

BC Teachers' Federation Teacher



Nov | Dec 2018

Learning *empathy* through the human/ animal bond

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with Badger, a rescue horse
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Meet your new
bargaining team
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New funding model
for students with
special needs—
helpful or hurtful?
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This is your **MAGAZINE**

Do you enjoy writing? Have a story to tell? Know of a project at your school or in your local you want to share with colleagues?

Then consider writing for *Teacher*, the flagship publication of the BCTF! Submission guidelines can be downloaded from bctf.ca/publications/TeacherNewsmag.aspx.

We also welcome letters to the editor. Send your letter to teachermag@bctf.ca.

Teacher reserves the right to edit or condense any contribution considered for publication. We are unable to publish all letters we receive.

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BCTF arbitration win means school districts must address teacher shortages

Earlier this fall, our union won an important ruling in a provincial grievance filed almost a year ago. We alleged school boards breached the collective agreement by failing to hire enough certified teachers to meet class-size and specialist ratios language restored by the Supreme Court of Canada.

IN THIS ARBITRATION, the BCTF said that school districts did not recruit enough teachers to meet the class-size limits nor the guarantees of services from specialist teachers. As a result, when classroom teachers were absent, teacher-librarians, counsellors, special education teachers and other specialists were pulled away from their specific duties. This, we stated, was a breach of the collective agreement. The arbitrator agreed.

While the example we took to arbitration was specific to teacher-librarians in Chilliwack, the decision applies to the other non-enrolling teacher ratios: school counsellors, special education teachers, ESL teachers, and learning assistance teachers across the province. When these teachers were re-assigned to classrooms to replace classroom teachers because of the district's TTOC shortages, this meant they could not fulfill their original teaching assignment and hence, staffing ratios were jeopardized.

At the time of printing, the BCTF and BC Public Sector Employers' Association are still determining the grievance remedy. We will update members in future communications. In the meantime, school districts and the province must step up their recruitment and retention efforts.

Bargaining conference sets objectives for upcoming round of provincial negotiations

On October 26 and 27, 2018, over 300 teacher delegates representing every BCTF local met in Richmond to debate and set the Federation's provincial objectives for the upcoming round of collective bargaining. Once we get closer to the opening of talks, we will publish regular updates on the MyBCTF portal to keep members informed and engaged.

Your bargaining team has also been set and have started the big task of preparing for the first day at the table. Meet the members of your new bargaining team. They are featured on page 6 of this edition of the magazine.

Our goal is to reach a negotiated settlement that focuses on gaining ground for BC teachers and students by June 30, 2019.



La victoire en arbitrage de la FECB signifie que les conseils scolaires doivent remédier à la pénurie d'enseignant(e)s

Plus tôt cet automne, notre syndicat a remporté une importante décision dans le cadre d'un grief provincial déposé il y a près d'un an. Nous prétendions que les conseils scolaires enfreignaient la Convention collective en n'engageant pas suffisamment d'enseignant(e)s certifié(e)s pour respecter l'article restauré par la Cour Suprême du Canada concernant le nombre d'élèves dans les salles de classes et les ratios de spécialistes.

AU COURS DE CET ARBITRAGE, la FECB a déclaré que les conseils scolaires n'avaient pas recruté suffisamment d'enseignant(e)s pour respecter la taille limite des classes ni les garanties de services des enseignant(e)s spécialisé(e)s.

Bien que l'exemple cité à l'arbitrage concernait spécifiquement les enseignant(e)s-bibliothécaires de Chilliwack, la décision s'applique aux ratios des enseignant(e)s non-inscrit(e)s : conseillers/conseillères scolaires, enseignant(e)s en éducation spécialisée, enseignant(e)s d'anglais langue seconde et les enseignant(e)s d'assistance à l'apprentissage à travers la province. Lorsque ces enseignant(e)s ont été réaffecté(e)s dans les salles de classes pour compenser le manque de suppléant(e)s dans les conseils scolaires, cela signifiait qu'ils/qu'elles ne pouvaient pas remplir leur tâche d'enseignement initiale et par conséquent, cela compromettait les ratios de personnel.

Au moment de l'impression, la FECB et l'Association des employeurs du secteur public de la Colombie-Britannique s'affairent toujours à déterminer le remède découlant du grief. Nous informerons les membres lors de futures communications. Entre temps, les conseils scolaires et la province doivent intensifier leurs efforts de recrutement et de rétention.

La Conférence de négociations établit les objectifs pour la prochaine ronde de négociations provinciales

Le 26 et 27 octobre 2018, plus de 300 enseignant(e)s délégué(e)s, représentant chaque syndicat local de la FECB, se sont rencontré(e)s à Richmond pour débattre et établir les objectifs provinciaux de la Fédération pour la prochaine ronde de négociations collectives. Lorsque nous nous rapprocherons de l'ouverture des discussions, nous publierons régulièrement des mises à jour sur le portail MyBCTF pour tenir les membres informé(e)s et engagé(e)s.

Votre équipe de négociations a également été mise sur pied et a entamé l'importante tâche de se préparer pour le premier jour à la table des négociations. Rencontrez les membres de votre nouvelle équipe de négociations. Ils sont présentés à la page 6 de cette édition du magazine.

Notre but est d'arriver à un règlement négocié, visant à gagner du terrain pour les enseignant(e)s et élèves de la Colombie-Britannique, d'ici le 30 juin 2019.

Teacher on Twitter



Elizabeth May Retweeted

Fair Vote Canada BC @fairvotebc • Oct 5

"PR gives voters more choices, resulting in a legislature that reflects our desire instead of our fears. ...we can put an end to our polarized & hostile political climate, which encourages cynicism, empowers extremists, & divides us" #pr4bc



Sue Stroud @suestroud
Replying to @bctf @CindyDalglish and 5 others
I love teachers! 🍎🍏🍏

A matter of conscience

I'M RESPONDING to the article: "A matter of conscience" (Teacher, Sept/Oct 2018, p. 12) on Susan Lambert's arrest. She was arrested for violating the injunction against blocking access to an industry site and charged with criminal contempt.

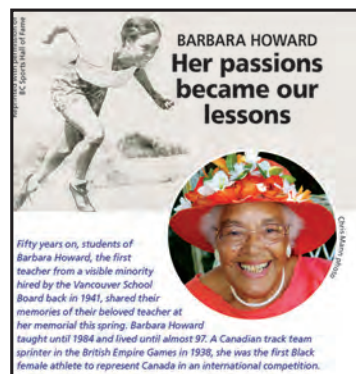
Your article glorifies this illegal act to practising teachers and is held up as model behaviour. This is a problem.

It is our job as teachers to present a balanced perspective on issues, especially topical issues on our economy and the environment. With respect to the Trans Mountain Pipeline (TMP) I expect our colleagues to present facts and bring forth points in a balanced and meaningful way. Isn't it our job to promote thoughtful discussion?

Please remember that teachers are a diverse group of dynamic, thinking, and caring individuals. The article was political and smacked of preaching to the converted—a group to which I obviously don't belong.

I really enjoyed your articles on inclusion in the same issue ("From institution to inclusion," p.9, and "Our students with special needs," p.7) and the parable explaining proportional representation versus first-past-the-post election systems ("Chocolate or vanilla?" p.21). Continue to keep your articles informative!

—**CL Chen**, New Westminster teacher



Barbara Howard Plaza

THE CITY OF VANCOUVER has honoured Barbara Howard, the first racialized person hired by the Vancouver School Board, by renaming Cambie Plaza (south side of Cambie Bridge, east off-ramp) as Barbara Howard Plaza. A former international track athlete, Howard taught for 43 years in Vancouver. Loved by her students, Howard was featured in *Teacher*, Sept/Oct 2017, p. 14.

Where is mentorship \$?

THE RETENTION and support of 3000-plus newly hired teachers in BC over the past 16 months shows the need for a comprehensive provincial mentorship plan.

Such massive reinvestment in our education system takes commitment and foresight. The NDP government has shown commitment in the form of capital infrastructure, but has shown scant foresight in building the professional capital essential to renewing our "high quality" system.

The New Teacher Mentorship Project was a successful initiative fully funded by the Ministry of Education for five years between 2012–2017 and then (ironically) cancelled just as the massive teacher hiring occurred. On a modest budget, this partnership project serviced over 40 school districts and built the structure and resources for the development of quality mentorship. The project established the framework of differentiated models of mentorship throughout the province, spanning urban, suburban, and rural regions. It built a Provincial Mentorship Resource Team that seeded the development of advisory groups for local mentorship program implementation and provided mentorship training. It is difficult to understand why this worthwhile and valued project would be denied its small source of funding at precisely the time it was and continues to be most needed.

—**Alison Davies**, former Co-ordinator, New Teacher Mentorship Project

Wellness write-ups, please

I RELY ON *Teacher* magazine to deliver thoughtful, insightful wellness strategies. I discuss and distribute current wellness plans to staff reps at every monthly union meeting. There were no wellness articles for me to copy and distribute in the Sept/October 2018 issue. Wellness programs like Starling Minds are important for every teacher to know about, especially our new teachers. Please include wellness in every issue, thank you!

—**Linda Rummel**, Wellness Chair SD28

Editor's note: Thanks, Linda for your suggestion. I invite readers to send us their stories and articles about wellness. Readers will find an article about Starling Minds on p. 21 of this issue.



The teacher's kid It's not what you think...

By Leah Kelley, Chilliwack teacher and Doctoral Candidate,
Faculty of Education, SFU

I had the opportunity this evening to have a discussion with a colleague, a teacher who is also the parent of a five-year-old autistic son.

AS WE TALKED, this teacher commented, "It is great that you are a teacher—I'll bet you've been able to be a great advocate for your son within the school system. Our kids are fortunate."

And I suppose this is true in many respects: my understanding of the system has supported us in navigating it in varying degrees and I recognize this is an advantage.

But that is not how I responded.

I might have caught him off-guard when I said, "No, my son has benefitted much more from me being a social justice activist. It is ACTIVISM that has made the difference. Our autistic, neurodivergent, and otherwise disabled children need us to show them how to be activists so that they can advocate for themselves."

I hadn't really considered it before but as I listened to my own words, I knew they held truth for me.

As educators and parents, we want to ensure our children with disabilities know, understand, and feel pride in who they are. When they know themselves deeply and with respect, it is then that they can reject the message that they must conform to be okay, accepted, valued, or to belong.

H turned 19 today and I look forward with excitement and pride at this fabulous autistic and otherwise neurodivergent young man, who now towers above me.

I cannot help but look back and see that raising my son to feel comfortable with who he is, and to understand that he can push back against injustice and discrimination and ableism is one of the most powerful things I have offered as a parent.

As H's childhood recedes, I am a little surprised that I feel no sadness or melancholy as I think back upon this journey.

How can I feel melancholy when I observe this spectacular human's sense of self that makes him comfortable in advocating for what he might need—or not need—or need in a different way. Along with this confidence, he has developed a sensitivity to extend his understanding beyond himself. He understands that he experiences both privilege and oppression and how his experience of being disabled intersects with the lives and stories of other people who face discrimination or exclusion or injustice. I see him pushing back against oppression—even when it is not about him. It is beautiful... ■

“Our autistic, neurodivergent, and otherwise disabled children need us to show them how to be activists so that they can advocate for themselves.”

Photos top, L to R: H and his father at a rally supporting public education in Vancouver in 2002.

H looking at a Margaret Mead quote that has been painted on an old building.

Below: H at the Vancouver Autistic Self Advocacy Network (Now Autistics United Canada) protest against Autism Speaks in September 2014.

Photos submitted by author.

Meet your 2018–19 bargaining team

By Susan Croll, Teacher editor



Delegates met their new bargaining team at the BCTF Bargaining Conference held in Richmond on October 26 and 27. Now it's your turn.

THE BARGAINING TEAM is responsible for negotiating provincial language, on your behalf, with the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA). Bargaining has not yet started but delegates at the conference adopted bargaining objectives. Because of the confidential nature of bargaining, the BCTF will communicate with members via bargaining bulletins, which will be placed in the BCTF portal.

Not sure how to access the portal? Email portal@bctf.ca for assistance.

1 Mike Ball is a Grade 7 teacher in Nanaimo with lots of union experience. He spent four years as Local President, one year as Vice-President, and was on the BCTF Executive Committee. He describes returning to the classroom last year both delightful and challenging. After the lengthy strike in

2014 he thought long and hard about this upcoming round of bargaining and decided to get involved. When Mike gets involved in something he throws himself into it wholeheartedly.

2 Gabriel Bureau is a member of the Prince Rupert District Teachers' Union, Local 52. He teaches social studies in both English and French to students in Grades 9–12. He's an activist with 25 years of union experience, including his term on the 2011–12 BCTF bargaining team. He loves the beauty of the North Coast and is involved with his school's outdoor club.

3 Cindy Gleb has taught for 35 years in several communities in the Elk Valley, even teaching in a one-room school. Her experience ranges from teaching young students in Kindergarten and older students in Grade 10. Besides her activism in her local

and the BCTF, she was a member of the last BCTF bargaining team. She lives by a lovely little lake, which is perfect for kayaking and her stand-up paddleboard.

4 Starleigh Grass is the BCTF staff member assigned to work with the bargaining team. In her role as Assistant Director of Bargaining and Collective Agreement Implementation in the Field Services Division she co-ordinates the bargaining team's work. She's taught in Lytton and Lillooet as a classroom teacher and district Aboriginal resource teacher. During the summer she loves to play a traditional and 10,000-year-old game called slahal, passed down by her Tsilhqot'in ancestors.

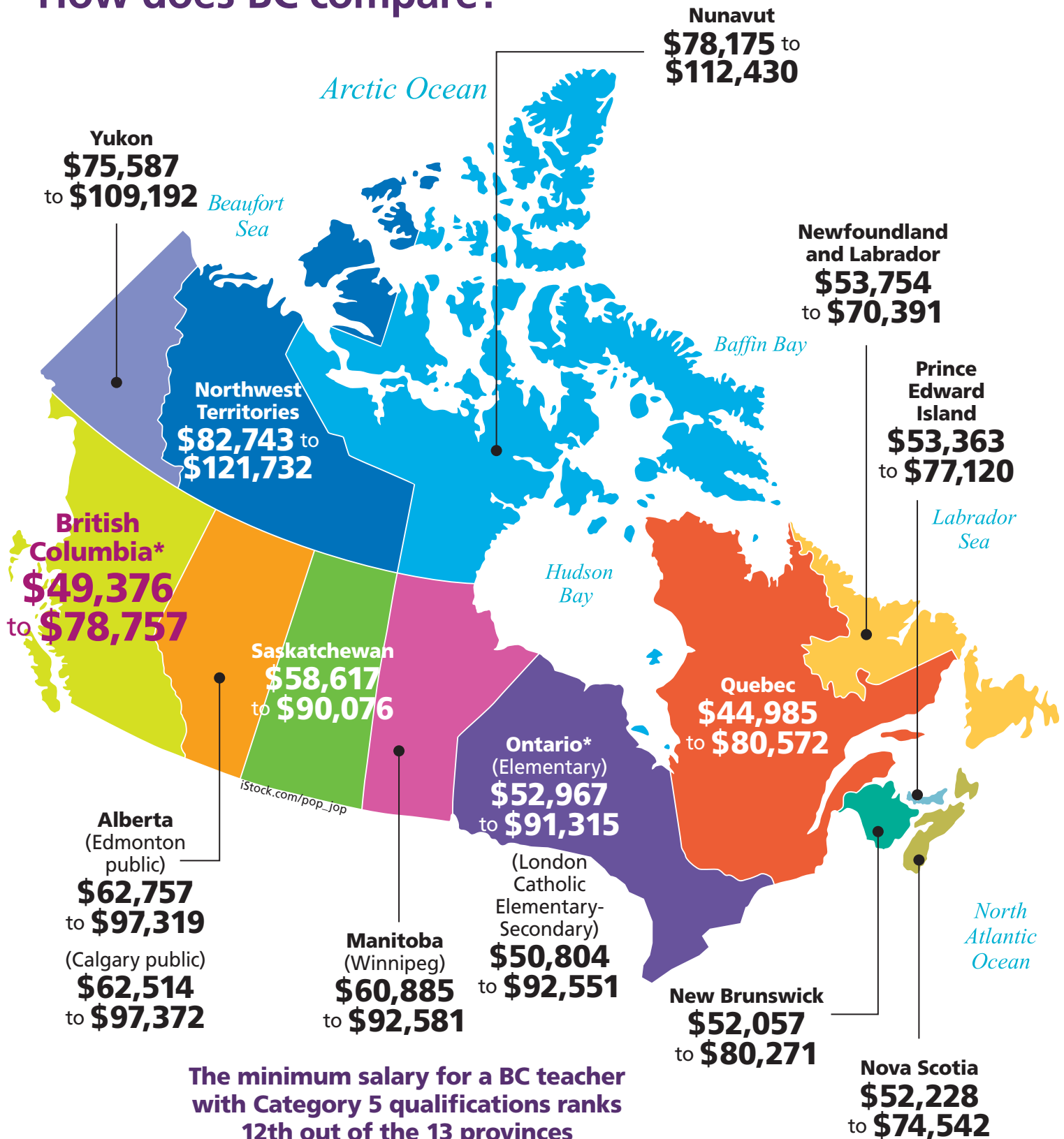
5 Lisa Kishkan teaches Grade 2–3 students at a dual track French immersion/English school in Quesnel. She loves the joy of working with children. Serving as Local President for five years, she participated in local bargaining and oversaw the implementation of restored language in her local. She's an avid gardener who finds that gardening helps bring balance in her life.

6 Teri Mooring is First Vice-President of the BCTF. She's a long-time union activist who taught in Quesnel for 20 years, before her election as a Full-Time Table Officer nearly six years ago. Teri loves the bargaining process and as a table officer was involved in the last round of bargaining, particularly near the end of bargaining, when the BCTF secured its deal. She's passionate about yoga, and invested in her granddaughters having good school experiences.

7 Jody Polukoshko lives in East Vancouver and is a member of the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association. An activist at heart, she's a member the BCTF Executive Committee, has negotiated four local agreements and two adult education agreements. She loves the process of teaching. Her multi-aged students practise democratic decision-making in the classroom and even use Robert's Rules of Order. She enjoys solo tent camping with her dogs and playing board games. ■

Teacher salaries across Canada

How does BC compare?



*Weighted average

—BCTF Research; Source: salary data from collective agreements as of April 2018.

A day in the life of a *primary* learning support teacher

By Dennis Mousseau, teacher, Qualicum

"So, what does a learning support teacher do all day anyhow?"

AS A LEARNING SUPPORT teacher working in a K–7 school in a rural area of Vancouver Island, I am happy to try and answer that question. Here is a day in my life:

8:00–9:00 a.m. An educational assistant (EA) is sick and not replaced so I adjust the EA schedule to ensure coverage for students who need one-to-one support. I meet with a parent in the hallway who wants more technology, more EA support, and more adaptations for her son. I then log students onto computers for an online reading group.

9:00–9:30 a.m. Online reading. Some students work with the Read Naturally program, while others use reading games on *education.com*.

9:30–10:30 a.m. Every day I work with six Grade 7 math students who need extra assistance. Today we are adding fractions and changing improper fractions into mixed numbers. I can't fit all the students into my office, so I split them between my office and the speech and language pathologist's office as they are only at our school two days a week. I go back and forth between rooms.

10:30–10:50 a.m. I am on recess duty today. An EA approaches me and tells me how stressful it is to get hit and yelled at every day by a student she works with.

10:50–11:05 a.m. I relieve another EA for her break as the EA who is absent today isn't here to do that.

11:05–11:10 a.m. I remove a student who is acting aggressively from their classroom. I tell them we can go play Lego. I'm thinking about a recent Pro-D day and bowling pins while I do this.

11:15–11:45 a.m. The student plays Lego while I help two Grade 6 students with their math.

11:45 a.m.–12:15 p.m. I take the student back to their class now that they are calm. I stand next to them for a while, and all seems good. I know that I will be back, if not later this afternoon, tomorrow.

12:15–1:00 p.m. I get changed when the lunch bell rings and meet the cross country run team in the front foyer. We cross the street, warm-up, and I run four kilometers with the fastest students. At 12:55 I am back in the staff room. I say hello to some of the other teachers and a Kindergarten teacher tells me how she needs more EA support in her class.

1:00–1:20 p.m. I hand out lunches to students who don't have any and then quickly get changed out of my running clothes.

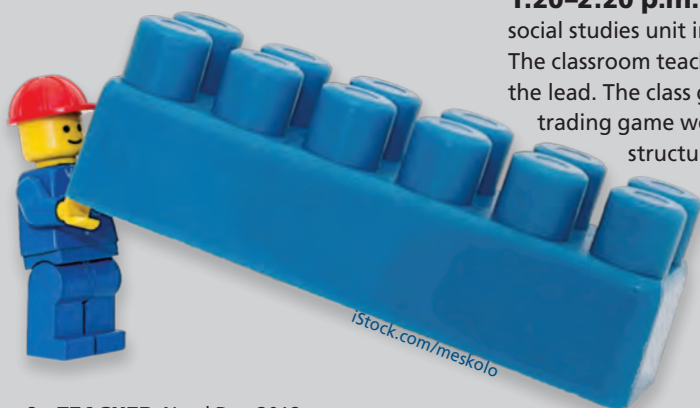
1:20–2:20 p.m. I am co-teaching a social studies unit in a Grade 4–5 class. The classroom teacher is absent, so I take the lead. The class goes well, except the trading game we designed is too loosely structured for total success. Still, fun to be with a whole class for a change of pace.

2:20–2:55 p.m. I have this time booked in the gym. I gather up my students; they range from Grade 2 to Grade 6. At first, I am too exhausted to think of anything to play, so I just let them drive around on plasma cars for ten minutes. For the last ten minutes, we play zombie tag, which they like. Three of the students protest repeatedly about not wanting to go home at the end of the day, as is usual.

2:55–4:00 p.m. I go outside with the students as is the tradition at our school and watch them get onto the bus. I sit on a bench for a minute to gather my thoughts when a young student starts screaming. They are standing by the door so my first instinct is that they have caught their fingers in the door, however this is not the case. Their true frustration is that they have forgotten to change their shoes. Their classroom teacher quickly rushes to them, brings them inside, and they are back outside getting on the bus in minutes.

After the buses leave, the classroom teacher and I discuss this student's plan and their EA coverage for about an hour. We then meet with a member of the admin team to discuss some concerns and come up with a plan. Everyone leaves satisfied, but experience tells me the plan may not get acted upon.

I look at my watch, start running through a list of all the things I didn't do today, then realize I need to go pick up my five-year-old son from his school. ■





A day in the life of a *secondary* learning support teacher

By Sylvia Metzner, teacher, Vancouver

I am at the latter end of my teaching career with many years of experience in special education. I enjoy teaching in special education—you could say it's my calling. When I saw my current assignment posted two years ago, I couldn't contain my excitement. Imagine having the opportunity to support students and staff in achieving true inclusion for a diverse group of secondary school learners with low incidence designations. I saw it as my chance to put supports into place and to achieve inclusion in its broader sense.

WHILE TEACHERS have made great strides in adopting strategies to accommodate diverse learners with academic challenges in their classrooms, we are now striving to move to a more inclusive environment—one where students are visible and present throughout the school. John O'Brien, an American advocate for person-centred planning for individuals with disabilities, identifies five key quality of life indicators: presence, choice, competence, respect, and inclusion. When applied to inclusion they need to reflect the values of the student and their families, looking at what needs to be put in place, and how to move toward those goals.

The job as defined on paper!

The role of a secondary school resource teacher looks different from our counterparts in elementary schools. We generally work in isolation. Our work ranges from:

- ▶ teaching specific strategies for self-regulation
- ▶ providing access to separate settings for extra learning time
- ▶ arranging for laptops to help students who struggle with writing
- ▶ consulting with teachers to implement accommodations
- ▶ meeting with individual and groups of teachers to navigate the distinctions between adaptation and modification within the new assessment model
- ▶ monitoring student success and maintaining communication with families
- ▶ organizing Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and then writing and distributing IEPs.

The reality: Set a plan but expect daily triage

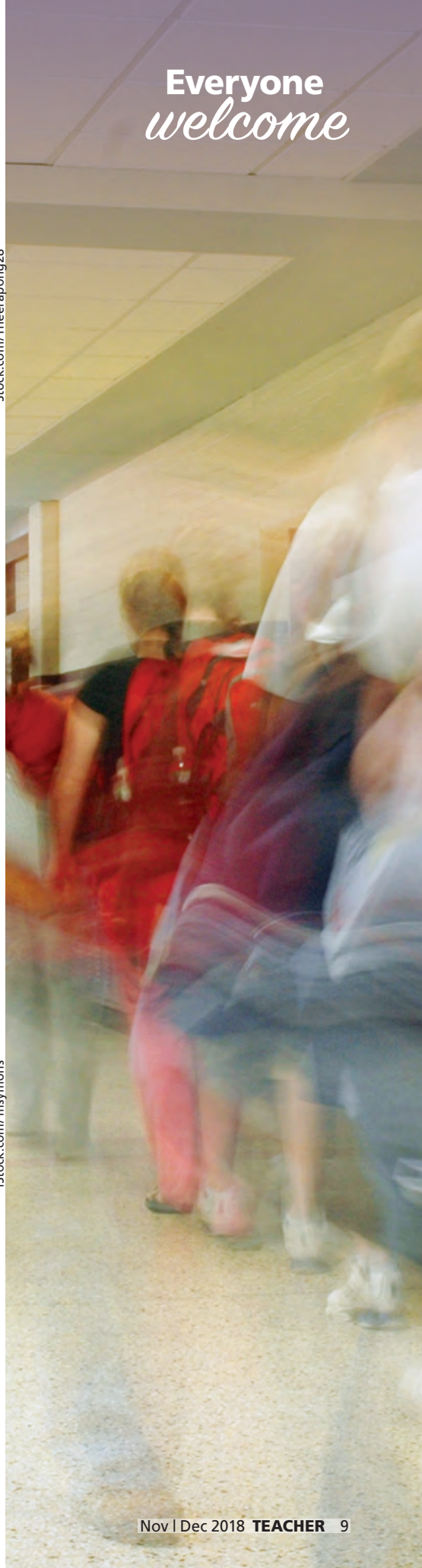
Secondary support teachers begin each day with a plan of what we hope to accomplish, but the plan usually disappears in the wake of a crisis. We address student support worker coverage and reassign shifts. We assist a student who's arrived "dis-regulated" and needs immediate attention before going to classes. But our yearly cycle of paperwork and expectations remain. Deadlines loom for data collection reporting in September. October brings IEP meetings and the writing that follows. In November and December we monitor and follow up with students. Generally, we provide support during skills block as it is too difficult for students to keep pace with their classes if pulled out. Besides, no secondary-level student wants to stand out as different from their peers. January brings the start of the articulation process and program recommendations. In February and March we focus on student progress and then back to articulation through school visits in April. In May and June, we're back to adjudication needs, IEP reviews, and the final push to support students.

I find the work rewarding, but tough with limited resources. I always want to do more, yet barriers like limited funding and time get in the way. Students need more specialized supports from both the school board and community health. Trying to create space to include all students is also difficult because of the structure of classes in secondary. But at the end of each day, term, and year, nothing replaces the joy of watching and supporting students progress and mature—especially over five years of secondary school. ■

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welcome

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MY INCLUSION ABC'S

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ALL
MEANS
ALL



BEHAVIOUR IS
COMMUNICATION



CHOICE

BE A BEHAVIOUR
DETECTIVE



EVERYONE
STARTS
TOGETHER



FAIR MEANS EVERYONE
GETTING THEIR NEEDS MET



HONOURING
CHILD



GROWTH
MINDSET



INDEPENDENCE



JOYFUL
LEARNING



KIDS DO WELL
IF THEY CAN



LEAD WITH
STRENGTHS



OPEN
MINDEDNESS



MOVEMENT
BREAKS



NEEDS
BASED



PLAN &
PURPOSE



QUESTION UNEXPECTED
BEHAVIOUR
WHY? WHY NOW?



RELATIONSHIP



SELF
REGULATION



TASSISTIVE
TECHNOLOGY



UNCONDITIONAL
POSITIVE REGARD



VISUALS



WORDS MAKE **W**ORLDS

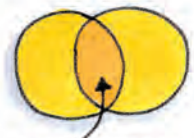


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ZONE OF PROXIMAL
DEVELOPMENT

Kristin Wiens is the Special Education Curriculum Co-ordinator at School District 62 in Victoria.
For more information on Kristin's visual work, see northstarchpaths.com. ■

Get to know LATA

A specialist association for learning assistance teachers

iStock.com/FatCamera

By Susan Croll, Teacher editor

For many years, the Learning Assistance Teachers Association (LATA) provincial specialist association (PSA) has worked with BC teachers to better understand and teach students who need extra help learning.

DENNIS MOUSSEAU, recently elected President of LATA, reports that about 300 teachers are members of the PSA. When he graduated from UBC in 2010, he wanted to become a social studies teacher, but like many other teachers found himself in an assignment completely different from what he intended. And he got involved in LATA.

LATA's marquis event is their annual conference in October on the provincial professional development day. Their keynote speaker this year was Rick Moore, the father of a student with learning disabilities. In 2012, Moore took the North Vancouver School District to court for failing to provide his son with proper assistance. The Supreme Court Justices ruled that students with disabilities are entitled to receive the accommodation measures they need for learning. They also declared that adequate special education is not "a dispensable luxury."

Like other PSAs, LATA offers members activities and resources. Last year, they hosted a book club, offered scholarships to members, attended the BCTF Summer Leadership Conference, facilitated a workshop at the New Teachers' Conference, emailed research updates to members, and answered many questions they received from teachers. They also advise both the BCTF and the Ministry of Education on policy and practice.

Some people wonder why there are two PSAs that deal with inclusion. Teachers for Inclusive Education (TIE-BC), which was featured in the September/October edition of *Teacher*, also supports teachers working in special education. Dennis says that LATA tends to focus on learning disabilities and how to give students the extra boost they need.

Regardless of students' needs, Dennis reiterates what teachers everywhere are saying. Teachers need better supports and resources for their students. "It doesn't

matter if labels or semantics change, things on the ground won't change. Students will still need that extra support in order to learn."

He also says that the impact of the BCTF court case win restoring stripped language has varied across the province. "Some teachers say their caseloads have decreased, which allows them more time to work with students. Other teachers' experiences are opposite. Their caseloads are greater, which doesn't benefit individual students."

LATA is considering conducting a survey of learning assistance/resource teachers to get a clearer picture of what is happening province wide.

Dennis and LATA welcome new members. "It doesn't matter what your title is: learning assistance, resource, special ed, or support teacher. We all have the same goal and that is to help our students in the best and greatest ways possible."

Please visit the LATA website latabc.weebly.com for more information, resources, and research. You can also find information on how to form your own local LATA chapter. ■



Danger! Government considering new funding model

A disaster for kids with special needs?

*By Glen Hansman, BCTF President
and Michal Rozworski, BCTF staff*

Imagine it's September. You have a new class and you have little information about any of your students and their learning needs. Your administrator says not to worry because not having information will give you the chance to get to know your students without any judgment or preconceptions. You wonder about class composition and are told that doesn't matter since students are no longer labelled. You ask about supports and resources and how you will know what's needed for your students. You receive a smile and a shrug. That's what you get for trying to do your job, you find out.

NOW YOU ARE really worried. In fact, alarmed. Something twigs your memory and you remember that Kindergarten and early primary teachers have raised similar concerns for years. They teach young students who come to school with particular needs, but without any prior assessments. The dearth of learning plans, long waiting lists for assessment, and lack of meaningful supports can be overwhelming and counter-productive—for both teachers and students.

Such a move for the whole K-12 system looks like it's in the works.

The idea of decategorizing students' identified needs has been part of educational discourse for many years. However, now a new funding model could help make it a reality. And it could turn out to be a funding model that your union strongly disagrees with.

New model might break the link between funding and identified needs

Last year, the Ministry of Education announced a funding model review and appointed an independent panel to develop a new funding formula.



The public have yet to see the panel's recommendations, despite them being delivered to government before the end of last school year. In March 2018, however, the panel released a preliminary document called the *Funding Model Review Discussion Paper*. While this paper discusses several items pertaining to education funding, the section on special education funding is especially problematic and troubling.

Here's why.

Some are lobbying to decouple funding and special needs. They declare that linkages to collective agreement language are out of date. In other words, your class-composition language is a barrier to their agenda. Does this ring a bell? Think 2002.

They also say that designations or diagnoses can create expectations for services that aren't necessarily required to meet students' learning needs—or that they create paperwork judged to be unnecessary. They argue that because spending for students with special needs is already greater than what government funds, because there aren't enough specialist teachers, and because some parents do not want their children labelled, a new funding model is in order.

What's predictive or prevalence funding?

The panel is considering funding allocated via predictive, statistical modelling based on population-wide prevalence rates instead. Such a model already exists in some provinces. For example, in Ontario, a large part of special education funding is distributed according to a "black box" statistical model that takes older provincial prevalence rates and tries to guess how many children in a given district will have special needs, based on chosen demographic information such as family income.

Don't let the word "predictive" fool you. From a policy-making perspective, predictive funding creates new pressures and inequities. It doesn't mean meeting students' needs.

- ▶ In the current system, identification plays a key role in special education funding in classrooms and schools, despite funding ultimately not

following the student. Under a predictive system, no link exists between students and funds. Greater pressure to ration funds results. No targeted funding means kids lose out and teachers burn out.

- ▶ Depending on how good the predictive model is, some districts will win, others will lose relative to their actual needs.
- ▶ A lot of identification will stop. If districts don't need to identify students to get funding, then parents with the means to get identifications will do so. It's possible their children will get services and others will not, perpetuating further inequities.
- ▶ We know teachers are already incredible advocates for getting services and supports for their students with special needs, but they will have to become even greater advocates.

Ontario and Nova Scotia already use statistical modelling to allocate funding for inclusive education. Economist Hugh Mackenzie summarizes major concerns in a report to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario:

"The breaking of the link between funding and needs has had profound implications for students, parents, teachers, and special education administrators. For students and parents there is no longer a link between needs and funding that can serve as a guide to available services. For teachers, there is no longer any link between special education needs identified in a classroom setting and additional resources to address those needs. The role of special education administrators has been transformed from one of enabling access to needed services to a gatekeeping role of rationing scarce resources and cost containment."

One more problem we can't ignore

Government may choose to go ahead and announce a new funding model in February. Not consulting the education community, including teachers and parents, in a full and in-depth discussion concerning implications and impacts is a grave mistake.

There is also the question of timing, especially when we're about to enter bargaining. We certainly hope this is an oversight and not a bargaining strategy.

BCTF funding recommendations for successful inclusion

Based on feedback from teachers and their provincial specialist associations, Local Presidents, Local Representatives, and AGM delegates, the BCTF has submitted a brief on education funding to the provincial government in advance of the 2019 provincial budget.

Here are our recommendations on inclusion and special education:

- ▶ That the Ministry of Education align special education funding with special education needs, closing the current gap between what school districts receive in special education funding and the much greater amount they spend on special education, including dedicated funding for professional learning for teachers.
- ▶ That the Ministry of Education provide targeted funding to support the early identification and designation of students with special needs, particularly in the K–1 years.
- ▶ That the Ministry of Education introduce per-student funding amounts for high incidence designations into the funding formula, including children with learning disabilities and those requiring moderate behaviour support.

What can you do?

Talk to parents, administrators and your colleagues with your concerns.

Contact your MLA and school trustees about the new funding model.

Get involved in bargaining support in your local.

For more information on this topic, please read the BCTF Education Funding Brief (October 2018) at bctf.ca/2018EdFundingBrief/.

BCTF research reports are found at bctf.ca/research.aspx.

K–12 Public Education Funding Model Review www2.gov.bc.ca. ■

Chilliwack Teachers' Association

By Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF staff

iStock.com/KarenMassier

Life in Local #33

Nestled in the fertile farmlands of the Fraser Valley, Chilliwack is famous for the sweetness of its corn and the bitterness of the struggle for control of its school board. No contest garnered more headlines in the October 20 trustee elections than that in School District 33, where a slate of anti-SOGI candidates were running to take control of the board.

FOR OVER A YEAR, controversy sparked by trustee Barry Neufeld's comments opposing SOGI 123 resources divided the community, revealing disturbing levels of homophobia and transphobia. Concerned community members stepped up in defence of LGBTQ rights. They wrote letters to editors and to MLAs, and they rallied at the school board office with colourful messages of inclusion, love, and pride.

Despite this exuberant support, tensions grew. The Chilliwack Teachers' Association (CTA) and CUPE local 411, representing support staff, both filed human rights complaints against Neufeld. For the first time ever, the CTA endorsed trustee candidates and got active in the campaign. One day before the election, Neufeld filed a civil suit for defamation against BCTF President Glen Hansman.

On election day, the CTA folks had mixed feelings: a majority of progressive trustees had been elected, but so had three anti-SOGI 123 trustees. "We are hopeful that the new board will be able to move forward and focus on all the important issues," said CTA President Ed Klettke.

While SOGI is the most high-profile issue, it is by no means the only one the CTA is facing. As families flee astronomical housing prices in the Lower Mainland, enrolment in Chilliwack is increasing by about 350 students annually. "We've been growing by the equivalent of one small elementary school a year over the last five or six years," Ed says.

The recent announcement by Education Minister Rob Fleming of \$48.6 million for a new K-8 school for 930 students was welcome news indeed. Unfortunately,

school construction is not keeping up with population growth. With 93 portables, Chilliwack has the highest per-capita use of portables in BC.

In a misguided effort to assuage the overcrowding problem, the district reconfigured its 29 schools so that elementary schools now serve K-5, middle schools Grades 6-8, and secondary schools Grades 9-12. Unfortunately, rather than solving overcrowding, reconfiguration merely shifted the problem from the elementary to secondary level. Enrolment at Chilliwack Secondary rose by 500 students in a single year.

The employer's disrespectful response to the BCTF win at the Supreme Court of Canada also posed challenges. Chilliwack had decent class-size and composition language, but the school district did not hire enough TTCs to meet the restored class-size and specialist ratios. As a result, students are losing much-needed support when teacher-librarians and other specialists are pulled away to cover in classrooms.

The BCTF and the CTA filed a provincial grievance alleging the district breached the collective agreement through its "failure to fill" the required positions. On October 11, 2018, Arbitrator Jennifer Glougie ruled in favour of the Chilliwack teachers, in a decision that will have positive implications province-wide. (For more info, see President's message, page 3.)

Education for reconciliation is another important goal. Chilliwack is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Stó:lō, "the people of the river," who have inhabited this land for 10,000 years.

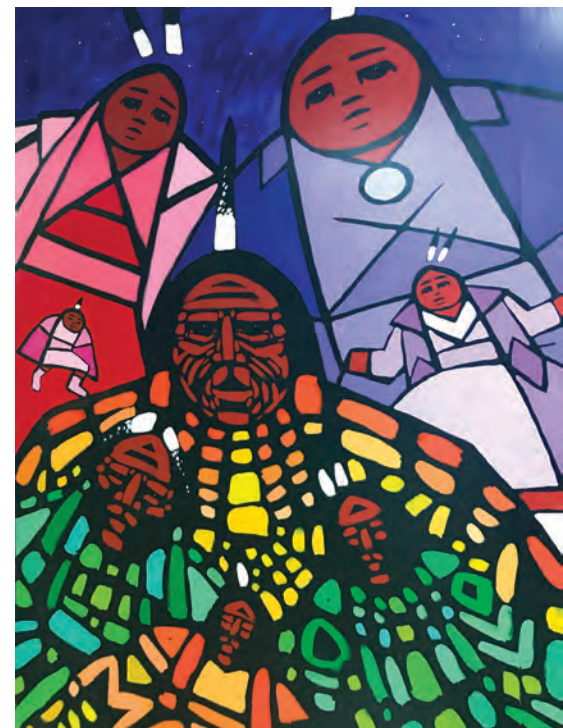
Today, about 20% of students in SD 33 identify as Aboriginal.

At McCammon Traditional Elementary School, adjacent to Skwah First Nation, "Everyone is really working hard to decolonize our education system," said CTA Second Vice-President Reid Clark, who taught at McCammon before going into the local office.

On a lunch hour visit, teachers spoke of the constant interplay between classroom and home, with teachers, parents, and Elders all co-operating to enrich programs. Students participate in drumming circles, learn beading, study their Halq'eméylem language, and enthusiastically participate in the annual "canoe pull" on nearby Hope Slough.

"Canoeing is a huge part of the culture, so every year we load them into the war canoes and they get their butts wet and they love it," said Clark. "It leaves unforgettable memories. It's what the kids talk about when they graduate from high school."

Below: Art by Jerry Whitehead at McCammon Traditional Elementary School.





Above: CTA table officers L to R: Reid Clark, Dannielle Bennett, and Ed Klettke.

Local President Ed Klettke

AS THE YOUNGEST in his family, little Eddie Klettke watched enviously as one by one his elder siblings trekked off to David Lloyd George Elementary School in southeast Vancouver. "I was aching to get to school. I loved it from the very first day."

Ed always knew he wanted to teach, but in Grade 8 he had "a transformative teacher" named James Nakamoto for math, and that's when he knew exactly what kind of teacher he wanted to be. He enrolled in the B.Ed. program at UBC and graduated in 1984 top of his class, a spot that earned him the Maxwell Cameron Award, given by the BC Teachers' Federation. And thus began Ed's career in the classroom as well as his engagement with the union.

Now, 35 years later, he's president of a local at the centre of the hottest issue in the October 20 trustee elections, a BC human rights complaint, a provincial grievance, and much more!

First Vice-President Danielle Bennett

Danielle knew early on that she wanted to teach, achieving her goal by age 21. She began teaching Kindergarten in Prince George but finally settled in Chilliwack. With kids in Grade 9 and Grade 12, Danielle supports public education both as a teacher and as a parent. Daughter of "a union family all the way," she says her work "is all about supporting colleagues and ensuring their rights are protected."

Second Vice-President Reid Clark

Unlike his fellow CTA officers, Reid struggled academically because of personal issues in adolescence. After graduation he followed his passion and became a chef, but hung up his apron after too many shifts lasting until 4:00 a.m. He enrolled in Douglas College, then SFU, and became the third generation of his family to embrace teaching. Grandma May Babish was in the first class of SFU's Professional Development Program, and mom Dale Clark retired last year from the Burnaby School District. His dad Glen Clark is a former premier of BC.



Above: Lucas (on right), in action with schoolmates in the Gaga pit.

Nancy Knickerbocker photos except where noted.

Empathy on wheels: Students learn lessons in equity

LOCATED IN RURAL west Chilliwack, Greendale Elementary is a tiny wee school with a great big heart.

Three years ago, a student named Lucas was critically injured in a farm accident that left him paralyzed. He spent much of Grade 2 in Children's Hospital and when he returned to school, the teachers were apprehensive. "How are we going to make it work for him?" they wondered.

Fortunately, his Grade 3 teacher Tammy McKinley heard about a non-profit organization that lends wheelchairs so that able-bodied youngsters can better understand the challenges facing kids like Lucas. Now the school has eight wheelchairs in different sizes that students take turns using, both indoors and out.

Members of the community raised thousands of dollars to help renovate the family home and the school playground to be wheelchair accessible. They laid down gravel pathways across bark mulch to the special "Gaga pit," an enclosure for playing a wheelchair version of dodge ball. With their chairs skillfully swiveling and dodging on the soft rubber flooring, Lucas and friends enthusiastically bashed away at the ball, despite the pouring rain.

Lucas's participation on school teams is leading Greendale students and staff to a new concept of sportsmanship. "We ask: How we can make it fair for Lucas?" Tammy says. Now, when they play basketball

against another school, they bring a second wheelchair. Whoever on the opposing team checking Lucas must also use a chair. Similarly, they bring four racing chairs to track meets so that Lucas can compete equally with other boys.

In September, Lucas's mom wrote to the school staff describing how, over the summer, kids who recognized her son from sports came up to greet him and often wanted to linger, talking to him. "This is the acceptance, inclusion—everything that we are trying to teach, and it is happening! Every time it made my heart want to explode. All I could think is the world and my kid are gonna be all right! Thank goodness for these kids! So, teachers and organizers—thank you! You are doing an amazing job!"

Grade 5 teacher Dale Hoepfner says Greendale will miss Lucas when he moves on to middle school next year. The teachers worry that, without him, their students will miss this extraordinary opportunity to participate in empathy on wheels. "You'd hate to lose that culture of acceptance," Dale says.

Tammy agrees: "Yes, I was Lucas's teacher, but he taught me more about life than I could ever have taught him. He's an amazing little boy." ■

Farm program helps kids build empathy and compassion

By Susan Croll, Teacher editor

Once a week, for eight weeks, children attending a South Surrey rescue animal program, clamber into a minivan along with Murphy, a frolicking and friendly golden retriever. At the end of a long dirt driveway, framed by majestic oak and cedar trees, the minivan parks at a little farm with a bright red barn, home to injured horses, cows, goats, and other animals in need of tender loving care.

BUT SALI, or the Semiahmoo Animal League Incorporated, was created not to just nurture injured animals, but to nurture children too—kids who also need tender loving care. And at SALI, they believe nurturing kids helps kids develop empathy and compassion.

Located in rural South Surrey, SALI partners with the Surrey School District and many of the children who participate in SALI's program are Surrey students. Bela Kovach, a social development teacher at Holly Elementary School in North Surrey, has participated in the program for the past three years.

She explains that as a social development teacher, she works with 7- to 13-year-old students, helping them to manage their emotions and learn social and friendship skills. Along with the principal, classroom teachers, childcare worker, and learning support teacher, they aim to provide wrap-around services for students who need that extra support. It's this team that chooses the children for the SALI program.

Chris Mayworm, a registered clinical counsellor, runs the program at SALI. Experienced in animal-assisted therapy, she organizes SALI programs and schedules, including recruiting and training volunteers, planning farm activities, and co-ordinating with agencies like the Surrey School District.

She explains that SALI wants to provide therapeutic benefit. "We attend to the individual child. We want them to learn non-violent problem-solving and value compassion and empathy. "Working with animals and nature can help children build empathy. We show the children how to return to their senses and be around animals. We encourage them to ask themselves 'What does it look like, what does it feel like, sound like?' It's

about being present, taking a breath, asking yourself, 'What's your plan?' and putting your thoughts away in your suitcase. That's one way to learn about the animals and to get to know their defence mechanisms, which all animals have."

Not only do kids form relationships and build trust with animals, they become friends with volunteer "buddies" too. Chris and Bela cannot overemphasize how important the buddies are to the program. They say it goes back to attending to the individual and the desire for therapeutic benefit for the children. "The volunteer buddies are deeply committed kind adults who give the kids that extra TLC," says Bela.

She points out participating at SALI is also about making a commitment. "We cherish the time we will be at SALI and try not to schedule any other school activities then. At SALI, the children learn to take care of the land, the farm, the animals, and community. And that takes time. Also, many of our students live in apartments so spending time on a farm is special. Andrew Shuk, our school administrator, supports the program too and that is helpful."

But even before the kids get into the minivan for their first visit, the teaching begins. Bela prepares the children and they discuss what's expected—and unexpected—when around animals, at the farm, with their buddies, or even riding in the minivan.

I would fix the horse problem by giving Secret some time with the other two then some time alone to process. I would tell Secret to spend some time with others but to give them some time together too. I would tell Chase that he would have some time to talk to Secret alone about what he is feeling.

Photos by Susan Croll, unless noted.

She sees the ride in the van as an opportunity for the kids to practise their social and friendship skills. "We don't bring cell phones, iPads, or any other technology in the van. Instead we play games like I Spy and Twenty Questions. Or we'll just look at the scenery. Some students want quiet time, so we bring along books and magazines."

During the first visit, all the buddies and children meet one another as a group. They check out the farm, are introduced to the animals, and inspect the gardens. Chris says that it's uncanny how children and buddies gravitate toward one another. It isn't until the second visit that they pair up and the journey is well on its way.

The program has its routines and expectations. Each visit begins with an opening circle and afterward each child and their buddy tackle their jobs together. Some work involves keeping the barns and animal houses clean. Chris laughs, saying that means dealing with manure. "They have to sweep out the stalls and the goat house, make goat beds, prepare salad for the rabbits, brush the horses, lay hay nets for the horses, and shovel sawdust."

After animal care, they prepare beds, plant pumpkins, squash, and other vegetables. She explains that the children who plant in the spring do not reap the benefits of the harvest. "Another group of children will pick the vegetables. We teach the children that it's paying it forward."

If they finish their jobs early, they can focus on their interests, sitting quietly in the forest, collecting bugs for the chickens, visiting a favourite animal friend, or flopping down on a bale of hay.

Before they return to the minivan for the trip back to school, they share a snack around the big wooden table in the kitchen, and then participate in a closing circle to honour the work they've completed, the animals, themselves, and the SALI community.

All the routines and activities are purposeful and respectful of the children, the animals, the land, and the community. Bela says the kids love coming to the SALI farm. "They're always talking about the animals and they have stories they tell their parents and that is good for everyone."

Bela also believes that for relationships to succeed they must be reciprocal. She and the children invite Chris and their SALI buddies to breakfast at their school once the program is complete. The breakfast is one way to say thank you, and to give back."

Bela also says she is always struck by the kindness of the volunteers. "They are really there for the kids. They're compassionate and empathetic and give the kids that extra TLC. I love SALI. It allows me to establish a stronger relationship with my students. That's huge."

Volunteers keep the farm thriving

Terry Pratt, a retired Surrey teacher, is one of over 100 SALI volunteers, who take care of the animals, buddy with the children, participate in work parties, keep the garden growing, or serve on the board of directors. She says that volunteers put in long hours, not only because they love the work, but because Keryn Denroche, the founder of the farm, and Chris Mayworm treat everyone like a family member. "It is clear to me that the essence of SALI is compassion and connections. Connection to and compassion for the children, the animals, the volunteers, the community, and nature," she says.

Terry has always believed in the capacity of animals to help children,



SALI Farm Program Director Christine Mayworm, M.S., RCC, with Louise, a kind and gentle rooster.

especially children considered at risk, to develop empathy and compassion. She used to bring her golden retriever, who was trained in animal assistance to her school. Volunteering at SALI is a logical and passionate next step for her. At SALI, "I have seen profound changes happen in the animal and child as unconditional love begins to grow between the two of them."

Visit www.sali.ca for more information about the program and to meet some of the animals currently being cared for. ■



Left to right: SALI best buddy goats Barney and Clyde; a student applies his problem-solving skills to SALI animal relations; Peanut, a resident SALI Highland/Angus cow.

Above: a student works in the garden with Louise, resident rooster.



One school's reconciliation journey

By Barbara Parkin, teacher, artist, writer, Coast Salish Territory

We are on a reconciliation journey, and like many school staff in BC, we expect to be on this journey for years to come. The staff at Quilchena Elementary in Vancouver is non-Indigenous, with roots in Europe and Asia. Back in September 2013, two staff members attended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in Vancouver. From that day forward, we began our journey.

We brought in First Nations artists Anastasia Hendry and Alice Guss to lead the children in activities from beading/sewing to cedar bark weaving. A local naturalist, Lori Snyder, led students and teachers

through identifying Indigenous medicinal plants on the school grounds.

The school's professional development committee arranged for BCTF's Aboriginal Education Co-ordinator, Gail Stromquist, to

lead workshops—one workshop on infusing Aboriginal content into the curriculum, the other on the history of residential schools. Both workshops were defining.

In 2017, we spent a professional development day at the Musqueam Cultural Centre with Musqueam leaders Larry Grant, Mary Point, and Debra Sparrow. At another school-based Pro-D day, the Vancouver Board of Education's (VBE) Indigenous Education Team led us through the BC Blanket Exercise.



Each year, staff built on the previous year's workshops, professional development activities, and artists' events, to help us determine how to teach our students as we integrated First Peoples content and perspectives.

In 2017, some staff members formed a reconciliation group at the school. We began by using a list titled 150 Acts of Reconciliation, created by Crystal Fraser and Sara Komarnisky (doing post-graduate work at the time at University of Alberta and UBC, respectively). The authors wrote the list for non-Indigenous Canadians to learn ways to reconcile with Indigenous peoples.

Suggestion #8 asked us to find out if a former residential school had been built nearby. We learned a residential school had existed about 20 kilometres away. Suggestion #9 instructed us to find its

name. We did—it was called St. Paul's on Keith Road.

The 10th recommendation on the list was to watch the CBC's *8th Fire* series (which aired in 2011, but is still equally informative today). We watched the series together over a number of lunch hours.

Around this same time, I attended the BCTF's 2017 PSA Super Conference at Canada Place on the Provincial Professional Day, and heard Dr. Cindy Blackstock, a First Nations children's advocate, professor of social work at McGill, and now a 2018 recipient of The Order of Canada. She had each person in the room of 100 participants hug and then pass along a teddy bear named Spirit Bear. Spirit Bear had been to court, she explained, and held an honorary law degree from the University of Toronto.

Blackstock, a group of First Nations children, and Spirit Bear had won a major victory for Indigenous youth at a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in 2016. The tribunal ordered the federal government to end its discriminatory practice of underfunding child and family services on First Nations reserves and in the Yukon. She also spoke about her work with the First Nations Caring Society, based in Ottawa.

Our school-based reconciliation group learned of the Caring Society's initiative called Planting Hearts, Honouring Memories. Across the country, schools were planting heart gardens to recognize and honour those who attended residential schools and to remember those children who never made it home.

We decided the picture book, *When We Were Alone* (by David Alexander Robertson and illustrated by local Vancouver artist Julie Flett) would work well for whole-school

teaching. We proposed that we all teach this same book at a level appropriate to our student grade levels. We'd also take part in the Honouring Memories, Planting Dreams initiative with our 300 students and create a heart garden.

Staff agreed, and we launched the action! One teacher volunteered to get 300 hearts cut from half-inch plywood. Another asked a local lumberyard to donate the wood. Another bought the pastels, wire, and other supplies. We purchased copies of the book and circulated them throughout our dual-track school. Salal, a local native plant important to the Musqueam people was purchased and planted. Parents and students volunteered to help get the hearts onto the fence in what would become the heart garden. The rest is best told in photos.

By early June 2018, all 300 students had learned about residential school history in Canada. Because we read the same book, we had a common experience and understanding. VBE Principal Carrie Sleep supported the entire initiative and arranged for District Indigenous Vice-Principal Chas Desjarlais to help open the heart garden. Ms. Desjarlais taught students and staff a song of strength.

Throughout our journey we have been learning together as a school community and hope that we are doing our part to bring about reconciliation in a respectful and beneficial way.

That's our school's experience...so far. Feel free to use any of these ideas along your school's journey. ■

Photos submitted by author.



Resources

BCTF Aboriginal Education program and workshops: <https://is.gd/p52D3S>

150 Acts of Reconciliation by Crystal Fraser and Sara Komarnisky: <https://is.gd/ZskLTK>

TRC Call to Action: <https://is.gd/DKjggs>

CBC *8th Fire* series: <https://is.gd/5ufMSy>

David Alexander Robertson's book: *When we were alone*: <https://is.gd/5oaIO5>

Caring Society and Heart Gardens: fncaringociety.com/heart-garden





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School staff committees: **Have your say in running your school**

By George Serra, BCTF staff

During my time as a full-time release officer in Maple Ridge, I came to realize that there was one clause in our collective agreement that teachers rarely or fully used. Can you guess which article that was? School staff committees!

AS LOCAL PRESIDENT, I received countless phone calls from frustrated teachers asking me if a principal could make school-wide decisions that affected staff significantly, without consulting staff. It came as no surprise that the schools where this occurred most often did not have an effective school staff committee in place. Most of your collective agreements will have language that outlines both the make-up of a school staff committee and the process to follow. Even when some collective agreements list the items that a school staff committee can discuss or recommend, language like the sentence below states that school staff committees can also:

Study and make recommendations on any other matters of concern to the teaching staff members.

There is no room for management to say that a topic of concern cannot be discussed at a staff committee meeting. School staff committees are vital for teachers to have

input in their school community and to foster a democratic decision-making culture.

It is true that most staff committee clauses in collective agreements do allow for an administrator to “veto” a successful staff vote on a recommendation, but not without a process that usually includes written notification to all teachers with the reasons why. Furthermore, some collective agreements include a process where the district superintendent is required to investigate a staff committee recommendation that is not supported by the principal.

Most senior managers in school districts will agree that collaborative decision-making is paramount for a well-functioning school community. You do not have to look far to find those schools that have collaborative leadership in action—they are usually found in schools where principals not only support a strong staff committee, but work with the committee proactively to make important school-wide decisions. In schools where staff

committees don’t exist, you will often find an administrator that struggles with sharing the leadership role and ultimately rules in a single-handed manner.

I have seen teachers use staff committees effectively by recommending:

- reporting timelines
- Christmas concert and winter break scheduling
- planning of school-wide events, e.g., track days, fun days, spirit events
- expectations for student behaviour and the role of administration regarding serious student behaviour issues.

Check your collective agreement and review the language regarding school staff committees. If your staff is unsure of how to organize an effective staff committee, call your Local President for guidance. In addition, the BCTF provides teachers with a workshop called Effective School Staff Committees. You can book this workshop for you and your colleagues at no cost.

For booking information and to learn more about the workshop visit bctf.ca/PD/WorkshopDetail.aspx?id=38707. ■



Confidential, online *mental health* program for BCTF members

By **Stuart Bowyer**, *Starling Minds* and **Mike Wisla**, *BCTF staff*

In 2013, Starling Minds became available to BCTF members across BC to help you build and strengthen your mental resilience and successfully manage growing stressors at work and at home.

STARLING MINDS gives immediate support to you and your families who cannot wait weeks or months to get professional help or who live in small communities where access to professional services is sometimes limited.

“With Starling, our teachers feel understood and supported. Many teachers have shared that this is the best initiative we’ve ever offered.”

—Michael Kimmis, *Director of Income Security at the BCTF*

Starling Minds is 100% confidential, meaning that use of the program is kept strictly private. To understand aggregate teacher mental health scores, the BCTF tracks anonymous data to remain proactive when mental health scores begin to decline. The latest data report indicates that after using Starling:

86% of BCTF members who use Starling Minds improve their mental health

Starling is now used by thousands of BCTF members, who benefit from evidence-based mental health education. The result is greater resilience to stress and improvement along the mental health continuum.

After using Starling Minds:

52% of BCTF members experience less anxiety

56% of BCTF members experience less sadness

61% of BCTF members experience less worry

Another member shares,

“This is the best thing our teachers’ federation has ever done for me.”

Teachers helping teachers

Starling Minds has launched a community support program that helps teachers anonymously share their own mental health journey. Stuart Bowyer at Starling Minds says, “We find that what other teachers have experienced and how they now cope provides hope to those in need.”

If you are interested in sharing your experience, please email Starling Minds Community Manager at members@starlingminds.com or complete this survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/MDHMNVQ.

How to register for Starling Minds?

The BCTF Health and Wellness Program provides access to Starling Minds with no cost to BCTF members or your families.

To register for Starling Minds, visit app.starlingminds.com/registration. You’ll need your unique BCTF member number to sign up. If you do not know your BCTF member number, please visit www.bctf.ca/PortalHelp.aspx. ■



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Obligated and proud

By Glen Hansman, BCTF President

All of us who work in the K–12 public school system in British Columbia have the professional obligation to uphold the *BC Human Rights Code*. At the same time, school districts are obligated to foster and maintain an inclusive and discrimination-free environment for students and staff—including LGBTQ students and staff.

WHILE THE SOGI 123 initiative is a recently developed collection of teaching resources and professional development supports, the work in BC schools to ensure that LGBTQ students (and all students) have safe and inclusive environments is not new. Similar resources already existed for decades, but SOGI 123 supports and resources are now in one place.

The courts have ruled

The obligation to maintain non-discriminatory learning environments is also built into the standards of conduct and competence set by the BC Teachers' Council. Numerous court decisions over the past 15 years have clarified and strengthened this obligation.

Azmi Jubran was a secondary student subjected to homophobic harassment over several years. The BC Human Rights Tribunal found that the North Vancouver School District did not sufficiently address what Jubran faced and found that school districts must be proactive in addressing homophobia and other forms of discrimination in schools—instead of responding to problems when they occur. His case went to the Supreme Court of Canada and, in 2005, Jubran's win was upheld.

Chris Kempling was a teacher in Quesnel who made antigay statements in the media and advocated for therapies to "cure" gay youth. The BC College of Teachers disciplined him and his school district. Kempling challenged the discipline in the courts, arguing freedom of expression and freedom of religion rights were not respected. Ultimately, in 2008, the courts found Kempling's religious beliefs and freedom of expression did not supersede the onus on school districts to maintain non-discriminatory environments and upheld the discipline. Kempling is no longer teaching.

These legal benchmarks have been similarly applied to teachers and other individuals with teaching certificates. The reality for BC teachers is we cannot make public statements or participate in situations espousing racism, homophobia, or other kinds of discrimination.

Book banning is a no go

The third major case is *Chamberlin et al v. Surrey School District*. The district prevented a Kindergarten teacher from using picture books featuring same-sex families after some parents, citing religious reasons, complained.

A group of teachers challenged the ban. The case went to the Supreme Court of Canada and, in 2002, the ban was overturned. As the court pointed out, values at home may conflict with what is taught in a secular, non-sectarian public education system. "Tolerance," the Justices stated, "is always age appropriate. Learning about tolerance is therefore learning that other people's entitlement to respect from us does not depend on whether their views accord with our own. Children cannot learn this unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home."

Obligated and proud? Absolutely

Public schools in British Columbia open their doors to all students and families. As a union, we support efforts to make sure that schools are safe, inclusive, and welcoming. And as a union, we have the obligation to support our LGBTQ members, so they can be safely out in their workplaces. Whether it's homophobia, racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination, we aren't just

obligated to speak out and advocate—we are proud to do so.

SOGI 123 endorsed by education partners

In late September, the Ministry of Education, BC Teachers' Federation, BC School Superintendents Association, BC School Trustees Association, BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, CUPE BC, BC Association of School Business Officials, Federation of Independent School Associations, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, ARC Foundation, First Nations Education Steering Committee, First Nations Schools Association, and Métis Nation BC, released this statement:

All of BC's provincial education partners for K–12 schools are committed to ensuring every school—both public and independent—is a place where students feel safe, accepted, respected and welcome regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion or background. In 2016, the BC Human Rights Code was amended to ensure that gender identity and expression are protected under the code. There is no room for any type of discrimination in our schools.

As provincial education partners, we stand unified in this commitment. All of our province's 60 school districts have now updated their codes of conduct and all independent schools have updated their harassment and bullying prevention policies that safeguard students from being bullied for their sexual orientation or gender identity. Students have the complete support of teachers, administrators, support staff, trustees and parents as we create learning environments where all students are free of discrimination so they can thrive and live authentic lives.

The statement is available at <https://is.gd/i7GXDk>. ■



BC's education partners joined Education Minister Rob Fleming (along with BC NDP, BC Green, and BC Liberal MLAs) at the Legislature Oct. 3 in support of inclusion and acceptance of all students.

Why queer teachers matter

By Reegan MacKenzie,
third-year elementary education student, UVic

Below: Reegan with her young cousin.



Caio Machado photo

I was sitting in my education professor's office, chatting about my three-week teaching practicum, my leg bouncing off my knee with my fists clenching and opening, keeping beat to my anxious song. I confessed that I irrationally felt like the only gay person in my elementary education program at the University of Victoria (UVic). She gasped and quickly corrected me, explaining that several of her colleagues are gay. My mouth gaped open and I flung my head backwards directly hitting a shelf. I had no idea that it wasn't just me. Even though I grew up in a progressive society, talking about queer people in school was taboo. If we don't talk about it, can queer people readily become teachers?

THE CLIMATE MAY have changed with SOGI education (sexual orientation and gender identity), but obviously my secondary school fears are still dragged into the present. This is why representation matters so much! I can look up to Shelley Moore, a lesbian and inclusive educator in British Columbia; Dr. Lee Airton, a self-identified non-binary professor in education at Queens University; and many faculty members at UVic. I live vicariously through them, as they teach openly as queer educators.

Representation is vital because queer people, like any minority, still need to know we are safe from discrimination. I find it is revolutionary that I have openly queer people to look up to as leaders in education. I watched Dr. Lee Airton present at UVic and they brought up the issue that incredible teacher candidates who are transgender and gender non-conforming are deeply afraid to enter the field. So, how do we keep our teachers and teacher candidates feeling safe? It begins by

We have magnificent scars from our life experiences—every single one of us.

acknowledging that not all teachers in the room are heterosexual and cisgender. As well, transgender and gender non-conforming teachers need advocates during their practicums to ensure they are safe.

The problem is that when people think of a teacher, they don't think of someone like me, who loves wearing colorful dresses and who also wants to marry a woman. Just this afternoon a child asked me sharply, "Reegan, why would you go to gay pride last weekend if you're not one of THOSE people?" This is why I was nervous going into teaching: my identity isn't a part of society's assumptions about teachers.

Let's challenge these assumptions, shall we? Teachers are men! Teachers are queer! Teachers are Indigenous! Teachers are from different races and cultures! Teachers come from low-income backgrounds! Teachers have disabilities! Teachers have mental health issues! We have magnificent scars from our life experiences—every single one of us. We all have one fantastic thing in common: we love children and we want to support them in their social, emotional, and academic pursuits. Just like our students, teachers are amazing and different too.

Queer people are well-versed in celebrating diversity because we must if we want to survive. It matters that there are queer professors and teachers because they actively challenge our perception of teachers merely by existing. We need to think critically about what it means to be teachers and embrace our experiences and identities to inspire growth and passion for lifelong learning. If we are to embrace diversity in our classrooms, we must first embrace ourselves. Showing up in our light and passion, exactly as we are, will spark great inspiration for learning in our students. ■



The Vancouver Firefighters Band led parades of uniformed firefighters during the 1983 Operation Solidarity protests. Their participation provided an emotional boost to the movement and validated for many the justness of their cause.



BC teachers walked out as part of Operation Solidarity's escalating job action plan against the government on November 8, 1983. These teachers and support staff were at Langley Secondary School. The lines were respected by other union members and parents.

Three rainy days that changed teachers

By Ken Novakowski, retired teacher, past president, BCTF

On July 7, 1983, two short months after their re-election, Bill Bennett's Social Credit government tabled a budget that dramatically reduced resources for public education and all other public services. Besides tabling 26 pieces of legislation, they eliminated the Human Rights Branch and rent controls, reduced legal aid spending, and cut programs for women, elderly, disabled and poor people. Bill 3 allowed any public sector employer to dismiss any employee without cause.

REACTION WAS SWIFT. Within days, the BC Federation of Labour organized Operation Solidarity and invited affiliates and non-affiliates, like the BCTF, to join. Shortly after, the province-wide Solidarity Coalition was born, bringing together hundreds of community organizations.

Together, these organizations mobilized tens of thousands of British Columbians to don signs and attend protest rallies. In July, 20,000 people marched in Vancouver while 25,000 protested in Victoria. At Empire Stadium in August, pipe bands led 40,000 protesters to their seats to listen to union and community leaders outline fightback plans. But this mean-spirited and tight-fisted government just carried on ignoring the massive public outcry. Even 60,000 people on the streets of Vancouver on October 15 did not influence them.

The BC Government Employees Union, also affected by the legislation, prepared to strike on November 1. Operation Solidarity planned shutdowns by other unions. The message to government: withdraw Bill 3 and end budgetary concessions. Education unions, including the BCTF, were scheduled to join the strike on November 8.

Standing up to pressure

On November 7, North Vancouver teachers reached a deal with their school board that included language for layoffs by seniority and exemption from Bill 3. But the Social Credit government scuttled the deal. They wanted to test the resolve of teachers, especially since only 60% of teachers province-wide supported joining the Solidarity strikes.

That evening, BCTF President Larry Kuehn, announced that teachers were striking the next day. To pressure teachers, many school districts obtained no picketing injunctions.

It poured in the Lower Mainland on November 8th, but the weather did not dampen picketers' spirits. In districts with injunctions, members from other unions and the Solidarity Coalition picketed schools. Across the province, teachers honoured or walked lines, even though districts threatened with firings. Members mirrored the courage shown by their president, who faced threats to himself and his family for standing up to government.

Teachers struck for three days. But over the Remembrance Day weekend, the BCGEU reached a deal with government that included exemption from Bill 3. The deal

resulted in BC Federation of Labour officers sending Jack Munro, leader of a major private sector union, to Kelowna to meet with the Premier and to resolve the overall standoff.

The Kelowna Accord: a controversial deal

A deal was hatched, and the Kelowna Accord ended the strike, but with great cost. While the Kelowna Accord deal ended Bill 3 and stopped firing without cause, it did not address most of the concerns of the Solidarity Coalition and the drastic cuts to community groups and social services.

Many teachers, pleased Bill 3 was killed, were also upset they were expected to return to work without a vote. Like thousands of other BCers, they were angry that no real deal was reached for the community sector. A deep sense of betrayal existed between the labour movement and community groups for many years to come.

What Solidarity striking achieved for teachers and how we became a bona fide union

Before 1983:

- Teachers could only negotiate salaries and bonuses. Now teachers could negotiate seniority, layoff, and severance provisions in every school district.
- Teachers crossed other education workers' picket lines but did not do their work. Now, because of the experience of Solidarity, the BCTF adopted policy to honour colleagues' picket lines
- The BCTF were timid players on the BC labour scene. Now the BCTF is resolute on challenging the government, and is an active force in the BC and Canadian labour movement.

For those of us who participated in the protests of 1983 and the November strike, we never looked back. We will never forget that momentous year.

Labour snippets

Compiled by **Susan Croll** and **Karen Rojem**, BCTF staff

BC Federation of Labour President steps down



BC Federation of Labour President Irene Lanzinger recently announced she is not seeking re-election. Delegates will elect a new president and secretary-treasurer at its convention from November 26–30, 2018.

LANZINGER, also a former president of the BC Teachers' Federation, was the first woman to become president of the BCFED. We thank her for her work as BCFED president and wish her well in her retirement.

Washington State teachers win big wage increases!

From Centralia to Puyallup to Seattle, Washington State teachers rallied and struck late summer and early fall to ensure their call for better wages was heard loud and clear. Like other teachers in the US who walked out of their classrooms and schools last spring, Washington State teachers showed they had to put an end to tight-fisted legislators. Teacher salaries in the US tend to be low, thanks to budget cutbacks, school privatization, and a decline in unionism.

THE WASHINGTON Education Association (WEA) represents the state's teachers and reports that increases ranged from 9% over two years in Longview, to 26% over three years in Ridgefield, Washington. In Tacoma, the union negotiated a 14.5% pay raise with starting salaries at \$54,308 and maximum salaries at \$108,529.

These significant wage increases also came about because of a Supreme Court ruling, known as the McCleary Decision. In 2012, the state Supreme Court ordered the government to fully fund K–12 public schools as required by Article IX of the Washington Constitution:

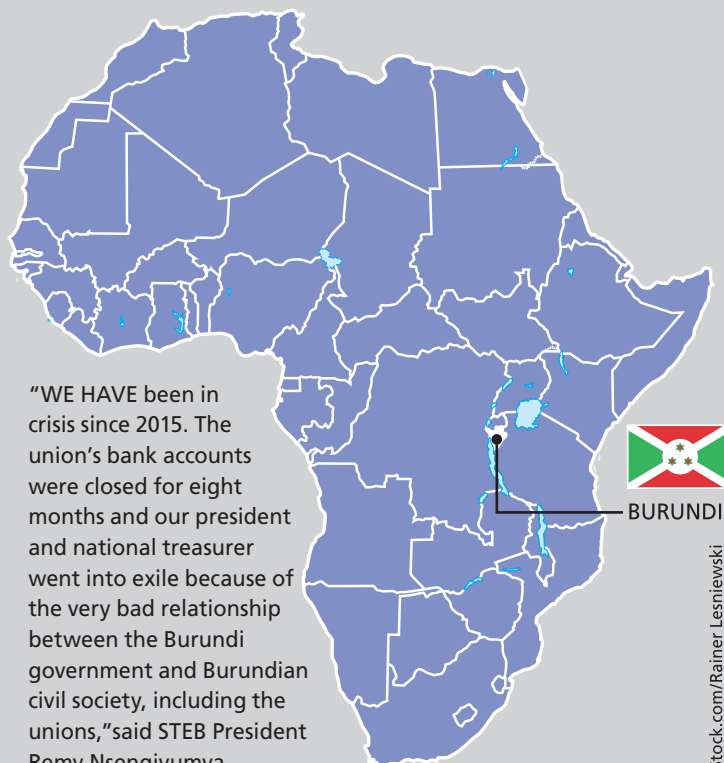
"It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex."

Two years later, the court found the Legislature in contempt for its failure to establish a plan for fully funding K–12 public education by 2018. Subsequently, the 2018 Washington State Legislature approved another \$1 billion for K–12 educator compensation, as ordered by the Supreme Court last November. That's in addition to the \$1 billion for educator salaries lawmakers approved last year. Because of McCleary, state funding for K–12 basic education has increased by billions of dollars.

With files from Washington State Educators (WEA).

Burundi teachers: Determined and courageous

Despite ongoing threats and intimidation, the Syndicat Libre des Travailleurs de l'Enseignement du Burundi (STEB) trained 360 new union leaders throughout the country with financial support from Education International, an organization the BCTF belongs to.



"WE HAVE been in crisis since 2015. The union's bank accounts were closed for eight months and our president and national treasurer went into exile because of the very bad relationship between the Burundi government and Burundian civil society, including the unions," said STEB President Remy Nsengiyumva.

"Our representatives were unable to meet and a sense of fear permeated all social dialogue in Burundi. In effect, social dialogue was pretty much dead in the water."

"We are in the first phase of reducing wage disparity," said the union leader. STEB now wants to regain its influence through awareness and mobilization meetings in order to massively increase union membership.

"After this phase of revitalizing our communities, we are now trying to persuade members who left the union out of fear or who are simply afraid to join the union," Nsengiyumva said. "We can see that this is starting to have an impact, as we managed to recruit 1,000 new members last year."

Although STEB still has more than 11,000 contributing members, there used to be more than 20,000, but this number has decreased because of the political and socio-economic crisis in the country.

With files from Education International.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time

a play by Simon Stephens

Review by Teri Mooring, BCTF First Vice-President

Watching this play left me feeling emotional, uplifted, and inspired. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* provides a unique perspective, since it is told from the point of view of a 15-year-old boy named Christopher who can't lie, is highly intelligent, especially in his math ability, and quite distrustful of people, especially strangers. And he doesn't like to be touched. We assume he is on the autism spectrum, though this is never made clear in either the play or in the best-selling novel by Mark Haddon.

PART OF THE BRILLIANCE of the play and book is the intentional way the main character is not labelled. Instead Christopher is accepted, quirks and all, and the audience is quickly swept up into his world through a number of interesting techniques that include loud sound, intense light, and "floating."

The production feels like an emotional workout, especially the second act. On the surface it's a simple mystery: Christopher embarks on a mission to discover who has killed his neighbour's dog with a pitchfork, despite his father's warnings "not to get involved in other people's business." While investigating the crime he makes notes for a class assignment and book he intends to write. What follows is an honest and sensitive drama replete with family secrets, complicated dynamics, and an unexpected ending. The acting is truly inspired. Daniel Doheny expertly provides a realistic insight into the world of this young man and the challenges he faces. All the other characters, including the family members and neighbors, are similarly well-acted.

The play is made even more impressive by the creative set design, which reflects the mathematical genius of the main character. It's an expansive backdrop that features the movement of colour and light that perfectly complements the events in the play and serves to create a modern and futuristic mood.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is a must-see for parents and educators as it provides a unique and inspired insight into the mind and personality of a young man dealing with challenges. As the play progresses Christopher learns to open up to those he interacts with and demonstrates a resourcefulness that enables him to effectively engage in the work of investigating the mystery. By the end of the play I felt optimism and hope about the vast human potential we all possess, including those of us who grapple with challenges.





iStock.com sources

My new white hat

By Veselin Jungic, Department of Mathematics, Simon Fraser University

A colleague came to my office to tell me that a former student of mine had been admitted to the psychiatric unit of a local hospital. She explained to me that the student was a member of her lab and when he didn't show up for work she became worried, contacted the student's mother, and learned what happened.



MY COLLEAGUE went to visit the student and during their conversation my name came up. The student was in a math class I taught several years ago, but since he occasionally volunteered in one of my outreach programs, we had stayed in touch. Whenever we would see each other on campus, we would stop to greet each other and exchange a few cordial words. He always struck me as a pleasant, friendly, and happy-looking young man who I respected very much.

My colleague asked the student if he would like her to contact me and the next day she came to my office to inform me what was going on with the student. She also mentioned that, in her opinion, it might be good for the student if I went and visited him in the hospital.

"Of course," I said.

In the late afternoon of the same day, I texted the student and asked if it would be okay if I came in 30 minutes to visit him. A

message came back immediately: "Veso, that would be awesome!!!"

"How do you know him?" asked the nurse when I requested to see the student. "I was his teacher," I answered. And there he was, smiling and stretching out his arms for a hug. "I am in the middle of dinner. Come see who is here," and he took me to the waiting room. Another one of my former students and volunteers was there. More happy greetings and hugs. I knew that the two young men had been good friends from the time when they were students in my class.

A short time later, when the dinner was over, my student came back to the waiting room carrying a new white hat in his hands. "This is for you," he said. "You need a summer hat." I was truly taken aback because just a day before I was thinking about buying a summer hat. "How did you

know?" I asked while putting the hat on my head. It fit perfectly. "I have my ways," he answered, smiling.

I spent the next hour talking with my former students about school and their plans for after graduation.

During our bus ride back from the hospital, my other student explained to me what had happened earlier that day. He came to visit his friend around noon and they went for lunch outside of the hospital. They stopped by a second-hand store where they saw a pristine white hat on sale for \$2.50. "I'll start wearing a hat, like Veso does," the friend said to him and purchased the hat.

Teachers' lives intertwine with the lives of their students, sometimes in unpredictable ways. Thanks to one (or many?) of those twists, I'll wear a white hat, a hat purchased by chance and given to me by a kind and generous young man I have the privilege to call my student.

*"I was his teacher,"
I answered.*

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To obtain an application, go to <https://is.gd/eaemQ6> or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.



Take advantage of new Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity resources for educators, because all students deserve to feel safe, included and empowered:

SOGI 1: Policies and Procedures

SOGI 2: Inclusive Environments

SOGI 3: Curriculum Resources

Find proven inclusive tools, resources and lesson plans at SOGIeducation.org

SOGI 123 is a collaboration of the BC Ministry of Education, BC Teachers' Federation, UBC Faculty of Education, Out in Schools, ARC Foundation, nine school districts across BC, and local, national and international LGBTQ community organizations.

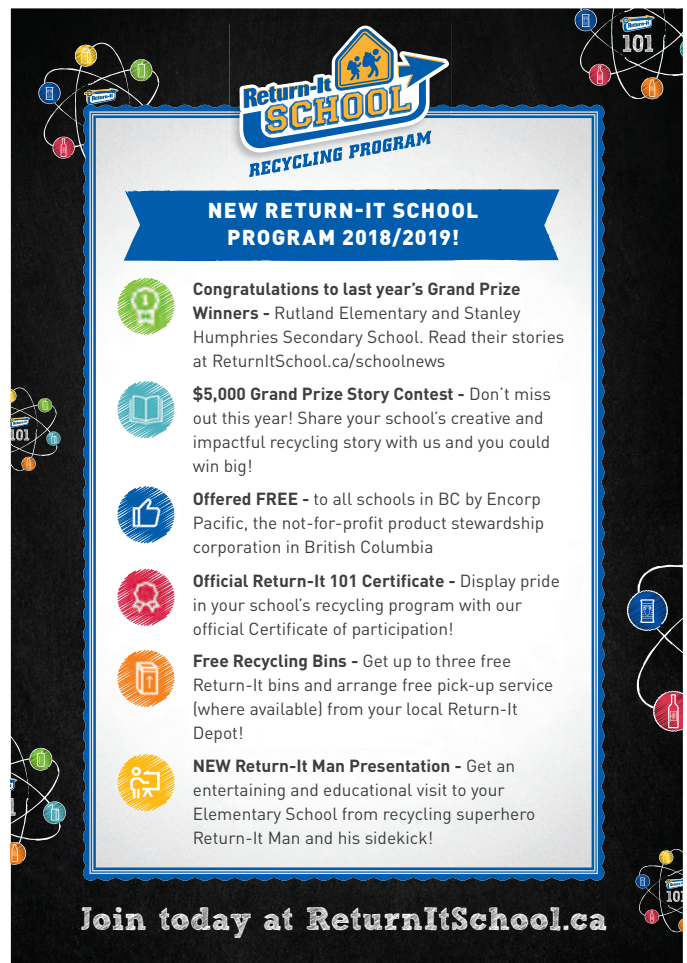


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November 20 Surrey Campus
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**Exploring Humanitarian Law
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For more information contact:
joanne.abshire@redcross.ca

Gender and Sexual Diversity in Youth

November 29–30 Vancouver
This workshop will help caregivers learn how best to respond to and support LGBTQ youth. For more information, please visit: <https://is.gd/JbynJQ>.
Email: info@ctrinstitute.com.

DECEMBER 2018**Addictions and Mental Illness
—Working with Co-Occurring Disorders**

December 4 Vancouver
December 6 Victoria
This workshop explores the impacts of both addiction and mental illness and how to integrate strategies in a way that supports health and change. For more information, please visit: <https://is.gd/N78tfp>.
Email: info@ctrinstitute.com.

**Harm Reduction—A Framework for
Change, Choice and Control**

December 5 Vancouver
December 7 Victoria
This workshop explores the principles of harm reduction, how it works, and for whom it may apply. Participants will learn practical strategies for working with individuals, families, and communities within a harm reduction framework. For more information, please visit: <https://is.gd/RuKAAZ>.
Email: info@ctrinstitute.com.

Assertive Communication

December 6 Victoria
December 7 Vancouver

This workshop teaches participants how to express ideas, make requests, and say no in clear and direct ways. For more information, please visit: <https://is.gd/pnjAlq>.
Email: info@achievecentre.com.

Vicarious Trauma**—Strategies for Resilience**

December 11 Victoria
December 13 Vancouver
December 14 Kelowna

This workshop will provide participants with the opportunity to examine their own experience and become aware of the signs of both vicarious trauma and vicarious growth. For more information, please visit: <https://is.gd/2qDtcn>.

JANUARY 2019**Social Emotional Learning**

January 25 Vancouver
MIMOTM MMT's Seminar for Teachers provide an embodied science-based learning approach to mindful movement strategies that may be implemented into the classroom to increase awareness, engagement, compassion, and motor skills for improved efficiency and overall consciousness. For more information or to RSVP, please email us at www.growyourroots.ca.

FEBRUARY 2019**BCAEA Challenge and Change 2019**

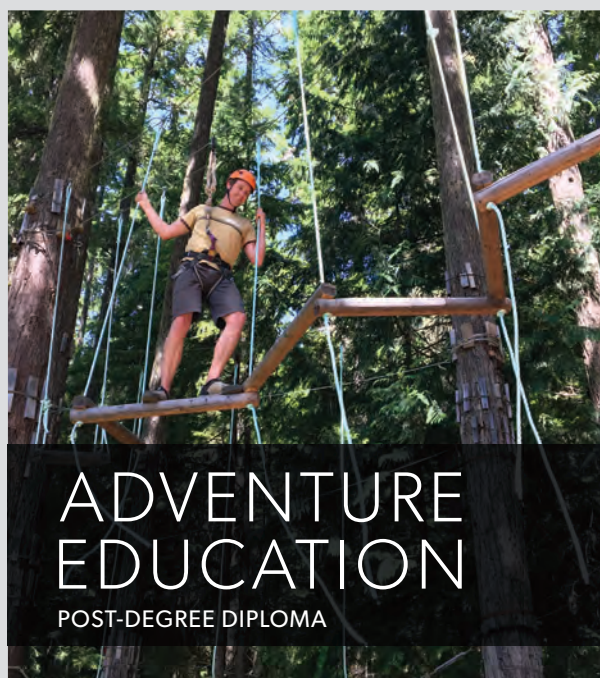
February 14–15 Vancouver
The BC Alternate Education Association's 32nd annual Challenge and Change Conference features speakers on a wide variety of topics of interest to teachers, administrators, youth care workers, and others engaged with at-risk youth in an alternate education setting. Visit our website bcaea.com for further details.

Crosscurrents 2019

February 21–22 Richmond
Teachers of Inclusive Education of BC are holding Crosscurrents 2019 at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport hotel. Keynote speaker Dr. Ross Greene will speak on the Collaborative and Proactive Solutions model. We have several other speakers on inclusive education relevant for K–12 teachers, administrators, and others working with children and youth in schools. Visit our website at tiebc.com.

PD Online Calendar

bctf.ca/PDcalendar
Changes/additions: msteele@bctf.ca



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