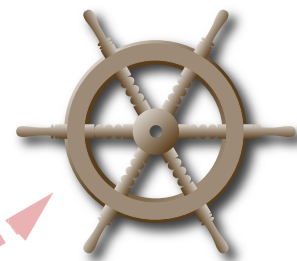


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Sheonoroil Conference: Safe Schools One Peace at a Time

by Adela Njie, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Development

The Sheonoroil Foundation was created in the late 1990s as a result of school research on violence in Nova Scotia public schools initiated by the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. Its objectives are: to support research and investigation into the effects of education site violence; develop and support appropriate intervention strategies; and to serve as a central repository for the preparation, collection, and distribution of resources.

The Sheonoroil Foundation organized a Conference on Mental Health on September 24 and 25. The theme was *Safe Schools One Peace at a Time*. The conference featured four keynote addresses along with concurrent workshops on a variety of topics.

Dr. Stan Kutcher, Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health, and director of the World Health Organization/ Pan American Health Organization Collaborating Center in Mental Health Policy and Training at Dalhousie University and the IWK Health Centre, kicked off the conference clarifying the various terminologies used to describe the term mental health. He also revealed data about some of the research he has been doing through his *TeenMentalHealth.org* project.

Friday morning keynote, Dr. Micheal Ungar, among the best known writers and researchers on the topic of resilience, and both a family therapist and professor of Social Work at Dalhousie University, spoke about nine things that can be done to make children change troubling behaviours and be more resilient. He reiterated with the audience

the importance of students' interactions between their families, peers, schools, and communities. Actor, humourist, writer, speaker and social activist Bill Carr spoke at the conference luncheon on a restorative practice approach to solving conflict. As a founding partner of the Atlantic Restorative Company, Carr focused his message on how to create space for authentic human exchange and the use of restorative practices in all aspects of social life through his humorous and touching style. The closing keynote was from recreational therapist, musician, and expedition kayaker Zac Crouse, who shared his *Paddle To The Ocean* story of using kayaking and music as an alternative approach for dealing with PTSD.

Some notable workshop sessions included that of Morris Greene and students from Citadel High who presented a workshop entitled the *Mask of Masculinity*, in which students shared their earlier experience of a "guys group" circle in junior high, facilitated by Green. Green is a co-ordinator of youth health for the provincial Department of Health and Wellness, and has been working with schools and boys, running Grade 9 healthy living curriculum in an effort to get them to talk about issues they are facing. This session was very moving for participants witnessing the young men discuss the importance of the program for them. It left the audience with wanting more and wondering how they could have a similar program in their schools.

HRSB teacher Amy Boudreau, and Richard Derible, shared their knowledge



Above are some of the delegates from NSTU's Sheonoroil Conference, Safe Schools: One Peace at a Time. From left to right: Cynthia Rigby (Halifax County) who teaches at William King Elementary School, Kate Therian (CSANE) who teaches at École Bois Joli, Chantal Letourneau (CSANE) who teaches at École du Carrefour du Grand-Havre and Kathy Rhodes Langille (Inverness), who is the Strait Regional School Board's Coordinator of Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights, P-12 Social Studies and Mi'kmaq liaison.

and experience on Restorative Approaches in schools. Glenn Thompson showed us how to use circles as an Instructional Model. Feedback from the conference was very positive. Participants shared with us the rich and significant insight that the Sheonoroil Conference had on them.

The Sheonoroil Foundation offers financial resources to any active or retired member of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, to any group of active or retired

NSTU members, or to any group of public school or community college students [working in cooperation with a teacher/faculty advisor(s)]. Funding is based on an application review process. **The next deadline is November 13, 2015.**

Thanks to all the presenters and participants for joining the Foundation on its journey towards peace—one step at a time.

[From The Teacher, October 2015, Volume 54 Number 2, Page 6 © NSTU 2015]