



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

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March 2017

www.atesl.ca

Statement from the ATESL Board of Directors: ATESL – Welcoming to the World

Over the last year or so, attitudes towards refugees and immigrants have changed considerably on the world stage. Although the Canadian federal government welcomed Syrian refugees with open arms in December 2015, the currents from other countries have chilled the international response to newcomers. These have been surprising times for all of us: Brexit and the election of Donald Trump were both unexpected by many pundits, and the implications of both of these events have been serious for many refugees and immigrants. The discourse in several European countries has become somewhat xenophobic, but Canada has stayed the course of acceptance and humanitarian openness.

ATESL, an organization in which members come into close contact with newcomers, is in a position to help other Canadians understand how important it is to assist our fellow human beings. Let us consider our mission statement:

As the professional organization of Teachers of English as a Second Language in Alberta, ATESL's mission is to promote the highest standards of teaching and provision of English language programs for learners in Alberta whose first language is other than English. We do this by:

- encouraging and providing professional development opportunities which are consistent with generally accepted principles of adult learning and with currently understood principles of second language learning and teaching
- encouraging and supporting the participation of learners in the decision-making processes which determine their educational choices
- communicating with English language program providers and learners to encourage awareness of issues of accountability and program standards
- communicating with government, business, and the general public to create awareness about immigration, settlement of immigrants and English language learning
- liaising with other organizations, local, provincial, national and international, which are engaged in education
- working collaboratively with government to develop policies and procedures which govern the provision of English language programs and related services for immigrants to Canada.

We, as ATESL members, have a responsibility to help other members of our communities – our neighbours, friends, and families – to see that newcomers to Canada are looking to rebuild their lives. They come here, as our ancestors did, to build a new life – a life of freedom and, most importantly, peace. It is our job to assist newcomers integrate by helping them learn English, but also

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by helping them learn about their new communities. We know newcomers better than anyone else and we are here to support them. The Board encourages you to speak out. ATESL supports newcomers and supports their integration into our wonderful society, enriched by diversity at every turn.



Alberta Teachers of English
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President's Report

This was not the president's message I wanted to write. I had planned to write about our activities and the exciting things coming up but recent events take me down a different path. The horrific attack on a mosque in Quebec City stunned and horrified me. How did this happen? Tragedy, lives lost so senselessly. A community and a nation betrayed by this horrific event. Sadly, this is not the first tragedy on Canadian soil but let's work to make it our last.

I write this message not only to express my sadness and my outrage, but also to express my hope that we find a way to build a better and stronger tomorrow. As a citizen of a country full of immigrants, as a professional in the field of Immigrant education, as president of an organization whose members play a huge role in the education and settlement of newcomers and as a newcomer myself and wife and mother to more newcomers, I see this and many of the events unfolding around us these days as a call to action. This is the opportunity to evaluate our roles as part of a communities, as TESL professionals, as ATESL members and most importantly as compassionate people, to support our communities and stand up for our nations' values. The world around us is undergoing many changes- how will we respond?

I see many tomorrows that are stronger and brighter as we rebuild. We cannot undo the things that have happened, undo the pain many will live with forever, but we can work to do our parts to ensure that it does not happen again and that there is change on the horizon. I see more people reaching out, being more active, I see momentum building, and thus I see hope.

Respectfully,
Lisa Rochman

ATESL 2017 Conference

The annual ATESL Conference will take place October 20th to 21st at the Westin Hotel located in beautiful downtown Calgary. In addition to their regular ATESL board duties, Wendy Chambers (Past President) and Chris Wharton (President Elect) are enthusiastically co-chairing the conference. The call for presentations will be sent out via e-mail to the membership in the weeks ahead, so be sure to check out atesl.ca for conference updates. Thank you to all ATESL members who submitted fantastic conference theme ideas!

If you would like to volunteer to help organize the ATESL 2017 conference, please contact Wendy and Chris at conference2017@atesl.ca

Edmonton Local

Past Meeting: The Edmonton Local meeting on January 27, 2017 was a big success! Fiza Abedin, Alison Vickerman, and Hilda Hildebrandt from ASSIST Community Services Centre presented on *Practical PBLA: A guide to PBLA in the LINC classroom* and we had over 50 attendees. We are extremely thankful to the presenters for sharing such a valuable resource!

Hospitality: Unfortunately, Irene Wilson had to step down for personal reasons. Irene was a diligent individual who did a spectacular job while she was with us. We would like to thank her for all her hard work these past few months. We are also pleased to announce that Rosalia Dela Cruz has joined the Edmonton local team as our new hospitality member! Rosalie has been working with us since January and has been a great addition to the team!

ESL Directors' Forum: Our annual ESL Directors' Forum took place on Friday, February 24th from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at MacEwan University's Alberta College Campus. The goal of this event was for all ESL practitioners to be aware of what is available for English language learners in the city of Edmonton and also to learn about upcoming developments. Nine directors agreed to participate in the forum.



Alberta Teachers of English
as a Second Language

Provincial Executive

2016 – 2017

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Theresa Wall,

Stacy Norrbom

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Irene Wood

Business Manager

Edmonton Local (cont'd.)



ICC Workshop: The third and final workshop in Edmonton took place on February 25, 2017 from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at NorQuest College. Attendees received a useful resource that contains lesson plans on intercultural communicative competence.

2017 Mini Conference: Currently, the Edmonton Co-Chairs are planning a technology-themed mini conference to be held later in the year. We are considering speakers and creating a proposal at the moment. It is going to be fantastic!

Central Alberta Report

The Central Chapter cancelled its January PD session but looked forward to a joint session with our local library's tutor program on February 23. The session, titled Discover Syria, gave us all some background on the large group of people who have come to make Red Deer and area their new home. Syrians have become major clients of several ESL programs.

Calgary Local Report

The Calgary local chapter hosted the second ICC workshop on January 14th, 2017 at SAIT. The workshop was facilitated by Veena Zarour-Murthy (Bow Valley College). A total of 35 individuals had registered, and 26 attended.

The workshop was well received by the participants, and many members thanked ATESL for providing them with such an opportunity. Veena did a wonderful job of making participants familiar with the ICC resource. The same workshop will be offered for the last time - on March 18th at Mount Royal University. As was the case previously, there will not be a cap on the number of participants at the final workshop.

The Calgary local chapter has also been busy planning sessions for the upcoming year. The schedule of local events for the next few months is as follows:

- February 23rd, 2017: Panel discussion, "Teaching Literacy Learners". Location: CIWA

- March 18th, 2017: ICC workshop. Location: MRU

-April, 2017: Three presentations will take place, including: "Mentorship opportunities for Learners" presented by Tyler Elliott and Shelley McConnell; "Creating Pathways for Learners" by Nilay Thomas; and "Increasing Student Motivation" by Jyoti Grewal and Chris Wharton. Location: Centre for Newcomers

-June, 2017: Round Robin creative ideas session. Location: TBA

Our goal this year is to hold each session at a different institution in Calgary. We hope to increase community involvement, recognition and a boost in our membership.

Respectfully submitted by: Jyoti Grewal and Nadia Khan



TESL Canada Report

TESL Canada Honorary Life Member Award

Nominees must have provided outstanding service over a period of not less than 20 years. Recipients will receive a life membership in TESL Canada at an installation ceremony to be held at our national conference. All nominees must be put forward by a provincial or territorial member organization of TESL Canada or a Direct Individual Member in good standing from British Columbia, Ontario, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island and Quebec. No more than one nominee per province or territory will be considered at one time.

Deadline for nominations is April 13, 2017.

Terms of Reference – TESL Canada Executive Committees

TESL Canada Executive Committees are working toward revising their Terms of Reference for 2016-2017. Motions were brought forward at the January 31st TESL Canada Executive Meeting to approve the 2016-2017 terms of reference for the Finance Committee and for the Governance and Policy Committee.

Memorandum of Agreement – TESL Canada Provincial Representatives Committee

The MoA between TESL Canada and the provinces has been revised. ATESL will have the opportunity to review the finalized document after it is finalized by the TESL Canada Executive.

2017 Budget Review

The 2017 Budget was approved by the TESL Canada Executive in December, 2016. Because there is a shortfall projected, the budget is to be revisited by the Finance Committee in July 2017. The Finance Committee can then provide an updated, detailed report on the financial status of TESL Canada.

TESL Canada Conference 2017 June 8-10, 2017 in Niagara Falls

Early bird registration closes April 30, 2017.

For more information about the conference, visit <http://www.teslcanadaconference.ca/>.

TESL Canada Upcoming Executive Meeting Dates

Feb. 22, 2017; March 30, 2017

Respectfully submitted by Kim Dudas
ATESL Representative to TESL Canada

Rural Routes Report

89 individuals have recognized the value in using SATIE, the online professional self-evaluation tool offered by Rural Routes to help practitioners determine what training would suit them best. To find out more information, contact Barb Hudkins at ruralroutes@norquest.ca.

Help the learners in your community meet their educational needs by helping them to learn how to learn online. Rural Routes now offers Prep for Online Learning for CALPs and other non-profit rural ESL providers. The complete course is available for downloading, or eligible coordinators and instructors can request access through the Moodle site hosted by Rural Routes.

Non-profit ESL providers, such as CALPs, can utilize this resource in a variety of ways. For example, the program can be offered completely on-line or face-to-face sessions can be offered in conjunction with the course. For more information, contact your Rural Routes Advisor:

Region 1 – North: Janis Goad, Janis.Goad@NorQuest.ca or 780.644.6001

Region 2 – East-West: Jeanne Spearman, Jeanne.Spearman@NorQuest.ca or 780.644.6207

Region 3 – Central: Jacky Rivas, Jacky.Rivas@norquest.ca or 780.644.6428

Region 4 – South: Alana Johnson, Alana.Johnson@NorQuest.ca or 780-644.6301

If you don't know who your Rural Routes advisor is, contact Barb Hudkins at ruralroutes@norquest.ca

NOTE: If you are interested in this program but are not connected to a CALP or other non-profit rural ESL provider, contact prepforonlinelearning@norquest.ca.

Submitted by Martha Urquhart



Newsletter Information

The ATESL Newsletter is published quarterly.

Deadlines: February 15, May 15, August 15, November 15

Announcements, workshop dates, book reviews, teaching ideas, and articles relevant to the field.

Contact: Irene Wood at services@atesl.ca

More information and archives at www.atesl.ca/newslettersArchive

Professional Development Bursaries

Apply for an ATESL Professional Development Bursary

Deadline: **March 15, 2017**

<http://www.atesl.ca/bursary>

The Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL)

is a professional organization which promotes the highest standards of teaching and English language program provision for all learners in Alberta whose first language is other than English.



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Focus on Research

by Marian Rossiter & Marilyn Abbott

We are pleased to introduce this issue's Focus on Research column, which presents insights from Dr. Lucie Moussu from a writing centre study conducted at the University of Alberta – and its implications for learners and instructors in ESL programs.

Long-term effects of writing center tutoring sessions on student revisions

The background

In Canada and the United States, writing centres (WCs) are dynamic places that are strongly shaped by their individual contexts. WCs exist in universities and colleges (and sometimes even high schools), housed in departments, faculties, student services, learning centres, or academic skills units. Some WCs serve only students, others serve faculty and staff as well, and still others are open to members of the community at large. I will refer to all these different users as “clients.”

WC clients usually receive 30 minutes or 1 hour one-on-one appointments with a (graduate, undergraduate, or professional) tutor who will help them improve their drafts and teach them writing strategies at any stage of the writing process. Most clients bring drafts of essays they will turn in to their instructors for a grade. However, tutors also help with letters of application to graduate programs, lab reports, grant proposals, theses and dissertations, resumes and CVs, creative writing, and other writing genres.

Despite their many differences, certain shared principles govern WC work. First, WCs are places where all clients are welcome to receive free advice in a safe and pressure-free environment that favors a collaborative approach to instruction. Second, the main philosophy underlying tutor training and how tutoring sessions are conducted has been, as North (1984) explains, “to produce better writers, not better writing” (p. 38). Third, composition theorists see writing as a process and thus suggest that clients should focus on content and be less concerned with form. As a result, most WC scholars favor the stance that grammatical accuracy should not be prioritized during tutoring sessions, and tutors often try to engage clients until they are able to make educated choices about their texts. These WC principles allow clients to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and to see writing as a broader skill that they can continue to improve.

Regrettably, these tutoring principles have unintended consequences: ESL/multilingual/non-native English-speaking (ESL) students who go to WCs in hope of finding help with a difficult language and who specifically need feedback on what WC culture tends to regard as lower-order concerns often feel structurally excluded.

The study

The University of Alberta (UofA) has approximately 40,000 graduate and undergraduate students in 17 faculties. Between 10% and 30% of these students are ESL students (depending on the Faculty). The Centre for Writers (C4W) provides free one-on-one tutoring sessions, as well as workshops, writing groups, and class presentations on a number of different writing-related topics, and serves approximately 7,000 students/ faculty/ staff/ alumni per year. In 2015-2016, 64% of the C4W clients self-identified as ESL.

At the end of their tutoring appointments, C4W clients fill out a form asking them if they found their tutoring session useful or not, but most clients don't spend much time providing useful feedback. Also, we don't know if students revise their papers according to their tutors' suggestions. And finally, we don't know the actual grade students receive on their papers. As a consequence, we can't really assess the efficacy of our services.

WCs have a difficult time assessing the effectiveness of their services, and advanced statistical data about tutoring sessions effectiveness are complicated to gather because of the very nature of writing centres. Often, WC administrators gather descriptive statistics that they share in annual reports about the number of students who used their services, the number of tutoring hours that were offered, etc. While these numbers provide information about the perceived usefulness of WCs, they do not provide any information about the actual short- and long-term quality of the support offered in WCs. We therefore wanted to investigate how we actually affect students' writing skills.

Research questions and methods

The purpose of this study, begun in 2013, was thus to try answering the following questions:



- 1) What did participants think about the usefulness of the C4W and tutoring sessions before they submitted their papers and then in light of the grades they received on their papers?
- 2) Did tutor suggestions make an impact on participants' revisions, and what other kinds of help did participants use to revise their papers?
- 3) Were the participants' revised/submitted drafts "better" than the initial drafts they had brought to the C4W?
- 4) In which areas had the revised/submitted draft "improve" (or not)?
- 5) Did instructors' grades and comments match the areas discussed during tutoring sessions?
- 6) Did the participants' first language influence their revision process (42% of the participants were ESL students)?

While clients waited for their tutoring appointments, the researcher invited them to participate in the study. The clients who accepted shared their contact information and the date when their final draft was due, and then filled out a short questionnaire asking them about their level of study (grad vs. undergrad), their first language, and their field of study. The researcher copied participants' initial drafts and assignment descriptions, and copies of the tutors' reports of the tutoring sessions were also made and attached to the participants' first drafts.

On the day when the participants' papers were due, the researcher asked them for a copy of their final draft. Participants were then invited to a first 20-30 minute-long interview, during which they were asked for feedback about their tutoring sessions and their revision process.

Once participants had received their graded paper back, they were invited to a second interview. This time, questions were asked about the final grade they received, positive or negative comments the instructors might have made, and how useful the participants found their tutoring appointments in light of these final comments and grades.

With the help of two graduate teaching assistants, a rating rubric was created. Then, two sets of raters rated the participants' initial and revised/submitted drafts, and the 120 interviews were transcribed and coded.

Initial thoughts and findings

Surprisingly, the recruitment of participants was not as difficult as expected. While the initial target was five to ten participants, 63 students agreed to participate and 60 completed the study. The difficult parts of the study were keeping track of these participants, collecting and coding colossal amounts of data, keeping track of the due dates of papers, sending interview reminders, and asking repeatedly if participants had received their graded papers back. It was also extremely time-consuming, especially for the research assistants who rated 120+ papers and the researcher who interviewed 60+ students twice that semester.

While not all data have yet been analyzed (drafts were rated but no statistical analyses were performed on the results, and the interviews are still being coded), some preliminary results—mostly in response to questions 1 and 2—can be presented here. For example, in general, participants appreciated the help they received in the C4W and used their tutors' suggestions to revise their drafts. While the number of issues addressed in revisions depended on how much time students had before their papers were due, native speakers of English were overall successfully able to use all the

feedback and suggestions their tutors offered. ESL participants, on the other hand, focused on format and grammar issues first and tended to believe that “good writing” meant “good grammar” only; many had a difficult time thinking of their papers in terms of global issues such as organization, development of ideas, etc. Both native and non-native English speakers said they would come back to the C4W in the future and try to improve time management so they could more effectively take advantage of their tutors’ suggestions.

An unexpected but welcome finding was that the participants’ positive view of the C4W did not change over time, even if they did not receive a good grade on their papers. Participants were often very aware of their strengths and weaknesses and readily admitted they had sometimes procrastinated, not successfully managed their time, and not always used all the resources available to them (office hours, teaching assistants, etc.). Funnily enough, the native English-speaking participants’ favourite support system, after the C4W and their instructors, were their mothers. International/ESL students were often less aware of and more uncomfortable using other resources available to them.

A less positive finding was that a number of professors, instructors, and teaching assistants did not take the time or know how to write practical comments that could be used by their students to do better on their next papers. Some comments were unkind (e.g., “make sure to fix your grammar before you turn in assignments in this course”), many were confusing (especially when instructors were trying to “fix” sentence structure), and several were so vague that they really meant nothing (e.g., “awk,” or “this is unclear”). A few comments were even wrong, especially when teachers were commenting about grammar in ESL students’ papers (e.g., calling pronouns “prepositions”). It was sad to see some bad grades on participants’ papers (although some of them were expecting low grades), but it was particularly heart-breaking to witness the struggles of many ESL students as they went through the different writing stages without really understanding their teachers’ expectations, how to ask for help, what resources were available to them, and how to interpret and use their teachers’ feedback.

The most delightful moments of this study were the interviews. It was a real pleasure for the researcher to discuss with students and help them reflect on their writing practices and uncover new ways to improve their writing and learning skills. Although not an initial goal of this study, these interviews turned out to be a wonderful opportunity to engage with the participants and have a glimpse of and positive impact on the way they perceive and understand writing, their learning process, and their student lives.

While much work remains to be done to answer all of the above research questions, this study has uncovered a few important findings: first, ESL students must be reminded that their language-learning process needs to continue even after they have successfully graduated from an EAP program or passed their TOEFL/IELTS exams. Second, ESL students going on to post-secondary institutions need to find and use resources on campus that will help them (teaching assistants, office hours, writing centres, etc.). Third, students must learn how to interpret vague or complicated assignment descriptions and prompts, as well as teacher feedback on their writing. And finally, ESL students must be taught that writing is a time-consuming and recursive process, that content matters as much as (if not more than) form, and that even native speakers sometimes struggle with writing—the difference being that native speakers are not afraid to ask for help.

References and suggested readings

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Dr. Lucie Moussu is an Associate Professor in Writing Studies at the University of Alberta and Director of the Centre for Writers. Her research interests include non-native English-speaking ESL teachers and Second Language Writing.



Perspectives on the Profession

Perspectives on the Profession is a column featuring articles by ATESL past presidents and leading professionals in the English language teaching and learning field. In this issue, Carolyn Dieleman shares her insights and perspectives regarding the role of volunteers teaching English to newcomers to Canada and poses thought-provoking questions for consideration.

Is teaching only for the professionals - or are there roles for volunteers?

by Carolyn Dieleman

The great influx of Syrian newcomers over the past year has pushed EAL/FAL to the limits in many communities. Many ATESL members have extended themselves in every way in order to offer the best training and support possible. As English language professionals, you have risen to the challenge, especially in larger centres where numbers have demanded extended services.

But what if newcomers go to a community without formal language training for immigrants, notably LINC? What if the newcomers are coming to one of many sponsoring groups in a region where there is at best one settlement agency, or perhaps only a satellite service? This is the current reality for newcomers and sponsoring groups across the country, including on Vancouver Island where I now live. The irony is that I know of at least one former Alberta EAL teacher in each of the larger communities along the entire east coast of this Island.

We obviously have need - 1000s of Syrians and other newcomers are coming to every region across the country, with a significant number going to smaller urban centres or towns and villages. We have expertise - I'm sure every one of you can list at least a few retired EAL teachers who continue to live in your community or who have moved to new locations, often smaller communities. Those retired teachers may not, however, want to engage in formal contractual work, wanting instead to have more control over their new found 'free time'. More often, there is no organization that they can join in order to offer their services.

We also currently have a high level of community engagement in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Individuals have aligned themselves with sponsoring or community groups, and are willing to offer support when families arrive, or are currently offering friendship to those already arrived, most especially Government Assisted Refugees (GARS). A number of these people have offered to help with settlement and language training. This is potentially another source of significant support for language training.

Again, a 'but' - what if these volunteers aren't professionally trained as EAL teachers? What if there isn't an agency or school that they can align with in order to access curriculum and teacher/learner materials? What if they are simply 'volunteers' willing to help in whatever way they best can without having the benefit of a formal settlement and language-related organization? After fighting for so many years to add professionalism to the EAL field, to increase the recognition of the efficacy of language training, is there a risk if we find a highly visible role for these volunteers? Would we be going back to the time when ESL was offered in church basements taught by well-meaning people? That was a reflection I often heard from teachers who have committed to making ATESL and other provincial bodies strong across Canada, 'let's not go

back to the time when language training took place in church basements.’ The irony is that a number of our current sponsoring bodies are church-related, and are seeking services and ways in which they can help once families arrive and beginning their settlement process. If there is no settlement agency or there are insufficient services to handle the demand, where do the sponsoring bodies and the newcomers go? How can we put this old paradigm of the well-meaning, unskilled volunteer to rest and examine with new eyes what volunteers have to offer?

True, in Alberta there are a number of resources that are accessible for learning outside a classroom. LINC Home Study, created by the Centre for Education and Training in Ontario, is probably the longest running such program. NorQuest College has LINC On-Line, which is now accessible across the country and can be a shared activity between newcomers and volunteers. NorQuest also provides instructor resources and curriculum through Rural Routes that targets community systems such as Community Adult Learning Centres. Bow Valley College has some of the finest ESL Literacy materials for trained teachers in the country offered through the ESL Literacy Network. The challenge continues, however: to be many faceted, in terms of knowing what exists, how to access the materials, and who can use which resources most effectively, especially as volunteers and staff turn over.

Sponsoring bodies are focused on getting families to Canada, and hope that services will somehow be available and accessible. Getting out in front of this assumption, by providing information, links and reassurance that there is some language support that they can depend on when families arrive would be a productive first step. If that opportunity is missed, as has been the case in a number of areas across the country during this past year, the capacity to link sponsoring groups with existing services, whether they be formal or informal, is obviously still needed. There is, however, no obvious system that supports this. How can we most effectively make those links? Bombarding people with multiple resources, most of which are meant for trained teachers, or telling them to go look on Tutela, will just overwhelm them.

The notion of mentorship has appeal and potential when we remember the number of retired EAL teachers that might be available, and the volunteer services that many of your organizations have developed. This might be a variation of what Rural Routes offers but using more structured LINC-related resources which are Canadian Language Benchmark referenced. There are many people willing to use appropriate curriculum and existing materials, to use resources that are appropriate to both the families they will support and their own capacities. They need to be informed about the more reliable and appropriate resources, guided in how to use them, and reassured that what they are doing has merit.

But, will the EAL sector allow this? Will you be willing to figure out how to connect formal services with volunteers who don't have a language and/or settlement service agency to provide formal services? Will you be willing to help create an effective system for volunteers to be a part of EAL services in Alberta and beyond? Will you be willing to find a way in which EAL is available in every community, whether by paid structured language services or volunteers? Can we find methods in which we marry the knowledge and expertise of the EAL system with the community sponsoring body who wants only to concentrate on the family they are supporting? Are you willing to develop a system that will see unpaid volunteers offer language support under your guidance and expertise, within a system that you help to create?

There is a family arriving in some small community in Canada this week, and next week, and the week after. Is the sector secure enough and confident in its capacities so that we can begin a discussion about how we can systematically offer the very best chance for new arrivals to learn English or French and settle in Canada, no matter where they live? I can't think of a better, more equipped part of the EAL/FSL sector to tackle this than members of ATESL.

***Carolyn Dieleman** is currently active with the Cedar Area Refugee Effort (CARE) sponsoring body in the Nanaimo, BC area. She continues as a board member of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, as well as the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society. For a number of years, Carolyn worked for the Government of Alberta, working with providers to develop innovative language development programming and resources. In her spare time, she teaches card making and is learning about how to garden in a new climate.*

