

Documentarian Lewis Cohen meets Roslyn grade sixers



Cohen establishing a rapport with enthusiastic grade 6 students.

BY RALPH THOMPSON

Emmy Award-winning documentary film-maker and producer Lewis Cohen met Roslyn Elementary School grade 6 students February 9 in the school library. What was planned as a presentation about Cohen's illustrious career path so far, to help students think about their vocation, turned out to be a tsunami of questions and answers.

Cohen, a former Westmount resident and Roslyn student, went on to study film making and then moved into documentary film, consulting and content production. His 13-part series *Fire Within*, which follows six Cirque du Soleil performers, won an Emmy Award in 2003 and his documentary *Lovesick* about Cirque performers

won a Gemini Award in 2007.

When asked what he was working on now, Lewis described his docufiction project based on one of his own real-life experiences of a slightly-out-of-control, highly mixed-breed dog that bites someone.

An inquisitive student asked what the film would be called.

Cohen hadn't decided yet, which generated a flood of suggestions from the young audience: "Dog Bites," "Charlie and the Dog Bite Factory" and so on until it was suggested that students provide all their suggestions to their teacher, who would forward them to Cohen, who in turn said if one of the titles is selected, then credit would be given in the film.

Other Cohen projects include teaming up with Westmounter Annabel Soutar,

whose series of plays *The Assembly* deals with political polarization. A similar-themed series written and produced by Cohen, *Truth and Lies*, is available on TVO (www.tvo.org/programs/truth-lies).

The chat with students soon drifted towards a documentary about Roslyn.

Cohen, students, principal Joanna Genovezos and vice principal Mireille Tehbelian were positive.

There was no doubt about the enthusiasm of students and chemistry between Cohen and the students, so don't be surprised if you see more budding film-makers emerging from Roslyn Elementary School in the future.

► From left, Roslyn Elementary School principal Joanna Genovezos, Lewis Cohen and vice principal Mireille Tehbelian.



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