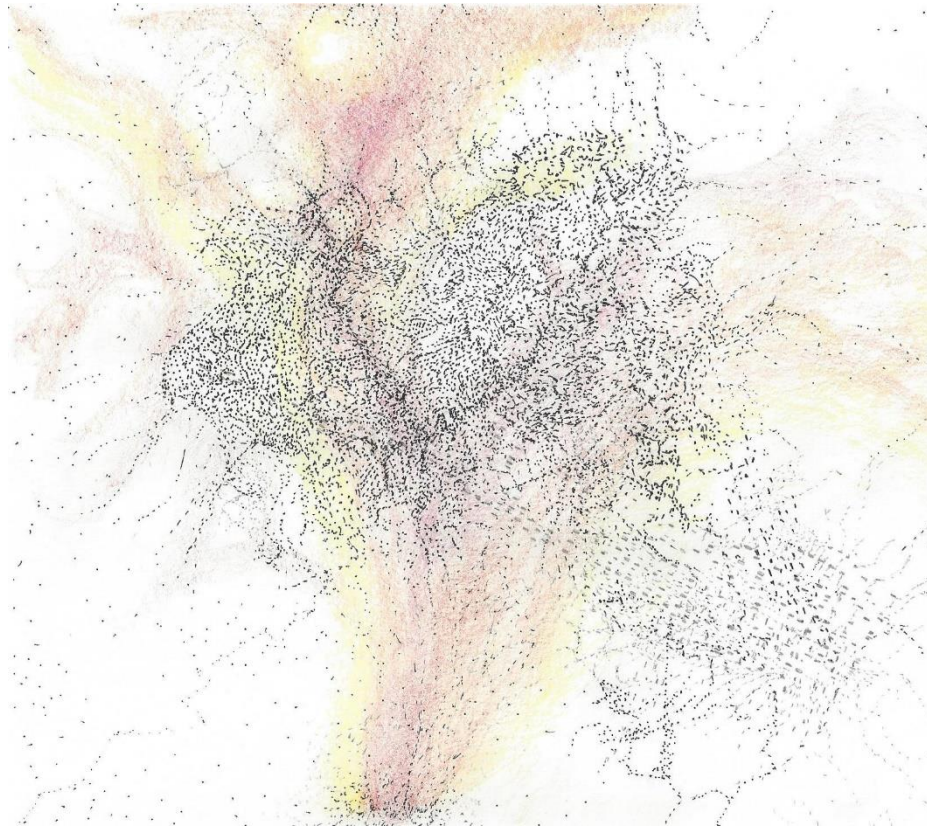


# THE NATIONAL GREAT TEACHERS MOVEMENT

## *Current Status and 2015 Updates*



Original Art by Steve Smith. ©2014

## *“45 Years of Adventures in Staff Development”*

***Compiled, Edited & Published by***  
*Steve Smith, NGTM Website Creator*  
*February 24, 2015*

***Written by***  
*Various Authors As Noted*

***Introduction & Foreword by***  
*David B. Gottshall, NGTM Founder*

## Dedication



This 2015 *National Great Teachers Movement* update is dedicated in honor of my great teacher, professional colleague, and dear friend David B. Gottshall.

*David and Steve in Chicago, IL  
October 2014*

## Introduction & Foreword

*David B. Gottshall, February 2015*

The Great Teachers Movement has been thriving and growing continuously for 45 years because of its unique, productive simplicity. It is a grass-roots faculty movement with no organizational connections and no commercial interests. Its only focus is on performance in the classroom and on the nature of the great teacher. It is based on the notion that teachers learn best how to teach from one another and that such learning is most effective if it occurs among participants from a random variety of teaching fields and disciplines. An important outcome of any GT event is the participants' realization of the problem-solving power of diversity. There is never a preplanned agenda; through various means, the needs and talents of those present are discerned and a program is created out of that on site. There is an underlying "ridged minimal structure" in all GT events; it is comparable to a simple bowl whose only function is to contain something.

The National Great Teachers Movement (NGTM) functions entirely on oral tradition. Although there is an occasional document, such as this about great teachers, there is nothing in writing that dictates or even suggests the actual content or conduct of a great teachers seminar.

Following are stories of two of the major Great Teachers Seminars: the National GTS in Hawai'i and the National GTS in Banff, Alberta. Since they draw participants from all across Canada and the U.S., they are the source of many regional and local seminars which in turn become the source of many other regional and local seminars and so on, and so on...

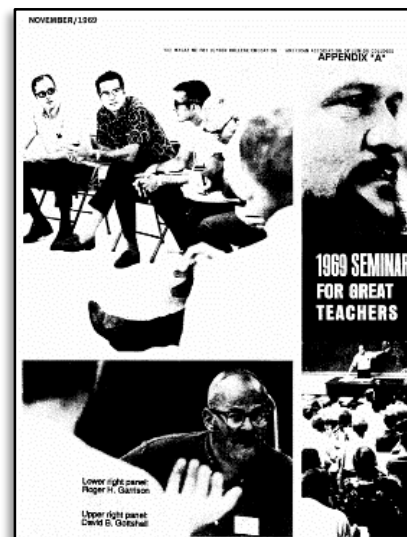
It is remarkable that this international movement began with the first Illinois Great Teachers Seminar in 1970, intended to be a one-time event but which soon developed into the original National GTS in Wisconsin, later moved to Hawai'i and Canada.

# This Document as a “Quasi Snapshot of an Enigma”

Steve Smith

While this may sound like a strange way to describe an update about an educational movement for educators, it attempts to capture what thousands of teachers have experienced for many years. This document will not only provide an update for those seeking current information about the NGTM, but will also attempt to explain its mysterious, often puzzling qualities that are most difficult to describe. The need for an NGTM update exists as the movement has matured, evolved, and spread globally. Additionally, it may provide a deeper understanding for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, educational leadership who continue to support this form of professional learning by sending faculty to and/or hosting local/regional GT events.

Several key documents have been created about the Great Teachers process since [David’s original 1993 document](#), written while he was still working at the College of DuPage. They can be found online at the [NGTM Resource Library](#). This update is not intended to replace existing works but rather become a part of the online resource.



The *Great Teachers* concept continues to thrive. There are still no “how to” manuals on exactly how to conduct a GT event. They simply do not exist. The [NGTM website](http://ngtm.net) (<http://ngtm.net>) continues to provide the most current, *single source* of information for those who wish to find or create a seminar.

**As of this writing, an International Great Teachers Leadership Summit is scheduled for June 2016 in Utah.** This type of gathering is an excellent place to network with GT practitioners from multiple perspectives. They are coordinated and held cosmically, or “*as the spirit moves*” with *no* pre-set schedule for where or when the next one must occur. Up-to-date information on the 2016 summit can be found on the NGTM website.

The concept of gathering the leadership within the GTM is not new. A *Great Teachers Leadership Colloquium* was first held in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin in 1998 to celebrate thirty years of the

NGTM. This event was created and organized by Rita Lease, leader of the Wisconsin Great Support Staff Seminar. Since then, a series of North American colloquia have been offered in Texas, Alberta, North Carolina, California, Nova Scotia, and North Dakota. In June 2013, after a 3-year hiatus, North Carolina hosted a new level of GT leadership development with the National Great Teachers Leadership Summit. Though the focus of the summit was different from the colloquia, the spirit and intent was the same: to provide an opportunity for perpetual NGTM growth from a leadership perspective.

# The Hawai'i National Great Teachers Seminar

*Written by Dave Sherrill (HNGTS Staff)*

*Submitted by Cindy Martin (Coordinator HNGTS)*

Since 1989, the **Hawai'i National Great Teachers Seminar** has been meeting at Kilauea Military Camp (KMC) in Volcanoes National Park on the Big Island of Hawai'i. Every year we gather in early August for the 5-night, 6-day event led by Great Teachers Movement founder, David Gottshall, assisted by trained facilitators drawn from the growing pool of past participants – most of whom are community college teachers. A maximum of 60 participants is admitted on a first-come, first-served basis. A waiting list is not unusual. Pre-school to graduate-school teachers from all over the world have participated and literally hundreds have shared the Volcano experience. Participants have hailed

from Australia, Canada, Japan, Micronesia, Qatar, United Kingdom and almost every state in the U.S.

The Coordinator of the Innovation Center at Leeward Community College coordinates the logistics of the seminar and is assisted by faculty from a number of the campuses within the University of Hawai'i system. A 3-credit graduate course is offered by the University of Hawai'i at Minoa's Department of Educational Psychology through Outreach College as an option for participants who want academic credit for the seminar. (Course registration is handled at KMC and requires payment of a separate administrative fee).

The seminar begins on Sunday afternoon and ends at noon on Friday. During our time together, we discuss teaching innovation and problem papers (1 page) brought to the seminar by participants, we share “tricks-of-the-trade,” and share books that have significantly influenced our work as teachers. The work of the entire week is drawn from the collective experience and teaching expertise of the participants. Morning (9:00–11:30 a.m.), afternoon (1:00–3:00 p.m.), and evening (7:00–8:30 p.m.) sessions are held each day and participants gather after the last session to sample local foods and network with participants and staff.

Throughout the week, blocks of open time are set aside to explore the natural beauty of the National Park. A free, optional tour of Hilo town and surrounding environs is also provided. Buffet-style meals are served each day at KMC's cafeteria and on Thursday night, a traditional Hawai'ian luau is held highlighted by a talent show featuring participants who volunteer to perform. Following a powerful series of closing exercises on Friday morning, participants invariably feel a sense of community, an appreciation for the seminar process, and, most importantly, a renewed commitment to teaching and learning.

At KMC, participants are housed in cabins scattered across the camp. (Private rooms are available at an additional charge). Cabins include cable TV, small refrigerators, phones, hair dryers, irons and ironing boards, umbrellas, and flashlights. Most have fireplaces. The camp has a bowling alley, game room, fitness center, small dry sauna, snack bar, Starbucks kiosk, general store, post office, an ATM, pay-to-use washers and dryers, and basketball and tennis courts. Computer connectivity is 24/7 and a limited number of computers are available for public use. An 18-hole golf course is within walking distance as are the Volcano Art Center, the



National Park Visitors Center, The Jagger Museum, and the historic Volcano House. Golf clubs, bicycles, and other sports equipment can be rented. Well-defined trails run throughout the park. The Kilauea caldera is about 100 yards from the camp's main entrance. The volcano's glow at night is spectacular!

On Sunday, KMC buses provide free transportation from Hilo International Airport to the seminar site which is about 45 minutes from the airport. Buses return to the airport on Friday afternoon. All major car rental companies are located at the airport for those who want to explore more of the Big Island on their own. Some participants fly in early and/or fly out later in order to have more time to appreciate this magical, sacred place.

We hope you will join us one day!

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## **The National Great Teachers Seminar in the Canadian Rockies**

*Judy Koch (Director of the CRGTS)*

One of the longest running seminars in North America is the **National Great Teachers Seminar in the Canadian Rockies**, often referred to by its shorter name, the Canadian Rockies Great Teachers Seminar, or CRGTS.



The CRGTS has happened annually in Banff, Alberta, Canada, or the Banff/Canmore area since it started in 1986. The first seminar was attended by faculty from the host college, Grant MacEwan Community College (as it then was), as well as other Colleges and Technical Institutes in Alberta. The 5-day activity was led by David Gottshall, founder of the Great Teachers Movement, and was a great success. The simplicity and effectiveness of the GTS model was immediately recognized and valued, and the organizing college agreed to serve as the administrative coordinator for the seminar on an annual basis.

### *The Location*

Since 2004 the seminar has been held at the world-renowned conference and art centre, the Banff Centre, in the Canadian Rockies. Majestic mountain scenery, excellent dining, comfortable accommodation, and spacious meeting rooms in the new Kinnear Centre, provide just what is needed in order to accomplish the purposes and outcomes of a Great Teachers event. One of the published purposes of any GTS is "to promote an attitude of introspection and self-appraisal by providing a relaxed setting and straight-forward process whereby participants can seriously review and contemplate their attitude, methods, and behaviour as teachers". ("The Spirit and Intent of the National Great Teachers Movement", Gottshall, 1999). The Banff Centre is an ideal setting for a GTS experience.

### *The Participants*

A good mix of attendees – teaching fields, experience levels, institutions – is one of the ingredients of a successful Great Teachers Seminar. The CRGTS is truly national and even international in scope. Over the years, participants have attended from almost every province and territory in Canada, and a number of US states, as well as other countries. From Alberta, we have seen teachers from a great variety of institutions:

public colleges, universities, technical institutes, nursing schools, private colleges, vocational centres, secondary schools, etc.

### Leadership and Staff

The CRGTS was extremely fortunate to have David Gottshall himself direct the seminar every June for 26 years. This meant that the process and structure (i.e., rigid, minimal structure) was exactly as Gottshall believed it should be. It was and is a seminar model that faithfully demonstrates the foundational premises and distinctive features outlined in his “Spirit and Intent” document. Currently, the CRGTS is directed by Judy Koch of MacEwan University, who was mentored and inspired by David Gottshall. Over the years, skillful and dedicated facilitator staff have been drawn from MacEwan University, the University of Alberta, Olds College, NAIT, and the College of Marin, California.



### Spawning other Seminars and Retreats

Often, after a participant experiences a Great Teachers Seminar, they take the concept back to their own institution and say, “This is so great, we should have one of our own!” Occasionally this has led to the start-up of regional or institution-specific seminars, some of which are still running. Examples of other seminars or retreats that were generated by the *National Great Teachers Seminar in the Canadian Rockies* include the Nova Scotia GTS (started in 2000, in Cornwallis, NS), the Prairie Region GTS (started in 2001, at Elkhorn Ranch, MB), and the West Coast GTS (happening biennially through Camosun College, BC).

*The National Great Teachers Seminar in the Canadian Rockies* will be celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015, and is still going strong. It has fostered the professional development of hundreds of teachers.



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