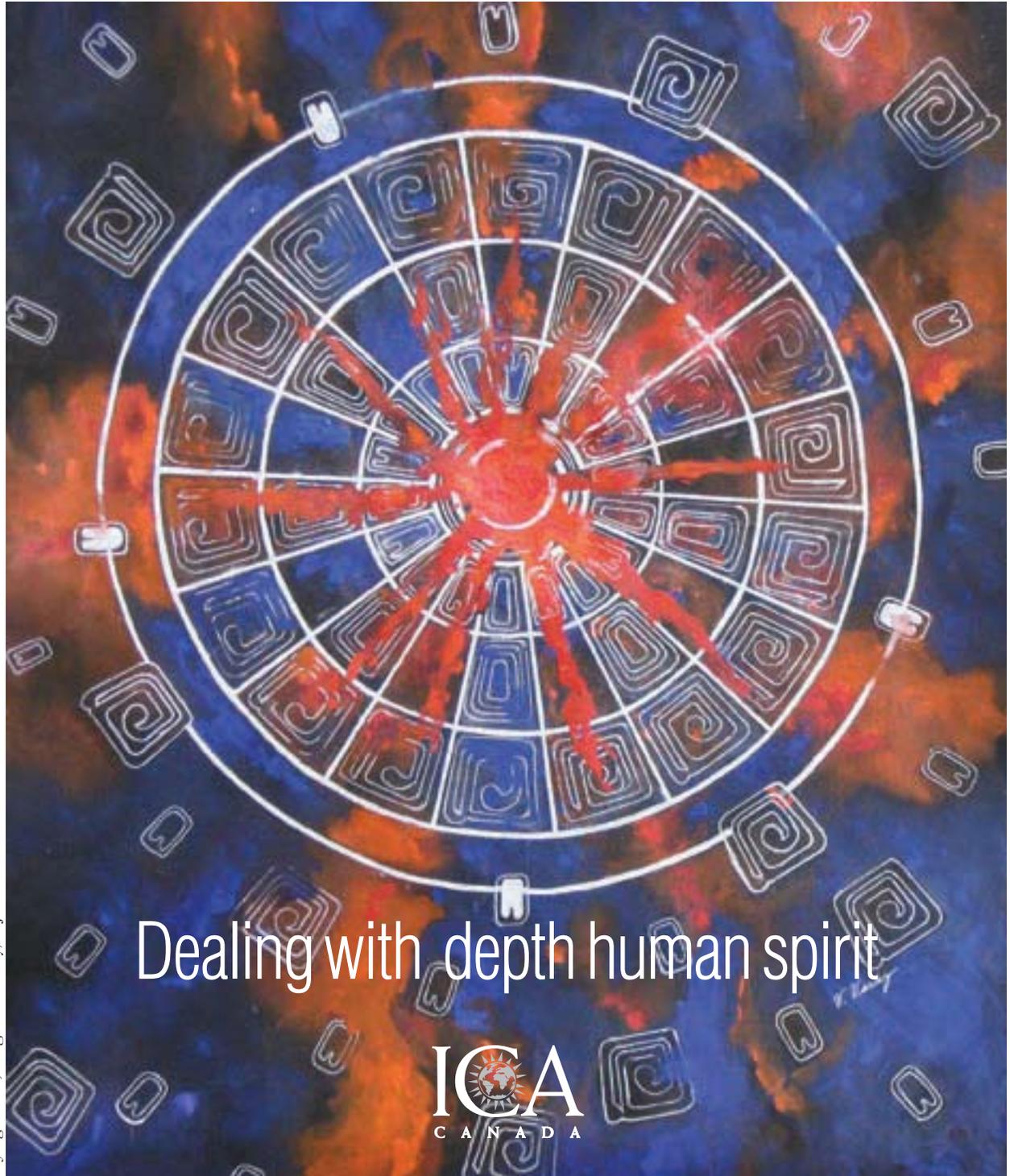


MAY 2008 • VOL 20, No 2 \$3.95

EDGES

NEW PLANETARY PATTERNS



Dealing with depth human spirit

ICA
CANADA

Flying Home, Virginia Varley, csj

The depth human spirit...

A Note from the Editor

The depth human spirit - When I first read these three words together the editor in me kept wondering.... "Where is the "of" between "depth" and "human"? Is this a typo? Should it be "deep human spirit"?' So I talked to other ICA members and staff about it. I learned that those who originally articulated the ICA value "We know that effective change is grounded in dealing with the depth human spirit in the real situation" were not grammatically challenged, rather there was deep/depth intention behind the choice to phrase this value in such a way. I hope that the articles in this issue will allow the reader an opportunity to get a glimpse into their "depth human spirit" and what difference it makes to honour this spirit in times of change or struggle.

Leah Taylor
Editor

Leah Taylor is the Chair of the Edges Committee and the director of ICA Canada's Youth as Facilitative Leaders program. Interested in writing an article for Edges? Contact Leah at ltaylor@icacan.cavav



Deep Speaks to Deep, Virginia Varley, csj

The Soul's Work

JOHN R. VINCENT

As humans, we are complex created beings that grow and mature both physically and within ourselves internally, personally. We have limited control over our physical maturation and yet seek to grow older gracefully, hopefully, with as much self care as possible. This includes looking after ourselves physically and nurturing ourselves amidst the demands of everyday life. Similarly, we have limited control over the growth of our inner selves, yet we exercise as much care as possible for our personal development. Growth of the inner self calls us towards maturation; a maturation that is expressed as personal fulfillment. This is a fulfillment that is not about external achievements but it relates to an inner satisfaction with oneself and a life well lived. This is a satisfaction that is rooted and grounded in what we know to be our potential, and a living out of that potential. It is at the same time always elusive, never fulfilled, but, hopefully, affirmed in a step-by-step sense of satisfaction with life well lived on a daily basis.

Note that this process is built on "hope". Hopefully we do care for ourselves physically. Yet, at times, we do not. Hopefully we do honour the work of our inner selves, yet at times we do not. What happens then? When we ignore ei-

ther a physical or internal expectation we are always invited to attend to that which we ignore. This is the work of the soul as it calls us toward personal responsibility and change.

The soul expresses itself through either or both the physical body or the spiritual "voice" within ourselves. For example, when we eat in an unhealthy manner and increase bodyweight, there is an invitation from within to be all that we can be, to be optimally fit. This invitation for health comes from the soul and may be revealed through the physical body, which becomes noticeably sluggish, or no longer fits the previous size of clothes. We may also hear the soul speaking from the spiritual dimension, which invites us to honour the potential to live well, be fit and give our best to life. In either case, we are aware of the invitation and say: "I've got to lose weight!"

There are times though that we not only ignore the invitations of life, but do so with certainty and diligence, unconsciously. In these instances, the soul rises up to create situations that are compelling, unmistakable and irresistible. The soul initiates a process that is both beyond our control and acts independently of our understanding or desires. This invitation of our soul always expects change.

To be a father to a child and maintain limited or varying boundaries or expectations for the child, based only on keeping the peace or having a pleasant relationship is an example of grist for the mill of the soul. The soul rises up asking for change, to move away from a co-dependent and unhealthy parent-child relationship to one of healthy boundaries and an expression of love that is equitable and fair. Not to be aware of the soul's agenda may be normal. But undoubtedly, the energy of the soul whose radar is to seek out fulfillment, continually draws the father toward a different relationship with the child. This may happen through a re-evaluation of life, for example, when the child rebels. Often, it is when a crisis strong enough occurs to create an impulse towards re-evaluation. It is the soul that is relentless and ever-seeking of the best in life, seeking fulfillment. Usually, the soul works strongly and unmistakably towards "life's lessons". It is best that at some point we co-operate with the soul to listen and honour its work in

order to continue our life's work.

Some people believe they can cooperate fully with the soul. This creates a myth that many people believe – that they can be fulfilled. There may be times of deep satisfaction with life, but the reality is that there is never equilibrium in our lives. We never achieve fulfillment. Rather, the soul's hunger for development continually works like a gyroscopic compass, setting us off in directions we would perhaps not normally take. And the soul is always "on", ever active, never content. The soul's purpose is to continually call us to newness, revitalization and change so that we take the next steps toward fullness. The role of growth and change in our lives is to assist us in seeking fulfillment, a sense of soul-full-ness or worthwhile-ness amidst the physical-ness of our lives. Because of the soul's work, we are internally and constantly reminded of our humanity, that indeed we are not in control, and we do always have a greater sense of ourselves to fulfill.

Perhaps strangely, it is amidst this seeming disharmony created by the soul that satisfaction occurs. To be on the journey and honour the push and pull of the soul is to collaborate with its depths. Rather than resist the invitations of life, we become co-creators with all of life as it seeks to help us along in the direction of life-lessons that we need to learn. Through intentional cooperation with what we know within us to be unmistakably true, we raise to consciousness the yearnings of the soul. Rather than inhibit or force the work of the soul, we can be collaborators, active co-creators.

Even amidst the enterprise of co-creation, ultimately we know that we cannot be the masters of our own destiny, nor do we have the ability to create what is not yet within ourselves. Yet, from beyond our own resources we are remade into something new each day. This transformation is a part of our realm and responsibility and is also a part of our normal repertoire. We rely on resources that are both within us and beyond to make the work of the soul possible. When we call on the energy of life/higher power/God to bring us insight, we learn what is possible because of a collaborative spirit. The soul expects to have at least two resources – one from within us, and second from beyond all that we are, to uphold

*...the soul's hunger for
development continually works
like a gyroscopic compass,
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not normally take.*

and accentuate the transformative process initiated by the soul. Thus the soul finds its expression through the medium of a cooperative human spirit.

The soul's work is at best elusive, but steady, progressive. It beckons us toward an inner sense of fulfillment that is in-

dividualistic, but contextualized in all that we are and participate in. The soul's work is expressed physically through our bodies and in our spirit, and it anticipates our cooperation. This work takes us on a journey into the unknown, yet colludes with the ever familiar parts of ourselves.

So if you were to actively seek out to be a co-creator with the soul, what would this look like for you? Would it be an adventure? A Challenge? Or perhaps, a recognition that finally the soul has found an expression that it was waiting for?

What stops you from being co-operative with the work of the soul? What could you imagine the results to be if you did give expression to the soul's work? ❖

Rev. Dr. John R. Vincent is the Manager, Spiritual Care, Toronto General Hospital, University Health Network.

Institute News

Annual General Meeting

On Saturday April the 12th 2008 ICA Canada held its 32nd AGM. Presentations from our two core programs, LISTEN TO THE DRUMMING and YOUTH AS FACILITATIVE LEADERS were given to update members on the programs' 2007 successes and our plans for 2008. This was followed by our key note speaker, Suzanne Jackson who gave an informative presentation called "Evaluation when Community Participation Matters". For more information, please go to <http://icacan.ca> to download our 2007 Annual Report.

Youth as Facilitative Leaders

Over the last few months YFL has trained over 80 youth in the Greater Toronto Area through public courses and fee for service agreements. We are currently working on soliciting youth participants for the first stage of the YOUNG COMMUNITY LEADERS project in North Bay and Sudbury (launching August 2008) who will be trained intensively in facilitation and community development methods to take the lead in developing comprehensive community-specific youth engagement plans.

Listen to the Drumming

LISTEN TO THE DRUMMING has been working to develop partnerships with RADAR, Rotary's HIV/AIDS Task Force, to develop community appropriate evaluation tools. The first capacity building

training sessions were held in Zambia with representatives from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. In mid-May, Eowynne Feeney, Program Director will be travelling to ICA Tanzania in Mtowambu, Tanzania to plan with local staff the launch of the next community-led HIV/AIDS initiative

Welcome to our New Staff and Board Members

ICA Canada warmly welcomes two new staff and board members to the ICA team!

Gabby Resch, Administrative Assistant
Mustafa Elkalz, Bookkeeper
Ottavio Cicconi, Board Member
Ilirjan Duka, Board Member
George Szabo, Board Member

Welcome to our New Executive Director

We would like to formally celebrate Liz Donnery's transition from the LISTEN TO THE DRUMMING PROGRAM Director to ICA Canada's new Executive Director! We are all excited to see where your leadership and passion will take the organization in 2008 and beyond.

Thank you and best wishes to our retiring board members Daphne Field and Mary-Jane Jarvis-Haig who have spent many many years serving ICA Canada and have retired from the board at our annual general meeting.

On April 26th, 2006 my sister, Jen, had an emergency C-Section to give birth to my niece, Abigail. Jen was only at 24 weeks gestation; medical complications meant that Abi was born into this world just over one pound: lungs barely ready to breathe, feet and hands the size of my thumbnail, eyebrows and nipples not yet developed, and skin so translucent we could see through the veins to her tiny shivering organs. Abi was rushed to Sick Kids Hospital immediately, like a tadpole not ready to leave the pond for land. Her lungs were forced to breathe using strange chemicals and tubes. We were told she had only a 25% chance of surviving. My sister and her husband, being of great faith, were the strongest in our

ably capable nurses and doctors, and a long history of scientific progress, she survived and even began to thrive. On the date of her originally predicted birth date in August, she was released from the hospital and went home to her parents.

Abigail will soon be two years old (20 months corrected age) and she is the joy of our family. She loves to dance and clap her hands. She knows the colour purple, blue and yellow and the difference between a dog and a horse. She shares her love freely with everyone she meets. She is my finest example of the triumph of the human spirit: hers, her parents and those who helped her along the way.

Statistics, however, would say that she survived because she is female and black. Being female and of partially African ancestry meant that she was statistically much more likely to survive such an early birth. My family is part of the white Canadian “majority”, our roots going back to the early days of colonization. We grew up in the countryside of Ontario where concepts such as “diversity”, “multiculturalism” and “tolerance” had little practical meaning to our daily lives. Then my siblings and I grew up, and like most small town kids moved to bigger cities. My sister met and married a wonderful man, Ade (pronounced A-day), from Nigeria. Abigail is the product of their love, their different life experiences and a globalizing world.

While medical statistics predicted a significant advantage for Abigail’s survival rate as a premature infant, societal statistics predict that she is much more likely to never finish high school, to be involved in a gang, commit a crime, face unemployment and one day be a single mother. It is these issues that the recently approved Black Focus School is supposed to address in Toronto. Set to open in September, 2009, commentators sometimes call this school black focused, Africentric, or Afrocentric. Parent groups in the Toronto area have been advocating such a school since the mid 1990s when the Ontario Royal Commission report on education recommended that “in jurisdictions with large numbers of black students, school boards, academic authorities, faculties of education, and representatives of the black community collaborate to establish demonstration schools” Citing the statistic that 40% of black or “African Canadian”

Black Focus Schools

A Preliminary Exploration

of the Intersections of Identity Politics:

“The Real Situation” and the “Depth Human Spirit”

in Creating “Effective Change” for Black Toronto Youth

LEAH TAYLOR

family. They spent all day, every day, at Abigail’s side, praying for her, touching their hands to the incubator glass, unable to hold her. Weeks passed and complications arose, the hole in her heart that all babies have while still forming in the womb was not filling in. She had trouble breathing and her immune system was severely compromised. But somehow, through a combination of love, incred-

students in Toronto do not finish high school, advocates say that black focus schools are the answer. The cause of the drop-out rates, according to most advocates, is an educational environment hostile to black children. Many say that Toronto's schools, curriculum and teachers are Eurocentric, discriminatory, and set up to make the black student fail. Proponents would unquestionably state that the establishment of such schools will be an "effective change ... grounded in dealing with the depth human spirit in the real situation."

Many who are fed up with the "real situation" of disturbingly high drop-out rates, increasing violence and crime amongst the young black population in Toronto believe that providing a space for African Canadian students to learn in an environment that speaks to their culture, history, and personal realities will acknowledge and deal with the "depth human spirit" of individual black students, who are alienated and ignored in the regular system. Lloyd McKell, executive officer for student and community equity for the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), states that "When we looked behind the reasons why students were dropping out, we found out that what mattered to students was how they saw themselves reflected in the school environment." Even in Canada, a self-identified multicultural country that is tolerant of diversity, McKell reminds us "Racism does exist in society and therefore it will reflect itself within the school and the school system." And while the approval of a single black focus school has caused heated debate in the city amongst the general populace as well as within the African Canadian community, proponents note that such specialized schools are already in existence for Aboriginal, gay and lesbian and other "special" groups. This black focus school will get at the "depth human spirit" issue by providing a space where young black students can learn about the African Diaspora, slavery (including in Canada), the civil rights movement and the contributions African Canadians make to our country.

Opponents of black focus schools cry out that the creation of such a school is a step backward towards segregation and reformation of racial lines. Opponents fear that such a school will create an "us"

and "them" oppositional mentality. The very fact that some Torontonians are calling for such a school based upon race threatens our mosaic of a society where everyone is different but equal. And the most significant counter-argument to the creation of a black focus school is the problem of WHOM this school will be focusing on. When we talk about the "African Canadian" or "black" community, we are lumping under one heading an incredibly diverse subset of the population, united only by darker skin shade and having a genetic connection to the continent of Africa. There are Caribbean Canadians, African Canadians who recently immigrated to Canada, blacks whose ancestry dates back to slavery



How does Abigail identify herself at such a young age?...When will she become conscious that the people who meet her will first see that she is "black" before they see that she is also "white"?

in North America. Within these categories are Somalis, Kenyans, Nigerians, Ethiopians, South Africans, Ghanaians, Jamaicans, Barbadians, Bermudians, Trinidadians, Haitians and so on. Then there are those like my niece who are "mixed". Ken Alexander, in his article "In Black Focus: the crisis in Canada's classrooms" in the April 2008 edition of *The Walrus*, reminds us that "Toronto's

"black community" exists in name only: "The needs and interests of immigrants from Brazil, Ethiopia, the Caribbean, and New York, "double laps" from England, and long-time black Canadians, are as different as those of melanin-deficient citizens from Serbia, Missouri, Rome, and Belleville, Ontario."

Proponents remind us that even though the black community is a diverse one, at first glance they are all seen as "black", creating a common experience and identity. While it is known that race is no more than a social construction with no scientific backing, there can be no question that race is made very real in the actions of institutions and individuals, including in the case of black focus schools. But does emphasizing one component of a person's identity (race) in dealing with the issue of high drop-out rates among those who are identified as "black" really deal with the depth human spirit of those individuals who are struggling within our education system? Are black focus schools addressing the "real situation"?

Let's begin with the first question. The problem of identity in this globalizing world seems to be central to the issue of whether or not black focus schools really will be the "effective change" grounded in the "depth human spirit" needed to address the many issues young African Canadians face in Toronto. How then, do we define "black"? Abigail, by mere virtue of one part of her ancestry will at first glance be considered black by those who meet her, and therefore more likely to be an "at risk" individual in our society. In government forms that ask to identify her ethnicity, she will have to decide which part of her ancestry to favour, or check the "mixed ancestry" box. On applications to post-secondary university she will have the option to identify as a "visible minority". These categorizations are meant to create a more equitable society that recognizes that the historical social construction of race has put some people at a disadvantage while keeping others in power. In our multicultural, diversity-tolerant country, we like to understand ourselves not as a melting pot, like our southern neighbour, but rather a mosaic with separate but beautiful pieces of multi-coloured glass grouted together to create a whole. And so we strive to create categories and classifica-

tions to create spaces for different groups to exist in harmony with everyone else. We stand at once together, and yet separate, with identities determined through difference. Identity formation, however, is much more complicated than the mosaic paradigm suggests.

The construction of an individual's identity is embodied in the innumerable intersecting relationships of place, class, race, gender, nationality, family, political culture and so on. These relationships and how they are understood are constantly in flux, and so one's identity, or how one chooses to identify oneself, changes on a moment by moment basis. In the case of Abigail, she is half-Nigerian, half-English Canadian. She is female. She has brown eyes. She likes the colour purple and is obsessed with eating bananas. Abigail does not fit on one square of the mosaic, she intersects many. How does Abigail identify herself at such a young age? Does she identify the different shades of her parents' skin as race? When will she become conscious that the people who meet her will first see that she is "black" before they see that she is also "white"? Is Abigail a good candidate

"When we looked behind the reasons why students were dropping out, we found out that what mattered to students was how they saw themselves reflected in the school environment."

LLOYD MCKELL
Executive Officer for Student
and Community Equity
Toronto District School Board

for a black focus school by virtue of her ancestry, or are there other criteria? What does the shade of her skin have to do with her "depth human spirit"?

While identity formation is much more complicated than race, gender or nationality, the continued racial and discriminatory framework from which much of our society has been based dictates which part of a person's identity we

privilege. As a white Canadian growing up among other whites, racial identity was never an issue, or something I had to think about it. Only now, as a resident of Toronto have I become more and more aware of my race and how others perceive me as a result. Abigail, on the other hand, will experience others dictating her primary identity as "black" without regard for how or who she understands herself to be. Given that there is a correlation between race and drop out rates, it makes sense that addressing issues of racialization would be part of the solution. However, it seems to me that black focus schools and the reasoning behind them do not address the wider impacts of racialization and identity formation.

While I have no available data to confirm this, my hunch is that socio-economic status, geographical location in the city (such as the Jane-Finch corridor), high incidences of crime and single working parent households (which can be attributed as symptoms of systemic racism) are also key ingredients in the recipe for staggeringly high drop out rates amongst black youth. While these factors certainly are the "real situation"

MEMBER PROFILE

Laurie Wyngaarden



I first became involved with LISTEN TO THE DRUMMING over two years ago after attending an event hosted by ICA Canada at the Toronto AIDS conference. It was there that Liz announced the charitable partnership between the LISTEN TO THE DRUMMING program and the Toronto Marathon. Having previously decided to take part in the half marathon, I was inspired to take my motivation to run to a new level and fundraise on behalf of 9 pt. After my first race and getting to know more of the members involved in the project, I volunteered with last year's marathon as well as the Stephanie Nolen event last fall. I am now looking forward to helping with this year's marathon for which I intend on running the full marathon distance!

When I hang up my running shoes, I work as a research technician for the Hospital for Sick Children; a job that provides me with much satisfaction. In my spare time, I enjoy designing and sewing different functional projects, cooking, finding new hot spots to eat and generally being creative.

This past summer, I was fortunate enough to take a personal trip to Kenya. My experiences reiterated three things for me. First, our membership in the global community; second, the important roles we share in not only assisting communities but educating our own communities on the injustices that still prevail; and finally, the hope that can be found in programs working to bring about positive change. ♦

many black youth are facing in Toronto, I have yet to be convinced that opening one black focus school in Toronto really addresses this “real situation” or the “depth human spirit” of the young people who so often seemed to be talked about and not talked with. While I cannot say that this black focus school will really be an “effective change grounded in dealing with the depth human spirit in the real situation”, I sincerely hope that the curriculum to be developed for this school will have some positive effect on the young people it reaches. More importantly, I hope that this debate will open up the space for us as a city and as a country to really explore ways of making our schools a place of hospitality for diversity, not just tolerance, for all people, no matter what box they check their identity under. I am probably naïve to believe that if we are ever able to really deal with the depth human spirit underlying the challenges of diversity in the real situation, such boxes will no longer need to be checked. ❖

Leah Taylor is the Director of ICA Canada's Youth as Facilitative Leaders program.

*Effective change is grounded
in dealing with the depth human spirit
in the real situation.*

DUNCAN HOLMES

We all know the experience of being in a group or an organization where the spirit is palpable. There is an excitement in the air. We also know the experience of groups, organizations, or workplaces that are deadening and spirit draining. You can often sense this human spirit within moments of walking into a place or encountering a person. We also know when the spirit we encounter is a flash in the pan or has depth to it.

In places where there is excitement in the air, you know the depth human spirit is alive and well cared for. When the human spirit has been repressed, you may be aware of it. However, we are so

used to that being the case, it is harder to notice. It is like we expect that work or meetings or many other activities will not be spirit filled. We really only notice the worst ones.

Sometimes dealing with the depth human spirit is a process of truly acknowledging the hard work that has been done to bring a group or organization to this point in its evolution. Recognition releases spirit.

Sometimes it is as easy as letting someone know why their job is really important. A friend watched her son's relationship to his monotonous job at a car assembly plant transform when he realized that putting in seat belts well was saving hundreds or thousands of lives one accident at a time. Suddenly what he was doing was important.

Some situations are more difficult. In working with a value-based school I was asked to help the staff talk through some topics that caused them continual problems. Getting into the topics but getting nowhere in the discussions (other than having nice conversations) made me realize there was a substantial issue at the base that needed to be dealt with. Through an image change exercise we worked on the real issue and created a solution that released the energy (spirit) in the group. At the end of the meeting, they acknowledged that I had not done what they asked me to do, but had opened up the understanding so they could do the job themselves.

In trying to bring about change, sometimes we try to take the easy way out. We use a solution someone else used in some other place. Or we use a theory we learned in school. Applying solutions without working through with the stakeholders what the real problem is and whether the “solution” will work, is like applying a band aid – sometimes a

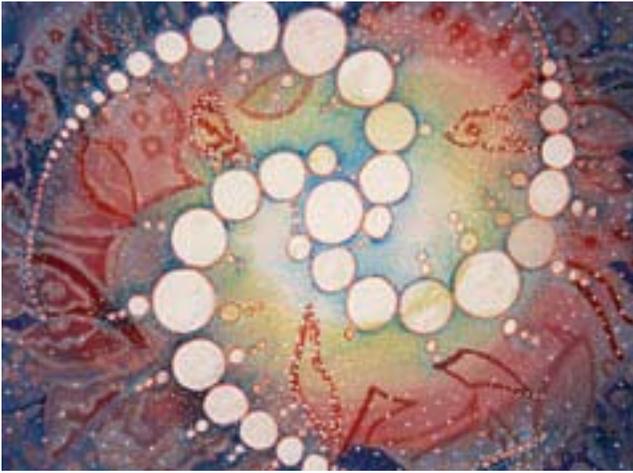
MEMBER PROFILE

Emma Sobel



My name is Emma Sobel and I have been a volunteer with YFL since I moved to Toronto last year, helping with training, curriculum develop-

ment and watching YFL grow. I loved YFL from the get go. It is an organization with great values, friendly people and a good cause. It has been a great experience being involved and teaching young people such valuable skills. Working with young people is something I think is very important and for the last few years I have been running youth programming in small communities in Ontario. I have also been running a summer camp called Camp Geshar where I also went as a camper. One of the things that drew me to YFL was the close working relationships I was able to develop with my peers at camp when we needed to make decisions together as a team. The sense of team accomplishment is a great feeling. I also like to run, be outside, canoe and eat cookies. ❖



Primordial Sea, Virginia Varley, csj

very expensive one – to a major injury. It doesn't deal with the true substance that is there. It doesn't release the human spirit because the human spirit was not even considered.

Dealing with the depth human spirit is about figuring out where the real pain is and where the real healing is needed. When that happens, people change the way they engage with their situation.

We worked with a First Nations community which was at odds with a provincial utility over a dam that had been put in decades ago. It was clear that all the previous approaches to resolve this issue had not touched the real pain. Through a series of discussions it became clear the substantial issue was that the construction of the dam had required the com-

munity to totally change their way of life – from being a river people who did all their communication and livelihood on the water, to being a land-bound people who could not use the waterways. It was a total culture shift. Suddenly it became clearer why the issue was so difficult to solve. When people understood that, the community and the negotiations moved forward. That which had been blocking the depth

human spirit in the situation had been touched.

I know we have tapped into the depth spirit when people experience themselves really being heard. There is an "aha – so that is the real issue". An energy is released that feels like we can breathe in a new way.

Why is this important? We each place a lot of energy into the many situations we encounter each day. Some situations give us energy and as a result we like being there, but more important, we are more creative and engaged. When we are engaged, our energy flows. Tapping into the depth human spirit releases energy; creativity that flows into all aspects of our lives. When the human spirit is flowing, everyone has a better life. ❖

EDGES

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Edges highlights new cultural patterns and fresh approaches to participation and social change. The opinions in *Edges* articles do not necessarily represent the policies or views of ICA Canada.

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