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Upcoming Events:

SPRING TRAINING

See page 2, or check
the upcoming events
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Cooperative
ESL Ministries

News Worthy!

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www.eslcooperative.ca

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A Quick Switch—Using Stories in the Classroom

She exited the plane swiftly, careful not to bump into the person ahead of her and careful not to get her carry-on caught between the seats of the narrow aisle. Time was precious. As the catwalk opened up to the spacious airport, she sprinted to the bathroom with item in handbag, changed from pants and shirt into burka pulled from handbag, exited the bathroom, and trying to look composed, began to search for her father.

"Daddy, daddy, I'm over here," the voice sounded close but as her father scanned the airport he couldn't find her anywhere. He was looking for a girl dressed with shirt and pants – but there was no one resembling that. His daughter, after all, had just returned from Canada, where girls wore men's clothes and mosques were few and far between. Suddenly he heard "daddy" again and there was a woman waving. Her dress wasn't what he had expected, she was wearing a full body veil which includes covering her eyes, but the voice was unmistakable.

"Oh daughter," he said, looking her over, "You're wearing a burka. You're keeping our ways, oh, you're such a good girl!"

"Yes I am," she replied...

And so goes the story, told in class, a few weeks ago. The point of it here is not complicated. First, think about the power of story. Treat the classroom like we are huddled around a camp fire. Let our students tell stories: of coming to Canada, of adventures here, of returning home for a visit. Let one story lead to the next.

Teaching a low-level literacy class I am confronted daily with students who are dizzied by the world of text. Writing is tough—but stories they do have. As students share stories they share experiences and feel valued. It is an easy bridge from the spoken word to the written word as you record a story and write sentence stems based on the words found in it (Low-level note: resist the urge to correct the story and have it written exactly as it was said thus making it easier to read since it closely resembles the original that students heard from the speaker and can relate to).

Don't be surprised if your students tell a better story than you do!

If friendships are to happen between us and our students, and if stories are to be exchanged, we must be willing to take on the position of learner.

Secondly, as the stories we hear indicate, students are often pushed between two different cultures, and many remain puzzled by the nuances of this new one. Is it our job to help integrate them into this new context? I think one of our jobs is to simply provide a place of refuge (cf: Numbers 35:15). For many, Calgary is a city of refuge, an escape from a bad situation. Letting go of some of the past and beginning to direct energy to improving their future is where we hope most of our students can be when they arrive in class. If they are ready, of course it would be nice to learn about the culture here, to know who the Calgary Flames are and why it's important to listen to the weather report during wintertime. But, these teaching tasks are accomplished from a position of expert and as an authority figure.

If friendships are to happen between us and our students, and if stories are to be exchanged, we must be willing to take on the position of learner. Teach Canadian culture (helping integrate them) but learn their stories. Don't let students' ability to flatter you with "thank you teacher" stop you from turning the focus to them and finding out what motivates their lives. You don't have to turn your classroom into the Oprah Winfrey show, but tears are not illegal either.

(James Edel currently teaches ESL at Columbia College in Calgary and attends Northside Bible Fellowship)



Networking Breakfast Well-Attended

On Saturday, February 23, CESLM hosted its 11th annual networking breakfast at the Marlborough Park Community Centre. We were blessed to have approximately 80 people in attendance, including representatives from a wide variety of immigrant-serving agencies in Calgary.

The theme, *From Isolation to Integration: Welcoming Newcomers into Community*, was well-represented by our speakers and the comments from our attendees was very positive. Thank you to all who attended for making this event successful!

A special thank you also goes out to our speakers: Patricia Love, Hin Leong, Bethany Matchullis, Maiamba Sambola and Kathryn Fasegha, who put a great deal of care and planning into their presentations. Our thanks also go out to all the staff and volunteers who helped make this event possible. Thanks for helping to create an inspiring, encouraging event.

We are blessed to live and work in a country so diverse and full of opportunity. Newcomers to Canada may not always feel that blessing, if they feel alien in our country. Canada is indeed the sum of its parts, and our newcomers are important parts. Let's each take the time to get to know and love our new neighbours and to extend a warm welcome to them!

"When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not ill-treat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

Leviticus 19:33-34

Some of the Comments from the Networking Breakfast:

"Thank you so much for doing this! You are a lighthouse!"

"From Isolation to Integration has been wonderful, especially encouraging newcomers to settle in, learning English, providing community connecting, welcoming feeling of finally feeling Canadian."

"Totally inspirational again. Passion all pumped up again. Thank you for this event. Great."

"Wonderful food. As always, well organized from first email to today—as an agency rep this is most appreciated. Thanks for the opportunity to quickly talk to the group about our programs."

"The schedule was full and efficient. Thank you! Things were well presented on the paper agenda! The meal was delicious. I appreciated meeting new people and hearing the testimonies."

"I enjoyed the networking breakfast—it was my first and I look forward to the next one."

"It was great as always. I always get new ideas and connections..."

"Very encouraging and useful on the whole. Thank you. Breakfast was delicious too..."

"It was an honour & privilege to interact with you during the CESLM networking event on Saturday. I must congratulate you & your team to organize such thought provoking ideas from "Isolation to Integration" workshop; I think it's long desired by every new immigrant to be the active part of Community through connections in diverse Canadian Society."

Save the Date!

For CESLM Spring Training on
Saturday, May 4th, 2013
Bethany Chapel, 3333 Richardson Way SW

More details to come!

www.eslcooperative.ca

