

Highlights of the 2014 CAfLN Members' Symposium!

by Martha Koch, CAfLN President-Elect

The first annual CAfLN Members' Symposium was held on May 1, 2014 in Winnipeg at the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. A total of 14 CAfLN members attended the symposium and two members joined us by Skype. Though we were a small group, founding members Lorna Earl, Damian Cooper and Ken O'Connor were joined by individuals from Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, representing a variety of roles in Canada's education system. CAfLN members from three Manitoba school divisions (Division-Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine, Seven Oaks School Division & Lakeshore School Division) were able to attend and shared their views. The contributions of a CAfLN member from the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium brought a unique perspective, as did the CAfLN members from the Calgary Board of Education and Regina Public Schools. The views of assessment researchers and pre-service teacher educators were also gathered from CAfLN members at the University of Manitoba, University of Calgary, and University of British Columbia who were in attendance.

After coffee, refreshments and an informal meet-and-greet, the CAfLN founding members shared their ideas about the most pressing issues in assessment for learning in Canada. This prompted a lively discussion during which everyone had an opportunity to describe some of the particular issues, needs and ongoing AfL initiatives in their context. We were struck by the similarities as well as a few key differences in what is taking place across jurisdictions; a reminder of the fundamental complexity of AfL.

The symposium is also the venue for the annual general meeting (AGM). As this was our first AGM, we spent some time ratifying the CAfLN by-laws before confirming the CAfLN directors and officers for the coming year and establishing the committees and sub-committees that are the life of CAfLN. We are thrilled that a number of CAfLN members have volunteered to become involved in activities such as recruiting new members, improving the features of the CAfLN website, finding and adding resources, and making communication with CAfLN members even more effective. A description of the entire CAfLN team for 2014-2015 is posted on the website under news bulletins. If you see an area where you would like to get involved just send an email to one of the CAfLN directors! This is your network. The more you engage; the more you learn.

While clarifying a few aspects of governance was a necessary part of the AGM, much of our conversation focused on continuing to define a shared vision of CAfLN. Since we are a member-led organization, we wanted to get a sense of each person's view of what CAfLN can and should be. One way that helped us to do this is that we asked each person at the symposium to give us a sense of why they had decided to become

a CAfLN member. Many of their responses focused on the importance of being part of a network and making connections with people across Canada who have a strong interest in formative assessment. We created the wordle you see on this page as a way of summarizing everyone's responses.

After a light lunch and some time to get to know one another, we turned our energies to envisioning the possibilities for the CAfLN website and forums. Many terrific ideas for improving the website and ensuring the forums are a convenient, timely and effective way of delving into the world of AfL in Canada emerged from our discussion. The CAfLN members who attended the symposium have an amazing wealth of experience and skills. In the coming months, you will begin to see some of their ideas take shape on our website.

The symposium ended with a wine & cheese at Bistro Two O Five on the University of Manitoba campus. The mood was one of collegiality and excitement as we all looked forward to the next morning and the start of CAfLN's first annual conference!

As a CAfLN member you are entitled to attend the annual symposium. There is no cost for this one-day event, which is held in conjunction with the annual conference. We hope you will consider attending next year's symposium to be held in Nanaimo, BC.