

## Local 556 Bursaries 2012

by Tom Tomassi



On behalf of Local 556, Tom Tomassi, Ed Larocque and Madeline McCarthy present bursary recipients with their awards. Clockwise from top left: Prabhjit Chane; Jonathan Vukson; Kathleen Kerr; Allan Sutherland.



### What's Inside

#### 1 Local 556 Bursaries

#### 2 Ed Ksenych: What Language ?

#### 4 The Green Corner

#### 5 AGM Meeting Notice

#### 5 Your SWFs

Once again, this is the time of the year when, on your behalf, the Local awards four Bursaries. Two \$1,500 Bursaries are targeted for aboriginal students and two \$1,000 Bursaries for all other students. This year again, we were overwhelmed with the number of applicants and the team selected four recipients. It is my understanding that the team had a real difficult task at hand, as they felt that all applicants were deserving.

I want to thank all our faculty who have not only made these bursaries possible, but also remain engaged in this process by getting the information out to the students and endorsing candidates that they believe are deserving.

We are proud to announce that Jonathan Vukson and Allan Sutherland are this year's recipients of the Aboriginal Bursary and Kathleen Kerr and Prabhjit Chane are this year's recipients of the Faculty Retiree Bursary.

Jonathan Vukson is in the CIFFA Certification, International Business Management Program. Allan Sutherland is in the Community Worker Program. Prabhjit Chane and Kathleen Kerr are both from the Bachelor of Nursing Program.

I am sure you join me in congratulating the four recipients, and wish them all the best in their future endeavors. ▼

# What Language Are We Talking?

## What's the Significance of Talking It?

by Ed Ksenych

*"Synergy", "leveraging", "best practice", "strategic imperatives", "client-focused", "bottom line"....*

I've been attending meetings regarding college affairs, following our President's columns in City College News and, for a while now, digesting statements about the future direction of our college, like our five "Strategic Imperatives and Objectives". What has struck me the most is how we're talking about what we're doing here. I'm concerned that the character of the language and imagination<sup>1</sup> that is enveloping our college has become less collegial, and more "corporate", to the point where other possible voices are being excluded or ignored.

What I mean by the character of the language and imagination becoming "corporate" isn't the preoccupation with the financial well-being of the college, or with the current economy, or with developing strong partnerships with business and industry; these are important concerns for any viable educational organization today. Rather it's the unquestioned adoption of a particular mind-set and language for talking about what we're doing here and should be doing in the future. What we've adopted involves a vocabulary of current business jargon and buzz-words that often does not clearly explain what is meant, and that continues to legitimize assumptions and practices without critically examining them to see if we should be fully endorsing them as a college.

Let me present a straightforward example. One of the five "Strategic Im-



peratives and Objectives" is "leveraging state-of-the-art technology". What does this mean? I have actually asked many people, and no one has been able to explain it to me. Whatever it might mean, it isn't being stated in everyday college English. It's being stated in corporate English. And the entire document is filled with these kinds of trendy business phrases and fashionable corporate concepts whose meanings are either obscure or can be interpreted in all sorts of ways, to the point that it's really not clear what it is we're being asked to go along with.

But there's a deeper problem than the fact that the concepts are fuzzy, unclear and trendy. It is a very exclusionary language and runs counter to the principle

of inclusivity that our college is founded on. Talking all the time in this language suggests that the only "community" or sector that our community college is here to serve is business and industry. Business and industry are very important to the well-being of our contemporary society. But they don't comprise all of our society, nor are they the focal point of all that we do here.

GBC is a public sector organization that provides a variety of services to a wide range of publics and communities of learners. We prepare people for work in community agencies, public sector organizations, non-profit organizations, the arts, cooperatives, aboriginal organiza-

Talking cont'd page 3

Talking *cont'd from page 2*

tions, and so on. And part of that preparation is upgrading, general knowledge courses, and developing employability skills for a long-term “career of working”, not just a particular occupation.

As it stands the current content of our “Strategic Imperatives and Objectives” as well as the corporate language in which they’re expressed sound as if they’re exclusively focused on one sector of the wider community. Our imperatives and objectives need to be envisioned and expressed in a much more inclusive collegial language that respects the diversity of work, initiatives and styles of education that are going on at our college.

But there is yet another downside to this corporate-style of talking about who we are and what we do. It sets a tone for the organizational culture of our college that shapes decision-making and has practical consequences for the everyday activities that occur here. Again let me give you a straightforward example. Consider the general classroom design found in our college buildings, especially in those classrooms that are being renovated (my experience is primarily with classrooms at St. James Campus).

Of course, there is a range of classroom sizes and designs, but one that faculty frequently encounter are rooms that position an LED projector assumed to be used primarily for Power Point presentations on screens that descend over a whiteboard or blackboard. Now what kind of assumption is being made about what education should look like in this simple design decision? Basically, that a professor presents information and ideas to students much like one would at a business meeting. It is assumed there will be little or no meaningful classroom discussion that will require any kind of recording or documenting on the white-

board/blackboard; that is, a discussion that might actually produce an overall lesson or work through an example based on input from students. In order to get to the whiteboard/blackboard, you often have to close off the projector, turn on extra lights, and roll up the screen. And then when it’s over, roll the screen down, turn the lights off and turn on the projector again.

This may seem like an insignificant example. But it isn’t on two counts. First, it’s not insignificant to those whose approach to the teaching-learning process is more interactional and collaborative than working solely with a one-way presentation (and use the whiteboard/blackboard several times in a three hour class). But it’s also significant because it illustrates how ways of teaching and learning that vary from the dominant business-style presentation are, if not entirely excluded, certainly over-ruled and relegated to a kind of second-class status simply by how the classrooms often end up getting designed or renovated.

This is but one example of how assumptions and practices associated with the corporate-style language used to communicate in our college sets the tone for the organizational culture of our college, influences decision-making, and has practical consequences for the everyday activities that occur here. I have several more, but there’s no need to go into them here.

Can we change how we’re talking about what we do, and should be doing, here? Yes. Do we want to? I hope so. As Wittgenstein demonstrated<sup>2</sup>, the “language games” we play do generate the worlds in which we situate ourselves and live. In so doing they render some things visible, and other things invisible; assign meaning and importance to some states

of affairs, and devalue others. And I certainly wouldn’t want to see educating and academic ideas rendered invisible at our college because of how we’re talking about what we’re doing. ▼

#### References

1. Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004.
2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1953.





THE GREEN CORNER

# The Final Footprint

by Jill Edmondson

"Buying the farm" might sound green, but it's not. Traditional ways of "kicking the bucket" entail a heavy carbon footprint. Whether funeral arrangements involve burial or cremation, the impact on the environment is significant. In fact, in the United States, more than 90,000 tons of steel (from coffins and vaults), plus upwards of 2,700 tons of metal alloys (used in casket linings) goes six feet under every year.

Based on the above figures, one might suggest cremation as a more eco-friendly way of saying goodbye. In terms of land use, cremation may be a good decision, but the cremation itself is not particularly kind to the planet. Cremation burns a lot of fossil fuels because it requires temperatures of 700°C to 1100°C for an average of two hours per body. Not surprisingly, the process is emissions heavy, yielding carbon monoxide, hydrogen fluoride, sulphur dioxide,

and nitrogen oxide. As well, cremation can release one to eight grams of mercury from dental fillings into the atmosphere.

Fortunately there are eco-friendly alternatives. An environmentally-friendly funeral has two criteria. First, the body is not embalmed. The primary ingredient in embalming fluid is formaldehyde, which is carcinogenic, and over time, this leaches into soil and groundwater. In the United States, upwards of 800,000 gallons of embalming fluid goes every year.

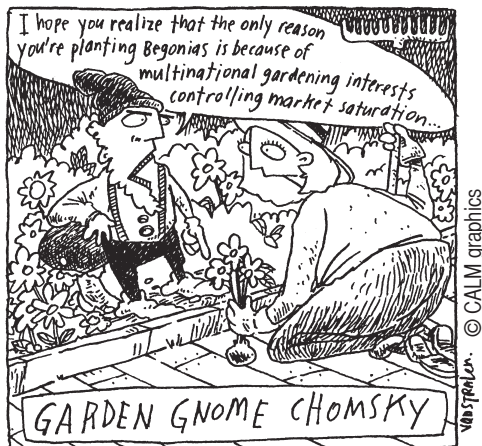
Second, a green funeral requires biodegradable casket. Eco-friendly materials for coffins include banana leaves, rattan, papier maché, and willow. As well, Earth-friendly caskets come with linings that will eventually decompose, such as calico or linen. Some funeral homes and crematoria take being green a step further: A crematorium in Oregon offers a bicycle ride into the great hereafter in lieu of a gasoline-powered hearse.

Naturally, a green burial should be situated at an Earth-friendly locale. The Centre for



Natural Burial ([www.naturalburial.coop](http://www.naturalburial.coop)) has a list and an interactive map of green burial sites around the world. In Canada, the green burial options are limited to Vancouver, Victoria and Cobourg. The United States currently has about twenty-five such sites, with several more under development in places as diverse as Colorado, Maine and Hawaii.

Essentially, a green burial preserves local flora and fauna. The unlandscaped interment sites allow only native plants, and in lieu of a tombstone, graves are marked by local stones or GPS coordinates. In other words, eco-friendly sites for pushing up daisies require loved ones to skip the daisies altogether... unless of course they are indigenous to the area.



**REMEMBER**  
your #1 spot  
for employment info

**opseu556.org**



# Your SWFs

by Tom Tomassi

As you all know, discussions about your workload between yourself and your chairperson for the academic year beginning in September 2012 will begin soon. It is important that all of us faculty insist that a discussion takes place between ourselves and the chair to discuss not only our workload, but all other issues that pertain to our teaching, such as Professional Development and other complementary functions.

Your Standard Workload Form (SWF) should be given to you six weeks prior to the start of teaching, exclusive of vacation. Therefore if your SWF begins on September 4<sup>th</sup>, you need to receive your SWF by May 18<sup>th</sup>.

If there is agreement between yourself and the chair regarding the assigned workload, sign it, make a copy for your records and return the original to the chairperson. If however, there is disagreement about the workload, discuss the disagreement with your chairperson.

If you are still unable to resolve it, then within three days, refer your assignment to the CWMG (College Workload Monitoring Group) by checking the appropriate box on the bottom of the SWF (middle box) and indicate under faculty members comment what your disagreement is. Fax a copy to the union office (416-415-4306), or scan and email it to us at

opseu556@gmail.com and return the original to the chairperson.

As soon as we receive the SWF, our office will be in touch with you to discuss the issue. As the co-chair of the CWMG (College Workload Monitoring Committee), I will then engage in dialogue with my management counterpart in an effort to resolve your concerns. Should we be unsuccessful, then you will be presenting your issue to the CWMG for resolution.

This whole process shouldn't take any more than six weeks, so by the time you leave for your vacation, your workload issue will be resolved.

There are many reasons as to why it is important that you scrutinize all aspects of your workload. If you wish to discuss your assignment with any of the stewards prior to signing off, I would encourage you to do so. If you wish to call our office at ext. 2200, there will be someone available to address your issues. ▼

## Annual General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, May 8, 2012  
4:00 pm ~ 6:00 pm

St. James Campus, 200 King St. E. ~ SJA, Room #128

*To be followed by a social  
get together at Betty's*



**OPSEU Local 556**  
George Brown College  
PO Box 1015, Station B  
Toronto, ON M5T 2T9  
(416) 415-5000 ext 2200  
[opseu556@gmail.com](mailto:opseu556@gmail.com)

The Vocal Local is a publication of the George Brown College Faculty Union, OPSEU Local 556. It is intended to provide information and stimulate discussion among its members. We invite your participation and welcome your contributions. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity.

Send your comments, articles, letters, praise, etc. to:  
VoLo Editor at [opseu556@gmail.com](mailto:opseu556@gmail.com)

