

## 2017 NSPU SCIENTIFIC SCHOOL PRESENTATION ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

*I am pleased to be a participant in the 2017 Novosibirsk Scientific School on Inclusive Education. I look on NSPU as a University to which I belong.*

My presentation today outlines aspects of the history of Inclusive Education, as I understand it, developed between Russia and Canada. My relationship with NSPU has been personally and ~~AA~~ professionally rewarding and, hopefully, of value to those attending your Scientific Schools. I do not claim to have a firm understanding of what has occurred with regard to Inclusive Education in Russia, though my visits to Russia and meetings with Russian colleagues in Canada, have given me some ideas regarding the interaction of the two nations.

I have had the opportunity to visit NSPU and other areas of Russia on a number of occasions. All of these visits were focused on Inclusive Education. These experiences allowed me to get a sense of progress of the development of Inclusive Education in Russia and to share with you what has occurred in Canada.

### **The Beginning of Inclusive Education**

It was in the early 1960's that a Canadian educator, Jim Hanson, who directed the Special Education program of the Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Board of Education in Ontario, Canada, was the first to place students with disabilities in regular classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers. He considered segregation socially un-just and began to include all students with disabilities in the same classrooms as any other student (Hanson, Leyden, Bunch and Pearpoint, 2006). The term 'Inclusive Education' had yet to be conceived. Jim's term was "Each Belongs" and basically meant to bring all students together in the same classrooms.

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Jim had a definite idea of what he meant when he began to include all students. He stated his beliefs in a Credo, his guide to socially just education for all. Here it is:-

### Each Belongs Credo

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- Each person is endowed with the dignity of a person.
- Each person has equal value despite difference in ability.
- Each person has the right to grow and indeed each person can grow.
- The limits of individual growth are unknown and should not be circumscribed.
- No person is static, each is ever in the process of becoming.
- Each person is unique and unrepeatable.
- The beliefs we hold about people can serve as prison walls limiting us at every turn.
- They can also set us free from our shackles to confront great new possibilities never dreamed of before.
- Life is the ultimate gift and learning is its crowning.

—The term “Inclusive Education” for students with disabilities was conceived in July 1988. John O’Brien and Marsha Forest described how the term came about. In July

1988 a group of 14 people from Canada and the United States, who felt that the “integration” of students with disability did not describe what they wanted for students with disabilities. It was too closely connected with the Special Education Model. (In lively discussion) The group which entered into a lively discussion. The group included educators, writers, parents, and adults with disabilities, all of whom had first-hand experience -with segregated

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education, came up with the idea of bringing all students together under the concept of "Inclusive Education".

This was a radical departure from the idea of Special Education, but the term and the concept rapidly caught on, first in Canada and the United States and then in other nations. Inclusive Education is a term and concept now used around the world. Both Jim Hanson and those at the Toronto meeting clearly stated that "Each Belongs" ~~and that Each Belongs~~ and "Inclusive Education" *both* were based on bringing all students together.

### **The Global Acceptance of Inclusive Education**

- *In years* Years later, in 1994, UNESCO called together a global meeting in Salamanca, Spain to discuss whether to continue education for students with disabilities under the Special Education practice of segregation of students, or to move to Inclusive Education, an approach considered to be more socially just. Following intense discussion, those at the meeting chose Inclusive Education and recommended it as United Nations policy.

This policy was reinforced by the U.N. in 2005 by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The CRPD made it clear that all students, with and without disabilities, were to be educated in the same schools and classrooms no matter what differences occurred among students, and that they all were to be taught by regular teachers.

The policy of Inclusive Education for all applied to all students in all nations. A number of organizations in various nations led in initiating Inclusive Education. *Russia and Canada* were among these leaders in these nations, with Canada being the first thanks to the work of Jim Hansen and support of others such as the Marsha Forest Centre *and York University.* ?

### **LEADING RUSSIAN/ CANADIAN EXAMPLES**

## The Early Work of Perspektiva

A short time after the United Nations began its support of Inclusive Education, organizations in Russia and Canada began to collaborate on advancing Inclusive Education. The first Russian organization to realize the promise of Inclusive Education was Perspektiva, the all-Russia organization led by Denise Roza and her staff. One of the early steps taken by Denise was to attend the Marsha Forest Center's Summer Institute and make contact those in Canada, in Toronto, advancing Inclusive Education. This collaboration continues.

I was invited to Russia by Perspektiva early in the new century. I visited their office in Moscow and to visit schools in Moscow and other places over two visit trips. The first school I visited in Russia was School 200 in Moscow. During a school tour I noticed a young boy with Down's Syndrome. As I observed the class and the boy, I saw that a woman seated beside the boy appeared to be giving him some support. In Canada we would refer to such a person as an "Education Assistant", a common support strategy in Canada. I was impressed by the understanding the staff had of how to apply Inclusive Education. During lunch one of the teachers asked me if I had noticed the boy. I said "Yes". The teacher went on to tell me that the young lad was the grandson of Boris Yeltsin. I was very impressed and I wondered what meaning this had for education in Russia.

I also visited an Early Childhood Centre in Moscow that I was told was inclusive. My opinion was that the staff was using the term "Inclusive Education" but, actually, were using more of a Special Education approach. This is similar to the situation in Canada where some educators understand that no students should be segregated while others still segregate many students with disabilities in favour of the Special Education Model. At the same time, they while claiming to be inclusive, as

claiming

*continued to*  
they do place some students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Such difference of practice from place to place is not unusual when a new concept challenges the one people with which people are familiar.

Next I visited some places in eastern Russia. In schools to the east of Moscow: Ulan Ude for example. I saw Inclusive Education in place in a variety of locations. In one school I visited I watched some classes at work where young students with disabilities learned along with all the other students. I also had opportunity to speak with an older student and to chat about Inclusive Education with him. He told me he that he felt he was just another student and that the other students felt the same.

I met with the Principal and the staff members for an after school discussion. It was clear that they understood the values of Inclusive Education and were not little challenged in carrying them out. On the other hand, I also met with Professors from a nearby University for a discussion. They believed that Inclusion Education was a questionable approach to students with disabilities in comparison with the Special Education approach. -?

Acceptance of Inclusive Education is uneven around the world including Canada. I will not speak of what is happening across Russia. You are the people deciding that. I do know colleagues at Universities in NSPU, Krasnoyarsk and Moscow as well while as Perspektivae in Moscow, and have met others in other centers who are active in advancing Inclusive Education. This progress is very exciting.

### **The Beslan School Seige**

On 11 September, 2004 terrorists attacked School No. 1 in Beslan, North Ossetia. In the ensuing three days some 172 students lost their lives as did some teachers. When the siege ended, the community of Beslan decided that the school would be

→ as two schools  
rebuilt and that all students in and staff, including those students and teachers who were disabled, would attend the two new schools built.

Joseph (Joe) Whittaker, a long-time English colleague and friend of the Marsha Forest Center was invited to assist the parents and teachers to develop a plan to keep all teachers and students in the two new schools built, regardless that the practice at that time was to segregate students with disabilities in institutions. The parents and school administration also agreed to include any students with disabilities in the Beslan area.

Under the leadership of Joe Whittaker, the parents and school administration decided created a program of Inclusive Education. A program covering the philosophy and the practice of Inclusive Education was instituted. The Marsha Forest Centre has heard that the schools were named after Joe.

#### G8 Preparatory Meetings Moscow 2005

The 2005, G8 Preparatory workgroups on Education for students with disabilities met twice in Moscow and again, along with groups from other nations, to present their final recommendations - to President Putin.

Among the working group on disability and Education were representatives from Russia and Canada. The two earlier meetings of 4 days each were spirited with some groups arguing to stay with the Special Education Model and other groups advocating change to the Special Education Model Inclusive Education Model. At the end of the two earlier meetings, the majority opted for change to the Special Education Model. ???????????????? Inclusive

In the third Moscow meeting, the Education group presented our support to change to the Inclusive Education Model. President Putin immediately accepted that etc

for their  
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and once

recommendation. At that time, a member of the Canadian representatives asked if she could approach President Putin and present him with a pin created by Perspektivae with a message urging Inclusive Education. President Putin immediately said it would be an honour to wear the pin and allowed the Canadian representative to pin it on his lapel.

The nation of Russia then began to put the mechanics needed for change in place. All of you in Russia who are preparing teachers for the future and those of you leading the movement in schools are to be congratulated.

The Marsha Forest Centre is proud to be working with you, *and York University* *our colleagues*  
*in Russia in advancing equity among*  
*all students.*

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