

Update



Common Threads VI: An uncommon experience

We are excited to announce the launch of our sixth Common Threads project: *The Sustainable Society*. This past summer the project team of six Ontario secondary educators traveled to two uniquely different countries to investigate the interconnected relationships between people, planet, and profit. They met with numerous diverse stakeholders, immersed themselves in local culture, and had many unforgettable experiences.

Common Threads is OSSTF/FEESO's international solidarity program which offers members the opportunity to travel abroad and conduct research resulting in the creation of new progressive curriculum on critical issues.

In July, the team went to Venezuela to discover how the social system, media, education and distribution of wealth works in this country. They met with several community leaders in Caracas to listen to their history and understand their points of view. Knowledge of the workings of the oil industry were defined through meetings with *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA)*, (Petroleum of Venezuela), the state owned oil and gas company. The team learned about several of their social programs such as the state run television and "The Frog and Dog" a government publisher that prints and distributes free books to those in need. Through first-hand accounts from students from Peru who were educated to be doctors for free in Venezuela, the continental social benefits from oil were explained. This was expanded upon by a visit with the ALBA bank to understand their system of trade with other member countries based on social needs. The socialist model used in Venezuela demonstrates the strength of people working together to bring improvements to the lives of many.

In August, the team went to Norway to research the success of the revered 'Nordic Model.' Each day thought-provoking meetings were held with different organizations

and government representatives including; Ministry of Petroleum and Energy, Institute for Labour and Social Research, and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions. Norway's research-based, tripartite approach to natural resource management and prioritization of a strong social welfare system illustrated the benefits of long-term planning and systems thinking.

The interdisciplinary Common Threads *The Sustainable Society* curriculum package will be available to teachers in the 2015–16 school year. In the meantime, you are encouraged to enhance your teaching program with any of our five previous Common Threads curriculum resources, available at: osstf.on.ca/commonthreads. 



The Common Threads XI team (l-r) Michelle Leake (D. 27, Limestone), Dave Darling (D. 5A, Northern Shield), Taina Kanerva (D. 12, Toronto), Alison Rimell (D. 12, Toronto), Jennifer Gilbert (D. 11, Thames Valley), Michelle Chambers (D. 14, Kawartha Pine Ridge), and Rob Dubyk (Provincial Office Staff). Photo taken while in Oslo, Norway in front of *Landsorganisasjonen i Norge* (The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) which is the largest and most influential workers' organisation in Norway)