



# BCHLA NEWS

Autumn 2006

Newsletter of the BC Home Learners' Association

Vol. 20 No. 1

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*The opinions and views expressed by the individuals in this newsletter are not necessarily those held by all BCHLA members. The editor is not responsible for the views and opinions expressed herein.*

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Remembrance Day not only commemorates the end of World War I on November 11, 1918, it is also used as an opportunity to honour and remember those fallen heroes from WWII and other wars. I am always in awe and filled with gratefulness for the men and women who laid down their lives for our freedom. Battles were fought on behalf of future generations. Battles that have blessed us with freedom that others would seek to remove.

As home schooling families we also need to remember another battle that was fought on our behalf. Not a physical battle but a political battle that seems to never end. A battle for awareness and recognition. Many have gone before us who worked tirelessly to bring about legislation and policy that would give us the freedoms we enjoy today: the freedom to home school without government intervention. I am so very grateful to those who have gone before us to make these freedoms a reality.

In many ways we are able to relax and enjoy the freedoms we have as homeschool parents. We have freedom to choose registration, our own curriculum, and our own learning agenda. We need to remember that at any time those freedoms could be challenged. There are those who are diligently challenging those freedoms, even today.

Jim McMurtry from South Surrey, has openly

made attempts at discrediting homeschooling. The National Post reported in January 2006, *The release pointed to comments made by Jim McMurtry, in a letter he wrote in 2003 to Teachers, a magazine published by the B.C. Teachers' Federation. A public school teacher, Mr. McMurtry is a strong opponent of home schooling. In his three-year-old letter, he wrote that parents who home school their children "participate in what can be perceived as a form of child abuse." that home-schooled children are sometimes forced to "do piecemeal work in the garment industry and in the construction industry ... home schooling in some cases is tantamount to child abuse when children are deprived of a nurturing environment. I believe that."*

In his 2003 article, Mr. McMurtry also noted that, "parents who educate their children at home are condemning their children to an impoverished, friendless, and segregated learning environment". It appears that Mr. McMurtry would love nothing more than to abolish homeschooling in our province.

BCHLA continues to promote minimal government involvement in homeschooling. The annual homeschool conferences in Surrey and Kelowna have given opportunities to explain the differences in registration and enrollment to parents. Our website continues to inform parents of their rights and education options in this province. I have spent many hours over the past months speaking with parents who are transitioning from enrolment to registration, who don't know where to begin when choosing curriculum, or who are

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having legal difficulties because of broken marriages. We keep in touch with the Ministry of Education's Independent Schools department, whenever necessary, to remind them that although we are few in number we will continue our efforts to maintain our freedom as homeschooling families. BCHLA will continue to promote the freedoms of homeschooling in the province of BC and we are very grateful to our members who partner with us in this cause.



*Sherri Piechnik  
BCHLA President*

- \* A low-frills, no hoops, no strings alternative
- \* Homelearning Registration anywhere in BC under Sections 12 & 13 of the School Act
- \* No religious affiliation



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## BCHLA E-News

New format coming February 2007!

The quarterly issues of *BCHLA News* have been one of the key ways we have communicated with our members since our inception as CHEA of BC in 1988. As personal computers have become a mainstream venue for news gathering and communications we have used this technology in a variety of ways. We have sent occasional notices via email, created email discussion and announcement lists, and posted our newsletter on the website for members to download in PDF format.

The year 2007 will see a new step for *BCHLA News* as we transition from using our usual hard-copy newsletter to a fully electronic format (those who don't have an email address will still receive a hard-copy). Over 96% of our current membership regularly uses or has access to email. In an effort to be good stewards of our financial and time resources we have decided to change the format of our newsletter and send it directly to your email inbox. This new format will also enable us to issue an extra newsletter per year, which means you will now receive five informative communications from BCHLA delivered in September, November, February, April, and June.

The new *BCHLA E-News* will include graphics and homeschool advertising with links providing easy access to further online information. If you prefer reading our communications on paper rather than on your computer screen, the new format can easily be printed.

BCHLA takes our members' privacy seriously. We never pass on your e-mail addresses to third parties and we've always taken steps to ensure that our discussion lists are safe from spammers. These policies will not change. However, if you feel very strongly about not receiving the

E-News to the email address you previously provided to BCHLA, you may write us at [newsletter@bchla.bc.ca](mailto:newsletter@bchla.bc.ca) to request your removal from the list or to give us an alternate address that you would prefer to use for this purpose. You may also use the "cancel subscription" link we will provide in each edition of *BCHLA E-News*.

Another change for the newsletter is that it will be available to anyone who wants to receive it, rather than being designated for members only. There will be a sign-up button on our website which people can use to add themselves to the newsletter list. All newsletters will also be archived on our site for public viewing.

### Advertisers:

If you are an advertiser in our newsletter, please see the last page of this newsletter regarding submission deadlines, graphics formats and sizes, and pricing.

### Spam Filters:

*BCHLA E-News* will be sent from the email address "newsletter@bchla.bc.ca". Adding this address to your email program's address book will help ensure that your software won't mistake our emails as spam and delete them before you see them.

### New Email Address?

If you have a new email address, please be sure to let us know so your newsletter subscription doesn't get interrupted ([newsletter@bchla.bc.ca](mailto:newsletter@bchla.bc.ca)). If you fail to receive *BCHLA E-News* by the end of February 2007, please contact us to confirm your email address.

*As registered, independent home school families we have few opportunities for financial assistance to help with our children's education. Here is your opportunity to have an impact on the upcoming changes. Please take a moment to read this article and write your MP and the Minister of Finance to let them know what sports you would like to see listed as eligible for the \$500 sports credit and why this change is a good idea. —BCHLA*

## Give tax credit for activities that 'make kids sweat': panel

Friday, October 27, 2006

Reprinted with permission from [CBC News](http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2006/10/26/fitness-credit.html):

<http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2006/10/26/fitness-credit.html>

Activities that boost children's "cardio-respiratory fitness" should be the focus of a federal tax credit, an expert panel urged Thursday as it outlined the types of activities and costs that should qualify.

The panel was appointed to advise Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservatives on their proposed tax credit for parents with children in organized sports, proposed in May 2006 to fight obesity and encourage fitness among young Canadians.



*The panel gave priority to activities that boost kids' cardio-respiratory fitness. (CBC)*

As the Expert Panel for the Children's Fitness Tax Credit released its recommendations, its chair, Dr. Kellie Leitch, told a news conference in Ottawa that for the exercise to boost children's fitness, the activity has "got to make them sweat."

"While we do not pretend that the Children's Fitness Tax Credit will be a panacea that will end most childhood obesity, we passionately believe the tax credit is an important component of what must be a broader strategy to encourage activity among young people," Leitch said in a letter from the panel to Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, which was also released Thursday.

Although the final approval for the panel's recommendations is up to the cabinet, the Conservatives have said they plan to introduce the credit on Jan. 1, 2007. It's expected

to cost the federal government \$160 million a year. The panel's recommendations emphasize cardio-respiratory fitness, said Leitch, who is the chair of pediatric surgery at the Children's Hospital of Western Ontario in London.

At a news conference, the panel recommended that:

- The tax credit not be issued unless the activity includes at least one session per week for a minimum of eight weeks.
- For children under 10, eligible activities should include at least 30 minutes of sustained and vigorous activity.
- For those over 10, the time rises to 60 minutes.
- The federal government let parents claim up to \$500 per child, but give them an annual maximum refund of \$78.50 per child.

"The tax credit can be a catalyst that supports programs for children, increased levels of activity, and hopefully — a lifelong love of active lifestyles for thousands of young Canadians," the panel said in the letter to Flaherty.

During the campaign before the Jan. 23 parliamentary election, Stephen Harper proposed that parents with children under 16 be able to claim \$500 in registration fees per child participating in organized sports.

Rates of overweight and obesity nearly tripled among Canadian children over the past two decades, the Canadian Institutes of Health Information reported in 2004.

To help reverse the trend, Canada's Physical Activity Guide advises children should aim for 90 minutes a day of physical activity. The guide suggests families:

- Increase the time currently spent on physical activity, adding another 30 minutes per day.
- Reduce "non-active" time spent on TV, video, computer games and surfing the internet, starting with at least 30 minutes less per day.
- Accumulate the 30 extra minutes of physical activity in bouts as short as five or 10 minutes.

The panel also suggested a provision for children with disabilities. Their parents can claim up to \$1,000 per child per year, up to and including the age of 21.

*(Continued on page 4)*


The panel's recommendations now go to government. Revenue Canada will come up with a list of sports that qualify for the tax credit, which will be available next year.

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**Barry Gruntman**  
Mathematics Department Head  
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## Announcements from the BCHLA Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General Meeting on October 30, 2006, we bid farewell to Sheila Paul. Over the past few years Sheila has filled the role of Secretary and Treasurer. She has put in untold hours serving the goals of BCHLA. Her husband, Peter, has put in many hours of work over the past year as our Newsletter Editor. Sheila has returned to a full-time university course load. We wish her all the best with her endeavours and give our many thanks to both of them

We also welcomed a new director to our board. Frank Piechnik, husband of our president, Sherri Piechnik has agreed to fill the position of Vice President. Frank's many years in the business community have prepared him to be a valuable asset as consultant and advisor.

It was decided that our next Annual General Meeting will be held the evening of Friday, June 2, 2007 following the BCHSC. We are hoping that planning it around the convention will allow more of you throughout the province to attend. It will be a short meeting of about one hour followed by dessert and coffee. The time and the place will be announced in upcoming newsletter.

**A huge  
THANK YOU  
to Sheila Paul for  
all her long hours  
of work on behalf  
of the membership  
of BCHLA!**

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## LOOK FOR BCHLA AT THESE 2007 HOMESCHOOL CONVENTIONS!

B.C. Homeschool Convention – Surrey BC – June 2-3, 2007

<http://www.bchomeschool.org/convention2007.htm>

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<http://www.bcconvention.ca/>



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# Homeschooling and the MP3 Experience

By Sherri Piechnik

After several months of consideration I've finally purchased my very own MP3 player. I've found it to be very helpful in our homeschool life – far more than a mere “gadget” reserved for students or music lovers.

I have uploaded all of my educational audio CDs. This includes teaching CDs, music for both me and my children, and audio books. I no longer have to hunt around for the right CD; I simply scroll through my menu and press play. I have also purchased the FM transmitter (we only have cassette capability in our van) so we can listen to the MP3 through our radio speakers. When we travel in my husband's car we prefer to continue using the FM transmitter to avoid having CDs all over the floor at our feet. Here are some specific ideas to help you realize the benefits of this new homeschool resource.

**Spelling** – If you are using a spelling program on CD (e.g. The Phonetic Zoo) you can upload the files and work on spelling anywhere.

**Literature** – Upload your audio books on CD and listen to them while driving in the car. Take advantage of online free audio books such as Runt the Brave.  
<http://www.podcastdirectory.com/podcasts/21550> We also use Andrew Pudewa's Poetry Memorization and have all the tracks on my MP3.

**Science** – I've downloaded the Singing Science Songs (done in the late 50's but they are great!) off the internet and can listen to them wherever we go. [http://www.acme.com/jef/singing\\_science/](http://www.acme.com/jef/singing_science/) There are many other science songs on CD

that can be purchased from homeschool vendors and upload to your MP3.

**History** – Take advantage of the history CDs in your local library. Upload them to your MP3 (delete when finished listening to honour copyright laws) and listen to them when you're studying a particular era. I've uploaded all my Story of the World CDs and can quickly locate the stories pertaining to what we are currently studying. The Teaching Company offers many downloadable courses.  
<http://www.teach12.com/teach12.asp?ai=16281>

**Second Language** – Upload the CDs, if that's what's used in your course, to your MP3 and have everything at your fingertips when you need it.

**Math** – The MP3 I chose has video capabilities so I'm thinking of uploading my Math-U-See DVD onto it so we don't have to run downstairs to watch the next lesson. In fact, we can watch the next lesson at the dentist's office if we want.

**Conference Workshops** – Upload all those CDs you purchased for the workshops you were unable to attend. Now you can listen to them at your leisure. I have found that I can focus best on conference workshops or teaching material when I'm gardening or working out at the gym. There are often teaching videos on the internet that can be downloaded to your computer and then uploaded to your MP3.

Remember in all of this to honour copyright laws. These recommendations are for personal use only.

Please send us your suggestions for how to make good use of an MP3 player in homeschooling. We'll include the ideas in our next newsletter.



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# SHEDDING THE ADULT AGENDA

BY BARBARA FRANK

I've always admired unschoolers for their relaxed approach to learning. Yet while my own style of homeschooling has become much more relaxed over the years, I will never be called an unschooler because I am incapable of being one. It is simply not in my personality.

Do the math: I'm a first-born (yes, there are Kevin Leman books on my shelves), public-schooled, Missouri Synod Lutheran (Lutherans live for and by their routines), child of a career military man. Let's face it, I was never meant to be an unschooler.

But there are many aspects of unschooling that appeal to me, and perhaps the greatest one is that unschoolers are so willing to let their children have unstructured time to play. In my neck of the woods, it's mostly the unschoolers that offer regular park days, where children run unfettered by adult agendas, while their moms (and the occasional dad) keep watch from a distance and share conversation and food.

I'm not saying other homeschool groups don't have park days. But when they do, there's usually a theme to it. We're all going to look for signs of spring today! We've picked a park with a soccer field so Kevin's daddy can teach us the basic rules of soccer! Bring a bucket and a magnifying glass so we can all see what's in the park's pond water!

There's nothing wrong with these activities in and of themselves. But they reflect a larger trend that worries me: it sure seems like adults are writing all the scripts these days. Many of today's parents (homeschooling or not) just have this need to run everything for their kids, and as a result, the kids lose their autonomy and their ability to find or make their own fun.

Maybe this bothers me because I'm old enough to remember when kids ran free. When I was a child, children had much more freedom than they do now. After school and all summer long, it was up to us to decide what to do. Sure, we had chores around the house, but once those were done, we were free agents. We played games, we had fun on the equipment at the park and we used our imaginations to become cowboys and Indians, or Batman, Robin and Batgirl.

Our parents were the spoilers, the ones who interrupted our fun to tell us it was time to eat or time to go to bed. If somebody's mom had informed us that today we'd be learning the proper way to play hopscotch, we would have looked at her as if she were from Mars. Parents just didn't get very involved in our play back then.

This lack of parental involvement didn't hurt us. We all grew up to be productive members of society despite the lack of

formal sports lessons and parent-run recreation. That's why I wonder if today's children aren't being gypped out of the chance to play freely by well-meaning adults who think they know best how their children should play. I guess the freedom I had in my childhood is what led me to homeschool in the first place; I loved my free time and I was usually bored silly in school. So while I may not be an unschooling parent, I've always tried to limit the formal lesson and study time in our home so that my kids have plenty of free time to indulge their own interests. When they play outside, they decide what to play, not me. I think that freedom is as important to their development as any other part of their education. I'm starting to wonder, however, how many other parents feel that way.

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*Barbara Frank is the mother of four homeschooled-from-birth children ages 13-22, a freelance writer/editor, and the author of "Life Prep for Homeschooled Teenagers" and the new eBook, "The Imperfect Homeschooler's Guide to Homeschooling." To visit her Web site, "The Imperfect Homeschooler," go to [www.cardamompublishers.com](http://www.cardamompublishers.com).*

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- September Edition—August 15th
- November Edition—October 15th
- February Edition—January 15th
- April Edition—March 15th
- June Edition—May 15th

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## MEMBERSHIP /MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

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