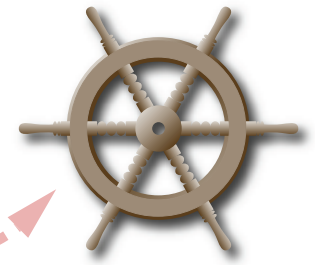


Charting Your Course FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



About the Primary Elementary Teachers Association (PETA)

by Barbara Rushton

PAST EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PETA

The Primary Elementary Teachers Association (PETA) has a long and rich tradition among educators in Nova Scotia. Founded over 50 years ago by Dr. Florence Wall, PETA has prided itself on providing high quality professional development for elementary school teachers in this province. PETA is one of “the big ones” with membership running as high as 1,200 teachers. In the early days, PETA was one of the few options for elementary teachers and conferences were huge.

PETA conferences have been held throughout the province. Offering professional development to elementary teachers means providing a range of topics from teacher wellness to physical fitness, art, music, literacy, math and more. PETA has always prided itself on being relevant and offering workshops and keynotes that span a broad range of topics. In recent years, keynote speakers including Sharon Taberski, Tony Stead, Miriam Trehearne, Steve Molene, Dr. Leonard Sax and Dr. Robin Sharma have shared their particular knowledge with teachers and have received rave reviews.

For a number of years in the mid-90s and early in the new millennium, PETA was able

to offer a separate Multiage Symposium, at Port Williams Elementary School. This specialized conference drew hundreds of interested teachers and became an important part of PETA's work.

PETA prides itself on being more than a conference association. There has been a long tradition of providing a variety of resources for teachers, including newsletters filled with practical everyday tips, topic-themed journals, summer institutes and special project grants for teachers.

CONFERENCE MEMORIES

During the 1980s, PETA used the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax as its conference site. The sheer size of the facility offered PETA the chance to have a Multiage Symposium as part of the conference and the central location was popular.

It was, however, also very costly and one bad conference meant economic disaster for PETA. The decision to leave the World Trade was not taken lightly but was necessary if we were to survive.

It was during these days that PETA developed a deep relationship with its sponsors



Above are teachers attending the PETA 2010 conference. They were participating in children's author Sheree Fitch's workshop: *Breathe, Stretch, Write a Whole Being, Whole Body Approach to Writing*. See page 11 for more on this workshop.

and publishers who stepped up and provided workshop speakers and keynotes at little charge to the organization. This generosity has never been forgotten by PETA, and our publishers' displays and involvement have continued to be a highlight of our conferences.

One of several “near disaster events” happened after PETA had moved to Prince Andrew High School in Dartmouth. Through a publisher, we had contracted Jeanette MacKenzie as our keynote speaker. The day before conference we got word that Jeanette's appendix had decided that she was not coming to PETA. The publisher was not going to replace her... until the PETA Executive had a chat with them. Enter Christine Finnochio, who arrived to do a keynote and workshop with less than 24 hours notice—she did a bang-up job. Jeannette provided our keynote the following year.

When teachers attend PETA events at Auburn Drive High School in Dartmouth, we often hear them wonder about the site. First of all, it is a high school and it also can be tricky to find. In the early 90s, PETA had developed a relationship with Prince Andrew High in Dartmouth. It had two gymnasiums, a performance theatre and, although tired, it was able to accommodate our needs and our large numbers. One year, early in September, we were contacted by the Halifax School Board and told that our booking had been cancelled and that another special association had booked the site. The word “panic” hardly seems strong enough, considering the amount of advance planning, including publication of the site in the conference booklet. After some serious scrambling, the Halifax Board found us another site—Auburn Drive. The site was new and beautiful, the staff was most accommodating, and we developed a relationship with several staff members who were anxious to provide their students as helpers in return for a donation to their club/team. This relationship with Auburn Drive has fostered and grown and we are very grateful to have Auburn Drive High to call our own on conference day.

There have been other conference-related adventures which are worth relating. In 2001 our special guest speaker was to be Sharon Taberski from New York. At that time, her

book *On Solid Ground* had been distributed in Nova Scotia schools as part of the Active Young Readers initiative and Sharon was “hot.” Sharon hated to fly, even on a good day. And following the events of September 11, 2001, she became much less interested in flying. As an Executive, we were willing to hire a car service for her transportation, if necessary. Through some fancy negotiations and persuasion from our Executive, Sharon finally agreed to come and provided us with a conference that remains a highlight among our many successful ventures. Her warmth, caring and passion for kids touched all who heard her.

Being on the PETA Executive is not for the faint hearted!

AND NOW FOR THE EXECUTIVE

Beginning with Dr. Florence Wall, PETA has been led by a variety of wonderful executive members. Presidents such as Betty Dunbar, Barb Allen, Bill Tower, Susan Hazelton, Marion Leier, Arthur Blades and Judy MacDonald are a part of PETA's history, and current members ride on their shoulders with pride. Executives often have a special culture all their own. At times they are regional, as current members invite others from their area to join.

There was the Port Hawkesbury crowd—Judy MacDonald, Buddy MacEachern and Doreen Beaton. In recent years, this area has been gracefully represented by Debbie Graham. The western part of our province was well represented by Bill Tower, Susan Hazelton and Arthur Blades, among others. The Annapolis Valley has also provided a significant number of executive members, including Brenda Newcombe, Lalia Kerr, Cathy Townsend, Heather Lewis, Marion Leier, Dave Campbell and Barb Rushton. With Fay Johansen and Krista Murray Hayden, PETA is expanding to Chignecto and other regions.

PETA continues to thrive because of the dedicated leadership of its Executive, and the quality of the opportunities offered to provincial teachers and the ongoing support of our loyal members. PETA looks back on its past with pride and looks ahead to its future with excitement!

 <p>CONFERENCE April 7 – 9, 2011 Delta Halifax Hotel Halifax, Nova Scotia</p>	 <p>KEYNOTE SPEAKER DR. SAMANTHA NUTT FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WAR CHILD CANADA</p>
<p>Concurrent Sessions include: <i>How to Tame a Bully</i> <i>Creating a Climate of Peace in your School</i> <i>21st Century Families</i> and many more</p>	<p>Conference Fee \$175.00 includes reception & meals Accommodations at Delta Halifax and Delta Barrington at \$84 + tax per night (includes parking) call 1-888-423-3582 and ask for Conference Group Rate</p>
<p>For more info contact: Gail Doucette Nova Scotia Teachers Union (902) 477-5621 1-800-565-6788</p>	<p>Register now at www.nstu.ca</p>  <p>Nova Scotia Teachers Union</p>