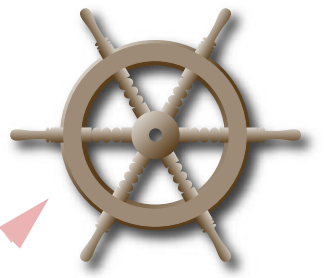


# Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## Leadership for Equity and Excellence

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Professional Development opportunities are all around us. If we are fortunate, some of those opportunities might find us in our classrooms, in our schools, in our Locals or in our province. The NSTU encourages you to take charge of your professional development by locating what is available, doing a needs assessment of your personal, school and local needs, and reaching out to participate in sessions that will enhance your professionalism and those of your colleagues. This year we have organized the Nova Scotia Teachers Union Professional Development offerings under the title *Charting Your Course for Professional Development*. Posters and pamphlets (see sample below) are being forwarded to all schools, locals and board offices. We hope that you access one or many of these workshops to support you in *Charting Your Course for Professional Development*. Please note that workshops and all expenses are provided free of charge to members of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union.

The Nova Scotia Teachers Union has the opportunity to show leadership through the professional development it offers its members. The professional development staff prides itself in the variety of workshops it offers to enhance professional growth. If the school climate is a concern, there are workshops that

deal with that specific topic. If making classroom connections is paramount, there are sessions that look at that particular area. Should members wish to enhance their professionalism, learn more about contractual matters, or look at the issue of teacher wellness, there are PD offerings which can assist them. Last but not least, if safe and inclusive schools are an issue, the NSTU offers several workshops which cover issues of equity and diversity.

One of the equity issues that has risen to the forefront in recent years is that of homophobia. Homophobia is defined in the Canadian Teachers' Federation's publication *Seeing the Rainbow* as the fear and hatred of homosexuality in others, often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, bullying or acts of violence. As the staff officer assigned to coordinate equity initiatives, I receive numerous calls, e-mails, and personal visits from members concerned about the prevalence of homophobic language and behaviour in their respective places of work. Administrators, classroom teachers, guidance counsellors and RCH coordinators (among others) attend to issues that arise when homophobia rears its ugly head. Often they are seeking information that will assist them as professionals in dealing with homophobic incidents. As an



Staff officer Gérard Cormier addresses delegates at the Annual Leadership Development Conference with his Plenary Session GBLTT: From the Personal to the Professional.

organization, the NSTU has developed workshops to help members deal with this issue.

Professional development workshops are not 'one size fits all'; therefore, they can be tailored to respond to the needs of the school, class, staff, or Board in question. Whether it be the issue of starting up a Gay-Straight Alliance, the arrival of an openly gay/lesbian student in the school,

the issue of complaints from parents regarding the inclusion of GBLTT (Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, Transgender, Two-Spirited) issues within the curriculum, the arrival of same-gender families to the school community, an NSTU member who has 'come out', or the issue of the use of homophobic language by students and staff, sessions can emphasize one or several aspects mentioned above. Furthermore, additional professional development can be arranged if the situation warrants it. What is of importance is the fact that a professional development need exists, and that the NSTU is responding to it.

From time to time the NSTU hosts a conference concerning a particular theme. This past June the Provincial Executive passed a motion which will see the NSTU Equity Conference opened up to the general membership, be held over a period of two days, and have GBLTT issues as a primary focus. The Equity Committee will meet in September and begin planning for what will be the first GBLTT-focused conference hosted by a teacher organization in Atlantic Canada. The conference planning will take into account the various voices that must be heard and the means by which that will occur. Thought will be given to workshops, panels, kiosks, keynote addresses, etc., all of which will allow for authentic voices to be heard. Approximately 200 NSTU members will be given the opportunity to experience this powerful professional development event which will be held at the Delta Halifax on April 24-25, 2009.

It is said that a nation is judged by the way it treats its minorities. The education system must be held to the same standard.

