

# Return to Nepal will bring brighter future to area's kids



**JEFF  
BELL**

*Good  
Neighbours*

Somewhere east of Kathmandu and south of Mount Everest, Troy Harris is settling in and hoping to make a difference.

The 36-year-old physical education and social studies teacher, on leave from Belmont Secondary School, has turned his travels of recent years into a passion for bringing education to less-fortunate areas of the world. For him, the effort begins in the Okhaldhunga region of Nepal with a school-building project designed to serve five area villages.

Harris was scheduled to reach Okhaldhunga this past weekend. After a flight from Vancouver to Kathmandu, Nepal's capital city, he was a nine-hour bus ride and a one-day hike from his destination.

The idea behind building a regional school is to draw in students who currently have to travel up to two hours or more to reach a classroom, Harris said just before his departure from Vancouver.

"That's just too much time, and as a result, parents don't encourage them to go to school. They encourage them to stay home and help support the family, basically work in the fields.

"Our goal is to put a school in place where it makes it easier. If kids may travel half an hour or 15 minutes to school, they can do both — work in the fields and go to school."

The country has a good supply of teachers, but many don't have work, Harris said.

His path to Okhaldhunga began to take shape in 2005 when he took his first leave, which came after 10 years of teaching, and headed off to see as much of the world as he could.

"When I went travelling, I had listened to stories from my uncle, and he was the one who encouraged me to go to Nepal because it was such an amazing place for him."

That first trip to Nepal included a three-week trek in the Himalayas, during which his guide explained some of the issues that were facing the country and its education system.

Harris said he was determined to commit himself to something he encountered during his travels "and this seemed to be closest to me because I'm a teacher."

Afterward, Harris decided to take another leave — he is due back at his job next September — during which he created a non-profit society to co-ordinate his overseas plans. The result is the Canadian World Education Society, which has now begun fundraising efforts in earnest.

The goal is to raise between \$40,000 and \$50,000, and to research future school projects in Africa, Central America and South America.

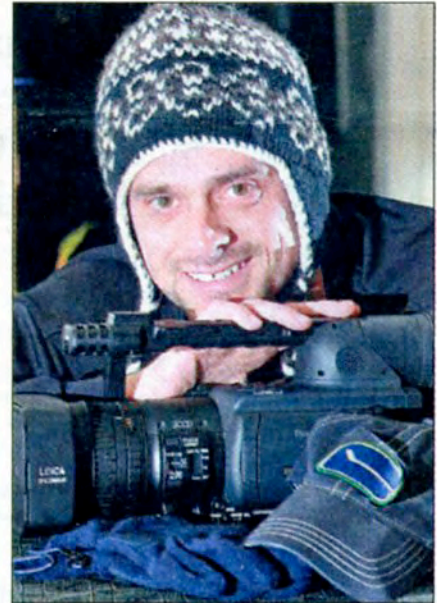
"Right now, we're at \$13,000," Harris said. "We've only been officially a society for 3 1/2 months, so I'm pretty happy with the progress. We're just looking to continue. There's a lot of people starting to get interested."

Harris said he isn't a construction expert, but will be involved in most aspects of the school project. He will also be making a documentary film of the construction process.

"I've been really lucky with friends and family — in Victoria, in Vancouver, in Toronto — that have supported me, and I want to show people what their money's gone toward," he said in explaining his filmmaking plans. "I think it's a good way to do it."

Building the school will be a community endeavour, Harris said.

"My idea is that I want to give money back to the local people. I want to provide something more for them, not just the school, so we are going to hire local labourers and probably utilize some of the community members as volunteers."



**Troy Harris: Will help build school**

Donations can be made through [givemeaning.com](http://givemeaning.com) or [canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org), or through the mail to Canadian World Education Society, 2920 Glen Lake Rd., Victoria, V9B 4B1. A website detailing the project will soon be in operation at [www.canwes.org](http://www.canwes.org).

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Peace gets a chance Thursday at the University of Victoria's Farquhar Auditorium.

The Creative Peace Mural Society (with Victoria artist Carole Sabiston as honorary president) hosts an event with a 6 p.m. silent auction and 7 p.m. performance featuring cultural dance and music. The main purpose of the evening will be to exhibit a peace mural made in Montevideo, Uruguay, one of four completed through the society.

Murals made in Victoria, Northern Ireland and Switzerland will also be on display. Lt.-Gov. Steven Point and Alvaro Moerzinger, Uruguayan ambassador to Canada, will be among the guests.

Tickets are \$17, \$12 and \$8 (for children under 12). Call 721-8480.

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