laughs and keeps going: “I love you four.”

We can play this all the way till “I love you ten”.

I started learning English from “one, two, three”, but I hope I will be able to express myself beyond just counting numbers in the future.



**Where are you going from here?**

Not quite decided yet. For sure I want to spend more time with my grandchildren, but other than that I am mulling over several categories of options: working overseas perhaps in Africa or the Middle East; tackling a new project here; or I've even considered less complex work that then allows me to explore my interest in creative writing. Certainly, whatever I end up choosing will be connected to social justice in some way.

**What are the greatest rewards of your work?**

Definitely the people. People at EMCN, other collegial connections throughout the city and beyond, immigrants of all ages and descriptions. I have been profoundly touched and humbled by the courage, creativity, and determination of the immigrants and refugees that come here. I have come to realize what an immense treasure that is for Edmonton. Definitely the people. People at EMCN, other collegial connections throughout the city and beyond, immigrants of all ages and descriptions. I have been profoundly touched and humbled by the courage, creativity, and determination of the immigrants and refugees that come here. I have come to realize what an immense treasure that is for Edmonton.



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