

TEACHER

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

The premier's swan song

By David Denyer

The premier's prime-time television address was aired on October 27 at a cost of \$240,000 to BC taxpayers. It was a last desperate, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to salvage his and the Liberal party's sagging fortunes. The polling that followed confirmed that Campbell's credibility was damaged, not enhanced, by the broadcast.

Contrary to expectations, education issues appeared as an afterthought, filler used to bump up the allotted time to the required 20 minutes. He put the focus primarily on early childhood education, announcing an expansion of Strong Start Centres by 100 at a cost of \$3-million a year. They favour those families who are able to spare a family member to accompany and work with the child and, at only three hours a day, they don't dovetail with the provision of accessible daycare, which would be of greater benefit to those struggling with limited incomes.

Campbell declared that, starting in September 2011, every student entering Kindergarten will be offered an early childhood learning assessment designed to assist teachers in planning for the first years of school.

But "voluntary early childhood learning assessment" is of no help without additional funding to meet those children's needs once



identified, said Susan Lambert, BCTF president. "Kindergarten teachers already assess all of the children coming into their classes, but we no longer have the specialist teachers in schools to work with them. More testing doesn't help children learn."

These proclamations of programs already in place were capped by a stunning assertion, that within five years (safely beyond the next election) every Grade 4 student would be reading, writing, and doing math at grade level.

This approach, said Lambert, "is typical of this government's drive to standardize education and not recognize the uniqueness of each learner. The statement demonstrates that the premier doesn't understand how children learn and it does a disservice to the children who are struggling and to those whose pace is far beyond grade level."

A major disappointment was the complete lack of any intention to address major funding shortfalls, lack of support for children with special needs, school closures, cuts in teaching positions, and the significant reductions in a wide range of services that help students and their education.

A major part of the address was devoted to a strenuous defence of the HST and the controversial announcement of a 15% cut in the provincial income tax rate as of January 2011.

Ironically, just the day before, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) released a report entitled "The Power of Taxes." The CCPA report makes clear what a

bargain taxes are when measured against the services they provide.

"Middle-income families in Canada often feel under financial pressure, but the bargain they get from public services is often over-

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looked: they consume an average of \$41,000 worth of public services."

In a recent opinion piece in the *Vancouver Sun*, Paul Kershaw of the Early Learning Partnership at UBC had this to say:

"So, British Columbians, it is time to recognize that our indignation about the HST is costing our kids, cornering our premier to the point that his party's electoral success depends on issuing another tax cut at the expense of the social policy investments that will really address the vulnerability in middle-income families."

"It is time—to do the math. Tax cuts cannot grow strong economies in perpetuity if we don't grow strong, smart, and innovative populations. Put bluntly, strong economies require smart family policy."

Iglika Ivanova of the CCPA in her assessment said: "If our Premier wants to help British Columbians, he should focus on directly inter-

vening in the labour market to ensure that all workers can benefit from economic growth or on redistributing income through more generous transfers, more progressive taxes, and through investing in public services that even the playing field... Notice that tax cuts are not on this list."

The premier's constant talk of putting more money in peoples' pockets and that consumers know better how to spend it is simply part of the dangerously misleading

mythology propagated by business and corporate interests.

In less than a week following his prime-time address, the premier announced his resignation effective the date a new leader is chosen. It remains to be seen whether the goals and general direction given for education remain the priorities of the new leadership.

David Denyer is assistant director and newsmagazine editor, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division.

On the inside

This month has been witness to a number of significant changes in the provincial government, and probing the impact begins with this edition.

A key part of the settlement agreement between residential school survivors and the Canadian government is the establishment of a commission to document the experiences of survivors, and create a permanent record. Representatives of the BCTF and teachers were present at an education initiative to further this work, and accounts of the event are included in this edition.

The controversial topic of Wi-Fi receives more coverage, as does the

area of data collection and data management.

Two further contributions from the BCTF research department look into another aspect of the worklife study, and as a follow-up to a feature in the October edition, an account of what may be done to alleviate the affects of poverty on students.

In addition, there are book and DVD reviews, and a host of articles on the many kinds of work and projects that teachers sponsor and support.

As is customary at this time of year, we acknowledge the contribution of those teachers who have retired as of June 30 and wish them well.

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President's message



Susan Lambert

There are many perks to my job. Probably the best is the privilege of hearing from teachers. I'd like to thank April Lowe, Grade 2 teacher in Sea-to-Sky, and a BCTF workshop facilitator, Paul Boscaroli, of Nelson and president of the Tech Ed PSA, and Brooke Douglas, Grade 5/6 teacher and Richmond's PD chair, for sharing these stories with me.

April Lowe uses a "jumping number line" to teach arithmetic concepts. Recently, she asked her students to plot when they were

born, estimate when she was born (they guessed 1863!) and then "count by tens" to determine the difference. They began to chorus the repetition: 1863, 1873, 1883... Suddenly, one little boy excitedly interrupted and insisted that the class stop counting "by tens" and instead count "to tens." And then he explained his point—count from 1863 to 1870, that's easy! Now count by 100s! That's easier still! All of a sudden a little boy (whose parents were worried about his numeracy skills) demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of place value. It was an amazing moment, a time for him to shine as he led the class down his path of discovery. And it was a joyful moment for Lowe. It illustrated the power of authentic assessment embedded in classroom practice, of assessment "for learning," of assessment as the antithesis of mindless standardized data gathering.

Last fall, Paul Boscaroli asked me to meet with the executive of the Tech Ed PSA. They told me stories of shop teachers desperately trying to teach while at the same time ensuring the safety of students using dangerous machines in

classes that far exceed the capacity of the physical space or safety standards. Students wait endlessly in line for a chance to use equipment. Students with special needs are often placed in classes without adequate supervision. There have been harrowing incidents of student injuries. The PSA decided to do something about it and this fall they published a practices and standards guide detailing working and learning conditions for school shops. These conditions are essential to both student safety and learning. This is the professional voice; it should be the authoritative voice.

As PD chair of her school, Brooke Douglas surveyed the staff and found the results daunting. There was such a broad and diverse range of interests. Previously, PD had been designed to address school goals stemming from the district's achievement contract, or parent needs articulated by the SPC. It was clear that this year such PD would be meaningless to some and irrelevant to others. So, in a complete departure from their previous practice, the staff decided to develop individual professional inquiry projects. Together, they

determined the parameters—everyone is required to attend PD days, everyone is required to provide progress reports to whole staff plenaries at the start of each PD day, and collaboration is encouraged. Now everyone is engaged in a relevant and meaningful self-directed action research. Douglas's story is evidence of the necessity of professional autonomy over professional development. It is a self-evident truth that for professional development to be effective it has to be relevant to one's practice, and to be relevant it must be reflective and self-designed. For Douglas, the new plan was hugely satisfying: "I feel like such a weight has been lifted off my shoulders; I couldn't meet and balance their needs; now there is such freedom!"

What do all these stories have in common? They are the stories of consummate teachers fulfilling the obligations and responsibilities of professional practice; teachers trying their best to use professional judgment and assert professional autonomy to improve the profession and practice of teaching. And they're doing it with dignity, dedication, and determination.

Lowe, Boscaroli, and Douglas are not the exception. They are the rule. They should be supported in their efforts. But when such work is uphill, it is exhausting. In BC, on average, teachers are working close to a 50-hour week. Most teachers have five years of basic training; 25% have masters degrees, and a further 26% have diplomas or other forms of certification beyond those five years. Yet, professional autonomy is not respected, and working conditions do not reflect professional standards or provide the learning conditions for students to thrive.

Students deserve smaller class sizes, and students with special needs deserve more support. All students deserve authentic assessment practices. How can learning be personalized when assessment is standardized? The FSAs and their misuse are harmful for students and schools. They are symbolic of our struggle to protect the quality of public education and make learning meaningful, engaging, and relevant. This year, we plan to take our message against the census administration of FSAs *viral*—watch for your opportunity to get involved in this campaign.

Readers write

More than one way

I agree with Jane Turner's description of students and teachers as either "objects" or "subjects." I'd like to extend that definition to include teacher training in university. How many of us trained under the Year 2000 document? I felt as a training teacher that I was being indoctrinated into a methodology of teaching I disagreed with. I feel strongly that teachers should be taught how to teach (i.e., a variety of methods, unit and lesson planning techniques, classroom management strategies, etc.), not that one way is the only way. If the university instructors did this, we would be graduating teachers with "built-in" professional autonomy, teachers who could decide for themselves what works best with their students and what fits with their philosophy of teaching.

Aldina Isbister
Vancouver

Up with homework

As a BCTF member, I had trouble understanding why the article "Down with Homework!" (Alfie Kohn, Jan./Feb. 2008, *Teacher*) was published in our union's newsmagazine with no preamble, stating that this is but one view.

Most of us, as teachers, give out homework from time to time, not because that's what we like to do, but rather, we believe the students

need to practice their understanding of the concepts. I don't normally assign homework—only if the assignments are not finished during class. Some of my more capable students hardly have any homework most of the time. However, I had a parent who read your article and now tells me that his daughter should not have to do any homework at all. I feel that it's very irresponsible of you to print such an article (for the public to see and to misunderstand that it is the position of the BCTF) without balancing it with other views. I am especially frustrated because this is the BCTF, my own union! Frustrated and disappointed.

Connie Lau
Langley

Science lacking

In its September issue, *Teacher* published a full-page article, "Should Wi-Fi be used in classrooms?", by Lynn Quiring. This article, though convincingly written, was bursting with misinformation, distortions, and pseudoscience; so much so that I was quite taken aback to find it published in our BCTF magazine. As a science teacher, one of my most important roles is to educate my students on how science works in order to help them distinguish fact from fiction. The key question that I encourage them to bring to all of their investi-

gations is simple, but important: "What is the evidence?" Of course, not all evidence is created equal and this is where things get interesting. Small preliminary studies, or even poorly designed larger studies, may appear to suggest that exposure to radiation from cell-phone and Wi-Fi towers is linked to certain health hazards. However, evidence from the best-designed studies with the most rigorous methods have consistently overturned these findings and confirmed what any physicist worth his salt will tell you...cell-phone and wireless radiation have far less chance of hurting you than the visible light shining from your desk lamp. This is because cell phone and Wi-Fi radiation is made up of low-frequency, low-energy radio waves. Radio-wave radiation cannot damage your cells or molecules as it is non-ionizing. As scientist S.T. Lakshmikummar writes, "Unless one is willing to discard the concept of photons, Planck's law, and the interaction between photons and atoms—and thus the entire body of quantum physics—it is simply not possible for the photons associated with either a power line or a cell phone to cause cancer." He also reminds us that cell-phone radiation carries a million times less energy than the radiation of visible light. I am puzzled how Quiring, who is an

apparent expert in this field, is unfamiliar with these points. I can only hope that a campaign to ban lighting in schools does not follow.

I get the impression that Quiring is either ignoring, or is unaware of, the best science in this field and is only paying attention to a selection of weaker studies that appear to support what it seems he wants to believe. What we want to believe has a huge influence on the information we choose to accept or disregard and psychologists call this the "confirmation bias." The best-designed scientific studies guard against many human biases, including the confirmation bias, and help us to slowly but steadily figure out how the world actually is, rather than how we wish it to be. This is exactly why quality science, and not simply good intentions and passion, is so important in guiding our policy and decision making.

Quiring is not serving the public interest by ignoring the best science on this topic. Rather, he is stirring up needless fear and worry, and possibly influencing people to make lifestyle changes that are completely unnecessary and costly. For example, in other articles he has advocated for people to move away from cell-phone towers and encouraged parents to take their concerns to school boards. The scientific consensus does not support any such quixotic actions and I'm concerned that an uncritical acceptance of his claims may influence school districts to make ill-advised decisions on Wi-Fi infrastructure, budgeting, and policy.

A growing, profitable industry continues to be built around the completely unsubstantiated health risks of cell-phone and Wi-Fi radiation, and Quiring, who owns Logical Health, LLC, a company that "specializes in electro-hypersensitivity cases and interventions in cell-phone radiation, electromagnetic radiation, and electro-magnetic field sensitivity" would appear to be in a position to benefit from a misinformed or misdirected public.

In today's day and age, the most technologically advanced of all time, there are certainly a great number of societal and environmental issues that demand our immediate attention and action. Radiowave radiation is simply not one of them and acts only as an unnecessary, and therefore dangerous, distraction. I'd like to encourage interested colleagues, as well as

BCTF executives and school district administrators, to read further on this topic and recommend the following science-based resources as starting points, which can be accessed by a quick google search: Brian Dunning's, "How Dangerous is Cell Phone Radiation?", Lorne Trotter's, "A Growing Hysteria," and S.T. Lakshmikummar's, "Power Line Panic and Mobile Mania."

Greg Payne
Surrey

Shocked

I am shocked by the inclusion of this article ("Should Wi-Fi be used in classrooms?") in the BCTF *Teacher* newsmagazine.

I just received my copy the other day. I am writing a response but checked to see that the deadline is already passed for submission. I am hoping that I will be still able to submit in the next day or so.

The article published is erroneous. It does not list a single reference and those quoted are not reliable sources or their quote has been taken out of context.

Finding Lynn Quiring's biography on another site provides: "Lynn Quiring is a Registered Pharmacist, Board Certified Clinical Nutritionist, and holds a degree in naturopathic medicine. He also holds diplomas in homeopathy and hormone regulation therapy. He is an expert in cell-phone radiation and EMFs and their health effects on the body. He has practiced in natural medicine for over 10 years."

How is Quiring an expert in cell-phone radiation? There is no research and no peer review of Quiring's work. Nothing in Quiring's degrees, or qualifications lists him as an expert. Quiring is very outspoken on the issue of cell phones and WiFi but without any evidence base. I have tried to find quotes or original articles in other work by this author and found only promotion of health products.

I am curious how CUEBC, our provincial specialist association, was not invited to comment, or review an article that clearly does not provide any factual basis.

Kevin Amboe
Past president of CUEBC, Surrey

Ideas recycled

I loved that recent piece by Emily O'Neill, "The 21st century obsession," and the Hollywood graphics were equally...foxy.

Words are cheap and the spinning, such as "a 21st century learning agenda" and "hands-on programs" continues to be woven,

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until the cows come home. There are a couple of other words that could follow that last sentence. I'll leave them to your creative imagination.

As a retired "chalk holder," I still remember when the Commodore 64 computers were really going to "do the teaching" and improve everything from academics to social growth. This was followed by "The Year 2000" and "accreditation"!

The idealism sounded great on paper and still does (even though some is on recycled). These "laudable goals" continue to be churned out just like the IRPs and the rest of the "cheese cake," while budgets are cut, schools closed, taxes increased, and platitudes printed out exponentially.

Dan Propp
Richmond

Editor's note

The newsmagazine reflects areas of interest and concern to teachers and the use of Wi-Fi is one that has received national attention. It is recognized that the topic is controversial and the evidence on either side of the issue far from conclusive and hence all points of view are welcome.

BCTF advantage program changing partners

A significant change is in store for the BCTF Advantage Program early in the new year. As of January 13, 2011, the British Columbia Automobile Association, (BCAA), will cease to be our principal partner.

BCAA has made the decision to end its involvement in group marketing and will end its marketing and promotions to groups. It intends, instead, to concentrate on service to individual members.

This change in no way affects BCTF members who have purchased BCAA memberships or any of BCAA's insurance products. The BCAA will honour any discounts and benefits already promised to BCTF Advantage Program members, and members wanting to renew services at group rates may do so prior to January 13, 2011.

On January 14, the BCTF Advantage Program will be introducing a new principal partner that will offer all the services previously offered to Advantage Program members, and, a new travel partner—W.E. Travel. Please watch the website: www.bctf.ca/advantage—the next edition of the *Teacher* newsmagazine, and your local newsletters for more information about our new partners and their offerings.

— Patti McLaughlin, BCTF Income Security Division

Find the BCTF on Facebook

The BC Teachers' Federation is on Facebook and engaging members through social media. If you have a Facebook profile, go to www.facebook.com/BCTeachersFederation to see our brand new page and become a fan. You will get updates about BCTF news, events, and opportunities to discuss current issues in education.

Check out the BCTF's YouTube channel

Go to www.youtube.com/BCTFvids to see the BCTF's YouTube channel. It's loaded with content about education funding, teachers teaching on call, Social Justice 12, and a brand new video on testing assessment that was filmed at Summer Conference. Don't forget to pass those links on to friends and post them on your Facebook page.

In with the new, out with the old

By Noel Herron

When Premier Gordon Campbell took to the airwaves in a rare prime-time televised address last month, he had previously announced several key cabinet shuffles, one of which was to usher in George Abbott, formerly minister of Aboriginal relations and reconciliation to the post of minister of education and to usher out Margaret MacDiarmid, former minister of

...MacDiarmid, with her aggressive and unpredictable manner, had become a lightning rod for growing discontent within the education community.

education, to the post of minister for tourism, trade, and investment.

Politically, this cabinet shuffle will be viewed as an attempt to revitalize Campbell's embattled Liberal government but whether it signals a change of education policies is another matter entirely.

One thing is certain, Margaret MacDiarmid had become a liability, if not an embarrassment, for the BC Liberals, and this portfolio change will be viewed by many as a demotion for her.

In her brief stay as education minister for almost one-and-a-half years, MacDiarmid was well on her way to becoming one of the most unpopular ministers—outside Finance Minister Colin Hansen—in the Campbell government. The fifth education minister, in a revolving door of ministers since the BC Liberals were elected in 2001, MacDiarmid, with her aggressive and unpredictable manner, had become a lightning rod for growing discontent within the education community.

Her very public four-month fight with the Vancouver School Board in which she was described by retired Superintendent of Schools Geoff Johnson, in *The Vancouver Sun*, as "a provincial bear, now well and truly in attack mode," MacDiarmid

Library guarantee for BC schools...in India

Still another overseas school has been accredited by the BC Ministry of Education. This one is the first in India, but 20 other BC schools exist in China, South Korea, and Thailand. These schools must use BC certified teachers and use BC curriculum, as well as be inspected annually by a BC ministry official.

About 6,000 students are registered in these schools which give easier access to post-secondary schools in BC. Most of these overseas schools are run as private businesses, with a few being run by BC school districts. One of the requirements for a school, according to the *Vancouver Sun*, is that "a library is open every day." In contrast, with ongoing underfunding of education, more and more schools in BC no longer have a library open every day.

— Larry Kuehn, BCTF Research and Technology Division

took the blame for selecting "in-house" Comptroller General Cheryl Wenzeki-Yolland, to silence VSB—the BC Liberals' most persistent education critic.

This particular choice, as opposed to the selection of Auditor General John Doyle, who was provincially empowered to undertake an independent, arms-length, financial review, was greeted with scepticism by many within the Vancouver education community. The lack of credibility of the comptroller general's \$200,000 report

Her response to the cutbacks to provincial sports funding by telling teachers to have their students "walk, dance, and play in the parks" instead of formal team sports, was widely ridiculed.

was underlined when she declared that the VSB had "a large surplus," a finding that even the Liberal supporters on the board greeted as "a preposterous assessment."

MacDiarmid routinely and cynically fronted for the BC Liberals

in their ongoing and dubious claim on the adequacy of "the greatest ever" per-student funding allocation, even in the face of last year's first-time-ever statement from the province's provincial secretary treasurers' association (BCASBC) that there was a documented shortfall of \$120 million in funding for boards across the province.

Ignoring the fact that persistent provincial underfunding led to cancellation of key programs and services, loss of hundreds of teaching and non-teaching positions, increase in parental fundraising, deferral of school repairs and maintenance, shortages of school supplies and materials, closure of upwards of 200 schools, and the shortening of the school year in a number of boards, MacDiarmid repeatedly dismissed pleas for added funding and support, claiming that Victoria was "protecting public education."

Her response to the cutbacks to provincial sports funding by telling teachers to have their students "walk, dance, and play in the parks" instead of formal team sports, was widely ridiculed. And she dismissed growing concerns about school board uncertainty concerning stable funding with a curt "this government has its priorities straight."

Looking back

70 years ago

Too commonly the rural teacher is looked upon by his or her neighbours, and even by himself or herself, as a transient. In too many districts there still lingers the perverse tradition that a country school teacher is little more than a temporary visitor probably to be replaced by still another. Very often the local residents do little to encourage intimacy. In other cases the school district is divided into hostile cliques among which the teacher must walk warily lest he identify himself with one of them and thus give offence to another.

— November 1940, *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

In my opinion, taking them as a group, there are no better dressed men than lawyers, and teachers should be in the same class. By "better dressed" I am not referring to the price tag of the suit. With a little care a fellow can be just as well dressed in a moderately priced suit as in the most expensive one.

Thus my first requirement is a well-pressed suit or jacket and slacks combination. And of course a dress shirt and tie and suitable, well-kept shoes. For hot weather there are short-sleeved shirts. In the hot weather I would permit the neck button of the shirt to be loosened with the tie also loosened but I would still insist on a tie being worn. Only in excessively hot weather would I permit coats to be removed. There is no place in school for a sport shirt. Never. The open-neck flannel sport shirt is inexcusable.

— December 1960, *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

The computer is with us and undoubtedly here to stay. The last 20 years have witnessed such a phenomenal growth of these machines that their presence in our daily lives now goes largely unheeded. The microcomputer requires commands to be relayed to it either by the typing of instructions on its keyboard or by the loading of a program stored on a standard

It's ironic that the new education minister had the word *reconciliation* in the title of his previous portfolio, because that is exactly what is needed in the wake of his predecessor's legacy of confrontation in dealing with various education stakeholders. MacDiarmid in her short stint as education minister leaves a legacy of alienation and distrust that will require considerable fence-mending.

Replacing the pratfall-prone MacDiarmid with a cabinet heavy-hitter like George Abbott is an admission by Gordon Campbell that he is in deep trouble with the education portfolio.

Replacing the pratfall-prone MacDiarmid with a cabinet heavy-hitter like George Abbott is an admission by Gordon Campbell that he is in deep trouble with the education portfolio.

Abbott will need to take a long, hard look at existing education policies of this government. In particular, he will need to re-examine the BC Liberals' dysfunctional funding formula, the systematic and surreptitious downloading of expenses on to school boards, and the restrictive provincial educational practices and policies, not to mention the outdated one-size-fits-all approach that has created so much grief.

To ensure quality public education for every child in BC, while valuing fairness and equal opportunity for all, a fresh and equitable approach to our K to 12 public system is urgently needed.

It remains to be seen if George Abbott is up to the task.

Noel Herron is a former Vancouver trustee.

cassette tape or on a "floppy disk." A program on a cassette tape is fed into the Apple by an ordinary cassette player. Floppy disks, which look like soft 45 rpm phonograph records, use a "disk drive" to "boot" in the program.

— Nov./Dec. 1980, *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

BC teachers deserve a significant salary increase. We haven't seen a raise that means anything in almost a decade. But when we bargain for ourselves, we'll be negotiating for the future of public education as well. If we are to attract the best and the brightest of our young people to teaching, and if we are to retain our experienced colleagues, we need competitive salaries. Our single most effective tool in achieving this goal is collective bargaining. It's up to each of us to make the coming round of negotiations a success.

— Nov./Dec. 2000, *Teacher* newsmagazine

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

21st century learning initiative in BC

By Jinny Sims

BC has one of the best public school systems in the world, and this has been acknowledged by the current and past ministers of education. In 2010, the Ministry of Education met with John Abbott, a British educator and one of the architects of 21st Century Learning in Britain. John Abbott, Valerie Hannon, and others have joined forces to promote 21st Century Learning in other jurisdictions. In the UK, this concept was an experiment that was carried out in a very low socio-economic area to help engage students in their learning, and was not seen as a panacea to overhaul the whole education system. What started as a progressive movement has since been influenced by the neo-liberal agenda for accountability that is based on measurable outputs, economic growth, privatization and commodification of public education/public services, and a focus on the individual and self-interest.

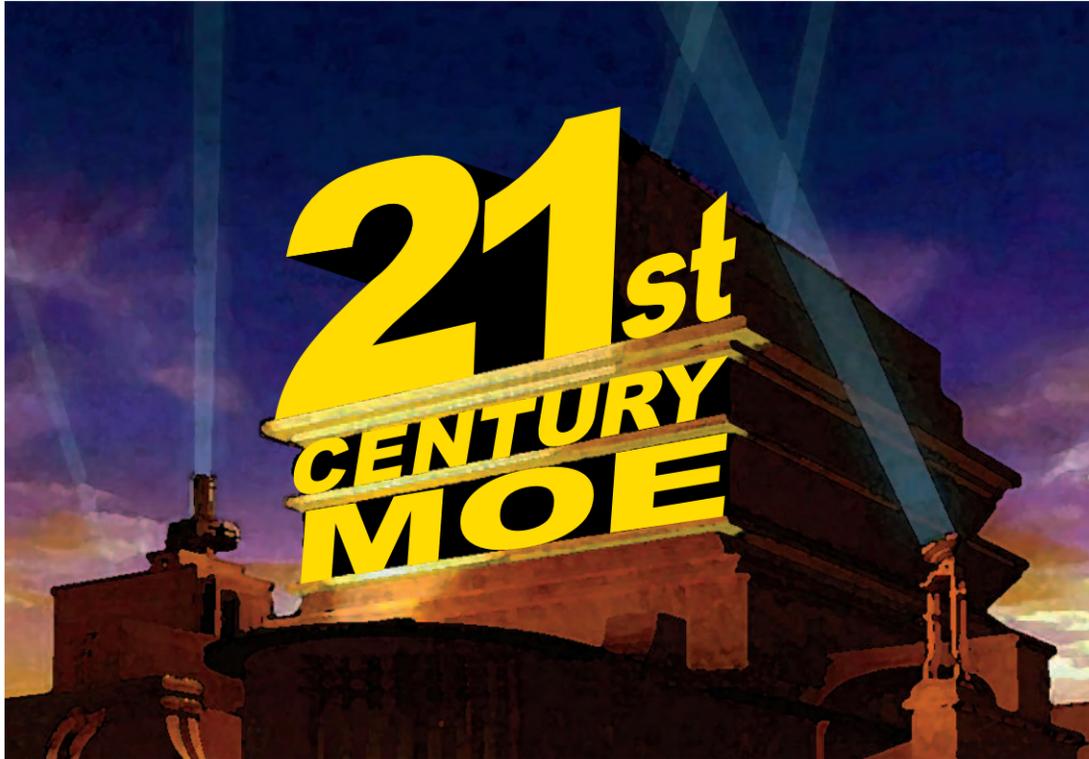
BC has joined Alberta, New Brunswick, and the US in adopting the 21st century learning mantra. The initiative was established in 1995 by "...a group of English and American businessmen and organizations to make sense of

When we look at what is happening in the US and other jurisdictions motivating 21st century learning, there is dissonance and contradiction between what is said, the actions of the policy makers, and those leading the charge for reform. This disconnect is very dramatic in the US, and is evident in Canadian jurisdictions as well.

research on learning and learning processes that were fragmented in many different disciplines, and embedded in many universities, research institutions and businesses around the world." (website quote). It is interesting to note that there is no mention of teachers, or the value of a public education system. So what is driving the latest version of reforms?

In BC, the ministry has identified 21st century skills as: reading, writing, numeracy, and 7 Cs: critical thinking and problem solving; creativity and innovation; collaboration, teamwork, and leadership; cross-cultural understanding; communication, computing, and ICT literacy; career and learning self-reliance; caring for personal health and planet earth. The focus in the presentations has been on personalized learning, use of technology and online learning, teachers as facilitators, and more choice for parents and students. No teacher could argue with these laudable goals, and would assert this is exactly what is happening in classrooms around the province. As practicing teachers, we also notice that a sense of community, citizenship, and civic responsibility are missing from the list.

When we look at what is happening in the US and other jurisdictions motivating 21st century learning, there is dissonance and contradictions between what is said, the



actions of the policy makers, and those leading the charge for reform. This disconnect is very dramatic in the US, and is evident in Canadian jurisdictions as well. 21st century learning has captured the imagination, and at face value, can be very appealing for teachers, parents, and the public. On reflection, for teachers trying to meet the diverse needs of students in an under-resourced public education system, the disconnect can appear macabre.

There is an underlying assumption that current teaching practice in public schools is antiquated, with Victorian-era images of teachers teaching students sitting in rows stuck in a historic time frame. Nothing is further from the truth. Change is constant, and public education is about teaching our students to learn from the past, live in the present, and prepare for the future. As teachers, we are keenly aware that we live in times of rapid change, and that we must prepare our students to live in a technological, complex, and fast-changing world. There is amazing teaching and learning happening in classrooms around the province. Teaching that is based on sound pedagogy, uses a variety of tools, including new technologies and social media to actively engage students in their learning.

Big business and corporations seem to be the main drivers behind current reforms. There is a concerted attempt to commercialize and corporatize public schools. Through deliberate underfunding of public schools, policymakers have created space for business as consumers and salesmen. Corporate giants, like Bill Gates, are quite willing to invest hundreds of millions of dollars to support charter schools in order to ensure a marketplace for consumers of goods and services provided by companies that will earn billions. Others are turning to schools to provide students with specific job skills, so they do not have to invest money in training workforces. Both groups are driven by economic self-interest, and the concept of life-long learning, with students engaged in the process of learning, is lost. In the US, many charter schools are run by corporations and foundations using public funds and buildings to make a profit.

In the context of deliberate policies to underfund, destabilize, and privatize public schools, privateers use the standardized-testing agenda to undermine public confidence in public education. The

focus on narrowly-defined measurable data narrows both teaching and learning. It forces teaching of content, rather than engaging students in the process of meaningful learning experiences. The imposition of standardized tests, like the FSAs, Grades 10-12 provincial exams, district- and school-wide writes, runs contrary to meeting the needs of individual students and exploring personalized learning paths. However, the testing industry, worth billions, is the driver. Both personalized learning and the testing agenda are being pushed by the same reformers.

Over the last decade, underfunding of public education and the testing agenda has narrowed student choice. Many students are not able to take elective courses, as they struggle to meet the demands of provincial exams, and under-resourcing has limited student choice as schools have been forced to narrow course offerings. The very government that decimated apprenticeship programs, and through underfunding, reduced student choice for hands-on practical courses, is now promoting student choice. Once again, first you limit choice, and then use choice to further privatize public education as you encourage private providers for services that have been cut from public schools. For example, at one time, most secondary schools offered auto-mechanics, and due to lack of funding upgrading and maintenance for most of those workshops have been dismantled. The proliferation of private schools and tutoring services is a direct response to larger class sizes, lack of support for

In the context of deliberate policies to underfund, destabilize, and privatize public schools, privateers use the standardized-testing agenda to undermine public confidence in public education. The focus on narrowly-defined measurable data narrows both teaching and learning.

students with special needs, and reduction in learning assistance and support services to assist our vulnerable students. Once again, there is a disconnect between the talk of 21st century learning and the commitment to fund public education.

Teachers and teacher unions have become the target of the reformers as they see teachers, individually and collectively, as a barrier to their agenda to privatize public education. After creating untenable learning and teaching conditions, and imposing standardized tests, the reformers have turned to teachers being the problem. At the same time as there is talk of creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and personalized learning, there has been a concerted attack on teacher professional autonomy. There are attempts to hamper a teacher's ability to design and deliver education programs, and to select resources and learning experiences. There are jurisdictions that are mandating reading and other scripted programs. At the same time, reformers are pushing to link teacher evaluation to student test results, and talk of value-added teachers who would be rewarded with merit pay. Job security and teacher tenure are portrayed as the biggest barriers to quality teaching. They do not want to talk about underfunding, working and learning conditions, learning resources, sound pedagogy, and the value of public education to a democratic society, but instead they focus on "fixing" the teacher with mandated courses so providers can make more money. Teacher unions and contracts are seen as barriers that must be discredited and weakened. A teaching force without the protection of a collective agreement or a union would be more malleable, and would not be able to mount a resistance to the undermining of public education; it would be much easier to silence the professional voice of teachers. All around the world, teacher unions are under pressure to move into the 21st century so teachers would be left without any protections, and employers would have all the flexibility.

The 21st century learning initiative proponents focus on the need to rethink and liberate the public education system. Teachers would no longer be teaching, but would be liberated to facilitate personalized learning for each student. Teachers are asking for class size, class composition, and specialist supports that allow them to meet the needs of every child. However, the reformers have visions of students attached to wireless digital devices taking personalized learning courses online, and students going out into the

community to buy services. Schools would be computer labs, and this would remove the imperative to maintain and build new schools, and infrastructures. The school day and school calendar are seen as barriers to the proposed reforms. There would be no need to worry about class size, and there would be huge savings because textbooks would be obsolete. In light of the recent fiasco around the implementation of BCeSIS, the reformers have not taken into consideration the diversity of our province and that not all BC students have equal access to technology. Many of our schools do not even have fully operational computer labs, never mind having the capacity for wireless connections for every student. This agenda for reform will further increase the social divide as it feeds greater inequities. Not all parents will have the resources to buy additional learning experiences and new technologies. Our students are spending so much time connected to Facebook, Twitter, wireless handheld, and television. Do we then want their education experience to be with a screen? When students are wired and immersed in the new social media, who will teach them media literacy, boundaries, and appropriate usage? Where will they learn about community, civic responsibility, and a just, civil society?

As professionals, it is imperative to insert our voices into the debate about education reform. We must

As professionals, it is imperative to insert our voices into the debate about education reform. We must welcome a dialogue that is based on sound research, pedagogy, and practice. We cannot allow reformers to put their own spin on education change. We must embrace the elements that are sound, and critique those that will undermine and privatize public education.

welcome a dialogue that is based on sound research, pedagogy, and practice. We cannot allow reformers to put their own spin on education change. We must embrace the elements that are sound, and critique those that will undermine and privatize public education. We can learn from our history. The Primary Program in the Year 2000 initiatives has survived and flourished because it was based in practice, and the experiences and knowledge of classroom teachers. It was play-based, child-centred, and developmentally appropriate. It was driven by, and embraced by, classroom teachers. So, if BC is serious about education reform, let the ministry engage teachers in a meaningful dialogue that is based on the professional experience and knowledge of teachers. Provide teachers with professional autonomy, and the resources to deliver quality teaching and learning. Last, but not least, trust teachers as they are highly qualified professionals.

Jinny Sims is director, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division.

Reconciliation: A work in progress

By Glen Hansman

The BCTF was invited to send participants to an all-day public education initiative about residential schools held at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre in North Vancouver, hosted by the Squamish Nation, the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, and the First Nations Health Council. Marjorie Dumont, assistant director, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division, and I were honoured to attend on behalf of the Federation.

The event was intended to promote interest and understanding among Aboriginal people and other British Columbians in the work of the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is part of a settlement agreement arising out of a class-action suit between survivors of the residential schools and the Canadian government. The commission has been given the respon-

sibility of telling Canadians what happened in the residential schools, honouring the lives of former students and their families, and creating a permanent record of the residential schools' legacy.

Residential schools date back to the 1870s. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools, often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture.

Chief Ian Campbell, Squamish Nation, opened the event, remarking that before reconciliation can occur, we must look at the truth—reconciling hurts and pains handed down, and the legacies of those—before moving forward. This was a theme that was emphasized by a variety of speakers during the morning of the day's events, which included Grand Chief Stewart Philip

of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. Jody Wilson-Raybould, the Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, noted that all of the individuals in attendance are on their own journey to find balance and reconciliation, and that the act

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of transferring despair into hope is not an individual effort, but one that by necessity involves the larger community and Canadians recognizing our colonial past in order to move to reconciliation and a positive future for all of us.

Disappointment was expressed

by speakers and by those present that neither the former minister nor current Minister for Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation were present at the event, which had been long in the works, but occurred one day after Premier Gordon Campbell's cabinet shuffle. Marie Wilson, one of the commissioners from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission noted that the event would have been the perfect way for a new minister to get up to speed on a key aspect of his new portfolio.

There was good reason for government and for teachers to be there. As Honorable Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, also noted that these issues cannot be approached as an "Aboriginal problem." Rather, it's a problem for all of Canada. Aboriginal children in residential schools were told they were inferior, that their languages and culture were inferior; meanwhile, he argued, non-Aboriginal students in public schools were told the same thing—Aboriginal students were inferior, and therefore non-Aboriginal students are superior and have entitlements. The laws, institutions, and society of Canada are founded on racism, he posited, not just for Aboriginal people, but

for Japanese-Canadians and Chinese-Canadians as well. "Stop walking around like you own the place, and start to awaken to the racist past" was his message to broader Canadian society. Reconciliation is going to take a long time, he said. It took many years to get us here, and it will take a long time to change attitudes at all levels of government as well as in our schools. It will be the children of Canada, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who will need to carry on this work, and we have a responsibility for helping them do so.

More information about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada can be found at trc.ca.

Additional information about the reconciliation work can be found on the website of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, ahf.ca.

The Federation has a letter of understanding with the BC Public School Employers' Association stating that the parties are committed to redress the under representation of Aboriginal employees. Locals are encouraged to utilize this letter of understanding to implement employment equity agreements for Aboriginal-identified teachers.

Glen Hansman is BCTF second vice-president.

A life-changing experience

By Courtney Swanson

I am speaking today as a non-Aboriginal nursing student, to give my perspective of our education system.

Approximately six months ago, I had a life-changing experience. I heard Samaya, from the Indian Residential School Survivor Society, speak to my class about the effects of colonialism and residential schools on the Aboriginal community.

I'm not exaggerating when I say life-changing. This is not easy for me to explain, because in order for me to give context to what I'm talking about, I must first admit how ignorant I've been for the first 28 years of my life.

I will say it though, because I want to be honest, and the topic of today is truth.

My truth, is that I am embarrassed and ashamed to admit that up until six months ago, I had no idea that residential schools ever existed.

I was oblivious to the effects that colonialism had, and continues to have, on the Aboriginal people of this land.

I thought that issues between Aboriginal people and European descendants were a part of a distant past, like something seen in the movies.

What makes this twisted perception of Canadian history even worse, is that the majority of my fellow classmates had similar levels of knowledge regarding this topic.

I graduated from high school within the BC public school system, but I had never come across the topic of residential schools and colonialism until my third year of nursing school.

I thought that issues between Aboriginal people and European descendants were a part of a distant past, like something seen in the movies.

How is this possible?

Why is it considered necessary for us to learn about the histories of other nations' mistakes, such as Nazi Germany, but not about our own?

I've looked back on my past to try to see how I managed to miss such a crucial aspect of our history—the history in which my own European ancestors would have played a role.

This is what I've come up with:

- I grew up in a predominantly white, middle-class suburban neighborhood.

- I never met any Aboriginal children.
 - I participated in Canadian holidays that catered to the dominant culture. (e.g., I remember dressing up as a pilgrim for a Thanksgiving school play, in honour of the European pioneers who journeyed to this land. Nobody ever mentioned that this arrival also marked what essentially became Canada's own genocide.)
 - In secondary school, the only Aboriginal students who I knew lived with Caucasian families.
 - My learning in class consisted of the fur trade and Aboriginal customs and culture, but nothing about how the white settlers attempted to dehumanize Aboriginal people.
- I also grew up when multiculturalism and human differences were a hot topic.
- To address multiculturalism, we learned that "we are all the same," and that it shouldn't matter if someone's skin is a different colour, or if they come from a culture distinct from our own.
- Essentially, we were taught "not to notice" differences, or at least, not to express that we notice them.
- As a result, rather than learn from each other, we learn from textbooks or secondary sources. We're afraid

of asking questions, because by asking questions, we're pointing out differences.

I recognize that this is a problem.

I also remember that we spent a lot of time learning about how to interact with people immigrating from other countries, but never about how to create meaningful, trusting relationships with the original peoples of this land. We never learned how to mend the ways of the shameful past that we created.

All of this combined added to my ignorance of residential schools, colonialism, and Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Today, as an adult, I can take responsibility for what I didn't know.

I can take responsibility for what my ancestors contributed to.

I can acknowledge the fact that my skin colour alone represents something that may cause feelings of hatred or anger in people, and that it is a symbol of oppression in this country.

I can talk about it, and I can share my knowledge.

The day that Sumaya visited our class marked a new beginning for me.

I understand that Aboriginal families and communities have been torn apart, displaced, lied to, stolen from, physically and

emotionally harmed, discriminated against, and marginalized.

I understand that accomplishments have come easier to me in life because I belong to the dominant culture, and I know that I don't feel right about that.

I will never view myself, my culture, our society, history, or this country the same way again.

Thanks to the Indian Residential School Survivor Society, I have decided to expand my knowledge, and I am now taking my nursing elective in the field of nursing with Aboriginal peoples.

It is my hope to take this learning and work as an ally with the Aboriginal community.

Without imposing, I hope to be part of a positive move forward toward equity—together.

As the former South African President Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful tool which you can use to change the world."

The IRSSS changed my world.

If education regarding the true history of this land can be brought into the school systems, and be taught by Aboriginal people, then perhaps we can begin to change the world of all Canadians.

Courtney Swanson made this address to the Public Education Initiative on the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



L-R, Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners Wilton Littlechild and Marie Wilson, Indian Residential School Survivors' Society Board Elder Louisa Smith and TRC chairperson Justice Murray Sinclair.



Courtney Swanson addressed the Public Education Initiative on the IRSTRC.

Conferences for social justice teachers

Professional development for social change

By Myriam Dumont

Over the past two months, I have been fortunate enough to attend two amazing conferences. The first one I attended took place in Berkeley, California. The conference was put on by an organization called Gender Spectrum and was put on for families and professionals living and working with gender-variant youth. Over the past few months, we have seen in the media how vulnerable our LGBTQ youth are, especially those who do not conform to the gender expectations our society has set for them. It was extremely empowering to meet with families and professionals who are trying to create a world where all our students feel safe and where their identities are celebrated. Perhaps the most valuable part of this entire conference was hearing the youth speak. Every teen spoke of the importance of having teachers speak up when bullying occurred and were hopeful that schools would eventually be safe places for gender-variant youth.

The second conference was hosted by a group called Northwest Teachers for Social Justice, with the involvement of Rethinking Schools. The third annual Northwest Conference on Teaching for Social Justice's theme this year, "Rethinking Our Classrooms, Organizing for Better Schools," seemed very timely considering what teachers and schools have been going through here in BC over the past little while. Along with the keynote from Sonia Nieto, there were so many

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interesting workshops it was difficult to choose just three. Here is a sampling of some of the many workshop topics offered:

- Let's empower middle school girls to be strong and confident!
- The arts as tools for social justice: Sharing the stories of Somali and Iraqi middle school students
- Bringing current events to life: Role-playing the Arizona

immigration debate

- Children are not color blind: Talking about skin color in the classroom
- Civics applied math lab: Social justice issues in the math curriculum
- Comics and social justice: A dynamic duo of content and style
- Learning Israel-Palestine: Connecting with Palestinian youth and uncovering the conflict in the Middle East
- Transgender youth 101
- Why teachers should be concerned about military access policy at your school.

There was also a resource fair that offered a wonderful selection of teacher resources for those interested in doing social justice

Although both these conferences took place in the US, the issues and the struggles facing teachers and public education are virtually identical. Teachers in the US have been battling against standardized testing, huge cuts to public education, as well as the implementation of charter schools.

work in their classroom.

Although both these conferences took place in the US, the issues and the struggles facing teachers and public education are virtually identical. Teachers in the US have been battling against standardized testing, huge cuts to public education, as well as the implementation of charter schools.

Building alliances with other organizations that see education as a means for social change is crucial. My hope is that next year even more teachers will head down to Portland or Berkeley to continue building bridges with our allies in the US.

Myriam Dumont is a part-time Grade 4/5 teacher and librarian at Hastings Elementary Community School, Vancouver.

For more information, visit Northwest Teachers For Social Justice, www.nwtsj.org and Gender Spectrum, www.genderspectrum.org.



By Bob Rosen

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has once again been thrown into high relief by the action of Israeli forces in boarding a relief ship bound for Gaza to attempt to break the crippling land and sea blockade of that territory by the Israeli military. Israel's actions have earned it an unprecedented degree of international condemnation.

Recently, the BCTF Representative Assembly called for the development of a curriculum unit that allows a fair and comprehensive all-sided discussion of the Israel/Palestine issue. Teachers need to understand what's going on in that region and discuss it with their students.

In the past year, there has been a spate of actions by government bodies in Canada in an attempt to brand critics of Israeli policies as anti-Semitic. At the same time, the Harper government has acted to defund the Christian human rights NGO Kairos because of its alleged support for a campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. In fact, Kairos never did support the BDS campaign, although many defenders of human rights around the world—Jews and non-Jews—do. Recently, the Ontario parliament also passed a motion condemning Israeli Apartheid Week on college campuses in Ontario and elsewhere. Well-known Canadian journalist Judy Rebick (who is herself Jewish) sharply criticized the move and pointed out that this is the first time a Canadian legislature has taken action against student protest activities since the McCarthy era in the early 1950s.

Most significantly, a group of MPs, representing all federal political parties except the Bloc Québécois, formed the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism (CPCCPA), which has been conducting a series of one-sided hearings aimed at defining pointed criticism of Israel as the "new anti-Semitism." They are now preparing to make a report to Parliament proposing legislation that could make such criticisms of Israel a violation of Canadian law.

Currently, an ever-greater number of Jews in Canada and around the world are distancing themselves from the policies of the Israeli government, which were recently condemned in the United Nations' Goldstone Report for criminal actions against Palestinian civilians during the Gaza War in December 2009. (The report also criticizes Hamas for its rocket attacks against Israeli civilians.) Goldstone, a noted international human rights expert and a South African Jew and self-described supporter of Israel, has subsequently been viciously attacked by the Israeli government and its supporters for taking such a forthright position. Recently Goldstone was told by Zionist religious authorities

in South Africa that he wouldn't be welcomed at the bar mitzvah of his own grandson. (This attempt at intimidation was reversed when it generated tremendous international outrage.)

Conflating criticisms of the actions of the state of Israel with attacks on Jewish people in general is utterly false. There have always been Jews who have been critical of the Zionist project. In fact, many of the strongest critics of Zionism and of Israel's policies have been Jewish.

To understand Palestinians' attitude toward this situation, imagine how Sikh, Jewish, or Muslim Canadians would feel if Canada were to define itself as a "Christian state."

In Canada, organizations such as Independent Jewish Voices, Jewish Outlook Society (which publishes the *Canadian Jewish Outlook* magazine), and Not In Our Name are increasingly vocal critics of Israeli policy and represent an alternative voice to the hardline Israeli supporters of B'nai Brith and the Canadian Jewish Congress. There is also a growing number of organizations of dissenting Jews in the US, England, and elsewhere who are speaking out in opposition to the actions of the state of Israel.

Israel's continuing illegal occupation of territories it captured in the 1967 war has given rise to many human rights concerns. The occupation denies the most basic rights to the Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories, including the right to a viable territory and state, to vote in meaningful elections, and to control their own governmental affairs. As a direct result of this occupation, the movement of Palestinians is strictly controlled through a series of military roadblocks that make communication and travel within the territories maddeningly slow and sometimes impossible. Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints frequently deliberately humiliate Palestinians simply trying to move within their own territory. Israeli dissident Jeff Halper has described Israel's administration of the Occupied Territories as a "Matrix of Control."

In addition, there are more than 11,000 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. Much of the best land and water access in the territories continues to be taken by illegal Israeli settlements, which are connected to each other by a series of Jewish-only roads that Palestinians are not allowed to ride on.

Currently, the Israeli military has been enforcing a blockade in Gaza since 2005. This aggressive action sharply limits the import of vital goods, which is causing terrible hardship to the people living there, in direct opposition to international law forbidding collective punishment of civilian populations, and

has been sharply criticized by the United Nations and the International Red Cross.

Within the "Green Line" of Israel's 1947 borders, Israel's self-definition as a "Jewish state" makes second-class citizens of the Palestinians who comprise 20% of Israel's population. These are the people who remained behind when the Zionist military's ethnic cleansing campaigns drove the majority of Palestinians from their ancestral homes. Israel refuses to allow the 80% of the Palestinian population that were driven out of their homes at that time, or their descendants, to return, even though Israel was obliged to do so as a condition of being granted its statehood by the international community in 1948. At the same time, anyone who is Jewish can immigrate to Israel and gain instant citizenship as a right in the Jewish state. To understand Palestinians' attitude toward this situation, imagine how Sikh, Jewish, or Muslim Canadians would feel if Canada were to define itself as a "Christian state."

South African leaders Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela have said that the conditions of Palestinians in the territories are worse than those faced by blacks under the apartheid system there. Former US President Jimmy Carter has described the current occupation as a form of apartheid.

In response to a growing awareness of the crisis in Israel and Palestine, a number of artists and musicians are refusing to perform in Israel as part of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign called for as a non-violent protest by Palestinian civil society organizations. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which played an important role in the defeat of South African apartheid, has also played a leading role in this BDS campaign, trying to pressure Israel to abandon its own apartheid policies.

There is considerable discussion and debate about the road to peace in Israel/Palestine. The internationally recognized goal has been a two-state solution. But Israeli settlement policies and intransigence have made this goal increasingly unattainable in the short run. Many in Palestine and elsewhere are proposing the idea of a single state inhabited by Jews and Palestinians who have full equality under the law. This is now seen by many supporters of the Palestinian cause as both a more practical and more principled solution than trying to establish a state in the fragmented Occupied Territories.

Regardless of their views on all this, Canadians should be free to consider all the options and approaches to resolving this decades-old crisis without fear of being labeled anti-Semites for speaking out against the injustice and oppression that the Palestinians are experiencing.

Bob Rosen is a retired Surrey teacher.



"You make our lives better"

Lessons in hope from Tamil refugee students

By Nancy Knickerbocker

Just after sunrise on August 13, 2010, the *MV Sun Sea*, a decrepit 59-metre cargo ship, docked in Esquimalt Harbour under tight security provided by two RCMP patrol boats and the watchful eyes of Canada Border Service agents. On board were 492 Sri Lankan refugee claimants, including two pregnant women, a six-month-old baby, and about 40 pre-school and school-aged children.

The arrival of the Sun Sea, the second ship carrying Tamil migrants to land on BC shores, created a tidal wave of controversy that swept across Canada.

Three Burnaby teachers watched the news with concern, but never imagined that they were about to begin the most unusual school year of their careers, teaching these very children who had endured months of ocean crossing with very limited food and water in a vessel that was far from seaworthy and now far from home.

The arrival of the *Sun Sea*, the second ship carrying Tamil migrants to land on BC shores, created a tidal wave of controversy that swept across Canada. Public Safety Minister Vic Toews voiced suspicions that the ship was carrying members of the terrorist Tamil Tigers, and declared that every passenger would be assessed individually to ensure they were not engaged in criminal activity,

including human smuggling.

After initial medical examinations in Victoria, the male Tamils were transferred to a detention facility in Maple Ridge and the females were sent to the Burnaby Youth Custody Services Centre. The children were housed with their mothers.

As September approached, the Burnaby school district was asked to provide educational services to the Tamil children, with joint funding from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Families. Reno Ciofi, director of instruction in Burnaby, said he assembled "a dream team" of teachers with a wealth of special education and ESL expertise to work with this unique group of children.

"I felt privileged to be asked to do it," said Cora Kinoshita, who had honed her ESL skills just the past summer working with rural children in the Philippines.

"We were very excited," added Joan Peddie. "What an opportunity!"

Kinoshita and Peddie each work part time with the 5- and 6 year-olds, while Pilar Spratt works full-time with the 7- to 12-year-olds.

The teachers soon discovered that only a few of the children had had any access to education in Sri Lanka, and it wasn't a very positive experience: "Canadian teachers nice. Sri Lankan teachers bad," the children said. Pilar explained that "they've been physically disciplined in school back home, but not here."

The first lessons were about proper conduct in school—lining up, sharing, taking turns.

"We needed to be firm," said Peddie. "They didn't know any rules because they have never been to school before."

"But they've adapted really well... Now they are starting to remind one another of the rules!" Kinoshita said. "And they are so eager to

learn, they're just lapping it up."

Most of the children are Level One learners who are illiterate in their native Tamil language but it's amazing how quickly they are progressing. "Some are so focused, with a great aptitude for languages," Peddie said.

"At first it may seem that the more extroverted students are the ones really getting it," Spratt noted. "I had one student who at first was very withdrawn, but now he's no longer shy and is willing to speak up. I can see that quite a bit has actually gone in. Some are real leaders in the group. After all, these kids have been together in close quarters for a long time."

All three teachers observed that the children understandably show a lot of interest in ships, and big boats frequently show up in their drawings. Do they seem traumatized by their perilous ocean crossing?

"If there is trauma, we are not seeing evidence of it," said Spratt, adding that the children seem

particularly resilient and cheerful, shedding fewer tears than teachers see in typical Canadian schools.

Classroom work so far has focused on concrete vocabulary, taught with some bilingual books, lots of props, and animated facial expressions. Calendar activities, the weather, colours of the rainbow,

The teachers soon discovered that only a few of the children had had any access to education in Sri Lanka, and it wasn't a very positive experience...

parts of the body and items of clothing, the importance of hand-washing, following directions, Canadian money, the numbers from one to ten (although some children already know one to a million), and different occupations and professions.

All three of the teachers were impressed by the children's high hopes for the future. "There are several future doctors and teachers in the group," said Spratt. "They have aspirations and they are

willing to work very hard. They have even asked for homework."

Their mothers are attentive to the children's learning and daily express their thanks to the teachers, bowing with their hands held palms together as if in prayer.

"It's so touching when they do that," Kinoshita said, adding the moms often bring little treats.

"You just see the appreciation and gratitude on the faces of the children and the parents," said Ciofi. "It has to do with how our teachers work to establish a relationship with every child. The curriculum comes next. You can't be there for more than a few minutes before you start tearing up."

The teachers were especially moved to find a message for them written in sidewalk chalk on the playground. It said: "You make our lives better."

The mothers and children are occasionally taken for visits with the fathers, who are detained in Maple Ridge. What do they make of their situation?

"They understand they are waiting for the immigration process to take place," said Spratt. "Hearing" is a word they understand. They'll say, for example: "Today father hearing." Or: "Tomorrow release?"

And indeed, some of the children and their parents have been released into the Canadian community. "I miss some of them already," said Spratt. "In particular I had three siblings who were just so happy. Their joy is infectious, their wide smiles and bright eyes."

What about those Canadians who say these migrants are just queue-jumpers who should be sent back to Sri Lanka?

"People are too caught up in where they stand on these issues," Spratt says. "It's the children we are providing this for. Children have rights, and we're just there to help them."

Nancy Knickerbocker is the BCTF media relations officer.



The children of Tamil refugee claimants who arrived from Sri Lanka in August are eager to learn English, their teachers say. L-R: Cora Kinoshita, Joan Peddie, Pilar Spratt.

REBECCA BLISSETT PHOTO

Le DELF et la spécificité canadienne

By Moh Chelali

Pendant longtemps, l'évaluation en français langue seconde était essentiellement basée sur la maîtrise de l'expression écrite. L'évaluation spécifique des activités langagières avec les diverses compétences et savoir-faire n'existait pas. On ne pratiquait pas nécessairement toutes les composantes d'une évaluation exhaustive comportant toutes les compétences : expression orale, expression écrite, compréhension orale et compréhension écrite.

Le Cadre européen commun de référence et le Diplôme d'enseignement de langue française

Le Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues (CECRL), publié en 2001, fruit de plusieurs années de recherches linguistiques menées par des experts des États membres du Conseil de l'Europe, n'arrive à influencer la réalité canadienne d'enseignement que plusieurs années plus tard. Patrimoine Canada, dans un rapport d'étude publié en 2006, affirme que « le CECR comporte des avantages » considérables, qu'il est capable de répondre à la diversité des besoins et des cultures pédagogiques des provinces et des territoires et qu'il s'avère très prometteur en tant que cadre cohérent et transparent pour les langues au Canada. »

Comme le CECR, le DELF est divisé en six niveaux (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) qui vont du niveau débutant (A1) au niveau confirmé (C2). Il distingue cinq compétences :

- Comprendre (2 compétences)
- écouter

- lire
- Parler (2 compétences)
- prendre part à une conversation
- s'exprimer oralement en continu
- Écrire (1 compétence)

Le DELF est sur le point d'être de plus en plus intégré dans le cursus scolaire de plusieurs provinces canadiennes. Certaines d'entre elles (Alberta, Colombie-Britannique, Québec...) disposent d'un centre DELF provincial habilité par le CIEP de Paris. Les sessions sont organisées au sein des établissements scolaires publics ou privés. Passer le DELF offre un cadre qui favorise la qualité des enseignements en français ainsi que le développement de la fluidité verbale et la confiance dans l'utilisation de la langue française axée sur le développement de compétences et de savoir-faire.

La réalité en Colombie-Britannique

Avec la mise en place du centre provincial du DELF depuis quelques mois et le projet de mise à l'essai dans plusieurs conseils scolaires du grand Vancouver, le DELF acquiert une réalité tangible. Environ 500 élèves ont participé à l'examen officiel et à l'examen en blanc cette année. Il est à prévoir qu'au moins 1 000 à 1 500 élèves participeront durant l'année scolaire 2010-2011 aux examens du DELF au niveau de la province.

En plus des 55 enseignants certifiés l'année dernière comme formateurs/examineurs à Vichy en France, cette année, 60 autres enseignants ont été formés comme examinateurs à Richmond par 6 formateurs canadiens de la Colombie-Britannique. Le financement de ces formations a été essentiellement pris en charge par le ministère de l'Éducation de la Colombie-Britannique, alors que le financement des examens officiels

et non officiels a été en grande partie pris en charge par les conseils scolaires.

La pédagogie, quelques pistes...

En matière de pédagogie, plusieurs enseignants commencent à introduire systématiquement un volet sonore dans leurs méthodes d'enseignement et aussi à développer des activités de compréhension de l'oral avec leurs élèves. La grammaire n'est pas en reste : dans une perspective de pédagogie du sens, elle est de plus en plus introduite de manière inductive en classe. La grammaire de l'oral est désormais prise en compte aussi. La phonétique est maintenue au-delà des niveaux A1 et A2 et sert son objectif initial : la différenciation de formes grammaticales dont la réalisation orale est proche. Pour rendre l'apprenant actif, les stratégies d'apprentissage actuelles misent sur la dynamique de groupe (alternance entre la classe entière, les petits groupes et les binômes), l'auto-apprentissage (en dehors de la classe) et parfois des enquêtes à l'extérieur afin de profiter des apports du milieu (où l'on peut trouver des locuteurs du français dans le commerce, la culture, l'enseignement...) et de faire de l'apprenant un « acteur social ».

D'autres gros médias se sont joints à cette nouvelle tendance; ainsi le site TV5 propose aux enseignants un ensemble d'outils, de services et de ressources pour exploiter les émissions de la chaîne et les documents en ligne sur tv5monde.com.

Le second élément d'intérêt pédagogique est le Portfolio. Le portfolio est composé de trois parties : le Passeport des langues, la Biographie langagière et le Dossier.

1) Le Passeport des langues est

l'ensemble des acquis en savoir-faire, diplômes et certifications de l'apprenant. On peut y intégrer aussi des expériences interculturelles vécues dans différentes langues. En plus, le passeport permet de déterminer le niveau et le profil de l'apprenant dans plusieurs langues que le candidat a apprises tant dans le milieu scolaire que familial ou pour toute autre raison (tourisme, loisirs, rencontres, etc.). Il permet alors de présenter l'ensemble des compétences linguistiques, y compris dans les langues de l'immigration. Les diplômes et les certifications officiels sont listés à la fin du Passeport, et les attestations sont jointes au Dossier.

2) La Biographie langagière permet de faire un état des lieux des compétences linguistiques de l'apprenant selon son niveau du moment (expérimenté, indépendant ou élémentaire).

3) Le Dossier contient l'ensemble des certifications et des diplômes officiellement obtenus par l'élève ainsi que des preuves de son excellence dans les différentes. Ces documents peuvent être sous forme écrite (travail scolaire, projet, stage, etc.) ou orale (cassettes audio ou vidéo, CD-ROM, etc.).

Débattre de certains défis

L'examen DELF apparaît pour certains éducateurs comme un examen/diplôme franco-français un peu déconnecté de la réalité canadienne. La rédaction des items ainsi que le recueil des textes apparaissent aussi centrés sur une réalité essentiellement française. Il faut dire cependant que le CIEP reconnaît ceci et est prêt à collaborer pour infuser un contenu plus adapté aux réalités canadiennes. L'organisation et la mise en place de structures d'examen et de

préparation aux diplômes nécessitent une coordination fiable. La formation d'enseignants et la mise en place de formateurs et d'experts requièrent un centre DELF dans chaque province. En Colombie-Britannique, par exemple, avec une population étudiante de plus de 40 000 élèves en immersion et plus de 100 000 élèves en français langue de base, il serait ardu de trouver des structures, des correcteurs et des examinateurs si un grand nombre de ces élèves décidait de passer le DELF.

Conclusion

Le DELF calibré selon le CECR offre une chance unique aux jeunes apprenants canadiens. Cet outil de référence validera le progrès de nos jeunes dans les quatre compétences de base (compréhension orale et production orale, compréhension des écrits et production écrite). Cet outil permettra aussi de suivre et de comparer les acquis, et de valider l'évaluation d'apprentissage dans une dimension locale, nationale et internationale. Le rôle de l'enseignant est crucial, car il doit mettre à la disposition de ses élèves des méthodes de travail, des stratégies et démarches d'apprentissage leur permettant non seulement d'apprendre à apprendre en autonomie, mais aussi d'être des acteurs qui agissent en interaction sociale dans la construction des apprentissages. La vivacité et les développements de l'enseignement au Canada ont fait du pays un pionnier dans le domaine des programmes d'immersion. Le choix d'un outil comme le DELF n'est pas une finalité en soi, mais un outil perspicace et efficace.

Moh Chelali, Responsable des programmes et services en français, Fédération des enseignants de la Colombie-Britannique.

Student brings hope to homeless youth

By Brittney Deering

I am sitting in front of my computer at school trying to write about homelessness. I am homeless and I feel rage, desperation, sadness, frustration, regret, and hopelessness. How can anyone understand my life?

I want to tell you about some of the feelings, stresses, and the hardships of being a homeless young person.

I want to tell you about some of the feelings, stresses, and the hardships of being a homeless young person. Just sharing my life situation is embarrassing and yet it gives me a chance to push back against all odds. I want to believe that things will be different in the future and that I will change my experience.

A year ago, I was in the same situation as a lot of other youths who are struggling on the streets all the time. Luckily for me, I became homeless during the summer. It is strange to get comfort from a season but it gave me a chance.

It all started in July. I was living as an independent youth on a youth agreement with support from the Ministry of Child and Family Development. I was celebrating my 18th birthday and decided to have a few friends over as a little celebration. Unfortunately, by the end of the night things had gotten a bit out of hand, but I never suspected what would happen next.

My landlord evicted me with four days notice to leave my "home." This is a familiar pattern in my life and there was no point in fighting the notice. I had similar experiences when I lived with my mom. We were always searching for a new place and leaving precious things behind. I had nowhere to put my belongings, no truck to help me move, and worst of all, nowhere to go. My friend helped me move a few of my smaller boxes—about all that could fit in her car. I stored those boxes at friends' houses and took the rest with me. I blamed myself. I felt guilty about messing up again and I had no one who could help me. Whenever I am faced with finding a new place, I feel my insides churn up with anxiousness and desperation.

It was a huge stress not having anywhere to go. I had no income and now I had to put the pressure

My landlord evicted me with four days notice to leave my "home." This is a familiar pattern in my life and there was no point in fighting the notice.

on friends and their families to help. It is a horrible feeling because it feels like begging. I felt like a burden to those people I care deeply about. I remembered when I was younger having this huge bag and I carried my belongings around with me all the time. Once again, I was in the same situation—carrying my bag around. It had my personal hygiene products and my clothes stuffed full. I carried this 10 kilo sack with me. It made me feel strange and hopeless.

It was fine during the summer because everyone was around. There were people to see; the weather was beautiful. I was dreading the return to school because I

wanted to tell everyone I was doing fine and that I was living independently, but I would have to lie on the first day back at school. How do I tell people that I have nothing, nothing at all? I hate the lying.

My homelessness was real and there was no one to help me other than my boyfriend and a few good friends. I used to steal a lot to feed myself and get the bare necessities that every girl needs. I went to the ministry and my social worker was sympathetic but her supervisor was unwilling to approve my request for a new agreement until I found a place to live. I was homeless for five months. I continued to steal food and moved from place to place. I would have to feel safe in a house and that feeling didn't last too long because there were often people who were quite willing to rip me off or to take advantage of me. I always felt nervous worrying about my safety. I became quite depressed with the hopelessness. My boyfriend tried to be understanding but he didn't comprehend the depth of my anxiousness.

Just before the cold days of winter took over, my friend Megan and her mom took me in. I was in contact with my social worker now and she was willing to pay Megan's mom an amount of money for having me there, food, bills, and basic necessities. Everything was going great once again. I had a home, I was back in school, and I wasn't fighting to survive anymore; it was just coming naturally. In February 2010 Megan and I moved out together on our own. I got involved in a youth homelessness initiative through the group FAYSS (Family and Youth Services Society). Six other youths and I were the

board directors. We would have bi-weekly and monthly meetings where we would sit down and talk about what we needed as young people and what we think we needed to be successful.

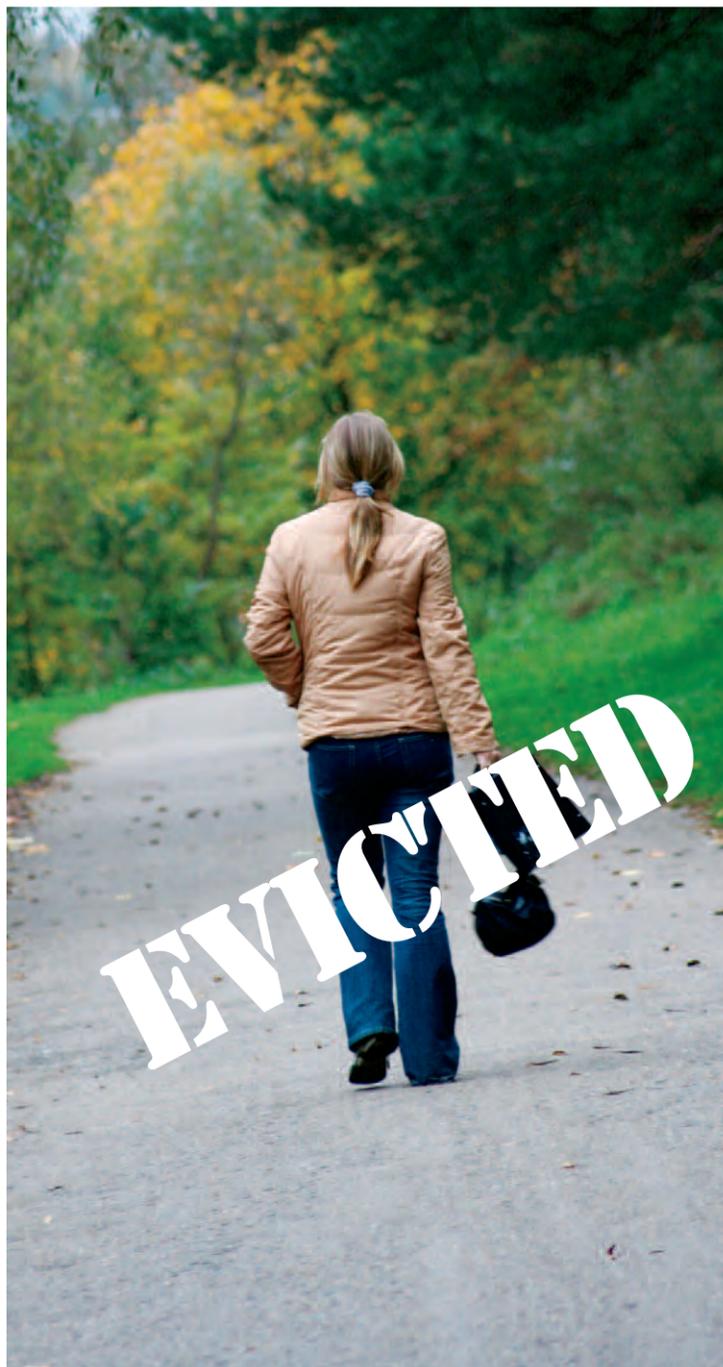
What we came up with was remodeling "Building 272" in Alder-grove. The building was previously just a youth hangout on Friday nights, and different groups used the area. Now it is used as a place for young people to come if they need help anytime. There are meals every night and youth-care workers are there if kids ever need to ask questions, or if someone needs a safe house. We help a lot of young people figure out their lives—especially how to get help. Some just need laundry facilities and a shower, others need food and a computer to send a message home or to someone they love, or to look for jobs. The youth workers help a lot because most kids feel lost in a homeless situation.

It makes me feel hopeful that I can be part of helping someone else. I just want them to never experience that feeling of hopelessness.

It makes me feel hopeful that I can be part of helping someone else. I just want them to never experience that feeling of hopelessness.

I am grateful to come to school each day but the painful experience of being homeless never leaves me.

Brittney Deering attends Langley Secondary School, Langley.



Poverty and education: Moving from research to action

Part 2 of the study findings, Poverty and education research project: A teacher's perspective

By Margaret White

What is needed in the classroom, school, and community?

An important reason for conducting this research was to learn from teachers what is needed to support low-income students and their families to overcome educational barriers related to poverty. Teachers who attended the focus group were asked to "Imagine what an ideal school community would look like if it had all the resources to support low-income students to fully participate and succeed at school. What would you put in the classroom, the school, and the community?"

Teachers shared many ideas about what they think is needed in the school, classroom, and community to create an inclusive, caring, and meaningful experience for low-income students and their families.

In the classroom

• *Creating an inclusive, caring, and meaningful classroom environment*

Many of the suggestions relate to creating a supportive, welcoming, and inclusive classroom environment. Teachers also told us that education should be meaningful to the experience of students dealing with poverty. Based on the discussion, a meaningful education challenges stereotypes and promotes understanding about poverty, builds on the strengths of students, fosters hope, is sensitive and responsive to cultural heritage, and addresses multiple skill levels.

Teachers also told us they would like to see resources to meet the basic needs of students in the classroom such as food being available at all times for hungry students and ample supplies, so all students have the tools required to complete school work.

In the first part of the focus group, some teachers identified small group learning as an important strategy for addressing learning gaps. Teachers told us that what is needed in the classroom to facilitate small group learning are additional staff resources such as special

education teachers and educational assistants to support small group learning as well as smaller class sizes.

In the school

• *Creating "schools of care"*
Creating schools of care emerged as a dominant theme in the responses to this question. Based on the discussion, "schools of care" would focus on social justice and social responsibility, build relationships with community, and have lots of caring adults to connect with students and families. Suggestions for involving families include having a drop-in space for parents and

Based on the discussion, a meaningful education challenges stereotypes and promotes understanding about poverty, builds on the strengths of students, fosters hope, is sensitive and responsive to cultural heritage, and addresses multiple skill levels.

sponsoring family events to encourage positive connections with the school. Teachers told us they would also like to see more after-school programs for students (offered at no cost) such as cooking, sports, craft courses, and mentoring programs.

Teachers also made suggestions for what is needed in schools to support the physical and emotional needs of students. Suggestions included providing a school nurse to assist families with health concerns, professional services for students in need of emotional and behavioural support, and a quiet space for students when they needed to sleep or take a break. Schools also need to examine procedures for offering school-meal programs so that students do not feel stigmatized for using these programs.

Teachers in the focus groups indicated a need for a shift in instructional approaches at a school-wide level. Some teachers would like to see less emphasis on learning that is based on age and grade level. A few teachers suggested schools offer a homework club to help address learning gaps while another teacher suggested the school implement a "no-homework" policy. Some teachers identified the need for schools to bring in

resources such as First Nations educators and cultural support workers to support the development of culturally meaningful education.

The focus groups revealed that many low-income students are excluded from field trips in subtle and indirect ways related to hidden costs of participating and/or an unwillingness of families to use subsidy programs. Teachers told us that in order for students to fully participate more funding is needed for field trips, and schools need to review subsidy policies to assess the extent to which these policies directly or indirectly discourage low-income students from participating in school events.

Some teachers spoke of the need to raise awareness about poverty-related issues within the school community by providing more opportunities for staff to learn about poverty and to share strategies that they find helpful in supporting students and families dealing with poverty. Some teachers spoke of the need to examine the values underlying current approaches to poverty and education and to challenge approaches that focus primarily on the limitations of students instead of building on their strengths.

In the community

• *Building caring and meaningful community connections with children, youth, and families*

Teachers made several suggestions as to how the community could help to build social connections with and between families, such as community kitchens and gardens, family nights and weekend field trips, clothing exchanges, and offering programs of interest to parents. Some teachers emphasized the need for caring program leaders who are sensitive to poverty issues and are able to create emotionally safe and welcoming spaces.

Values emerged as an important aspect of community programs in the focus-group discussion. Teachers' comments suggest the community has an important role to play in providing programs that promote volunteerism, instill a sense of meaning and purpose, empower students, and create opportunities for skill development.

Other suggestions for how the community can support low-income students include providing free access to community sports programs/facilities for youth and assisting with transportation, when necessary. Many teachers noted the need for affordable childcare services in their community, including after-school childcare.

The community also has a role to play in meeting the basic needs of students and families. Some teachers identified the need for more consultation between teachers, social workers, and social agencies involved with families. Improved access to dental, medical, and mental health services for families in need, including assistance with transportation, is also needed.

Finally, teachers recognized that the importance of social justice advocacy in raising awareness about poverty and addressing the underlying causes of poverty. The Living Wage Campaign, affordable housing, a national childcare plan, and reduced tuition fees are poverty-reduction strategies that teachers identified as important areas for education and advocacy.

Where to from here? Moving from research to action

We view this research as a starting point. We hope it helps to build empathy and understanding about students dealing with poverty and to bring about positive action towards building a more equitable and inclusive school community. The focus group research served as a catalyst for further action in local communities.

Julia MacRae, focus-group facilitator and Surrey teacher, reported that some of the teachers who attended the focus group formed a Poverty Action Group at the Surrey Teachers' Association. Ilse Hill, focus-group facilitator and Port Alberni teacher, published an article in *Teacher* newsmagazine, calling on teachers to mobilize for change:

In a focus group that I conducted in my community last year with BCTF researcher Margaret White, we asked teachers about the effects of poverty that we are observing in our classrooms and communities. Part of the exercise was to imagine the resources needed to have the "perfect" situation for our classrooms, schools, and communities. None of the responses offered could be considered unreasonable. Experienced teachers talked about the supports that used to be in place and the increasing burdens placed on children and families. It is time to use our professionalism to unite together and develop a plan of action to create systemic change.

While the intention of this project is to bring out a teacher's perspective on poverty and education, the voices of students, families, and community members also need to be heard.

Teachers also told us they would like to see resources to meet the basic needs of students in the classroom such as food being available at all times for hungry students and ample supplies, so all students have the tools required to complete school work.

Stacey Kemp, a school psychologist, long-time social justice advocate on poverty issues, and a focus-group facilitator reported on an idea for a community forum that developed out of this research project:

One of the things that came up in the focus group was how we need to reach out more to the community. One of the quotes I like is "nothing about us without us" meaning that we need to find out what our families living in poverty really need instead of making assumptions about what we think they need. An idea that arose out of the focus group was having a community forum similar to the focus group. This forum would join the various community groups together and the goal would be to include those who often do not have a voice. This is something I would like to work toward in Pentiction and School District 67 (Okanagan-Skaha).

Linda Young, chair of the Anti-poverty Committee for the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association (VESTA) participated in a VESTA-sponsored research project, organized by a researcher (Marcy Cohen) and community organizer (Priti Shah) in partnership with the Living Wage Coalition and Frog Hollow and Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House. They met with immigrant parents living on low incomes to hear about what parents found positive and supportive at school, what challenges they and their children face at school and in the community, and what schools can do to support children and parents with low incomes so that they have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of school life.

The Poverty Action Group of the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice is also planning to share some of the research findings in a poverty and education workshop they are developing for BC teachers.

Prepared by Margaret White (BCTF Research) in collaboration with Ilse Hill, Stacey Kemp, and Julia MacRae (2009 Poverty Action Group of the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice); and Linda Young (VESTA Anti-poverty Committee).

BC teachers talk about satisfaction and stress in their work

By Margaret White and Charlie Naylor

The Research Department of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation conducted a survey of public school teachers to assess working and learning conditions in BC schools. An important objective of the *Worklife of BC Teachers: 2009* survey was to explore qualitatively what teachers find the most satisfying about their work and to learn about which factors most contribute to teacher stress.

The analysis of written responses shows that many teachers clearly love teaching and gain immense satisfaction from a vocation that they see as instrumental in supporting children's learning and development. The study findings provide further evidence that teacher/student relationships and interactions are the primary causes of satisfaction; yet other positive interactions, with peers and parents, and some level of autonomy, are also important factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction.

I greatly enjoy the variety of the work I do; working with principals, vice-principals, teachers, students, parents, agencies...I have a lot of autonomy. I am glad that the work I do is with people, helping students and families. This is very satisfying.

On the converse side, it almost always appears that it is the combining of factors that stresses teachers, such as multiple demands/limited time, classroom complexity in terms of class size and composition, lack of supports in general, and limited levels of support for dealing with student behaviour. Stress appears to be most severe when several sources of stress occur at the same time.

The survey findings suggest that teachers teaching on call (TTOC) experience very high stress levels associated with job insecurity concerns about employment, as do teachers with less than five years' experience, or who are less than 35 years of age.

All the bits and pieces to weave together, never enough time. When teachers recognize a student has issues outside the norm they ask for help, but early intervention is not really very early. We are professionals who should be supported with the extra help to bring these students along. Instead, we have meetings, do more paperwork, and have even less time and energy for teaching. Nobody

listens when we call for help.

The quantitative results confirm what we learned in the qualitative part of the study. Of the 47 sources of stress listed in the survey, the most stressful factors relate to inadequate support to meet student needs. Level of support for students with disruptive behaviour, class-composition issues, level of support for non-designated, grey-area students, and the unmet needs of students are the four most significant sources of stress. At least 60% of respondents rate these factors as *high stress* or *very-high stress*. The attitude of the provincial government is the fifth-highest source of stress for teachers, slightly higher than inclusion issues. Class size, and testing and assessment also rank in the top-10 most-significant stressors.

Job insecurity is increasingly an issue for newer teachers due to the steady erosion of teaching positions in BC over the past decade. The survey findings suggest that teachers teaching on call (TTOC) experience very high stress levels associated with job insecurity/concerns about employment, as do teachers with less than five years' experience, or who are less than 35 years of age.

It is extremely difficult to have a regular family life when you are working on-call, and don't know until the morning if you are working or not. I am unable to pay for daycare when I am not sure if I will use it or not.

It is hard to get a full-time continuing job. I feel every year is insecure in regards to work for me and I have a mortgage to pay.

Changes in workload, stress, and job satisfaction

This study provides evidence that most teachers are working many hours outside of the regular workday on a range of school-related activities, with administrative and reporting requirements taking up an increasing amount of their time. The survey findings indicate that, in the view of respondents, working and learning conditions are worsening, with at least two-thirds of teachers (who have been teaching for five years or more) experiencing increased stress levels and workload compared to five years ago, and 40% reporting decreased job satisfaction. These changes appear to be pervasive, affecting teachers across demographic groups, implying that strategies to reduce workload and stress would be of benefit to teachers across the board.

Increased workload and stress for teachers may be a consequence of the significant reduction in teaching positions arising from a growing funding crisis in BC's public educa-

tion system. Data from this study suggest that this reduction has increased workload for classroom teachers and reduced support provided by specialist teachers. With severe cuts expected in the 2010-11 school year, the implications are problematic for an education system in which teacher workload is already a significant

Increased teacher workload and stress, and loss of job satisfaction, have considerable implications for students in the classroom and for teachers' quality of work life, and will likely affect teacher retention in future years.

issue. The survey results indicate that excessive workloads contribute to teachers being on medical leave, especially for a stress-related illness/disability. If workload increases and specialist support decreases due to cuts in teaching positions in the 2010-11 year and beyond, there may be increased stress-related claims in the coming years.

Increased teacher workload and stress, and loss of job satisfaction, have considerable implications for students in the classroom and for teachers' quality of work life, and will likely affect teacher retention in future years. There is evidence from other empirical studies that excessive teacher workloads, and problematic conditions in classrooms, cause teacher burnout and negatively impact students' learning. This survey found that one in five teachers is considering leaving the profession, with some of these teachers identifying increased workload, stress, and burnout as reasons influencing their perspective.

The study results indicate that teachers view their working conditions as fundamentally linked to the conditions that support student learning, and that they want to see improvements to working conditions that give students better chances of success. One key set of evidence for this claim is that while pay and benefits are emphasized by many teachers as directions they want the union to pursue, respondents place addressing working conditions linked to student learning as a slightly higher priority than improving their own pay and benefits.

This research was conducted by Margaret White, senior research analyst, and Charlie Naylor, senior researcher, of the BCTF Research Department.

government attitude
stress
 class size
 variety
 lack of support
 time limitations
 disruptive behaviour
 workload
 burnout
 class composition
 autonomy
 paperwork
 job insecurity
 meetings

Health and safety

Health and safety topics and what to do about them

By Karen Langenmaier

Health and safety representatives from all over the province provided a wealth of information about what is going well and what still needs work at the recent zone meetings. It is so encouraging to see reps who have been coming for a number of years and the degree of knowledge they have to help members in their locals through health and safety issues.

Regardless of which health and safety issue arises, we need to keep

in mind that we are workers with the same processes available to us to keep us as healthy and safe as any other worker. Using the joint health and safety committee process helps us to recognize the importance and power of these committees at our worksites in addressing and preventing injuries and occupational diseases. It is all about prevention.

Workers have the responsibility to report not only accidents and incidents but also any work practice, method, or condition that could cause an injury or occupational disease of any other worker. Reporting potentially hazardous situations, followed by an investigation and recommendations to remediate the situation, will prevent

accidents. It is all about prevention. The WCB claims process can be long and emotionally draining and carries a varied success rate. It is much better to prevent an injury than to go through the claims process.

Follow these steps when you see an unsafe condition:

1. Report to the administrator.
2. Report to the health and safety representative on the joint health and safety committee.
3. Put it in writing.

The employer is obligated to:

- investigate the situation and correct any unsafe situation “without undue delay.”
- report the investigation to the joint committee or worker representative.
- inform all workers affected by the unsafe condition.

Follow these steps if you are

injured (remember—not all injuries are physical) or are exposed to an agent that could cause an occupational disease:

1. Report to the first-aid attendant.
2. Report to the administrator verbally and on a 6A form. Send a copy to your local union office.
3. Report to your health and safety representative.
4. Report to WCB using Teleclaim at 1-888-WORKERS.
5. See your doctor.

What should happen next:

1. The administrator, along with members of the site-based committee, conduct an investigation of the incident.
2. The committee makes recommendations and action plans to prevent further incidents.
3. Emergent issues should be corrected “without undue delay.”

4. Follow-up plan for corrective actions is put in place.

5. Investigation report is written.

6. Investigation results should be publicized.

The employer has 21 days in which to respond to the committee’s recommendations. (A good reference can be found on the WorkSafeBC website under the “Publications” tab, called Investigations of Accidents and Diseases—Reference Guide and Workbook.)

Remember the basic tenets:

- Health and safety is for all workers.
- Report, report, report, report.
- It is all about prevention.

Look after yourselves and others.

Karen Langenmaier is health and safety officer, BCTF Income Security Division.

My father’s garden

By Marsha Thompson

Being a teacher. What does that mean? What influences and sparks the passion of those of us who have made it our life’s work? For me, the answer can be found by digging deep into the roots of my childhood, into the rich soil of my father’s garden.

Dad is a quiet man, an honest man who holds his emotions close; a man I still seek to truly know and understand. As a precocious and active youngster, I would trail after him, trying to keep the pace on numerous walks through our neighbourhood and frequent hikes up Knox Mountain. Dad expected me to keep up, and I often had to run to match his steady stride. Only in our back garden could I be with him in my way, at my pace. Whether watching him while hanging upside down from the swing set, puttering next to him in a row of radishes, or helping to pick the early strawberries, I had a chance to listen, watch, and absorb the lessons I was to take forward into my life as a teacher.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 states, “For every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.” My father appeared to unconsciously follow this concept as he worked/played in his garden. With the departure of the winter snows and spring thaw would come the preparation of the soil in his well-defined gardening space. I learned how important it was to ensure that stones were removed and hard clumps broken down into earth that would cradle a seed, enabling it to grow strong and true, without strange bends and warps. It was the carefully maintained minute spaces between the grains of soil that

enabled this growth. I watched as Dad added the compost from previous seasons, infusing the garden with new life and vitality. Digging, turning the soil, pulling early weeds, planning the beds, marking rows, checking seed catalogues and reference books, remembering previous years’ experiences, and finally, after

...I recall how learning came easily and joyfully in the relaxed moments in the garden. I hope that I've created classrooms where students feel safe enough to make mistakes and move at their own speed on their individual paths.

analyzing weather and temperature conditions, my father would plant his seeds.

As with my father’s work in the garden, Patti Pentti (2004) states, “Teaching is a complex combination of many forms of knowledge. Throughout her/his career, a teacher continues to develop knowledge and with each new experience that knowledge is adjusted, refined, and honed.” She goes on to say, “It is the entire person who draws from many sources in order to teach...often passing on values and beliefs as she/he consciously passes on subject knowledge.”

As a teacher, I attempt to remove or ameliorate the conditions that might hinder a child’s educational path. Sometimes successful, but too often unable to combat the obstacles many children face, I become discouraged and wonder if I

can make any difference at all. I prepare my lessons, read professional journals and inspiring books, reuse ideas that have worked, and rework ideas that don’t. Many lessons are discarded as I plan new tactics and strategies. I strive to be a guide, allowing students to grow and explore in my defined space—the classroom.

During the summer months my father would spend hours in his garden. He countered the hot Okanagan sun with carefully planned watering. Of course, my brothers and I benefited by running through the sprinkler as it clicked its way onto the lawn. He would diligently monitor the leaves and beds for pests, which were swiftly and naturally dealt with. He was patient while working the soil, much different from the impatient taskmaster I encountered while attempting to be a worthy crew on his sailboat. There he was abrupt, curt, and I would often become clumsy and inept as his intensity and lack of tolerance for slowness and error became manifest.

I too “water” my teaching. I attempt to monitor the amount of information, practice, feedback, and assessment I dole out, always striving for the perfect balance that will ensure steady growth. I try to avoid flooding my students with too much of any one thing as my exuberance pushes me to cover curriculum and impart my views and knowledge.

I understand, from my sailing experiences, how it is possible for a child to freeze and perform poorly under some types of pressure. In contrast, I recall how learning came easily and joyfully in the relaxed moments in the garden. I hope that I’ve created classrooms where students feel safe enough to make mistakes and move at their own

speed on their individual paths.

One crop, asparagus, was my Dad’s favourite. He had dug it wild from the orchard and planted it against the back fence. I wasn’t fond of asparagus back then, and the plants he let go to seed would tangle my feet as I attempted to balance on my walk along the narrow fence rail. It’s only now, years later, that I appreciate the delicious taste and textures of this vegetable. I wonder if my former students reflect back on our classes together with the same sense of belated understanding and appreciation.

As I continue to reflect on the students I have taught, it is often the “wild” ones, the ones I had to try harder to understand, or give special concessions to, so that they could cope with life inside the four walls of school, that I remember with that special warm glow. In

...I still see my father’s pride as our family sat down to meals created from his garden’s bounty. I, too, beam with delight as I hear of the successes of my former students and watch the glowing pride on our graduates as they cross the stage to receive their Dogwood.

their being out of the ordinary, they somehow woke up something uniquely responsive in me.

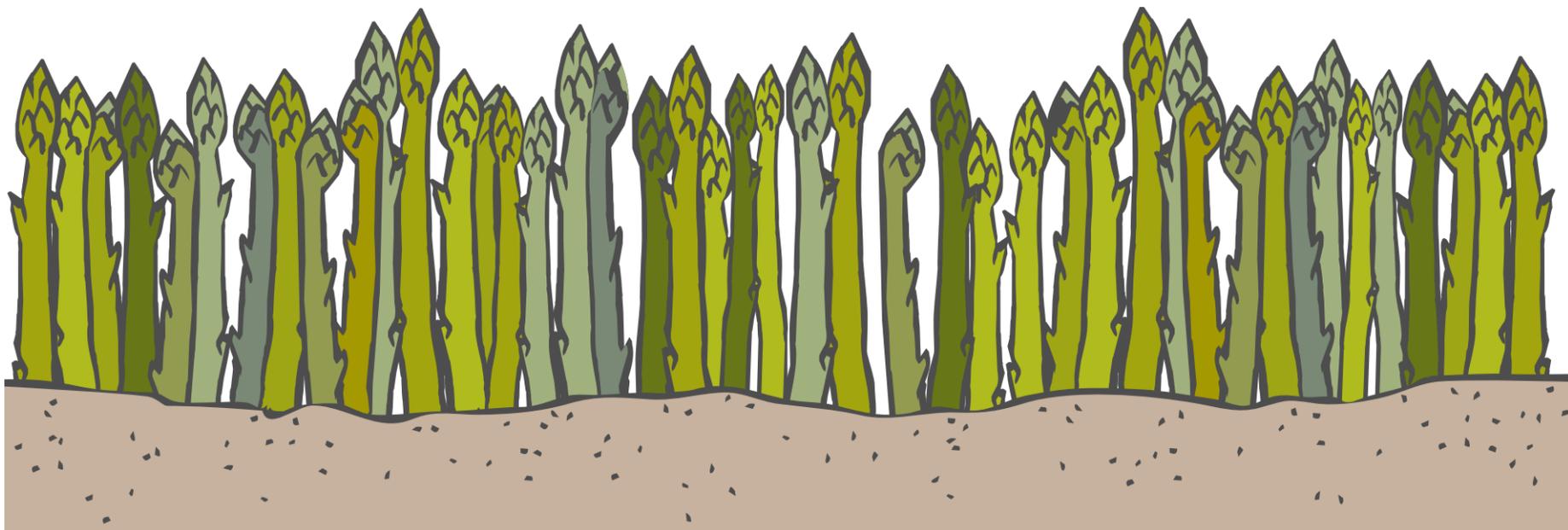
I am a highly independent person, and it took me years of teaching before I learned how to ask for help and to share ideas without prompting. I look back and see how closely

I resemble my father. He didn’t exchange ideas or produce with neighbours, although when I questioned him about that he said it was because no one else had a garden. I don’t recall him ever asking for help or expressing uncertainty about anything, and I believe that as a child I came to see these traits as less than desirable. Teaching taught me to allow myself to be uncertain and to admit to not knowing and needing help. It was the most liberating feeling to finally cry with exasperation on the shoulders of caring colleagues, and to talk and work out solutions together.

In my mind’s eye, I still see my father’s pride as our family sat down to meals created from his garden’s bounty. I too beam with delight as I hear of the successes of my former students and watch the glowing pride on our graduates as they cross the stage to receive their Dogwood.

Health considerations forced my Dad to move to “the land of the walking dead,” as he calls it, a gated, seniors, residence where he cannot have a garden. He misses this part of his life dearly, and I have suggested that perhaps he could grow herbs on his back patio instead. He was somewhat reluctant until I reminded him that my daughter, who also lives in Kelowna, loves to cook, and would welcome the fresh herbs for her culinary adventures. And so, with renewed purpose, and a sense of being needed and appreciated, he is once again researching, reading, buying the perfect containers, preparing the soil, and when the time is right, he’ll plant his seeds once again.

Marsha Thompson teaches at A.R. MacNeill Secondary School, Richmond.





Is the iPad right for education?

By Mark Holland

For those of you who don't know what an iPad is, I'll give you a brief synopsis: The iPad is an electronic Internet device, similar in appearance to an iPhone or iPod touch, but quite a bit bigger. In fact, its colour screen measures 9.7 inches. It weighs in at approximately one-and-a-half pounds, and is only half an inch thin. This allows you to take the iPad virtually anywhere without too much trouble. With up to 10 hours of battery life, you can get through a full day of use without a charge. Like the iPhone and iPod Touch, the iPad uses multitouch technology, where you use your fingers instead of a mouse to navigate around its iOS operating system. Text can be entered from the on-screen keyboard or by connecting up any Bluetooth wireless keyboard, which is a nice feature if you plan to do a lot of typing.

Compared to the price of a laptop, the iPad is about half the price, making it attractive in times of tightening school budgets.

There are two different models available; there's a Wi-Fi version, and one with 3G network capability, allowing you to connect to the Internet from virtually anywhere! Storage capacity ranges between 16, 32, and 64 Gigabytes. In Canada, Rogers, Telus, and Bell provide 3G network access for the iPad.

The iPad is a device—not a “computer.” That's because after using it for a few weeks now, I've discovered that it's so much more.

When I first heard about the iPad, the first thing that went through my mind (like many others) was, “Why do I need a big iPod touch?” It shares many of the design traits of its smaller siblings, but because it has a much bigger screen it really excels at displaying your photos, movies, and web pages beautifully. At the top, is a 1/8" headphone jack and microphone, and at the bottom is the standard dock connector and a very decent sounding speaker. On the right side is a switch that locks the screen orientation, with volume controls below it. The standard dock connector at the bottom, allows you to plug in the unit to charge it, and you can also purchase a dock to VGA adapter to use it with a projector. This opens up endless possibilities in the classroom.

From my perspective, the iPad seems to be ideal for education in several ways: There are no moving parts, no hard drive to fail, no physical keyboard that will get sticky or damaged if any liquid is spilled on it. It's very light, making it easy to pass around the classroom, and you can store a bunch of them together, taking up very little space. Compared to the price of a laptop, the iPad is about half the price, making it attractive in times of tightening school budgets. There is literally no file system to learn, manage, or update. No viruses period! The learning curve for using one is minimal, and it seems to be an ideal device for users of all ages. The iPad's applications are endless for use in special education, report-card writing, social networking.

Along with the introduction of the iPad was the iBook store; a virtual bookstore contained within iTunes. Here you can purchase and download digital books to the iPad. Some of their offerings are for purchase while others are free. The iBook reader app also allows you to store PDF documents, which by the way are wonderful to view on this device. You can even pinch and zoom in on diagrams to make the text larger and easier to read. I can see the obvious advantage of being able to store all of a student's reference materials on the iPad. One can only imagine the potential of having interactive textbooks installed on student iPads. This could have a dramatic impact on helping to meet tight school board budgets, considering the fact that the need to spend huge amounts of money to replenish traditional textbooks will be obsolete! The real power of the iPad lies within the

The learning curve for using one is minimal, and it seems to be an ideal device for users of all ages. The iPad's applications are endless for use in special education, report-card writing, social networking.

thousands of applications (many of them free) that are available for it. There are more and more being introduced every day.

Mark Holland teaches at Upper Lynn Elementary School, North Vancouver, and is director of education for MacVideoTraining.com, a Vancouver-based company specializing in creating video training courses for all Mac users. E-mail: mark@macvideotraining.com.

Metadata: There's more to that essay you're marking than just the words

By Tony Wilson



A couple of years ago, I marked a paper for a law course I teach. I know the level of the students and their general knowledge of the subject area (Canadian Contract Law), but one student's assignment jumped out way ahead of all the others. All the assignments are e-mailed to me in MSWord, but for some reason, I went into “File/Properties” within the electronic version of the document to see what was there. Lo and behold, “Properties” showed that the author of the document wasn't the student I was grading, but a law firm. This suggested that the document wasn't written by the student, but had been obtained by the student by e-mail from the law firm or from someone who received it from the law firm, or the student had paid a lawyer or someone else to draft the paper.

It turns out that the student worked part-time at the law firm and used one of the firm's computers to do the assignment. “Properties” showed the identity of the licensee of MS Word. The licensee was the law firm. All was legitimate, but it goes to show there's more to a Word document than what appears on the surface of the page. You have to understand that an electronic document contains more than just words. It contains metadata.

What's metadata? It's a Greek word, and it means data about data. If the online world is a binary world of zeros and ones, then the concept of data about data is important. It's the information behind the words, like layers of an onion or the iceberg below the waterline. Metadata is information about the history, tracking, or management of an electronic document.

Certainly in the academic world, I always (repeat, always) check “file-properties” in Word to see what it says or doesn't say about the author of an electronically delivered assignment I'm marking. If a name of a former student shows up, or it looks like the name of a commercial essay-writing company, a lawyer, or something just doesn't smell right, I take it to the next level. And like my situation above, everything may be explainable and legitimate. And sometimes, maybe it's not.

In the commercial world, metadata is something businesspeople have to be acutely sensitive to. A client of mine discovered one of the Word documents he was sending to a contracting party to print, sign, and return in good faith had been manipulated in Word in the same font as the contract, and that royalty rates and renewal terms had changed from the version my client had sent out. Then they were being printed, signed, and returned by the other party with no notice that the document had been altered. On my advice, the contract was terminated and my client now sends only PDFs, faxes, or original documents for execution.

Word documents that have been “tracked” to show changes, or documents that have had “comments” added using the “comments” function in Word may retain previous changes or comments. Sometimes, you can see the changes made and accepted to a document e-mailed to you that go back to the date the original version was created. This can be done by accessing the track changes function and going “back” as far as you can. If, after reviewing the tracked changes in a document, the author chose “final” in the reviewing toolbar

instead of “accept all changes,” the recipient of the document could click “original showing markup” and see the history of all the changes made. In the commercial world, this might reveal different business terms, different pricing, and other highlighted changes made to the document before it was e-mailed to you, and reveal the people who reviewed the document. Or you might notice there are still comments embedded in the document when you hit the “comments” function. Although not a part of “tracked changes,” I've heard of some documents having comments made in white text in order to hide the words from everyone except the author. Of course, if the colour of the font is changed, the white text is exposed.

What's metadata? It's a Greek word, and it means data about data. If the online world is a binary world of zeros and ones, then the concept of data about data is important. It's the information behind the words, like layers of an onion or the iceberg below the waterline. Metadata is information about the history, tracking, or management of an electronic document.



Some people think they're quite clever hiding portions of text by highlighting words or sentences in “black” using the highlight function. Although this might look secure at first glance (and somewhat like bits of it have been crossed out with a thick black felt pen by a censor or the RCMP), all someone has to do is re-highlight the words covered up, click yellow highlighting or, even better, no highlighting, and they'll see what the not-so-smart censor tried to cross out.

And some people put deal points in the “properties” portion of the document when they create or edit the document, i.e., Not final offer.

For the recipient of a document that hasn't had the metadata “scrubbed,” the ability to see previous tracked changes, deletions, imbedded comments, and white text might be a windfall in terms of positions to take in negotiations. For the sender, well, you might think your organization has a mole in it.

In 2002, a lawyer I know was shocked to learn a securities filing he was involved in drafting revealed his “hidden” comments in the version of the prospectus filed with the Toronto Stock Exchange by another lawyer. The Toronto Stock Exchange was good enough to call the lead lawyer and alert her to the problem so a “scrubbed” document could be inserted in its place.

Politicians have failed to appreci-

ate the importance of metadata. The so called “Downing Street Memo” was downloaded in MS Word from the British prime minister's website in 2003, and it revealed that the press officers and others in the PM's office who prepared the memo justifying the war in Iraq, “cut and pasted” an American graduate student's article into the memo word for word without, of course, referring to the student's work, or changing anything, begging the political question: Who's in charge of the UK's foreign policy anyway? Washington or London?

And for anyone with an interest in litigation, metadata behind a document is discoverable in litigation proceedings and can be evidence in court.

But metadata isn't just an issue for business, lawyers, and politicians. For teachers and university instructors, metadata in an electronic version of an essay or assignment can reveal that the purported author of the assignment wasn't the student enrolled in the class, but someone else, such as a commercial essay preparation company or another student. So metadata can potentially reveal plagiarism and other academic offences.

Although sending documents as e-mail attachments in PDF is far superior to sending documents as attachments in Word, some metadata, like the author's name, can survive a conversion of a Word

document to PDF. A Word document scanned to PDF, however, will not retain metadata. And neither will faxes.

And metadata is contained in digital photographs as well.

Although I'll talk more in future articles about commercial services available to check for academic dishonesty and plagiarism, (i.e., web-based services that use web crawlers and algorithms to find previously used papers, improperly cited papers, plagiarism, and papers being written by “paper mills”), the answer to the issue of imbedded metadata requires use of special software to “scrub” the metadata off the Word document before the document is e-mailed, prompting the sender to hit “scrub” or “not scrub” each time the document is e-mailed.

Teachers should know about this. But perhaps students shouldn't. Just so you can check.

Tony Wilson is a franchise and intellectual property lawyer at Boughton Law Corporation, Vancouver. He is an adjunct professor at Simon Fraser University and is rated as a leading Canadian franchise lawyer by LEXPERT and WHO'S WHO Legal. He is a regular columnist with the *Globe and Mail*, *Lawyers Weekly*, *Canadian Lawyer* and *Bartalk Magazine*. His book *Manage Your On Line Reputation* will be published in November 2010.

Teachers retired

Teachers who retired prior to September 30, 2010

5 Southeast Kootenay

Sheryle Blackwood
Brian Conrad
Jane Curry
Murray Knipfel
Gary Leclair
William Lindell
Peggy Lucas
Neil McDermid
Carol Mitchell
Janet Oliver
Mary Elizabeth Parks
Terry Quick
Murray Quinn
Patrick Robertson
Betty Thomson
Maureen Valikoski

6 Rocky Mountain

Janice Baker
Sharon Ford
Donna Mozell
Brenda Oslie
Douglas Praskey
Pat Schwartz

8 Kootenay Lake

Linda Blair
John Borley
Robert Brocklesby
Jim Donald
Helen Foulger
Enid Gayle-Ewashen
David Gerlitz
Arnold Johnson
Lynn Johnson
Margaret Kinrade
Lois Lawrence
Marilyn Lawrence
Janet McLean
David Olynyk
Mary Olynyk
Nancy Pulsifer
Pik Hwa Sept
Jeanne Shaw
Mary Tanner

10 Arrow Lakes

Valerie Piercey-Wilson
Henning Von Krogh

19 Revelstoke

Judith Cowan
Carol Du Mont
Diane Fujino
Eileen Harris
Dianne Martin
Jeanne Whitehead

20 Kootenay Columbia

Timothy Beecham
David Brewer
Sandra Brewer
Michael Calder
Glenn Caputo
Antonio De Luca
Darrel Ganzert
David Nutini
Ronald Paolini
Diane Sanford
Douglas Sly
Sandy Stevenson
Carla Terava
Alexia Turner

22 Vernon

Diana Bainbridge
Susan Brockley
Susan Cunningham
Gary Davidson
Ronald Delangen
James Inglis
Lori Johnson
Karen Kenny
Heather Klassen
Janis Leblond
Michael Lynch
Jackson Mace
Pamela McGregor
Elizabeth McKinnon
James Miles
Caren Pittman
Suzanne Wallden

23 Central Okanagan

Shirley Adams
Leslie Armour
Pamela Beck
Lorna Beger
Brenda Bell
Marguerite Bilyk
Candida Bothe
Margaret Boyd
Susan Boyd
Ruth Brooks
David Buckna
Georgina Cadman
Susan Campbell
Tina Chalmers
Valerie Charison
Heather Cooper
Wendy Cowley
Janet Cowper
Erik Danielsen
Laurie DeBry
Audrey Delaere
Dorothy DeVries
Cecile Eastman

Kathy Feth
Sharon Francis
Robert French
John Gobolos
Gail Goodall
Lawrence Gradin
Aline Grigg
Franceen Herron
Doris Hewitson
Jerry Holowchak
Clyde Howard
Susan Keller
Grace Klein
Beverley Leland
David Loyd
Brenda MacDonald
William Maier
Gordon Marano
Fernando Mastromonaco
D McClure-Isik
Deborah Meldram
Marilyn Moffat
Jennifer Moodie
Dianne Neufeld
Garry Otker
Alan Phillips
Ian Pooley
Janet Salvino
Douglas Sanders
Denis Showler
Trudy Spletzer
James Stait
Betty Thibodeau
Cheryl Tuddenham
Jeannette Turk
Georgina Turvey
Susan Volk
Gregory Walker
Patricia Warrender

27 Cariboo-Chilcotin

Marilyn Bergen
Robert Bergen
Judy Davis
Carlos Demedeiros
Christine Donaldson
Audrey Dye
Sharon Hoffman
Christine Koshelanyk
Karla Langley
Donna Prendergast
Ulla Ritchie
Kathleen Waldron
Stacy Wright

28 Quesnel

Elizabeth Bensted
Jane Fletcher
David Law

33 Chilliwack

Denis Andersen
Donna Cheshire
Amy Doughty
Harley Gauthier
Marilyn Hickman-
Presseau
Terry Jensen
Lorraine Krahn
Carolyn Loewen
Gary Mason
Douglas Sly
Steve Mowat
Julie Muirhead
Susan Nessman
Janet Pohl
Harold Schmidt
Catherine Sessions
Diane Smith
Alice Stein
Miriam Taylor
Helena Tetteroo
Gail Vodden
Dara Wakely
Heather Walker

35 Langley

Catherine Bailey
Patricia Brealey
John Callaghan
Sue Chan
George Clulow
Henry Doerksen
Penny Emerson
Catherine Fallis
Francis Flanagan
Stuart Gaitt
Kerry Herd
Linda Jensen
Judith Johnson
Kelly Johnson
Stuart Jones
Maureen Jonson
Ronald Jonson
Susan Jow
Colleen Kouwenberg
Susan Kydd
Dianne Leroy
Patricia Marshall
Douglas Mason
David McGowan
William Mercer
Donald Nelson
Victor Paquette
Brian Priest
Gillian Richardson
Gail Schneider
Wendy Smith
Daphne Stevens
Jennifer Strand

Althea Strudwick
Joanne Sullivan
Martin Summers
Richard Sutherland
Cheryl Taylor
E Tisher
Judith Turner
Diane Twist
Grant Vander Hoek
Bob Zeilstra

36 Surrey

Barbara Ashworth
Margaret Avery
Lloyd Baluk
Judith Barteluk
Jeanne Bateman
Betty Beach
Karen Beaman
S Blanchflower
Vivian Bradley
Maureen Brooks
Chloe Broomhead
Susan Brown
I Butchart
Brian Cameron
Jude Campbell
Sharon Carter
Brent Cassie
Judith Clark
Mary Clifford
Peter Connal
Barbara Cook
Guyle Coon
Carol Cosens
Mary Cullen
Ralph Dale
Anneke Dandy
Dorthe Davison
Shirley Deane
Diane Desilets
Surindar Dhaliwal
Phyllis Donnelly
Susan Dumanski
E Duncan
Margo Durkin
Carol Duthie
Stanley Dyck
Reta Eddleston
Margaret Endersby
Guy Ethier
Kathleen Griffin
David Hall
Kris Hans
Irene Hanson
Dennis Hazelton
Lucinda Hendren
Ruby Hennessey
Diane Henry
Karyn Henwood
Krystyna Holan
Carol Holland
Dean Hollett
Marinus Horsting
Diane Howe
Allen Hull
David Jackson
Mary Kazuta
Beverly Kilpatrick
Beverly King
Carol Korst
Janice Kosty
Karen Kroeker
A Kula
Linda Lavers Erickson
Michael Loosemore
Tracy Maclean
Eileen Mageau
Marian Mahony
Linda McArthur
Anne McKay
Sheila Meek
Sandra Melrose
Mariana Mezo
Stephen Motek
Margaret Murtzell
Naeema Noor
Gail Pack
Karen Pedersen
Vicki Philipps-Wolley
Elizabeth Powell
Sid Prysunka
Richard Ritchie
Reuvena Ross
Melody Sawkins
Maureen Scott
Joanne Seib
Yom-Tov Shamash
Carol Simonsen
Russell Slade
Roderick Stables
Charles Stansfield
David Strand
Diane Sullivan
Vicki Sullivan
Janet Summers
Karen Tapella
Alison Temple
Donna Trask
Maria Undurraga
Elinor Waldman
Charles Wang
Dina Willis
Darhl Wood

37 Delta

Gale Berkner
Reinhart Blum
Robert Bourgeois
Carole Brost
Patricia Brown
Charles Carignan
Lorna Clare
Annette Davidson
Sheryl Everett
Steven Faraher Amidon
Peter Gilchrist
Regine Hedley
Patricia Hendry
Patricia Hillman
Pamela Hockin
Sandra Houghton
Martha James
Janet Johnston
Nickolas Kanakos
Patricia Kaulius
Susan Koot
Kathryn Lambert
Christina Lang
Allen Loewen
Wynn Machin
Julianna Mazziotti
Diane McArdle
Leslie McKerrow
Phillip Milligan
Carol Morrell
Sharon Niles
Anna Panton
Susan Peters
Sylvia Pryke
Susan Pudek
Gordon Rittinger
Barbara Salt
Beth Sparks
Brenda Stewart
Donald Tuck
Catherine Tyler
Ely Van Alfen
Jane Vychlo
Marilyn Wells
Lori Wilson
Dale Wormeli
Janet Worrall

38 Richmond

Janice Adams
Nicola Beninger
Oscar Bisnar
Kathleen Boyle
Faye Brownlie
Kent Campbell
Margaret Chandler
Mauri Clemons-Braund
Linda Con
Colin Cox
Sue Dadson
Brenda Dewonck
Roger Doi
Harald Erbe
William Evans
Lydia Francescutti
Yvette Gellatly
Joanne Gray
Zaitoon Hamir
Gerald Harris
June Harrison
Lorraine Jarvis
Kimberley Jensen
Klaus Knapp
Jean Leach
Heather MacKay
Robert McKeown
Daphne McMillan
Helen Mirfield
Maureen Mosher
Vivian Nabata
Harvinder Nahal
Kanwal Neel
May Oshiro
Georgina Page
Joyce Peatch
Becky Pendleton
Donald Pudlas
Rose Schwenning
Margaret Sherwood
Catherine Silverberg
Gordon Smith
Jane Spearing
Kathleen Stewart
Graeme Swan
Jacqueline Thompson
Kathleen Vanderwood
Louise Walker
Lois White
Laura Wieler
Jane Wright

39 Vancouver Elementary

Anne-Marie Arthur
Joyce Beveridge
Jerry Bialecki
Sharole Brown
Sharon Bushell
Marietta Carlie-Grubb
Penny Clement
Jacqueline Conradi-
Robertson
Dorothy Crossley
Barbara Crowther
Louisa Di Tomaso
Pamela Donald

Candace Drew-
McKinstry
John Duncan
Marjorie Elliott
Barbara Fahmi
Michael Flanagan
Perla Glanzer
Helen Glass
Elizabeth Griffin
Gwendolyn Chute
Valerie Clark
Helen Close
William Dick
Viola Dickson
Maidena Domijan
Patricia Fletcher
Margaret Forman
Richard Gaska
Vicki Hickenbotham
Jennifer Jakobsen
Sheldon Klein
Ruth Larson
Anne Lyle
Carol MacLean
Daryl McFadden
Joanne Morrison
Wayne Murphy
Janet Ollis
Valerie Palosaari
Allison Payne
Franka Raynier
Dawn Reithaug
Monique Robert
Patricia Sharpe
Catherine Smith
Jade Soon
Robert Turner
Pamela Moulton
Diane Murray
Gail Paget
Lizette Pappas
Mary Anne Parker
Sol Pavony
Janis Puusepp
Jean Redpath
Jean Ronalds
Judith Roos-McClacherty
Monty Rudd
Gail Ryan
Michael Scales
Betty Scheltgen
Douglas Scott
Marleane Sinclair
Harriet Small
Geoffrey Smith
Pamela Steele
Nancy Stevens
Elizabeth Surchin
Luigi Tallarico
Patricia Taylor
Norma Westrom
Alan Zisman

39 Vancouver Secondary

Gillian Adamson
Allan Amundsen
Janice Brooke
Vera Buxton
Linda Calliou
Eliana Charbonneau
Keith Chu
Rita Cloutier
Anna Dispirito
Michael Dow
George Foster
Susan Gallpen
Marie Genereux
John Henderson
Kelvin Hoyle
Kam-Shim Johnston
John Jordan
David Kay
Bryan Knapp
Edward Koch
Kazimierz Kozdron
Siew Lau
Allan MacDonald
William Magee
Rebecca Maruno
Janet McKinlay
Trudie McLellan
Marion McMillan
Martin Meissenheimer
Raymond Morel
Lawrence Myers
Cathryn Parker
Michael Pearce
Janet Polonijo
Mary Puddicombe
Susan Robinson
Donald Rolls
Vickey Sahota
Nina Shenton
Joanne Smedley
Susan Smyth
Judith Sommer
David Stephen
Graham Stokes
Sally Stubbs
David Walker
Donald Wishlow

40 New Westminster

Elaine Biagioni
Eileen Duncan
Gina Gagne
Ross Irving
Jeanne Jensen
Joy Mayadas
William Wright

41 Burnaby

Donna Andrews
Brenton Baillie
Sheila Ball
Elizabeth Ballantyne
Michelle Beraldin
Margaret Burke
Christine Bush
Jennifer Caswell

Chui-Fong Chim
Lawrence Chu
Gwendolyn Chute
Valerie Clark
Helen Close
William Dick
Viola Dickson
Maidena Domijan
Patricia Fletcher
Margaret Forman
Richard Gaska
Vicki Hickenbotham
Jennifer Jakobsen
Sheldon Klein
Ruth Larson
Anne Lyle
Carol MacLean
Daryl McFadden
Joanne Morrison
Wayne Murphy
Janet Ollis
Valerie Palosaari
Allison Payne
Franka Raynier
Dawn Reithaug
Monique Robert
Patricia Sharpe
Catherine Smith
Jade Soon
Robert Turner
Pamela Moulton
Diane Murray
Gail Paget
Lizette Pappas
Mary Anne Parker
Sol Pavony
Janis Puusepp
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Jean Ronalds
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Book review

Education, resistance, and the empire of illusion

By Patrik Parkes

In his famous exploration of modern authority, *Discipline & Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault characterizes formal education as an extension of the military and prison systems: "A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching." To most teachers, it is perhaps distasteful to read a depiction of our work as equivalent to that of prison guards. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that teaching is "inscribed" with a surveillance function that serves greater structures of authority. We are employed by school boards, and teach material prescribed by provincial curricula. Short of a radical social transformation, we cannot help but act as virtual prison guards in the service of such authority. However, we should not excuse ourselves too lightly: our "prison guard" function is also a question of degree, and in this we have some control.

Two books, recently published, provide insights regarding our role as servants of authority. The first, *Empire of Illusion*, by the Pulitzer Prize winning US journalist Chris Hedges, describes the banality and atomization that characterize contemporary North American culture. The second, *Résistance*, is the recent translation of French resistance activist Agnès Humbert's wartime memoir. On the surface, these two books may seem unconnected. But for those who doubt Hedges' depiction of North American society as extreme, Humbert provides a foil: for most, life in Nazi-occupied France was fairly "normal," after all. That is, when we consider that most French weren't cowering in corners, anticipating abuse by the Gestapo, the apparent placidity of our own times may come into question. Both Hedges and Humbert depict the mechanisms by which extreme situations are abetted by complacency. And as teachers—unless we aim to assist a kind of fascism—we need to be vigilantly mindful of such mechanisms.

Hedges reminds us that "honest intellectual inquiry...is by its nature distrustful of authority, fiercely independent, and often subversive." However, through various filters, universities function instead to create "hordes of competent systems managers." Hedges describes universities that "do only a mediocre job of teaching students to question and think" and "organize learning around minutely specialized disciplines, narrow answers, and rigid structures designed to produce such answers." These assertions are backed by fascinating anecdotes of an education system in which

fragmentation is promoted as "diversity," students fail to question the structures of their own society, and literature is taught without regard for its social context.

In Hedges' account, education fails to engage in the 'big picture,' and serves only the illusion of wisdom—one of the five "illusions" presented alongside those of Literacy, Love, Happiness, and America. The failings of education, here, are not isolated, but symptomatic of a North American culture in which adults are infantilized, unable or unwilling to confront the confusion of reality; "indulged and comforted by clichés, stereotypes, and inspirational messages that tell us we can be whoever we seek to be." It is also a sadistic culture, in which "reality" television tells us: "Those who win are the best. Those who lose deserve to be erased. Compassion, competence, intelligence, and solidarity with others are forms of weakness." And for those who think it's just entertainment, Hedges' discussion of violent pornography is illuminating:

"Porn reflects the endemic cruelty of our society. This is a society that does not blink when the industrial slaughter unleashed by the United States and its allies kills hundreds of civilians in Gaza or hundreds of thousands of innocents in Iraq and Afghanistan. Porn reflects back the cruelty of a culture that tosses its mentally ill out on the street, warehouses more than two million people in prisons, denies healthcare to tens of millions of poor, champions gun ownership over gun control, and trumpets an obnoxious and super-patriotic nationalism and rapacious corporate capitalism. The violence, cruelty, and degradation of porn are expressions of a society that has lost its capacity for empathy."

Here it should be clarified that most of these descriptors also apply to Canada. Hedges reminds us that a similar segment of our own population—42%—is also illiterate or semiliterate. In the broader sense, however, he makes it clear that literacy indicates not only the practical ability to read, but also willingness. He describes a media-saturated public discourse in which "those who question, those who doubt, those who are critical, those who are able to confront reality and grasp the hollowness of celebrity culture are shunned and condemned for their pessimism." Here, let us remember that Canada is also influenced by much of the same mass media.

Hedges makes a clear connection between the kind of infantile, narcissistic, and magical thinking he finds in North American society, and the sadism—specifically the lack of both compassion and communitarian values—promoted in this culture. Within this discussion he invokes history, and declares that "those who suffer from historical amnesia, the belief that we are unique in history and have nothing to learn from the past, remain children." This brings us to Agnès Humbert's account of the French Resistance.

In *Résistance*, Humbert also describes a society overrun by sadism and banality. Of course, Nazi-occupied France and contemporary North America are not the same. Yet the connection should not be dismissed. We, too, are subjected to surveillance, ideological orthodoxies (of disingenuously unregulated markets and globalization), exploitative trade arrangements, and a vapid mass culture inculcating establishment values. And in reading Humbert's account of occupied France, we can approach an understanding that our contemporary "normalcy" is in fact a kind of illusion.

Humbert's wartime memoir reads like a novel, populated by a variety of characters, responding individually to the political circumstances in which they live. Immediately following the Nazi occupation, there is little sense of a drastic alteration in day-to-day living. The infrastructure operates as normal, and we discover

there is no shortage of supportive actors, willing to take positions vacated by those less trustworthy to the new regime. Resisters, such as Humbert and her comrades, are in the minority. As a result of her transgression, she is imprisoned, and later sent to a series of work camps.

Among the Germans, we discover various degrees of complicity with the Nazi government. There are committed Nazis and sadistic labour camp supervisors. We also encounter a judge who "respects and admires the men whom he is about to condemn to death" for subversion; a competent mayor who joins the Nazi party for reasons of practicality; a guard who risks his life by offering refuge to Humbert; and active resisters who, like Humbert, are condemned to forced labour. This account is nuanced, and through it we learn that there are degrees of complicity and resistance. But what is the best response under the circumstances? And in our own times, to what degree should we cooperate with the system in which we live? Should we actively support it? Should we, like the judge, register our distaste yet follow the rules? Should we, like the prison guard, work within the system subversively? Or should we, as Humbert and her comrades, actively resist? In the end, their resistance is rewarded, but it is, perhaps, a Pyrrhic victory—most of her comrades are executed. Humbert's *Résistance* acknowledges that there are various and complex versions of both co-operation and non-co-operation, but she has little patience with those who excuse their inability to act, as follows: "We couldn't! Our hands were tied!" To this, she replies, "Were your hands tied more tightly than ours?"

Again, we do not live under the Nazi occupation. Nor are we guards at a forced labour camp. However, by Chris Hedges' very convincing account, in *Empire of Illusion*, we live in a society in which "to engage in the goals of the collective, is to be [perceived as] obstructive and negative." He shows us that, in light of the 2008 financial crisis, it is a society in which elites "were never taught how to question the assumptions of their age," and act as technicians, trained merely "to sustain a dead system." Of course, we are not the same elites who are responsible for the financial meltdown. However, as teachers, we need to be self-critical, and question whether we are not, in fact, training future generations merely "to maintain a structure that cannot be maintained."

Are we truly qualified to provide students with the tools they need to see the big picture and participate in a democracy? This is a difficult task if we do not have these tools ourselves. To be sure, we need to take responsibility and acquire these tools on our own—as many of us do. But we also need to question whether the system that produces teachers is, in fact, adequate. In BC, for example, it is possible to be certified as a teacher without ever having taken a course in the philosophy or sociology of education (as is the case for graduates of SFU's professional development program). It is absolutely crucial that we are able to understand our role in the greater context—if not for the sake of our society, then for ourselves. A society as Hedges depicts it, atomized, sadistic, and irrational, will certainly find no interest in providing a supportive environment for our profession. We play an important role in influencing the direction of the society in which we live. But if we do not take this role seriously, that is, if we act uncritically, as mere system managers, it may not be a society in which we will want to live.

Patrik Parkes teaches at Moscrop Secondary School, Burnaby and is editor of *The Global Educator*.

Reprinted from *The Global Educator*, the PAGE PSA journal.

Pension seminars for all ages

Your Pension, Your Future and/or Thinking about Retiring

These two seminars are co-presented by BCTF staff and Pension Corporation staff. Preregistration is required. The time and the location will be confirmed by mail or e-mail. Check out the list of dates and locations on the poster in your school staffroom or go to the Teachers' Pension Plan website (<http://pp.pensionsbc.ca>). You can also contact the plan by phone 1-877-558-5574 or e-mail TPPseminar@pensionsbc.ca.

There is more to it than money

The BC Retired Teachers' Association has developed a workshop for those of you about to retire.

The workshop is designed to complement the pension plan seminars, but with limited enrolment to facilitate

sharing and learning. It's a workshop—not a seminar.

Attend a seminar. We know that entering retirement is more than choosing a pension option, and who better to share information, ideas, and experiences with you than retired teachers?

Retirement brings with it life-altering situations and a wide variety of choices, some financial, some legal. Some physical, some social, and all are connected with lifestyle. Achieving a workable balance of activities and fulfilling dreams doesn't just happen. Once you have determined that it's time to retire, it's also time to concentrate on all the other aspects of your new venture.

If a pension seminar is coming to your area, ask your BCTF local president to contact the BCRTA to book this highly acclaimed follow-up workshop.

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.

Principals and vice-principals should contact their HR department to inquire if they are members of the BCTF SIP or the disability plan offered through the BCPVPA. The BCPVPA plan will have its own withdrawal guidelines.

Applications are available online at: bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/SIP/LT-withdrawalForm.pdf or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

BCTF Peer Support Service

This service will be provided by teachers, who are known as BCTF peer consultants, who have an extensive background in teaching and training in planning, consultation, classroom observation, analysis, and feedback skills.

Peer consultants will offer support in a collaborative and non-judgmental environment. PSS consultants support the growth of a teacher's professional practice, outside of the evaluation process.

How can a member access the service?

An active member may request PSS services by communicating with their local president who directs the request to Patti Turner, BCTF program co-ordinator.

Who will pay for the service?

The cost of the service to a teacher will be covered by the BCTF when the teacher is self-referring. When the member is on a plan of assistance, the cost of the service will be negotiated with the member's school district. Cost-sharing with school districts is negotiated case-by-case.

For more information about the service, contact Patti Turner
604-871-1803, toll free: 1-800-663-9163 (local 1803)
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Yours for the asking

New full-day Kindergarten exemplar videos

The Early Learning Branch of the Ministry of Education has produced new resources to support teachers in the implementation of full-day Kindergarten.

While the videos are designed with teachers and principals in mind, they are an enjoyable way for all education partners to learn more about the importance of play in early learning pedagogy.

Developed in partnership with the British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (www.bcpvpa.bc.ca) and the British Columbia Primary Teachers' Association (www.bcpta.ca), the

Full-day Kindergarten Exemplar Video Series (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/fdk/exemplar_videos.htm) demonstrates rich, age-appropriate activities and learning environments supported by teacher, principal, and researcher interviews.

The video series is comprised of four vignettes covering the following topics:

- Part 1: The Learning Environment
- Part 2: Teaching and Learning in a Play-Based Environment
- Part 3: Inquiry-Based Learning and Development of Self Regulation
- Part 4: Extending and Deepening the Learning Experience

The accompanying viewing guide (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/fdk/pdfs/exemplar_video_guide.pdf) offers questions for reflection and discussion to stimulate ideas for supporting early learning in the classroom.

The videos and accompanying viewing guide build on and are supplementary to the Full-Day Kindergarten Program Guide (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/fdk/pdfs/fdk_program_guide.pdf).

For more information visit: www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/fdk/exemplar_videos.htm or contact the Early Learning Branch at: EDUC.EarlyLearning@gov.bc.ca.

Congratulations to the Primary PSA for their hard work on this project.

– Anita Chapman, BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division

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The Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education

Master of Education Programs

M.Ed. in School and Counselling Psychology

Entrance requirements: Pre-requisite courses and one-year work experience in the human services field plus either a B.A. (Honours) in Psychology, a B.Ed., or a B.A. (Honours) in an area other than Psychology or Education.

M.Ed. in Educational Psychology and Special Education (thesis or course-based with some online course offerings for Sept. 2011)

Measurement and Evaluation

Entrance requirements: a 4-year degree in Psychology or Education including introductory and intermediate courses in statistics.

Special Education

Entrance requirements: a four year degree in Psychology or Education plus 6 credit units of undergraduate study in Special Education and an introductory statistics course. Students who have completed a Post Degree Certificate in Education: Special Education can receive advanced standing in the Special Education course-based masters option.

Enquiries should be directed to: Dr. Jennifer Nicol, Graduate Chair (epse.gradchair@usask.ca or 306-966-5261) or Shauna Quintin, Graduate Secretary (epse.gradsec@usask.ca or 306-966-5255). Information is available at www.usask.ca/education/epse/graduate-program

Post Degree Certificate in Education: Special Education Program

Applicants must have a Bachelor of Education and a valid Teaching Certificate. In addition, applicants will be expected to have one year of teaching experience and 6 credit units of undergraduate courses in special education (EPSE 390.3 and EPSE 414.3, or equivalent).

Enquiries should be directed to Dr. Laureen McIntyre, Director (laureen.mcintyre@usask.ca or 306-966-5266) or the Program Secretary (spec.edpse@usask.ca or 966-5253). Information is available at <http://edpsecertificate.usask.ca>.

The application deadline for the programs above is February 28, 2011. A fee of \$75 CDN is required at the time of application.



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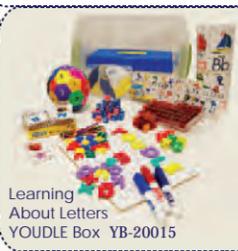
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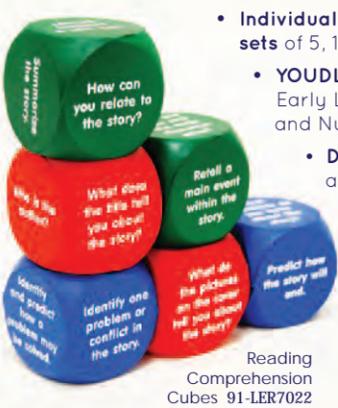
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PD Calendar

DECEMBER 2010

9-10 Vancouver, BC. 2nd International Human Rights Day Student Symposium: "Human Rights in the Asia-Pacific 1931-1945." Sponsored by the Vancouver School Board, hosted by the Vancouver Technical Secondary School and organized by BC ALPHA. Vancouver Technical Secondary School from 8:30 a.m to 3:30 p.m. Keynote by Dr. John Price, University of Victoria professor of history and breakout workshops. All workshops will be facilitated by BC specialist teachers. Teachers in the Lower Mainland are invited to bring their students to this free and inspiring learning opportunity. Registration deadline is November 15, 2010. For program and registration details visit www.alpha-canada.org/ihrdss or e-mail bcalpha@alpha-canada.org.

JANUARY 2011

20-21 Vancouver. BCAA (Alternate Education Association) 24th annual "Challenge and Change Conference." Keynote Denise Bissonnette "Beyond Beyond Barriers to Passion and Possibility" plus 28 sessions dealing with "at risk" students. For a brochure and to register, www.bctf.ca/bcaea/conference.html.

21-22 Vancouver. AEPSA (Adult Educators' Provincial Specialist Association) 15th Annual Conference and AGM, "Dealing with Neurodiversity, Addiction and Mental Health Challenges in Adult Students." Keynote speaker Robert Aitken, VCC. To register www.bctf.ca/aepsa or contact psac74@bctf.ca

FEBRUARY

25-26 Richmond. BCTF New Teachers' Conference. Radisson Hotel Vancouver Airport. This conference is a professional development opportunity designed specifically for new teachers—those in their first five years of teaching, and for student teachers. Call for workshop proposals closes December 3, 2010. Proposal applications: bctf.ca/forms/NTC.aspx?ekfrm=19862. Costs: \$70 (BCTF members), \$35 (student teachers). Registration will open on December 20, 2010. Watch the BCTF website—bctf.ca—for information.

MARCH

17-18 Vancouver. The Special Education Association (SEA) is proud to present the 36th Annual Crosscurrents Conference at the Westin Bayshore Hotel. Keynote: Dr. Paula Kluth plus a variety of quality sessions and exhibitors for regular and special education. For information, contact or visit the website at www.bctf.ca/sea or contact conference chair Leann Buteau, lbuteau@gmail.com.

MAY

7 Vancouver. "Investigating Our Practices 2011" 14th annual conference. Teachers from different educational contexts convene at UBC to share their investigations, understandings and questions. Deadline for proposals March 11, 2011. Registration fee \$25 (\$15 for students). Lunch and refreshments included. Scarfe Education Building, 2125 Main Mall, UBC. For more information, visit <http://epl.educ.ubc.ca/programs/institutes/iop.php> or contact Judy Paley at judy.paley@ubc.ca, 604-822-2733.

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 Fri. 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 Fri. would be the designated day.

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 21, 2011

PD Calendar website:

bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProDI/PD-Calendar.cfm

Additions/changes:

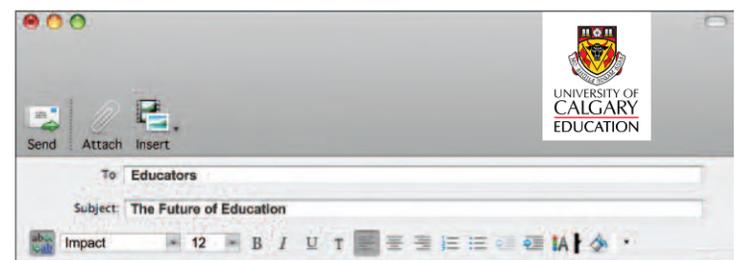
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Living safely with electromagnetic radiation

By Jim Waugh

Electromagnetic radiation (EMR) from cellphones, cellphone antennas, Wi-Fi, and other sources has saturated much of our living environment. As our awareness of its effects increases, the question becomes, what can we do to protect our health? Fortunately, there's a great deal that can be done. The government, by its refusal to acknowledge the potential dangers of untested wireless technologies, has shifted the responsibility of protection to you.

Despite having accountability for national health, Health Canada continues to insist that exposure to low-level radio-frequency energy, such as from Wi-Fi equipment, is not dangerous to the public and the equipment is required to meet the safety guidelines of Safety Code 6. In doing so, Health Canada ignores the Royal Society of Canada Report of March 1999, which states Safety Code 6 is explicitly designed to protect from thermal exposures (causing body tissue to increase in temperature) and Wi-Fi, cellphones, cell and radio transmitters, and DECT cordless phones do not fall into this category because the radiation is non-thermal. Health Canada also ignores a large body of science that proves biological effects of EMR exposure occur at levels thousands of times lower than Safety Code 6 recommended guidelines. Why is our federal government so persistent in ignoring the facts? The evidence points to the money. The wireless telecommunications industry is generating revenues in the trillions of dollars annually world-wide and, as a result, our government is collecting millions in taxes, fees, and other revenues. Seemingly, taking care of this cash cow is much more important to the politicians and bureaucrats than protecting us from harm.

The invisible fog

The invisible fog of man-made electromagnetic radiation we live in is formed by radiation in a couple of frequency ranges. Radio-frequency radiation enables our wireless

technologies like cellphones, cordless phones, Wi-Fi, wireless baby monitors, and wireless security systems. Power-frequency radiation is emitted by appliances, electric tools, electronic equipment, and lighting fixtures in the home, and high-voltage electrical transmission and distribution lines on the landscape. A variety of frequencies are found in modern passenger vehicles particularly hybrids and cellphone use in the vehicle will add to the density of EMR. The frequencies contribute to the aggregate amount of radiation our bodies absorb on a daily basis. The more radiation the body is exposed to, the greater our risks of contracting symptoms and illnesses that have been attributed to EMR.

Considering the high radiation density in our outdoor and working environments, it becomes a matter of necessity that it be as low as possible in the home so that we may rest and recover from the radiation we absorb during the day.

A few of the symptoms include headaches, nausea, altered reflexes, flu-like symptoms, insomnia, tinnitus, skin rashes, allergies, behaviour difficulties, anxiety, and the worst one—feeling old. An estimated 3% to 5% of the population suffers with electromagnetic sensitivity, an allergy-like condition that can be severely debilitating when sufferers are exposed to electromagnetic frequencies. Exposure to EMR affects the immune system and nervous system of the body as well as its genome. A few of the many diseases attributed to EMR are chronic fatigue, chronic stress, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, brain tumours and cancer, childhood and adult leukemia, and lung, breast, and prostate cancer.

The dangers around us

Many public places like shopping malls, office buildings, restaurants and coffee shops, and schools

contain unhealthy levels of radiation. It comes from cellphones carried by the occupants, Wi-Fi, cordless phones, wireless security systems, fluorescent lighting, and exterior sources such as cellphone antennas and high-voltage transmission lines. Even outdoor areas like parks and beaches are becoming contaminated with radiation from cellphone antennas, Wi-Fi, and transmission lines. Hospitals and extended-care facilities contain a radiation fog similar to other public buildings exacerbated by emissions from electronic medical equipment. The EMR environment in casinos is very unhealthy in part because of the close proximity of the players to large numbers of gaming machines.

Making your home safe

Considering the high radiation density in our outdoor and working environments, it becomes a matter of necessity that it be as low as possible in the home so that we may rest and recover from the radiation we absorb during the day. An electromagnetic home inspection performed by an experienced professional or as a consequential do-it-yourself project will alert you to unhealthy sources of EMR and highlight an appropriate course of action. Should you be planning to build a new home or do a major renovation, it would be prudent for you to learn about low-EMR design or seek the services of a knowledgeable professional. A well-conceived floor plan together with good electrical planning will yield a safe living environment.

Reducing radiation levels in the home begins with eliminating unnecessary sources of wireless radiation. Discouraging cellphone use at home is very important. Cellphones emit harmful radiation that enables them to maintain constant contact with cell antennas. Equally important is to eliminate cordless phones and replace them with the corded variety. Substitute wired Internet connections for Wi-Fi. Refrain from using wireless baby monitors and consider replacing wireless security systems and other wireless technologies with wired systems. Remove fluorescent lighting fixtures and compact fluores-

cent lamps (CFLs) from the home and replace them with LED (light emitting diode) or incandescent bulbs or fixtures. Fluorescent lamps and CFLs are not healthy because they emit high levels of power-frequency radiation from their ballasts and CFLs radiate ultraviolet radiation from their lighting tubes that can burn the skin if there are no UV filters in place. They generate dirty electricity (high frequency energy) on the building wiring that causes harmful magnetic fields to be radiated and the tubes contain mercury, a toxic heavy metal. Electric radiant floor heating should be used to warm a floor only when the room is not occupied. Hot water radiant heating is much safer.

Safety in the bedroom

Bedrooms are rooms where we spend a third of our time resting and healing and special attention should be paid to them. Make sure the head of the bed is not located on a wall common with an electrical panel or service drop, computer, television, or other source of EMR. If so, move the bed or the source. Move electric clocks, radios, cellphone chargers, extension cords, power converters, and anything else that uses electrical power during the night one to two metres from the bed. Unplug computers and televisions from the wall at night. Ensure the bed is a metre or more from an electric baseboard heater. Never use an electric blanket or heating pad and turn off the waterbed heater before climbing into bed. If you're in the market for a new bed, buy one made of natural materials without steel springs or metal bed frame. Should you be sensitive to radio-frequency radiation coming through a wall from a cellphone antenna or a neighbour's Wi-Fi or cordless phone, consider blocking the radiation with aluminum foil applied directly to the wall or on large hanging panels suitably decorated. Your decorating skills will definitely be an asset. The window can be covered with fabric made with silver- or tin-plated copper fibre. An alternative is a canopy covering the bed made with plated copper fibre material. You may consider similar

shielding techniques in the living room. If you suffer from sleep disturbances, try turning off the switch at the electrical panel for the bedroom circuit during the night making sure there are no appliances, health monitors, or devices that require a 24/7 power supply. If your sleep improves in a few days, consider installing a demand switch on the bedroom circuit.

Kitchens are important too

Kitchens have the largest number of EMR sources in the home. Every appliance, large or small that uses an electric motor, heating element, or electronic control will emit unhealthy levels of radiation. For this reason, beds, reading chairs, or couches should not be located on walls common with major appliances. Be cognizant of EMR emissions from electric stoves, ovens, and microwave ovens, and maintain a distance of a metre or more when your immediate attention to the food is not required, particularly if you're pregnant.

Biological experiment

We are in the midst of a huge biological experiment and our children are most vulnerable to potential harm. Their undeveloped bodies, precise electrical systems operating at 7.8 Hz, are being continually harassed by frequencies measured in billions of hertz. The biological changes that are occurring may only become evident in 10, 20, or 30 years. Until the government takes action to establish and enforce biologically based safe exposure guidelines for radio- and power-frequency electromagnetic radiation, we must protect the children and ourselves. It is incumbent on us to educate ourselves and speak out against the mindless proliferation of wireless technologies until they are proven safe.

Jim Waugh, North Vancouver, assists clients in reducing their EMR exposure. *Living Safely with Electromagnetic Radiation: A Complete Guide for Protecting Your Health* is a wealth of valuable information. Visit www.EMFSafeHome.com or JimWaugh@EMFSafeHome.com.

Manage your digital footprint

By Larry Kuehn

Here's a new task to add to your day: online reputation management.

So you don't write a blog or comment on blogs. You don't belong to MySpace or send e-mail messages to students. Not only do you not become a "friend" with students, you don't even belong to Facebook.

Nothing to worry about, you think. Wrong, according to Julia Hengstler. Even if you never personally go online in any form, you probably still have a digital footprint. It could even include video of your teaching, taken with a student phone and uploaded onto a website. Shutting your eyes to the web is not enough to maintain a positive reputation.

Hengstler now teaches in the education faculty at Vancouver Island University. She spent more than a decade as a secondary teacher and was active in CUEBC, the computer-users specialist association. She offered a workshop on managing digital footprints, social media, and education policy at the October 2010 CUEBC conference.

She suggests you check out your digital footprint. Do a Google search on your name—and don't forget to search for images, video, and blogs, all possible on Google. Check for

your name on ratemyteacher.com and on YouTube. For a look into the "deep web," try pipl.com. You may find more of a footprint than you imagined.

Hengstler points out that your footprint—and reputation—is built in two ways. One is active—the blogs, articles, photos, videos you post. The other is passive—what others put on about you. All of it is permanent because of the nature of the Internet.

If something terrible and untrue is said about you, you may be able to get the website to take it down. However, it is still out there. It could be on personal computers where it was already downloaded. Much of the web exists on digital archives, even after data is removed from the source website. Taking content down in one place does not remove it from others.

Building and maintaining a positive professional online profile requires active work. If you allow yourself to be identified entirely by what others post, you have no control over your online identity. While active participation will not entirely erase the damage others may do to you, you can develop a positive presence that will help to balance whatever else is out there.

Of course, when you are active on the web, you can do a lot of damage to yourself. Hengstler calls

this playing "professional Russian roulette." You have probably heard some stories, or read them in discipline reports from the BC College of Teachers.

Inappropriate e-mail to a student—the rule should be that as you are writing, imagine that your principal and your mother are standing behind you, reading what you are writing.

Hengstler points out that your footprint—and reputation—is built in two ways. One is active—the blogs, articles, photos, videos you post. The other is passive—what others put on about you. All of it is permanent because of the nature of the Internet.

The family photo book on a photo site that included a picture of him swimming in the nude created a problem for a BC principal. Candid shots of drinking or provocative behaviour can haunt you. Some people now insist that when they attend a party that no pictures be taken, fearing that something will get posted on the web that will have a negative impact on them.

On Twitter, the people following

you can see who you are following and check out what they are saying. Even though your tweets and retweets may be perfectly fine, your reputation can be affected by what others are saying or the language they are using—linked to you even though you are unaware and are not responsible for what is being said when your network is visible to others.

With all the possible negatives, one might think that Hengstler is making the case for staying off the Internet. Not at all.

Joining up may be dreadful and dangerous. It can also be rewarding, both professionally and personally, if you come to it thoughtfully and consciously. You may also want to create your online presence by building two personas, one professional and the other personal. However, you must be aware that because of the nature of the technology, these two may well be linked by someone at some point.

Hengstler argues that teachers should develop a "professional tool box" for the web. For example, Facebook now allows for the creation of "groups" within it. A group set up for a class could be a space for doing work on Facebook, without the teacher and students being "friends." Social networking tools like Ning allow the creation of intact groups, such as classes or an

enclosed space for a professional learning community. Caution and good sense should always be at the top of the tool box.

She also sees a pedagogical reason for teachers becoming immersed in online experiences. Many of our students' lives are being lived online. For some, it starts before birth as an ultrasound picture gets posted by about-to-be parents.

Leaving the online experience to children and youth without mature models and examples is both dangerous and professionally irresponsible. The young lack the perspective of the long-term impact of what they do today.

Because of the permanence of the digital record of our lives, most of what we did as children was forgotten beyond anecdotes of parents and friends—and forgiven. That is a luxury not available to today's children. Our professional responsibility is not only to own our professional online identity and reputation, but to understand enough that we can provide advice and be an online model for our students.

Julia Hengstler can be reached at Julia.Hengstler@viu.ca. Larry Kuehn can be reached at lkuehn@bcf.ca.

Larry Kuehn is director, BCTF Research and Technology Division.