



Making an Impact in Canadian Society

Educating

The future of our world is linked to the values and priorities being developed in the minds and hearts of young people today. L'Arche's educational materials are making an impact in the lives of thousands of students and teachers across Canada and are used in public, Catholic and private schools.

- Nathan Ball, Executive Director

In Brief...

LOWER CANADA COLLEGE

"We were very pleased to receive the materials on Jean Vanier and L'Arche. We intend to integrate them into a new ethics and world religions program at the Grade 9-10 level. Jean Vanier is a wonderful Canadian leader and role model. His ideas are unique in a me-centered world – and should prove very useful in the development of our curriculum." Christopher Shannon, Headmaster, Lower Canada College, Montreal.

YOUTH BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

L'Arche Canada is preparing a Bible Study Guide for church youth groups, to use with the Vanier and L'Arche educational videos. We expect it will be ready in the late fall.

Helping Students Dream: L'Arche Educational Materials

L'Arche is about caring for people with intellectual disabilities and also about changing society through its message of hope and inclusion. Young people are a particular focus. L'Arche helps its many college-aged assistants discover their gifts and find a vision for their lives; and frequently, L'Arche communities give presentations in schools.

Responding to requests from high school educators, in recent years L'Arche Canada has collaborated to produce a body of highly regarded curriculum materials for leadership, civics, social studies, religion and philosophy. Teachers are enthusiastic about them and students are drawn to L'Arche values, and to Jean Vanier who invites them to have a dream for their lives and to help build a world where everyone belongs. When Vanier spoke to nearly 2,000 enthusiastic grade 11 students from 17 school boards at a Toronto Youth Forum last fall, teachers used L'Arche materials to prepare and follow up in the classroom. The L'Arche message is



The Vanier Youth Forum was sponsored by a cooperative of Catholic school boards in Southern and South-Western Ontario.

becoming integrated into school environments and transforming them.

L'Arche materials are widely used in Ontario. L'Arche Canada is working to extend their use in public, private, and Catholic schools across the country. We are presently in discussion with the Alberta Ministry of Education about including them in its grade 11 Social Studies program. To learn more please visit the Education section of www.larche.ca or write education@larche.ca.

L'Arche Materials Impact Students' Lives



Narmie and Kevin show off L'Arche materials

Last year our board and L'Arche Canada co-produced the DVD-ROM *Choosing Our Future*, in which Jean Vanier talks with students about their lives and concerns. Many students have had their passion to make a difference in this world ignited by this resource. Youth are challenging each other to witness to the beauty of diversity, to go beyond the superficialities

in relationships, and to see the gifts in weakness. As this curriculum continues to touch students this year, there is reason to celebrate, for the hopeful signs are that young people want to wholeheartedly engage in the venture of becoming human!

I am so struck by the awe and respect students feel towards Vanier, this 80-year old man who offers a different kind of wisdom. He calls forth in them a desire to think about their lives. It is very powerful for me to see their willingness to listen to a message that counters everything our culture tells them about success and what it looks like. They sense the truth of what Vanier says—that there is a deeper side to success, a different way of measuring it.

Narmie Kandiah,** a grade 12 student in the International Baccalaureate Program and vice-president of her school's student council, helped with making the DVD. She speaks about its impact in her school: "Most students don't normally ever talk about what Jean Vanier talks about—loneliness, diversity, fear, weakness—but these topics



Jean speaking with Narmie and other students

...continued

In Brief...

JEAN VANIER IN THE NEWS

- Jean celebrated his 80th birthday in Trosly, France in September.
- To mark Jean's birthday, The Globe and Mail has begun publishing a monthly correspondence between Jean and Ian Brown.
- In October, Jean received the respected President's Award from the Canadian Society for Training and Development. Nathan Ball and Gordon Henry received the award on Jean's behalf.

NOVA SCOTIA GOVERNMENT

"I loved the program materials that you sent." Sarah Hainsworth, Media Librarian and evaluator for Social Studies, Nova Scotia Ministry of Education.

A STUDENT'S COMMENT

"Jean Vanier's wisdom supersedes the boundaries of age and culture. The students truly understand his message, the message of unconditional love for humanity." Sammy Tewelde, Grade 12 student and school president, Jean Vanier High School.



L'Arche Canada has a well-regarded body of curriculum materials.

are important to them. The DVD lets students discuss these subjects. It teaches that belonging is important in every school context. It changes them. We belong to each other, we belong to every race,

we are all human---abled and other-abled!" She continues, "A friend and I had this experience: We decided to sit with a student with disabilities who was always sitting alone at lunch. She told us that no one except her educational assistant had ever talked to her before. Getting to know her shattered our assumptions and stereotypes about people with disabilities."

**Choosing Our Future: Senior Students in Conversation with Jean Vanier, 2007.*

***Narmie Kandiah is at Pope John Paul II school, Scarborough, Ontario. At university, she hopes to study bio-medical sciences and human rights.*

Kevin Welbes Godin, resource consultant in Religion and Family Life education, Toronto Catholic Board

Teaching Citizenship and Personal Responsibility

In my teaching I use the L'Arche materials on Jean Vanier's vision and philosophy. I have also recommended them to other teachers. Vanier is a good example for students of a Canadian who has made an impact on the world. His message is simple but powerful and one that teenagers can relate to. His philosophy fits into various high school courses (Civics, Family Studies) where concepts of citizenship and personal responsibility are discussed. In Civics, I use the *Belonging: The Search for*

Acceptance video and discussion questions as an introduction to the rights and responsibilities that we have as citizens in our community and in the world. This course is about challenging students' perception of themselves and their place in the world. Vanier's message about looking out for the most vulnerable calls students to action. By the time we look at world events where there is human suffering, the seeds of change have been planted in the class and the students are eager to engage.

I am looking forward to using the *Et toi? Tu Choisis Quoi?* DVD-ROM in my grade 12 core French class soon. It will lead students into discussion of important social and life questions while strengthening their French.



Anne Sagar, Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School, Markham, Ontario

Two Educators and a Pedagogical Principle Rooted in L'Arche Philosophy



Joe Bezzina Tony Cosentino

This fall, L'Arche was approached for materials by the Restorative Services worker for a large public school board. Others concerned for students at risk are already using these materials. Joe Bezzina who instructs teacher-candidates in Religion at the University of Western Ontario

Faculty of Education writes, "You should know how much the material on L'Arche and Jean Vanier benefits us. Recently, I co-presented a paper on students at risk,* with Tony Cosentino, Religious Education & Family Life Resource Teacher for Renfrew County Catholic School Board. In it, we referenced the L'Arche material as especially helpful with such students. When we presented our paper, one teacher questioned why students at risk should be singled out; why not include all students. Tony, the lead author, responded strongly, 'If we make guidelines to help

students who are disadvantaged, these guidelines actually help all of the students.' This is a Vanier principle and one of which we are both deeply convinced." Tony adds, "Jean Vanier's work is becoming more and more influential in my thinking. I find his books and the L'Arche resources a wonderful asset for my professional development work with teachers."

**"Students at risk" are those who, for a variety of reasons, may not obtain a high school diploma. The paper, A Place of Honour, references Vanier. It has become an online resource for teachers (www.carleo.org).*

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L'ARCHE CANADA FOUNDATION

10265 Yonge Street
Richmond Hill ON L4C 4Y7

Tel: 1.800.571.0212 or 1.905.770.7696

Fax: 905.884.4819

Email: foundation@larche.ca

Charitable Number: 889909719RR0001

www.larchefoundation.ca

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