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## The Second Spring: Media Literacy in Canada's Schools

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### ABSTRACT:

Media literacy in secondary schools has begun to develop in the western Canadian provinces. There is also some interest being shown in the subject in the Atlantic provinces. Quebec has its own stand on Media literacy. In Ontario - where more than one third of all Canadians live - Media literacy is very much alive. The Ontario government has mandated the teaching of media within the English curriculum for grades seven through twelve. There are a number of resources available for teachers and the Association for Media Literacy provides information, workshops, summer schools, a newsletter, and in-service training in media .

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### Introduction:

In 1922, Lewis Selznik, the Hollywood producer, is reported to have said: "If Canadian stories are worthwhile making into movies, then companies will be sent into Canada to make them." Selznik's dismissive words encapsulate a not uncommon attitude among some Americans to their northern neighbours. Canada, in this view, is not a place where interesting things happen; all the good stories come out of the USA.

But in one area, at least, this presumption is manifestly untrue. The interesting stories in North American Media Literacy are Canadian stories.

From the late 1960's until the mid 1970's, the Americans developed a series of secondary school Media Literacy projects that showed great promise. Unfortunately, most of these projects were short-lived for any number of reasons. At present there are only a handful of significant Media Literacy programs in the USA.

In Canada, by contrast, secondary school film courses blossomed in the late 1960's and the first wave of media literacy began under the banner of "screen education". An early organization called CASE (Canadian Association for Screen Education) sponsored the first large gathering of media teachers in 1966 at Toronto's York University. Participants came from across the country. Largely as a result of budget cuts and the general back-to-the-basics philosophy, this first wave died out in the early seventies. But in the 1980's and 1990's there has been a new growth of secondary school Media Literacy . As well, there is the beginning of a strong movement to develop elementary Media Literacy.

Canada is a vast nation - the largest in the world now that the Soviet Union has broken up - with a relatively small population of about twenty six million. In fact, there are more people in the state of California than in all of Canada. Canada's ten provinces and two northern territories each have their own education system. With responsibility for education resting in the hands of the provinces, there are differences in how each province deals with media literacy.

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### The Provinces of Western Canada - British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba

In the summer of 1991, a group met in Vancouver to form the Canadian Association for Media Education (CAME) whose current membership numbers about one hundred mainly from the Lower Mainland. Although most of the members are classroom teachers, other organizations are also represented. Members include representatives from the National Film Board of Canada, the Knowledge TV Network, Pacific Cinematique, International Development Education Resource Association (IDERA), MediaWatch and ADBUSTERS magazine. Their objectives are to educate Canadians about the media, to promote media literacy and to encourage Canadian cultural expression in the media.

CAME has hosted yearly forums on media literacy topics and has brought prominent speakers such as Len Masterman, George Gerbner, John Pungente, and Geoff Pevere to Vancouver to speak to parents and teachers. In the summer of 1994 CAME members were involved in organizing a two week summer institute for teachers wishing to teach media literacy. And in the summer of 1995, CAME helped organize a credit summer course in media literacy at Simon Fraser University. CAME has published two resource samplers of information and teaching strategies for teachers beginning work in media literacy.

In the spring of 1994, CAME signed a contract with the Ministry of Education to produce a Conceptual Framework of Media Education. This framework was made available to the curriculum review committees that began meeting in the fall of 1994 with instructions to incorporate suggestions for media literacy into all curriculum areas. It is prescribed in BC curricula from K-12. The framework was also given to the Western Consortium - a group which has written a common Language Arts curriculum for the four western provinces. This curriculum will include a mandated segment on media literacy which will differ from province to province.

And in the fall of 1996, British Columbia was the first of the western provinces to put into effect the new Language Arts Curriculum. Media Literacy is represented in two ways. First, media literacy is mandated in all Language Arts courses from K-12 as one third of the material taught. Second, media literacy is part of the Integrated Resource Package (IRP) which is cross curricular in all subjects from K-12.

British Columbia has still to develop the resources to help put into effect these changes. There is a major need to address the question of teacher training in media literacy. This is true of every province.

In Alberta, since 1982, Viewing has been one of the strands that is required across the curriculum. Unfortunately there are no teacher training courses or other support material. Early in the 1990's, groups such as the University of Alberta, The Society for Instructional Technology, the Alberta Association for Curriculum and Development, and the National Film Board of Canada held several conferences on Media Education.

In the spring of 1993, a group of educators and media professionals formed the Alberta Association for Media Awareness (AAMA). Its goals are to promote media awareness, education and understanding as essential survival skills for all Albertans, children and adults. Among other activities, AAMA provides forums for information, discussion and action on media issues; prepares reaction and suggestions on media issues such as new government policy and programs; provides conferences and training sessions for teachers; maintains a resource centre; and establishes action networks.

The AAMA's education committee reviewed the May 1994 draft of the Alberta Education Junior High Language Arts Program of Studies. The committee made a number of commendations and suggestions for improvement.

Teachers interested in Media Education have support in the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan. There Mick Ellis, the Audio Visual Consultant for the Saskatoon Board of Education [and the first Canadian to obtain a Master's degree in Media Education from the University of London, England], and a group of Saskatoon educators founded Media Literacy Saskatchewan (MLS) in January of 1988. MLS has as its goals:

- to establish and maintain communication among educators.
- to advocate for the development and integration of media literacy in educational curricula. to influence educational policy makers.
- to provide professional support. to maintain contact with Canadian and international media literacy organizations.

The Saskatoon Board of Education members of MLS have developed three programs - Telemedia, Newsmedia, Kindermedia - for use in the schools and has written a unit of study in Film and Literature for the senior English course. They have also developed a Media Literacy guide that extends from primary through to the end of secondary school. This is in line with their belief that Media Literacy should be integrated with any and all aspects of the school curriculum from the earliest years of school to its completion.

In 1991, MLS became an official special subject council of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF). This allows access to all teachers in Saskatchewan through the STF Bulletin, provides an instant sort of respectability, and allows the funding of inservice and a conference through an annual \$600 grant. The first annual conference was held in October of 1991 with 45 in attendance including representatives of three mass media businesses in Saskatoon.

Media Literacy Saskatchewan publishes a quarterly newsletter for its members called MEDIA VIEW which contains practical information, bibliographies, reviews of books and audio-visual resources, and lesson ideas. Saskatchewan has six categories of common essential learnings which are to be incorporated in all courses of study offered. Two of these learnings are Communication Skills and Critical and Creative Thinking. Using these, the MLS is currently working on a proposal which would integrate Media Studies throughout the primary and secondary curriculum. The proposal approaches the topic of Media Literacy through four key concepts: Text, Audience, Representation and Production.

The primary and secondary Language Arts Policy in Saskatchewan requires Media Literacy be further integrated into the curriculum. Not only is it part of the common essential learnings but it is also one of the supporting domains of the basic Language Arts structure. There is also room for Media Literacy as a locally

developed option in Grades 10, 11 and 12 (ages 15 to 18).

As yet, very few Saskatchewan schools offer such courses possibly because there is no teacher training in this area. However,MLS is working to interest more schools in the possibilities for Media Education and to offer some inservice programmes.

Manitoba has an official provincial policy on Media Education. Language Arts teachers are encouraged to integrate Media into their teaching in the Early and Middle Years by examining the messages coming from television advertising. Secondary school teachers are asked to investigate the media as part of their English courses. Other possible vehicles for teaching about the media include school and student Initiated Courses. Senior history courses can deal with television's view of the Third World and Grade 9 (14 year olds) Canadian Studies courses look at the images of Canada presented on television.

Many Manitoba teachers do not feel capable of dealing with the media in class and hence do not do so. There are no regular courses available to train them. although in 1992 and 1993, the University of Manitoba offered a summer school in media education for teachers. Thus while an official educational policy is in place which would permit a great deal of Media Education, there is little practical support for teachers wishing to teach media studies. However in 1995, Brian Murphy, President of MAML was asked to teach a thirteen week course for media literacy teachers at the University of Manitoba.

The Manitoba Association for Media Literacy (MAML) was founded in October 1990, the result of a Special Areas Group (SAG) Conference sponsored by the Art Educators Association of Manitoba. At that time several individuals interested in Media Education met with Neil Andersen and John Pungente, SJ, executives of the Ontario-based Association for Media Literacy (AML). The outcome of that meeting was the formation of MAML.

The role of MAML is to promote the aims of Media Education, in particular to assist individuals to examine the role of the media in society. Specifically, MAML wishes to provide individuals with an opportunity to:

- develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to interpret the ways in which media construct reality;
- develop an awareness of the social, cultural, political and economic implications of these constructions and their pervasive value messages;
- develop an appreciation and aesthetic understanding of the media.

To accomplish its goals, MAML sponsors presentations and workshops for educators, parents and members of the public at large; assists in the development of media literacy programs for Manitoba schools; provides inservice opportunities for Manitoba teachers; and publishes DIRECTIONS, a quarterly newsletter.

### **Atlantic Canada and The Territories - Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, The Yukon, The North West Territories**

The Yukon and the North West Territories are members of the Western Consortium. As such they are developing media literacy components of their Language Arts Programs.. Some teachers in these places are working on their own to introduce Media Literacy into their courses - usually in English.

In 1995 an Atlantic provinces initiative - similar to the Language Arts Consortium in Western Canada - developed a common Language Arts curriculum in which media literacy figures prominently . It builds on the notion that literacy is moving beyond competency in the written word to the ability to use and understand visual and technological means of communications. This curriculum has been piloted in 1996 for implementation in 1997.

In the fall of 1992, a group of teachers, parents, librarians, media professionals, and environmentalists formed the Association of Media Literacy for Nova Scotia AML-NS. One of the reasons that brought the group of about one hundred people together was the need to stop the Youth News Network (YNN) from selling its commercial news network to Nova Scotia schools. They succeeded in both forming a media literacy group and in stopping YNN.

AML-NS members publish a twice yearly newsletter - The Mediator . Past President, Eileen O'Connell has a monthly column on media literacy issues in the Halifax Chronicle Herald, Nova Scotia's largest circulation daily paper. As well, Gail Lethbridge, editor of The Mediator, writes a regular column for The Teacher , the newsletter of the Nova Scotia's teachers' union.

Members of AML-NS have presented workshops to parents and community groups as well as at several provincial in-services for teachers. Since 1993, the Atlantic Film Festival has invited teachers to participate with their students in the ScreenScene program for young adults. The Festival and AML-NS also sponsor one event for teachers dealing with media in the classroom.

The Literacy section of the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture together with AML-NS have co-sponsored a media literacy project for adult learners. Funded by the National Literacy Secretariat and written by AML-NS member Pat Kipping, the kit consists of a workshop manual, a collection of resources, and an annotated guide.

In terms of teacher education, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Education Department has built into their courses some components which raise the issue of media literacy. Some students have developed teaching units working with media and popular culture. NSCAD's interest in media literacy points to some interesting opportunities for the development of cross curricular media literacy. As well summer courses have been offered by Mount St. Vincent in media literacy and for two summers these courses were taught by Neil Andersen from Ontario's AML.

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### **Central Canada - Quebec and Ontario**

Over half of Canada's population lives in the two central Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Quebec's Ministry of Education has given approval for the teaching of some secondary school courses in Media Literacy in both French and English schools.

There is a Communication element to the Language Arts courses. Such courses are mainly taught in and around Montreal. There have been a few Media Literacy text books written in French. The latest was written by Jacques Piette, a professor at the Universite de Montreal, and published in the fall of 1992. The author has given a number of courses on Television Literacy in French speaking schools in both Quebec and Ontario and is speaking with government officials about a further implementation of Media Literacy.

In September of 1990, a group of French and English speaking secondary teachers, university academics, and others interested in Media Literacy met at the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal to form the Association for Media Education in Quebec (AMEQ). AMEQ is a bilingual grassroots organization composed mainly of teachers from the Quebec school system. AMEQ is co-chaired by Lee Rother of the Laurenval School Board and Brenda Wilson of Trafalgar School for Girls.

The primary purpose of AMEQ is to provide information, lesson plans and ideas, expertise, and professional development regarding media literacy. AMEQ contends that media literacy should be included both in the kindergarten through grade eleven curriculum and in all teacher training programs. AMEQ actively promotes the idea that parents should also be media literacy educators for their children.

AMEQ has sponsored student media festivals, media literacy conferences, day long workshops for teachers and parents and parent information evenings. AMEQ members regularly lead workshops at provincial education and parent conferences, school board professional development programs, and guest lecture at McGill University's Faculty of Education. AMEQ executive members have also presented briefs to the Quebec Ministry of Education concerning proposed curricular changes and also to the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) on violence and the media.

In 1991, the Montreal-based, Centre for Literacy, which maintains an open resources collection with materials related to every aspect of literacy, began to receive a large number of requests for resources on media literacy. The Centre made a commitment to increase the media component of their collection and to organize workshops and other activities on media education. A similar development has taken place at the Centre Saint-Pierre, a French language popular education group.

In Ontario, where over one third of Canada's population lives, Media Education is thriving. In 1987 Ontario's Ministry of Education released new guidelines that emphasize the importance of teaching Media Literacy as part of the regular English curriculum. At least one third of a course in both intermediate and senior division English must be devoted to media study. And in Grades 7 and 8 (12 and 13 year olds), ten percent of classroom time must be dedicated to some form of media studies. In addition students may choose a complete media studies course as either an optional credit or as one of the five English credits required for secondary school graduation.

The decision by the ministry was the result of several factors. The concern of many public groups about the proliferation of violence and pornography in the media resulted in pressure to have the school system respond

in some constructive way. Many parent groups, concerned by the increase in television viewing among the young, insisted that schools has some responsibility to teach media literacy skills.

At the same time as the new English studies guidelines were being developed, teachers were surveyed about classroom practices. While only a minority taught media literacy programs, more than eighty percent indicated that they would do so if there were resource materials and in-service training. Informal lobby groups consisting of teacher federations, the Association for Media Literacy, and home and school groups, submitted briefs to the Minister of Education asking that media literacy be an essential part of the school curriculum.

At the beginning of April 1995 , the Ontario Ministry of Education released two documents of special interest to those involved with media literacy. The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes Grades 1 to 9 clearly outlines what students are expected to know and when they are expected to know it. Provincial Standards: Language: Grades 1 to 9 provide objective and consistent indicators to determine how well students are learning. From Grades 1 through to 9 in Language Arts there are strands which must be taught. These strands are Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, Viewing and Representation. The Viewing and Representing strands ensure that media literacy is now a mandated part of the Language Arts curriculum beginning from Grade 1. Both documents stress throughout the importance of media literacy and there is no doubt but that this is a most important, necessary and vital part of all Language Arts classes.

Ontario was the first educational jurisdiction in North America to make Media Literacy a mandatory part of the curriculum.

One group above all is responsible for the continuing successful development of Media Education in Ontario. This is the Association for Media Literacy (AML). There were seventy people at the AML's founding meeting in Toronto in April of 1978. The founders of the association were Barry Duncan, a secondary school teacher, now AML President and head of English at Toronto's School of Experiential Education; Arlene Moskovitch, then with the National Film Board of Canada, now a free lance producer, writer and consultant; Linda Schulyer, an elementary school teacher, who has since become a principal in Playing With Time, Inc. the production company responsible for the popular DEGRASSI television series seen around the world; and Jerry McNab, head of the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Center, now head of Magic Lantern, a film production and distribution center. By the end of the 1980's, the AML had over 1000 members and a track record of distinguished achievements.

In 1986, the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Teachers' Federation invited ten AML members to prepare a MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCE GUIDE for teachers. Published by the government in the summer of 1989, the 232 page guide is designed to help teachers of media. It includes teaching strategies and models as well as rationale and aims. The main body of the book presents ideas and classroom activities in the areas of Television, Film, Radio, Popular Music and Rock Video, Photography, Print, and Cross-Media Studies (Advertising, Sexuality, Violence, Canadian Identity, News). The Resource Guide was preceded by the release of a video (produced by AML members) on Media Literacy for teachers. This guide is used in many English speaking countries and has been translated into French, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Prior to the release of the Resource Book, the Ministry seconded the AML authors to give a series of in-service training days to teachers across Ontario in preparation for the introduction of media courses. Since 1987, AML members have given over 100 in-service days and workshops in Ontario. AML members have also given presentations across Canada, and in Australia, Japan, Europe and the United States.

The Ontario resource guide describes Media Literacy as being concerned "with the process of understanding and using the mass media. It is also concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products." [1]

The government resource guide is very specific about the ultimate aim of media education. Ontario's aims closely follow those first stated by Len Masterman in TEACHING THE MEDIA. Ontario sees Media Education as : ". . . a life skill, and the success of an educational program must be judged by the behaviour of students after they leave school. If the school can provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills and awareness, they will then be in a position to control their relationship with the media." [2]

There are many international influences reflected in the MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCE GUIDE. Several of Ontario's concepts were influenced by the work of Len Masterman, a British university professor who is one of the foremost Media Education theorists. Masterman's statement on principal concepts resulted in the development of the following eight key concepts in the guide. [3]

1. All media are constructions. Arguably the most important concept is that the media do not present simple reflections of external reality. Rather, the media presents carefully crafted constructions which have been subjected to a broad range of determinants and decisions. Media Literacy works towards deconstructing these constructions.
2. The media constructs reality. A major part of the observations and experiences upon which we base our picture of what the world is and how it works comes to us "preconstructed by the media, with attitudes, interpretations, and conclusions already built in." [4] Thus it is the media, not ourselves, who construct our reality.
3. Audiences negotiate meaning in media. Who we are has a bearing on how we process information. Each of us finds or "negotiates" meaning in a different way through a wide variety of factors: "personal needs and anxieties, the pleasures or troubles of the day, racial and sexual attitudes, family and cultural background." [5]
4. Media have commercial implications. Media Literacy includes an awareness of "the economic basis of mass-media production and how it impinges on content, techniques, and distribution." [6] Media production is a business and must make a profit. As well, Media Literacy investigates questions of ownership, control and related effects. A relatively small number of individuals control what we watch, read and hear in the media.
5. Media contains ideological and value messages. All media products are advertising in some sense - for themselves but also for values or ways of life. Our mainstream media convey - explicitly or implicitly - ideological messages. These can include all or some of the following: the nature of the "good life" and the role of affluence in it, the virtue of "consumerism", the role of women, the acceptance of authority, and uncompromising patriotism.
6. Media have social and political implications. Media are closely linked with the world of politics and social change. Television can elect a national leader largely on the basis of image. And at the same time involve us in civil rights issues, famines in the Third World, and the AIDS epidemic. The media has intimately involved us in national issues and global concerns. We have become McLuhan's Global Village.
7. Form and content are closely related to the media. Each medium, as Marshall McLuhan noted, has its own grammar and codifies reality in unique ways. And so, different media will report the same event but create different impressions and messages.
8. Each medium has a unique aesthetic form. Just as we notice the pleasing rhythms of certain pieces of poetry or prose, so ought we be able to enjoy the pleasing forms and effects of the different media.

Len Masterman makes an important exhortation to teachers. "The really important and difficult task of the media teacher is to develop in pupils enough self-confidence and critical maturity to be able to apply critical judgements to media texts which they will encounter in the future. . . . The primary objective is not simply critical awareness and understanding, it is critical autonomy." [7] Ontario students who are media literate will have the ability to decode, encode, and evaluate the media symbol systems that dominate their world.

Classroom textbooks in Media Studies were available from Australian, British and American authors, but there were no suitable Canadian textbooks. Since 1988, AML members have written Canadian textbooks for senior students - Barry Duncan's MASS MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE, Donna Carpenter's MEDIA: IMAGES AND ISSUES, Neil Anderson's MEDIA WORKS, Roy Ingram's MEDIA FOCUS, and Rick Hone and Liz Flynn's VIDEO IN FOCUS: A GUIDE TO VIEWING AND PRODUCING VIDEO. The AML also publishes media literacy bibliography

During 1988 and 1989, the AML collected curriculum units in media studies from Ontario teachers and published some of the best of these in THE AML ANTHOLOGY 1990. Edited by AML executive, Bill Smart, the first edition quickly sold out and THE AML ANTHOLOGY SUPPLEMENT 1992 was planned. For the first edition of the Anthology, the AML executive felt the need for an all-purpose compendium of media lesson plans and units which demonstrated a variety of media genres and strategies for a variety of grades and levels. Some units were designed for teachers new to media studies, others were more sophisticated in their application of the key concepts and in their activities and production tasks.

Recognizing the importance of learning from what has been done in other countries, the AML has collected materials from around the world and organized visits to Toronto by Len Masterman from England, Eddie Dick from Scotland, and Barrie McMahon, Robyn Quin Peter Greenaway and Stephen Walters from Australia. In

addition, to fulfil a need for a textbook for Grades 7 and 8 (12 and 13 year olds), two AML members - Jack Livesley and John Pungente - obtained permission from Barrie McMahon and Robyn Quin to do a Canadian adaptation of their excellent text MEET THE MEDIA. The Canadian edition was published in January of 1990 and is now in use in schools across Canada.

Three times a year, the AML publishes MEDIACY. This periodical, edited by AML executive member Derek Boles, updates AML members on what has been happening, lists new publications in the field, announces speakers and topics for quarterly events, and publishes articles on related topics. During the school year, the AML quarterly events bring in speakers ranging from media teachers to media professionals and deal with topics as varied as Multiculturalism, Race and Media and Deconstructing Television News.

From 1987 to 1993, the AML offered three courses for media teachers during summer school in conjunction with the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto. A steep increase in the cost of summer school courses brought these courses to an end.

Media Part I introduced the key concepts of the media: how the media construct realities through the interaction of media codes, cultural practices, media industries and audience. Models of critical pedagogy and classroom organizations were presented. Students worked in groups with camcorders and an editing suite as well as deconstructed a variety of media, reviewed current resources, and designed practical curriculum units. Special speakers from the media industry made presentations to the class.

Media Part II reinforced what was done in Part I and had a special emphasis on how individuals and audiences negotiate meaning, showing the implications of this for course designs and student discussions. In order to propose effective school-wide and board-wide courses, teachers assessed course frameworks developed in Britain, Australia, and several Ontario school boards.

Media Part III students developed and presented an original research project based on assessing student response to media curriculum in the classroom. Refining ideas drawn from media theory, critical pedagogy, and discourse analysis, students learned appropriate research practices and looked at the variety of ways for contextualizing teachable moments in the media. Students were expected to acquire the skills of conducting workshops and advising teachers at the school board level on course design.

The Canadian government is in the midst of passing legislation on a new copyright law. The AML has been very active in lobbying for the right of teachers to a "fair use" clause which would allow them freely to show excerpts from television in class.

In May of 1989, the AML brought together forty-six educators and media professionals for a two day invitational think tank to discuss future developments of Media Education in Ontario. The Trent Think Tank took place at Peterborough's University of Trent. Participants included classroom teachers, Ministry of Education personnel, Language Arts co-ordinators and consultants, university professors, and representatives from the Saskatoon Media Literacy Association, the Development Education Centre, the Children's Broadcast Institute, Strategies for Media Literacy (San Francisco), TVOntario and the National Film Board of Canada. Keynote speakers were Eddie Dick, Media Education Officer for the Scottish Film Council in Glasgow, and Peter Greenaway, Professor of Media Education at Victoria College in Melbourne. The results of this conference were published by the AML early in 1990.

The Association for Media Literacy organized the first North American Media Education conference, held May 10-12, 1990, at the University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario. Chaired by AML executive, Rick Shepherd, this highly successful conference featured keynote speakers Len Masterman, lecturer in education at England's University of Nottingham and author of TEACHING THE MEDIA; Eddie Dick, Media education Officer for the Scottish Film Council; and Barrie McMahon, senior curriculum officer for the Western Australia Ministry of Education and Robyn Quin, lecturer in Media Studies at the Western Australia College of Advanced Education.

When the Association began planning for the conference, they hoped to attract about 300 teachers. By the time of the conference the final count was 420 participants. Space limitations forced the organizers to turn away another 100 applicants. The participants came from eight provinces of Canada, nine American states and three overseas countries.

Participants had their choice of over 50 workshops and took part in a number of social events which gave them an opportunity to meet media teachers from other areas. During this conference, the American National Telemedia Council awarded Barry Duncan, AML's president, the Jessie McCause Award for his contributions to Media Education. The National Telemedia Council also published the keynote speeches in their newsletter.

The success of the 1990 conference sparked a call for a second North American Media Education. Once again,

the AML organized this conference - CONSTRUCTING CULTURE - at the University of Guelph from May 13-15, 1992. John Pungente, SJ, of the AML executive, chaired the conference which attracted 500 participants from eight Canadian provinces, fifteen American states, and fourteen overseas countries. It was a most international mix of media educators from around the world.

Keynote speakers were Barry Duncan, President of the AML and author; Susan Cole, author and editor of Canada's NOW Magazine; and Barry McMahon and Robyn Quin from Western Australia. There were over 70 workshops and panels to choose from during this very successful conference as well as video screenings of media education resources, social events and a special closing panel.

After the conference, representatives from Canadian provinces met in Toronto to form the Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO). The purpose of the group is to promote media literacy across Canada. CAMEO's first president was Mick Ellis, then head of Media Literacy Saskatchewan. In May 1995, John J. Pungente, SJ was elected the second president. CAMEO links together the media literacy organizations across Canada. The member groups are:

- Canadian Association for Media Education of British Columbia
- Alberta Association of Media Awareness
- Media Literacy Saskatchewan
- Manitoba Association of Media Literacy
- Ontario Association of Media Literacy
- Jesuit Communication Project
- Quebec Association for Media Education
- Association for Media Literacy Nova Scotia

CAMEO member organizations have been involved in a number of Canadian initiatives. Most recently presentations were made by member groups to the CRTC during the national hearings on violence and the media. CAMEO advocated the development of a single national classification system and offered its services to develop the called-for media literacy strategies. CAMEO has also petitioned for the inclusion of a fair use clause in the revised copyright laws. As well, CAMEO successfully led two struggles in 1996 and 1997 to keep the Youth News Network out of Canadian classrooms.

### **The Canadian Professional Media and The Development of Media Literacy:**

Having access to good media resources is very important for media teachers. This is especially true in Canada where the current copyright laws complicate the situation. There are a number of such resources available although there is a considerable distance to go before Canadians have access to the quantity of material available to British and Australian teachers.

For many years Canadian teachers have used films from the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), subscribed to their educational newsletters, and taken part in their workshops. Since 1989, the NFB have issued three video resource packages which are proving very helpful for media teachers -

- IMAGES AND MEANING is an anthology of nine National Film Board productions to spark discussion and learning in media literacy courses. A small booklet gives a series of discussion guidelines for classes.
- MEDIA AND SOCIETY is especially useful dealing as it does with media in contemporary society under four main topics - Advertising and Consumerism, Images of Women, Cultural Sovereignty, and Shaping the Truth. Each topic is presented with a short, provocative introduction. The package offers a wide choice of topics in the form of short documentaries, animated films, advertisements, and excerpts. This video package consists of 3 VHS videos containing 19 NFB films or film excerpts and a 124 page Resource Guide. The Resource Guide includes activities, interviews with filmmakers, backgrounds on the films, student handouts, articles and quotes.
- CONSTRUCTING REALITY deals with truth, fact, objectivity and the nature of propaganda in the media. The six video cassettes or laserdiscs house an anthology of films, film excerpts, interviews, and original production material for use in senior media literacy classes. The accompanying 150 Resource Guide raises critical issues around documentary filmmaking and representations of fact and fiction in mainstream media. The package is organized in six sections: The Documentary Process, The Viewing Experience, Documentary Traditions, The Search For Truth, Many Voices, and New Directions.

Another resource is The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) INSIDE THE BOX, a series of six packages each of which include a video and teacher's guide. The subjects dealt with are Television Documentary,

Television News, Children's Television, Drama, Television and the Consumer, and Television as an Artistic Medium.

Beginning in the autumn of 1991, YTV, the Toronto based national youth channel, worked with AML executive, Neil Andersen, to produce media literacy notes for their weekly TV program STREET NOISE. Toronto's CITY TV has a weekly program, Media Television, which analyses various aspects of the mass media and the national MuchMusic puts on the web media literacy lesson plans for a number of its programmes..

The Alliance for Children and Television in collaboration with Health Canada has produced the Prime Time Parent kit which has received an overwhelming response from teachers and parents. The Media Awareness Network has created the Video for Media Education catalogue, which offers one hundred and fifteen English and one hundred French video titles - all reviewed by media literacy teachers across Canada.

There is good - and growing - cooperation between the media themselves and groups promoting media literacy. A few examples:

- Warner Brothers assistance in publishing a 1994 media literacy study guide for the animated film, BATMAN: MASK OF THE PHANTASM , in Kids World Magazine. This guide dealt honestly with the issues of violence in the movie.
- YTV's series of lesson plans for teachers and written by Neil Andersen and other media literacy teachers - YTV News in Class - has dealt with a number of topics including Television and Violence. This lesson plan presents ways of discussing such topics as types of media violence, how to report violence on the news without showing it, and other ways children might have learned violent behavior. It also offers topics for research into the area of media violence as well as suggestions for practical activities.
- TVOntario has purchased rights to a number of media literacy programs for teachers and has prepared two interactive satellite broadcasts on media literacy. Both of these were done with consultation from media literacy teachers.
- CITY TV's weekly series Media Television provides a critical look at various media. This is an important example of original programming about the media. It has a great potential for use by teachers of media literacy.
- Much Music's program Too Much for Much brings in media literacy teachers and students along with station decision makers and cultural critics to discuss why certain videos are not being aired. As well, as part of the Cable in the Classroom, Much Music has developed a number of teacher's guides to accompany the programs which appear monthly through Cable in the Classroom.
- CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM brings copyright cleared, commercial free, educationally relevant French and English television programs to elementary and secondary schools. Teachers are free to tape programs of interest and replay them in class. Schedules and support print material are available

Some of the best books on media come from sources such as the British Film Institute and American publishers. These books have not been readily available in Canada. However, a Toronto book store, Theatre Books, stocks many of these books as well as titles listed in the AML Bibliography. Theatre Books lists these books in their catalogue and have an excellent mail order service which allows Canadian teachers easy access to key media books.

The Jesuit Communication Project was set up in 1984 to promote media literacy in Canada. It also serves as a Canadian resource center for media literacy with a collection of over 4000 books and periodicals on the media, as well as vertical files on media literacy and a large collection of media literacy materials from around the world. It is used by teachers, researchers, students, and the media from across Canada and around the world. Twice a year, it publishes CLIPBOARD - the only international media literacy newsletter - and distributes it to 41 countries. In 1997, the Jesuit Communication Project working with award winning filmmaker Gary Marcuse, CHUM Television Ltd. , YTV, TVOntario, Warner Bros, and the NFB produced SCANNING TELEVISION - an award winning collection of some 40 excerpts from television for use in media literacy class. The accompanying teacher's guide was written by Neil Andersen and the four video kit is published by Harcourt Brace.

In 1995 a new service appeared on the Internet - on the World Wide Web - called the Media Awareness Network. It is the first, and only on-line Canadian content clearinghouse (and the only one of its kind in the world) dedicated to media literacy and to increasing public appreciation of the role media play in the lives of children. Leading media educators across Canada have participated in the design of one of the Network's

content areas specifically as a resource for media literacy. This is an important communication link between teachers, students, and the communications industries across Canada.

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## Conclusion

A study of media literacy around the world, shows that there are nine factors which appear to be crucial to the successful development of media literacy in secondary schools. These are:

1. Media literacy, like other innovative programs, must be a grassroots movement and teachers need to take a major initiative in lobbying for this.
2. Educational authorities must give clear support to such programs by mandating the teaching of Media Studies within the curriculum, establishing guidelines and resource books, and by making certain that curricula are developed and that materials are available.
3. Faculties of Education must hire staff capable of training future teachers in this area. There should also be academic support from tertiary institutions in the writing of curricula and in sustained consultation.
4. In-service training at the school district level must be an integral part of program implementation.
5. School districts need consultants who have expertise in media literacy and who will establish communication networks.
6. Suitable textbooks and audio-visual material which are relevant to the country/area must be available.
7. A support organization must be established for the purposes of workshops, conferences, dissemination of newsletters and the development of curriculum units. Such a professional organization must cut across school boards and districts to involve a cross section of people interested in media literacy.
8. There must be appropriate evaluation instruments which are suitable for the unique quality of Media Studies.
9. Because media literacy involves such a diversity of skills and expertise, there must be a collaboration between teachers, parents, researchers and media professionals.

Australia, Scotland, and England, where many of the above factors are in place, lead the world in media literacy. Although Ontario has not had the years of experience that Australia and Britain have, it is clear that Ontario does now possess most of the factors critical to the successful development of media literacy. The past few years have seen the province of Ontario become a leader in media literacy not only in Canada but also around the world. The other provinces are not far behind.

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## End Notes:

[1] Duncan, Barry et al.. Media Literacy - Resource Guide. Toronto: Ministry of Education, 1989, p.6-7.

[2] Ibid. p.7.

[3] "Media teachers should attempt to make a list of the principal concepts which they wish their students to understand, for it is these concepts which can provide the subject with its continuity and coherence across a wide range of media texts and issues." TEACHING THE MEDIA , p.23.

[4] Op.cit, p.8.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Op.cit., p.9.

[7] Op.cit., p.24.

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## Special Thanks:

Dan Blake, British Columbia; Wayne Blair and Sharon McCann, Alberta; Mick Ellis, Saskatchewan; Brian

Murphy, Manitoba; Maureen Baron and Lee Rother, Quebec; Neil Andersen, Barry Duncan, Bill Smart , Ontario; Pat Kipping, Halifax

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### **Curriculum Vitae:**

John Pungente is a Canadian Jesuit priest with Master's degrees in English, Theology, and Film. He taught Media and other subjects for eighteen years at a Canadian Jesuit high school in Winnipeg. He is co-author of MEDIA LITERACY - the Ontario Ministry of Education Resource Guide for Teachers, co-author of the Canadian edition of MEET THE MEDIA -a text for students aged eleven to fifteen, editor of the international quarterly newsletter, CLIPBOARD, and co-producer of the award winning video teaching resource, SCANNING TELEVISION. Currently he is executive Director of the Jesuit Communication Project in Toronto where his main work is the promotion of media literacy.