



NLSKA NEWS

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Learning Compassion, Living Solidarity Nurturing the roots of a peaceful world

On February 27, 2001, the faculty of education at the University of Alberta, Educational Policy Studies, officially honored faculty member Toh Swee-Hin, winner of the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education 2000. The following is a synopsis of Toh's address that evening.

Toh Swee-Hin began his address by noting that the year 2000 was the United Nations' International Year of a Culture of Peace, and the year 2001 begins the UN's International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

Toh then said, "These declarations signal a historic appeal for all nations and peoples to transcend violence and the destructive and painful conflicts of the past centuries. We need education at all levels and sectors of society to cultivate peaceful values, attitudes and worldviews within individuals, families, communities, institutions and conflicting parties. Peace education begins by educating ourselves on the root causes of all forms of conflicts and violence. Based on this understanding, we are empowered to act for transformation, to change our realities from a culture of violence to a culture of peace."

He identified six interrelated problems underpinning violence and conflicts, namely, "militarization, structural or socioeconomic

violence, human rights violations, lack of cultural solidarity, environmental destruction and loss of personal peace."

Pace education begins by educating ourselves on the root causes of all forms of conflicts and violence.

—Toh Swee-Hin, February 27, 2001

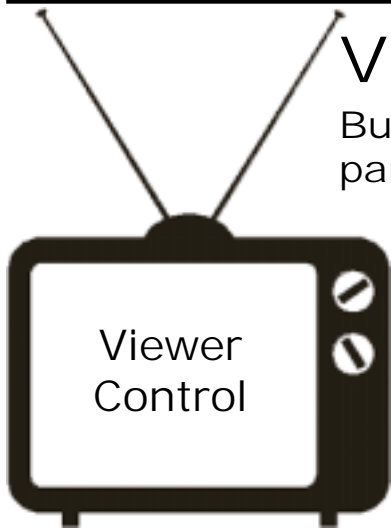
Toh believes that education for peace does not mean simply passing along information about issues—how we educate for peace is also very important. He encourages

learning processes that are based on

- critical thinking,
- understanding alternative perspectives and
- creating participatory learning environments.

Peace education, said Toh, is guided by two powerful values: compassion and solidarity. "Compassion also means a dedicated willingness to build just relationships and systems that uphold human rights for all. Compassion calls on us to deeply respect differences and diversity and care for our mother earth and all its creation as well. The other crucial value in peace education is solidarity. Solidarity means that we care deeply enough for others in suffering that we are

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V-chip website launched

But technology no substitute for parental involvement

A new website has been set up to provide Canadian families with practical information on the Canadian television

program ratings systems, V-chip (viewer control) technology and media literacy tools.

The Action Group on Violence On Television (AGVOT) launched <www.vchipcanada.ca> in March at the same time as Canadian broadcasters began to encode their television programming with Canadian program ratings.

A Canadian invention, the V-chip allows parents to block television programming they don't want their children to see. It works in conjunction with classification systems that rate television programs on the basis of violence, coarse language, nudity and sexual content.

"The Canadian broadcasting and cable industries are leading the way together in equipping Canadians to determine what programming is right for their families," says Canadian Association of Broadcasters president and chief executive officer Michael McCabe.

"The website is a clearinghouse of information on V-chip technology and the Canadian program ratings systems in order to help parents and caregivers to determine the programming their children watch."

Adds Janet Yale, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Cable Television Association, "We want to help ensure that children enjoy a safe and enriching television experience by providing families with practical tools and by encouraging parents to become involved in their children's television viewing."

That involvement is key. As Jan D'Arcy, co-director of the Media Awareness Network, points out, the V-chip is a parental tool, not a parental substitute.

"No technological tool can replace the fundamental skills we give our children through education and awareness," she says. "It is still very important for parents to be actively involved in their children's media consumption."

AGVOT, a coalition of broadcasters, cable companies, program producers and advertisers, was formed in 1993 following a conference on television violence and its effects on children. The coalition developed program classification systems and conducted the world's most extensive field trial of V-chip technology.

SACS resources on the move



The resources of the ATA's Safe and Caring Schools (SACS) Project are being transferred to the Learning Resources Centre (LRC).

To order SACS resources on or after May 1, 2001, please contact the LRC at 12360 142 Street NW, Edmonton AB, T5L 4X9, tel: (780) 427-2767, fax: (780) 422-9750, email: <lrccustserv@gov.ab.ca>, website: <www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca>.

The victim

By Ashley Gillies

A child stands alone.
No friends at school to call his own.
He feels so bad.
He's never felt so sad.
Why is he all alone?

Though he tries real hard to be included.
He always seems to be excluded.
They always stare.
Maybe it's what he wears.
Why is he not included?

They taunt him and they tease him.
In the classroom and in the gym.
His eyes are too revealing.
To hide the hurt he's feeling.
Why do they taunt and tease him?

They seem to think that they're the best.
He's not treated like the rest.
His eyes, so sad, no burning flame.
It's not his fault, he feels such shame.
Why do they think they're the best?

Alone he cries, he plays and walks.
Always longing for a friend, to share long talks.
He's not real slow, he's not real smart.
He bleeds real blood, and has a heart.
Why must he cry, play and walk alone?

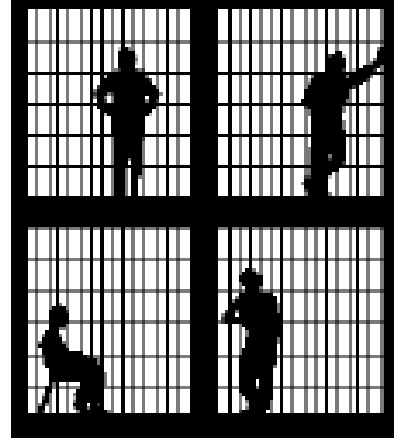
Think hard, think long.
How would it feel to not belong?

Ashley Gillies is a student at Chief Justice Milvain School in Calgary. Her poem "The Victim" was the winning entry in the Turn Off the Violence—Action Committee Against Violence's 2001 Creative Writing Contest.

Formulas for crime

A formula for crime—Part 1

"If you were interested in creating a criminal, you would have a pretty good chance if ... you took a young person from a seriously troubled home, put them into a series of foster and group homes, changed their primary worker on a regular basis, let them run away from 'home' at an early age, and enabled them to develop a drug and/or alcohol addiction. Your chances would improve if somewhere in their lonely and painful existence, they had been sexually, physically, or emotionally abused."



A formula for crime—Part 2

"If in those few instances that they sought help ... you would ensure that there were no accessible services, that the workers they encountered were rushed and overwhelmed by heavy caseloads, and that they would be seen first and foremost as trouble rather than troubled, is it surprising then that these young people would become perpetrators or victims of crime?"

Source: National Crime Prevention Centre, Community Mobilization Program Information Workshops, Edmonton, June 15–24, 1999.

Notices and Events

- The International Youth Co-ordination Council will hold the **International Youth Conference** November 4–6, 2001, at Tigertops, Meghault, Chitwan, Nepal. The theme of the conference is Youth, Leadership and Development—Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century. For more information, please visit the conference website at <www.iycnepal.org>.

- **The NetSmartz Workshop**
www.netsmartz.org

The NetSmartz Workshop uses interactive characters and tools to help kids and teens learn about dangers on the Internet and how to avoid them. A separate section provides parents and educators with valuable information on Internet safety.

Learning Compassion

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willing to dedicate our energies and resources to their struggles for peace, justice and sustainability.”

Toh believes that education is a gradual process of sowing seeds. Adults need to be included as well as the younger generation because the decisions and actions of the adults shape the world youth will inherit.

In closing Toh said that weaving a personal and global culture of peace takes even more than touching hearts and spirits: “We need to promote learning for compassion and uphold living in solidarity, so that we can nurture the roots of peaceful persons and a peaceful world.”

For the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World, the ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools Project requests your assistance for the Peace Edition of *Niska News*.

Niska News: Peace Edition

The ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools Project would like to dedicate an issue of *Niska News* to the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World.

We are requesting that teachers and members of the community submit

- ideas that exemplify ways to build peaceful classrooms, schools and communities;
- work created by children and youth in Alberta that reflects nonviolence, peace, compassion or caring (poetry, short stories, journal entries or graphic art work); and/or
- notification of special events that celebrate and promote peace this year.

Please send your submissions to Barb Maheu, Program Manager, the ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools Project, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1 on or before June 15, 2001.

If possible, send written submissions by e-mail to bmaheu@teachers.ab.ca. For more information, phone (780) 447-9484 or 1-800-232-7208, or fax (780) 455-6481.

Please note: *If we have an overwhelming response, we will only be able to print a limited number of submissions. Thank you.*

Attention TSCC facilitators

- Toward a Safe and Caring Community, Workshop 4: Managing Anger and Dealing with Bullying, is being revised. The two topics will be delivered in separate workshops:

Workshop 4A—Managing Anger

Workshop 4B—Dealing with Bullying.

- The addition of new materials and videos has necessitated this change. Continue to conduct Workshop 4 as it currently exists until you are notified.
- A new video is available to accompany Workshop 5, Working It Out Together. A script of the video and questions for discussion can be ordered to supplement this workshop. This new material will be available June 1, 2001.
- Watch for new order forms that include the videos for workshops 4B and 5.



Niska News is a newsletter produced by the ATA’s Safe and Caring Schools (SACS) Project for school and community members. The goal of the SACS Project is to encourage practices that model and reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviors so that learning and teaching can take place in a safe and caring environment. Achieving this goal requires the involvement of not just parents and teachers but also all the important adults in a young person’s life. This newsletter is designed to provide timely, up-to-date information about the project. For more information, contact the SACS office by phoning 447-9487 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (from elsewhere in Alberta). Copying and distributing Niska News is permitted as long as the source is credited. The newsletter is available online through the SACS Project website at <www.teachers.ab.ca/safe/index.html>.