
SOCIAL & ECO-JUSTICE COMMITTEE 2008-09 REPORT

The committee met 4 times – in September, December, January and May at Eric Hamber and at John Oliver School; as well, several members also participated in the VBE Adhoc Bike Advisory Committee meetings at the Vancouver School Board in October, February and May. We also communicated by email, fax or phone.

GOALS - In September, 2008 we reassessed our goals for the year:

- to support our colleagues working to heighten students' awareness of globalization, homelessness, poverty and gender issues and to promote the new Social Justice 12 course;
- to support Environmental Sustainability & Climate change initiatives for teachers - especially recycling beverage containers, computers and paper, energy use, composting, use of water, transportation and bicycle commuting;
- to continue working in international education affairs, including Tanzanian Teachers' Union president (Karagwe region) and educator Mr. Frederick Kabendwe regarding sending him supplies & used textbooks
- to meet and communicate with VESTA's various committees to share workshop costs and participate in events with them when possible

PROGRESS

At the September VSTA GM, our name was officially expanded to include environmental and sustainability concerns. During the year, we supported and shared information on various peace and justice campaigns, as well as the Burrard Bridge bicycle lane conversion trial.

UPDATE on International Education/Recycling textbooks.

The committee sent money last June to help the Tanzanian Teachers' Union; they bought a TV and VCR and developed literature to help educate their teachers about the union, as well as publishing a primary numeracy book for students (in Kiswahili language). Frederick Kabendwe, President of the Tanzanian Teachers' Union – Kagarwe district, sent a copy of their union calendar and two CDs on union activism this spring. He also requested financial help for his transportation costs as the union car broke down and he is unable to use a bicycle due to an old knee injury. The committee is considering various actions.

UPDATE on Environmental Sustainability

The committee met with the VBE Sustainability Coordinator, Kevin Millsip, newly appointed. May 2, 2009. His position is mostly funded by a grant from the Vancouver Foundation. Kevin has been the Executive Director and co-founder of CYH, Check Your Head, the organization empowering youth to take action on the environment. He was also a Vancouver school trustee for COPE from 2002-05. He wants to expand the definition of Sustainability to include social sustainability and climate justice. He welcomes teachers' suggestions and concerns and plans to set up teacher-stakeholder sharing events to enhance networks, as well as being keen to try other ideas.

For fun and prizes, consider participating in the Bike to Work week, May 11 to 17, with the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition – go to www.vacc.bc.ca to register for your school.

UPDATE ON Social and Eco-justice activities by individual reps:

1. The December 2 White Ribbon Campaign to remember violence against women – Tom Ross organized this.
2. BCTF Metrowest Zone meetings – October, April – Ros Kellett and Treena Goolieff attended these.
3. Stand for Housing – Treena initiated and attended many of these Saturday afternoon silent protests against homelessness across the city of Vancouver, especially the now closed-down Riley Park Housing development.
4. Attendance at two Translink cycling division - stakeholder meetings – Ros attended (VBE paid for TOC)
5. Attendance at October Pro-D on program HASTE – Hub for Action on School Transport Emissions – Ros attended
6. Attendance at VBE District Race Relations & Pride Committee – Treena (Hamber) attended many of these meetings; Ros attended one district Pride committee meeting.
7. Worked with VESTA Anti-Poverty Committee to develop Film Fest & Discussion Series – April 15, 22, & 29 on issues of poverty, the hyper-sexualization of girls and acting on sustainability. – Treena Goolieff
8. Compilation of teacher-bike contacts and advocates at each secondary school – Dianne Murray continues to work hard setting up and expanding this list. New members welcome.

I wish to thank heartily the following social and eco-justice members and contacts who came to our meetings and contributed valuable ideas to further our goals: Kathy Hartman (John Oliver); Omar Kassis (Britannia); Doug Matear – until February (Byng); Jaime Tong – since February (Byng); Martin Hauck (Churchill); Treena Goolieff (Hamber); Dianne Murray (Hamber); Jane Wyllychuk (Kitsilano); Kate King (Prince of Wales); Shirley Chew (Killarney); Henny Coates (Magee); Teresa Diewert (Tupper); Vagner Castiho (Windermere); Amy Hurn (Van Tech); Sally Wong (Point Grey); Bill Hamilton (retired Community schools teacher & bike instructor with VACC).

Rosalind Kellett, Chairperson
VSTA Social & Eco-Justice Committee