**“LITTLE LIBRARIES” OF BRAZIL**

In July I was fortunate to be member of a team of

seven who traveled to Fortaleza, Brazil to visit three

“Little Libraries” created by the I. Can Foundation.

Ben and Doreen Wicks, co-founders, shared a

vision of making literacy a possibility for children

by opening Little Libraries in Brazil, the Philippines

and Lynn Lake, Manitoba. These libraries provide

safe, secure and nurturing environments that

promote literacy and develop self-esteem.

What did we take with us? We packed our

favourite stories to share, our Portuguese-English

phrase books, oodles of enthusiasm and copies of

CIRA Ontario resources donated to the three library

sites.

We learned that games are truly a universal

language enabling us to use fewer words and more

body movements to express ourselves. Games and

activities helped us to get to know each other

quickly and broke down any language barriers that

may have existed.

We decided to plan a GAMES DAY for the children

and spent time brainstorming in both Portuguese

and English…Por que Jogos? Why Games? Luke

Bendus, a student at Wilfred Laurier University,

took a leadership role as he led the discussion and

gathered the following responses.

**Games can...**

**Increase:**

• Creativity

• Responsibility

• Self-esteem

• Relaxation

• ReleaseTension

**Build:**

• Group dynamics

• Associations with new people

**Exercise:**

• The body

• The mind

…and Luke, a football player, reminded us that

we play games to have FUN!!!

We took turns sharing favourite games and found

many similarities and some enjoyable differences

in games played in Brazil and Canada. When we

evaluated the Games Day it is interesting to note

that the Brazilian teachers requested more ideas

and resources to teach and emphasize cooperation.

Small spaces and lack of resources were the daily

reality for our Brazilian friends. We marvelled as

we watched and learned how the children played,

moved and eagerly learned new games in the heat

of the sun-baked pavement.

The book that I introduced was the CIRA Ontario

publication 50 Games With 50 Tennis Balls. In one

game the children energetically worked to keep the

pail full of tennis balls, as a few us worked harder to

tossed them out. My son, Andrew, played the

Brazilian favourite, futebol /soccer with a highly

skilled group of older boys and then introduced

them to his favourite game – rugby. The boys

quickly caught onto the new passing plays he

introduced. Andrew discovered that the boys were

far more accustomed to playing on pavement than

he, after fifteen blistering minutes of running

barefoot on pavement.

I was happy to find a shady spot to introduce

sidewalk chalk games like bottle cap toss and

hopscotch. Four Square was a new game for the

children and I was glad I could leave Pat Doyle’s

excellent resource on playground games. I noticed

a child off to the side by the bucket of tennis balls,

leafing through the English book 50 Games With

50 Tennis Balls. Although he could not read the

words he was reading the photos and teaching

himself another tennis ball game. He reminded me

of a lesson I had learned in my career as a teacher –

there is always more than one teacher in the classroom.

Some times we need only to provide the books,

materials, space and time for free exploration and a

child will lead the way in her/his own learning!

Many thanks to CIRA Ontario for your donation of

resources. We know that they will become

favourites in the “Little Libraries” of Brazil. For

more information go to www.icanfoundation.ca

*Sharon Romashyna*