

# ESL News for the week of February 20, 2017

## Story 1: Mardi Gras

Mardi Gras, which is French for "Fat Tuesday," is celebrated this year on February 28. It is the last day before the Catholic and Anglican celebration of Lent, a six-week period ending in Easter when devotees are supposed to give up eating rich, fatty foods, like meat and sweet desserts. Two cities that are famous for their Mardi Gras celebrations are Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and New Orleans in the United States. Besides the wonderful and plentiful food that you can buy, there is a huge parade that takes place with all kinds of floats. Three of these floats are dedicated to Orpheus, the Greek father of songs, Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, and Endymion, lover of the moon. It is a lively celebration where many people, religious or not, go to have fun.

## Story 2: RRSP Season

A Registered Retirement Savings Plan, or RRSP, is a way to save money for your retirement. Although most people get a tax refund and spend the money on things they want such as a holiday, others put that same money into an RRSP. An RRSP contribution can actually make you money. For example, a \$5,000 contribution can increase your tax refund by \$1500 or so. If you want that money in this year's tax refund, rather than next year's, you must invest that money by the deadline of March 30, 2017. To do this you can get a short-term loan from your bank, put that money in your RRSP account, get your tax refund in April, and pay down the loan immediately with your refund. That way it's like the government is paying for a third of your investment. Pretty smart, isn't it.

### Story 3: Couple from Langley install pipe organ in home

Sixty-five-year-old Sipke Pyle and his wife Lois always wanted to own a pipe organ. When they heard of one being offered by a church in Vancouver, they went there immediately. However, it was so huge that they decided they couldn't put it in their Langley house. Some of the pipes were quite long; in fact, one of them was 17 feet (5.2 meters) long. Later Sipke changed his mind and went back to get the organ, but it was in pieces and parts of it were destroyed. Some of it was already in the Vancouver city dump. Sipke didn't care. He was going to rescue this organ and take it home anyway. They both moved hundreds of pipes by themselves and had a moving company move the rest. They had to replace some parts, and after months of hard work, they managed to put the organ back together in their living room. The 1500 pipes are in a different room and are so loud that no one can go into the room when someone is playing the organ.

### Story 4: B.C. Government gives money to schools

Because of a strong economy the provincial government has announced that a Student Learning Grant of \$27.4 million will be given to public schools in all 60 school districts to pay for supplies for students. An additional grant of \$2 million will be given to private schools. The NDP education critic, Rob Fleming, said the government is only putting back the same amount of money they took from education in their last budget. He said the government is trying to look good because of the May 9 general election coming up. In November, 2016, the B.C. Teacher's Federation won a Supreme Court ruling against the government after a fight that started in 2002. The court ruled that the government had to restore class sizes to the 2002 level, which means rehiring about 3500 full-time teachers who were laid off.

### Story 5: Grand opening of Trump Tower

On February 28 Donald Trump's sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, will be in Vancouver for the official opening of Trump International Hotel and Tower. The \$360-million hotel and condominium development was designed by the architect Arthur Erickson. The Trump Organization doesn't own the tower but licensed its name for branding and marketing. It does, however, own the 147-room hotel. The more than 200 condominium units sold out last year. Protests are being planned on social media for the event because Vancouver is known for its multiculturalism and liberal politics. City Counselor Kerry Jang, along with Mayor Gregor Robertson and a petition of 56,000 signatures, has asked the developer to drop the Trump name from the building saying that it represents intolerance, sexism and bullying, which is not what Vancouver is about. Robertson said, "Trump's name and brand have no more place on Vancouver's skyline than his ignorant ideas have in the modern world."