



Montessori Society of Canada

Happy Spring! Hopefully wherever you live across this great nation, you are starting to see the signs of spring! It's time to dust ourselves off, and reinvigorate our practices to bring a peaceful, loving and positive energy to the final term of school.

As educators with the goal of creating Montessori environments that truly serve and meet the developmental needs of children, the demand and expectations that we place upon ourselves in meeting our great responsibilities as Montessorians is tremendous. The sacrifices made in pursuit of meeting and achieving these goals are typically personal in nature and there is often a tendency to neglect oneself in the process.

Despite the incredible things the teachings of Maria Montessori, and the Montessori Method enable us to achieve, we are not Super Beings. We are Human Beings, like any other, and we require nutrition, sleep, relaxation, exercise, intellectual stimulation, fun, love, understanding and support. I encourage you, as you begin this new school term, to find the balance between your work and personal life and ensure your own cup is full and your own needs are being met, so that you may put forth your very best self to the children and families in your school.

In the first part of the 2014-2015 school year, the Board of Directors, with the help of much appre-

ciated volunteers, hosted workshops for both members and non-members in Calgary, Ottawa, and Vancouver and in March there was an excellent workshop held in Toronto. The workshop committee has been busy planning a 3 year Calendar. Watch for more information coming soon.

As returning members are aware, the AMI Canada name has once again been secured by AMI thanks to the collaboration and dedicated efforts of Jim Brand, Felix Bednarski, Donna Boreham, Sandra Giralto, Eduardo Cuevas, Lynn Woodward and Lynne Lawrence. In February, the Board of AMI Canada met with representatives from other Montessori organizations and AMI affiliates including MSC (AMI Alumni in Canada), and MQA (AMI Montessori Quality Assurance) to discuss how the organizations will work together under the AMI Canada brand to ensure a cohesive, collaborative, efficient, and comprehensive resource for alumni, parents, administrators, and supporters of Montessori Education. As this is both an important and extensive undertaking more meetings are required before any final decision will be made. We will keep you informed as developments progress.

The Board continues to focus its energy on raising awareness of Montessori Education and on building a

OTTAWA HAPPENINGS

On Thursday, February 5, 2015 a group of dedicated MSC members braved the cold winter elements to gather on the scenic 19th floor of a member's condo social room. Over appetizers and wine classroom management issues were discussed, material use or non-use, books of note, job opportunities and classroom behaviours and learning challenges.

Sometimes it is nice to bounce ideas off the collective group to glean ideas one might not have thought of. In addition, it was interesting to catch up with what others were doing and to find that one of our members is working towards her PhD and will focus on a study of Montessori Math!

Anne Laws gave an interesting update on the Montessori Quality Assurance program which will allow many programs to seek consultation and advice when they wish.

The consensus at the end of the evening was to schedule another session in the Spring.

Beth Mackay -Regional rep. For National Capital Region

stronger Montessori community regionally and Canada-wide. This year marked the second grassroots initiative to celebrate the United Nations' Rights of the Child Day. In addition, Regional Liaisons began hosting social events in their communities. Not all regions have a dedicated Regional Liaison at this time, so if you are interested in taking on this volunteer position for your region, please indicate this on your MSC Membership Application Form or contact Erin Higginbottom at the MSC office.

I encourage teachers and schools to begin, even in the smallest degree, to connect and collaborate more with your Montessori colleagues and the larger Montessori community. Together we are stronger! When you do, we want to hear about it and share it with other members in the MSC Bulletin. Submissions about this or any other interesting or exciting things in your classrooms and school can be forwarded to Erin Higginbottom at the MSC office.

The board is a small group of AMI alumni who volunteer their time to support you and the Montessori movement in Canada. Hearing directly from you, what your needs are, and engaging you to participate in or volunteer at the MSC events and other initiatives is top of the list. This is your alumni group and we'd love to hear what matters to you in order to serve you better

Sincerely,

Mrs. Tiffany Goulding nee Howard

President, MSC



Maasai communities.

Free The Children has long focused on providing primary education to rural and marginalized communities in Kenya. The number of girls graduating from Free The Children primary schools (grade eight) each year continues to rise as community members increasingly recognize the value of educating girls.

The opportunity for continued education is challenged by domestic obligations, family finances, early marriage, and inadequate access to secondary schools.

Brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger, founders of Free The Children, are proof that young people can change the world. The organization's international development model, Adopt a Village, offers long-term support to communities in which it works. Rather than offering hand-outs, Free The Children works with local community members to free children and their families from the grips of poverty, in order to one day leave a self-sustaining community behind.

This reminded me of our Montessori Principles of Freedom within Limits, Independence and Responsibility. Giving the children opportunities for development, and by connecting them to their environment, provides them with tools for learning.

FREE THE CHILDREN - A REFLECTION BY LORENA VUCKO

“Only through freedom and environmental experience is it practically possible for human development to occur.”

- Dr. Maria Montessori

When my daughter Monica invited me to join Free The Children on their 2014 staff trip to Kenya (Maasai Mara and Narok Districts), it brought excitement and a bit of apprehension at the same time. We embarked on a trip of a lifetime December 28, 2014 for an 11 day adventure!

Free The Children is an international charity organization and an educational partner working both in Canada and internationally to empower and enable youth to be agents of change.

It has been operating in Kenya since 1999, within the Narok South District, working with both Kipsigis and

We travelled to the Narok South District of Kenya, where Free The Children focuses its efforts.

The purpose of this trip was to enable us to see how the "Adopt a Village" program has engaged many communities across the Mara and by building schools, li-



braries, water projects, latrines, kitchens and teachers' accommodations. We were fortunate also, to participate and help with some of these projects.

It was truly overwhelming to witness the success of Free The Children's development model "Adopt a Village" designed to empower communities to break the cycle of poverty and support themselves over the long term. It was also a joy to see the deep appreciation demonstrated by the Maasai and Kipsigis community members to us.

Education

Education provides the highest return of any social investment.



Through the education pillar of Adopt a Village, Free The Children builds schools, school rooms and libraries, and provides communities with school furniture and basic school supplies.

I visited the old school still used a few years ago by the children. The school's construction is based on wooden beams and mud. The school was built by members of the community and every time it would rain the school's ceiling and walls would be seriously damaged.



This was a humbling experience as the children came happily to greet us and were following us continuously.

School building and expansion: I participated in the building of a classroom for a Primary School and a dormitory for the projected Boy's School.

I visited Kisaruni Girls' school and witnessed the graduation of the first group of 38 graduates. As a surprise for the girls, Nelly Furtado performed a song for them. She is a strong supporter of this project.

SAVE THE DATE

The Montessori Society of Canada AGM |

Saturday, May 9th | Vancouver, BC | Location: TBA

The Montessori Society of Canada will be holding our AGM next month in Vancouver, BC. In addition to the AGM, we will be hosting a community wide talk given by consultant Karen Elliott. All Parents, Teachers, Administrators and Support Staff are welcome to attend. Details and registration will be sent out shortly. Please see Karen's bio and topic below.

Clear, Compassionate Communication: Essential Skills for Adults at School and in the Home

"Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care for people will hear them and be influenced by them for good or ill." ~ Buddha

Every day, with many different people we engage in conversation. Sometimes those conversations go well, sometimes they don't. While most children and adults approach conversations with the assumption that they will be understood, very often this is not the case. The topic, the people involved, the words we use and the emotional field influence the outcome. When we miscommunicate we miss opportunities for deeper insight, connection, creativity, compassion and collaboration. Our children look to us to model the skills they will need to create a peaceful and compassionate world, but are we sufficiently equipped?

Our facilitator: Karen Elliott is an organizational and leadership development consultant with over 10 years of experience helping people to work better together. Through her work, Karen supports individual leaders, work teams, business partners, or entire organizations to work more skilfully, productively and collaboratively in pursuit of their goals. Karen has a Masters in Applied Behavioural Science and is passionate about creating more engaging and humane work environments in which people can reach their full potential.



While primary education in Kenya is free, secondary education remains incredibly costly and largely out of reach for the communities supported by Free The Children. Studies suggest that girls experience higher returns to secondary education than do boys and that secondary education appears to have a greater positive impact on the lifetime welfare of women than any other level of education. Kisaruni is a place where girls' self-confidence and esteem will flourish, empowering them to become exceptional leaders.

Health

I visited the Baraka Health Clinic. The clinic serves ap-

proximately 30,000 community members. The clinic was established by Free The Children to help increase primary health care for the Maasai, Kipsigis and Kisii communities. The clinic provides preventative, curative and rehabilitative services to the most vulnerable segments of the Kenyan population.

Agriculture and Food Security

The Agriculture and Food Security consists in providing irrigated school farms, a medicinal garden, the formation of school environment clubs and nutrition programs as well as agriculture training and seed distribution.

Children, just like in a Montessori environment, thrive when connected to Nature. Children should always be encouraged to participate in selecting seeds, planting and taking care of the garden.

I had the pleasure of participating in tree planting near the vicinity of the Primary school to prevent soil erosion.

I also visited an organic farm. The produce of the farm is utilized to provide daily lunch to the Primary and Secondary schools.

Clean Water and Sanitation

Clean water isn't a luxury—it's a basic human right.

Free The Children helps provide communities in need with localised clean water sources and sanitation facilities. They also work with individual community members to promote local education in basic hygiene practices and waterborne disease prevention.

I participated in a 1 km water walk with a Maasai Mama to collect water from a river and back to her

household. This proved to be a very difficult task and I witnessed children participating in this activity. The community now has access to clean water thanks to the rain catchment systems, wells, and latrines available. There are continuous water, sanitation and educational programs for the community, as well as access to hand-washing stations.

Alternative Income and Livelihood

Free The Children provides parents, especially mothers, with the resources to generate a sustainable source of income, increase their savings and even start their own businesses.

Women who participate in alternative income and livelihood programming increase their capacity and skills. These skills not only benefit the women who have them, but are passed on to friends and children who can use them in the same way, now and in the future.

There are a variety of opportunities for income such as: education on financial principles and practices, leadership & skills training, beekeeping and Maasai traditional beading.

I happily participated in Maasai traditional beading. There are more than 800 Mamas dedicated to this entrepreneurial task. They create beautiful objects, which once completed, are sold for income.

This trip has inspired me and confirmed that a great change can be originated by one person. In this case, it was 12 year old Craig Kielburger who saw injustice and was puzzled about why children would work instead of going to school in another country.

This trip reminded me why I chose a life and career based on Montessori principles. I do encounter op-

VANCOUVER GATHERING

In early February administrators, educators, and students working with children from infancy to upper elementary joined together at Coal Harbor Community Center to enjoy a wonderful lunch and uplifting discussion. This gathering brought MSC members, AML alumni and future AML graduates together to connect, socialize and learn more about MSC's new goals, and member benefits.

The event was well attended and discussions were lively. The initial reflections emphasized how directresses and directors are encouraged to reflect on and strengthen the role of the adult in the prepared environment. It was encouraging to gather as a group, to learn from and connect with one another. We look forward to our next gathering.

Nadin Elkhail - Regional Liaison, Vancouver

portunities every day to inspire my students to make our world a better place. I do it through examples of kindness, empathy and respect for each other. I do it through connecting them with interesting and beautiful materials, by sharing stories and facts about different cultures and celebrations.

Through the magic of Montessori we inspire in each child the love of learning, the love for each other and show the commitment and passion we have for the development of the whole child. We as Montessorians give the children the keys for a better future.



This trip also reassured me that we are all good by nature and those small acts of kindness could influence a child to one day make a big difference in the world.

Lorena Vucko

AMI Directress

Queensville Montessori Academy

** Information facts were excerpted from Free The Children's Website*

REGIONAL LIAISON

In 2014 MSC embarked on a new initiative to bring together our AMI community across the country, starting with intimate and productive local gatherings. In November of 2014 a small group of AMI teachers gathered in Halifax to kick off what we hope to be regular meetings of our members nationwide. Coming together to support, inspire, motivate and innovate while adhering to AMI principles and standards in the name of the child is what we hope to achieve.

MSC does have some vacancies for Regional Liaisons in certain areas across the country. If you are interested in becoming a Regional Liaison please contact: membership@montessorisocietycanada.org

Role of the Regional Liaison

The goal of the MSC Regional Liaison Role: In efforts to strengthen our membership's community ties, provide resources and meaningful connections, and to heighten membership engagement and participation MSC has created a volunteer role of "Regional Liaison". Our goal is to provide a connection between members across the country and the work of MSC-AMI. We will do this through providing a liaison in different regions across the country who will plan and organize social and networking opportunities, and who will be a contact for resourceful information.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Regional Liaison:

- To be informed of the structure and mandate of MSC-AMI. To be aware of the list of resources and services that MSC-AMI provides.
- To be knowledgeable and comfortable guiding members to an accurate source for their questions.
- To plan and organize social and networking events in your region in conjunction with MSC.
- To promote MSC and its services through such events.
- To provide the MSC Treasurer accurate and detailed records on MSC monies spent on said events.

MSC's current Regional Liaisons:

Maritimes: Vickie Mastrapas

Quebec: Vacant

Ottawa Region: Beth MacKay

Toronto Region: Vacant

Prairies: Vacant

Alberta: Teresa Sabiston

British Columbia: Nadin Elkhail

Northern Territories: Dominic Bradford

THE ELEMENT HIGH SCHOOL MOVES TO LANSDOWNE

The Element, Ottawa's first Montessori High School, is moving to Lansdowne Park* for September 2015. This dynamic location was chosen to support The Element's integrated program which encourages students to be active,

MONTESSORI MARCH MADNESS IN CALGARY

On Friday, March 20th Montessorians in and around Calgary kick started Spring Break with a wine and cheese social.

Seventeen eager souls showed up for what turned out to be a very enjoyable and fun evening. It was wonderful to relax with colleagues while enjoying a beverage (or two) and share stories about how things are going professionally as well as personally. What an amazing group of people – passionate, caring, dedicated and motivated!

A big thank you to everyone who showed up with delicious snacks

and pretty spring flowers. And of course, a big thank you to MSC for sponsoring this inaugural event. The general consensus was that it would be great to do this on a more regular basis - so stay tuned!

Teresa Sabiston



participating members of the adult community. At The Element, students grocery shop for their cooking program, run micro-businesses, volunteer in the community and participate in public fitness classes while simultaneously completing credits towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Montessori pedagogy supports student development and education by encouraging focused engagement within a supportive, mentoring community and adolescents are engaged by the adult world they are about to enter.

Montessori high schools have been part of the education system in the United States for some time (Clark Montessori High School in Cincinnati was one of six national finalists in the "Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge," a public school competition) and The Element brings this tradition to Ottawa. The Element grew out of the Junior High Program that was established at OMS Montessori in 2003 but is now growing to serve students from Grades 7 to 12.

While students from Montessori elementary programs such as OMS Montessori and Glebe Montessori will be welcomed at The Element, other youth are welcome also; previous Montessori education is not required, a passion for life is.

Contact information

If you would like additional information on The Element, please contact Pat Gere, School Director at pat@elementhighschool.com or by phone: 613-862-8578.

*Lansdowne Park: <http://ottawa.ca/2/en/residents/parks-and-recreation/recreation-facilities/lansdowne-park/whats-at-lansdowne>

The Element: <http://elementhighschool.com>

HALIFAX GATHERING

Greetings from Halifax! I am so excited to pass along the news of Montessori happenings here in our city. Seven years ago, when I first opened Montessori Monarch, connecting with, or rather finding, other AMI Montessori individuals was no easy feat. I can remember feeling very isolated in the field of early childhood., and just wishing I had someone to bounce ideas off of. Someone who got where I was coming from, and where I wanted to go with this little school I had opened.

And then, just last Fall, as Regional Liaison, I held our first Montessori gathering. I was able to gather ten AMI trained Montessori Directresses in the same room, to discuss the direction of Montessori in Halifax. From my Casa Directress when I was a little girl, to fellow school owners, to our Monarch staff and to acquaintances that are current clients but not teaching – we had a diverse group sharing so many different experiences, stories, ideas and hopes for the growing future and awareness of Montessori in Nova Scotia. To say it was exciting is putting it mildly!

Our current focus is on developing a Montessori Society for Halifax that can serve to be an authentic voice for Montessori education throughout the province. To be available to our community, families and media to offer real answers to their Montessori questions, and to be a helpful guide in helping families choose a Montessori school.

We are also hoping to increase awareness of Montessori education within our Government and the Early Years Branch. Directing them towards many opportunities for professional development outside of the province and creating a standard for inspecting and licensing Montessori Programs in our region.

I am in the process of planning our second meeting before the school year's end, and I am so looking forward to the possibilities for Montessori in Halifax.

