
SOCIAL & ECO-JUSTICE COMMITTEE REPORT 2010

The committee met 4 times – in October, November, January, and April at Eric Hamber Secondary School, as well as additional monthly meetings for some of us as active members of the newly formed VSB Bike Advisory Committee. We also communicated by email, fax or phone and put useful announcements and reports on our webpage connected to the VSTA webpage.

GOALS - In October, 2009, we re-affirmed our goals for the year:

- to support our colleagues working to heighten students' awareness of globalization, homelessness and poverty issues (Equality vs. Equity);
- to support Environmental Sustainability & Climate Change initiatives for teachers (especially recycling, energy use, transportation, bike commuting, even composting);
- to continue working in international education affairs (including Tanzanian Teachers' Union President (Karagwe region) and educator Mr. Frederick Kabendwe regarding sending him financial support for the teachers and students in his region; the population of youth is growing there yet they have very few books);
- to communicate and cooperate with VESTA's various committees to share workshop costs and participate in events with them when possible

Update on Local activities

Many teachers reported taking time to discuss the impact of the 2010 Olympics on the city and the displacement of low income residents, etcetera. Public protests by some of our member for governments to speed up the development of Riley Park housing and increase availability of social housing met with some success as temporary shelters were set up for the 3 month Olympic period, with some due to carry on longer.

Many members are also active with their school's clubs and outreach programs: eg. GSA's; Mentorship programs for girls (YWCA); Haiti relief fundraising and raising funds for the unrecognized needy within their own schools; 30 hour famine; fundraising to build schools overseas. Collecting socks for Vancouver's needy people (JO). The new Social Justice 12 course is being taught in several schools, with Lord Byng offering 3 classes this year.

International Education and outreach

The committee recommended VSTA sending a financial donation rather than Canadian textbooks to Frederick Kabendwe in Karagwe, Western Tanzania, so that his teachers' union can request or create their own textbooks, relevant to their curriculum needs. A video of Frederick at work and some of their teacher and student activities was sent in the mail but got lost. Frederick was re-elected the teachers' president for another 5 years and continues to send updates by email several times a year, although they have suffered a drought, economic slowdown and ongoing problems supplying electricity on a daily basis. It is very expensive to produce electricity in his region and, like the water supply, its use is rationed. He has given an open invitation to any VSTA member who would like to visit to come and be his guest!

Environmental and Sustainability

Several committee members - Martin Hauck (Churchill); Kathy Hartman (JO); Dianne Murray (Hamber); and myself - have taken time to support the work of the newly developing VSB BAC, chaired by VSB Sustainability Coordinator, Kevin Millsip. Through this committee, we are asking the Board to

work with the City and support the development of the west side Arbutus line into a pedestrian and cyclists pathways; and are helping with the re-assignment and location of many of the 50 bike racks left over from the 2010 Olympic sites to secondary (and elementary) schools. Dianne Murray continues to compile contact lists of teacher-bike contacts and advocates at each secondary school. New members welcome!

Windermere Secondary helped a student-led Climate Change Conference in December, using UBC speaker Dr. Andrew Weaver. This has led to ongoing student meetings on Friday afternoons at VSB. Recently, Prince of Wales held a district-wide student conference in April on sustainability. Many teachers are taking time to support students leading hands-on recycling projects at their schools, including composting and school gardens, e.g. Tristesse Seeliger and Margaret Kalaski at Hamber Secondary School.

For fun and prizes, consider participating in the Bike to Work week, May 31 to June 5, with the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition – go to www.vacc.bc.ca to register your school.

Social 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; Translink cycling division Conference – Ros Kellett attended.
3. Attendance at VSB District Race Relations Committee –Ros (Hamber) attended some of these meetings.

RECOMMENDATION – That each VSTA site be encouraged to select TWO representatives for this committee, one for social justice and the other for eco-justice issues and concerns. This also allows more flexibility with meeting attendance.

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 (Total Education); Susan Robinson (Gladstone); Melanie Beliveau & Albert Mann (VT), Kris Price and Kira Faris (John Oliver); Shirley Chew (Killarney); Germanita Springer and Martin Hauck (Churchill); Henny Coates (Magee); Kate King (Prince of Wales); Celeste Pante (Templeton); and Dianne Murray (Hamber).

Rosalind Kellett, Chairperson
VSTA Social & Eco-Justice Committee