



News From the Green Blanket

Island Roots

A heartfelt welcome to the Isle of Man, which, under the leadership of the Manx Department of Education, is instituting its first Roots of Empathy (ROE) program in the 2008-09 school year. In a three-year pilot project, ROE will initially run in 10 classrooms and be delivered in all 35 elementary schools on the island by the third year of the program.

Located in the Irish Sea off the northwest coast of England, the Isle of Man joins Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand in ROE's increasingly global movement—changing the world, child by child. ☞

Parlez-vous “empathie”?

Roots of Empathy is proud to report a recent leap forward in Canadian French-language capacity. Recently we have doubled the number of francophone Trainers nationally, added new Mentor capacity in Alberta and Manitoba, and unveiled the first French program in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Additionally, a new partnership between ROE and the Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques will boost

Investing Today for Tomorrow

Mary Gordon recently joined Bob Elton, President of BC Hydro on a panel discussion about successful corporate and not-for-profit partnerships. This panel was part of the Business Council of British Columbia's one-day conference, Investing Today for Tomorrow: Corporate Responsibility in BC. Former United States president, Bill Clinton and Frank Giustra, Canadian Business Executive and Philanthropist, were the lunch speakers at the completely sold-out event, touted as “the BC business event of the year”.

The panel's message focused on the ingredients of successful funding partnerships. The other panel members were Tamara Vrooman COO, Vancity Credit Union, and Liz Evans, Founder and Executive Director, Portland Hotel Society. The panel was moderated by Rick Cluff of CBC Radio.



Roots of Empathy's Manx team includes John Knight, Sue Porter, Trainer Linda Armstrong, the team of trainee Instructors and ROE International Director, Christopher Sarson.

French-language Instructor training materials, resulting in more families being able to participate in ROE programs in francophone Ontario, and ultimately across Canada. The two-year partnership is being generously funded by a \$106,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Roots of Empathy currently reaches more than 4,000 French and French immersion students across Canada. ☞



Mary Gordon and Bob Elton from BC Hydro

Bob Elton announced BC Hydro's partnership with the Roots of Empathy organization in enhancing their work with Aboriginal Communities. ☞

Shine A Light ROE Parent Nicole Murfin

Nicole Murfin credits Roots of Empathy with getting her more involved in her community. As the mother of two boys—a seven- and an eight-year-old—Murfin had always volunteered at her sons' school. But then their family moved to a small town (South River, Ontario) where she didn't know very many people, and she gave birth to another boy, which she assumed would make it impossible to volunteer for a while. That's when a teacher put her name forward for ROE. "I liked it that Roots of Empathy was one



way I could still volunteer in the school," she says. Soon, Murfin began to experience the benefits of having a "rock star" ROE baby. "I got to know a lot of new people in the town—parents of the kids in the class," she says. "Everywhere we went, it was always 'Mum, look—there's Baby Timothy!' Murfin's son also enjoyed the experience. "His little face lit up every time we walked into the classroom—he was such a ham!" she laughs. "I would definitely tell other parents that Roots of Empathy is a good thing to do." ❧

Mary's Message



Following the national healing process brought on by the Canadian government's recent apology for atrocities committed against Aboriginal children in residential schools, I am honoured to report that I was recently invited to speak before the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada. On July 17, 2008, at the invitation of National Chief Phil Fontaine, I spoke to 450 chiefs at the AFN's 29th Annual General Assembly in Quebec City. The Assembly then passed a resolution to support and endorse Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy (ROE's

younger sibling), calling both programs "compatible with traditional First Nations teachings and worldviews" because they address aggression and foster empathy and social and emotional competence. The Roots of Empathy organization will be in dialogue with Aboriginal communities across Canada in support of healing and finding a way ahead. As history books are rewritten, school children will learn about the injustices and generational impact of residential schools. Our organization will support all children to develop empathy to ensure that no group in society is ever treated as Canada's Aboriginal children have been treated. ❧

Mary Gordon is Founder/President of Roots of Empathy.

P.S.

Mary Gordon was recently selected as a finalist for the Ernst & Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award. This was the first year for the Social Entrepreneur category. Congratulations to Marc and Craig Kielburger in being selected as the winner for their work with Free the Children.

What is a social entrepreneur? Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change.

Did you know that by the time children are two-and-a-half-years-old, in child care settings, social pecking orders are established and can be identified?

Why is our newsletter called Green Blanket?

In Roots of Empathy classrooms, children gather around a green blanket where the loving relationship between a parent and baby is the lever for learning. The green blanket is where learning and sharing takes place – and that's what we want this newsletter to be too.

Green Blanket is a bi-monthly update on what's happening with Roots of Empathy. If you would like to be added to our distribution list, or to unsubscribe, please e-mail greenblanket@rootsofempathy.org