



# SIMAGES

The Official Online Newsletter of the North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA)

Volume 6, Issue 2

2006

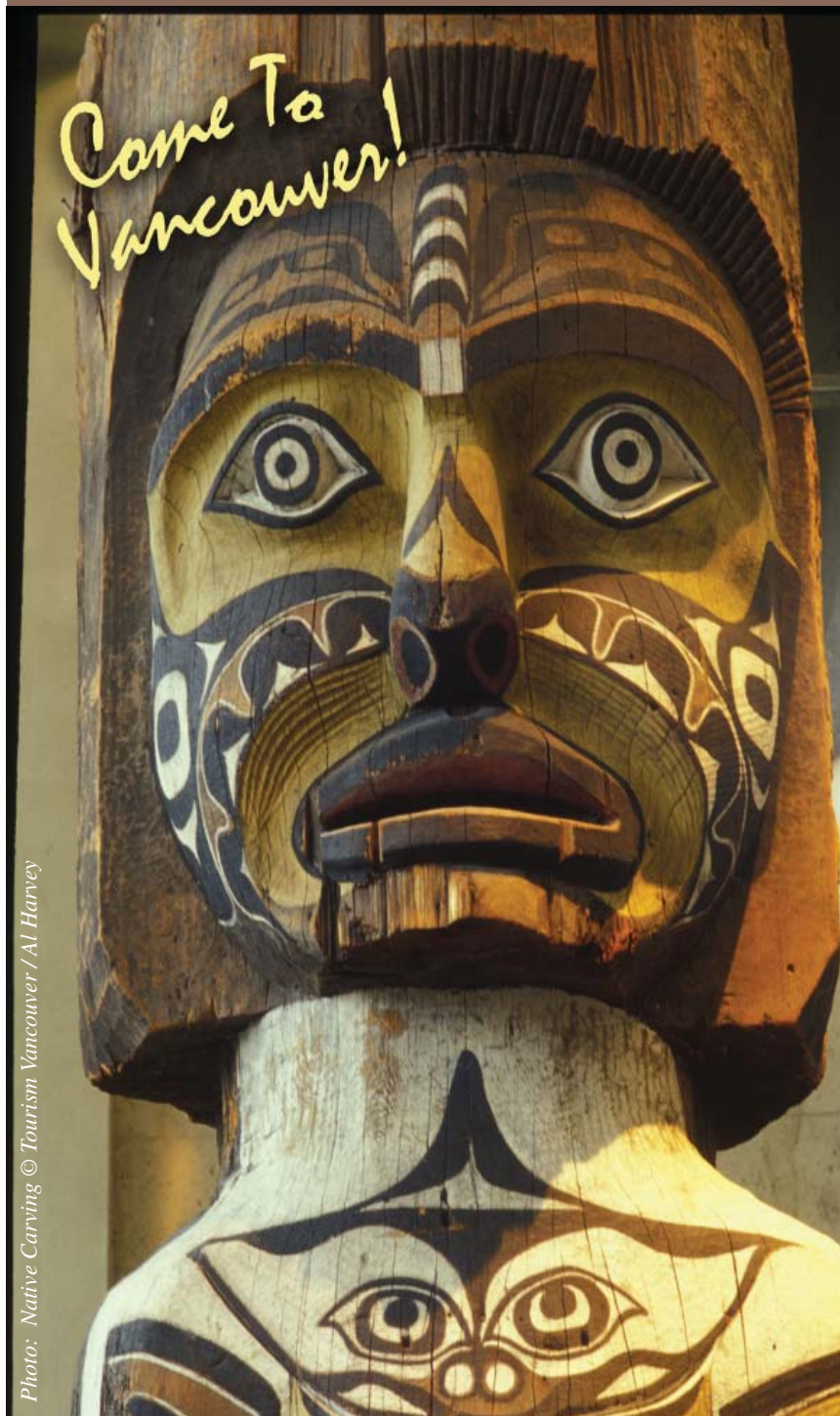


Photo: Native Carving © Tourism Vancouver / Al Harvey

## Editorial Board

Judee Blohm, Brian Remer, William Wake

## Table of Contents

### From the Chair:

Busy Spring!  
By Dave Matte 2

### NASAGA 2006 Conference:

NASAGA's Game Design Certificate  
By Chris Saeger & Kevin Eikenberry 3

What To Do in Vancouver  
By Deborah Thomas 4

### Special Feature:

NASAGA Membership Survey 6

### Article:

NASAGA Board Conducts Business  
in Vancouver  
By Liliane Lessard 8

### Activity / Book Review:

Talking Rocks Game  
Reviewed By Sandy Fowler 10

### Ready to Use Games/Techniques:

Acting Out  
By Deborah Thomas 11

Got Team? Get Flip 'Em!  
By Kathleen Koski 13

### Game:

NASAGA Sudoku  
By Deborah Thomas 15

FROM THE CHAIR

# BUSY SPRING!

BY DAVE MATTE

I seems fitting that I will author my note from the Chair, sipping coffee in a random airport, off on another crazy training tour. It is a busy life these days and time to sit and write is scarce. But truly, it is these breaks and these moments that we take to reflect that are so precious. Just think for a minute. And breathe. Neat eh?

I am gearing up for the most insane 7 months between now and the conference. The combination of being Chair of NASAGA and president at the same time is overwhelming. I am also starting a new job. Pile it on! If it is going to be busy, it might as well be really busy.

Don't worry about me though. I have fantastic support from my awesome team on the Board. I am very lucky. In fact, everyone in this great organization has been so supportive and generous for NASAGA 2006. Though the list of sessions is only a draft that I made in the kitchen yesterday, by the time this issue of SIMAGES is in your hands, registration will be up on the website and a complete conference program will be available on-line. We had over 40 presentation proposals! I am very excited about our keynote speakers and the great variety of concurrent sessions. Check

out all the fun at: [www.nasaga.org/conf\\_2006](http://www.nasaga.org/conf_2006).

Also, NASAGA is one of the most affordable conferences. You get so much for the investment of time and money. I would encourage you to register early and take advantage of the early discount and to stay at the host hotel, the Pacific Palisades ([www.pacificpalisades.com](http://www.pacificpalisades.com)). All NASAGA guest rooms are upgraded to suites! As an additional bonus, early registrants will also have the opportunity to participate in a pre-conference email game by Sivasailam "Thiagi" Thiagarajan.

We will be offering the certificate program at the conference again this year. Details regarding this program are in an article later in this issue of SIMAGES. It brings the conference experience to an entirely new level.

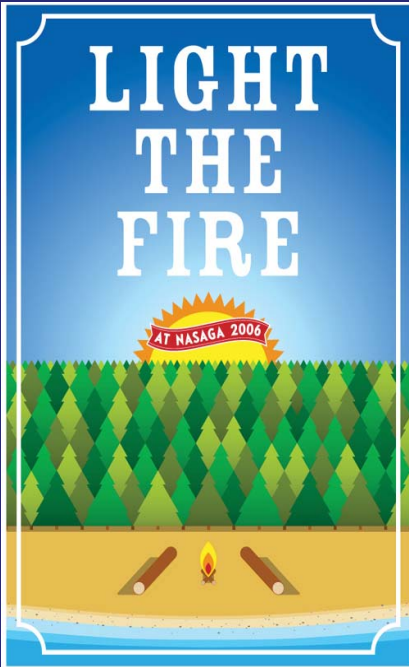
On April Fool's Day, the NASAGA board was in Vancouver for our mid-year meeting. I have included an update from that meeting for the membership.

On top of it all, I am also making some time to play. Over the Easter weekend, I am heading down to Los Angeles to see a taping of the Price is Right. My passion for games started at a very young age, setting up pricing

games for my sisters in the basement so going to see Bob Barker is a bit of a pilgrimage. I can't wait.

Keep it real and fun! ■

Dave Matte  
[dwmatte@gmail.com](mailto:dwmatte@gmail.com)



NASAGA 2006  
Annual Conference  
October 11 to 14 at the  
Pacific Palisades Hotel in  
Vancouver, British Columbia

## CONFERENCE

# NASAGA'S GAME DESIGN CERTIFICATE

BY CHRIS SAEGER & KEVIN EIKENBERRY

The NASAGA game design certificate program will be offered again this year at the conference in Vancouver. It is an opportunity to gain professional credibility for the use of games in education and training. Previous participants reported real value in working and learning with experienced game designers to focus their conference experience on the specific skills they wanted to build during the week.

Participants in the game design certificate will attend a special simulation and game design workshop during the pre-conference. At this session they will have hands-on experience in the development and facilitation of simulations, games, and activities. Each person will identify a specific project to guide and focus their work. With this background they will attend at least five sessions from a specially selected list in the conference program. This will help provide depth in a particular aspect of the field. There will also be opportunities to meet with others in the program throughout the conference to share daily insights. At the end of the conference participants will come to a wrap-up session to

present the projects they have worked on and put what they have learned into practice.

Attendees of the game design certificate program will be able to:

- ◆ Identify the range of interactive learning methods available to designers
- ◆ Use a variety of tools to speed up interactive learning development
- ◆ Design an interactive learning activity
- ◆ Pilot test their design and get feedback for refinements
- ◆ Participate in other experiential activities and give feedback for their improvement

Facilitators for the game certificate are NASAGA members Kevin Eikenberry and Chris Saeger. Both have designed, used, and facilitated award-winning games for varied audiences over many years.

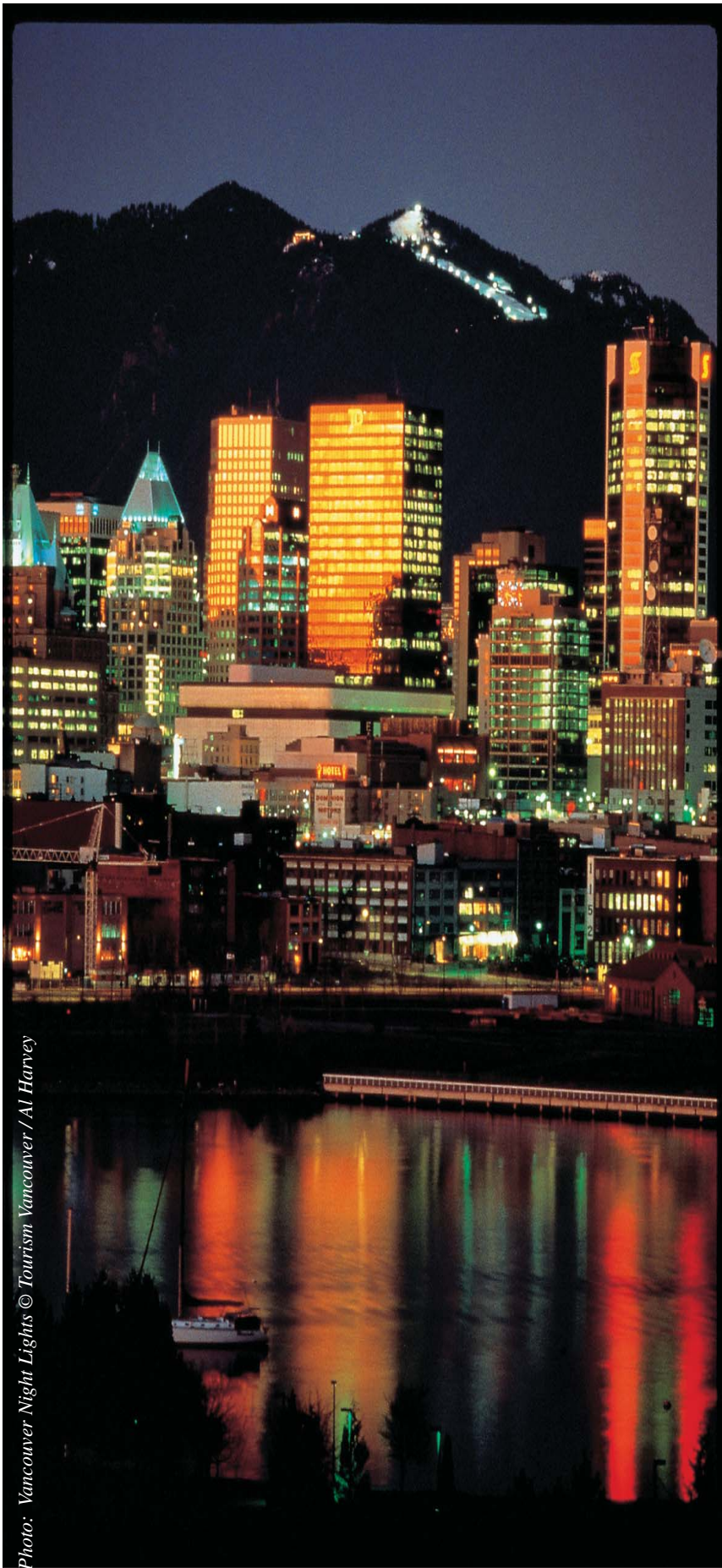
Kevin Eikenberry is an expert in converting organizational, team, and individual potential into desired results. He is the Chief Potential Officer of The Kevin Eikenberry Group and a long time NASAGA member. Kevin has spent the last 15 years helping

organizations all across North America and has trained people from every continent. He is the author of the best selling book *Vantagepoints on Learning and Life*, a contributing author to more than 15 other books, and publisher of four newsletters which are read by over 100,000 people worldwide.

Chris Saeger helps organizations improve performance through active learning. He has been creating simulations and interactive learning experiences since 1985. His work has won awards from ASTD, Lakewood Publications, and the International Society for Performance Improvement, Potomac Chapter. He is a regular presenter at ISPI, the North American Simulation and Gaming Association and other conferences. Chris is a past chair and former president of NASAGA and an ISPI Certified Performance Technologist.

NASAGA's game design certificate is offered to anyone who registers for the conference for an extra fee. Registration instructions and fees are available at NASAGA's web site: [www.nasaga.org](http://www.nasaga.org). ■





## CONFERENCE

# WHAT TO DO IN VANCOUVER

BY DEBORAH THOMAS

I slowly walked into the Pacific Palisades Hotel, nestled perfectly on Robson Street between a bounty of boutiques and restaurants. Whatever you want, it's within walking distance. The marina. Stanley Park, the largest city park in North America, which houses the Vancouver Aquarium, to 8,000 species of aquatic life including a beluga whale. This park has totem poles. Eight.

I think it was the painted ceilings and colorful hand blown glass chandelier in the hip lobby that first caught my eye. As I approached my room I couldn't help but smile at the whimsical room plate number that marked my room. No, it was the fun martini glass filled with candy that caught my eye. Maybe, it was that personal note that welcomed me to my room. Or was it the baubles that were glued to the tiles in the washroom that made it feel like someone cared? Cared very deeply about my eye candy. Or was it the amusing colored paddle ball tucked in the basket of candies and crackers and various sundries for sale in the basket in my suite? (All rooms are suites replete with refrigerator, stove, wine glasses, and any thing you might need). I bought the paddle ball.

I can't tell you how excited I am to return to Vancouver. We just finished our NASAGA board meeting at the same hotel where NASAGA 2006 is scheduled in October. There isn't a better place to hold a NASAGA conference. It is brimming with fun and fancy. The breakout rooms are fun and inspiring.

Photo: Vancouver Night Lights © Tourism Vancouver / Al Harvey



I can't stop saying fun. I had to pinch myself to wipe the silly smirk off my face. As we walked from room to room someone aptly said, "Is every room in this hotel cool?" And the restaurant that is connected to the hotel is certainly worth the stars. The free evening wine tasting is right outside the restaurant doors.

So, let me tell it to you straight. In October, we get to partake in the most exciting games and simulations, interactive training and communications event ever. And we get to stay at a lovely hotel. And it's situated in Vancouver.

Have I died and gone to heaven?

I just left Vancouver and I can't wait to return.

One evening the board went out for sushi. Without a doubt, the best sushi I have ever had. At the best price ever. NASAGA president Dave Matte lives in Vancouver. And we benefit from his expert knowledge of this, the most livable city in the world. We had dim sum for lunch one day. What a delight. Can I tell you how terrific the Asian influence is in this the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Asian populated city in North America?

Let me tell you the other reasons that I am excited about returning to Vancouver. Walking the city streets you get the sense that it is at once both eclectic and formal. Vancouver has something for everyone. Chinatown, the beaches, the gardens and parks. Gastown complete with the only steam operated clock in the world and it's cobblestone streets and old world charm.

And they say that from the top of Grouse Mountain you can gaze down 1120 meters stretched out like a beautiful brooch. I plan to confirm that.

Vancouver is on par with every great place I have visited. And, no this wasn't my first trip to Vancouver. It just felt like it because it was so exciting. Trips to Vancouver are exciting. Great things are bound to happen at NASAGA 2006. ■

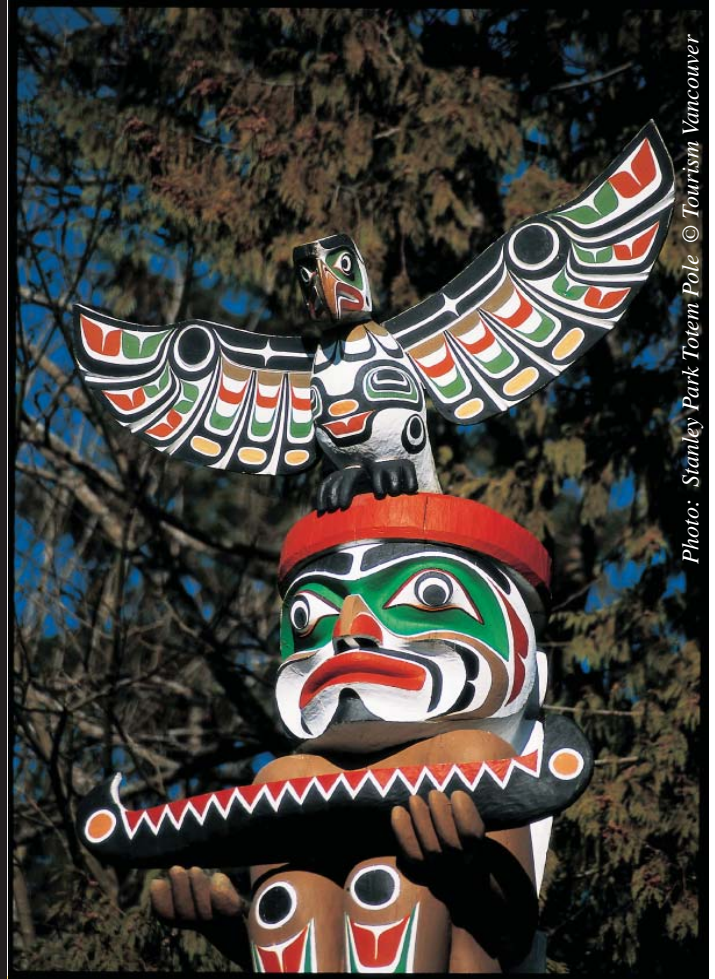


Photo: Stanley Park Totem Pole © Tourism Vancouver

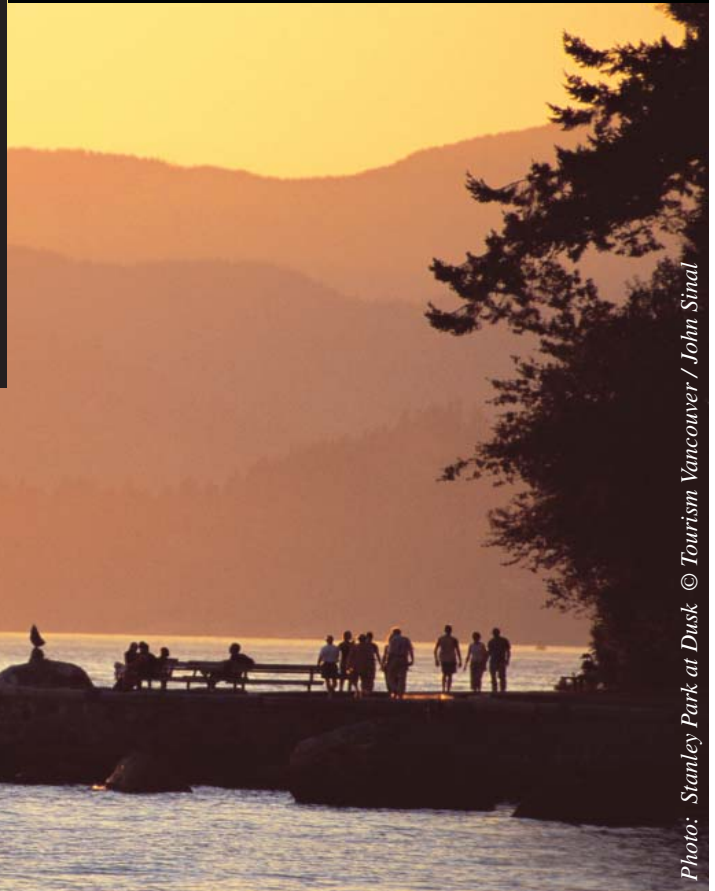


Photo: Stanley Park at Dusk © Tourism Vancouver / John Sinal

# NASAGA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

In the summer of 2005 NASAGA conducted an online membership survey. It contained both quantitative and open-ended questions. One hundred fifty-one members responded, which is approximately 10% of our online members.

Below are highlights of the quantitative data.

## From Respondents We Learned About Their Work:

1. 60% Work for an organization  
37% Are self-employed
2. 24% Work in a one-person company  
23% In companies/organizations of 1,000 to 10,000  
21% in 2-10 people companies/organizations
3. 61% Work for profit/private business  
22% Work for non-for-profit organizations  
18% Are in academics
4. Some roles members play in their organizations (can be more than one):  
55% Instructional designer  
48% Organizational consultant  
44% Curriculum designer  
41% External (independent) trainer  
40% Internal trainer  
40% Game designer  
35% Simulation designer  
21% Training manager or director
5. Supervisory or no:  
28% Non-supervisory  
27% Executive (director, VP, CxO)  
20% Manager/supervisor
6. How long they have been in their field:  
42% - 16+ years  
21% - 11-15 years  
19% - 6-10 years  
17% - 2-5 years  
2% - Less than 2 years

7. How often they use games and simulations in their work:  
43% Very often  
33% Often  
25% Infrequently

8. Mix of elearning to face-to-face:

|                          | Mostly elearning | Mostly face-to-face |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Within all training work | 11%              | 89%                 |
| Within games/simulations | 12%              | 88%                 |

## We Learned About the Organizations They Belong To:

1. Belong to or participate in activities of which other organizations:  
59% ASTD  
26% ISPI  
10% SIETAR  
And many, many more!
2. Consider their primary organization:  
17% ASTD  
14% NASAGA  
And many others
3. Conferences they attend regularly:  
14% NASAGA  
10% ASTD  
8% ISPI  
28% None
4. How long been aware of NASAGA:  
25% Less than one year  
29% One to two years  
24% Three to six years  
12% Seven to ten years  
3% Eleven to fifteen years  
7% More than 15 years

5. How learned about NASAGA:
  - 40% From a friend
  - 34% From web search
  - 17% Other organization affiliations
  - 9% Mentioned in an email
  - 5% Flyer mailer announcement
  - 5% Speaker at another conference
6. Consider themselves members of NASAGA:
  - 75% Yes
  - 25% No
7. How many years been involved with NASAGA:
  - 53% Less than one year
  - 28% One to five years
  - 10% Six to ten years
  - 9% More than ten years
8. Have introduced NASAGA to any friends or colleagues:
  - 76% Yes
  - 24% No

### We learned about NASAGA conference attendance

1. How many NASAGA conferences attended:
  - 69% Not attended a NASAGA conference
  - 14% Attended one conference
  - 10% Attended 2-5 conferences
  - 7% Attended more than five conferences
2. If attended, the 2 or 3 biggest factors in that decision:
  - 58% Location
  - 56% What you hope to learn
  - 44% Cost of registration
  - 33% Sessions that will be held
  - 29% Networking opportunities
  - 25% What you hope to contribute
3. If have not attended, the biggest factors in that decision:
  - 49% Location
  - 42% Cost of registration
4. Importance of various conference features:
  - 78% Meeting others who use experiential training activities
  - 92% Seeing/experiencing games/simulations
  - 69% Large network of resources when I need help with a job
  - 43% Networking with people who might use my services
  - 16% Networking to identify consultants/trainers I might hire
  - 61% Guaranteed fun at the NASAGA conference
  - 72% Receiving feedback to improve games I have designed
  - 42% Hearing "Big Names" in the field make presentations

### Other useful data

1. About the NASAGA email list and web site, how often do you:
 

|                                |              |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                | Regularly    | Fairly Often |
| Read the NASAGA emails:        | 48%,         | 43%          |
|                                | Fairly Often | Hardly Ever  |
| Log on to NASAGA web site:     | 22%,         | 67%          |
|                                | Hardly Ever  | Never        |
| Ask a question to the list:    | 47%          | 50%          |
| Answer a question to the list: | 52%          | 41%          |
| Search the archives:           | 35%          | 44%          |
  2. About the online journal SIMAGES, how often do you:
 

|                                |             |              |       |
|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------|
|                                | Every Issue | Infrequently | Never |
| Read SIMAGES:                  | 22%         | 32%          | 29%   |
| Pass it to a friend/colleague: |             | 36%          | 53%   |
|                                | Online      | Print        | Both  |
| Read it online or print:       | 57%         | 14%          | 29%   |

What types of SIMAGES articles are the most valuable:

    - 91% Training activities
    - 63% Resources
    - 53% Feature articles
    - 28% Interviews
    - 27% On-going columns
    - 18% News of conferences
  3. About the 2004 eConference:
    - 5% Attended the eConference
    - 95% Did not attend the eConference
    - 53% Found eConference to be somewhat valuable
  4. Top suggestions for additional NASAGA activities:
    - 23% Local activities
    - 35% E-conferences
    - 14% Special interest groups
    - 23% More cross cultural exchanges/topics
- As you can see, the survey revealed that many members are not aware of or do not use the online discussions, web resources or journal, SIMAGES. Does that include you? We hope not! The journal editors would like contributions. Responses to discussion questions educate all of us. We encourage you to participate!
- If you responded to the survey, thank you! ■



# NASAGA BOARD CONDUCTS BUSINESS IN VANCOUVER

BY LILIANE LESSARD, NASAGA BOARD MEMBER



As a recently elected board member, I was fearful that the NASAGA mid-year board meeting would be long and exhausting. Yet it proved to be a highly energizing and satisfying work session. Dave Matte, our host and chair, prepared a hectic schedule and many varied subjects were addressed with creativity and fun. Twelve board members made it to the Pacific Palisades hotel in Vancouver, where the 2006 “Light The Fire” conference will take place.

To start off the first full work day on a reflective, dynamic, and creative note, Deborah Thomas, a new board member, facilitated



a “Light The Fire Scratch and Dream Game”. She challenged us to dream up two ideas that would either Fuel, Spark, or Ignite passion and that could be implemented during the fall conference. Many bright ideas were shared and documented for later use by our conference organizer, Dave Matte.

Dave then revealed the names of the keynote speakers and the list of presentations that had been accepted by the selection committee for the conference. Special speakers include Kat Koppett and Bernie DeKoven. A vigorous marketing campaign devised by Deborah Thomas, Chuck Needlman, and David Blum was proposed which reinforced our belief that the 2006 Conference will be a huge success.

Other key NASAGA projects discussed during the weekend include a NASAGA book project with Wiley Publishing, the naming/branding of NASAGA, fund raising, and making SIMAGES more useful.

### **A NASAGA Book Project!**

This is really exciting news. Martin Delahoussaye of Wiley Publishing has offered to publish a practical and referenced handbook on games and learning activities. The handbook will contain contributions from NASAGA members and be edited by Thiagi. The advantages for members like you include the possibility of being published and a discount on the purchase of the final book. The NASAGA name will increase visibility and credibility for the project. The next issue of SIMAGES will provide updates about how you can be involved!

### **The Naming/Branding of NASAGA**

Those who remember our association from its early years will also remember its first name “War Games”, which gives a clue to how NASAGA has evolved to meet the reality of our practice and the needs of our members. Much time was given during this mid-year board meeting to how we could enhance our image. Quick fixes are not an option the board members truly wish to consider. Going back to the drawing board is an exercise which might enable us to ensure we are on the right track. Hence the board is contemplating revisiting its mission and working on vision and values. This project should take place within the next year.

PLEASE  
FORWARD  
OUR  
EMAILS!

You will be receiving information about the conference in Vancouver over the next few months. Please read and forward the emails to your colleagues and contacts. Our membership survey revealed that most NASAGANS learned about the organization from an individual contact. Please share the good news of NASAGA with others!

### **Fund Raising**

Over the past two years the board has looked at various ways to raise funds to support NASAGA activities. At present the yearly conference is the only revenue-generating activity. A small group met during the board meeting to analyze some of the other ideas proposed. They presented the whole board with two mapping tools: an opportunity map which helps evaluate ideas by how much time/study/outside assistance is needed, and a priority map which identifies potential results (small or big gain) in relationship to effort required. Except for the NASAGA publication which is already in the development phase, other ideas will be reviewed further.

### **SIMAGES**

Readers appreciate our newsletter because of the different contributors, the variety of the articles, and the professional look. Yet maintaining an online publication of such high standards remains a challenge. How we could make SIMAGES more useful to our membership is a question we like to ask ourselves regularly in order to stay abreast of our readers’ needs and expectations. During the fall conference, a display of the three 2006 issues will be available and conference participants will be invited to propose topics as well as articles.

Board members got a taste of Vancouver and the conference facilities in anticipation of “Light the Fire.” We are all looking forward to seeing you at our annual meeting during the conference in Vancouver! ■

# TALKING ROCKS

BY ROBERT F. VERNON

REVIEWED BY SANDY FOWLER

Robert F. Vernon developed this game as a simulation on the origins of writing. In the game, participants are divided into bands of Eagle People—preliterate shepherds. The small bands migrate with their flocks of sheep and goats from campsite to campsite leaving behind vital instructions for survival. When a band moves to a new campsite, they must decode the survival message left on a rock (newsprint) and if the message is not understood, the band dies. The spirits of the members are allowed to wander and get involved with other groups or whatever they want to do, however, the goal is to survive; not die. Once a band has correctly decoded a survival message, the game facilitator gives them a new message that must be encoded on newsprint with markers. They cannot use any modern symbols, letters or numbers. After several

moves, a crude picture-writing system usually evolves.

## How It Can Be Used

This game works well as a team building exercise. The Eagle People bands are essentially teams that must solve a problem and work together toward a solution. A discussion question in this case might be: What did you learn about working together? When the composition of the groups is diverse, the post-game discussion can focus on how diversity affects teamwork, leadership and the like. The goal can be to develop a multicultural team approach. Since the drawings are non-verbal, this is a good simulation for groups in which some people are not necessarily fluent in the dominant language—English, Spanish, Japanese etc. This simulation was used to select a city manager when the city council had narrowed the field to the final two candidates and could not make

a decision. Playing this game with both candidates made it very clear which one was the better team player. Originally designed for students, this is a good game for children and young adults in elementary through college level, in art, linguistics, anthropology classes etc. The game also works well for groups interested in the heritage of primitive cultures—their sophistication, talent, ability, art, and religion.

## Potential Cultural Biases

Depending on language proficiency, it may be necessary to review the vocabulary in the scenarios prior to playing.

## How To Procure It

The instruction manual for Talking Rocks is available from Robert F. Vernon, 1829 Kessler Boulevard West Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46208, USA. His phone is 317-466-0100. ■

# ACTING OUT AT NASAGA 2005

BY DEBORAH THOMAS

*This is a description of the simulation ACTING OUT. It was developed as part of NASAGA's game design certificate program at the 2005 Conference. We encourage your comments about how the format or content of ACTING OUT might be adapted for other audiences or content. – The Editors*

I had been a “peep” on the NASAGA website for years and finally decided to attend my first conference last year. I was psyched and decided to sign up for the additional training game design certificate.

The certificate program included a full-day pre-conference session presented by the master, Sivasailam “Thiagi” Thiagarajan, on the theory of game design. It was there that requirements for completion were explained. We were told that we had to design and present a game on the final day of the conference! Further, our design needed to include something learned from the confer-

ence—it seemed a perfect opportunity to incorporate improv into a training game.

During the conference, I attended Kat Koppett’s session, “Improv Designs for Inspired Training,” which was informative and invigorating. It complemented my 20-year fascination with improv, which has resulted in occasional study and performance for me. I was so inspired by Kat that I bought her book, *Training to Imagine*, at the NASAGA Store!

Incorporating improvisational theater into the classroom has been a continuing goal of mine. But doing it is not so straightforward. After all, improv can be frightening and engender the assumption that it is an innate skill that one is born with.

Difficulties are further exacerbated by the reality that events can quickly go awry during a training session. Having worked with Fortune 500 companies for the past 15 years, I

am exceptionally aware that a trainer should have a “cleanup plan” in the event a training session begins to fail. Yet to do improv, the facilitator has to give up a significant amount of control! So, when Kat presented a training tool that lends a supportive structure to improv, my ideas coalesced. I decided to create a game to complement my Acting Out Series, a training I had designed for customer call center representatives.

I had realized that beginnings and ending in improv and storytelling are thorny. Add the middle, and both your hands are full! Kat solved this problem with a popular improv game designed by Kenn Adams, at Freestyle Repertory Theatre. With this game, called “Story Spine,” full-length improv narratives are woven, resulting in quality beginnings, middles, and endings. Story Spine provides starter sentences that are used to guide the creation of the story and ensure a complete, cohesive narrative.



The story spine follows this sequence of beginning sentences:

- Once upon a time ...
- Everyday ...
- But one day ...
- Because of that ...
- Because of that ...
- Because of that ...
- Until finally ...
- Ever since then ...
- And the moral of the story is ...

In designing my training game, I utilized this framework to fashion a card game with scenarios and situations. At one point in my career I was a call center training manager and it was then that I recognized the need to nudge participants into thinking about the consequences of their actions. The game I designed at the conference provides the framework for that type of activity. My intention was to demonstrate how slight actions ripple into situations that can lead to big problems. By assisting customer call center representatives in thinking about the consequences of their actions, even innocuous actions, the game creates a customer representative safety net and helps to free managers from awkward situations.

The game includes a set of spine cards and situation cards. The situation cards list the various scenarios that a representative might encounter. Some example situations for reps are:

- ◆ doesn't listen to the caller
- ◆ answers the phone with an attitude
- ◆ tells the customer the computers are slow
- ◆ tells the customer that they didn't cause the problem and not to take it out on them
- ◆ asks the customer to repeat everything

This is how it works. Split the class into teams. Each team member gets

a spine card with one of the sentence starters (see above) on it. A situation card is turned over and the team has to tell that story. Members tell their part of the story following the story spine in order. The instructor should write the order of the spine sentences on a flipchart.

An example of how the game might play out:

Once upon a time a rep answered the phone with an attitude

- ◆ Everyday the rep had a bad attitude
- ◆ But one day the bad attitude got really, really bad and he yelled at the customer
- ◆ Because of that the customer yelled back
- ◆ Because of that the rep yelled louder and said unspeakable things and hung up on the customer
- ◆ Because of that the customer called the owner of the company and reported the rep
- ◆ Until finally the owner fired the rep and the rep had to find a new job
- ◆ Ever since then the rep answered the phone with a smile on his face and never once yelled at a customer
- ◆ And the moral of the story is, if you have a bad attitude it can lead to trouble, not only for the customer, but also for you.

As the game is played, the participants often laugh and become animated, and the story can become quite silly. But the point is not lost because as the stories become ridiculous, they create a non-threatening way to think about actions. It's a very simple way to help employees consider consequences, ranging from mild to complex.

Before attending the conference, I knew I wanted to create a card game for my Acting Out series of games. I came prepared with a set of preprinted cards that had my Acting Out logo. (Cards can be made by using Adobe Illustrator or a table in MS Word.) Then, at the conference, I hand wrote the game contents on the backside of each card.

I created enough story spine cards so that four teams could play. There are enough situation cards that the game can be played over and over and the class will encounter different scenarios with a lot of variety. But even if the class repeats scenarios, the story that develops will be quite different. This game is great to use in conjunction with a lecture or other training modules and provides an excellent opportunity to change the training environment and satisfy the needs of various learner preferences. It obviously allows for student participation!

My game can be easily altered for other types of training situations, and I am currently modifying it for use in a customer service training session for the hair salon industry. It will also be used as a train-the-trainer coaching tool for new trainers at a large beverage company. Other applications could range from an internal IT center, to a Medicaid Part D help line, or group of performance improvement specialists in manufacturing. In fact, this flexible format would be ideal for any situation where people need to anticipate potential problems and practice their "cleanup plan" ahead of time! ■

## About The Author

*Deborah Thomas is a member of the NASAGA Board of Directors and owner of Sillymonkey, LLC, a training and consulting firm based in Atlanta, GA.*

# GOT TEAM? GET FLIP 'EM

BY KATHLEEN KOSKI, PH.D.

Flip 'Em is a fabulous game, simple but elegant. It's a basic game of tic-tac-toe, three-in-a-row, but the rules add complexities that keep players entertained—and learning—for hours. It's a great game for the whole family on a rainy Sunday afternoon; even the little ones can join in and have fun. It is also an excellent organizational training activity focusing on group dynamics, team building or other small group learning goals.

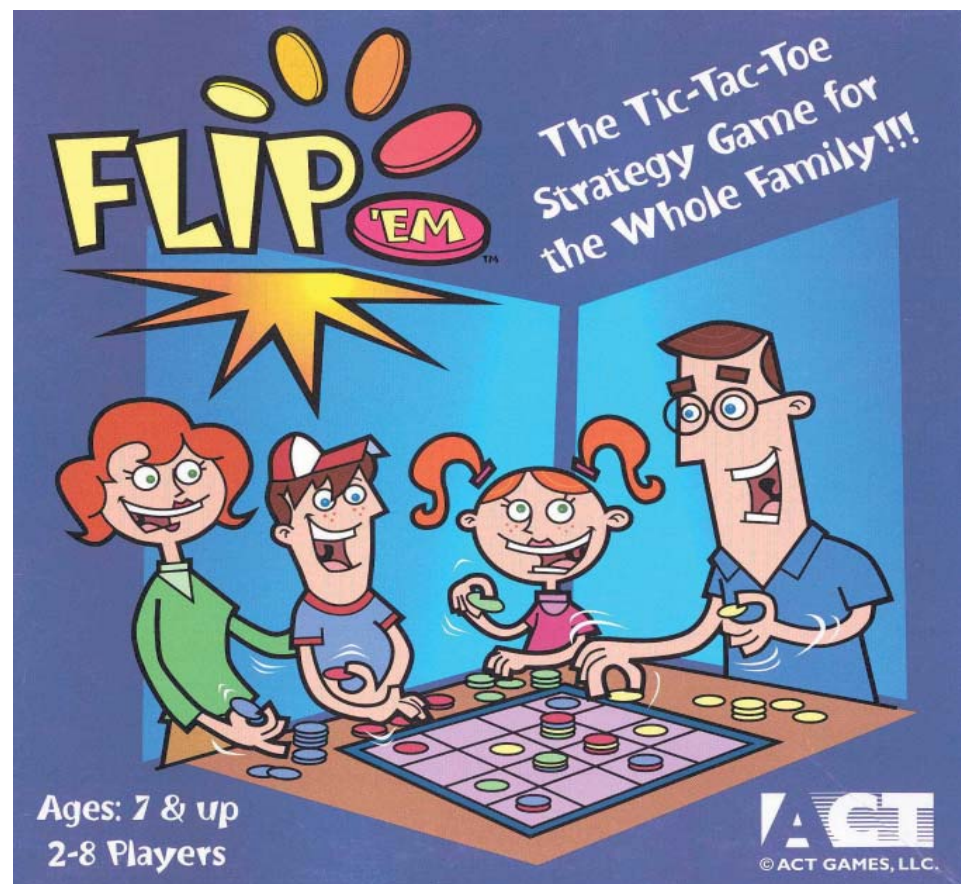
Flip 'Em includes a game board which has been divided into a four-by-four grid and 64 "chips" divided equally into four different color groupings. Players choose one of four possible moves in any turn: players may *place* one of their own brightly colored spongy "chips" on any empty space on the board; players may take their chip and *cover* any other chip (or stack of chips up to four high); players may *move* any chip or stack of chips to an empty space; or players may *flip* a stack of chips so the color on the bottom becomes the top color. With four players, the permutations for getting three in a row are endless.

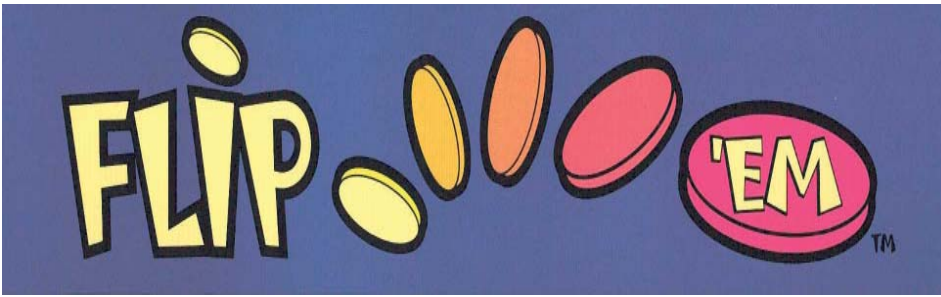
This game design is particularly conducive for trainers to elicit discussion about changing organizational realities and how people respond to them. One technique to bring out the issues of change management

is to introduce the rules one at a time during the play. For example, in the first round, the trainer may have participants play the rule of simply placing their colored chip on the board until one player gets three in a row. The trainer may then introduce a new rule that "you may choose either to place a new chip or to cover another player's chip." In the third round,

the choice of moving a chip may be given and, finally, the "flip 'em" rule is added.

Changing the rules gradually not only adds to the interest and excitement of the game itself, but also simulates the way in which organizations develop (from simple to more complex) or the way in which organizations change rules, sometimes without understanding the effects on employees.





The changing rules aspect of this game is interesting and especially rich when considering how the organizational environment affects group performance. Rules and expectations of the larger organization are some of the factors that play a part in how groups view their work, how members interact and so on. This aspect of the game “Flip ‘Em” provides the opportunity for participants to explore their experience of change in their organizations. “What happened when the rule changed during the game?” is a starting question, which can then move on to “How does that relate to your organization when rules change there?”

Another very productive aspect of this game is the opportunity for self-awareness during group interactions. How people see themselves playing Flip ‘Em is a great metaphor for how they “play the game” of working in groups. On one occasion, a woman began the game with great excitement declaring herself to be highly competitive. “Oh, I just love games,” she said. “I just love to win.” While her enthusiasm never waned and her claims did not diminish, she never won a round. During the debriefing, she said she noticed two things. The first was that she was so busy trying to make others lose, she didn’t pay attention to her own moves for winning. The second was that she loved the rule changes. Each change, she said, was another opportunity to win. The discussion that came from that insight was very productive for that group.

In another group, a winning participant who initiated conversation

with his fellow players about understanding rules, realized that he usually operates the same way in his larger work life. He often brings people together to talk about strategies for accomplishing projects, but then goes off to accomplish the work on his own. Other insights playing this game have had to do with the idea of paying attention to specific detail as opposed to standing back and taking a longer, broader view. One participant who visibly “stood back” consistently won over his fellow players who hunched closely over the game board. A very rich discussion ensued from that group observation.

Flip ‘Em is a game for four players, but can accommodate up to eight players in partnership. While it’s a little game with simple rules, its uses for training are limited only by the trainer’s imagination. Whether folks play it for fun or for learning, it’s a giant among games.

### **About The Author**

*Kathleen Koski, a member of NASAGA, worked in human resource management and labor relations in manufacturing before teaching adults at the University of Massachusetts. Currently she provides training to teachers and managers in cross-cultural communication, multicultural group dynamics, and conflict resolution through her consulting company, CultureWorks. She is based in New England. Flip ‘Em is available from ACT Games LLC ([www.act-games.com](http://www.act-games.com)).*

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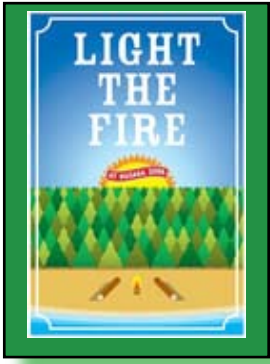
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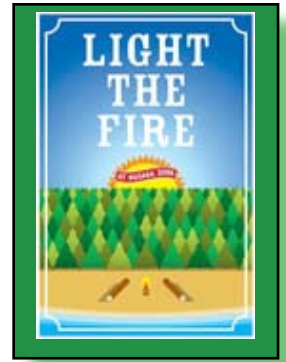
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|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | S | A |   |   |
| A | G |   | N | A | S |
| S |   |   | A |   |   |
|   |   |   |   | N | A |
| N |   | A | G |   | A |
| G | A |   | A | S |   |

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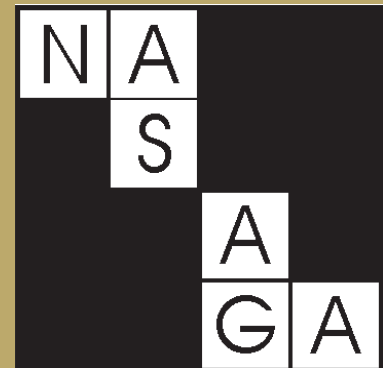
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