

transition



The Stories We Tell

The Stories We Tell

I confess, I can't tell a joke. I either remember the punch line and not the joke, or I tell the joke all the way to the end and botch the punch line. Clearly, jokes are not my forte so I leave them to my husband. But jokes are not the same as stories, and I *can* tell stories, especially family stories. I tell stories to my grandchildren about the day we had, stories about my past or their parent's past, fairy tales, stories about overcoming fears, and stories created from thin air. The wonderful thing about stories is I never forget the beginning—"once upon a time." From there, the sky is the limit.

The focus of this issue is storytelling, especially the importance of storytelling in families. The Institute is proud to include author and former board member Blanche Howard among its contributors for this issue. Her article draws us into her exploration of why we humans are compelled to arrange facts into stories, giving them a beginning and an end. Her life experience is central, in particular her relationship with author Carol Shields, as she explores this need to tell stories and offers us her insights into this need.

David Sidwell, program director at the American West Heritage Center in Utah, has written about how telling oral stories creates community or *communitas*, which is a feeling of equality and involvement that a group experiences through the process. Vivid images illustrate his assertion that sharing oral stories rather than written words is both important and more effective.

I developed the third article using many online resources in addition to my experience as a parent, grandparent and writer of children's stories. It introduces readers to the craft of telling a story aloud, especially family stories, without benefit of a script. I am not referring to the kind of storytelling people do for a living, but rather offer some practical ideas to inspire people to tell their own stories. I have also included some online resources that readers might find useful if they want to pursue storytelling further.

I hope you enjoy this issue and take time to share some of your stories with the people you call family.

—Elaine Lowe, Editor

Contents

The Stories We Tell, by <i>Blanche Howard</i>	3
Storytelling and Community, by <i>David Sidwell</i>	6
Stories Heard are Stories Remembered, by <i>Elaine Lowe</i>	11

The Vision of the Vanier Institute of the Family is to make families as important to the life of Canadian society as they are to the lives of individual Canadians.

transition

**Autumn
2007
Vol. 37, No. 3**

Allan D. MacKay
President

Jean T. Fournier
Executive Committee Chair

Clarence Lochhead
Executive Director

Elaine Lowe
Editor

Lucie Legault
Distribution Clerk

Transition is published quarterly by the Vanier Institute of the Family (VIF) for distribution to its members. To become a member, or to find out more about VIF, please SEE PAGE 16 FOR CONTACT INFORMATION.

To report a change of address, send your old *Transition* address label, with your new address, to the Vanier Institute of the Family. See page 16 for contact information. Editorial contributions and comments are welcome. Material for publication is subject to editing. Contact:
Elaine Lowe, Editor, *Transition*
Telephone: 613-623-3105
E-mail: elainelowe@sympatico.ca

The contents of *Transition* may be reprinted or used on radio or television without permission. However, a credit is requested. If in print, please send a copy to VIF.

Transition was founded in 1970.
ISSN0049-4429
Charitable Reg. #10816 8337 RR0001
PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 0040006500
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE
CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO
CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT
94 CENTREPOINTE DRIVE
OTTAWA, ON K2G 6B1
E-mail: llegault@vifamily.ca

Networks

September 24-25: *2nd National Conference: New Directions in Senior's Mental Health.* Mississauga, ON. Host: Canadian Coalition for Seniors' Mental Health. Info: www.ccsmh.ca

September 27-30: *Ethnicity, Civil Society, and Public Policy: Engaging Cultures in a Globalizing World.* Winnipeg, MB. Host: Canadian Ethnic Studies Association. Info: CESA@uwinnipeg.ca

October 14-17: *Informing Health Care Policy for Canadian Children and Youth: Strategies that are Making a Difference!* Montreal, Quebec. Host: Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres. Info: www.caphc.org

October 17-20: *Health, Work & Wellness Conference 2007: Conquering the CHAOS.* Toronto, ON. Learn to take back control of your working life. Host: Health, Work and Wellness. Info: www.healthworkandwellness.com

October 19-20: *Halfway There: A Canada Fit for Children in a World Fit for Children.* Children Matter Symposium. Calgary, Alberta. Host: UNICEF Canada. Info: emurray@mtroyal.ca

October 25-26: *On New Shores: Understanding Immigrant Children.* Guelph, Ontario. Host: Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, University of Guelph. Info: www.family.uoguelph.ca/newsPage.cfm?id=38 or schuang@uoguelph.ca

November 1-3: *Improving Access & Minimizing Disparities: A National Forum on Cancer Care for All Canadians.* Vancouver, BC. Hosts: BC Cancer Agency, Interprofessional Continuing Education of the University of British Columbia and Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control. Info: www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Cancer.htm

November 16-17: *Your Passion, Your Profession. An Early Childhood Conference.* Hosts: Canadian Association for Young Children & Mount Saint Vincent University. Info: www.cayc.ca/indexece.html

November 19-21: *Putting It All Together.* Halton-Hamilton National Conference to promote the relationships between school, community and family, and healthy child and youth development. Info: <http://interkom.ca/earlyyears>

January 31-February 2: *Valuing All Children.* The Early Years Conference 2008. Vancouver, BC. Host: Interprofessional Continuing Education of the University of British Columbia. Info: www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/Early_Years.htm or ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca

"*Networks*" lists events in support of families, especially major events of interest to many readers across Canada. For a free listing, please give the Editor ample notice, and state in what language(s) your event will be conducted. Provide written information in **English and French**, if available.

Photo on cover by
iStockphoto.com/AndreasReh

The Stories We Tell

by Blanche Howard

Lately my adult children have been suggesting that I write my memoirs. This was rather unexpected; up until now their eyes had glazed over whenever I began to tell stories of the Great Depression or repeated my father's funny sayings (the zany lines over which I had once groaned but now found myself repeating), not to mention the mild embarrassment of any mention of their own precocity and unusual cuteness as babies.

Now they actually wanted to hear my stories. I dug out my ancient five-year diary, one of those little red leather-bound books ruled off into days and years, five lines to an entry, complete with a tiny key that locked it for privacy. "Cold today. Went to school. Mama made rhubarb pies."

These were truly the small daily episodes of my childhood. Why didn't they suffice? I put memoir-writing on hold and signed up for a history course at our local community college and there I found the answer. I thought I knew what history was, a recounting of the events of long ago, but our instructor said no, that wasn't it at all. A recounting of the daily events in the early seventeenth century at the time of the Thirty Years War might read something like my dairy: "Cold today. Fetched water from the well and saw a rough-looking group of men in the distance. Someone said there was some fighting," and then no more talk of fighting for another month.

This isn't history. History was born when, much later, scholars examined the times and saw that the fighting had gone on at first sporadically and then with more determination for thirty years, following a rebellion by a few hotheads in the Evangelistic Union of Calvinists against the Catholic Hapsburg rulers. A local skirmish ballooned and enveloped most of Europe. After thirty years the fighting ended with a prostrate Germany and the Holy Roman Empire reduced to an empty shell. Now we had history: a story with a beginning, a muddled middle and an end.



© istockphoto.com/George Cairns

So history, like memoirs, is not a matter of congruent fact. History is the making of stories based on a choosing of the facts. The scholars who determined that the Thirty Years War was the defining movement of the early seventeenth century were not interested in the little lives of individuals, the mini-stories of men who avoided the fighting, the women who managed to keep on baking bread and raising children. History is interested in the grander scheme, the patterns that emerge when discrete events are stitched together, the big story.

Why this human imperative to arrange the facts into stories? I think it is to give our brains something we can work with, a bite-sized digestible portion. One episode after another is something we can't process, an information overload that needs some mechanism to sort it out and store manageable bytes where they can be taken out and pondered and arranged in such a way that we can look back and say, "This is where it started, this is where it ends."

Over the years historians have grappled with reducing the major events that shaped governments and economies and all the big things into historical narrative, but that isn't enough to satiate our curiosity. What seems to linger alongside the grander scheme is a hunger for the forgotten interstices of history, the minor events that my children

were after in their requests for a memoir. And in talking with other seniors I realized that it wasn't just my children; other aging parents were finding the same thing. By the time children are in their forties and fifties their parents are failing, bracing themselves against a distant coldness, a glacial foretelling that chills the skin and seeps into the bloodstream and sends shivers down the spine of both parent and child.

These middle-aged children must now face, four-square, the finiteness of human life. It is no longer possible to hide behind the curtain of denial that has, since adolescence, protected them; they no longer believe in their own imperviousness. They, we, all of us, crave some sort of continuity. We want to know what went before, what the world used to be like—or not so much the world but the backward shadow each of us casts. The shadow that stretches back to grandparents, great-grandparents, and sometimes into the mire of genealogical research. Not a daily fact sheet; what we want are mini-histories—a grouping of the facts so that stories take shape, stories that have some sort of beginning, middle and end. Stories that connect us, that will stave off, or lessen, the abyss of aloneness. We need memoirs and we need them now, before a parent dies and family history is lost.

Not long ago my daughter Allison and I edited the letters that Carol Shields and I wrote to each other over the thirty years we knew one another. The raw materials were letters much like more sophisticated diary entries. We talked of daily events, the books we read, our families that we nurtured, our failures and then our successes as writers. Taken separately they didn't make a story. It was only after my daughter and I had pondered and worked over the letters that patterns began to emerge, that we could see that an event marked the beginning of a new phase of our friendship. An early impulse had been to separate the material by years, but patterns are not defined by the calendar. And so we began to group the phases we could see emerging. We arranged it so that each chapter made a story with a story's defining boundaries, and in the end we had a memoir: a series of stories that transcended the individual smaller stories and told a larger story of the belonging that friendship brings.

Is this human desire for stories encoded in our genes? Something that evolved in *homo sapiens* along with thumbs? Why is it important for me to know that my paternal grandfather was an early surveyor in the wilderness from which Canada was



Blanche Howard with Carol Shields

© Photo courtesy of Blanche Howard

carved? And why was it important enough to one of my nieces that she retrieved the material from the Glenbow Museum, photocopied the journal and distributed it to us? The diary itself is a somewhat battered black-covered notebook, inscribed on the title page in the beautiful copperplate writing that was then in use, "George Machon Winnipeg Manitoba Dec. 23, 1876." It tells the story of a motley group of young, untrained men who left Sarnia, Ontario on May 4, 1876, made their way to the lakehead (now Thunder Bay, Ontario) and on to Winnipeg and endured black flies and mosquitoes and illness and frostbite travelling across the frozen prairies. Eventually, the ones who were left (some of the group had succumbed to the cold) arrived at the Battle River and officially named the town of North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

This is the sort of thing we who are alive today want—a story of our forebears with a beginning, middle and end—and we don't care what happened the day after the journey was finished. The journey has become a separate entity, a history, something we can hold on to out of a past we weren't there for.

So maybe it is in the genes. Perhaps this seemingly-universal desire to relate through stories goes back to hunting and gathering, the pride of the tribe when one of their own killed the biggest bison or found a new way to preserve the precious fruits of foraging.

Over the years, the centrality of tribal life has given way to the centrality of extended family life and

then of the nuclear family. The Judeo-Christian heritage with its Old Testament stories about the way the world was created was an attempt to make sense of an infinity our brains aren't equipped to understand. The New Testament stories about the birth of Christ and his teachings gave us a new way to perceive our friends and forgive our enemies. The Haida Indians of the Northwest explained creation with totems that told the stories of the animals that brought the world into being, and an animal became a marker of individual tribal families. Islam shares part of our Old Testament and builds on that with the stories of the prophet Mohammed. All the world's peoples sought their own explanations for the state of our being and passed them on as stories.

So it goes back a long way, this need. Before the invention of the printing press and the advent of widespread literacy we told and retold our stories orally. This in itself fashioned our brains with skills that have now fallen into disuse, in that the ability to memorize long and complicated events and shape them into coherent patterns was a particular talent and one that was revered. Storytellers drifted from one small village to the next and recounted tales of what was happening outside their own domains. The locals added to the length with their own stories of the goings-on in their own villages.

After Gutenberg's momentous invention we began to read our stories and then we began to invent them. Fiction became a means of telling a story whose essence was not of one or even a group of particular living individuals but a way to search out something universal. In the hands of an accomplished teller, these fictional stories could be far more focused on the things that make us human than were the rather messy doings of real-life individuals who don't always stick to the script but tend to wander off into by-ways that muddle the beginning, middle and end. Shakespeare was a master at pinpointing human foibles through fiction; who since has despaired so volubly as Hamlet? maneuvered a weakling spouse as deftly as Lady MacBeth? raged so terribly against the final folly of his old age as King Lear? In Shakespeare

both the hero and villain are, as he put it, "hoisted by his own petard." Fictional stories took us out of the fenced-in boundaries of coherent fact and brought us into an arena where we were able to examine something deeper about the human psyche, where we were invited to ponder not just what happened but what in our humanity impelled it to happen. These stories said to us, you aren't just an unwilling pawn of fate or of the gods, you are a contributor and shaper.

But this doesn't completely answer why it is that we want to bring our stories to the level of the personal, of the familial. There is something else operating here. We grow up loving our parents, or rejecting them, or forgiving them, or doing all three at once, emotions that may be bewildering. We need to solve the puzzle, to try to look at their lives and understand what it was that impelled them to the actions we may applaud or deride as the case may be. We want to peek inside the hidden aspects of their lives and through that to shed light on our own.

Then what of family stories that reach further back, like the story of my grandfather's journey — other than the fact that it makes for a good story, the beginning, middle and end of an adventure, that is? Why do such family stories beckon, intrigue, acquire significance? Partly, I suppose, because they are the source of at least some of the genetic material that provides the broad outline for what we have or may become. It helps us to understand. It is the clay from which we sprung and perhaps it is a mould into which we can fit a portion of our own lives, or at least understand from whence the impulse arises.

But beyond and above all this is the need to belong. We are like other animals in our need to belong to our own group, or tribe, or family. If we don't belong, if we are outcasts, we are outcasts because we have no stories to bring us into the fold. As humans, we differ from animals in that we can reach back into a forgotten past, find where we belong, weave that belonging into the fabric of our existence. Stories locate us in the chaos of a boundless universe. They give us a place where we can live. ▣

Blanche Howard is a former Director of the Board of VIF and the author of several novels. She recently published a new book: A Memoir of Friendship: The Letters Between Carol Shields and Blanche Howard (Penguin Canada).

This is the sort of thing we who are alive today want — a story of our forebears with a beginning, middle and end — and we don't care what happened the day after the journey was finished.

Storytelling and Community

by David Sidwell

*The breath of life,
The spirit of life,
The word of life,
It flies to you and you and you
Always the word.*

—Maori Proverb—

How could I ever forget my father, goblin-like and fiery from the campfire's glow, telling us stories of my grandfather? He was so alive that evening. And we, huddled together under blankets against the chill of the night, were never warmer. Little did I know the gift my father was giving me that night. He gave us all stories, sure, but he was also sharing something far more potent.

Storytelling is one of the most ancient of the arts. For generations, this very democratic art form has helped societies strengthen and form cultural bonds and has helped people feel closer and more connected to each other. It can safely be said that as long as societies have existed, storytelling has existed within them. Without stories and storytelling, how else can a society discover and reinforce the common bonds that exist among its members?

Through the centuries, storytelling has been used to pass on traditions, community and cultural ways of understanding the world (paradigms), and moral and ethical codes of conduct. In many instances, the telling of stories has been passed off as "entertainment," as it was with my father's campfire stories, but it is easy to see the significance they hold in our communities. Stories provide a golden thread of awareness in humans. They help us know, question, remember and understand. They help us realize how interdependent we are and how much we need each other to survive and be happy.

Storytelling is one of the most ancient of the arts. For generations, this very democratic art form has helped societies strengthen and form cultural bonds and has helped people feel closer and more connected to each other.



© Elaine Lowe

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz noted, "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun."¹ Those webs can be understood as what we usually call *culture*. Storytelling helps us understand and explore these webs and the myriad connections that make up our communities. Not only that; storytelling also helps to create new communities, as paradigms, feelings and emotions are shared personally through experienced narratives or vicariously through fictional events.

Stories themselves, when shared with audiences, are often signatures of cultures in capsule form. They contain archetypes and standards for acceptable behaviour. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss maintained that through the stories of a culture, that entire culture could be accessed and interpreted.² The storyteller gives her listeners such interpretation in subtle and entertaining ways. Though this does not often happen deliberately or overtly, the storyteller disseminates important cultural information and interpretation through channels that are more spiritual and more subconscious than, for example,

Stories provide a golden thread of awareness in humans. They help us know, question, remember and understand. They help us realize how interdependent we are and how much we need each other to survive and be happy.

an anthropologist's ethnographic narrative. Valuable life ways, constantly threatened in a quickly changing world, can be preserved through the telling of tales. As we consider the positive ways characters in stories relate to events and people in the story, these ways can be established or renewed. Of course, my father probably wasn't thinking all of this when he was telling stories around our little campfire. But I think he knew, innately, that what he was doing was important as well as fun.

Consider the story of Cinderella. There is far more than an entertaining story that is being shared. There can certainly be a moral or morals—lessons for our lives should we choose to take and understand them. Themes surrounding human decency and kindness, true love, fortitude, and others can all be found between "Once upon a time..." and "...happily ever after." These ethical codes remind us how we should behave. They are the commas and exclamation points that determine the grammar of culturally good behaviour. But storytelling can go even deeper than these lessons.

When a group engages in storytelling, a spirit of *communitas* can pervade the entire group, regardless of the various backgrounds of each individual member. *Communitas* is a feeling of equality, a profundity of shared, vital—and in a way spiritual—involvement that a group experiences in the process of ritual or quasi-ritual activities. When *communitas* is present, everyone feels welcome, everyone feels like they belong. Hierarchies and status are left at the door for a little while in favour of total group solidarity. Think of a wedding. If the President of the United States were present at your wedding, would he be the most important person there? Of course not, *you* are! It's *your* wedding! And while your wedding moves through to the "I dos," the symbols of the wedding promote the cultural codes that we are all supposed to live by. In a Christian context, the bride dressed in white may indicate purity, the ring, perhaps, a never-ending love between partners.

It is this spirit of *communitas* that is the goal of the storyteller. With every hero's action, every conflict overcome and every personal reminiscence, we are reminded of what is important to say, do, or prepare for in various circumstances. The ethical strands of community behaviour are woven into the tapestry of our verbal cultural constructs. We willingly put our hierarchies aside to be entertained and taught.

All of these rituals and activities have the common goal of reasserting shared paradigms and celebrating the known and common social structures that exist around us. *Communitas* is important to bringing people together, and to building a true sense of individual value and shared community in our diverse world.

Not only are cultural paradigms shared through storytelling, but personal and individual interpretations of life and the moral and ethical codes that accompany these interpretations are also shared. Thus, society and individual are brought together in a synergy of experience for both the teller and the audience.

It may seem complex, but it is simply part of the magic of storytelling.

We all have stories to tell. It is tempting, perhaps, to leave it up to the new storytelling professionals who travel the continent, weave tales at festivals and craft CDs and DVDs for our enjoyment. But we need to continue this age-old art ourselves, to create times and situations in which we know that stories will be told. We can't leave this important cultural task just to the artists. We have to tell our own stories ourselves.

Our personal stories are particularly important to us and to our communities. Our lives are made up of stories, stored in our minds as memories and sensory images. As with anything that we do, sharing and giving are important both to us and to those around us. Since life itself is a story that is constantly unfolding, telling our own stories reminds us of where we have been and where we may be going, both individually and as a society. As we reflect on where we have been in our stories, we can begin to understand the patterns of our past that have an influence on the way we behave in the present. Discovering healthy and effective patterns also helps us maintain them in the future. Likewise, as we discover unhealthy patterns and actions in our stories, we can learn to avoid them in our lives.

Telling our own stories also puts us in touch with the myths that surround us. The fallacy of myths is that they are often taken to be untrue. "That is just a myth," we might say. Whether a myth is "true" or not is irrelevant to its functions in terms of storytelling. It simply does not matter. Myths are our ways of looking at the cosmos to understand how it works and how we relate to all other things. Positive myths are healthy. They remind us that all the things we see around us are merely tips of immense icebergs. We remember our parents, siblings

These ethical codes remind us how we should behave. They are the commas and exclamation points that determine the grammar of culturally good behaviour.

Communitas is important to bringing people together, and to building a true sense of individual value and shared community in our diverse world.

and friends, but we realize through telling stories that they are complex and interesting individuals with a wealth of feelings, histories, talents and shared experiences.

"Why not simply write everything down?" some might ask. "We have books that house our cultural codes—and they last a lot longer than a story. Stories can be forgotten." In response to such questions, it is good to remember Hamlet, that muddy skull in his hand, and his buddy, Horatio, at his side. Hamlet instinctively knows that now is not the time for writing. "Alas, poor Yorrick!" he moans, "I knew him Horatio!" As he describes the personality and antics of the court's once-funny jester, Horatio is enraptured by Hamlet. This is a story that he will not soon forget. This is information that is best given orally. It is best told and remembered through story, in this case, as a dramatic play.

After exchanging a few emails with me, Hank Kune, on a fact-finding mission for the Department of Transportation of the Netherlands, finally called me on the phone from Europe.

"We are knee deep in paperwork," he complained in perfect English. "We keep sending memos to each other, thinking we're getting lots of things done, but these memos are all filed away and we never see them again. So what's the use?" A good question. When he came to Salt Lake City on his fact-finding tour in the U.S. to consult with me several weeks later, I had done some research.

"What are all of these memos about?" I asked him while he waded up to his knees in the Great Salt Lake, the only attraction he really wanted to see while he was in Utah.

"Everything. Anything," he said. "The problem is, we have had these great successes, yes? Some people have done some great things, completed some wonderful projects and are good examples that we want everyone to know about." He paused, looking into the water. "But the memos just get filed away with everything else. Our filing cabinets are overflowing, but no one is really communicating."



© Elaine Lowe

"I used to think that writing things down made them more permanent," I told him. He laughed, deep and Dutch, as if what I had said was a joke.

I distinctly remember my grandfather. Before he passed away, I visited him nearly once a year at his house in San Francisco. We went fishing, took walks in the neighbourhood, and I enjoyed lazing around with him as he had his morning coffee or smoked his many cigarettes. He would tell me stories about his life when he was growing up: stories of the cars he had had, adventure stories, stories of his life of youthful crime. I remember these stories vividly. They made a deep impact on me and influenced me in many ways that have, at times, surprised me. As he lay ill with emphysema for several years before he finally died, he wrote down many of his stories, his pen racing the time bombs that were his lungs. This is a sensible thing, writing things down. Once written, it becomes "permanent." When I received his book of stories after his death, I was delighted. I knew many of the stories already. Several were new to me. I very nearly memorized the booklet. To this day, however, the stories

that were *told* to me had a much greater impact on my life than those that were *written*. It has been said that the pen is mightier than the sword. This may be true, but sometimes the tongue is mightier than the pen.

Remembering this, I told Hank Kune that some information is simply more effectively communicated through speech than through writing. Living, evaporating speech is our most potent

form of communication. It is powerfully present even as it vanishes. Such power is apt to remain in the mind and in the heart.

Why should spoken words be more potent than written ones? Just look at Hamlet's face! He is gazing at something that Horatio wants to see. Hamlet's eyes are fixed toward the direction of the cemetery gate, but that is not what he is looking at. Horatio bends closer to see the vision his prince sees as Hamlet continues his story: "... He hath borne me on his back a thousand times..."

Oral peoples actually *can* remember, even word for word, a huge wealth of important information without writing it down. These skills are lost as soon as spoken words become referents to visual symbols written on a page.

Only through spoken words and living presence can Hamlet be so clear. Horatio gazes at Hamlet's image, envisions a younger, laughing prince upon the back of a motley goofball of a man and then he glances back at Hamlet again, whose face shows the love he once had for his friend at court whose skull now molders in his hands. Now Hamlet turns his attention to the skull itself. "... Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft..." Horatio notes the slight quiver in Hamlet's voice, he considers the pause between "kissed" and "I." He is only slightly startled to see a small tear begin its trek down Hamlet's cheek. This is communication! Horatio could not have gotten this in a memo or from a filing cabinet!

It is this kind of communication that is so potent in our dialogues and in our communal communications.

Studying primary oral cultures—cultures that do not have writing and can barely conceive of writing—is one way to see the awesome power of oral language. Language historian Walter J. Ong has made great strides in helping us understand the methods of such cultures. In so doing, he also informs us about the power that resides in spoken words. Oral peoples have a completely different way of thinking and storing information. They actually *can* remember, even word for word, a huge wealth of important information without writing it down. These skills are lost as soon as spoken words become referents to visual symbols written on a page.³ Still, there are elements of orality that still exist for us: "In all the wonderful worlds that writing opens, the spoken word still resides and lives."⁴ As for written words, he asserts that they are "in a radical sense dead, though subject to dynamic resurrection."⁵ But only if those written words somehow grope their way out of the filing cabinet and into our community storytelling circles.

Of the many elements Ong defines as belonging to an oral culture, at least two are outstanding and universal to effective oral speech, even in written-based cultures: spoken words are often events unto themselves and oral speech can carry great power. Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowsky suggested that to oral peoples, language is a mode of action. It is not simply a referent to thought.⁶ Perhaps it is not surprising that the Hebrew term *dabar* means both *word* and *event*.⁷ Oral speech is also power. Oral peoples generally, and perhaps universally, consider words (and hence speech) to have great power. Combining both event and power into a description of speech, and watching Hamlet breathe heavy on the images he relates, indicate that speaking is a powerful



© istockphoto.com/Monika Adamczyk

event. As we tell stories in our communities—our families, our workplaces, our circles of friends, our places of worship, and our neighbourhoods—we too can tap into this power.

Perhaps this is why it is difficult for many of us to actually come out and say, for example, "I'm sorry" when one has transgressed. One actually has to be in the "sorry mode;" one must actually be in the act of *being* sorry as one says the words. In an altercation with my father once, I remember vividly the inability to say those two words. I wrote them down instead in a letter with a gift. Spoken words in the living presence of my father were simply too potent at that time for me. Likewise, saying "I love you" is often challenging. These words do not come easily in every situation, and when demanded in a relationship, the words carry great meaning and power. My wife would not stand for me to simply write love notes to her. She needs (and I need it too!) to hear it, to experience the event and power of love that comes with the speaking of it.

Is there a time for writing? Certainly. Ong suggests that without writing, "human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations"⁸ like computers and automobiles. Complex and detailed instructions and information are often the times for writing, simply because we, as a writing-based culture, do not have the capacity nor the techniques to store and remember such information. Even

In a nutshell, when you want to give information, write it down, but when you want to give images, tell a story.

stories that are told can be later written, but a system must be in place for oral retrieval of such stories.

So when is it time for speaking? When is *telling* a story a better choice than sending a memo? In a nutshell, when you want to give information, write it down, but when you want to give images, tell a story.

Stories are image-producing. Any sensory event or object in a story is an image. Images are things one sees, hears, feels (both tactile and emotionally), tastes, smells or intuits. As such, they bring to the mind pictures or sensory feelings that allow the listener to remember what is being said in a unique way that goes beyond mere intellectual understanding. Simply knowing information may never lead to change, but images can inspire. This is the difference between information and real knowledge. Stories with their images can stimulate emotional responses that motivate individuals to do things and to take action, leading us to the Hebrew word *dabar* again. Once inspiration, motivation and action take place, the mind can later, when it needs to, make intellectual connections and begin the process of rational understanding. Storyteller Ruth Sawyer once said, "What the heart knows today, the head understands tomorrow."⁹

How to tell a good story is a topic too big for discussion here, but since stories communicate images, the visualization of those images is important to mention. When Hamlet stares toward the cemetery gate and sees in his mind's eye himself on Yorrick's back, he is visualizing. Simply put, *the clearer the image in the mind of the teller, the clearer the image the audience will receive*. The mind is a wonderful thing, and visualizing images completely is the first step in telling the body how to gesture, how one's face should react, and how the words should come out. By clearly seeing himself gaily laughing on Yorrick's back, Hamlet's mind told his eyes to focus in a certain direction, told his face to react a specific way. Horatio, seeing Hamlet visualizing, was able to form an image in his own mind too. Visualization—clear and complete—is by far the most important skill in storytelling.

So mix all of these elements together: images, personal sharing, *communitas*, ethical remembering, ritual, entertainment and more. That's quite a stew! It's one that is important to eat in a community setting. Dig in!

*And now, you can have your supper,
And say your prayers,
And go to bed.
Morning is wiser than evening.*

— Russian Ritual Closing to Storytelling — ☐



© istockphoto.com/Josef Vital

Dr. David Sidwell is the Program Director at the American West Heritage Center in Wellsville, Utah and an adjunct professor at Utah State University where he has taught storytelling for over 12 years. He is the author of a website on storytelling, the Ultimate Storytelling Guide, and many articles about storytelling and oral history. He has traveled the U.S. telling stories at conferences and festivals and in his home state of Utah, where he resides with his family.

End Notes

- ¹ Geertz, Clifford (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 5.
- ² This is a prevalent motif in much of Levi-Strauss's work, but for more information on stories and their underlying cultural codes, see Levi-Strauss, Claude (1963). *The Structural Study of Myth*.
- ³ Ong, Walter J. (1982). *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 32.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.
- ⁶ Bronislaw Malinowsky (1923). "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," in C. K. Ogden, and I. A. Richards (eds), *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner), pp. 451, 470-81.
- ⁷ Ong, 32.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.
- ⁹ Sawyer, Ruth (1942). *The Way of the Storyteller*. New York: Viking, p. 105.

Stories Heard are Stories Remembered

by Elaine Lowe

My husband often tells stories from his childhood involving his Norwegian grandparents who farmed a filbert orchard in Oregon. In one of the stories, his grandfather, who has to sit a lot because of a broken hip, hates the sconces in the living room and his grandmother doesn't want him to remove them because it is a rented house. For Anna's part, she always wants a bigger vegetable garden, but that would reduce the size of the cash orchard crop so Norm is opposed. Over the years, whenever Norm would go to North Dakota to visit family, Anna would hire some lads to move the fence around her garden back by about a foot. Norm would come home and nothing would be said. When Anna would go to North Dakota to visit family, Norm would have the sconces removed on one wall and the hole plastered and painted. Anna would come home and nothing would be said. After a few years, Anna's garden was a few feet larger in diameter and all the sconces in the living room were gone. And no one said a word about it.

When John tells the story, it contains more details and elaborations. But even its bare bones contain all the components of a good story, with a beginning, middle and end that follow a thread and reach a satisfying conclusion. You learn a lot about the relationship between John's grandparents and, because he clearly likes this story, you learn a lot about John too—that he rather likes the silent way his grandparents both got what they wanted without any confrontations and presumably with a lot of secret delight.

All our children have heard this story along with many others. Even though we all live very far away from one another, these stories are part of the glue that holds us together and makes us feel close, a family, through a shared pastiche of stories. Through stories, our children and children's children have learned about us—our roots, our mistakes, our successes, zany things we have done, adventures, places we have lived and so on. Our children know where they come from and they know their elders as people with pasts, people who were once

Even though we all live very far away from one another, these stories are part of the glue that holds us together and makes us feel close, a family, through a shared pastiche of stories.



© istockphoto.com/Pamela Moore

babies, children, teenagers and newlyweds, people who have struggled with money issues, jobs, neighbours, parents and our relationship together.

The pages that follow deal specifically with stories that are told orally. Although technically this includes stories that are read aloud from books, I am referring to stories that don't have the benefit of a script. What you remember is what is important, even if it is not all that true. Such stories, like the one above, may be told over and over again, but change according to the personality of the storyteller, who creates the mood, and the audience, which responds to the story. Each feeds off the other as the story unfolds.

What is a story and what is storytelling?

According to *Nelson Canadian Dictionary*, the definition of a story is: "an account or a recital of a series of events; a usually fictional narrative intended to interest or amuse the hearer or reader; an incident, experience or subject that furnishes or would be interesting material for a narrative; the plot of a narrative or dramatic work."

Beyond that, there are components that drive a story—a plot, characters and a point of view. A story can be used to teach, explain or entertain. It can be factual or fictitious. A good story engages the audience by following a "narrative arc." A "winning beginning" captures the attention of the listener or reader through characters and conflict. A strong middle relates the events that take place as the characters try to resolve the conflict. Often, there are three attempts, the third of which is successful. The end satisfies by bringing order to the chaos created through the conflict.

Storytelling is the art of conveying events in words. A good storyteller tells just enough to create a sense of what is going on, but leaves some things up to the audience to figure out. A good storyteller keeps out of the way of the story because it is the story that is the focus, not the teller. A story well-told can be mesmerizing—linking the ordinary with the extraordinary and the everyday with the amazing. Heather Kirk wrote about storytelling: “The significance of seemingly random incidents is explained, the present is explained, sources of strength are revealed, information is passed on to descendants, gaps are filled, the past is recreated for those who are ‘bereft.’”¹

Why tell stories?

There is more to telling stories than reading a book to a child or group of children. While this form of storytelling is incredibly important for teaching children that books are an integral part of life, stories that are off-the-cuff and part of everyday life are just as important.

Steve Barancik identifies four reasons why children need to hear stories:

1. Stories help children understand their place in the world.
2. A story can help your child cope with a difficult situation or experience.
3. Learning to tell stories helps your child become socially proficient.
4. Storytelling can be the perfect way to impart a life lesson.

It has been shown that telling stories about your own childhood is one of the most powerful ways to strengthen the child-parent bond.²

Why tell family stories?

As Barancik notes above, if you want a strong family bond, tell your child about yourself, your childhood, your siblings, your parents and grandparents. It is very important for your child to understand that you were once a child yourself, that you too struggled with things. For example, your child lets you know she is being bullied. This probably happened to you or someone you knew. Relate how you, your friend or a fictitious person managed (or didn't) and have the story resolve by telling what you did (or wished you had done). Hearing these things from your lived experience or vicariously through a fanciful character, rather than simply being told what to do, is where the power lies. The child begins to see you as a person with many more dimensions than before because you have both been there and understand. It helps the child realize she too can overcome problems.

¹ Kirk, Heather, 1991. Alice Kane: River Without End, Stories Without End. *CM Archive*. www.umanitoba.ca/cm//cmarchive/vo119no6/alicekane.html

² Steve Barancik, 2006. Best Children's Books. The magical parenting power of storytelling! www.best-childrens-books.com/storytelling.html

She is armed with ways to deal with whatever life brings her way, especially knowing that you are her ally, not her boss.

Children love to hear stories. That is one reason the television is such a magnet. But not all of television's messages are the ones you want them to hear. Instead of television's stories (and ads), tell your own stories. You have thousands of them hidden inside you, just waiting for something to awaken them. Blow the dust off your photo albums and tell stories about the family pictures. Grandparents farming? Your first child's birth? Look around your house. There are probably dozens of things that have a story attached—a teapot? A sawhorse? A shirt? And all souvenirs do—why else do we collect them but to recall stories?

Tell fairy tales that you remember. My grandchildren delight in hearing their grandfather tell them the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears or the Three Little Pigs. As you are driving together, make up stories about the people you see—what is happening and why.

In addition to adults telling stories to children, encourage children to tell their own stories. Or tell them together, taking turns. Both hearing and telling stories foster children's verbal and listening skills, as well as their imagination.

What are the ABCs of telling a story?

Below is a short fable, courtesy of Story Arts Online (www.storyarts.org). Using this simple tale, you can learn about how to embellish it to create a story that listeners can see in their mind's eye.

The Sun and the Wind ... an Aesop's Fable

The wind and the sun argued about which of them was the strongest. They decided to hold a contest. The sun suggested that they see who could take the coat off of a man walking along the road below them. The wind blew hard, but the man, feeling chilly, held his coat tightly around him. The sun then became gently warmer and warmer. The man felt so hot, he took off his coat. Sometimes, they say, you can get your way more easily with gentleness than by force.

Having read this fable, you can identify the basic plot as well as the moral that was intended. Your job now is to decide:

- how to retell this story in your own words and in what form — a story? a play? a puppet show? a musical?
- what point of view the story will be told from—the sun? the wind? an observer?
- the setting—is it a farm, outer space, a mountain top, a forest, a city?
- the time—is it long ago, the future or now?

- the characters in the story, in addition to the sun and the wind; give them names and personalities.
- it might even be illustrated from your own past or that of your family.

Once you have decided on the basic raw materials, develop your “winning beginning” and an ending sentence that satisfies. It is mostly in the middle that you will use your creativity: your words, your body and facial language and your imagination. Although the phrase “telling a story” suggests just the telling part, what is most important is to paint a picture in the imagination of the listener, which is much more about “showing” than “telling.” The previous fable is telling. Your job as storyteller is to *show* the wind and the sun arguing through the words and gestures you choose, and the characters you draw.

A helpful technique is to rehearse so that you are able to see the story in your own mind, like a movie. If it is clear enough for you to see how everything unfolds, then you will be able to tell it well. The main tools at your disposal to create this “movie” are adjectives and dialogue. Add to that a different tone of voice for each character and gestures to create mood and imagery, you will have your audience enthralled.

Here is the fable retold, again with thanks to Story Arts Online.

The Sun and the Wind

... An Aesop's Fable

The North Wind boasted of great strength. The Sun argued that there was great power in gentleness. “We shall have a contest,” said the Sun.

Far below, a man traveled a winding road. He was wearing a warm winter coat.

“As a test of strength,” said the Sun, “let us see which of us can take the coat off that man.”

“It will be quite simple for me to force him to remove his coat,” bragged the Wind.

The Wind blew so hard, the birds clung to the trees. The world was filled with dust and leaves. But the harder the wind blew, the tighter the shivering man clung to his coat.

Then, the Sun came out from behind a cloud. The sun warmed the air and the frosty ground. The man on the road unbuttoned his coat.

The Sun grew slowly brighter and brighter.

Soon the man felt so hot, he took off his coat and sat down in a shady spot.

“How did you do that?” said the Wind.

“It was easy,” said the Sun. “I lit the day. Through gentleness I got my way.”

If your goal is more to engage your child with a story, have her help you pick names for characters. For example, you could say “once upon a time there was a little girl named....?” and she will enthusiastically shout out a name. Young children usually want to be the main character in the story. Older children will often pick wacky and wonderful names. Create autobiographies of objects, like a favourite toy, from what they were made from to who owned them and where they travelled, right up to where they are now.

In short, storytelling is a wonderful way to impart life lessons to children, and to develop their verbal skills and their imagination. Children learn who they are in the world through stories. Stories heard are much richer than mere explanations or advice because they forge strong ties between people. And perhaps best of all, it's fun.

Links to more about telling stories


There is a wealth of information on the internet that can help you discover more about storytelling, give you ideas about stories to tell or remind you of stories you once heard told or read. Whether you want to tell a story about luck or about dragons, a search engine like Google can help you if your key words include storytelling. Beyond search engines, here are a few links to guide you on your quest for stories.

‘Story Arts Online’ was created by storyteller and author Heather Forest. Designed primarily for classrooms, the site offers a great deal of practical ideas and tips for storytelling. www.storyarts.org

‘Folklinks’ by D. L. Ashliman. An extensive collection of links to fairy tales and folk tales from around the world. www.pitt.edu/~dash/folktexts.html

‘Storyteller.net’ shares articles and audio stories by and for storytellers. www.storyteller.net

The Storytellers School of Toronto. A non-profit organization that supports the art of storytelling and produces the week-long Toronto Festival of Storytelling. www.storytellingtoronto.org

The Ultimate Storytelling Guide was created by Dr. David Sidwell. The site offers information on all kinds of stories, some stories themselves, and workshops and lessons on storytelling. www.storytellingsite.com 



© istockphoto.com/Andrei Tcherno

Celebrate **National Child Day** on **November 20**. This day marks the adoption by the United Nations of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. As such, on National Child Day, families, schools and communities focus on children's basic human rights through activities, resources and discussion. Visit www.cccf-fcsge.ca/ncdnov20_en.htm to learn more.

Because stress is not conducive to good mental health, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) has developed a new feature on their website to help Canadians assess their work/life balance and develop strategies to improve it. According to the CMHA, achieving work/life balance means having equilibrium among all the priorities in your life, which is different for every person. Taking the *Work/Life Balance Quiz* can help you understand more about the balance in your life. The questions are clues to the places you might need or want to improve. Beyond that, the site offers tips and resources for everyone to strike a new balance. Visit www.cmha.ca.

Stress is very much a part of children's lives as well but often it goes unrecognized. Good stress can keep us alert and boost performance levels. But too much stress is hard on our bodies and can be overwhelming for a child. *Kids Have Stress Too*, a broad-based primary prevention program of the Psychology Foundation of Canada, offers information about recognizing stress in children and about ways to help children, parents and caregivers find strategies to relax and manage the stress in their lives. In addition, a facilitator training program is designed to provide professionals who work with children and families with the information and tools they need to educate parents about stress in children. To learn more, visit www.kidshavestress.too.org.

The Urban Poverty Project 2007 (UPP) is a newly released online publication of the Canadian Council on Social Development. The report provides a series of analyses, resource tools, and data profiles that examine urban poverty in Canada—beyond the numbers and into the stark realities of the daily lives of millions of Canadians. For example, 40% of households who rent pay a disproportionate amount of their income on housing. The UPP also pays special attention to population groups that are vulnerable to poverty as well as the concentration of poverty in urban neighbourhoods. To read more about urban poverty, visit www.ccsd.ca.

The second annual **Media Education Week** is **November 5-9**, developed by the Media Awareness Network and the Canadian Teachers' Federation. The purpose of the week is to promote media education and encourage media literacy activities throughout Canada. Download a media education workshop and booklet, sign up for the Media Education Week bulletin, enter the video podcast contest or visit the "Talk Media" blog. To learn more, visit www.mediaeducationweek.ca.

The Canadian Association for Community Living has finalized a respite guide, *Real Respite for the Whole Family: An Advocacy Resource Guide for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability and their Families*. The guide offers information, strategies, checklists, contacts, resources, and questions for family members who are providing unpaid care to children, youth and adults with disabilities. It outlines a guide for conducting a workshop for family members, providing information that will help them plan towards getting the type of flexible and individualized respite supports that they need, by negotiating and working with community-based support systems. To download the full report, visit www.cacl.ca/english/projects.

We are deeply saddened that Family Service Canada's national office has closed. Due to substantial cutbacks in operational grants and project contributions, the Board of Directors decided to close the Ottawa office and to implement a decentralized model of operations with lead agencies from its networks. Like the VIF, Family Service Canada has always emphasized determining what kinds of help families in general need and helping those who most directly help families. Among its many worthwhile achievements, the national office sponsored and organized National Family Week, an annual conference for family practitioners, and specialist training related to Employee Assistance Programming. The new address for inquiries is Family Service Canada, c/o 312 Parkdale Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1Y 4X5, telephone 613-722-9006, email info@familyservicecanada.org or visit www.familyservicecanada.org.

National Family Week, which has been celebrated since 1985 during the week before Thanksgiving, this year will take place from **October 1-7** with the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada) taking the lead for the first time replacing Family Service Canada's long-time success with

this event. The National Family Week theme, *Celebrating the Diversity of Families in Canada*, is marked across the country by a broad range of local community organizations. For more information, visit www.frp.ca.

Bowl for Kids Sake is a fundraising event of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, which is the successful child and youth serving organization providing mentoring programs across the country. Men and women (age 18 or older) give of their time to become a mentor to a youngster who can greatly benefit from having an adult role model to look up to. The fundraising event allows people to get together with friends, family, and co-workers and have fun in support of Big Brother Big Sister mentoring programs in their community. To learn more, visit www.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca or www.bowlforkidssake.ca.

Campaign 2000, whose goal is to end child poverty in Canada, has released a discussion paper, *A Poverty Reduction Strategy for Ontario*. The report was written because of concern about the persistence of high rates of child and family poverty in Ontario, despite strong economic growth. This paper concentrates on a strategy to reduce child and family poverty, drawing on successful strategies around the world. The goal is to encourage public discussion so that child and family poverty become a focal point for the Ontario fall elections. To read the executive summary or the full report, visit www.campaign2000.ca.

Creative Bound, an Ottawa-based publishing company, has recently released two new books. The first, *Six Degrees of Dignity: Disability in an Age of Freedom* by David Shannon, examines the issues of equality and the promotion of dignity for people with a disability. The author, himself a quadriplegic since the age of 18, offers a personal perspective to the issues, as well as a legal and academic one. He identifies the social and attitudinal barriers present in society and offers ideas about what needs to change to reverse the process of exclusion. The second book, *Young Misery: A child and family psychiatrist discusses child and youth depression—how to identify it, and how to cope*, by Dr. David Palframan, a child psychiatrist for over 30 years, draws attention to the devastation wrought by depression in children and families. Although the causes of child and youth depression are seldom simple, the author believes that the search for the best possible therapy, support and relief is both rewarding and enlightening. Contact Creative Bound www.creativebound.com to learn more about either of these books.

If you need the facts about families today, you need this book.



Profiling Canada's Families III:
Accessible statistics, comments, charts, and tables.
A clear picture of family life today.

The Vanier Institute of the Family
www.vifamily.ca

Families on the Web

Visitors to our website say....

"I love the work that the Vanier Institute does and I am extremely proud to be one of your supporters."

To be notified of current and future publication releases, add your name to VIF's electronic mailing list, contact our Webmaster, webmaster@vifamily.ca

A few of the publications available free at www.vifamily.ca....

Transition, "Pay Now, Pay Later, What is Sustainable", Spring 2007, vol. 37-1

Building Emotional Intelligence: Darwin Reconsidered, by Jenni Tipper (2007)

The Current State of Canadian Family Finances - 2006 Report, by Roger Sauvé (2007)

The Rise in the Number of Children and Adolescents Who Exhibit Problematic Behaviors: Multiple Causes, by Anne-Marie Ambert, Ph.D. (2007)



Public Lecture

A Place in Time Families, Family Matters & Why They Matter

Dr. Glossop will look back over his 30+ year career as a family researcher and family policy specialist.

The free lecture will be held on
Thursday October 18th, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.
in the Panorama Room of the
National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

RSVP: glossoplawson@vifamily.ca



Donors Support VIF's Work

The Vanier Institute of the Family gratefully acknowledges all those who support our work of promoting the well-being of Canada's families.

Donations: May to July 2007

Individual Donors

Vicky Attwell	Alex Harrison	Marguerite Noble
Martha Breithaupt	Gerald Helleiner	Ronald Pauls
Marilyn Clarke	Paul Herzberg	Bryan Rakusin
Ingrid Connidis	David Holman	Zenaida Ravanera
Sue Cousland Thompson	Marjorie Hougham	Eleanor Ross
Rita Katherine Dwyer	Robert Lewis	Judith Sapp
Joan Fidler Burrows	Mary Lomax	Helen Trainor
John Funnell	Allan MacKay	Nicole Vandal
Frank Guenther	LaVerna McMaster	Hana Wener

The Vanier Institute of the Family

Telephone: 613-228-8500
Fax: 613-228-8007

94 Centrepointe Drive
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2G 6B1
Web site: www.vifamily.ca

Transition Editor: Elaine Lowe
Telephone: 613-623-3105
elainelowe@sympatico.ca

VIF Staff

Jennifer Brownrigg, Webmaster and
Desktop Publisher,
ext. 213, jbrownri@vifamily.ca.

Brigitte Des Rosiers, Program Officer,
ext. 219, bdesrosiers@vifamily.ca.

Lucie Legault, Accounts Receivable,
Membership, Publications & Mailing
Clerk, ext. 211, llegault@vifamily.ca.

Clarence Lochhead, Executive Director,
ext. 214, clochhead@vifamily.ca.

Paula Theetge, Accounting &
Administrative Assistant,
ext. 215, ptheetge@vifamily.ca.

Jenni Tipper, Research Associate,
ext. 218, jtipper@vifamily.ca.

Stay Informed on Family Matters

Membership in the Vanier Institute of the Family

brings you *Transition* four times a year.

I want to join VIF (or renew my annual membership) as an:

- Individual (voting) member: \$30
- Organizational (voting) member: \$65
- Associate (non-voting) member: \$20
- I would like membership in VIF but payment would be a financial burden.

I want to contribute to VIF's work on behalf of Canada's families. Enclosed is my tax-creditable donation of:

- \$30 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$ _____ other

Total of membership fee + donation = \$ _____

- cheque enclosed or
 VISA MC card # _____ Expiry date: _____

Name on credit card: _____

Name for membership: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ Province/Territory: _____

Postal Code: _____ E-mail: _____

Signature: _____ Phone: _____

Please mail or fax to the Vanier Institute of the Family.