

## GALE BC is Evolving

Over the past 15 years, GALE BC has contributed much to the process of educating educators and related professionals about the needs of LGBT students, families and staff. We are often seen as leaders in BC and Canada, when it comes to advocacy, education and the creation of resource materials. And, like many other organizations, GALE is facing some challenges and re-evaluating its purposes and its activities.

At the November meeting, it was decided to make some changes that take into account changing social and political conditions, and our reduced human resources. The feedback that has been received from our members is that they are generally supportive of the range of activities we have previously undertaken. The other strong message is that teachers are working harder than ever and do not have a lot of free time to devote to volunteer groups. Many still don't feel free to be visible and out at school, and so a small, core group of members has been left to do most of the public work of the organization. We do want our community to know that our group, like so many others, cannot rely on the same few individuals forever. As we are seeing more and more volunteer organizations down-sizing their workload, it is hoped that those who have been on the fence may now decide to lend their time to the important work of any of our community's organizations.

Following upon the agreement between the BC government and the Correns, it appears that the Ministry of Education is serious about making changes in the K-12 curriculum and in the delivery of this curriculum. The agreement states many areas in which there will be more explicit inclusion of LGBT realities and perspectives. As well, societal attitudes are shifting, and we hope that many more teachers, students and families will speak up if they sense that something inappropriate is being done or said. We also trust that most education authorities will now treat such complaints with more seriousness and respect. However, there is still a need for the LGBT community and its allies to assist the Ministry of Education and the various school boards in the process of making schools safer and more inclusive.

GALE will continue to support the creation of GSAs in schools, and we will try to create a self-sustaining GSA network. We will offer GSA conferences in various locations and continue our GSA bursary program. We will also continue to provide financial assistance to graduating LGBT students and allies, via our Scholarship project. Our website will still offer many downloadable resources, information about other books, videos, lesson plans, and school district policies. As well, there are web links to many other groups that are directly or indirectly involved in making schools more LGBT-inclusive, such as AMES, Out in Schools, PrideSpeak and the BC Teachers' Federation.

Because of the work of our organization and many others, we are seeing social attitudes to LGBT issues and persons undergoing a positive change. Due to this and with the BCTF's commitment to offer glbt-related workshops for teachers and teachers-in-training, GALE will be offering fewer workshops except in special circumstances. We will also spend less time on meetings and creating newsletters, and more time on personal / professional support for LGBT teachers and allies. This will take the form of mentorship, conferences for teachers, provision of resources, advocacy within our professional bodies, and encouraging school boards in BC to implement policies that are truly LGBT-positive.

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