



St. Catharines Torch Club

May 2014 Newsletter

Susan Drake

Susan Drake was a high school teacher at Lakeport Secondary School in St. Catharines, teaching physical education, health and English for many years. Here she learned the "basics" of teaching. From there, she attended University of Toronto to do a Ph.D. in Curriculum. In the 25 years since she graduated she has taught at the Faculty of Education at Brock University connecting practice to theory. Her special interest has been in how to engage students in learning. To this end, she has been involved in research on curriculum design, best instructional practices, classroom assessment, innovation and educational reform. She recently co-authored a book called *"Interweaving curriculum and classroom assessment: Engaging students in 21st century learning,"* published by Oxford University Press in 2014. Previous to this book Susan has published numerous books on curriculum - more specifically on interdisciplinary curriculum.

Current Challenges for Education

As the world around us has changed dramatically given the impact of technology, and professions have changed in response, education has remained eerily similar to when we all went to school. We live in an age of accountability, meaning evidence-based education and large-scale testing to ensure that students are learning what they are intended to learn according to curriculum documents. Such education is also associated with traditional classrooms, where students sit in rows, lectured to by the teacher, who is considered to be the expert. The student is a passive learner and rote learning and back to basics ensure that students have basic skills in literacy and numeracy. One troubling aspect of this educational landscape is that students K to 12 report being bored in the classroom. In particular, students report a lack of intellectual engagement in the material being taught.

Next Meeting

- Wednesday May 14, 6 pm social hour, 7 pm dinner.
- Best Western, St. Catharines.
- **Dinner: Greek (plated):** Greek salad, souvlaki kebab with tzatziki on the side, Greek lemon potatoes, green beans and tomatoes (Greek style), baklava, tea/coffee.
- Cost: \$25.
- **Speaker:** Susan Drake.
- **Topic:** Current Challenges for Education.
- Please let your phone captain know whether you are coming.
- If you require a special meal, please contact Alexandra Fic or Merle Richards.
- If you need a ride, contact David Warren at 905-934-9765.

At the same time, there is more and more recognition that education needs to be different in the 21st Century. Students work with big ideas/interdisciplinary concepts/ generalizations/principles as opposed to memorizing facts that they easily forget. They see connections across subject areas. They need to learn 21st Century skills such as information management, financial literacy, communication, critical literacy, collaboration, technology and creativity. Governments around the world are moving toward defining what these skills look like (so we can teach and assess them). Even OECD, in its influential international testing program (PISA), is testing digital literacy now and in two years will be testing collaborative problem solving. In Ontario we have the 21st Century Learning department at the Ministry of Education, as does every other province.

So what does education look like in the 21st Century? How do we engage students and

still be accountable? How do we capture the power of technology to enrich rather than dominate learning? How do we achieve deep, rather than surface, learning? This presentation looks at exemplary teachers who have harnessed the potential of technology to enhance learning and engage the learners. It is a new culture of learning. They are taught the basics and are also explicitly taught the steps of the complex 21st Century skills to master. For example, students work collaboratively to solve "wicked" problems or at least are given the skills to think about the unsolvable problems of our times such as poverty, environment and education. They work with experts around the world and are in touch with their colleagues (other students) globally. Learning is often personalized, as is assessment. These teachers have a passion for teaching and their students have a passion for learning.

April 10th Meeting

Attendance: 39

Meeting called to order by: Dave Sydor
Guests were introduced.

Toast and Grace: David Warren

Business Notes:

Ivan Hrabowsky again encouraged all members to attend the conference in June at least on the Saturday. Registration can be accomplished by visiting the website at <http://http://iatc2014convention.webs.com/>
John Northover is seeking to fill the executive positions for next year. He is still looking for a secretary (not too onerous a job he assured us) and a Vice President.

Speaker: Alexandra Fic "1947-The Partition of India"

Introduced by: Doreen Peever

This excellent and comprehensive presentation focused on the turbulent years that resulted in the independence of India and the simultaneous partition that created Pakistan. Alexandra began by identifying India today as a complicated country with huge contrasts encompassing 1.2 billion people. She also reminded us that India is a modern nuclear power. India has been independent since 1947 and politically represents a multi-party system leading to a "messy" democracy. Although Hindi and English are the national languages, there are 22 official lan-

guages overall. Today 80% of the people are Hindus. The talk about gaining independence was framed by Nehru's famous speech "Tryst with Destiny".

Alexandra then provided background to the complicated political event by going back in history. The English arrived in India in 1600 in order to trade in spices, and the East India Company began to have political influence, eventually bringing India under the umbrella of the English Empire. By 1876, Disraeli referred to India as the "Jewel in the Crown" of the British Empire.

Independence cast a long shadow, beginning with the Mutiny of 1857, which was ultimately suppressed by the British. However, by 1985 the Indian National Congress was established and dialogue about independence began with the British. During this time, Muslims felt underrepresented and established the Muslim League and began demands for a province within India to protect their interests. In 1916, Gandhi returned and despite the distraction of the First World War, began his campaign of Civil Disobedience and Passive Resistance. The first success came in the form of a 1919 decision by the British to grant Home Rule. Gandhi, however, demanded total freedom and independence and continued his pressure including a number of hunger strikes. The unrest in India continued until the Second World War broke out.

After the war, the rise of the Labour Party to power under Attlee changed the climate as Attlee did not believe in colonization. Riots all over India prompted Britain to send Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy, with a mandate to transfer power to India and write a constitution. The four players in this final struggle were: Gandhi, who wanted to keep India together; Jinnah, who wanted a separate state for Pakistan; Mountbatten, who was caught in the middle; and Nehru, who waited to see what would happen.

Finally a compromise was struck with Jinnah accepting much less territory for Pakistan than he desired (he got half of the Punjab and half of Bengal, which are not contiguous). The outcome was not totally satisfactory as unrest continued until 1971, when Bangladesh succeeded. Kashmir remains an unresolved issue today.

Thanks to Speaker: Irena Michalska.

Instead of our traditional final joke, we were treated to a demonstration of a Poetry Slam by Jason Collins.

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