

# Board Retreat

ANDREAS AALHUS, VWS BOARD TRUSTEE

The Board of Trustees of the Vancouver Waldorf School participated in a retreat on the evening of 30 October and the day of 31 October 2009, ending just in time to go *Trick or Treating* with our children. While the food prepared and served by Eitel Timm (High School humanities teacher) evoked images of high brow resorts, we were in fact meeting in the Art/Grade Ten classroom in our renovated High School facility. It was fitting for the people who made the decision to commit \$210,000 towards renovating the high school to spend some time in the completed space. It certainly felt right, and reminded us what can be accomplished when we set ourselves to it.

The retreat was a first for the current Board of Trustees. Although not all Trustees were able to attend, those who did were fully and vibrantly present. The broad intent was to provide us the opportunity to meet for longer than the monthly evening meeting allows, thereby allowing more wide-ranging discussions an opportunity to reach their logical conclusions. Within that broad intent was a framework that provided conversations around the historical perspective of the Vancouver Waldorf School, the *raison d'être* of the school, and the function and focus of the Board of Trustees.

We began by developing a historical timeline of the world, the Waldorf educational movement and Vancouver Waldorf School itself. This was referenced continually throughout the remainder of the retreat as it provided context for other discussions we had. As a newer member of the Vancouver Waldorf School community, this was a real eye-opener. What an incredible history this school has! Hearing of and understanding some of the history provided me with great perspective through which to view my own four year association with the school.

We moved from the timeline to a review of the school's Vision, Mission and Values statements – not to change them, but to consolidate the whole to reach a

common understanding of the primary purpose of the Vancouver Waldorf School and the role of Trustees in guiding the school toward that purpose.

We understand the core mission of the Vancouver Waldorf School is to be a model Waldorf School that, through delivering the best education possible, radiates the social mission of Waldorf education. The Board's role in this is to provide leadership in guiding the organization in the right unfolding to meet this mission, to know what needs to happen next, to facilitate the harnessing of resources to enable the delivery of the pedagogy and Waldorf education, and to provide a plan.

We spent some time with an excerpt from *Anthroposophical Medicine* by Husemann/Wolff. In this we examined the threefold human being and the three human systems. Upon reflection, it was this part of the retreat that really provided me with some grounding with and relatedness to Waldorf education. It also prepared us for a review and discussion of the threefold governance structure initiated and currently in place at the school.



As the retreat ended, the Trustees reached common clarity on two critical things: the strategic planning process undertaken nearly two years ago must be completed so that the organization can maintain a focus and marshal its resources in a synergistic manner; and a new facility to house the high school and the grade school must be completed

so the school's Vision, Mission and objectives can be manifested and our Values affirmed.

In closing, I must extend a thank you to several people. Eitel Timm thank you for keeping us all fed and watered – what gastronomical delights!; Daniela Fiess, your Eurythmy sessions kept us working at peak capacity; Elaine Mackee, your knowledge of the VWS history filled in many blanks; Karen Humber, your facilitation skills allowed us to accomplish what we set out to do. Finally, I want to thank my colleagues on the Board. It is a pleasure to work with you, and I learn from each of you each time we meet.