

Laughs and Lessons: The 2010 Library Conference

By Jennifer Wilson

Long weekends are a great excuse to escape from the commute, embrace the open road and have a lot of fun on the way to your destination. The British Columbia Library conference provided a welcome reason to drive the highway at the end of April and to spend time in Penticton, a well-known jewel of the B.C. Okanagan.

Seriously Entertaining

In order to get myself into a fun, fun, fun mindset I decided to have Stuart McLean as a central component of my journey's soundtrack. What better way to start a weekend whose theme was "Seriously Entertaining" than to warm up the belly-laugh muscles with some well-written stories. Driving out of the Fraser Valley is always beautiful and this trip was no disappointment; we left in sunshine, encountered some rain and were perplexed by the snow on the Okanagan connector. Luckily good weather was waiting for us on the other side of the summit.

The Presidents' welcome reception on Thursday evening was a wonderful start to the conference with plenty of attendees enjoying the exhibits, goodies, beverages and company of friends old and new. The evening passed quickly and set the stage for an energetic plenary address on Friday morning.

Make fun part of your culture

A new schedule for the conference this year meant that many of us did not have to feel guilty for setting the alarm a little bit later than the one which starts the workday at home. The plenary was well attended and despite the large size of the room, it felt intimate. There were only 7 rows of chairs and everyone had a great view of the speaker, Tim Ellison, a Certified Chef de Cuisine, Sommelier, and Instructor at the Pacific Institute of Culinary Arts who is also an avid collector of great socks. The session was punctuated with bursts of laughter in response to short anecdotes, although attendees had a few challenges to face too: brainteasers first thing in the morning are one way to get the brain moving!

Ellison encouraged the crowd to identify teaching opportunities where the use of fun and games could engage students to meet important learning outcomes. He recognized that some instructors might have to work harder than others to make fun and games part of their culture, but assured the audience that it was well-worth the effort. If introducing a raucous atmosphere into your teaching program seems daunting, think about other ways to play; foster competition between your students or in the larger community. Don't be afraid to reach out to other community groups as well – the Pacific Institute of Culinary Arts paired with the Granville Island Brewery for one particularly memorable competition wherein students shopped on the island and created food pairings for the beer maker in a set time. Creative engagement with students and the community was at the heart of many of Ellison's anecdotes which hopefully inspired many of those present at the plenary.



Plenary speaker Tim Ellison and Conference Chair Heather Compeau; laughs and wine recommendations were a part of the morning fun.

Friday Night Shenanigans

The conference committee put together a great roster of activities for the Friday evening. Four BC authors participated in intimate and engaging talks for those with literary interests. For foodies, there were

2 wine maker dinners, where food and wine pairings kept people reaching for their pens in an effort to make note of wine makers and varietals. All the events were equally successful, judging from the buzz about the convention centre the next morning, and will hopefully be featured on the roster of future conferences.

Seriously Rewarding Fun; Engaging with the Library Community



Past-President Ken Cooley hands the ceremonial gavel to Incoming President Marjorie Mitchell at the Annual General Meeting.

Saturday morning started off with a whirl of business; the Annual General Meeting met the attendance quota and things moved along swiftly. Reports were made and motions made; new board members were introduced and outgoing members were acknowledged. It was a successful meeting that left delegates with extra time to network before the next session.

As lunch drew near a number of delegates made their way to the BCLA awards luncheon. The noon-time slot was another change from past conferences, but was successful enough to suggest that the transition from an evening to a daytime event was worth considering for the future. Attendees enjoyed a delicious buffet and celebrated the achievements of colleagues and library systems; congratulations to all the [winners](#). The ceremony was inspiring not only because of the great work being done in British Columbia libraries, but also the community

engagement demonstrated by those in attendance: donations totaling \$1600 were raised to support the Sheila A. Egoff Children's Literature Prize Fund.

The conference came to a belly-shaking end with the Great Debate. Millennial, Gen Xer and Baby boomer alike found something to laugh about as the debaters argued the merits of the resolution: Be it resolved that experience is highly over-rated. Baby boomers must retire without delay. An early assessment of audience age could not have predicted the final outcome: 50 percent for the retirement of baby boomers, and 50 percent against!



Conference delegates enjoy a sweet treat and plenty of networking opportunities in the spacious atrium of the Penticton Trade and Convention Centre.

Thank you and Congratulations!

Thank you and congratulations to the hard-working members of the conference committee as well as the local arrangements committee. The 2010 conference was seriously entertaining and well worth the trip out of the lower mainland!

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