

TEACHER

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

Education funding in crisis

Budget 2010 is another blow

By Margaret White

Education funding crisis unfolds as structural shortfalls grow

Each budget year, the Ministry of Education responds to concerns about chronic underfunding of public education by asserting that the ministry is providing “more funding than ever” during a sustained period of declining student enrolment.

While the nominal amount of education funding has increased, this increase has not been sufficient to fully fund publicly mandated education programs and services. According to a 2010 report by the Saanich School District (www.sd63.bc.ca), new costs to school districts exceeded provincial block funding, resulting in a \$157-million shortfall in 2009–10, after accounting for savings due to declining enrolment.

K to 12 education is actually receiving a diminishing share of the provincial budget. Chart 1 shows that Ministry of Education funding as a percent of the provincial budget fell to 15.34% in 2009–10, down from 19.67% in 2001–02, and 26.36% in 1991–92. More of this funding has gone to private educa-



David Perkins 2010

tion. Since 2005–06, independent-school funding increased by 34%, while public-education funding increased by only 13% (Chart 2).

2009 budget pushes districts into a funding crisis in 2009–10

The impact of cumulative shortfalls on districts was evident early in the 2009–10 budget process. School districts reported a total of \$71 million in budget shortfalls to the Centre for Civic Governance (www.civicgovernance.ca/node/560). Many districts had no, or insufficient, surpluses to address these shortfalls, and were faced with reducing educational programs and services to balance the budget.

This was the situation before the September 2009 Budget update. In addition to a \$157-million shortfall in block funding, districts were also hit by the cancellation of the \$110-million Annual Facility Grant (AFG). Add to this the unexpected loss of \$25.3 million in Salary Differential funding, after the autumn 2009 grant recalculation. All of these factors combined to push districts into a funding crisis with major cuts to education services looming on the horizon for 2010–11.

Education funding crisis deepens in 2010–11

BC Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO) identified several new cost pressures for 2010–11, including full-day Kindergarten, a teacher salary lift of 2%, teacher pensions cost increase, carbon offsets, MSP premium and BC Hydro rate increases, and CUPE Trades Adjustment. Ongoing struc-

tural shortfalls mean that, each year, districts are pushed deeper into a financial crisis, surpluses are used up, and the impacts on students, the classroom, and the school community are more severe.

By February 2010, many school districts reported anticipated budget shortfalls for 2010–11, with some increasing significantly. Compared to 2009–10, the 2010–11 budget shortfall for Vancouver was estimated at \$17.5 to \$36.3 million, up from \$7.12 million; for Surrey \$15 million, up from \$9.53 million; for Prince George \$7.0 million, up from \$2.2 million; and for Greater Victoria \$5.0 million, up from \$0.5 million. This is a signal that the education funding crisis is deepening.

A review of school-district budget documents reveals that some districts are proposing drastic measures to offset budget shortfalls. A BCTF survey, of local presidents in January 2010, identified 49 schools threatened with closure or restructuring. Cariboo-Chilcotin School District, (www.sd27.bc.ca), is considering cutting programs such as French immersion, band, and First Nations targeted-augmented funding. Massive layoffs were anticipated, with Vancouver School District, (www.vsb.bc.ca), sending potential layoff notices to 800 teachers in January 2010.

Special education will be adversely affected if teaching positions are reduced. This means fewer specialist teachers, an increase in the student/teacher ratio, and more classes that exceed class-

composition limits. Since 2006–07, the number of classes with four or more students with an Individual Education Plan increased from 9,559 to 11,959 classes. The number of FTE special education teachers has decreased over the last three years.

What is needed to resolve the funding crisis?

The Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services report (November 2009)

recommended the Annual Facility Grant be treated as a priority in the 2010–11 budget and that the implementation of full-day Kindergarten be fully funded. These recommendations address some but not all of the structural shortfalls districts are facing. BCASBO estimated that a \$300 million injection of funding is required to address the cumulative structural shortfalls in the public education system.

See BUDGET page 3

On the inside

Diverse views and opinions are what make publications and meetings interesting. There is no shortage of that in the newsmagazine this month ranging from full-day Kindergarten through the Olympics and military recruitment.

The BCTF annual general meeting is known for frank debate and open expression and a number of our members have given their impressions. The recent “smoke and

mirrors” education budget gets thoroughly deconstructed and the ongoing consequences for schools and education services examined. Bargaining is on the horizon and we begin to sample our members’ hopes and needs as this period draws closer.

There are topics covering innovative curriculum, programs, projects and events, and milestones to remember.

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President's message



Irene Lanzinger

Since the introduction of provincial bargaining in 1994, teachers have struggled with a dysfunctional bargaining structure. The Liberal government made matters worse in

2001 with the legislation that made education an essential service. Not content to limit our right to strike, in 2002 the government stripped all class-size limits, composition language, and ratios for non-enrolling teachers from our collective agreement and limited our right to bargain these provisions.

In 2005, we were once again at the bargaining table when the Liberal government imposed a contract that included a two-year wage freeze. In protest against years of unfair treatment and numerous attacks on our rights, teachers went on a two-week illegal strike. We demonstrated amazing courage and solidarity. The amazing support we received from parents and the public was both energizing

and gratifying. The strike and the public support took the government by surprise.

That strike and the bargaining that followed produced a number of improvements for teachers and students: class-size and composition legislation, salary improvements of 14% to 19%, grid harmonization, a 2% SIP allowance, significant salary and seniority improvements for TTOCs, portability of sick leave and seniority, and recruitment and retention allowances.

In spite of our success, we are still governed by unfair essential services legislation. Restrictions on negotiating class-size, composition, and caseload limits remain. Many local provisions are badly in need of updating and improvement.

While we have made modest

gains, our salaries and working conditions have fallen behind other teachers in Canada. Teachers in every province west of Quebec now have higher salaries than we do. In Winnipeg, the maximum salary on the grid is \$6,000 higher than the equivalent salary in Vancouver. Elementary teachers in Ontario and other provinces have two to three times more preparation time than we do.

The class-size and composition legislation was inadequate to begin with and is not working effectively. Across the province, there are 3,000 classes over 30 this year and more than 12,000 classes over the composition limit of three students with IEPs per class.

Our collective agreement expires in June 2011, and we are getting

ready for the next round of bargaining. The Federation has adopted a plan to address the many issues we face and move toward more local bargaining. It is based on negotiation with government, negotiations with BCPSEA, and negotiations in every local around the province. Over the next few months, teachers will hear about the plan in their locals and will have the opportunity to discuss bargaining priorities.

It won't be easy and we don't expect BCPSEA, the government, or school boards to embrace our desire for change. However, as we have demonstrated many times, we have the commitment, the courage, and the unity to be successful in making improvements for ourselves, our students, and public education.

Readers write

Olympic pride

Youth is a time of hope and idealism. As a teen, I exuberantly supported the Olympics and what they stood for in pursuing excellence and unity in our world. Then as the years passed I lost that; cynicism about politics, corporatism, and elitism sullied my perspective with each passing game. That all changed as I watched the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

How proud I am to be a Canadian citizen at a time when we begin to show the world that our true heritage is intricately, powerfully, and positively linked to the indigenous peoples of this land: the Metis, the First Nations, and the Inuit. We empower ourselves and the world by recognizing that the missing Canadians we have all had a part in ignoring or pushing aside actually belong in the centre of our circle.

My Olympic idealism is revived! Go, Canada.

Jennie Boulanger
Coquitlam

Young teachers need a break

I was fortunate to participate at an excellent BCTF Retirement seminar, where the presenter tried valiantly, and for the most part successfully, to speak above the chatter of some of our colleagues. Thinking about retirement brought me to thinking about the future of our profession, and looking around the staffroom at lunch made me worry. My worry stems not from the fact that our young colleagues are energetic and enthusiastic, but from

the fact that there are not enough of them.

I know the universities are continuing to train large numbers of teachers and I am also involved in that, with student teachers at least once and sometimes twice a year. My worry is that these young, enthusiastic, full-of-potential people are not getting hired. They are not getting hired because the TTOC list, which is the threshold for entering most districts, is filled with retired teachers.

I respect my retired colleagues, indeed, when a TTOC comes in and "knows the drill" and has no problems with discipline or reading my scratches that pass for preparation, I can be confident that the day will pass smoothly. However, as much as I respect my retired colleagues, I feel a certain unfairness on their part with regard to our young, inexperienced colleagues. Most retired teachers have an income that is being grandly supplemented by being a TTOC. In addition to the financial aspect, how can a new teacher get experience if they do not work?

I have no answer to this dilemma; I do know that the future of our profession, indeed, the future of education in British Columbia, must include well-trained, highly educated, and knowledgeable individuals who are committed to public education. It is within the power of the universities to select those individuals who meet the emotional and intellectual needs of the profession, the schools to give successful new colleagues a place to develop, and the union to give young teachers a spiritual home.

Ellen McDonnell
Burnaby

You said what?

I was reading through the March issue of "Federation Funnies" and it brought to mind a conversation I had with my Grade 6 student the other month.

I teach in a one-room school in Blue River. We were in the middle of social studies one day when my Grade 6 student raised his hand for a question. He waited patiently until I was able to call on him to ask a question. He said, "Mr. B, why is it that they call them humanitarians and not just use the word cannibal?" At first I wasn't sure what word he was saying because he was mispronouncing humanitarian (as he tried to remember the word he had heard on the news that morning). As it hit me what he was saying, it took every ounce of self control not to burst into laughter; to me it seemed hilarious. I composed myself and answered him with the difference between humanitarian and cannibal. I don't think he'll make that mistake again. Thanks for your time, bye for now.

John Blakley
Blue River

Stress release

I have just finished reading through the latest edition of *Teacher*, which I receive online, and was thrilled to see the two funny stories that I submitted had both been published.

Regarding the second one, I correctly named the students mainly for the benefit of the students' parents. When it happened, about 10 years ago, I did not tell the parents the story because I knew that they would have been very embarrassed about their sons

misbehaving in school. One of the parents is still a vice-principal, and since then, another of the parents has become an elementary classroom teacher, and another, a school board trustee. I am sure that now when they read the stories, and see that they were submitted by me, they will recognize the students as their little boys in Grade 1, and have as much of a laugh as I did then, and still do now.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for teachers to input personal content to the publication. I would like to see more of these or similar invitations in *Teacher*. In these times of high stress and professional fulfillment, it is important to share the happier moments of our daily experiences and careers, and give a chance for our hearts to laugh.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year of the Tiger. May it bring you health and good fortune.

Audrey Lear
Comox Valley

Help for a Namibian primary school

Imagine teaching in a shed made of sticks and grass, with the students sitting on logs and writing by balancing paper on their thighs. This is the reality in a rural school in Namibia that is seeking sister schools that could help provide some resources for the development of the school.

While Namibia has made significant advances in developing schools since independence from South Africa 20 years ago, most of the improvements have been in the urban areas. Rural schools are often far from where students live, and have few resources and facilities. Some students walk as far as 10 kilometres to get to classes.

When I was at the congress of the Namibian National Teachers' Union (NANTU), an activist teacher approached me to make the case for her school, the Omutwewomhedi Primary School. I told her that I would let teachers in BC know about her school and see if any were interested in developing a sister relationship and help the development of the school.

Most students in the school are orphans or from very low-income families that have no capacity to provide more for the school.

If you would like further information about the school, please contact me at lkuehn@bctf.ca.

Larry Kuehn

BCTF Research and Technology

Editor's note

In the March issue of *Teacher*, the article, "The Ministry unveils full-day Kindergarten" was submitted by the Minister of Education's office unauthored. For more opinions about full-day Kindergarten, see page 6 and 7 in this issue.

Hardship obvious

I was always a bit of a slow reader while holding a piece of chalk in a portable or genuine classroom. Retired, after 23 years in that role, ironically there is the time now to taste each word in *Teacher* and really appreciate the content.

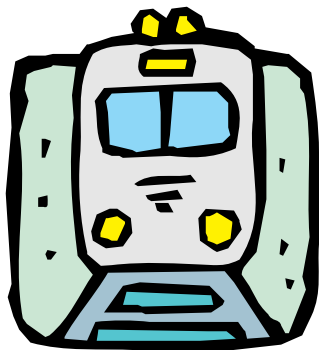
Congratulations for publishing that piece by Brittney Deering (Langley Secondary student) re the transit system. Now that I'm over the hill (65), a pass is only \$42 monthly. I live on the bus, skytrain, and Canada Line (lugging an accordion—doing oldtime song gigs at senior homes, hospitals, etc.). No more car to worry about, thank heavens! Sitting there on our public transit system (that you and I have paid for) the "incredible hardship" that Deering speaks to is obvious. All these officials to keep everything on track and yet for youngsters and those on low incomes, who have to witness the police transit security, escalating costs, stress and conflict with bus drivers, it must be a pretty tough pill to swallow, eh? Wait until she tries to apply to enter university. A textbook alone can cost more than \$100. Who pays most of the costs of developing a UBC, or an SFU? It's the average working Joe and Jane in East Vancouver, Surrey, and Langley! In reality, which students will end up going to these wonderful institutions of higher learning—those from Kerrisdale or from Newton?

On top of all this, the ministry has the chutzpah to reward students and parents with the nonsense of the FSA. If Albert Einstein had been a Grade 4 student in Whalley, he would likely have failed it with flying colours! By some miracle, had young Albert suddenly blossomed at Queen Elizabeth Secondary (off King George Highway) he probably wouldn't have had enough loonies to attend UBC or SFU—perhaps not even enough funds to pay for a bus so he could play the violin on the corner of Georgia and Granville in Vancouver.

I do, however, have some empathy for most of the bus drivers. They sometimes remind me of the teachers—more and more passengers, more and more appearances, plus political correctness, and more and more regulations.

Thank heaven for the accordion and music!

Dan Propp
Richmond



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CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association

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BUDGET from page 1

Will Budget 2010 solve the crisis in public education funding?

A comparison of Ministry of Education budget documents for the last three budget periods revealed that Budget 2010 restores \$100 million of the \$128 million in Education Programs funding for 2010-11 that was lost when the provincial budget was revised in September 2009. But this amount still falls \$28 million short of the original allocation in the February 2009 Budget Plan.

Public school funding is the largest component of Education Programs. Public school funding will increase from \$4.699 billion to \$4.82 billion, up \$129 million from 2009-10. The new budget claims to provide funding for the 2% teacher-salary increase and implementation of full-day Kindergarten, and partially restores \$110 million of AFG funding spread over two years. This is half of the \$220 million AFG funding districts would have received under the February 2009 Budget Plan. Budget 2010 contains some more bad news for public school funding—funding of support staff is reduced by \$9.1 million in the new budget.

The impact of cumulative shortfalls on districts was evident early in the 2009-10 budget process. School districts reported a total of \$71 million in budget shortfalls to the Centre for Civic Governance (www.civicgovernance.ca/node/560). Many districts had no, or insufficient, surpluses to address these shortfalls, and were faced with reducing educational programs and services to balance the budget.

What's new for school districts in the 2010-11 Operating Grants estimates?

The 2010-11 Operating Grants estimates show a \$112-million increase in funding compared to the 2009-10 recalculation, with \$57.6 million allocated for full-day Kindergarten and \$54 million to cover wage settlement costs for teachers. But this does not necessarily translate into an overall increase in funding, as 33 districts actually show no change in funding allocations compared to 2009-10.

The biggest change in the 2010-11 Operating Grants estimates is the reallocation of the labour settlement costs supplement, which is now “rolled into the funding

formula.” This makes it very difficult to compare 2010-11 allocations to previous years. Most per-student allocations increase in 2010-11, with the basic allocation increasing from \$5,851 to \$6,740 per student. However, much of this increase appears to be a transfer of funds from the labour settlement costs supplement (\$557 million in 2009-10) to other parts of the funding formula.

As a result of the reallocation of the labour settlement supplement, funding increases in some districts and decreases in others. A new formula transition supplement offsets these changes, providing 100% of the difference in 2010-11. There is no guarantee that districts will be fully compensated for the loss of this funding in future years.

Student FTE enrolment is projected to increase by 2,306 students in 2010-11, mostly due to full-day Kindergarten. Excluding Kindergarten students, FTE enrolment is projected to decline in 52 districts. Of these 52 districts, only 40 will receive an enrolment-decline supplement to help offset the loss of funding. The others receive no supplement, even though the projected declines in student numbers in districts such as Vancouver (-411.5), Greater Victoria (-165.6), and Central Okanagan (-157.18) are enough to have a significant impact on district budgets.

Another change is in the calculations of the Salary Differential supplement, so that the variance now appears to be based on the provincial average educator salary rather than the base minimum salary. The average educator salary shown for 2010-11 is \$71,118, a significant increase from the \$60,986 indicated in the autumn 2009 recalculation. Educators did not receive such a salary increase, so something must have changed in how this variable is measured. These changes resulted in the Salary Differential supplement increasing to \$97.1 million for 2010-11. The ministry documentation provides no information as to why the average educator salary increased by \$10,000, or how salary differential funding is affected by the reallocation of the labour settlement costs supplement.

Is the funding increase enough to cover district shortfalls?

The budget addresses some but not all of the cost pressures identified by the BCASBO. The \$112 increase in operating grants funding is targeted for two major cost pressures facing school districts—full-day Kindergarten and negotiated salary costs for teachers. Cost pressures such as BC Hydro rate increases, MSP premiums, and carbon offsets are not covered. Nor does

this take into account the loss of purchasing power due to general inflation for goods and services or underfunded mandates such as BCEsis, Bill 33 reporting, and early learning and literacy initiatives. Funding for Early Learning and Literacy programs actually decreases by \$1.4 million in 2010-11, so this may increase the burden on school districts.

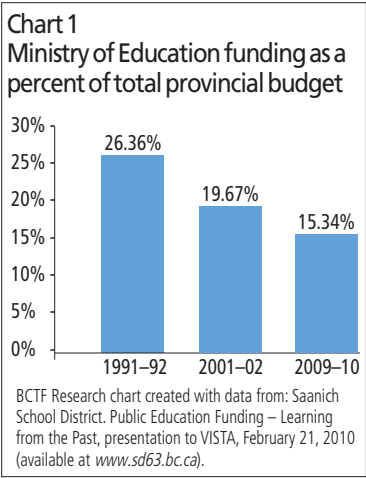
While a strong advocacy movement helped to restore some of the funding lost in previous budgets, more work remains to be done. An open and comprehensive review of funding adequacy and the funding formula, involving all stakeholders, is also needed.

Budget 2010 may cushion the blow of school closures, mass layoffs, and loss of education programs, but many districts will still face significant shortfalls. This will especially be the case for the 33 districts that receive no funding increase for 2010-11. Early media reports suggest that the district allocations in the 2010-11 Operating Grants Manual will reduce the budget shortfall for Surrey from \$15 million to \$12 million, for Prince George from \$7 million to \$5.2 million, and for Nanaimo-Ladysmith from \$3 million to \$1.5 million. Two districts reported an increase in projected budget shortfalls—Saanich (from \$2.6 to \$3.3 million) and Vancouver (from \$17.5 to \$18.12 million), after the 2010-11 Operating Grants allocations.

These are early warning signs that the funding crisis is not over.

Comprehensive review of education funding needed

Due to a vigorous lobbying effort in the fall by all education partners across the province in response to



the September 2009 provincial budget, the Ministry of Education restored at least some of the AFG for 2010-11, provided additional funding for full-day Kindergarten, and addressed additional costs for teachers’ wage settlements.

The ministry undertook a major change in the funding formula by reallocating the supplement for additional costs resulting from labour settlements to the rest of the funding formula. Little documentation is provided in the Operating Grants Manual to assess how this funding was reallocated. This makes it impossible to compare funding allocations for each supplement to previous years, or to assess how each component in the additional labour settlement costs supplement changed. It appears that operating grants supplements and per-student funding are increasing, but most of the funding is actually a transfer from one area to another.

While a strong advocacy movement helped to restore some of the funding lost in previous budgets, more work remains to be done. An open and comprehensive review of funding adequacy and the funding formula, involving all stakeholders, is also needed.

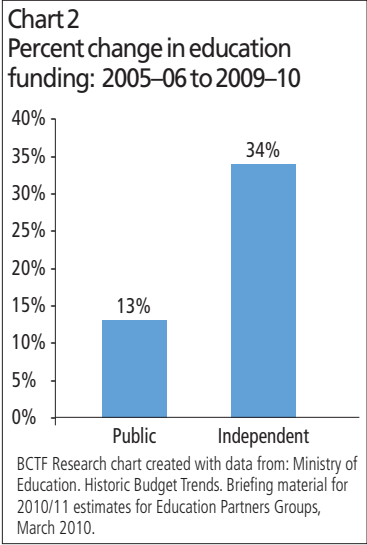
References supplied upon request.

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Margaret White is a research analyst, BCTF Research Department.

For a comprehensive research report on this topic, go to: bctf.ca/publications.aspx?id=5630#Edfunding



Bargaining 2011

At this year's AGM, we began asking members what they hope for in the upcoming round of bargaining in 2011.



Bernice Jay, VESTA

What would you like to achieve in the next round of bargaining?

Widespread membership participation through the local bargaining process.

1. That members believe in the local bargaining process; trust that members’ voices are being heard; and that the bargaining team is doing their best to negotiate on behalf of members.
2. That members be brave, open, and willing to do whatever it takes to achieve our bargaining objectives.
3. That members stand in solidarity and stick together like glue.

Most important issues for you?

Working and learning conditions: that class-size/class-composition language that was stripped from our collective agreements be reinstated! Children's learning conditions are our teaching conditions!



Gerald Caissie, Kamloops Thompson

What would you like to achieve in the next round of bargaining?

1. Better split of prov/local issues.
2. Class size and composition and non-enrolling staffing.
3. Infusion of cash into Pension IAA.
4. Seniority for TTOCs in post and fill.
5. Retainment stipend for TTOCs and/or benefits package.

Most important issues for you?

1. Class size/composition and non-enrolling staffing
2. Seniority for TTOCs in post and fill.
3. Infusion of cash into Pension IAA.

AGM recommendation acknowledges our traditional territories

A lesson in the democratic process at it finest was an interesting way to commence spring break at the BCTF AGM. A recommendation put forward—“that schools and school districts should begin all events with an official recognition of the Aboriginal territory or territories on which the school district is located”—passed, I believe, without dissent.

Langley's Aboriginal Program, School District 35, and the Ministry of the Education are about to sign their second enhancement agreement and one of the main goals of this agreement that came forward from the community consultation process, time and time again, was that in order for schools to be a place of success for Aboriginal children, it is essential for our children to feel a sense of belonging. By acknowledging the traditional territories, Kwantlen, Katzie, and Matsqui we are demonstrating respect, and in doing so, we are

contributing to a sense of belonging.

Members of the provincial Aboriginal advisory committee were pleased to have this pass because it is one more step in the acknowledgement of the changes needed to provide a safe, respectful, and welcoming place for our children to learn.

That being said, while reading Janet Steffenhagen's blog (see below) and in particular the follow up comments regarding this recommendation, it's clear there is much work to be done in our province, and in our country to establish respect, understanding, and acceptance to build a better place to live for our children who will be our future leaders.

Gail Stromquist

Langley

<http://www.vancouversun.com/sports/School+events+should+begin+with+aboriginal+recognition+teachers+federation/2651917/story.html>

70 years ago

The Editor has loved teaching, more than most perhaps, but in preparation for coming days when he will no longer meet his accustomed classes, he has sought to cultivate intellectual curiosity which no years of leisure can discouragingly satisfy. If he is to live out the span traditional in his family, he hopes not to die so ignorant as he is at present regarding various sciences and topics worthy of investigation. He hopes still to find tasks adapted to his capacities. Some of them will be worth while because they will enable him to keep in touch with and to continue to give some service in the educational world, but some of them will be worth while because for the first time in a busy life, he will have a chance to do certain things, perhaps not very important in themselves, that he is hungry to get at.

– April 1940, *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

“Audio-visual aids indeed! We never had them when I was a girl!”

This scornful retort from an elderly lady represents an educational philosophy which claims more than you would think. Such people would add: “Elizabethan children had no visual or aural aids—but look what Shakespeare did! And how many films did they show Chaucer?” It is the duty of every Social Studies teacher to introduce his pupils to the world of visual and aural education so that they can choose wisely in the welter of material available to them as adults.

– April 1960, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

Typically in a Montessori setting you soon discover an atmosphere of serenity and serendipity. Do we not all desire such an atmosphere in our classrooms and our home? How often I have bitten my tongue when out of the best intentions the “teacher” in me emerges to try to do something for my children they can do themselves, instead of doing what Maria Montessori recommended when asked to summarize her educational philosophy: “Attendere, osservando”—watch

and wait. Imagine getting a salary for watching and waiting!

– March/April 1980, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

Commercialization is tainting more areas of society all the time. It is becoming difficult to escape no matter where one goes. It has become apparent that there is, indeed, a deliberate corporate agenda in place to try to influence those with the most impressionable minds. As educators we can't do much about retired hockey stars on the grocery store shelves, but we are well-placed to try and minimize, if not eliminate, the commercialization of our schools. The first step is to become aware of the extent to which it is already around us, and to avoid becoming desensitized to it. The people intent on turning our students into future consumers would like nothing better than to be able to count on our apathy.

– April 2000, *Teacher* newsmagazine

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich



BC budget day

Let the spin begin

By Stacey Robinsmith

March 2, 2010, was budget release day in BC. And just as I did in September of last year, I made my way to the premier’s office at Canada Place. As usual, when I entered the premier’s office I was forced to relinquish all devices that could electronically connect me to the outer world. I was also forced to sign a waiver saying something about not spilling the beans on the budget details until after Minister Hansen has “risen in the House.” This is an age-old tradition that prevents people from unfairly profiting from the information contained in the budget.

On to the BC budget. “Budget 2010 maintains the government’s priority of protecting core services in health and education and commits every dollar raised through the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) and four other revenue streams to

be used for health services funding when the HST comes into effect July 1, 2010.” Let the spin begin.

The framing on this issue in “Liberalspeak” is that now, if you are opposed to the HST, you must be opposed to healthcare. The reality is that it makes no difference that revenue streams are being designated as specific to certain ministries. All revenues are accumulated in the consolidated revenue fund (CRF). And all provincial expenditures are taken from the CRF.

The big spender ministry is still health services. The health services ministry budget allotment is \$14.8 billion. That is an increase of approximately \$750 million over the previous year, although those dollars are not for public-sector wage increases. The government has committed to continue collective bargaining within a net-zero increase wage mandate. In other

words, the collective bargaining process, a process typically utilized by public-sector unions to increase wages, has no mandate to negotiate increases in wages. Good luck with those negotiations.

On the HST situation, the provincial government was supposed to receive a cheque from the federal government for \$1.6 billion to ease the transition from a PST/GST tax regime to the Harmonized Sales Tax. Now that money is not coming in one lump-sum payment. In fact, the provincial government is set to receive \$250 million in 2009–10, and \$769 million in 2010–11. Perhaps not so coincidentally, on the eve of the next provincial election the provincial government will receive the final instalment of \$580 million. It doesn’t hurt to have an extra \$580 million to help balance the provincial budget leading into an election year.

And then there is education

funding. The per-pupil funding for students in the K–12 school system will be increased to \$8,301. Prepare to listen to the minister endlessly repeat the refrain of “the highest funding level ever.”

There actually is some good news in the provincial education budget; additional funding to cover the cost of the new full-day Kindergarten program is being provided. Funding for that program has been set at \$44 million in 2010–11 and \$107 million in 2011–12. The voluntary full-day Kindergarten program is set to roll out in half of BC school districts this coming September. Full-day Kindergarten will be available in all BC school districts starting in September 2011.

Along with additional funding to cover the cost of the new full-day Kindergarten program, there are additional dollars to fully fund the negotiated teacher’s 2% salary lift and the costs that school districts will incur as a result of the HST.

However, the \$23.1 million needed to cover the 1.04% teachers’ pension increase is not funded. The \$6 million that districts will have to pay for the new carbon offset tax is not funded. The MSP premium

The framing on this issue in “Liberalspeak” is that now, if you are opposed to the HST, you must be opposed to healthcare. The reality is that it makes no difference that revenue streams are being designated as specific to certain ministries. All revenues are accumulated in the consolidated revenue fund (CRF). And all provincial expenditures are taken from the CRF.

increase will cost districts \$2.9 million—not funded; BC Hydro will charge districts an additional \$2.4 million—not funded; \$3.3 million for the CUPE Trades adjustment—not funded.

The one positive piece of news

was that there is a partial restoration of the \$110 million Annual Facilities Grant.

When Michael Ewen, New Westminster school trustee was contacted for comment on the education piece of the 2010 budget. He replied,

“I am cautiously optimistic with the increases we have seen in this budget, but the proof, as they say, is in the pudding. I can’t be sure how good the news is until we get the real numbers March 15; sometimes numbers from politicians can mean different things. But it certainly looks like the Liberal government has moved away from the education funding precipice.”

However, Irene Lanzinger, of the BC Teachers’ Federation, feels that the budget does not adequately address the public education funding puzzle, “This government has no long-term plan to improve classroom conditions for students. There’s no plan to improve class sizes or support for students with special needs, and there is no plan to prevent school closures.”

One thing is clear; this is not the budget that will see BC lose its position in Canada as the jurisdiction with the highest child poverty rate.

This is how Carol James, leader of the Opposition New Democrats, summed up the budget: “The budget also failed to address the growing social inequality we’ve seen under the BC Liberals. There was nothing in this budget to address child poverty, the growing income gap, or lack of affordable housing.”

And finally, remember the oddly placed pictures of Premier Campbell? There are more of them. And they are just as disconcerting as ever.

To read more of my informed, insightful, and irreverent political commentary visit, www.theleftcoast.ca.

Stacey Robinsmith teaches at New Westminster Secondary School, New Westminster.

Relationships: Teacher colleges and teacher unions

By Larry Kuehn

British Columbia is not unique in having a college of teachers imposed on the profession by a right-wing government. Nor is it unique in experiencing tension between the two types of organizations, union and college. Both Chile and Peru have also been through challenges developed from the creation of colleges, as described in recent meetings with teacher leaders in both countries.

The Colegio de Profesores de Chile

The case of Chile shows one way of creating something positive from a negative, as described by members of the executive of the Colegio de Profesores de Chile (CPC), at a recent meeting in Chile.

Almost immediately after the military coup in Chile in 1973, the teachers’ union was outlawed. Soon after, the Pinochet dictatorship created the Colegio de Profesores de Chile. The members of the governing council were all government appointees, selected by the Interior Ministry (security) rather than the Education Ministry.

Activist teachers organized, on an underground basis, as a part of the resistance to the dictatorship. As its days were drawing to a close, the dictatorship finally let teachers elect the directors of the colegio in 1986. The teachers who had been organizing were successful in using the election to take control of the colegio.

Although it does not have

collective bargaining rights, the colegio operates as a union. Its executive is elected by teachers and it negotiates with government. Agreements reached are legislated, rather than being signed by the two parties. The colegio goes on strike to improve conditions of teachers. This last year they were on strike for 40 days—although with unsatisfactory results, according to at least some members of the colegio.

The transforming of the organization from one aimed at imposing government policies into one that represents teachers, is an example of what can be accomplished by collective action.

The Colegio in Peru

Reforming the imposed colegio to meet the needs of teachers was the strategy chosen by teacher leaders in the context of Chile. Quite a different approach was taken by the teachers in Peru, as described by Soledad Lozano, the Dean of Peru’s college of teachers at a recent visit in Lima. Going to Lozano’s office for our meeting involved walking past the office of the International Secretary of SUTEP, the teachers’ union in Peru. The colegio and the union share a building.

As in Chile, the colegio, was imposed by a right-wing government intent on creating a parallel organization to wipe out, or at least weaken, the teachers’ union, SUTEP. SUTEP has been one of Peru’s strongest and most militant civil society organizations.

Three slates were put up for the first election in 2005 among the 360,000 people who registered to be

members. Besides SUTEP’s slate, the election was contested by a government slate and an “education leaders” slate. Soledad Lozano won, heading up the SUTEP slate. She was by far the best-known of the candidates, having been secretary-general of SUTEP (equivalent to president in our unions).

The central plank of the SUTEP slate was that the colegio must be integrally tied to the union, not a parallel and competing structure.

Lozano said that the World Bank has identified creating colleges of teachers as one way to undermine teacher unions by setting up competing organizations. They identify teacher unions as the main impediment to the neo-liberal reforms they are trying to impose.

despite the legal wrangling. In particular, it has reached agreement with some of the municipal teacher-training institutions. This is particularly important since much of teacher training in Peru has been privatized. The private institutions are looking for profits, which come from the tuition of thousands of students who are given very inadequate training.

The private institutions only focus on subject matter, without any attention to pedagogical practice, Lozano said. A test, developed by a private company, is given to qualify as a teacher, and few pass it. It is very biased, with some questions based on knowing religious teachings, and others that have multiple right answers. The test is particularly irrelevant to the large indigenous cultures, such as those in the Peruvian Amazon, blocking potential indigenous teachers from being able to work in the schools.

Since 2001, about 200,000 students have been through teacher training, but are not employed. This, despite class sizes that average about 45 or 50.

Lozano said that the biggest issue for the future is who will win over the young teachers. One element of doing this, she said, was that the union be included in workshops offered by the colegio.

What is the attraction of a college of teachers?

Lozano said that the World Bank has identified creating colleges of teachers as one way to undermine teacher unions by setting up competing organizations. They identify

teacher unions as the main impediment to the neo-liberal reforms they are trying to impose.

Weakening the union by setting up a competing structure is clearly a motivator of right-wing governments. In addition, even beyond the issues of power and influence, there is a difference in the conception of the nature of the professional relationship.

The college is an individualist and elitist concept of professionalism. The teacher is regulated in this individual relationship, and should feel good about it because it places them with the other professions seen as elites, such as doctors and lawyers.

In contrast, the union concept of professionalism is a collective one and one based on egalitarianism. Collective professional interests are about the conditions of teaching, sharing in the development of sound pedagogical practices, seeking the social conditions that support all children, and working together to achieve those objectives.

Our colleagues in Chile and Peru have worked hard and with some success at ensuring that the colleges in their countries have not succeeded in destroying collective professionalism. One has done it by turning the college into a union, the other by making sure that the two are in tandem, and not in competition.

Larry Kuehn is director of the BCTF’s Research and Technology Division and co-ordinator of the BCTF International Solidarity Program.

Owning the Podium—Teachers and the Olympics

By Lance Read

As a retired teacher looking back in from outside the profession these past few years, there seems to me to have been a surprising about-face of teachers in this province. I recall during my final years of teaching, that most of my colleagues had serious misgivings about the Olympics, the inevitable costs and tax burden, and the eventual effect the extravagant expense for a 17-day party (plus nine for Paralympics) would likely have on funding for healthcare, education, and other important social programs.

We had just been through two years of work-to-rule due to drawn out contract negotiations. While some of us continued to coach sports and sponsor clubs, others chose not to, causing a slight rift in school staff as a result of government funding issues even back when the bid was a baby. Back then, the IOC and VANOC assured us that the games would break even or make a small profit. Of course that was when we were misled about security costs being \$175 million. When I retired in 2007, VANOC had adjusted that figure to \$500 million and eventually \$750 million. This all seemed a bit strange as the security for the much less complicated and easier to secure Torino 2006 venue had come in at \$1.4 billion.

Up until a few months ago, many teachers continued to fret somewhat about the financial effects of the Olympics on our already stressed education funding. The

government's own arbitrator had ruled that the Liberals had broken their own legislation extensively throughout the province. From the very beginning, some of us wondered what would happen if the games actually hemorrhaged money. In his definitive book, *Five Ring Circus*, Chris Shaw had shown us solid numbers several years earlier, as to why the Olympics will leave us at least \$6 billion in the hole like most recent games while, leaving no positive future economic benefits. None! (Sauder School of Business, UBC).

Teachers in the know were concerned about the environmental impacts of the 17 days of games. Tens of thousands of mature trees mowed down for the Nordic events venue, the Eagle Ridge ecosystem obliterated, millions of tonnes of rebar and concrete carbon by-product ejected into the atmosphere and the massive climate costs of air travel for 250,000 visitors, media, IOC elite and their families, 2,500 athletes and their thousands of coaches, support staff, and entourage, as well as flying in the bulk of 16,000 security personnel from all over Canada. Those of us who taught in Coquitlam, along with regular transit users, watched in disbelief as the desperately needed on-again, off-again Evergreen line was bumped by the less important RAV line to YVR. Once the Canada Line was completed, Translink announced the Evergreen line cancelled due to lack of funds.

Many teachers seemed to ignore the fact that the IOC contradicted their own charter and ideals. Anyone reviewing the *Olympic*

Charter soon sees in how many areas the IOC (and VANOC) fail, e.g., excluding women from ski-jumping was wrong, as the IOC states: *Fundamental Principals #5. Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement. Mission #7. To encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women;*

Our highest courts ruled that excluding women from ski-jumping was unconstitutional for Canada, but the Olympic Industries are not a behemoth to be messed with. After all, they are perhaps the only multi-million-dollar international entity to pay no taxes at all, in any country even their own home base.

Yet somehow as the 17-day party drew nearer, as the torch relay (originally concocted by Adolf Hitler) made its \$80 million way around our country, BC teachers fell in line. The same teachers who initially suggested they wouldn't even make use of the \$3 million wasted for Olympic classroom curriculum, organized for classes to stand and watch the torch pass through their communities. Some teachers actually carried the torch, the same torch that symbolized a black hole of unlimited funding which would suck much needed resources away from our education system. Teachers flocked to the torch province-wide with their classes forgetting all about funding ills that have beset these very

students.

To a few of us, the mantra "Own the Podium." reeked of American egoism. To us it seemed so "un-Canadian" and in fact ran totally contrary to the original ideal of the games being about participation, not medals: *Principal #1. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.* Somewhere along the way for many, winning men's hockey gold became crucial to the overall success of the games.

There is nothing wrong with all of us striving to perform at our highest level in every endeavour, in encouraging our students to do so as well—whether in athletics, performing arts, or academics, but investing such a disproportionate amount of money, effort, and time into some single physical activity, to me, is contrary to the ideal of the well-rounded individual teacher and especially, the student.

BC teachers, especially high school coaches knew that the Olympic black hole was a significant factor because a third of BC secondary school sports funding was being redirected away from student athletes. Yet in all this, many BC teachers embraced the games. Most teachers are aware too, that Canadian youth are in the midst of a growing epidemic of obesity, that fast food and soda pop are a significant contributing factor,

yet teachers supported these games even though McDonalds and Coke Cola have been the traditional major sponsors.

If everything unfolds as per usual, the IOC (and VANOC) will declare these games a smashing success. They will likely proclaim the games a financial success, hide the true finances for 18 or 20 months until London 2012 is upon us and the sick cycle will continue. The pristine wilderness of Sochi Russia, including the UNESCO protected Caucasus Biosphere Reserve and Sochi National Park with 250,000 trees slated for removal will be the site of the next Olympic environmental disaster. I wonder if more BC teachers will then wake up to the facts. Hopefully, enough teachers will learn from our mistake and actively support educators in future bid cities, to defeat the process.

I also wonder if we and our governments will continue to shift money away from education and BC sports in order to *Own the Podium* again in 2014. At the close of these games our national debt had blown past \$515 billion. That's over half-a-trillion dollars.

"Well, the Canadian Olympic Committee has finally checked its ego at the door, admitting its Own the Podium program will fall far short of the medal standing it hoped for!" Peter Mansbridge, *CBC News*, Monday, Feb. 22, 2010.

Lance Read, a retired teacher, submitted this article prior to men's hockey semi-final weekend and closing ceremonies.

Welcome to Tupper Tech

A different type of trades program for Grade 12 students

By Karen Larsen

I arrive at the entrance to room B113 at Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School in East Vancouver, where I am greeted by a 17-year-old male, dressed in marine-blue coveralls. He holds the door for me and welcomes me to Tupper Tech. I pause—did that really happen—without adult prompting? I venture a little further into the auto shop where another young man, clad in the same blue-coloured overalls, hands me protective eyewear and instructs me to put them on. "Safety rules" he smiles, "this is a working shop." Something magical happens when they don those blue smurf suits and I need to learn more about the program behind the coveralls.

Tupper Tech is a program like none other in BC's secondary school system. Tupper Tech offers trades training for Grade 12 learners who know they want to pursue a trade, but who are not sure which trade. Student Lucky Nguyen says, "If you don't know what you want to be in the future, it (Tupper Tech) gives you options."

Uncertainty is what sets Tupper Tech apart from other career-oriented trades programs offered province-wide. There are more than 180 dual-credit programs offered across BC (where students simultaneously earn secondary school and college credit)—dual-credit students, however, are focused on one specific trade. Tupper Tech is not a dual-credit program, because students do not earn post-secondary credits.

Vancouver schools run linear timetables, affording Tupper Tech students the luxury of spending all day, every-other-day in the technol-

ogy education shops. For their efforts, students earn 16 Grade 12 credits (8 credits of Work Experience and 8 credits of BAA courses), as well as 4 credits for Math 11E.

The 2010 class is the third cohort to move through the program. Classroom projects vary from year to year, based on the interests and

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abilities of the students. Skills in carpentry, plumbing, welding, metal fabrication, tile-setting, drafting, electrical, and mechanical engine (automotive) service are taught. Eventually, each student seems to find her or his niche.

Mike Cuenta admits that Tupper Tech was the "...best choice for me, I was failing my academics. I don't excel in a desk, I'm meant to be a hands-on worker. I can see myself working on cars 30 years from now." Cuenta smiles when asked for his parent's reaction at his decision to enter the trades, "My mom was surprised to see 99% on my report card."

Ben Sheppard came to Sir Charles Tupper from a private school. He feels that "electives can get you somewhere in life if they have a practical application." Observing the action in the Tupper Tech classroom when he was still in Grade 10 was



Tupper Tech students Mike Cuenta and Lucky Nguyen.

enough to convince Ben to apply. His sights are set on BCIT Welding Level C.

Hemen Saed, formerly of David Thompson Secondary School, transferred schools due to the allure of Tupper Tech. Saed was not experiencing success at school, so his father met with a DT counsellor; she suggested Saed would be a good candidate for Tupper Tech. Dad came home, pitched the idea to his son, and he bit. He has narrowed his career choices to carpentry or plumbing and feels that perhaps one day he will open his own home-renovation business.

Leon Luu's initial passion was cars, but after a work experience in automotive service and another in electrical, Luu chose the latter. He is enrolled in the September 2010 BCIT Entry Level Trades Training electrical program. "My mom wanted me to be a doctor. Isn't that what all Asian parents want?" Luu recounts. "Now she thinks I should

do what I like."

After two hours in the Tupper Tech classroom, I am dismayed that there really isn't magic woven into the fabric of those blue coveralls. Thoughts about ordering a set for my own classroom disappear. I was looking forward to the manners, work ethic, pride, and confidence that the coveralls seem to instil in those who wear them. While I understand that the clothing might not have magical powers, there is a magician in the room. His name is Russ Evans and he is their teacher.

Evans holds full qualifications in three trades—automotive service technician, marine mechanic, and small-engine mechanic. He designed the Tupper Tech program, quite simply, because he saw a need. Seventeen-year-olds might know they are interested in a trade, but very few of them have enough life experience to know which trade best suits them. And so Tupper Tech was born.

Evans operates his classroom much like a business. He has a few classroom rules and they are clearly understood. Show up to class—students are permitted up to 1.5 sick days per month, beyond that there are consequences. Be on time by arriving early—students must be ready to start work the minute the bell goes. Perform tasks correctly—according to Ben Sheppard, "In this course you can either do something or you can't. There are no part marks."

These young people speak ever-so-highly about Russ Evans. Basically, they feel he embodies all the components of a great teacher. To 17-year-olds, good teaching boils down to:

- Encouraging critical thinking skills. Sheppard pronounces, "He teaches you a technique, not how to do it. If he just told us how to do it, we'd always only do it that one way."
 - Being persistent. "Mr. Evans won't leave you alone until you've got a (career) path. Really, he's doing us a favour. In Tupper Tech, we send in BCIT applications and all have been accepted," says Saed.
 - Letting your personality shine through. When asked to elaborate on why he believes Mr. Evans is a great teacher, Luu says "He has a loud voice. He's scary...a bit nice. He's not like any other teacher. He can relate to you. Really, he's not a teacher, he's a boss."
- Keep up the good work, Mr. Evans. Your unique set of skills and your style of teaching are having the desired effect. You are one of many BC teachers who are making a difference for youth.

Karen Larsen is a career education teacher at RE Mountain Secondary School, Langley. She is currently on a temporary assignment with the Vancouver Board of Education, promoting trades and apprenticeship for youth.

Paths to full-day Kindergarten



Full-day Kindergarten coming soon to a school near you

By Jean Adshead and Fiona MacNicol-Clark

We were pleased to read Karen Bernath’s excellent article in last month’s *Teacher* magazine. She succinctly described the feelings of many Kindergarten and primary teachers. Some of us are old enough to remember the introduction of the Kindergarten Program that preceded the years before the Primary Program. There was great excitement at being able to better provide for our youngest students in a true play-based learning environment.

With the arrival of full-day Kindergarten (FDK), many are anxiously waiting to have answers to the questions we hear asked at meetings and in staffrooms in our school districts. Who will supervise at recess and lunch? What about materials, furniture, and equipment? Will there be a phase-in policy? What will the day look like? How will I balance the day so that our children do not get too tired? Will it become a *pushdown* Grade 1? What about multigrade classrooms?

By now you will know if your school is having FDK next September or waiting until September 2011. We, on the executive of the BC Primary Teacher’s Association, in conjunction with the BCTF, have been busy preparing workshops that will help you in preparation for FDK and also revisit the goals of the Primary Program.

The Primary Program is one of the recommended curriculum documents for the K–3 years, but many teachers are unfamiliar with this marvelous resource for all teachers in general, but primary teachers in particular. It provides philosophy and research on how primary-aged students learn, as well as best practice on engaging young learners in language development and productive play. We are hoping that the advent of full-day Kindergarten will rejuvenate the Primary Program philosophy by providing a vehicle to revisit how young children learn and allow us to align our practice.

“Play is the business of childhood, and it has a unique and vital role in the whole educational process.” (Weininger 1994)

Play contributes to social, emotional, cognitive, and physical

development. It allows children to imitate, to practice, and to make sense of their world.

In environments rich with materials and print, children incorporate literacy into their dramatic play, using these tools to enhance the drama and realism of the pretend situation.

We agree with the ministry that young children learn best through active learning and play. Imagine being able to stretch all that we did in 2 ½ hours to 5 long hours. What a wonderful opportunity! As Early Primary Educators, we believe that children need certain elements to be in place for them to play, learn and grow: artistically, socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically (these are the five goals of the Primary Program—download it at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/primary_program).

Children’s learning should be play-based, integrated, engaging, and interactive in the child’s “zone of proximal development” (ZPD), which illustrates how people can stretch beyond their individual capabilities toward more mature cognitive functioning when they learn through social interactions. (Vygotsky, 1978) p.46, Primary Program.

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, coined the term *zone of proximal development* to describe how children learn. Children learn through scaffolding—at the beginning a child needs direct support and modeling, and bit by bit the scaffolding is released until the child can work independently. When a child is supported in learning, the child is pulled into their ZPD—what they can do with support. This zone is beyond what children could do had they not been initially supported by the teacher.

Vygotsky’s work was relatively unknown in the West until the 1980s when it gradually came to the attention of educators as an option to Piaget’s ideas that children learn when developmentally ready. Vygotsky’s work on play is also of great importance, as well as his cognitive tools that he believes need to be in place for optimal learning. For further reading, try Vygotsky, LS (1978), *Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

This developmentally appropriate play happens through hands-on, exploratory activities that are relevant to children and their world. Children make meaning through interactive and social collaboration. Primary teachers model, guide, and support learning as children build

academic and social skills through these purposeful play experiences. Teachers look for teachable moments through observation, listening, asking questions, and encouraging critical thinking, thus moving children’s play into new areas of learning.

Kindergarten classrooms should be welcoming, safe, child-friendly, colourful, and responsive to each child’s needs with children’s creations on display. They should be organized in a way to invite lots of opportunities for play, talk, exploration, and discovery. Appropriate early childhood equipment and materials with effective storage systems should be plentiful and accessible allowing for independent choice and movement.

Our FDK workshop will walk you through current wise practice for Kindergarten as well as all primary grades. We want to support you and this exciting process of implementation as it evolves across our province. We will share appropriate play-based learning centres and some sample plans for you to use as starting points using a variety of teaching styles: theme-based, project-based, inquiry-based, literature-based, multiple intelligences, genre, and/or learning styles. We want to create support networks as we all work our way through this new era in primary education.

Jean Adshead and Fiona MacNicol-Clark are Richmond primary teachers.

To have our team come to your district, contact Kelly Shields at kshields@bctf.ca or Bonnie Quan Symons bquansymonds@bctf.ca

When did education in British Columbia become a race?

By David Buckna

In his September 1, 2009 budget speech, BC Finance Minister Colin Hansen said the government is “committing \$151 million to provide the option of full-day Kindergarten for 50% of the children starting school next fall, and for every five-year-old in British Columbia by September 2011...”

When did education in British Columbia become a race? According to world-renowned family therapist and parenting author Steve Biddulph (www.stevebiddulph.com) full-day Kindergarten for five-year-olds is too long, and any younger is a big mistake developmentally. In support of Biddulph’s claim, a major review of British primary schools by Cambridge University included a report from the National Foundation for Educational Research, which stated the practice of allowing children to start school at age four was found to be stressful.

Yet authors Anna Riggall and Caroline Sharp found that in some countries where students start school up to two years later, many outperform their English peers. The authors conclude: “While the value of high-quality pre-school education is beyond dispute, the assumption that an early primary school starting age is beneficial for children’s later attainment is not well supported by the research evidence.”

Biddulph says the calendar is a poor guide for when a child should start school. Decades of research has shown that most boys (and some girls) are slower to develop fine motor and language skills.

Many of these children would benefit from an additional year in Kindergarten—full-day senior Kindergarten. They could begin Grade 1 at age seven, when their fine-motor skills are ready for pencil-and-paper work.

In his web article, *We Can Do Better By Boys*, Biddulph writes: “In English speaking countries, boys make up more than 80% of all remedial classes. In Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and many other countries where school [Grade 1] does not begin until age seven, this gender gap in literacy does not exist...hence the idea of boys delaying starting school till they are at least six. It can mean a choice between your son being one of the youngest in his class, feeling inadequate, being the least able, or being one of the most co-ordinated and confident by waiting and starting the following year—and having this remain so all the way through school. Professor Kathy Sylva at Oxford University recently reported findings that starting school too soon creates a failure mentality, while Kindergarten—which used to be a year of play, activity, and social learning—has succumbed more and more to pressure for skills learning. This compounds the problem.”

Biddulph writes in his best-selling book, *Raising Boys*: “This (later start) needn’t be done rigidly. It can be based on some simple screening of fine motor skills and in consultation with parents and school staff. Many schools today have to dissuade parents whose attitude to education is to see it as a race, and wish to enrol children earlier and earlier as if they can get a head start! Thoughtful parents will understand the benefits of a delayed start for boys, once these are explained.” Biddulph also goes on to say that a child’s starting age “...can be made more flexible based on actual ability—a far more rational approach.”

Educators in several European countries have promoted this idea for years, and it has paid off not only in happier children, but also in terms of academic success and far fewer drop-outs.

The *Globe and Mail* article by Marina Jiménez (Early Education’s Top Model: Finland, June 16, 2009—available online at www.theglobeandmail.com), (search *Education Finland*) that although all Finnish children have access to free, full-day daycare (up to age five) and Kindergarten (age six), they don’t begin primary school [Grade 1] until age seven.

Jiménez writes, “Finland has consistently been among the highest scorers worldwide in the international assessment for student performance—a study carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.”

“In 2006, Finland’s 15-year-olds scored the highest in science and the second highest in literacy of 57 countries. The World Economic Forum ranks Finland No. 1 in enrolment and quality and No. 2 in math and science education.”

It’s easy to understand why many parents would like full-day Kindergarten, as it would be convenient for those who would otherwise seek out daycare for the other half of the day. But Kindergarten is more rigorous and task-oriented than daycare, and most five-year-olds will find full-day Kindergarten too demanding. In Kindergarten there is less opportunity for free play, which is crucial for a child’s development.

Psychologist Kathy Hirsh-Pasek (Temple University) comments, “The philosophy of play is really about an

integrated philosophy of learning. It’s about how human beings get information. We learn by being active, not passive...I think today we have a real problem in a misperception of play. I think we think of play as not work, and when we realize that, as [Jean] Piaget once said, ‘...play is the work of childhood.’ Piaget was one of the greatest living psychologists of our time.” (Listen to the interview at www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/hurried-infant/index.html.)

Rather than using the \$151 million set aside for full-day Kindergarten, the government should be creating full-day senior Kindergarten classes for those six-year-olds who would benefit, and restore cuts to programs, as well as the reduced funding for school sports and Parent Advisory Councils.*

If a Canada-wide survey was done of parents who enrolled their own children in Grade 1 at age seven—especially parents who are teachers themselves—I’m certain the vast majority would say it was one of the best decisions they ever made as parents.

Children need good models and so do governments. At the very least, the Campbell government and Ministry of Education should put full-day Kindergarten for five-year-olds on hold, and investigate the Finland model. Not to do so is to choose expediency over reason.

For more information, listen to an interview with Carl Honore, (www.carlhonore.com) author of *Under Pressure: Putting the Child Back in Childhood*, (www.cbc.ca/wordsatlarge/blog/2008/04/under_pressure_by_carl_honore_1.html).

David Buckna teaches at Rose Valley Elementary School, Kelowna.

* Note: Although the government promised in last month’s budget announcement to restore the Annual Facility Grant, there are expenses beyond teacher salaries that are still unfunded and will create challenges for boards trying to balance their 2011–12 budgets.



Is full-day Kindergarten a good idea?

By Rita Chudnovsky

For many BC childcare advocates, the expansion of Kindergarten is a significant and promising development. We believe that, if done well, building on the elements of public Kindergarten can, and will, make a real difference in the lives of children, families, caregivers, and communities.

To understand why, it’s important to start with Canada’s and BC’s shameful record on meeting the needs of our very young children. Although Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, we rank last among OECD countries in providing public funding and access to quality early learning and childcare services. And, a 2008 UNICEF report puts Canada last out of 25 developed countries in achieving family policy benchmarks that support young children.

Every day, BC children, families,

and communities struggle with the realities of the resulting childcare crisis. While mothers of young children, including many teachers, are in the paid labour force in unprecedented numbers, there is still only licensed childcare space for 15% of BC children under 12. Parent fees, which generally cover about 80% of the cost of childcare, are higher than post-secondary tuition and for some families, more than their monthly mortgage payment. And, wages earned by college-trained early childhood educators remain at poverty levels.

This situation persists despite the mounting evidence that the child's first few years of life lay the groundwork for lifelong health and development and that quality experiences during those early years matter.

So, what is the problem? Well, unlike school, childcare is NOT a system. There is no legislated right to participate in quality childcare. There is no accountable level of government with a mandate to plan, develop, and deliver childcare. There is minimal direct funding to cover the operating costs of childcare. And, while educated, dedicated early childhood educators do a heroic job of providing the best quality they can—they are working in a patchwork of disconnected services where parents and children are consumers rather than citizens with rights.

In this context, it is a victory that this provincial government has accepted that young children have a right to universal, publicly funded, democratically controlled services, where the people who nurture them are respected and relatively well paid. After 30 years of advocacy for a childcare system built on these very principles, it offers an opportunity for progress that we cannot ignore.

That doesn't mean we don't have serious questions and concerns. Like many teachers, we have little reason to trust that, on their own, this government will put the interests of children and working families first. So, if the expansion of Kindergarten is going to move us forward—it must be done well.

First, doing it well means ensuring that early care and learning programs meet the developmental needs of all children. For starters, BC must end the false divide between childcare, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and early learning, the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

The research, evidence, and lived experience of BC children and families make it clear that, for young children, learning occurs in the context of caring relationships and play-based, developmentally appropriate experiences throughout children's waking hours—not in neatly defined time slots, whether called *school* or *childcare*.

We share very legitimate worries about a narrow school readiness approach and the downward extension of standardized testing to ever younger children. For us, doing it well means reframing *readiness* to a focus on schools that are ready for children. It also means being open to the potential that the best of early childhood education practice can have a positive upward influence on the whole education system.

Doing it well also means that expanded Kindergarten programs meet the needs of working families, for whom the term, all-day Kindergarten, is a misnomer. At best, current plans call for full school-day, full school-year Kindergarten. Let's be clear. The majority of mothers of four- and five-year-olds are in the paid labour force to stay. Most of them need full-day, full-year care for their children—not instead of learning, but as an integrated and equal part of a universal system of early care

and learning.

Not surprisingly, doing it well also means providing adequate resources to ensure programs are sustainable and that other children's services don't pay the price. For childcare, it means ensuring quality services for all are sustained and expanded as four- and five-year-olds move into the public education system—no matter how the school day ends up being defined. For schools, it means no cuts to other parts of the system in order to fund expanded Kindergarten.

Finally, doing it well means finding new ways to respect and value the contribution that both teachers and early childhood educators can make to a universal, integrated, publicly funded, high-quality system of early care and learning.

It appears that plans to offer full-school-day Kindergarten to more five-year-olds by next fall are proceeding without much public dialogue about these essential elements. Perhaps that is because Kindergarten for five-year-olds is already an accepted and expected part of our community. However, the projected expansion of early learning for four-year-olds, and then potentially for even younger children, pushes the envelope in fundamental ways. Before that happens, we need concrete policy recommendations for advancing an integrated system of early care and learning that gets it right for children from birth to 12.

That is why the Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC have launched a new project—*Moving to a System of Integrated Early Care and Learning in BC*. Over the coming year, we will examine the relationship between free, universal, and publicly funded, full-school-day Kindergarten for five- and four-year-olds and BC's existing childcare services. We will explore models and approaches from elsewhere and develop our vision for what a truly integrated system of early care and learning in BC could look like.

We look forward to an open dialogue with the BCTF and teachers across BC as we build this vision. We know that together, we will need to mobilize our sectors and communities to build an integrated system that meets the developmental needs of young children, supports working families, and values the work of all those who care for and teach them.

Rita Chudnovsky, a long-time childcare advocate and retired teacher is currently facilitating the joint project of the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC and the Early Childhood Educators of BC.

Expanding access to full-day Kindergarten: Pay attention to the details

By Adrienne Montani

The devil is in the details. This phrase looms large in all the discussions among early childhood educators, K-12 teachers, school trustees, and parents about the design of an expanded entitlement to Kindergarten for five-year-olds, and additional programming, eventually, for four- and three-year-olds.

In our response to the provincial Early Childhood Learning Agency's consultation paper on this topic, First Call coalition partners noted:

“Early childhood advocates have long called for a commitment by the provincial government to universal, quality, publicly funded, and community-based services for young children. If done properly,

First Call partners believe that the proposed expansion of Kindergarten and pre-Kindergarten programming for three- to five-year-olds has the potential to serve young children and their families well.We are particularly interested in strengthening the shared understanding that care and education are not separate concepts and that quality childcare programs for young children provide both.”

With regard to full-school day Kindergarten for five-year-olds, doing it properly means ensuring programs:

- are designed around learning through play and other developmentally appropriate activities that support the holistic development of the child.
- are staffed by adequately compensated, qualified staff with expertise in early childhood care and education.
- include parents/caregivers as knowledgeable partners in a “shared caring” relationship.
- connect with community-based and other government supports for families.
- address the need for childcare outside of school hours for working parents, recognizing the importance of an integrated learning and care environment in one location for young children as the ideal.
- respect children's views and their individual, cultural, and linguistic identities.
- include and support children with special needs.
- provide sufficient age-appropriate outdoor playground space and supervision.
- are optional.

These are the first set of details we must pay attention to. They are based on solid research evidence about child development, the benefits of young children's participation in high quality programs, including full school-day Kindergarten, and the international trend to recognize children's entitlement to quality programming in their early years.

But there is a second set of details we must also pay attention to. They relate more to aspects of the social, economic, and political context in which the expansion of full-school day Kindergarten is taking place in BC. First Call partners have considerable consensus on these principles and issues as well.

First, there is agreement that we need to protect Kindergarten children from an inappropriate academic agenda and a measuring and testing agenda. When young children are playing they are doing what they are supposed to be doing—they're not wasting time!

We also need to build greater mutual respect and appreciation between early childhood educators and school teachers, and between the school system and the early childhood education sector. One aim should be to build a system in which all Kindergarten teachers have training in early childhood development.

And following the principle of “do no harm,” the expansion of Kindergarten shouldn't divert funds from other parts of an already underfunded public education system.

Given the inadequacy and fragility of the supports for young children and their families in BC, and the crisis in the availability and affordability of childcare, the development of an expanded free entitlement for young children in the school system is most welcome.

However, planning for this expansion needs to address how childcare programs can be sustained during the shift of more five-year-old children into the school system. Family resource programs and other community-based early childhood programs have expressed

fears that their funding will be diverted to cover the costs of the increased school entitlement.

This is the type of apprehension that is created in the absence of a comprehensive early years plan from the provincial government and in a policy context where an artificial divide is created between early childhood development and childcare (the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Development) and early learning (the responsibility of the Ministry of Education).

Early childhood educators and families have repeatedly expressed concerns that the government doesn't understand that for young children, care and learning are not separate. Planning for expanded early years programming requires a recognition that just as school-based programs for young children must incorporate care, quality childcare settings are early learning sites, too.

From the Kindergarten teacher



De-institutionalizing learning

By Katherine Nelson

After reading “The ministry unveils full-day Kindergarten” in the March edition of *Teacher*, I was left feeling unsatisfied and unconvinced with the assertion that full-day Kindergarten is a definite benefit for all children at the age of five.

As a university student myself, I am by no means an expert on what is best for children and the way in which they are educated but from reading the article it seems as though the author writes from one viewpoint only and makes many statements that may or may not be true depending on the individual child.

The article places great emphasis on learning within the confines of BC's school system and according to the author, the extension of Kindergarten into a full-day program will “...provide our children with greater and more enriching educational experience.”

My purpose is not to negate the importance of formal education but I couldn't help but feel that this statement takes a lot of credit away from the individual learner. It is based on the assumption that the majority of a child's learning happens inside the school.

In addition to this, the author states that, “A longer instructional day will enable Kindergarten teachers to provide more opportunities for learning and success.”

Giving the credit back to the learner, I again think it is important to at least consider the possibility that we may be taking away opportunities for learning rather than providing them.

Inside the school system, an individual child is expected to learn what the teacher and curriculum tell them to learn, and their success is measured by some kind of system whether it's a test score or a letter grade.

By lengthening the time spent in an institution, we take away the freedom to learn and explore on one's own without the restrictions

survey data collected by the Human Early Learning Partnership, we know BC has high levels of child developmental vulnerability upon school entry, currently at 29%. We also know that BC has had child poverty levels higher than the national average for the last decade, with the most recent, pre-recession data showing one in five children were poor in 2007. With soaring welfare caseloads and unemployment rates over the last year, we can guess that the child poverty rate has also gone up. Living in poverty is a primary contributor to childhood, and possibly life-long, vulnerability to a variety of ill effects.

Enhanced investments in early childhood education, such as an expanded entitlement to full school-day Kindergarten, are key to bringing down these vulnerability rates over time. Now let's just pay attention to the details, and make sure we do it right.

Adrienne Montani, First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition.

that our educational system places on children and without the critique of a supposed superior.

I think it's particularly important to consider this, given the range of diversity among individuals attending school in BC. We have children with different ethnic backgrounds, different kinds of home life, a range of disabilities, behavioural and learning difficulties, and the list goes on.

I can't even imagine that we have begun to understand all the different ways a child might be able to learn or what path may lead them to success.

This idea brings me to question the evidence used by the author to come to such conclusions.

The statement “research shows” appears twice in the article and yet it is not identified who the researchers were and how the research was conducted.

It is stated that, “Full-day learning is associated with improved literacy and numeracy, smoother transitions to Grade 1, and in the longer term, better secondary graduation dates.”

After doing some research of my own, I found it difficult to come up with a concise, non-biased answer as to how beneficial full-day Kindergarten really is. On the whole, most education journals were inconclusive with results. Short-term academic achievement had consistency in different articles but long-term achievement lacked conclusive evidence.

I am not saying such research does not exist. What I am saying is that it needs to be included or at least made accessible to the reader.

Again, given the diversity of children living in BC, I think it is important to look at what method of research is conducted.

If we are looking at grades or test scores, it seems like just another systematic way of deciphering the success of a child; another way of an authority saying what is learning and what is not.

Katherine Nelson is a student at Simon Fraser University.

Reflections

**Carole Gillis
Kamloops Thompson LR**

A full day on pensions? Um, yeah. And it probably wasn't enough. With serious questions about ethical investment and about the inflation adjustment account (IAA), pensions were a pressing topic for teachers at the 2010 AGM. The question of flagging IAA will continue to challenge us as we endeavour to guarantee that teachers' pensions keep up with cost-of-living increases.

One bright spot in the pension discussion was that it assured us of the presence of the indomitable Pat Brady—attending his 50th consecutive AGM. That gave me hope that I still have lots of years to do something about my spring-break AGM habit!

With pensions as the dominant issue, I guess I'm not surprised that people commented to me that it was a "technical" AGM. I don't even recall a "nuts" or "handwashing" debate that characterized the AGM! There did seem to be a lot of "housekeeping" updates to the *Members' Guide*. One surprisingly hot topic was whether the Executive Committee should continue to hold regular meetings on Saturdays (in addition to their other Saturday committees, trainings, and conferences); the decision was that it should.

I did come away concerned about proposed changes to the College of Teachers, and I hope that the Federation continues to communicate the issues of freedom of association clearly to members. Teachers need to be knowledgeable to speak up to our elected councillors to ensure that they are fairly representing the interests of the teaching profession.

The AGM also provided something of an indicator for the upcoming Bargaining Conference for the 2011 round of bargaining; many bargaining-related resolutions came

to this AGM, and while it was expedient to refer them to the bargaining conference, the sheer number of these resolutions provided evidence to me of teachers' desire for updates to our archaic CBH language and provisions, and to the failure of the BCPSEA bargaining structure. Given the number of bargaining objectives and referrals, the bargaining conference promises to be a challenging balance of objective setting and strategy development.

Having served two years on the Executive Committee, I am always interested in the elections. There were no challengers for any of the table-officer positions, and the Executive Committee remains strongly dominated by members of the Coalition party, with a 9-2 majority. Curiously, for the third time in four years, an independent candidate topped the polls. Notwithstanding my concern that Saturday meetings and other extensive time commitments deter the involvement of younger members, as a group, the candidates elected to most EC positions seem younger than ever before (I'm sure it's a sign that I am aging!), and all have such extensive local and provincial leadership experience that sometimes it was easy to forget. However, David Chudnovsky pointed out to me that Denise Moffatt's election makes her the first EC member whose teaching career started after the turn of the century—the 21st century, that is!

And, as with all spring breaks, democracy prevailed and the members' decisions were always right.

Of course, winning a prize at the BCTF Advantage booth was another nice perk!

**Chris Harris
VESTA president**

The BCTF AGM is an event I always look forward to. As a local president, I go to my fair share of meetings, but there is nothing like the BCTF AGM to remind you why we do this work and why it is so important. Although every year I leave exhausted, it is still an exhilarating event.

I will have many fond memories of this year's AGM. First, the

number of new delegates from Vancouver and around the province gave us a look at the future of the BCTF. I was quite proud of the teachers who announced in front of 700 colleagues that this was their first time at the microphone. I was also quite surprised at how articulate those speakers were. It is only with these fresh perspectives and passionate speeches that our AGM can be the success that it is.

Second, the way we came together as a union in our bargaining objectives was solidarity at its best! We will need to rely on each other and be strong in every single local around the province if we are to achieve what we need for our membership. I look forward to building on this as we go into a bargaining year. If the BCTF AGM can be used as a litmus test for anything, I now know how solid we are going into a process that may help bargain things that have remained stagnant for years.

Third, this AGM really reminded me what being in a social justice union is all about. It's not just about looking out for our own vulnerable members, but also for those human beings who need our generous support and advocacy. Mary Walsh, for all her humour, delivered a powerful and compelling message. We cannot sit back and let the most vulnerable members of our society suffer when we have the resources to support them. Additionally, how we treat our retired teachers is a reflection of how the BCTF treats

everyone. Our active members did not disappoint our social justice values when they came forward with their feedback found in the pension consultation report.

Finally, watching my past president, Barb Parrott, receive the G.A. Fergusson award, and my dear colleague, Jane MacEwan, receive Honorary Life Membership, was something that I will never forget. It is so important for our newer delegates to see the work that has gone before them, and the possibilities that union activism has in defining their work as a teacher. I know that many of the VESTA delegates were inspired by their work, and I hope the same can be said for other delegates.

The staff who organized the BCTF AGM did an amazing job, and the delegates from around the province, and from every local, did a similarly amazing job in making sure they were representing their colleagues.

I will remember the 2010 BCTF AGM as one of the best. Thanks to everyone who did their part in making it so!

**Linda Naess
Prince George president**

I spent part of my spring break at the BCTF Annual General Meeting. While that may not sound like much of a holiday to most people, it certainly is an experience! The meetings can be long and tiring, the days can be exhausting and frustrating, but in many ways it is also an

inspiring and energizing experience.

It was inspiring to listen to speakers such as Jim Sinclair who always reminds us about the importance of working conditions and decent wages for all workers. It was inspiring to listen to newly honoured lifetime members speak about their commitment to the union and their love of teaching. It was inspiring to listen to Mary Walsh speak about her commitment to rights for all and her involvement in improving conditions, especially for the working poor.

It is energizing to do the serious work of the Federation, to take part in the discussions and decisions about pensions, bargaining, the rights of TTOCs, the College of Teachers. The agenda seems endless and it is; much of the work is not completed and it will be unfinished business at subsequent rep assemblies.

The campaigning and elections involve us all. We talk to candidates, about candidates, and to their supporters. Who will best represent us? Where will they lead the Federation? Their commitment and willingness to spend long hours working for the BCTF impresses us.

But in spite of all the work, there is still time for conversations about our profession and time to meet up with friends across the province. There is time for shopping, for drinks, dinners, walks, and talks with new and old friends.

The AGM is truly democracy in action. The spirited debates and diversity of opinions remind us of how much the Federation means to us all. It demonstrates how accepting we are and how badly we want to "get it right." The true power of the AGM is always the bringing together of teachers from all over the province to discuss the issues that are most important to us.

So, yes, I did spend part of my spring break at the AGM, and yes, it was long and often tedious, but the benefits of working and meeting with colleagues outweighed that by far! It was, and always is, a great



AGM delegates took to the streets of downtown Vancouver to ask people to sign postcards addressed to Premier Campbell and calling for the government to fully fund public education.



DAVID DENYER PHOTOS

on the AGM

time, and I recommend it to anyone.

Paul Steer
Delta president

I was sitting with the Delta delegation at the Annual General Meeting this past March amazed at the totality of the AGM experience: the many tables, so many in fact that a map is provided to assist delegates in making their way to the place assigned; the raised podium with its own impressive line of seats and microphones, and of course the great big BCTF banner—massively and expansively unfurled above the whole scene playing out below, for the information of anyone stumbling in from the residual warmth of some post-Olympic urban street party and having doubts about where they now were.

Whatever we think, as a society, of the 2010 Olympics Games, this much is clear—in contrast to the BCTF Annual General Meeting, which arrives every year, we waited for the Olympics for a long, long time. When the Olympics arrived, they were a lot of fun, arguably more fun than the AGM, which can't really be described as fun at all—unless fun is sitting for hours at a time listening to an amplified human voice in a windowless room. But now that the games have ended—they're gone for good. In contrast, the BCTF and our Annual General Meeting remain. The Olympics were exciting, exuberant, and dramatic, but ultimately they were completely transitory. The BCTF AGM: exciting? For some, perhaps. Dramatic? Sometimes, mainly during the final few seconds in the midst of counts as the final few tables report, and often during reports from the nomination chairperson.

I've spent most of the second half of my teaching career attending meetings of various kinds—board meetings, meetings of district committees, meetings of parent groups, union meetings, and political meetings. And I have never doubted my motivation in doing so, never troubled myself with worry as to why. And now, sitting at the 94th BCTF AGM, one of hundreds of delegates, it's difficult for me not to believe that we, as a society, are edging toward a momentous shift, that the era of the Big Olympic Party has ended, and that the future is opening up toward newer, different, more trenchant realities.

Teachers are in for the long game—which means that we're there to advocate for our students, in service to learning and the needs of our society—no matter how adverse the circumstances, or how mean or distracted the government might be by the transitory spirit of the times.

Anne Guthrie Warman
VSTA president

Although once a reluctant delegate (many years ago) to this annual rite of spring for BCTF members in our province, I am now a committed enthusiast for this incredible, impressive, exhausting and salutary exercise in participatory democracy. All those years ago when I was first on the VSTA executive, Irene Lanzinger, then VSTA's immediate past president promised me "it would be fun." Initial skepticism aside, I am happy to report that this same message I gave to our 14 new delegates this year was borne out by their comments to me during and after this year's AGM. All reported how much they had learned about our processes (and how resolutions shape policy and procedures) and how much they enjoyed the debate, the caucus lunches where we talked vigorously about upcoming resolutions, and the hospitality suites in the evening where they got to mix with teachers from around the province.

A major highlight for all of us was the inimitable Mary Walsh and her funny, acerbic, and hard-hitting analysis of the power structures in this country and their disregard for the issues of poverty and social

justice that exist in such shocking reality here in our wealthy and privileged society. A national treasure, Walsh was an incredibly good sport in standing endlessly for pictures with delegates and also attending the Feminist Caucus lunch where she continued her humorous but deeply felt analysis of the challenges faced by women in a variety of areas. Two showings of her film, *Poor No More*, hit an equally strong chord with delegates and we are very happy to hear that DVDs of the film are available for our use.

The chance to again "take it to the streets" and speak out about education underfunding was also welcomed enthusiastically by all our delegates and the postcard signing campaign was, I believe, remarkably successful. This concrete and important reminder that the public welcomes our input as the professionals who work closely with children and students in this province was heartening. And the sight of 700 teachers spread out around the downtown core with signs and postcards was very impressive indeed (not to mention the fresh air and chance of some exercise).

So the 2010 AGM was, for me, a

valuable, constructive, and energizing experience and, with the opportunity to work with so many new, young (and not so young) delegates especially meaningful.

Charlene Watts
Bulkley Valley president
Linnea Lanstrom
BVTA grievance chair

You realize that the BCTF Annual General Meeting is an important and valued event when elected local delegates willingly carpool 1,000 km for a long 17-hr. drive to Vancouver at the start of our short one-week spring break. Luckily, this year the roads were bare and dry so there were no distractions to keep us from the *Reports and Resolutions Booklet* discussions, as we carefully prepared for the upcoming debates on the floor of the 2010 AGM.

Even with an average of 32.5 teaching years amongst the delegates, the passion for teaching and public education was still vibrant, as each of us highlighted what we considered the important issues in the many pages of recommendations and resolutions. In turn, we were consumed by our own debate

as the kilometres flashed by out the window. Not surprisingly pension issues raised both our voices and blood pressures!

As the snow and ice neighbourhoods of our northwest communities gave way to bare and brown landscapes of the interior and then finally Vancouver's gently greening trees and fragrant blossoms, we began the four days and three evenings of amazing collective work around the governance of our union.

Monday, Canadian actor and activist, Mary Walsh, had us laughing until we cried as she delivered wit, satire, and pathos in her speech and inspired each of us to social civil action. The proof that her message truly resonated was evident with the enthusiasm that we saw as teachers took to the streets of downtown Vancouver at lunch on Tuesday, with banners, flags, and signs in defense of public education. One of our delegates even mailed the postcards in the lobby of the hotel to Gordon Campbell immediately after gathering the signatures!

From the vantage point of our delegates' table, and after we met and renewed our relationship with a former student who is now a teacher in our zone, we each remarked at the visible change in the demographics of delegations in the room. Many new delegates proudly participated at the mics, with their "first-time delegate and first time at the microphone" statements eliciting loud rounds of applause.

The presence of these new teacher delegates left us encouraged and confident that the BCTF will indeed be their BCTF in the future.

The return trip home seemed shorter, as we felt surprisingly refreshed and satisfied, thinking about the important contribution our small delegation made along with all of the other delegates from locals across the province to the democratic work of the BCTF.



(Top) Guest speaker Mary Walsh. (Above) BCTF Honorary Life Memberships awarded to: (L-R) Truls Asdal, Fraser-Cascade; Jane MacEwan, Vancouver Elementary; and Barb Parrott, Vancouver Elementary.



BCTF Executive Committee 2010–11: L-R back row: Rick Guenther, Abbotsford; Teri Mooring, Quesnel; Irene Lanzinger, Vancouver Secondary; Susan Lambert, Burnaby; Christine Stewart, Vancouver Secondary; David Komljenovic, Kamloops Thompson; Jim Iker, Burns Lake. Front row: Denise Moffatt, Surrey; Kip Wood, Nanaimo; Jill McCaffery, Mount Arrowsmith; Glen Hansman, Vancouver Elementary.

ALISTAIR EAGLE PHOTO

La francophonie : jeux et enjeux

By Moh Chelali

La francophonie est l'ensemble des États utilisant le français et se reconnaissant membres de cette communauté de culture et d'histoire. Le mot " francophonie " aurait été forgé en 1880 par un géographe, Onésime Reclus, qui a eu l'idée de classer les populations du monde selon leurs critères linguistiques.

C'est en Mars 1979 que fut instituée à Niamey (Niger) la première structure intergouvernementale de la Francophonie. Mais la véritable institutionnalisation du mouvement date de 1986, avec le premier sommet, tenu à Paris, des "pays ayant en commun l'usage de la langue française" formule remplacée, en 1993 par celle de pays ayant le français en partage."

En Novembre 1997, le septième sommet, tenu a Hanoi (Vietnam) adopta une nouvelle Charte de la Francophonie prévoyant, notam-

ment, la création d'un poste de secrétaire général de l'Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF) dont le premier titulaire fut l'ancien secrétaire général de l'Organisation des Nations Unies (ONU), M. Boutros Boutros-Ghali et dont l'actuel président est l'ancien président du Sénégal Abdou Diouf.

L'ACCT se transforme en 1998 en Agence intergouvernementale de la francophonie avec TV5 Monde, l'Association universitaire de la francophonie (AUF), l'Université Senghor d'Alexandrie et l'Association internationale des maires francophones.

Le Haut Conseil de la Franco-phonie, laboratoire d'idées est composé essentiellement de personnalités indépendantes (responsables politiques, écrivains, universitaires, journalistes, juristes, économistes, entrepreneurs). Cet organisme cessa, en 2002 de dépendre de la présidence de la République française pour devenir

une institution de l'OIF, donc présidée par son secrétaire général Mr. Abdou Diouf qui avait pris la relève de Mr. Boutros-Ghali (ce dernier devenant vice-président du Haut Conseil).

La question ou plutôt les questions qui se posent sont : «Y aurait-il un ou plusieurs espaces francophones, un ou plusieurs espaces économique une ou plusieurs identités francophones ?»

Le discours officiel à travers les divers sommets de la francophone tend souvent à apparaître sous des signes de pure forme qui annoncent l'unité à travers un porte-parole majeur vu ou compris à travers la France. La réalité observée est qu'il y a plusieurs francophonies avec des identités culturelles très distinctes selon la saveur des régions et des cultures d'origine. Cette réalité est hélas souvent ignorée, voire méprisée au profit d'un élitisme bon chic bon genre !

Certains films québécois par exemple ont été doublés, voire même traduits pour convenir aux goûts de certains salons parisiens! Il

est de notoriété publique que l'on se moque de l'accent africain et que même des comédiens français ont fait de cela un métier qui leur réussit bien !

Au Canada la situation du français notamment dans le domaine de l'éducation, juridiction d'ordre provincial reste très précaire. On constate que bien qu'au niveau fédéral, la réalité de la dualité linguistique est bel et bien présente, au niveau provincial la réalité est toute autre. En Colombie-Britannique il a fallu emmener le gouvernement en justice pour avoir le droit à un système d'éducation pour la minorité francophone.

En Colombie-Britannique toujours, les programmes d'immersion n'ont aucune légalité ou juridiction qui les protège. La préservation de ces programmes dépend de la seule force et ardeur des parents, notamment Canadian Parents for French.

Les récentes coupures au budget de l'éducation ont entraîné un réajustement et une concentration des programmes ce qui est oblige

les élèves à se déplacer loin de leurs domiciles. Dans un cas, le conseil scolaire 27 de Cariboo-Chilcotin, le programme d'immersion sera purement et simplement éliminé!

Bien sûr la francophonie est aussi une réussite qui a fait beaucoup de chemin et qui est de plus en plus inclusive malgré tout. Au Canada les programmes francophones presque partout à travers le pays sont dans une constante évolution et les nombres des ayants droit qui fréquentent les écoles francophones est en constante progression. De même pour les programmes d'immersion, le Canada reste un pionnier et un leader reconnu à travers le monde entier dans l'éducation immersive.

Enfin, notre rôle après tout est non seulement de célébrer la francophonie et l'éducation en français mais surtout de rester vigilant pour défendre et consolider les acquis.

Moh Chelali, coordonnateur des Programmes et Services en Français de la FECB.

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of International Women’s Day



By Louise Gonsalvez

This year, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. And as I pondered about women's struggles and achievements throughout the century, I deliberated what is most significant to me about the feminist journey and International Women's Day. To me, International Women's Day is about a way of thinking, being, and doing things. It is about finding within ourselves the desire to do what is right, the moral imperative, and, ultimately, about transformational leadership. It is about claiming a new interpretation of leadership and a new direction for us in these troubling social and economic times.

Women continue to support participatory transparent leadership. The leadership paradigm, that plagues our institutions and governments, is comprised of an ideology that equates leadership to power, domination, competition, efficiency, performativity, being on top and the grandest of all—a society built on a corporate model. Under this regime, the vested interests of dominant groups rule—control of the media, the elimination of funds for women's advocacy work, green-washing, cuts to legal services, and the list goes on. All is done to sustain the status quo and minimize the efforts of grassroots coalition groups seeking change. Often, the leaders of these grassroots organizations are women. Our future depends on grassroots coalition building, transformative leadership, and local capacity building.

A feminist ontology essentially believes that society is built by

caring citizens, communities, and capacity building; services are considered an investment not an expense. In this era of globalization, the intense competition for market advantage is placing incredible pressures on governments to downsize the public sector budget, e.g., education, health, social services. The legacy of traditional leadership and the Davos Project is an unregulated, out-of-control free market economy that has no regard, for the public good and bulldozes the social fabric that constituted it. It is the marginalized, the poor, the more vulnerable members of society (many of whom are women and children) who are suffocated by a leadership paradigm that only measures progress by dollars and security by military power. Traditional leadership ideology is robbing our children and our students of an integrative world where values and behaviours are fused; it falsely promises and perpetuates a myth that material wealth will provide us with the security, stability, and cultural lifestyle we need. It exploits lands, rivers, and other species rather than sustaining a healthy relationship with them.

Women have fought to be considered persons, to vote, to have a voice, to have dignity, and to be taken seriously. They have been burned at the stake and their values have been disregarded, silenced, or ridiculed for being either too whimsical or too—shall I say the F word—feminist. Women have been seeking these values for centuries: equality, equity, empowerment, human rights, peace, sustainability, shared power, well-being, safety, celebration, sisterhood, and the

right to work, lead, and speak out. And to add a few more: co-operation, consultation, sharing, and consensus building. They have fought for another ideology—an ideology that challenges the status quo and privileges a small minority. They seek an ideology that seeks to transform the world to make it a better place for everyone; they believe and know it is possible for such harmony to exist.

Rounaq Jahan states, "Transformative leadership not only calls for a change in vision and commitment of leaders, it also emphasizes the need for the leaders to follow a different set of institutional processes and behavior." How often have we been delivered top-down notification that our contracts have been stripped, that we have been locked out, that a deal has been manufactured behind closed doors, that we have to administer standardized tests that we know are damaging? These are the result of failing institutional processes and behaviours that are designed to wear us down. Who can we turn to, to glean insights into how to confront these oppressive structures? It has been grassroots organizations, often led by women, but I claim that it is their transformative leadership paradigm that will help us all create the education system, healthcare system, and government that we want. It is their vision and their struggles that provide us with the wisdom that we need to face our future.

There are women like Asma Jahangir and Hina Zilani, of Pakistan, who challenged the horrors of honour killings, making the practice a gross violation of international human rights. Or, Ela

Bhat, of India, who established the Self-Employed Women's Association and "transformed the definitions of employment and trade union by focusing on the officially uncounted work of poor women and organizing them in a trade union." And there is, Mira Sorvino, who was named the UN Goodwill Ambassador to combat human trafficking. Women have historically championed the causes of excluded groups, the marginalized, the poor, the unhealthy, the elderly, and the young. Celebrating International Women's Day is about celebrating women who have championed a cause. It is about all of us championing worthy causes and believing in a vision for a better world. It is about social justice.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that women have played a pivotal role in confronting situations that are gender specific or disproportionately gender related. Women are at greatest risk of violence from men they know. According to a 2002 World Report on Violence and Health by the World Health Organization: "In Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa, and the United States, 40–70% of female murder victims were killed by their partners." Females are often used as rape-pawns during war and forced into sexual slavery. Females are often denied access to education, employment, land ownership, leadership, and other human rights, just because of their gender. Gender equality programs are exposing statistical proof of these injustices and creating campaigns to confront these issues. On this 100th Anniversary of International Women's Day, I seek to celebrate women's achievements, but I also

want to acknowledge the struggles we still must face.

Our new millennium began with great prosperity, but this was accompanied by gross inequalities and injustices. The assets of the top three billionaires are more than the combined GNP of all of the least-developed countries and their 600 million people. (Jahan) Now, a weaker economy, a costly Afghanistan war, and all the problems of the 20th century are resurfacing, such as racial conflict, violence, and poverty to name only a few. And what is happening in North American schools? We see a significant rise in charter schools and private schools, a push for merit-based pay, punitive measures for what are called underperforming schools, and ultimately a resegregation of schools based on ethnic and or class divisions. After we re-defined education as a means of advancing critical thinking and democratic ideals, standardized tests were instituted to return education to an earlier millennium when schools were designed merely to transmit knowledge and prepare a workforce. Hierarchical leadership seeks to control society rather than liberate it; it practices denial, suppression, and oppression—it attacks education rather than builds it. As British Columbia continues to grow and become home to multiple nationalities, cultures, faiths, languages, and a growing First Nations population, we need transformative leadership, education, and politics to build this province—we need a new form of leadership.

Louise Gonsalvez teaches at Sparwood Secondary School, Fernie.

On joining the military

By Nicole Davis

There are many reasons given as to why we do not have military recruiters in our schools. One remarkable story I heard was about military recruiting efforts at an elementary school playground. As I recall hearing it, the soldiers had arrived in their dress uniforms with all sorts of decoration. They had their weapons with them and had also brought a tank on which they allowed the children to play. At first blush, this sounds like a horrific and unthinkable way of manipulating our children. However, upon a more critical evaluation, it seems more and more unrealistic. If we think about this scenario in terms of the Canadian military, its quite unbelievable. First, they don't recruit from elementary schools, or any school with a "playground." The Canadian military has very limited equipment, and to be honest, a finite amount of tanks and other armoured vehicles. Tanks are wide-tracked, and cannot simply be driven down the road. They need to be transported, not to mention the huge amount of damage tank tracks do to asphalt and sod alike. Weapons are also carefully guarded and although it's likely a police recruiter will arrive armed in your school, it's highly unlikely that a military recruiter will.

It is true that the military has recruiting programs in place for women, minorities, and Aboriginal peoples, but so does engineering, information technology, and a variety of other white male-dominated fields. One may ask why—and the answer is simple—A representative military.

Beyond "unthinkable" stories of military recruiters, another common argument revolves around the safety and high casualties of our soldiers. Statements such as "our boys and girls are dying over there" affect good and caring people in a very profound manner. We do not want to see the sons and daughters of our country perish. However, if we really evaluate the mortality rate of soldiers and compare it to forestry workers, or roughnecks on an oil rig, we would all be surprised to find out who is more likely to suffer a work-related injury or even death. If the concern is "risk of life" why



don't we discourage apprenticing (undersea) welders or junior fire-fighter programs in our schools?

It is true that the military has recruiting programs in place for women, minorities, and Aboriginal peoples, but so does engineering, information technology, and a variety of other white male-dominated fields. One may ask why—and the answer is simple: A representative military. Our military has only 15% women (51% of the population), 2% Aboriginal peoples (3% of the population), and 4% visible minorities (13% of the population). My memory of the demographics of the Canadian Forces—white middle-class males.

Other memories I have of the Canadian Forces:

- The recruiter arrived at my school in a grey panel van. He was awkward and lanky, but did in fact wear his dress uniform. He did not pack a rifle, pistol, or any other weapon; he carried a stack of green binders.
- Basic training was gruelling; if you did not have 110% commitment to being there you knew within the first hour. You also knew that should a war break out, you would be in the middle of it, and that there was a very reasonable expectation of death.
- Becoming friends with a person whose skin was darker than my own and a woman whose sexual orientation was not the same as mine—this may seem mundane, but growing up in a white-bread small town never put me in the position of requiring cultural tolerance when everyone is "just like you."
- Seeing most of Canada from British Columbia to Ontario—and meeting dozens of people from all over the globe.
- Training as a medical assistant, and receiving an education equivalent to a field-savvy OFA 3 and a nurse—all of which I was actually paid for, rather than having to pay for it.

The Canadian Forces can be painted with an evil brush; however when we look closely at facts, we can sometimes find balance. The military, and its recruiters, provided me with the opportunity to see things through a different lens, to be forced to work with people with whom I would not normally interact, and to grow into a well-travelled Canadian citizen.

In reflection, I have not a single regret joining the military, even though it was a decision I made while I was in secondary school.

Nicole Davis teaches at Peter Skene Secondary School, 100 Mile House.



By Marianne Neill

When I was in my early 20s, two of my brothers joined the reserves because they couldn't find another summer job. In late August, when they returned, I was sitting on the front porch at my parents' home, listening to one of them tell me about his summer. With the crickets chirping, and maple trees rustling above us, he told me a story that shattered my understanding of what it meant to be Canadian. My brother told me that during bayonet training, the sergeant had advised recruits to imagine there was a "____ big ugly gook" standing in front of them, and they were to "lunge and thrust" with their guns. For reservists, this had been only the beginning of a lesson in desensitization and dehumanization that crossed boundaries of decency in multiple ways.

Not all recruits have such sordid tales to tell. However, this story is a fragment in a culture of militarism that enables systemic racism in many different ways. Teachers must sensitize themselves to this if they are to pass on critical awareness to their students, and give them a fair chance to make informed choices about their lives.

My conversation with my brother took place during the years when the Canadian military was ostensibly a peacekeeping force. It is true that during the years when the military was publicly identifying with the peacekeeping role, there were missions that called that role into question. There have been questions about Canada's role in the removal of Aristide from power in Haiti, and we are all well aware of atrocities committed by individual troops in Somalia. Nevertheless, the dissonance between public image and actualization during that time, gave our citizenry a platform for objection when our military strayed from the role we understood them to have.

Since 2002, the Canadian military has gradually transformed its public image from peacekeeping to war-fighting. The public has been non-reactive, largely because of the stealth with which the transformation was effected: an incremental, carefully planned public relations campaign that has shown us images of Canadian soldiers breaking down doors, and creeping through streets with guns, as well as rescuing women and children from vague disasters.

A war-fighting military is more reinforcing of systemic racism than a peacekeeping one. Peacekeepers help develop agency, autonomy, solidarity, and advocacy (the BCTF social justice lens) in the countries they contact. Though perhaps not always in reality, their role is conceived as antiracist. In contrast, war-fighters, even while protecting one group or population, seek to conquer another. Unlike police, soldiers do not discern between one individual and another, and are not

constrained by a criminal justice system. Their job is to attack a group that has been identified as the enemy. Most often in wars, the enemy is a racially and/or culturally identifiable group. The aggressive and defensive nature of war-fighting, and its identification of the enemy on the basis of group membership, means the individuals who participate in it are going to be susceptible to racism. My brother's story exemplifies this.

Clearly, I am not saying that all members of the military are racist. I am saying that the act of war-fighting is inherently racist. Fear and desensitization make individuals vulnerable to racism when they are in a war-fighting situation. This experience can stay with them in subtle ways after the crisis is over. A boundary once crossed is more easily crossed again.

In the last six years, since the Canadian military has begun to transform its public role, and has been structurally integrated with the American military in new ways, we have seen more soldiers come home in coffins than we had in 50 years of peacekeeping. Recruiting efforts have stepped up, and money has been spent on a massive advertising campaign to attract youth. Promises of free education, travel, and adventure, appeal especially to disadvantaged youth. Military leaflets offer the army as a way to fight boredom.

Recruiting campaigns target vulnerable groups. As such, they exploit inequities, including racism.

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Ads directed at Aboriginal youth are insidious in exploiting psychological needs. They promise the life of a warrior, manipulatively integrating military and Aboriginal iconography. Reserves and the Bold Eagle program for Aboriginal youth pay more than students could get for flipping burgers all summer. The Atlantic provinces produce more recruits because they are economically disadvantaged. Recruiting drives are more aggressive there. General Rick Hillier, who was Commander-in-Chief until 2007,

openly advocated targeting immigrant populations for recruitment.

In a just society, youth would not be drawn to the military just because they have no other opportunity to have an education. There is a reason that disadvantaged groups are targeted by recruiters. It may have something to do with all the information recruiters don't share with recruits, such as:

- Military charges against Canadian forces members have risen as much as 62% since Canada started sending troops to Afghanistan. Absent without leave charges were the most frequent.
- The suicide rate among Canadian soldiers doubled from 2006 to 2007, and was triple that of the general population.
- Canada does not reveal the number of soldiers wounded so badly that they have to return home for treatment. However, during the first eight months of 2007, 108 members of the CF were eligible for an allowance given to people in this category.
- Finally, they do not mention the controversy over war as a solution, or the moral disturbance inherent in war-fighting. In a letter to the *Toronto Star* on October 9, 2008, Corporal Paul Demetrick wrote: "We respond to hostile fire by indiscriminate bombings and shelling of villages, killing innocent men, women, and children; we fire white phosphorous shells into vineyards... we hand over prisoners of war to Afghan authorities, who torture them; and we shoot and kill a two-year-old Afghan boy and his four-year-old sister... How can we inspire the Afghan people to respect liberty, democracy, equality for women, education for children, human rights, and respect for life when we are maiming and murdering them and destroying their homes, communities and the economy, and their country...?" War-fighting creates disturbance in the emotions of healthy people.

Economically disadvantaged youth are more willing to hear the promises and appreciate the opportunities offered by a military career, while ignoring negative messages. This is why they are targeted for recruitment, and why recruiters don't bother wasting too much time trying to recruit the wealthy.

The injustice in recruiting to the military is effectively summarized in the concept of an economic draft. If you underfund universities and colleges, fail to support Aboriginal, immigrant, and refugee populations, and fail to guarantee a living wage, there is no need for conscription.

In this country, we like to believe we are a just society. We have a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* that enshrines equality rights. Yet, we do have systemic racism, and the nature of our military and its recruiting processes are one expression of it.

Marianne Neill is president of the Burnaby Teachers' Association.

Ken Smith 1940–2010

Ken Smith, our colleague, mentor, and friend passed away on January 14, 2010.

We are fortunate to have had him walk with us, and are grateful for his ways: he helped so many of us, guiding us to salaries that could sustain us, helping us make best decisions for, and in, retirement, suggesting thoughtful solutions to our problems. When it came to questions about our pensions, he was our “go-to guy.” We will miss him.

After a few years on Vancouver Island, Smith moved to teach in Kamloops and to become involved in the welfare of educators. First serving as a member of the Executive Committee of the BC Teachers’ Federation, he joined the staff in the Bargaining Division. There, his work was to help teachers achieve salary increases and fair working conditions. When leading BCTF

locals in bargaining, he synthesized the volumes of data supporting a salary increase; melded local issues with detailed economic research; and with conviction, swayed many a salary arbitration board. His presentations were always forceful yet respectful of the other side; and when his view was rational and right and good for educators, he would not be moved. He could disagree but be agreeable, even provide the pun that reduced the tension and saved the day. His winning approach achieved much throughout the province for the good of education.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Ken Smith worked with thousands of teachers as they made significant life decisions: Should I retire now or later? What pension options should I select? Regardless of the hundreds of times he heard the same questions, he cared about each person’s

concern, each person’s individual situation. Each was unique, all were special, all deserving of his assistance. He was greatly respected for this caring attitude, as he was for his expertise, and wisdom.

We of the BC Teachers’ Federation and the Retired Teachers’ Association were benefactors of his generosity as he shared his skills, knowledge, and goodness. As chair of the Pensions and Benefits Committee, he monitored our plans; explained issues surrounding pensions, benefits, and insurance; and presented his information in *Teacher* and in *Postscript* and at workshops near and far. He answered our hundreds of questions about future pension security. We depended on his experience, intelligence, and integrity. He had our welfare at heart.

– Dale Lauber

Non-enrolling teachers—endangered list

By **Cheriee Weichel**

Her eyes welling with tears, the teacher I had only just met confided, “I have six kids in my Grade 2 class who are so far behind in reading. One doesn’t even know the letters of the alphabet; but because none of them are coded (officially designated as special needs), there is no support for them. Our learning assistance teacher only has time to help kids who are, and even then she mostly deals with paperwork.”

This year during spring break, I attended my first BCTF Annual General Meeting. At my session for new attendees, I was dismayed when a teacher from one of the districts in the north mentioned that they didn’t have a teacher-librarian at her school. Here in Vancouver, I have watched the incessant carving away of non-enrolling staff; ESL and learning assistance teachers, counsellors, and teacher-librarians, to where it is less than half of what it once was. I began to wonder what it was like across the rest of the province. One afternoon, I wandered around visiting delegates from other locals around the province to conduct an informal survey of the situation for non-enrolling teachers in general, and school libraries in particular. I spoke to colleagues from Peace River, Prince George, Port Hardy, Nechako, Burns Lake, Tahsis, Gold River, Port Hardy, Langley, Abbotsford, Vernon, and more. Almost as soon as I introduced myself and explained what I was doing, reserve transformed into relief—teachers have stories they need to tell if only someone will listen to what is going on.

It didn’t take me very long to realize that, whatever our differences across geography, demographics, and politics, we are all (students and teachers alike) in a serious crisis across the province.

After my conversations with just the first two locals, I was deeply disturbed. By the time I spoke to the teacher mentioned at the onset of this article, I was near to tears. Her situation is by no means unique.

Across British Columbia, non-enrolling specialist teachers need to be declared an endangered species. School libraries have been decimated and teacher-librarians are nearly non-existent in some districts. School counsellors are reduced to such an extent that their caseloads are overwhelming. Learning assistance, special needs, and second-language support teachers are being whittled away to fewer than half of what there once was. Music and art programs are also disappearing at an alarming rate. In spite of the province declaring that they are putting more money into education, most teachers told me that their administrators and boards have told them to expect even more cuts to these positions next September.

Some communities, like Prince Rupert, already have less than one full-time teacher-librarian. In other cases, there is less than one for the entire district. Qualified teacher-librarians are often replaced by administrators. Libraries, if they are being kept open at all, are regularly being run by staff without relevant specialist training or education. More often than I liked to hear, they are not even teachers. This means that other unions are filling teacher-librarian positions, a situation that amounts to contracting out, yet no grievances have been filed to date. This is profoundly disturbing as we are putting ourselves in an estoppel situation whereby we may lose these positions entirely. Teacher-librarians in secondary schools are taking on more and more teaching blocks. Consequently, school libraries are being closed with increasing frequency.

The situation regarding learning

assistance teachers is only slightly less upsetting. Teachers from Burns Lake said there are no learning assistance teachers in elementary schools and only one in the secondary school of about 450 students. Consistently across districts, I was told that, unless a student has a designated code or number, she or he will not get any extra support from a learning assistance teacher. Testing to determine if students can be designated special needs is regularly done by school psychologists, another position that is disappearing. The resulting Catch-22 is that a student can only get support when she or he is designated, yet there are increasingly limited opportunities for designation to hap-

Even under optimal conditions, specialist support for all these at-risk students is necessary. Today, teachers are dealing with larger class sizes and increasing numbers of students with special needs and minimal, if any, support staff.

pen. Moreover, often even when students are eventually tested and it is determined that they need extra help, it doesn’t mean the help is there. Even in schools with a special education teacher of some kind, her or his caseload is increasingly confounded by reams of accountability related paperwork downloaded from the provincial government. One teacher told me that she doesn’t even get help with her designated students until January because of this. Unfortunately, this also seems to be the norm across the province. A specialist teacher, I know here in Vancouver, comes to work early and regularly stays until 6:00 p.m. to do paperwork so that



We’ve done the haggling for you

There are several new and exciting additions to the Advantage Program this month.

First, the **BC Lions Football Club** is our newest Marketplace Partner. They are offering group ticket discounts, and for every ticket purchased, the BC Lions Football Club will make a donation to BC Children’s Hospital. Find this offering at www.bctf.ca/advantage and look under the Marketplace link.

The BCTF Advantage Program is also very pleased to announce new cars at Advantage Program pricing. Our partnership is with the following new car dealers: the **Jonker Auto Group** (Nissan & Honda), and **Carter GM** and **Carter Honda**. You can contact these dealers directly through the BCTF Advantage Program homepage: www.bctf.ca/advantage.

Marketplace partners

This year, for the first time, the BCTF Advantage Program hosted its 20 Marketplace partners at the AGM. In recent years, only our principal partners attended, but their number was expanded this year to show off many of our new Marketplace partners who offer valuable incentives to teachers on everyday items.

Delegates had an opportunity to meet the eclectic group and discuss their services face-to-face. Our new

Marketplace partners also made contributions of generous prizes for the draw for delegates who visited the displays.

In addition to the Marketplace partners, at the AGM the Advantage Program also introduced extended health and dental coverage for TTOCs. The launch began with a short presentation at the TTOC breakfast, and the Advantage Program had a extended health and dental coverage specialist in attendance to speak directly with TTOCs about this coverage.

To read more about the BCTF Advantage Program Marketplace, and extended health and dental coverage for TTOCs, please go to: www.bctf.ca/advantage.

Below is a list of the prize winners:

Partners	Winners
Etico Coffee	Steve Jones
SPUD!	Annette O’Connor
Black Bond Books	Cynthia MacKinnon
Baaad Anna’s	E. Skiffington
10,000 Villages	Tammy McKinley
Bobo Kids	Jaslene Saran
GardenWorks	Rajinder Chhina
Raspberry Kids	Carole Gillis
Fountain Tire	Sandy Ho
Salin Acupuncture	Lareen Hickey
BEST Bikes	Marie Naubert
MD Cosmetics	Kelly Shields
SleepCountry	Debra Thame
Carter Honda	Lorraine Edwards
Frog Box	Eric Hartman
Carter GM	Steve Fairbairn
BCAA	Romy Cooper
BCAA	Elizabeth MacKenzie
Ellis Mortgages	David Denyer
Canada	

– Patti McLaughlin

she has some time during school hours to work with students.

Since the removal of language from our teaching contract that guaranteed ratios of specialist teachers to student population, numerous positions have been eliminated. Initially, many regions saw an increase in hiring of teacher aides, special education assistants, and other non-teaching staff from other unions—individuals without the education and expertise of a specialist teacher. Now it appears that these positions are also being chiselled away.

When teachers talk about class-size and class-composition issues in a formal way, they are talking about the total numbers of students as well as the numbers of designated special needs students per class. This discussion does not take into account the numbers of students with special learning needs who do not have an official designation, students like the ones mentioned above. Even under optimal conditions, specialist support for all these at-risk students is necessary. Today, teachers are dealing with larger class sizes and increasing numbers of students with special needs and

minimal, if any, support staff. This puts teachers and all learners in their classes in an untenable position. It is not enough to look at class size and and class composition. We must also focus on re-establishing ratios to guarantee that there is adequate specialist teacher support for all learners.

School libraries and teacher-librarians, counsellors, special education, learning assistance, and English-as-a-second language and dialect-support teachers, have an integral role in supporting literacy development in different but significant ways for the many learners within the diverse groups of our educational communities. What is truly distressing about their loss is that there is now a dearth of support for the most vulnerable students. Those who most need our help are the ones who are being abandoned. All of the teachers I spoke with are worried about many students like those six students I first mentioned. Without proper support, what is going to happen to them?

Cheriee Weichel teaches at Charles Dickens Elementary School, Vancouver.

Celebrating our successes



Gloria Cole

Gila’kasla/greetings

My traditional names are Gaaxstalas and Wedlidi. My ancestry is Scottish, Tlingit, Kwakiutl, and Haxwamis. I am a

member of the Tlowitsis First Nation. I am privileged and honoured to be a teacher teaching on call (TTOC) in SD 85 (Vancouver Island North). I am also known as Gloria Cole. In the classroom I am addressed as Ms. Cole, Mrs. Cole, and yes, even “Auntie.”

I have been involved in the BCTF for about 10 years. My most recent appointments have been to the Internal Mediation and Aboriginal Education Advisory Committees, for three-year terms. I certainly look forward to the learning journey with both committees.

In spite of certain “myths” that some Aboriginal teachers receive their Bachelor of Education degrees

from a Cracker Jack box, or from watered-down programs, I am a very proud graduate of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) at UBC. I have also earned my Masters of Education from SFU, and am currently a doctoral student at UBC. I feel very privileged to be attending university and continue my life-long-learning journey.

My passion is witnessing the transformation of Aboriginal education. Although we have a lot of work to do, and the journey is slow and challenging we are breaking down some of the barriers that have prevented our success. We do this work because it is important to reflect the history and

cultures of Aboriginal people. We need to be teaching this history and cultures in our classrooms. Aboriginal people have made positive contributions to this country called Canada and also to the World. Our learners need to see that, we as Aboriginal people, have made those positive contributions. I would like to see more of my colleagues infusing Aboriginal content into their lessons. This infusion should not just happen in Grade 4 but throughout all grades from K–12 and in all subject areas. It must go beyond the aesthetics of “dreamcatchers, button blankets and totem poles.” There are so many resources available now to

infuse Aboriginal content. I encourage my colleagues to contact the Aboriginal department in their school district to seek out support from that department. We can all work together toward making our classrooms a place where not just Aboriginal learners, but all learners have that sense of belonging.

I want to be a teacher who has made a difference in the lives of her students. Our children/learners are our teachers too and I learn from them...especially “patience.” I raise my hands in thanks and respect to the learners and teachers.

Health and Safety

Working and learning conditions in portables

The Surrey School District is one of very few districts in which the enrolment is actually increasing. The board chair, in an interview on CBC Radio, indicated that the district had received no funding for capital projects to build new schools since 2005. Their solution then, to accommodate the students and staff, is to buy portable classrooms.

The Comox Valley is in declining enrolment. The board's decisions to restructure the grades and close schools has resulted in overcrowding of the existing schools and the necessity to use portables.

It seems that regardless of whether a district is in declining or increasing enrolment, the solution to housing students and staff in the light of budget cutbacks is portable classrooms. The Ministry of Education in 1999-2000 initiated a portable classroom reduction strategy recognizing even then that these structures were, and are, meant to be temporary and less than adequate as working and learning environments. Their strategy is sadly failing.

At the BCTF Annual General Meeting, two resolutions came to the floor in an attempt to address some of the concerns for teachers working in portables. The first dealt with how the inadequacy of the building structure itself creates an unhealthy environment. Many portables leak through ceilings, around windows and doors, and some have been found to have no vapour barrier either in the walls or under the floors. This moisture coupled with inadequate ventilation and heating systems results in a perfect environment for mould growth.

The board chair of the Surrey School District, in her interview, indicated that new portables cost approximately \$100,000 each. With the lack of funds, some school districts are refurbishing existing portables, some of which had been used as unheated storage containers for years. Even a completely retrofitted portable does not guarantee a healthy environment. This was evidenced by a portable with new floors, windows, walls, ceiling, and roof that through testing showed such high mould counts that the students and staff were evacuated within hours of receiving the test results. This particular board was pro-active in testing all portables after discovering mould in one refurbished portable. This practice of testing, as many of you have reported, is not always the case.

The other health issue, not only related to portables, is that of reduced custodial support as a result of budget cutbacks. Due to the inadequate building structures listed above, portables require more stringent cleaning and maintenance to ensure a healthy environment. Unfortunately, again, this is not always the case. Our brothers and sisters in the support staff union are often the first to feel the brunt of the budget cuts and as a result, it is reported that many classrooms do not receive even daily cleaning.

The other resolution that was brought to the floor was one of providing cell phones for teachers who work alone. Portable classrooms are typically considered temporary structures and as such do not have the same infrastructure as the main school. Portables are often separate from the main

building and are easily accessible by the public. Portables do not have the same level of security of locking doors. It was reported that one teacher used skipping rope to tie her back door closed for weeks before the maintenance department was able to repair the lock. For these reasons, there must be working-alone procedures in place that would include some mechanism to call for help. The excuse that it would cost money to install phones or buzzer systems to all portables does not absolve employers of their responsibility to keep all workers safe.

Portable classrooms unfortunately are here to stay. They should be treated, however, as any working environment free from mould, with ventilation and heating sufficient for the number of people in the room and regular cleaning to maintain a healthy environment. A risk assessment should be performed to identify the risks of people working in them and controls put in place to ensure teachers' and students' safety.

Most local collective agreements have some language regarding the employer's responsibility to maintain a healthy work environment.

All teachers are covered by the *Workers Compensation Act and Regulation*, which also defines the employer's responsibility to ensure the health and safety of the workers.

Each school site should have either a joint occupational health and safety committee or a worker representative whose role it is to identify issues and make recommendations of remediation to the employer.

Report any health and safety issues to your administrator and the site-based occupational health and safety committee.

Karen Langenmaier, BCTF Health and Safety Prevention Officer

Need help in dealing with a difficult situation?



I was in conflict with a colleague!

I felt her/his behavior was inconsiderate and intimidating.

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A friend suggested using the BCTF Internal Mediation Service.

I was apprehensive, but sought more information.

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Factor 88? Don't wait

A member who has attained age 64, has reached factor '88' (age plus contributory service), or is in receipt of a retirement pension under a registered pension plan, may voluntarily withdraw from the long-term portion of the Salary Indemnity Plan. Withdrawal may be made during any school year in which one of the foregoing conditions has been met and upon the completion of the appropriate withdrawal form. Withdrawal will be effective, upon approval, in September for applications received in that month. Applications submitted later will be effective the month following approval of the application.

In making application for withdrawal, you should ensure that in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP: short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach factor '90' or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first. Applications are available online at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/SIP/LT-WithdrawalForm.pdf or by calling the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

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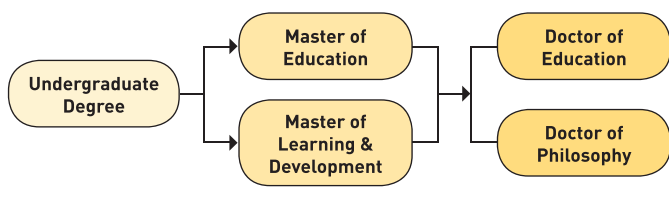
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PD Calendar

MAY 2010

15 Vancouver. Investigating Our Practices 2010 13th annual conference. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Registration fee \$25 (\$15 for students). Lunch and refreshments included. Scarfe Education Building 2125 Main Mall UBC. For more information, contact Judy Paley 604-822-2733 judy.paley@ubc.ca or visit eplt.educ.ubc.ca/programs/institutes/iop.php

15-16 Vancouver. UBC offers at the Point Grey campus a French and Spanish immersion weekend. Single accommodation is available at the Pacific Spirit Hostel for \$33 (+ taxes) per night. Teachers can use their Tuition Fee Certificate toward the \$250 tuition fee. Call toll-free 1-866-528-7485 or see www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/weekend.html

19-23 Vancouver. Environmental Educators' PSA (EEPSA) hosts the EECOM 2010 national conference in partnership with Simon Fraser University and Metro Vancouver. Diversity, Sustainability, Environment: Cultural and Practical Diversity in Environmental Education. Contact Patrick Robertson, 604-818-6521, pabrobo@shaw.ca or visit our website www.bctf.ca/ee psa.

20-21 Vernon. SD22 Technology Showcase and BCBEA Regional Conference. Keynote speaker Steve Dotto. Keynote topics: CyberSafe, Currents Trends in Technology and VSS Cyber Bullying presentation "Be the Change" presented by Mike Sawka plus 16 BCBEA conference sessions and showcase presentations. For more information, visit www.sd22.bc.ca/~showcase. To register for BCBEA sessions e-mail Terry Downton tdownton@sd22.bc.ca

JULY 2010

1-13 7th Peace & Reconciliation Study Tour for BC teachers. This is an excellent and heavily subsidized professional development opportunity supported by BC Social Studies Teachers' Association. The tour is organized to enhance teachers using "Human Rights in the Asia Pacific 1931-1945: Social Responsibility and Global Citizenship"—a teachers' guide developed by the BC Ministry of Education to support aspects of senior social studies curriculum. The study tour facilitates selected teachers to have better understanding of the cultural and historical background of China during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945) through meeting survivors and historians, as well as visiting museums and historical sites in Beijing, Quzhou, Nanjing, and Shanghai. The organizer, BC ALPHA, covers all ground costs inside China while teachers basically need only to take care of their own international travel costs between Canada and China. For application details and highlights of the study tours from previous years, visit <http://alpha-canada.org/StudyTour> or contact Thekla Lit at 604-313-6000 or bcalpha@alpha-canada.org.

5-23 Quebec City, Quebec. Institut de Français, UBC à Québec, French Bursary Program for Teachers. This French immersion program is intended for all teachers and administrators interested in learning or improving their French language skills. www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec or toll-free 1-866-528-7485

18-23 Vancouver. 37th Annual International Systemic Functional Congress, UBC. A rare opportunity for educators to hear the latest in research and teaching in the field of functional systemic linguistics.

Congress Theme: Language Evolving: Language is constantly evolving, whether we consider it from the perspective of its use in practical contexts or as a system. This congress presents an opportunity to learn about, reflect on, and extend SFL's various ways of thinking about language evolving. We will be joined by researchers, teachers and students working on these topics from around the globe. Plenary speakers include Michael Halliday, Jim Martin, Terrence Deacon and Gunther Kress. Wednesday, July 21st will open with a plenary session given by Mary Schleppegrell, a Professor of Education at the University of Michigan School of Education and author of The Language of Schooling (Erlbaum, 2004). Dr. Schleppegrell's research explores the relationship between language and learning with a focus on students for whom English is a second language. This will be followed by parallel sessions from both practicing teachers presenting classroom-based work involving SFL and academic leaders in the field of SFL, or functional grammar in educational contexts. Further information is available at: www.isfc2010.ubcconferences.com

AUGUST 2010

13-16 Parksville, BC. The three-day Achieving Excellence in Writing Workshop, presented by Susan Augustyn, offers an exciting and effective method of teaching writing. The workshop demonstrates the teaching of various structures and stylistic techniques that are easy for students to learn. Students are motivated to write, given the tools to write well, and led to take ownership of their writing. Teachers will leave the workshop ready to teach a repertoire of writing skills that will greatly improve their students' writing within a few months. The workshop is practical, offering an extensive set of skills to take back to the classroom to use immediately. Used widely across British Columbia and Alberta, this method has empowered thousands of students and proven to be effective for those students who struggle with writing as well as those who are gifted. Applicable for Grades 2 to 11. Contact: saugustyn@shaw.ca or phone 250 248-6434

OCTOBER 2010

22-23 Surrey. PITA Fall Conference, Featuring over 60 workshops in literacy, math, science, social studies, PE, and so on. Learn from: Adrienne Gear: Reading Power; Diana Cruchley: Writing; Mary Moody: Teaching Strategies; Liliana Lanfranchi: French strategies; Action Schools, Elaine Jaltema: Literature Circles; Ray Myrtle: Start UP Your class Successfully, and many more! Watch for details at www.pita.ca or contact Ray Myrtle president@pita.ca

Future October PSA days (BCTF procedure statement 30.A.14) 30.A. 14 That for the purposes of a province-wide PSA day, the BCTF supports the third Friday in October as the day on which all districts hold a professional day, except in years in which Thanksgiving Monday falls in the same week, in which case the fourth Friday would be the designated day.

2010-11: October 22, 2010
2011-12: October 21, 2011
2012-13: October 19, 2012
2013-14: October 25, 2013
2014-15: October 24, 2014
2015-16: October 23, 2015

PSA PD Day-October 22, 2010
PD Calendar website: bctf.ca/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx
Additions/changes: sdrummond@bctf.ca

Children making music in the Downtown Eastside

Children of all ages come three times a week to St. James' Anglican Church after school and take part in a wide variety of musical experiences

In the November/December edition of *Teacher*, I wrote about the visit of a remarkable youth orchestra from Venezuela. The young people involved were from the impoverished areas of Caracas, and the opportunity to play was making a profound difference in their lives.

Similarly, here in Vancouver, the Saint James Music Academy, an independent non-profit society, is pursuing the same mission. Children of all ages come three times a week to St. James' Anglican Church after school and take part in a wide variety of musical experiences covering theory, voice and instrumental classes, choir, and orchestra. The many cavernous spaces of St. James are ideally suited to music making and the whole environment rings with a cacophony of sounds and the energetic activity of children engrossed in performance.

Tireless energy and dedication is exemplified in Kathryn Walker, the executive director who founded the academy nearly three years ago in response to the lack of opportunities for children in the Downtown Eastside to engage in music. Many of the children come from disadvantaged families in the Strathcona area and join a "walking" bus after school for their journey over to St. James.

There is no charge for children to attend and the operating costs, which include paying the teachers, are met through donations received from businesses and retailers. A number of the teachers work in the public education system during the day and are well-known for their expertise in music education.

Like José Abreu of Venezuela, Kathryn Walker views the provision of musical opportunities as a social justice issue. "This investment in the lives of children will ensure positive social change in our neighbourhood, our city, and the world."

For more information, visit www.sjma.ca.

– David Denyer

