

# Cutting it up at work! : 2010 BC Library Conference Plenary Presentation Report

By Lisa Morry and Heather Compeau.

The plenary speaker Friday morning featured a sommelier and chef. Sounds odd, but he was all about having fun at work. "It looks like fun on the food network, but we all have knives!" said Tim Ellison, who works at the Pacific Institute of Culinary Arts on Granville Island. "What we do can kill people and we sometimes do." Seriously (according to Tim):

*"When people are smiling and having a good time, they're more open. When the topic is important, when learning outcomes are important, or when the topic could be boring, fun is important. Fun is an attitude. It forms part of your culture and has to be worked at. Do we stop having fun because we get old or do we get old because we stop having fun?"*

And so began Tim Ellison's kinetic, amusing and infectious plenary presentation at the 2010 BC Library Conference in Penticton. For the next 75 minutes, the audience enjoyed stories and strategies to engage and energize people through fun, in order to relieve pressure, challenge boundaries and build team spirit.

What we appreciated most about the plenary presentation is the opportunity to peer outside one's own profession, gain new perspective and see the similarities and differences between the two worlds. Tim explained the many ways he integrates fun, passion and enthusiasm into teaching and work culture. He cultivates relationships and draws people into the content, ideas and information.

Tim employs a variety of competitions, exercises and games like brain teasers, Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy to energize students, relieve pressure, break boundaries and build team spirit. Ellison sends new students on a scavenger hunt: "What's in the bottom left drawer of the president's desk?" They do blind tastings of food and wine: "Here, open your mouth and then tell me what this is." They go on art and architecture tours in downtown Vancouver—in the driving rain! Ellison likes to let students get comfortable in the classroom, choosing the same seats class after class and then he takes their name

tags and moves them around. People arrive and sit in the "wrong" seats and discomfort ensues.

The Pacific Institute of Culinary Arts held a seafood cooking competition at the Vancouver Aquarium and organized a competition at the Granville Island Brewery for Christmas. Strategies such as this allow students to connect with the local community and be creative with short timeframes and resources. Tim's attitude was to create a sense of fun and camaraderie and to instill an atmosphere of respect even though the environment was uncomfortable and events unexpected. Fun in the workplace or school does not mean being unproductive or wasting time but is an opportunity to connect creatively and build community. Wouldn't it be great if we went back to our workplaces and did something silly and fun to inspire our colleagues and students and make them laugh?



Chilliwack Library Fish..... Betty Wierda, Lisa Morry and "Loan Shark" Leslie Olsen along with Instructional Media Services Fish, June "Finding Nemo" Pitcher. Heather Compeau was on the good ship Abbotsford that day.



Heather takes Curriculum Lab Chickens on a tour of the library.

*By Lisa Morry, UFV, Chilliwack Library Technician and Heather Compeau, UFV, Education Librarian.*