

## **ABE Updates from Metro Vancouver Area**

### **Congratulations to Coquitlam Continuing Education: Registration is up, and programs are expanding:**

In addition to classes located at school sites, School District #43 (Coquitlam) Continuing Education has been working with the three municipal libraries to bring Foundations classes to the community. The School District provides the teacher and the registration services for the students, and the libraries provide twice weekly daytime classroom space.

The program started in September 2008 with a class at Terry Fox Library in Port Coquitlam. They then opened a class at Port Moody Public Library in January 2009. This September 2009, in a newly renovated Coquitlam Library classroom, they opened their third Foundations class in the community.

The partnership with the libraries has been outstanding and community response has been very positive. These classes are full with waiting lists. Students really like the venues and they learn to use the library. In addition, Coquitlam Library has provided tutor training for volunteers and we have successfully placed the volunteers with students needing more assistance.

### **Vancouver Community College is Working Hard throughout the Community:**

The Basic Education Department is the Adult Literacy Fundamental Level (from beginning skills up to Grade 9) program at Vancouver Community College. They offer both group-based and self-paced continuous intake math and English classes at its two main campuses, and also have well-established adult learning centres at First United Mission in the Downtown Eastside and at Vancouver Public Library's Downtown Branch. In addition, they are in our second year working with their community partner, the Salvation Army, in offering a self-paced English and Math class at Harbour Light which is a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in the Downtown Eastside. Here are a few activities they have been involved in this year:

- They are working on the community literacy planning task groups for Mount Pleasant and Marpole neighbourhoods as well as being involved in the Vancouver Neighbourhood Literacy Support Committee.
- They continued their participation in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) Roundtable, a gathering of people from groups that offer literacy related instruction or support in the inner city.

- Rene Merkel and Laurie Gould attended the Pan African Reading For All conference in Tanzania from August 10-14, 2009. They showcased VCC and other Canadian literacy materials at a display table.
- They have been active in organizing and will participate in “Worlds of Wisdom,” a neighbourhood literacy fair which took place in East Vancouver on October 24. This event included hourly performances and presentations in a central meeting area as well as information tables set up by over a dozen service providers.
- Laurie Gould, a long-time member of the Department, was awarded the Council of the Federation award for her outstanding achievements, innovative practice and excellence in literacy. Gould's passion for literacy and commitment to her students for 35 years, along with her extensive contributions through advocacy, creative teaching and assessment practices were the reasons she was chosen as the B.C. recipient for this year's award

### **NVIT & Aboriginal Adult Literacy**

#### **Picture of Marla**



It has been a busy time at The Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, as **Marla M. Pryce** has been diligently putting together (with her dedicated team) the “Indigenization Strategy for Aboriginal Adult Literacy”. This initiative was funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education to administer the coordination of an Aboriginal literacy initiative and the indigenization framework development.

On their new webpage (<http://nvit.ca/indigenizationstrategy1.htm>) they present all of the findings and materials developed from this initiative. They hope this will assist literacy practitioners in providing the resources and tools necessary to help increase the success of Aboriginal learners in BC.

Marla says that the involvement of literacy practitioners and resource people was crucial for this initiative, and NVIT would like to respectfully acknowledge and thank anyone who had any input, suggestions, thoughts, ideas and participation.

Here is a breakdown of what you'll find on this Website:

- Indigenization Strategy Literature Review
- Indigenizing Framework for Aboriginal Literacy
- Practitioner's Aboriginal Literacy Resource
- Elders of BC Mapping Project (Personal Literacy Stories)
- Fundamental English Curriculum (Indigenized English 010, 020, 030)
- Primary Research Report

Other NVIT ABE News:

1. They are continuing their classes in the women's correctional facility (Aluette), and are planning to expand the offerings to include Workplace Essential Skills, in the near future.
2. They are also offering a basic math & basic English course at The Friendship Centre on Hastings Street starting in November.

### **An interview with Lara Condello – instructor of Adult Education in the Correctional System of BC.**

How did it come about that you started teaching in the corrections setting?

Two former colleagues and I shared a passion for prison advocacy and social justice, so in May 2007 we "went to the gates" of a local provincial women's prison and started to build a relationship with the residents and staff regarding their programming needs. We started to hold frequent circles and workshops in the prison about Aboriginal peoples in Canada and invited the women to speak about their learning and motivational needs.

What sorts of things are the students interested in learning?

Women are interested in learning about Aboriginal peoples in Canada and learning more about who they are and where they come from. One requirement of the course is to create a final project on "your passion". Most interestingly, over the last 2 years I have seen a distinct pattern in these projects that include two project themes: culture/spirituality and health/well-being.

Who is the typical learner? Where are they "coming from"?

We welcome women of Aboriginal and non-aboriginal heritage to the class, yet we privilege Aboriginal worldviews, beliefs and cultures. The majority of learners have not graduated from high school and this class tends to be the first time the women are stepping back into a formal classroom. Women face multi barriers and challenges: substance use, homelessness, poverty, intergenerational effects of residential school. For some women, this is the first time that they are learning about their indigenous heritage. All

the women are role models, very resilient and eager to learn to make a better future for themselves, families and communities.

Could you describe a "typical" class?

Over a 10 week period, we build a strong collaborative and experiential learning community. Our class typically starts in circle, where each woman is responsible to share her selected topic for the week (news, sports, horoscope, gratitude, affirmation). Each woman can also pull an "angel word" - cards with inspirational words - and share what that word means to them. Our class meets twice a week and we engage in a variety of activities to address a diversity of learning styles. This can include videos, guest speakers, art, group discussions, individual work, presentations, and journaling. We have also added 7 computers to the classroom this semester to allow the women to improve their computer and technological skills.

Any funny/interesting story that you would like to share?

At the beginning of the semester, the women were asked to create an art collage on their binders that reflects their philosophy of life. I had a box of magazines and other art supplies - the women were very excited to complete this small project. As the women were working, I walked back into the classroom to find the women rubbing magazine pages all over their arms and faces. I was confused. Then I smiled to find that these pages were actually perfume ads. They loved the smells and this reminded me of the small pleasures in life that we need to be grateful for everyday.

### **Picture of Lara**

