

## An Academic and Romantic Success Story

Tim Bemister

Christina Christie and Aaron Olson are an alternate ed success story, both academically and romantically. Christina graduated from the Outreach Program at Maple Ridge Secondary School in 2005 and is now at Emily Carr taking general fine arts. Aaron, who graduated from Outreach in 2006, is studying sheet-metal work at BCIT.

Aaron and Christina met in the summer of 2003. Aaron, 16 at the time had been out of school for a year and a half, while Christina was in summer school in grade

9 courses so she could enroll in grade 10 courses in the fall. They met at a party and were immediately attracted to each other, and three weeks later they were in love. Christine entered grade 10 in the fall but quit after six weeks.

They spent all their time trying to be together, which meant Christina began skipping classes. Aaron began hanging

around Christina's school way too much, and unfortunately, was eventually charged with trespassing, because if Christina did make it to class Aaron wouldn't be far behind.

Things came to a head by mid October at Garibaldi so Christina quit and after a month and a half of rootlessness Christina's mom pushed the couple to get back to school. Aaron had already been in Outreach briefly in the past, and after telling Christina's mom about Outreach, the three of

*...continued on page 3*

### Inside:

President's Message	2
Missing Sarah	4
2008 Conference	5
Story of a Victim	6
Classroom Magic	8
Association Goals	9
Financial Statement	10
2008 Budget	11



## From the Editor's Desk:

*If you are reading this column, I can only surmise you are one of the many who enjoy the BCAEA Newsletter so much, you'll even read the Editor's Message.*

*Have I got a deal for you. The prestigious position of BCAEA Newsletter Editor is up for grabs.*

*After having served on the BCAEA executive as Regional Rep Coordinator, Vice President, President and now Newsletter Editor, it is time to step aside and invite new energy to the position of Newsletter Editor.*

*It has been my pleasure to bring you many interesting articles on a variety of relevant topics as well as features on successful students and programs, but the real enjoyment continues to be "simply serving on the executive." The BCAEA Executive is a dedicated collection of Alternate Education professionals that mix a generous proportion of fun with the performance of their assigned duties. Ask any executive member (the ones in the red vests at the conference) about their experiences with the Association and the answer will be the same. "Very rewarding and MOST enjoyable."*

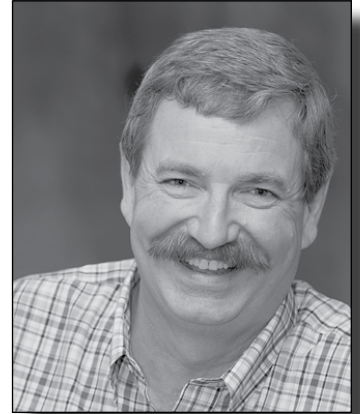
*So here it is: A chance to express your commitment to Alternate Education in a creative fashion while you reap the benefits of executive service.*

*I look forward to seeing you at the Conference in January.*



# President's Message

Mike Shaw



If ever alternate education students needed strong advocacy, now is that time. The changes announced by the Ministry of Education to the funding formula in mid-October will have an enormous impact on teachers, programs, and especially students. Consider this your call to arms!

In my seventeen years' experience in alternate education, our programs have always been the "poor cousins" of the education system. Yet as alternate teachers we work in these programs because we believe in our kids, believe they are worth fighting for, and don't give up on them when others already have.

Our kids don't fit the regular mould. If they could be successful in a regular program, taking eight courses a year they probably would still be there. But they can't. They have to support themselves at a young age, have to deal with social and emotional problems that bring tears to your eyes when you hear their stories, have ongoing struggles with the demons of drugs and alcohol abuse. And yet they come to school as best they are able! They know they have to graduate to have any kind of future.

As alternate teachers, we are all too familiar with the daily process of trying to reach kids other schools have given up on. We try this,

we try that, we accommodate, we bend the rules, doing what we can to make a connection and move them further along the path to graduation. Our classes are smaller and our courses are often self-paced, tailored to each individual student's needs.

Under the new funding formula, no accommodation is made for our kinds of kids. If they cannot take eight courses per year, they will not be fully funded. Without full funding, Districts will be hard pressed to staff programs at their current levels. Without changes to the formula, programs will close.

So now is the time to advocate for our kids. Send your comments to two people. Anita Chapman is our PSA liaison at the BCTE, and a strong supporter of what we do. Her e-mail address is [achapman@bctf.ca](mailto:achapman@bctf.ca) Shirley Bond is the Minister of Education. Write her and tell her how the funding changes are prejudicial to the goals of alternate education, and the education of your students.

Honourable Shirley Bond  
Minister of Education  
PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria BC V8W 9E2

Our kids need us to champion their cause. We've not let them down before. Lets not now! ♦

## Success Story

(continued from page 1)

them decided it would be a great way to get back on the right track.

Outreach worked for both Christina and Aaron for a number of reasons. For Christina, the school was a welcome respite from the pressures associated with trying to fit in at Garibaldi. Outreach's population of 70 students was much easier to deal with than Garibaldi's 1500. The afternoon schedule (12:30 to 6:30) helped Christina get a proper night's sleep and be awake for her first class. Christina was also able to deal with the anxiety attacks that were making regular school unnecessarily difficult to face.

For Aaron, Outreach worked because he was given the space and time to complete his course-

work and lots of attention from his teachers, whom he found caring and helpful and more like friends. All through his Outreach days Aaron held a steady job, and a flexible school timetable made it all work.

They both found many kindred spirits in Outreach, and all the kids with similar backgrounds and stories made them feel like they belonged and were part of a larger support group. Christina graduated first, in 2005 and after applying for a number of bursaries received two; one from her elementary school and one from the BC Alternate Education Association.

Christina was accepted at Emily Carr in the fall of 2005. Her portfolio contained work she had completed at Outreach and work she had completed with the support of the Career Centre in the main school. The Arts Umbrella on Granville Island also lent a helping hand. She's now in the third year of general fine arts at Emily Carr, and last spring went to New York with the school to visit art galleries and meet with modern artists. The future for Christina looks bright and she's enjoying her life now more than she ever has.

Aaron graduated in 2006 with the John Hoffman Memorial Scholarship, Rotary Club of Haney Bursary, and a B.C. Alternate Education Award. He enrolled in the sheet-metal trade at BCIT, and is looking forward to getting his red seal ticket as a journeyman sheet metal worker. Aaron now has a future to look forward to and he's poised for success. ♦

“  
All  
the kids  
with similar  
backgrounds  
and stories  
made them  
feel like they  
belonged  
”

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*Tim Bemister works in the Outreach Program in Maple Ridge.*

# Missing Sarah

Maggie de Vries

**M**y book, *Missing Sarah: a Vancouver Woman Remembers Her Vanished Sister*, tells the story of my sister Sarah who was murdered in April 1998, almost ten years ago, and whose DNA was found on Robert Pickton's property in Port Coquitlam in the summer of 2002.

Through interviews, memories, Sarah's journals and poetry, I tell Sarah's story because I think that we as a society don't tend to see women like my sister as people. Instead, we see a set of stereotypes. I thought that if I could help people to see Sarah, perhaps that would help them to see other marginalized women as well, to really see them. And if we start to do that, lives will change and lives will be saved.

I have been astonished by the response from young people. I have done many readings in high schools to large groups of students who sit in dead silence while I speak and whose hands shoot up when I ask if there are questions. I had a moving experience in 100 Mile House where I spoke to about twenty kids who are in an alternative program. I was told that they miss a lot of school and (only after I had spoken) that in the past they had reduced speakers to tears.

I spoke for a solid hour, telling my story and Sarah's, showing a CBC interview that was done with Sarah about being a heroin addict and playing a song that women in the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (where Sarah spent six months in 1991) wrote in memory of the missing women, who of course were their friends and family.

The students were silent when I asked if there were questions and then after a pause, the questions and comments came. I was profoundly moved by the experience. I have had similar experiences at the Youth Detention Centre in Burnaby and at the women's prison in Allouette.

And just recently I traveled to Saskatoon to meet a group of Aboriginal teens who read *Missing Sarah* last year, and were drawn back into the school experience by that book and what the teacher did with it.

Really, I think that it is my sister who speaks to these young people, not me. They recognize parts of themselves in her; they see me speak of her with love and respect and they are freed to consider themselves, perhaps the darkest, scariest parts of themselves, in a different way. And I think that for some the experience leads them to look at their loved ones differently. Many people come away with more understanding of troubled members of their families, others with sympathy for the parents and siblings who try to support them when they are going through troubles themselves.

In my sessions at the conference in January, I would like to share bits of *Missing Sarah* and discuss my experiences with the book and young people and what I have seen done with it as well as ideas from the attendees about how material like *Missing Sarah* can be used to reach children and create a wide range of opportunities in the classroom and beyond. ♦

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*Maggie de Vries will present two sessions at the 2008 conference entitled Words From the Margins: A Literary Café.*

# 2008 Challenge & Change Conference

*Mark Bradshaw*

The 2008 Conference has a lot going for it, including forty sessions on a wide range of topics, and the ever-popular Dr. Gordon Neufeld as Keynote speaker. You'll find something for everyone this year. And, of course, who can forget the Schmooze? Joyce is once again tantalizing us with the menu below!

If you feel your program is a 'Successful' program and you'd like to share your success with others, we'd like to hear from you. At the BCAEA Conference, we offer two sessions on Friday where teachers from around the province get to present successful programs, and/or successful practices within programs, to an audience who would like to add to their own programs. Sometimes teachers who are just starting to develop new programs in their District need to hear what kinds of programs and teaching strategies lead to success. Some 'veteran' teachers want to do something a little different for a change.

Don't be shy! Volunteer to present your successful program at the 2008 BCAEA Conference. If you'd like to be part of the Successful Alternate Programs session, please contact either the session facilitator, Jim Taylor, (svses@telus.net) or Mark Bradshaw (mark-bradshaw@shaw.ca) as soon as possible. We all learn through sharing! ♦



“  
Makes  
your  
mouth  
water  
just  
reading  
the menu,  
doesn't it?  
See you  
at the  
Schmooze!  
”

# Story of a Victim

Anonymous

The poem I wrote as sort of an anti-drug use poem. To show people what it's like to live through it without having to feel what it was actually like. I would never wish a life like that on my worst enemy even. I truly hope anyone will read that and honestly think twice before doing drugs just because it "looks cool" or because "everyone else is and it looks fun!"

I first tried my first drug, marijuana, at 10 and a half. I had no idea what it was but I recognized the smell from when I was younger. I was an angry child for multiple reasons and decided I didn't care and I smoked it. I was smoking cigarettes already so it wasn't that big of a change to me. Really, it was only green tobacco...so I was told by the girl who gave it to me. Little did I know that girl would later become the door to a whole new world of 'fun.'

Her name was Kayllen. She was a couple years older than me and always seemed to be there when I needed a friend the most. Kayllen always knew how to make the 'shitty' feeling I had go away and fast. I will never forget the day she pulled a zip-lock baggie from her pocket and it was half full with what looked to be a bunch of skittles. "Try one..." she tells me... "It will make you feel so much happier in like 45 minutes!" All with a big grin on her face. So I took it. There is nothing in the world I could possibly compare to what that high felt like. Love doesn't even compare. Is it worth it?

By the time I reached 11 and a half I had tried weed, E, and cocaine. Most girls still play with Barbie's and have sleep-over's. I was dealing

drugs, running from the cops and having parties. Not your typical childhood. By the time I reached 13 I had tried them all. You name it, it was probably in my system within a weeks time period. I had no friends anymore, except for the drugs. My family didn't ever see me. I couldn't even recognize myself anymore. I will never forget the time a deal went wrong and someone I thought was my friend got shot right in front of me. I held his diaphragm while he died in my lap. Is it worth it?

I ended up in a detox/rehab for 6 months where I cleaned up pretty good.

That is until I got out and my sister and I got into a fight. I relapsed on crack

Story of a

Let me tell you a story  
Trust me it will make you worry  
Look into the life of a victim  
Really you don't want to be like them

At first you feel like a rock star  
It's like going real fast in a race car  
Time by then has lost all its meaning  
Got to keep going so you don't feel the fire

There's on

You're terrified of your own twisted mind  
Peace and serenity you can't find  
That awesome tiny white friend  
Takes everything and your life in the end

To

Bel

and almost died from overdose. Is that honestly worth it?

*of a Victim*

*It starts with "oh what's one time"  
Then goes to "oh just one more line"  
Can't feel the emptiness grow  
Can't feel yourself going to low*

*The friends you once had are gone  
Your family you haven't seen in so long  
Only one friend that keeps you coming back  
And it comes in a tiny little flap*

*So there's the life of a victim  
All me do you want to be just like them?  
I went down the road just like it  
Believe me when I tell you it's not worth it*

I stayed off of chemical drugs for a few years. Until a couple months before my 18th birthday. Then I saw my 'best friend' again. The one that made everything seem so much better for a little while. And it started all over again. I had it all I thought. Friends, fashion, popularity, style, I was beautiful. Or so I thought. In a matter of 4 and a half to 6 months, (I honestly can't tell you how long because it's hard to tell with all the drugs involved), I was as bad as someone that had been

using for about 4 years. I wasn't eating anymore and anything I did eat just came right back up. I didn't sleep anymore. I couldn't, I was too high all the time. I didn't even have my own sanity left to cling to. Is that worth it?

It's hard to admit I hit rock bottom. Most people will never know what that's like and they are lucky. It's even harder to admit I have been there twice. Looking back on my life I realize it wasn't all glam like I thought. It was like watching a slide show of me slowly and painfully killing my self. I pushed my friends away when they were all I had and I pushed my family away because I thought they didn't care anyways.

It's hard to believe I thought so much about drugs I didn't care about doing them in front of my little sister. I was so wrapped up I even gave some to her. A loving big sister doesn't do that. Knowing that I will always be looked down on and known as a drug addict almost makes me feel like a waste of skin and blood. My family will never look at me the same because I am no longer the same person. Drugs have permanently altered my brain and the person I am.

Thinking back before drugs I don't really remember anything. It's hard to tell what's an actual memory anymore and what my mind has put there to make up for a missing piece. I will never understand how much I hurt the people around me. But I understand how much I have hurt myself. Tell me, really, is it worth it? ♦

*Anonymous is a 19 year old student currently enrolled in an alternate program in BC.*

# Magic in the Classroom

Christopher Taylor

Imagine. You have a grade seven student, Ricky, in your class. Ricky hates reading. “It’s boring,” he always says. He can decode until the cows come home but his difficulty is getting meaning from what he reads. Your difficulty is in engaging him with material long enough to teach him reading strategies which will help him. Not hard to imagine at all.

Now imagine you are standing by his desk with a deck of cards in your hand. “Are you going to do a card trick or something?” he asks.

“No, card MAGIC,” you reply. “There’s a difference.” You spread the cards face down onto his desk and he makes a free choice. After Rick secretly looks at it, his card is lost in the deck and you pick up the cards and sort through them with a confident air. You produce the ace of spades. “Here it is!” you pronounce triumphantly.

“Not!” says Ricky.

“Oh. Is this it?” you say, offering another card hopefully. Ricky groans and looks embarrassed for you.

Undaunted you continue. “Okay. That was the trick, now for the magic.” You explain that you are going to invoke the magic of a very powerful word. You count four cards face down onto the desk calling out one letter for each card as you spell, “R-E-A-D.”

You turn over the fourth card but it is still not his card. Giving up, you hand the deck to Ricky to try.

“R-E-A-D,” he spells and this time when he turns over the fourth card, it is his. The inevitable question is asked: “How did you learn that?”

You want to say, “From some ponytailed magic geek at a Pro-D workshop.” But instead you say, “By reading, of course. Would you like to learn it?” As he nods, you hand Ricky a printed sheet. On it are the Instructions for Spell-a-Card. “I won’t help you learn the magic, that’s up to you; but I can help you with the reading part.” Ricky is smiling.

Imagine some more. Imagine your class coming to understand the essence of the scientific method by employing it to discover how a magic trick works. Imagine a child who feels chronically powerless and unheard, seeing expressions of awe and respect on the faces of her audience. Imagine teaching reading, writing, listening, speaking, drama, science and math through magic. Finally, imagine yourself sitting in a workshop having fun learning cool tricks to help bring all this about. ♦

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*Christopher Taylor is a full-time mentalist and magician who also teaches part time in School District 42. He will be presenting Magic in the Classroom at the 2008 conference.*

# 2007-2008 Association Goals

- *To advocate appropriate programming and services for alternative education students.*
- *To promote alternative education programming and services provincially.*
- *To support and promote professional growth and networking for alternative education teachers.*

## **Objective 1: To advocate for alternative education students.**

### Activities

- 1.1 Provide Student Awards.
- 1.2 Respond to Ministry of Education and BCTF requests for policy and program direction.
- 1.3 Encourage alternative education students to provide artwork and articles for the newsletter.
- 1.4 Publish newsletters.
- 1.5 Provide Student Activity Awards.
- 1.6 Liaise with Ministry for Children and Family Development.

## **Objective 2: To enhance programming and services for alternative students.**

### Activities

- 2.1 Provide Innovative Programming Award.
- 2.2 Hold Annual Conference.
- 2.3 Publish Newsletter.
- 2.4 Network with members via membership list-serv
- 2.5 Liaise with Ministry for Children and Family Development.

## **Objective 3: To network with other PSA's and other programs that support the association's goals.**

### Activities

- 3.1 Provide complimentary conference registration for PSA presidents.
- 3.2 Send the newsletter to interested groups.
- 3.3 Support BCAEA representative to attend other conferences.
- 3.4 Maintain a website homepage on the BCTF file server.
- 3.5 Develop and maintain a provincial directory of programs for at risk students.

## **Objective 4: To support regional development.**

### Activities

- 4.1 Provide expertise and financial support for regional conferences and activities.
- 4.2 Provide start-up grants for the establishment of local chapters.
- 4.3 Provide a maintenance grant for local chapters based on number of PSA members.
- 4.4 Provide Innovative Programming Award.
- 4.5 Maintain a directory of programs for at risk students.

## **Objective 5: To promote membership.**

### Activities

- 5.1 Include membership fee in conference registration.
- 5.2 Provide information regarding exemplary programming and services at conference.

## **Evaluative Criteria**

1. Membership maintained.
2. Conferences held.
3. Representatives at regional conferences and other conferences.
4. Newsletters published.
5. Regional bursaries awarded.
6. Innovative Programming Award given and synopsis published in Newsletter.
7. BCAEA Homepage maintained on the BCTF Web-server.
8. Network with Ministry for Children and Family Development maintained.
9. Maintenance and refinement of Program Directory.

# Financial Statement

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for the Year Ended June 30, 2007 (Note 1, Note 2)

**Balance, July 1, 2006** \$130,771.32

## Receipts

BCTF grant	5,143.00
Membership/subscription fees	20,930.40
Sale of back issues	115.00
Other	60.00
Interest	4,781.71
Conference fees	7,004.00
Conference exhibits/sponsorships	3,176.65

41,210.76

## Disbursements

Executive meetings	7,421.15
Meeting-annual general meeting	1,773.06
Meeting-council	0.00
TOC costs	1,340.00
Publication-newsletter	8,704.94
Publications-other	763.09
Operating expenses	60.39
Chapter support	500.00
Scholarships	4,250.00
Miscellaneous	817.51
Conference-operating	5,194.91
Conference-facilities	3,248.24
Conference-catering	12,554.99
Conference-printing	483.93
Conference-promotions	1,537.40
Conference-committee costs	2,778.41
Conference-entertainment	12,752.32
Conference-equipment rental	3,752.16
Conference-speakers	23,528.26

(92,929.50)

**Balance, June 30, 2007** \$79,052.58

Note 1: This statement reflects only funds held by the BC Teachers' Federation on behalf of the BC Teachers of Alternate Education.

Note 2: This statement does not reflect the \$73,000.00 held in the outside conference fund as it was not possible to deposit those funds into the BCTF account before June 30 due to the BCTF lock out.

# 2007-2008 Budget

## Income Accounts

99921	Income surplus (deficit), June 30, 2007	79 052.58
99930	Membership fees, 300 @ \$30.00, 200 @ \$50	19 000.00
99931	BCTF grant, 300 @ \$18.50 (\$3,000 minimum)	5 550.00
99933	Sale of back issues	500.00
99934	Interest	3 000.00
99939	Other *	73 000.00
99940	Conference fees	70 000.00
99943	Conference exhibits/sponsorships	1 650.00
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>\$251 752.58</b>

## Expense Accounts

99950	Meeting-executive	15 000.00
99951	Meeting-table officers	1 000.00
99952	Meeting-council	1 000.00
99953	Meeting-subcommittee	2 500.00
99954	Meeting-annual general meeting	2 500.00
99958	TOC costs	3 000.00
99961	Publication-newsletter	8 000.00
99962	Publication-other	1 000.00
99970	Operating	1 000.00
99972	Chapter support	2 000.00
99973	Affiliation fees and meetings	1 500.00
99978	Scholarship	8 000.00
99979	Miscellaneous	1 000.00
99980	Conference-operating	5 000.00
99981	Conference-facilities	5 000.00
99982	Conference-catering	15 000.00
99983	Conference-printing	2 000.00
99984	Conference-promotions	2 000.00
99985	Conference-committee costs	3 000.00
99986	Conference-entertainment	15 000.00
99987	Conference-equipment rental	5 000.00
99988	Conference-speakers	25 000.00
99989	Conference-start up costs (registration)	3 000.00
99998	Conference-hold, future conference expenses *	122 052.58
99999	Conference-miscellaneous	1 000.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>		<b>\$251 752.58</b>

\* This reflects monies in an outside account that were not transferred in to last year's account due to the BCTF lockout. The Association presents its 2006-2007 financial statement and 2007-2008 budget to members at the AGM held on January 25, 2008 in Vancouver, and publishes them in this edition of the Newsletter.

# Association Executive Contact Information

The following dedicated individuals volunteer their time to ensure the smooth running of your association. Information on the roles and responsibilities of each position may be found on our website: [www.bctf.ca/bcaea/executive.html](http://www.bctf.ca/bcaea/executive.html)



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