

## TRUE NORTH STRONG AND FREE: THREE WISE MEN AND THE FOUNDING OF CASAE/ACÉÉA

**Roger Boshier**

University of British Columbia

### Abstract

*The founding meeting of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education/l'Association canadienne pour l'Étude de l'Éducation des Adultes (CASAE/ACÉÉA) on May 6, 1980, occurred against a backdrop of unease about the influence of U.S. academics in Canadian university departments of adult education. In particular, CASAE advocates in Vancouver had to navigate around Coolie Verner, who felt adult education (as a discipline and field) was stalled by lack of consensus concerning fundamental concepts. He would be reluctant to endorse anything lacking rigour. Verner was not opposed to Canadians having their own organization, but, even so, his 1979 death created space for the founding of CASAE in 1980. This paper analyzes events leading to the less-than-dramatic CASAE birthing process involving three wise men. Despite early years on life support, by 1982 CASAE was where it should be—in a Vancouver Chinese restaurant toying with noodles. Thirty-one years after the founding, university adult education is in big trouble. But CASAE is still here and members are grateful to those who sustained it.*

### Résumé

*Le congrès fondateur de l'Association canadienne pour l'Étude de l'Éducation des Adultes (ACÉÉA) eut lieu le 6 mai 1980, dans un contexte de malaise latent concernant l'influence et la proximité des universitaires américains dans les départements d'éducation des adultes au sein des universités canadiennes. En particulier, les partisans de l'ACÉÉA à Vancouver, ont dû composer avec Coolie Verner qui considérait que l'éducation des adultes (comme discipline et comme domaine) était bloqué par un manque de consensus concernant les concepts fondamentaux. Or il était réticent à approuver quoique ce soit manquant de rigueur. Verner n'était pas opposé à ce que les Canadiens aient leur propre*

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*organisation, mais quand même, sa mort en 1979, créa l'espace qui permit la fondation de l'ACÉÉA en 1980. Cet article analyse les événements conduisant au congrès fondateur et au moins que dramatique processus de création de l'ACÉÉA qui fut dominé par trois sages. Malgré ses premières années de survie, dès 1982, l'ACÉÉA était où elle devait être - dans un restaurant chinois de Vancouver, jouant avec des nouilles et essayant d'identifier le mot français pour sauce soja. Trente-un ans après sa fondation, l'ACÉÉA continue d'exister et les membres sont reconnaissants envers ceux qui l'ont toujours soutenu.*

### **Introduction**

The Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) was well and truly founded on May 6, 1980, at a meeting in Vancouver. Yet, 31 years later, some members insist Vancouver festivities were foreplay. For them, the main event occurred a year later at the 1981 "founding conference" inside the Downtown Ramada Inn in Montreal.

There are many reasons why some people cite 1980 and others insist on 1981 as the founding of CASAE. In some ways, the discrepancy is an echo of ancient rivalries concerning universities with substantial adult education graduate programs: the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in Toronto and the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver. There is also the fact the founding meeting was packed with Vancouverites. But most disagreement arises from the most excruciating of Canadian preoccupations: a constitution!

After the founding meeting in Vancouver it took a year to organize and vote on a CASAE constitution. Selman (1994) explained how he was tasked to steer it through the 1981 meeting: "This was done in a few hours and CASAE/ACÉÉA came officially into existence . . . I felt I had handled that potentially troublesome task quite well, and certainly the meeting expressed heart-warming congratulations when the process was over" (p. 123).

When Boshier submitted this paper for the special issue of the journal, the editor said "official records" of CASAE cite 1981 as the founding. Along with Plumb (2009), the CASAE website ([www.casae-accea.ca](http://www.casae-accea.ca)) also makes this claim. Although reassuring to know there are official records, the fact it took a year to organize a constitution does not obliterate the significance of 1980 events in Vancouver. Did three wise men (Roby Kidd, Alan Thomas, and Gordon Selman) accidentally stumble into a CASAE meeting while en route to Wreck Beach? Not likely! So, in 1980, who did what to whom? And why?

Thirty-one years is long enough. One purpose of this paper is to create a better record of what happened. Another is to gently probe the lingering notion CASAE was more or less an OISE action. Another purpose is to forestall attempts to stomp on Vancouver's part in the founding story. So what really happened? Like Pi Patel said to accident investigators, answering this depends on what is meant by "really." In this case, the author has notebooks from 1980 and clear recollections. There are also mail chats with survivors of the CASAE creation process.

CASAE was primarily spawned by the desire of some Canadians to create an arena for adult education research not tainted by barbarians from the south. Two strands

coalesced to bring the infant to life. In the first were people active in the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) but glad to have a similar arena at home. In the second were people who had little (or nothing) to do with the AERC, but studied great men and considered outfits like Antigonish and Frontier College emblematic of Canadian adult education. Although UBC was top-heavy with U.S.-born scholars, it was at the forefront of efforts to create the new association.

### True Patriot Love

Part of the impetus for CASAE stemmed from what some people considered U.S. domination of Canadian universities and research. For Canadian nationalists wary of U.S. influences, developing a Canadian ethos at UBC was complicated by appointment of three Americans (Coolie Verner, Jim Thornton, and Bill Griffith) to head up the Adult Education Research Centre at different times. In addition to these three, Russell Whaley, another American, came in 1965 and left in 1966. In 1966, John Niemi, also an American, was hired from Alaska. He was a prodigious networker south of the border.

OISE faculty members cited the presence of Niemi as evidence of U.S. hegemony at UBC (A. Blunt, personal communication, September 9 and 7 December, 2010). Later hires included Gary Dickinson, a Canadian, in 1968; Roger Boshier (a New Zealander) and Gordon Selman (a Canadian) in 1974; John Collins and Dan Pratt (Americans) in 1976. Despite their places of birth, UBC faculty members were engaged with Canadian issues. For example, soon after arriving, Boshier had projects with the Girl Guides (on leadership) and Environment Canada (on marine safety and oil spills).

Canadian nationalists navigated with extreme caution around Verner—an intelligent, opinionated, U.S.-born scholarly strongman whose shadow loomed over adult education north and south of the border (see Boshier, 1995; Damer, 2002; Dickinson, 1978, 1979). In 1959, Verner had been a visiting scholar at UBC and impressed the dean. On April 13, 1961, Dean Neville Scarfe sent a telegram offering a full professorship at UBC with a salary of \$12,000. Coolie accepted, but, a decade later, was rubbing against parts of what he called the Canadian adult education “establishment.”

Verner’s tendency to encourage students and junior faculty to publish in U.S. arenas (such as *Adult Education*, later *Adult Education Quarterly*) created disquiet in some quarters. Even so, throughout the 1980s, papers from UBC faculty, graduate students, or alumni often constituted a quarter (or more) of those presented at AERC.

Canadian nationalists (such as Jindra Kulich and Gordon Selman) were reluctant to participate in U.S. adult education research arenas. But they were pragmatists who recognized the draw of an AERC meeting in Vancouver. Colleagues from other parts of Canada would be coming and there would be chances to talk amongst ourselves. Was 1980 the time to create the longed-for Canadian research organization?

The CASAE founding meeting could have been staged at the Adult Education Research Centre on the edge of the UBC campus. Instead, it was in the law building—only a few metres from AERC. Comedian Dave Broadfoot claims being Canadian is mostly

about what we are not; in 1980—when CASAE was born—the elephant in the room was undeniably the United States of America.

### **In All Thy Sons Command**

The CASAE did not emerge from a vacuum. While Senator Joe McCarthy rooted out alleged Communists, during the Cold War Canada was positioned as a middle power (between the Soviet Union and United States). At the same time, Canadian adult educators formed organizations, acted as a bridge, and took on difficult tasks in international arenas.

This tendency was evident at the 1960 Second UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education, where Roby Kidd presided and authored the important Montreal Declaration (1963). Elsewhere at the conference, John Friesen herded U.S. and Soviet delegates into a hotel room and got them talking. Later, Friesen heard A-bomb creator J. Robert Oppenheimer had been barred from talking at the University of Washington. Oppenheimer had disavowed nuclear weapons and become a peacenik. Friesen sent a car to collect the errant scientist and had him deliver his message of peace to a crowded meeting in Vancouver (Friesen, 1994).

At the 1972 Third UNESCO World Conference on Adult Education in Tokyo, Kidd roamed corridors seeking support for an "International Council" of Adult Education. Some delegates said lifelong education was the way to go; adult education was too restrictive. Participants familiar with the moribund World Association for Adult Education dismissed Kidd as likeable but unrealistic. A meeting organized by Kidd triggered "an unexpected heated controversy" (Lowe, 1975). Paul Bertelsen of UNESCO supported Kidd. However, the history of international adult education associations had proved to be "far more unstable and poverty-stricken than national bodies" (Lowe, p. 208). Scandinavians such as Stig Lundgren of the Swedish Workers' Educational Association feared an international council would undercut national associations. Kidd silenced him by abandoning individual membership. Members would be national associations. Besides, an international body would strengthen (not weaken) national associations. Most of those present accepted this "constructive viewpoint" (Lowe, p. 208), and, in 1973, Kidd launched the International Council.

Fast-forward seven years to 1980. If Kidd were to appear in Vancouver and suggest a Canadian adult education research organization was needed, only the brave, reckless, or naïve would oppose him.

### **With Glowing Hearts We See Thee Rise**

With 1970s separatism stirring in Quebec, the secretary of state had money to foster cooperation among anglophone and francophone university students. Adrian Blunt (then a doctoral student studying with Verner) produced an official-looking telegram from Claude Touchette at the Université de Montreal. The telegram praised Verner for fostering anglo-franco cooperation and invited UBC people to Montreal. As a result, Professor Gary Dickinson and 11 graduate students went to Montreal for 10 days, where, among other things, there was talk of forming a national adult education research association.

“They at least had a sense of unity that we didn’t because of their penchant to view the world through political and philosophical lenses . . . the best thing we ever did was to take our group to Montreal to see how they went about the study of adult education.” (G. Dickinson, personal communication, December 17, 2010)

In 1979, UBC representatives went to Michigan to secure the 1980 Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) for Vancouver. The Vancouver event would be the 21st birthday of AERC and the cover of published proceedings would feature a birthday cake with candles. This Vancouver AERC set the stage for CASAE.

Jim Draper (and others) had organized Canadian meetings at earlier AERCs — such as the one in 1976. But they lacked energy and achieved little. In 1979, heavy snow was falling outside the Ann Arbor Marriott Inn and there was another Canadian meeting. This one was different because of a well-attended AERC symposium on participatory research (Hall, Marino, Jackson, Conchelos, & Barndt, 1979) suggesting Canadian adult education was raunchy and political. “Something quite fresh and new was coming. And it was coming from Canada. It made us feel proud, linked to our own adult education heritage and at ease with what today is called engaged scholarship” (B. Hall, personal communication, January 4, 2011). Before the concluding session of the 1979 AERC, Canadians had agreed to create a research organization.

### **God Keep Our Land Glorious and Free**

In Vancouver, CASAE was erected against a backdrop created by Coolie Verner. Although UBC later neglected to maintain the Verner collection, when the university hired him, they paid to ship his books to Canada. For Verner, a big day out was a session in second-hand bookshops. He was respected in three disciplines: rural sociology, carto-bibliography, and adult education. The common thread was his interest in the diffusion of knowledge.

Verner had close relationships with John Friesen and UBC Dean of Education Neville Scarfe. He ate Christmas dinner with the Scarfe family and was good at getting students to produce publishable research. Like Paulston (1996) in comparative education, Verner was fond of maps. His last book, *The Northpart of America* (Verner & Stuart-Stubbs, 1979), coauthored with the UBC librarian, demonstrated his expertise in carto-bibliography. Soon after presses rolled, Adrian Blunt rushed a copy to Mayne Island so the ailing Verner could see it.

In 1959, Verner was chair of the Adult Education Association (USA) committee on academic freedom, set up as an antidote to McCarthyism. But, once in Vancouver, his interest in research and fundamental concepts of adult education did not fit the Canadian celebration of ambiguity or obsession with context. For Verner there was no hope of building a discipline or viable field of practice unless people could agree on basic concepts. But getting adult educators to agree was like trying to gift-wrap live eels.

From 1961 onward, Verner built bridges to nursing, planning, agriculture, public health, medicine, schools, community colleges, technology institutes, librarianship, cartography, and numerous other university fields, disciplines, and departments. He was committed to strengthening Canadian life and culture, and published more than 30 Canada

Land Inventory surveys. For this work on the way Canadian soil was used and abused, he secured the largest external research grant in the history of the Faculty of Education (Damer, 2000, 2002). Throughout the 1960s there were attempts to develop academic rigour and boost the output of researchers in the UBC Faculty of Education. A 1967 external review by John Goodlad, dean of education at UCLA, praised adult education faculty as "competent, empirical researchers," and said Verner's committee work to encourage graduate studies was "first-rate" (Damer, 2000, 2002).

By 1976, Verner was ill, Thornton had become head, the adult education group was under pressure and having difficulty getting curriculum revisions past university gatekeepers. Psychologists acted like they owned concepts like "adult learner" and "adult development." Peter Seudfeld, head of psychology, claimed "Adult Development" had an 80% overlap with his department's "Psychology of Aging" course. "I am not at this time able to give the approval of the Department of Psychology to these proposals," said Seudfeld (interdepartmental memorandum, October 20, 1976). Charlie Ungerleider, chair of educational foundations, said his group had "several serious reservations" about adult education courses (interdepartmental memorandum, October 20, 1976). The history department acidly noted, "There is little significant literature on adult education in Canada" (M. Prang, personal communication, October 20, 1976). The dean of graduate studies proposed to do a "formal review" of adult education (P. Larkin, personal communication with John Andrews, October 18, 1976).

The "blue book" coming out of these processes, so named for its cover and mood of its creators, today illuminates the state of academic adult education in 1976. This UBC blue book should not be confused with the Jensen, Liveright, and Hallenbeck (1964) "black book," or the Peters and Jarvis (1991) "black-and-blue book"—so named by Allan Quigley (personal communication, December 13, 2010).

John Peters had persuaded 1992 AERC organizers to create space for a panel involving contributors to a new book. Mike Law was to review it for *Adult Education Quarterly* and, unlike everyone else, had read the book. Because it was a more or less "official" project of the Commission of Professors, Mike Law, assisted by others, charged, tried, and convicted Peters and Jarvis for errors of omission. Where are the chapters on race, gender, and indigenous people? Of the 16 chapters, only two were by women and they were the usual suspects (Sharan Merriam, Phyllis Cunningham). What is going on? Why did Jossey-Bass agree to publish this? Look at the title: *Achievements of a Developing Field*. Where were the achievements? Some people thought it significant the black-and-blue conflagration happened in Saskatchewan, but overlooked the fact Law was (and is) a New Zealander.

Back at UBC, dramas over book colours were mostly in the future. Those present at the 1976 UBC blue-book meetings included Coolie Verner, Gary Dickinson, Jim Thornton, Jindra Kulich, Gordon Selman, Roger Boshier, senior graduate students, and visitors. Verner wanted attendees to describe their understanding of adult education. Vague references to Canadian geography would not suffice. "Vast landscape," being a "middle power," and "immigrants" were part of the context—but not fundamental concepts of adult education.

As well as staking claims for the discipline of adult education, Verner was certain OISE faculty members considered his research too empirical, logico-deductive, reductionist, and positivist (A. Blunt, personal communication, September 9 and December 7, 2010). In Vancouver, Selman had reservations about colleagues and later characterized foreign influences a matter of “life and death” for Canadian adult education. “The decline of the uniquely Canadian approach to adult education, shaped by our geography, history, and culture, can be seen as part of our broader failure to steer our own course” (Selman & Selman, 2009, p. 25). In 1956 when Kidd came to teach the first credit course in what became the UBC graduate program in adult education, he and his two sons (Bruce and Ross) stayed at Selman’s house. Selman was better connected to Kidd, Thomas, and Draper in Toronto than he was to Verner (across the hallway in Vancouver), whom he considered “a somewhat prickly character, bright, belligerent and dogmatic” (Selman, 1994, p. 139).

In 1979, Coolie was on Mayne Island dying of throat cancer. Fed up with flying into Vancouver for radiation, he nailed his face protection to a post. His name—Verner—was spray-painted on the mask, which became a garden ornament. On Friday, October 12, 1979, there were no map-makers, adult educators, or Canadian nationalists at the cottage when he died. Only a local nurse (a former student of his) was there. Before he died, Verner made 172 contributions (articles, books, papers) to the discipline of adult education.

He had willed his books to UBC, but knew the collection was in danger. “Do not let those bastards steal my books,” he exhorted Boshier, Blunt, and Little (audiotaped personal interview, August 19, 1979). He left his pedal organ to the church he never attended and organized his own wake. Coolie was not opposed to forming an adult education research organization flying a maple leaf. But, when the time came, would the new organization commit to research? Or something soft, ambiguous and Canadian?

Despite the department’s engagement with Canadian issues and problems, when Gordon Selman arrived in 1974 he was “dismayed” by the “lack of interest” in what he considered “the Canadian dimension of the field” of adult education (1994, p. 91). For 10 years Selman was a member of the Adult Education Association (USA) Commission of Professors of Adult Education. “I did not get there very often, and usually regretted it when I did” (p. 136). “As Canadians, working in a cultural and social setting . . . different to the United States, we should devote our energies to creating and strengthening Canadian organizations” (p. 91).

Selman had been active in the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) and enjoyed close personal friendships with CAAE directors Roby Kidd and Alan Thomas. Later, Ian Morrison was running CAAE, but not in a manner satisfactory to Selman. From 1976 onward, Selman was supposedly editor of *Learning* but frustrated by changes made by the Toronto office. There were also annoying delays in the publication schedule.

The CAAE had “meant a great deal” to him, and Selman bemoaned the “distance, even alienation” he felt in the late 1970s (1994, p. 104). Although remaining “close to the CAAE in my mind and research work” (p. 104), he felt rejected. Was this the time to form another association? Beyond the reach of Ian Morrison? Even better, what if CAAE stalwarts Roby Kidd and Alan Thomas could be recruited? They had both taught the earliest adult education courses at UBC. Morrison’s role should not be overstated. But, with the

CAAE undertaker hovering nearby, the timing was right. Bon voyage CAAE! Bonjour CASAE!

### O Canada!

The Vancouver committee to create CASAE consisted of Judith Mastai (chair), assisted by Gary Dickinson and Gordon Selman. Being dead, Verner missed the May 6, 1980, founding meeting by seven months. Was it easier to get CASAE underway with Verner out of the picture?

Judith Mastai, Verner's doctoral student, would chair the founding meeting. As snow came over the horizon and Christmas 1979 approached, Mastai nudged others aside to orchestrate the founding. Exactly eight weeks after Coolie died, on December 14, 1979, she sent a professionally printed invitation (blue ink on grey paper) to everyone listed in the *Directory of Professors of Adult Education in Canada* (Boshier & Thiesfeld, 1978). A cover letter said, "After discussing occurrences at the Ann Arbor gathering, the group felt the time might be right to suggest the organization of a Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education." The invitation "cordially invited" everyone to attend a meeting and had a tear-off RSVP slip at the bottom—"J'assisterai a la reunion S.V.P. me transmettre une copie des donnees de base."

The 1980 Adult Education Research Conference, largely organized by Roger Boshier and Ingrid Pipke, lurched into crisis when the famously unreliable UBC Printing Department "forgot" to deliver conference proceedings and, at noon, rain drenched the place where an outdoor barbeque was planned for 5:00 p.m. However, total embarrassment was avoided when proceedings arrived (late) and rain stopped.

On the morning of May 6, 1980, Gordon Selman, Teresa McNeill, Jean Louis Bernard, and Don Brundage gave papers on the Canadian contribution to adult education research. At 1:30 p.m., people filed into a now sunny room in the law building to decide whether there was a need for a Canadian AERC. Visitors eyed damp but manicured grounds outside. Mastai stood at the front.

Many attendees were registered for the May 7–9 AERC. Others had to step onto AERC turf to get to the Canadian meeting. Roby Kidd sat on the left, toward the back. Alan Thomas sat in the centre. Mastai told the meeting the idea of a Canadian AERC had been around for years, talked about 1979 Ann Arbor discussions, and gave the impression anything was possible. There were about 75 people present—men, women, francophone, anglophone, western, central, and eastern Canadian. Curious U.S. academics and Swedes attending AERC showed up to see Canadians enact their rituals. Numerous UBC adult education students were there.

The CASAE founding meeting was open for discussion and a possible motion. At first, nobody spoke. Then, after faked reticence, Roby Kidd rose from his seat. A Trudeau-era liberal, he strongly believed adult education and a vibrant civil society were pillars of a democratic state. There was no chance he would oppose creation of CASAE.



“Oh well, if nobody else is going to speak . . . ho, ho, ha, ha,” he said, looking to the centre of the room and then at those to his left. “Yes, well, Madam Chair . . . We do need such an organization and we applaud the people who organized this meeting.”

After Kidd sat down, Alan Thomas got up. “Well, yes, jolly good idea . . . but we need to do this the Canadian way.”

Ingrid Pipke would later become secretary of CASAE. But now Boshier whispered in her ear, “Selman will be next.”

With his usual imposing presence, Gordon Selman threw his weight behind what had started to look like an all-OISE idea. With Selman’s support it was becoming a pan-Canadian idea, straddling east and west.

French Canadians remembered the Blunt trip to Montreal and enjoyed being at UBC. Claude Touchette and Gisele Painchaud enthusiastically supported the motion to create CASAE.

Graduate students realized they were witnessing a historic moment, and given the stature of the first speakers, would not contradict anything. Those understanding the history of Canadian unease with U.S. politics and culture knew having Kidd, Thomas, and Selman together in a room on the side of an AERC (what the three wise men considered an “American” meeting) was at the edge of extraordinary.

It would have been reckless to let this go forward without challenge, and there was a dissenting voice in a foreign accent.

“Did adult education need yet another organization?”

“What about corpses littering the road of good intentions?”

“What about the Canadian Association for Adult Education (the CAAE)—soon to be laid out and filled with formaldehyde on the mortician’s table?”

“Instead of being an anarchist-utopian outfit (like AERC) with a single mission and threadbare organization, Canadians would soon be talking ‘constitution’ and ‘secretariat,’” said the dissenter.

“Instead of research, there will be people wanting to turn this into a lobby group,” he said.

“There will be a this-caucus and that-caucus. Will this new organization be an instrument for bringing people together? Or driving them apart?”

It was (and still is) possible for learned societies affiliated with the Social Sciences Federation to get grants for conferences, publications, and other scholarly activities. Canadians wanted their own scholarly journal as an alternative (or in addition) to the U.S.-based *Adult Education* (later *Adult Education Quarterly*).

In 1980 the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) was an infant and academic fields competed for recognition. Federal funding for social sciences had steadily increased during the 1960s and tripled from 1970 to 1976. SSHRC, founded

in 1977, was an offshoot of the Canada Council and intended to encourage social and economic development (Damer, 2000; Canada, 1977; Healy, 1978).

From the mid-1970s onward, Verner evaluated Canada Council applications and Ottawa was beginning to recognize adult education through SSHRC and other grants (Annual Directory, 1978; Stapleton, 1982). Were research grants and a journal on the road ahead? Sensing goodies, delegates took little notice of dissent (particularly in a foreign accent).

The lack of a research journal was a stunning testament to Canadian waffling, mediocrity, and paralysis by analysis. It was embarrassing to tell others a country the size of Canada could not manage a journal. Hence, the prospect of CASAE producing a journal made it very easy to ignore dissent. Besides, the dissenter was a contrarian and plenty of people were happy with the notion of CASAE as lobby group.

Critical comments landed in dead air. Wise men had spoken and the deed was done. CASAE would be an organization, not a conference. For an association there would have to be a secretariat, membership dues, and annual meetings. Did anyone have surplus energy for any of this? And what about conference papers? Would CASAE pick up scraps after AERC had finished the main meal?

### **We Stand on Guard for Thee**

Throughout the 1970s there had been too many articles and conference sessions on quantitative versus qualitative research. It was a preposterous false binary opposition. As well, many Canadians confused theory with research methodology. Some people spoke of grounded theory as a methodology. And what distinguished Canadian from other kinds of research? Was it just a matter of context? Or disagreement over questions demanding attention? These issues could influence the name of the new association.

Back at the founding meeting in the law building, a decision was needed. What should the infant be called? How about Canadian Adult Education Research Association (CAERA)?

Wise men spoke again. "Research" was not a good word. Too oriented to statistical forms of inquiry. Too redolent of positivism and objectivist ontology. Sounds like the laboratories of the enemy — psychology!

Canadian nationalists like Kulich and Selman did not use (or think much of) quantitative analysis. There was also tension between researchers committed to building a discipline and advocates of practitioner training (Thomas, 1987). For practitioners, "research" seemed formidable and "studies" were enough. Among very bizarre claims was the notion studies embraced subjectivist ontology, whereas research was nested in objectivism. In 1980, subjectivist ontology was widely (and wrongly) regarded as the leitmotif of feminist research.

Verner never had problems with research and named facilities at the UBC president's house and 5760 Toronto Road the Adult Education Research Centre. It was there right on university letterhead and business cards. At one time, UBC faculty stamped

outgoing mail, “our research is better than your research.” The idea research denoted only statistics, objectivist ontology, or quantitative methodology was ludicrous and embarrassing.

Much discussion in this part of the meeting was based on false binary oppositions and a contest between strands now coalescing to form CASAE. On one side were AERC enthusiasts who favoured research and did not regard their involvement with U.S. conferences or journals manifestations of disloyalty or un-Canadian behaviour. On the other side were nationalists suspicious of AERC but keen to study great men and other icons of Canadian adult education.

There were snorts, grunts, whispers, and raised eyebrows as both sides sized up the other. It was too late. The lavishly printed invitation letter had identified the new organization as the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education. Selman, Mastai, and collaborators had already decided on the nomenclature. Mastai was looking to manufacture consent and it was agreed. Better to focus on studies. More friendly and inclusive. Embraces qualitative perspectives. Studies it is. Next item!

Some people wanted it both ways. At the 1983 conference in OISE, Hall (1983) introduced a panel by describing CASAE/ACÉEÀ as a “new national organization . . . committed to the study of and research in adult education.” Study and research!

What about governance?

On this issue, the first steps were exquisitely Canadian. Claude Touchette and Gisele Painchaud moved to ensure francophones would be involved. There would be a steering committee—an anglo man (Gordon Selman) and a francophone woman (Gisele Painchaud)—and links to another organization, maybe CAAE or CAUCE.

CASAE would not be a university organization. As Mastai’s letter declared, “The organization should be available to all Canadians engaged in adult education and not just professors.” In March 1981, the *CASAE Newsletter* (1981a) noted this organization was different:

A striking distinction of the new organization arises not from the fervor with which a decision was taken to proceed with its creation, nor from the simultaneous translation of proceedings . . . What marks the new association with a difference is its openness to all who have an interest in the study of adult education.

Among planned activities was the “duplication of rare materials for deposit in key research centres.”

Bringing non-university researchers on board sounded good but tough sledding lay ahead. Much of what was said on May 6, 1980, was quickly (and properly) forgotten. In years ahead there would be a collapse of collegiality in too many places. Adult education professors would manifest a disgraceful inability to protect books (such as the Verner collection at UBC). There would be the tumult of restructuring, unsympathetic deans, and no systematic exchange of rare materials. Key research centres would become a scarce commodity.

The AERC had a constitution but few people had seen it. AERC had survived on a threadbare organization and did not have paid staff or a secretariat. The AERC annual meeting (to transact business) had, for years, been a jolly affair punctuated by Bill Griffith's treasurer's report. The speech was always the same. "Mr. Chairman, in preparing my treasurer's report I feel like Elizabeth Taylor's new husband. I know what to do. But how do I make it interesting?" Bill's speech reflected the collegiality and informality of AERC, and, from 1993 onward, it became the place where U.S. and Canadian activists (e.g., Hill, Grace, & Associates, 2009) analyzed lesbian, gay, and related issues.

In some ways, AERC was more Canadian than CASAE. Productive Canadian adult education researchers were prominent and several had served on the steering committee.

AERC met in Canada about every fourth year. There was an unwritten rule requiring a Canadian on the four-person steering committee. Yet Canadians who never attended AERC regarded it as an American organization.

Could CASAE now do better than AERC? Apart from staging this founding meeting, CASAE had done nothing. And there was already talk of a constitution.

### **Our Home and Native Land**

The CASAE founding meeting produced few surprises. As people went off to AERC sessions, there was no ah-ha experience, sense of catharsis, or, as Elaine McCreary said, "fervour." Unlike earlier eras, there was no song to sing. In some ways it was a replay of CAAE rituals (W. Day, personal communication, December 22, 2010). Whatever it was, nobody doubted the fact May 6, 1980, was the founding of CASAE.

Some people chuckled over the order in which three wise men got on their feet and wondered why influential women did not get up. At the salmon barbeque, people wondered how CASAE follow-up activities would be organized. It was one thing to create a learned society but something else to take action. Would everything have to be in French and English? If so, who would pay? Is this what it meant to be Canadian?

Already, there was resistance to the idea of CASAE conferences producing proceedings. When Quebecers were asked about translation, they lit cigarettes, grinned mischievously, and spoke English. Of regional groups at the founding meeting, Montreal delegates appeared most delighted with the infant.

After the founding meeting there was a new Vancouver CASAE committee - Judith Mastai, Paz Buttedahl, Elaine McCreary, and Bob Ramrattan. By May 1981, Selman and Painchaud had published a newsletter with one page in English and one in French. The newsletter contained a draft constitution and a "special note to graduate students" from UBC's McCreary.

In case there was doubt about whose shadow loomed across the fledgling infant, McCreary said this:

Let us be practical. We cannot expect our neighbours, however hospitable, to always understand why Canadians think something is important, or regrettable, or desirable—and, as Weber pointed out, such values guide

the selection of questions for further study . . . We must expect to speak among ourselves about our own experience. (CASAE, 1981b)

It was not easy to translate utopian rhetoric of May 6, 1980, into a conference program for 1981 and even tougher to get anyone interested in producing proceedings. A letter from Gordon Selman about the June 14–15, 1981, conference said, “It is difficult to get commitment from persons who are interested in presenting research findings to the conference.” Had 75 advocates of “studies” already forgotten? Non-university researchers were not banging at the door. Selman wanted people to present research findings and, along with this delicious slip of the discourse, said the 1981 program was “the best we can do.”

The infant was on life support and the 1981 conference a “cliffhanger” (Selman, 1994). It was an ominous beginning for adult education studies in our home and native land. While AERC nurtured research and charged into its 22nd year in its inimitable threadbare way, CASAE was struggling.

Just before the 1981 conference, only 30 people had registered. On June 14–15, 1981, fewer than 100 people walked into the faded opulence of the Downtown Ramada Inn in Montreal for a conference where they approved the CASAE constitution. For Selman (1994), it was a surprisingly personal moment:

Two years of fairly intensive work on my part, assisted by others, came to an end . . . Achieving such a result had been on my ‘agenda’ for quite a few years and I was pleased to be able to play a leading part in making it happen. (p. 123)

In 1982, the second annual conference of CASAE was held in the same law building at UBC where the infant was born. Boshier and Pipke (1982) presented a discriminant function equation showing how Canadian and American research (published in the U.S.) differed. Judith Mastai chaired a symposium on Canadian research involving Claudia Denis, John Dobson, Jim Draper, and Bill Griffith. As the new head of the UBC Adult Education Research Centre, Griffith had hosting duties when CASAE was in town. At 4:40 p.m. there was a session on Canadian research. Afterwards, Bill led conference attendees to a Chinese-style buffet at the Excelsior Restaurant on West 10th Avenue in Vancouver.

Despite false binary oppositions, whiffs of self-righteousness, phobias about positivism, and the chore of putting out proceedings, by 1982, CASAE had survived two years. Gisele Painchaud from the Université de Montreal was the first president and the organization was where it ought to be: in a noisy Vancouver restaurant with members fumbling over French words for chicken chow mein and poking at wonton and noodles in our home and native land.

### **From Far and Wide**

At one time, adult education was considered an emerging field of university study. Today, it is fading fast. In places it has been swallowed by neo-liberal forms of lifelong learning, corporatism, and theory wherein humans are resources to be developed. It has also been captured by techno-utopianism and techno-zealotry (Boshier & Chia, 2000) and there has

been a collapse of whatever consensus once unified adult education as a field of university study.

Adult education associations are an endangered species, and print-based journals face a bleak future. But, after 31 years, CASAE is still here, with printed proceedings and a journal.

In 1980, McCreary wanted CASAE to speak with a Canadian voice. Today, the Canadian penchant for decency, civility, and even-handedness is not as visible as before. These days not much distinguishes Canadian from U.S. voices. However, despite the excesses of their rulers, Canadian and U.S. adult education researchers enjoy fruitful relationships. Hence, is it still necessary to position CASAE as an antidote to U.S. barbarians and excess?

After 31 years, CASAE has a proven track record that speaks for itself. Even so, McCreary's 1980 cautionary note still applies. Discussing this, U.S. adult education researcher and former *Adult Education Quarterly* co-editor Bob Hill said, "We do not look at Canadians with apprehension, but I sense Canadians look at us this way. I would not ask you to let your guard down. The U.S. has a long history of imperialism—global, economic, cultural, and scholastic. It's important to remain a bit wary" (personal communication, December 13, 2010).

Within academic adult education, the U.S./Canadian relationship is as equilibrrious as before. However, on both sides of the border, adult education is in trouble, and the situation resembles the *Life of Pi*. In Yann Martel's story, Pi Patel and Richard Parker (a tiger) are in the same lifeboat where survival for both depends on negotiating their relationship. The tiger has eaten a hyena, licks his chops, and stares at Pi, who wonders if he will be breakfast, lunch, or dinner. But, as day follows night and weeks turn into months, Pi and Parker find a way to work together.

Joint meetings involving CASAE and AERC demonstrate a willingness and ability to work together. These days, it is more important to celebrate difference than bask in self-righteousness. Instead of eyeing each other with a mixture of apprehension and desire, would it be better to get up and dance together? Taking a few turns around the dance floor does not impede the Canadian ability to speak amongst ourselves. In the process of boogying with neighbours, they learn about us and we about them—all of which is better than identity politics, fear of research or entitlement arising from being Canadian born and bred.

Before 1980, prevarication and false starts led to nothing. In the end, it did not take much energy to orchestrate the 1980 founding of CASAE, but a lot of effort to sustain it. We acknowledge those no longer with us and 31 years' worth of conference organizers, envelope lickers, newsletter compilers, money collectors, minute takers and editors. Thirty-one years later, is this the time to break out the champagne? Tuck into another bowl of noodles? Sing a song? Invite neighbours over for a dance? Or compile an anniversary edition of the journal?

God bless CASAE!

Long may she reign!

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