Editorial:

**CMEA in Dialogue**

Lee Bartel and Lee Willingham

*My province is affiliated to CMEA but I know that I am unhappy about paying extra to belong when I don't really see CMEA offering our province anything new. I understand why some provinces are not affiliated. When I was on our provincial board I did not want to give CMEA our money for what we were offered in response.*  

CME Reader

In the last issue of the *Canadian Music Educator*, Volume 43#2, we used this editorial page to examine the effectiveness and mandate of our sponsoring association, the CMEA. Our friend “Clark” was portrayed as an effective and committed music educator who would not join the CMEA because of his perception that it was simply a small group of individuals who went to meetings and produced a journal.

We also posed some questions to which we invited readers to respond. While the response was not large, those who took the time to share their views did so passionately and eloquently. We would like to offer a glimpse of some of the responses, and again challenge you, the members of the Canadian Music Educators’ Association, to consider what the organization stands for, and what it offers you in the music classroom.

The first question dealt with the very existence of CMEA. If it disbanded today, how would it affect you? Here are some responses:

*If the CMEA disbanded I wouldn't have to read another journal, but I would lose the illusion of being connected with the country.*

*If the CMEA disbanded today, I would feel sad. It has always been a part of my professional life. Would I survive? Of course. But the network of people I have met through my association with CMEA has made me a better person and music teacher.*

*At this point CMEA appears to be more of a liability than an asset. Our province is busy trying to keep music education in the schools. If CMEA disbanded we would have more money to spend on helping teachers in rural communities. CMEA seems to be providing very little benefits—some journals—for taking a large percentage of dues, almost two thirds of the fee.*

*...besides being without issues of "The Canadian Music Educator" and the newsletter I am not sure that it would affect my work.*
Right now I feel the role of the CMEA is redundant.

CMEA is not redundant. As I said, it is our National organization. While I live in Ontario, I am a Canadian first.

We also asked you to consider the formation of an umbrella national music education association that would affiliate or partner with all of the specialty organizations, such as Orff, Kodaly, Choral, Band, Early Childhood Music, and so on. Here are some of your ideas on this.

Consider the possibility of one outstanding music education journal published on behalf of all of the organizations.

…but is there someone who could function as an ambassador to pull all of this together? I envision a project, funded by a generous Canada Council grant, and carrying the support of every provincial Dept. of Ed and every university and college Music Faculty. This Stephen Lewis-like sage would pull all of the music education players together into a new CMEA that becomes THE voice - and perhaps finds a donor to set up an on-going money base so that a professional, full-time facilitator could be hired. Honestly, I don’t see any other solution!!!

Perhaps, a simplified music education support system, called CMEA, replacing everything else, would unite us. A journal continuing along the lines of your current work, and expanded to include the coalition, the university professors and all the splinter groups, would be incredible!!

CMEA should be for united the country on national issues. Be it curriculum or teaching strategies for private and public teachers, CMEA should be a place to give music educators voice.

I think the main concern we regular teachers is that association membership costs. If each branch (band, choral, elementary) is individual association we must budget our money and pick the most pertinent one. It is sad that the CMEA isn't it. Specialized associations offer concrete solutions and support.

I do believe we should all be united. Isn't this what CMEA is for? Somehow membership cost need to be combined and all benefits retained. (I know this is a dream but shouldn't we strive for perfection?)

My home province of Alberta is trying to reverse that trend by forming an umbrella organization named 'Music Alberta' that is the largest provincial arts service organization in the province. It has 1500 members who work with over 150,000 individuals in music programs throughout Alberta. It has not been easy but we now receive one journal, we attend one annual convention and we feel that whether we are string teachers, band, choral or private music teachers we are united in the
delivery of music programs throughout this province. I think that it is time for Alberta to consider the affiliation question with CMEA.

The question that asked what you would change about the CMEA elicited these ideas.

Now, is it time that the CMEA had a CMEA advocacy team? This just can’t be someone who sets up a booth at a provincial conference. It has to be someone or some people who do actual workshops/presentations/keynotes etc. at conferences and workshops across Canada who sell CMEA. Wow this sounds so American, yet maybe it is time for CMEA to wave the flag more. Why belong to CMEA? The answer is obvious. We are Canadian and we are music teachers! It is our national organization and we should be proud to be a part of it. But I think we need some real spokespeople out there who will beat the CMEA bushes. I guess we need someone who will make the blood boil a bit and get people fired up. Sounds very evangelical, doesn’t it? Has our CMEA president talked to the President of MENC? I know that money is always a problem, but perhaps a conversation between the two presidents with very strategic questions about how MENC does it right might generate some ideas. We are not the United States and we don’t have their money, but we can still learn something from them.

I think that the CMEA should hold bi-annual conferences to bring music educators together to discuss issues that are affecting educators from each province. If managed properly, these conferences could be a money maker for the CMEA which would help develop such things as research and promoting music education in greater ways.

I would like to see the Coalition for Music Education and CMEA adopt different roles – CMEA is Music Education; Coalition – advocacy – tell the nation about it. CMEA should be present at all provincial conferences – not to preach – just be there, talking to delegates.

For almost two years, we have produced a journal that is in a popular magazine format with a targeted readership of classroom teachers, as well as music education students and academics. Several of our readers commented on the journal itself.

I would also like to share a few thoughts regarding the Canadian Music Educators‘ Association Journal; it has become very important to me. Each time I find the time to look through a new issue, I feel better. It raises me from the mire of chasing down incomplete assignments, dealing with damaged instruments, and drowning beneath my own unachieved expectations. It brings me up above all the annoying stuff and helps me feel part of something important; it brings me back to feeling like a professional.

I do like the look of the new journal

- visually appealing
- more readable (I previously found that the articles were too scholarly with research for me to use in my classroom)
- realistically, the articles need to applicable to the classroom, easy to read, not too lengthy
teachers are working too hard to struggle through reading if it is not going to help them with their teaching practices the next day, week or month.

The journal reminds me that I am a member of a profession which does fascinating and valuable work. It allows me to feel connected to what is going on today in music education. Occasionally, if I am lucky, it even offers research which validates my own efforts. Most of the time it just offers me goals to strive for, and most of the time that's all I really need.

More people need to discover the high quality of the CME magazine since its makeover and new look. It is distinctively Canadian and compared to its counterpart in the United States, the Music Educator's Journal, is infinitely better. Dare I suggest that the CME journal is written ‘up’ (meaning that it stretches one's mind) while its US counterpart seems to be heading in the opposite direction. This then is a niche that the CME journal could definitely occupy—that is, research based articles that do not drown one in a soup of statistics but rather explore the qualitative aspects of the musical experience. Count me in as a subscriber.

Finally, what do we do about Clark? He is one of us in the profession, but would rather spend his annual CMEA membership on some good pub food and fellowship with colleagues. Here is what some of our readers suggested.

I will continue to support CMEA, of course, but I would say the majority of my colleagues are like your “Clark.”

What to do with Clark? Well I guess you could get him a membership as a gift sometime. Give him lunch at your house and give him a membership on the amount you saved from not going to a restaurant. !!!! I don’t know. I guess you will win some and lose some.

Is Clark being politically active for music education? CMEA is! If music education were to be decimated at the elementary level (for example), would this not affect Clark's program (assuming he is a secondary teacher or beyond) e.g., he may think that he is working in isolation, but cuts or political change can affect everyone.

Dialogue and conversation are a first step to change. Change can happen in a number of ways, but we know from our own experience that effective change happens when both leadership and members are fully engaged in identifying the needs, the processes, and the end goals for change. We all most own the change. As editors, we provide the means for the voices to be heard. CMEA President Barbara Graham closes her message with this exhortation, “it’s up to you!” We concur… it is up to the CMEA leadership, (that’s us), and to you, the member.

Your responses are always welcome. Please contact us by email at:

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