

# TEACHER

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

## Taking a stand for bargaining

By John Wadge

It has been 16 years since the NDP government ended full-scope local bargaining and imposed our current structure of bargaining where virtually all substantive items are negotiated at the provincial table. What we recall as the glory days of local bargaining consisted of just three rounds over a period of only five years. It may have been short, but it was memorable.

In those three rounds, particularly the first two, most locals bargained healthy salary increases and clear class-size and composition provisions. The final round ended with back-to-work legislation in the spring of 1993, which ended strikes in Surrey and Vancouver. Those locals had to endure concluding their agreements through the arbitration process.

Effectively, local bargaining was over. A year later, the government created the British Columbia Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and brought in the *Public Education Labour Relations Act* (PELRA), which removed bargaining authority from locals and made the BCTF the bargaining agent for all public school teachers in BC.

Sixteen years later we have yet to reach a truly, freely negotiated collective agreement. The great majority of the provisions negotiated by locals remain unchanged from 1993. For much of this period,



**Bargaining is about our working conditions and more.**

grievance and arbitration were our only recourse for renewing a mutual understanding of the language.

Although there was a negotiated agreement between BCTF and BCPSEA in 2006, it took two weeks of job action in 2005 to bring BCPSEA to the table and to make any progress in bargaining. We were, nevertheless, mostly unable to make any improvements to local provisions during those negotiations.

But in recent years, particularly after the provincial negotiations in 2006, many, many locals and districts have been attempting to renew their language through the mid-contract modification process. BCPSEA has attempted to curtail this trend, but local unions and local boards have asserted their right to reach mutual agreement on local working conditions. In more than a few instances, locals and their boards have signed Letters of Understanding (LOUs) and implemented them without involving BCPSEA.

The strong desire to return to local bargaining has remained our policy and an undiminished part of our culture for 16 years.

The November 2009 Representative Assembly, adopted a comprehensive plan that seeks to reclaim our right to bargain locally. Only

four items will remain at the provincial table—salary, benefits, hours of work, and paid leave. All other items will be negotiated at local tables.

**In this next round of bargaining you can't be a bystander. You will have to be involved. You will have to stand behind your bargaining team and with them. There will be meetings, demonstrations, actions, and possibly job actions. And you will have to be there and be involved.**

Since then we have forged ahead with the plan. Locals have surveyed members and are in the process of using the results to develop objectives. In October 2010, we held a bargaining conference predicated on the return to local bargaining and to develop our provincial objectives. This was followed closely by four days of intensive bargaining training in November.

Clearly the commitment to the plan is high throughout the province.

Both local and provincial tables must open no later than March 1, 2011. This is an exciting time. We



have the opportunity to renew stale provisions in critical areas like posting and filling vacant positions and in the area of professional autonomy. We can seek local solutions to local issues arising out of unique demographic or geographic conditions.

You will be hearing more about

local and provincial bargaining over the next few months and, likely, into the spring, summer, and next fall. We expect this to be one of the most difficult rounds of bargaining we have ever faced.

BC teachers' salaries continue to fall further and further behind those of other teachers in Canada, particularly those in Alberta and Ontario.

There is a lot at stake in these upcoming negotiations and members have told us they are determined to make improvements in key areas such as salaries, benefits, preparation time, class size and composition, teacher workload, and a plethora of other local provisions that haven't been properly updated in two decades.

Since 2001, public education in British Columbia has endured year after year of layoffs, increasing class sizes, cuts to programs and services for students, school closures, and more.

In this next round of bargaining you can't be a bystander. You will have to be involved. You will have to stand behind your bargaining team and with them. There will be meetings, demonstrations, actions, and possibly job actions. And you will have to be there and be involved.

This won't be easy, but we must succeed. The alternative—deteriorating salaries and working conditions for teachers and lost learning opportunities for students—cannot continue.

*John Wadge is assistant director, BCTF Field Service Division.*

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### On the inside

Two topics have dominated the attention of readers. The articles on Wi-Fi have been roundly criticized for their lack of scientific rigour. A number of readers have also viewed the article questioning anti-Semitism in criticizing Israel as unduly extreme and biased. In response to both issues this edition includes writing that challenges the position and assumptions contained in these articles.

The lead article sets the stage for bargaining by outlining our plan and urging the involvement and commitment of all members. Twenty-first century/personalized learning continues to invite speculation and scepticism. The BC Federation of Labour convention involved a large segment of our

leadership and witnessed the confirmation of our past president Irene Lanzinger as the new Secretary Treasurer of the BCFL.

A further instalment of the teacher work-life study is included along with advice on liability issues and the importance of reputation management. Pensions are on the mind of many of our members and the first of a four-part series examines in detail the operation and principles of the Teachers' Pension Plan.

Teacher-initiated projects in areas as diverse as food, gardening, and drug awareness provide insight into the broad range of activities and interests that teachers bring to their work.

### Bargaining team



**L-R: Kathy Couch (Nelson), Susan Lambert (BCTF president), Chris Stewart (Vancouver Secondary), Jim Iker (BCTF first vice-president), Gabriel Bureau (Prince Rupert), Tara Ehrcke (Victoria), Bill MacFarlane (Revelstoke).**

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## President's message



Susan Lambert

There are 15 fluent Haida speakers left in Haida G'waii; all are over

60, one is 82 and another 90. The desperation of the teachers trying to capture and preserve the language for future generations is palpable. Language is foundational to culture. The Haida peoples' experience of the history of colonialism is replicated in nation after first nation across Canada.

When our colonial ancestors reached the shores of Haida G'waii, they found a thriving community. In a very short time, the 30,000 strong nation was reduced to 600 by a conscious policy of infection, neglect, and dispossession.

Residential schools were only one, albeit egregious, component of an articulated policy aimed at extinguishing Aboriginal language, culture, and primarily, land

entitlement. The legacy has been a devastating one. The greatest proportion of children living in poverty are Aboriginal children. Aboriginal children have higher rates of disease and disability than non-Aboriginal children. They are much more likely to end up in care or in jail. The Aboriginal youth suicide rate is six times higher than the average across Canada.

The Federation's response to our failure to address the needs of Aboriginal learners has been slow. The first policy we adopted was in 1989. Since then we have established an advisory committee, an administrative staff position, and we are currently creating a network of Aboriginal contacts in every local.

In 2006, we took a big step forward. We negotiated an Aboriginal Equity Letter of Understanding appended to our collective agreement, which encourages locals and districts to seek "special program" status from the Human Rights Commission in order to encourage the hiring and retention of Aboriginal teachers in proportion to the ratio of Aboriginal students in the system. However, only four locals have been able to sign such agreements with their boards that go beyond using targeted federal funds and actually use core funding to achieve employment equity.

It is high time that this number be increased. Our collective agreement ends on June 30, 2011. It is time to set our own goals and establish our

own timelines for Aboriginal equity in teaching in BC.

We are entering bargaining this spring for a new collective agreement. Our plan aims at establishing meaningful bargaining on a broad range of issues at local tables. This should be a topic that will attract boards to local tables. We all should be driven to improving the life chances of our Aboriginal students.

Before this collective agreement expires, I hope that most districts will step up and negotiate an agreement with locals, which commits core dollars to encouraging and nurturing Aboriginal teachers to assume their rightful place in our system and to provide positive role models for Aboriginal youth.

## Readers write

### Converted

Wow! You have out done yourselves in the last issue (Volume 23, Number 3) of *Teacher*.

Frankly, I usually find *Teacher* to be filled with left-wing, pro-NDP propaganda, that I find it difficult to relate to. As a result, I usually give *Teacher* a cursory overview and then toss it aside.

Not this month! This time, I found several articles to be thought-provoking—Is it anti-semitic to criticize Israel, is the iPad right for education, Metadata: There's more to that essay you're marking than just words, and Education, and the Empire of Illusion.

While I may not have agreed entirely with the content of each article, at least each one got me thinking. If you keep up presenting such articles as these, I may revert to reading *Teacher* through from cover to cover.

**Ernie Bate**  
Abbotsford

### 21st century Here we go again

Reading Emily O'Neill's article on the ministry's 21st century agenda, immediately uncovered old nightmares of the Year 2000 Program and the thousands of dollars in materials and teacher-hours squandered in its failed implementation.

O'Neill is right-on when she writes, "There is a disconnect between the vision that the ministry is putting forward and what is actually happening on the ground—where pervasive underfunding, fewer electives, larger classes, a lack of teacher autonomy, the constrictions of the accountability agenda, and the realities of child poverty all would seem to conspire to hamstring the ministry's

proposals."

Will the ministry abandon its so-called 'accountability' and support the inherent creativity of hands-on teaching methodology rather than teaching to provincial tests based mainly on cramming textbook material?

Of course, teachers know that hands-on class activity requires smaller class sizes. When will the ministry provide adequate funding for reducing class size and improving staffing for special needs and class composition (not to mention the forced closure of schools)?

Until these structural ministry-mandated deficits are addressed, hands-on programs will remain largely unachievable.

**Ken Abramson**  
Burnaby (retired)

### The catch in open boundaries

Allowing students to attend schools outside their catchment area causes widespread damage. Lately there has been thorough coverage of the shifting school population causing funding, capacity, and quality problems for schools.

There are additional severe consequences that appear not to have been considered. There has been little mention of the resulting car usage contributing to clogged streets, pollution, depletion of resources, and the sheer physical danger of all these cars milling around schools.

There has been even less mention of the long-term effects of children being delivered to schools like courier packages. Getting to school on time fosters self-reliance and discipline. Kids are growing up convinced our society can't function unless we drive all the time. They

don't get a chance to play with each other before school or walk home with each other. After-school activities become scheduling problems for parents and involve even more driving.

Our urban culture suffers greatly from lack of community spirit. An essential ingredient of community is activities associated with schools. You interact less with your neighbours if your children don't attend the local school. The children themselves end up not associating with the kids they go to school with because they live all over the place. Similarly, they also don't know the kids in their own neighbourhood.

What good is it if your child learns French but lacks self-reliance and inherits a degraded community and environment? To what extent should kids be prepared for a global economy at the expense of local alienation?

Inadvertently or deliberately, the overall consequence is to further a class society.

It is simply not right to allow a situation where some schools thrive at the expense of others. For something associated with learning institutions, dropping catchment-area restrictions seems remarkably unwise. They should be reinstated. We're told parents find ways to evade catchment area boundaries. Well, we have rules for the common good, and there are always measures to deal with those who put counter-productive and selfish interests first.

**Steve Grant**  
Vancouver

### Buy sunscreen

Regarding "Living safely with electromagnetic radiation" (*Teacher*, Nov./Dec. 2010):

Despite several complaints about the lack of adherence to good

science and citations in the September issue of *Teacher*, the newsmagazine has once again blundered and allowed an anti-science journalist (Jim Waugh) with an agenda to publish Living safely with electromagnetic radiation, effectively allowing him a venue to sell his book (by the same title) and corresponding misinformation. No one is asking for a scientific dissertation, but I am disheartened at the lack of editorial prudence in this regard. The author failed to describe, in what would amount to nothing less than 100 words, how exactly non-ionizing radiation affects our bodies. Fear is at the heart of the article, not any useful, science-based information. All I received from this is how the author thinks the government ignores "evidence" by "big money" and how we should all be stricken with deathly fear. Does his website contain any more useful information? No. More baseless fear. Still worried about radiation after this article? Save some money and buy sunscreen. Best bang for your buck.

**Marian Minar**  
Port Hardy

### Article welcomed

As someone who has faced some criticism myself for some of the issues and opinions I have presented personally, or in BCTF publications, I want to tell you how much I appreciate your courageous decision to publish the recent article by Bob Rosen on the topic of anti-semitism.

While I know that many feel strongly (with a diversity of opinions) on this topic, I also know that as teachers we encourage people to use their words, and participate in discussion. *Teacher* is precisely a place where this exchange can and does take place. Our representative bodies have discussed many controversial topics in the years I have

been a teacher, and regardless of my point of view on any particular issue, I have been proud that we have consistently stood for open discussion. In 2010, there are very few organizations that dare to take the time and energy required to do this.

The topic of Rosen's article is one where many people (including a number of MPs ironically) are encouraging all Canadians to essentially be quiet, and "mind our own affairs." Well the issue of fair and equal treatment for all, and the use of discussion over violence will always be our business as teachers.

I look forward to a healthy exchange of opinions on many of the important topics of public interest (especially those of peace and social justice) in the pages of *Teacher* in the months and years to come. This will, however, not happen if the average teacher can be brow beaten into silence and the people who publish can be made to run and hide.

By printing this letter, you did not take a point of view for the Federation. You invited debate and discussion.

Thank you for having the courage to do your job on behalf of all teachers. I am yet again proud to be a member of the BCTF.

**Bill Hood**  
Vancouver

### A multifaceted situation

It was with great concern and dismay that we read Bob Rosen's "Is it Anti-Semitic to Criticize Israel?" in the Nov./Dec. 2010 edition of *Teacher*. His article, which supports the idea of implementing 'a curriculum unit that allows a fair and comprehensive all-sided discussion of the Israel/Palestine issue' then goes on to attack Israel, Jews, and anyone who supports them.

This is deeply worrying to us as

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By now you have probably seen the updated version of our booklet about BC education funding. Do you want to make a

presentation to your PAC? An electronic version of this booklet is available at [bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca).

# Irene Lanzinger elected at BCFed 54th Annual Convention

By Glen Hansman

The BC Federation of Labour held its 54th Annual Convention November 28 to December 3, 2010, at the Vancouver Convention Centre. More than a thousand delegates from all parts of the province and all sectors of the economy attended this year's convention, including teachers from most BCTF locals. The BC Federation of Labour Convention is an excellent opportunity for teachers to share information about teaching and learning conditions in BC public schools, an opportunity to learn from the

educators that the BCTF would choose to print such an openly biased article, with no evidence or sources to back up his claims. Rosen appears to use the cover of developing new curriculum as a platform to present personal views, rife with factual errors, on this sensitive and multifaceted situation. The rest of his article has nothing to do with education in Canada or the Middle East. Is *Teacher* news magazine not supposed to be a forum to discuss educational issues?

Let us please stick to what our area of expertise is supposed to be—children, education and British Columbia's public school system. BCTF members can take political stances on their own time and with their own resources.

**Ginaya Peters, Tracy Adno, Joanne Cox, Anita J Goddard, Charlene Goldstein, Lori Grad, Shelley Green, Yvonne Green, Kathryn Krausz, Judy Rother, Myrna Shefrin, Erica Trister, Vancouver, Jeanna Gavsie, Richmond**

## Retired...or not

In the Nov./Dec. *Teacher*, we incorrectly reported that Dina Willis, Surrey, had retired and we missed reporting recent retirees Barbara Stepney, Vancouver and Elizabeth Randall, Mackenzie.

## New teachers' and student teachers' conference

**February 25–26, 2011  
Radisson Hotel  
Richmond**

A BCTF professional development opportunity designed specifically for new teachers—those in their first five years of teaching, and for student teachers.

For more information, go to [bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2011.aspx](http://bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2011.aspx)

## Notice of AGM 2011

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2011 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

The 95th Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation will be held at the Victoria Conference Centre, Victoria, BC, beginning on Saturday, March 19, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. and continuing to Tuesday, March 22, 2011.

worklife experiences of other workers, and to build solidarity between unions around a common cause.

Particularly exciting for teacher delegates at this year's convention, however, were the elections.

Jim Sinclair was re-elected to a two-year term as president of the BC Federation of Labour, having held the post since 1999. Also elected was BCTF past president Irene Lanzinger to a two-year term as secretary-treasurer of the BCFed. Sinclair and Lanzinger ran a joint campaign, promising shared leadership and a team approach to building unity between both public and private-sector unions. Their priorities include: an increase of the minimum wage to \$10 per hour, successful collective bargaining, strengthened coalitions, increasing participation of young people in the labour movement, campaigning for sustainability in the resource sector, advocacy for job creation, ongoing leadership in the struggle for equity and social justice, and more.

"I look forward to working with Irene Lanzinger and the federation's affiliated unions on behalf of working people in our province," says Sinclair. "The fight for a fair minimum wage, training, good jobs

for our young people, workplace safety, and respect for all workers will remain our focus in the months ahead."

"I'm excited about the opportunity to continue the great work of the federation and working to build the kind of province we all want," says Lanzinger.

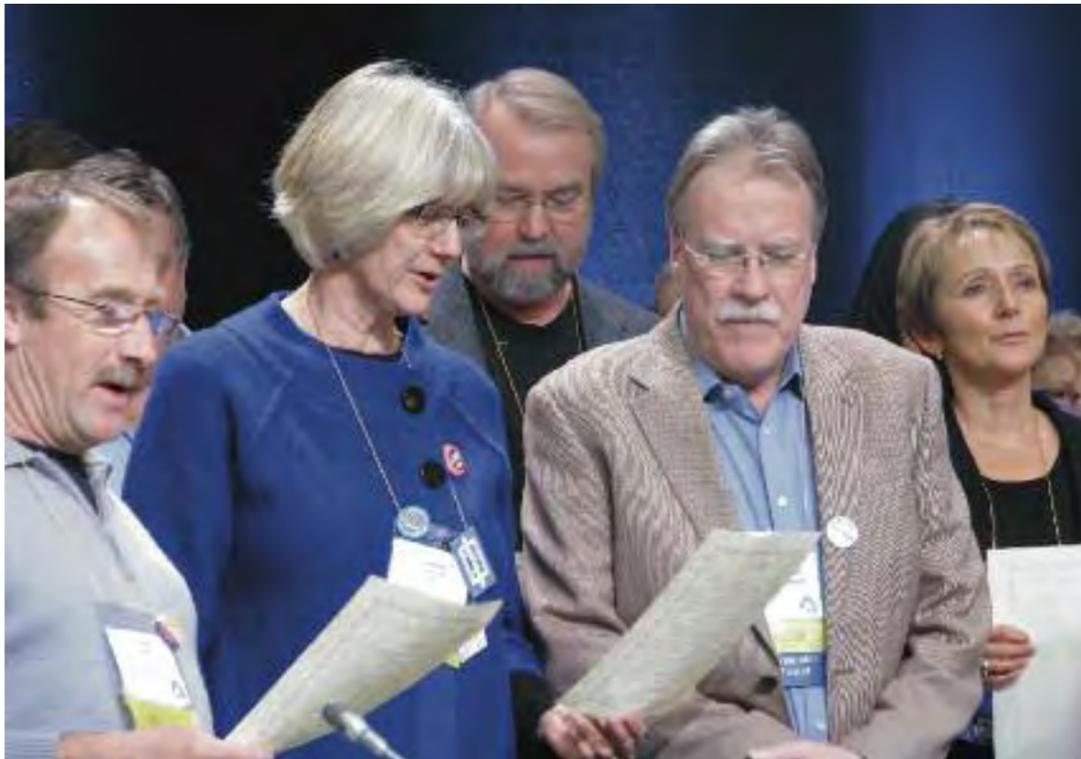
Outgoing federation Secretary-Treasurer Angela Schira, became

the first recipient of the Joy Langan Award. The award is in recognition of Schira's long contribution to the labour movement in British Columbia.

At the convention, the decision was also made to approve the BCFed Executive Council's proposal to continue to hold the five-day constitutional conventions every two years, and to replace the three-

day policy conventions, usually held in the years between constitutional conventions, with regional conferences around the province in order to make the work of the BCFed accessible to workers in different corners of BC.

*Glen Hansman is a Vancouver teacher, and 2nd vice president of the BCTF.*



**Above: Irene Lanzinger was elected to a two-year term as secretary-treasurer of the BC Federation of Labour and Jim Sinclair was re-elected as president for a two-year term.**

**Below: BCTF delegates from most locals in the province attended the BC Federation of Labour's 54th Annual Convention, November 28 to December 3, 2010, in Vancouver.**



## Wi-Fi statement

The BCTF Information Services Department has conducted a detailed review of the available research and opinion on the affects of Wi-Fi and come to the following position.

The BCTF recognizes that this controversial topic has been garnering a lot of attention in the media over the past several months. Recently, the Canadian House of Commons' Standing Committee on Health held a number of hearings to investigate the potential health effects of radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation. The report that came out of this investigation provides a number of recommendations to the Government of Canada, and to Health Canada in particular. The recommendations include funding for long-term studies, tracking and responding to reports of adverse health reactions, and promoting the safe use of wireless technologies.

"An examination of the potential health impacts of radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation"

[www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=4834477&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=40&Ses=3](http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=4834477&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=40&Ses=3)

While there is an on-going debate regarding the safety of wireless technologies, the research to date is inconclusive. Based on the existing research, we cannot definitively state that Wi-Fi is harmful, nor can we say with assurance that it is entirely harmless. In spite of the conflicting evidence, we do take the concerns surrounding this issue seriously, and we will continue to monitor research on this topic as it becomes available.

– BCTF Information Services



## Looking back

### 70 years ago

It is all very well to warn parents that report card ratings are made only in relation to their children's ability. But, more often than not, parents are in no position to evaluate accurately this ability. One reason is that the parent has little opportunity of seeing how his child measures up to other children of his own age. Johnny may seem bright and teachable to a fond mother at home. To his teacher at school he may be of only average or even below average ability. Another reason is that the duller the parent himself is, the more unlikely he is to realize that his offspring is a chip off the old block and to make allowances for him accordingly.

– January 1941, *The BC Teacher*

### 50 years ago

Measurement is an area of frequent difficulty. Many children find it difficult to remember the number of ounces in a pound, quarts in a gallon, quarts in a peck, pecks in a bushel, inches in a yard, feet in a rod, rods in a mile, square

feet in a square yard, etc. because the measures are meaningless to them. How often are groceries and other dry goods purchased by the quart or the peck? When is distance measured in rods?

– February 1961, *The BC Teacher*

### 30 years ago

After years of feeling that our teaching was effective and rewarding, we were finding that changing circumstances were making our efforts ineffective. Moreover, we could not see that those with "new" approaches (some of which we had tried and discarded a decade or more earlier) were accomplishing any more than we were. We were "burning out" because we were "burned up" over the practices associated with "schools without failure"—schools that made great demands on the teachers but demanded little of the pupils. Teachers with a sense of traditional cultural values have been burning out because they see these values ignored, denigrated, or trampled on, in the names of fairness, kindness, freedom, and human dignity.

Schools without failure do not promote the qualities of responsibility, self-support, and application to distasteful activity that allow a person to achieve real success..

– Jan./Feb. 1981, *The BC Teacher*

### 10 years ago

There are many pure, net pluses with small numbers in a primary classroom. Kindergarten and Grades 1, 2, and 3 are critical years in child development. Indeed, what years are not? Smaller classes promote learning and allow more time for positive, caring interaction. However, it doesn't stop with eight-year-olds. Primary teachers are aware that 22 students in their Grade 3 classes are not so well accommodated in a Grade 4 class of 30 or more. Larger classes require more support. They can change the whole climate of the school.

– Jan./Feb. 2001, *Teacher* news magazine

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

# Should Wi-Fi be used in classrooms?

## A different perspective



By Kevin Amboe

The article published in the *Teacher* newsmagazine titled "Should Wi-Fi be used in classrooms?" (October 2010) was thought provoking; however, it depicts unfounded concern without scientific support. The first line states that "no studies have been done on Wi-Fi" and then proceeds to share the dangers identified in these non-existent studies.

The claim is made that Wi-Fi has the same type of radiation that cell phones emit. Wi-Fi is quite different as it operates at a much lower power level over a much shorter range. Sir William Stewart, former chair of the Health Protection Agency (HPA) (quoted to support a fear mentality by the Lynn Quiring article) also stated, "high-bandwidth wi-fi devices are less likely to be head-mounted and there really is no issue here." [1] The quotes were intentionally taken out of context and misled the reader.

The brain-blood barrier and potential risks to it sounds pretty scary. My understanding of cellular functioning does not follow the alleged concerns. Bringing up the blood-brain barrier is stated as

hypothetical, yet it is written as if it were fact. There is again no reference to the research or scientific background leading to these conclusions. An example of what could happen implies that it is actually happening.

***In my readings from the World Health Organization (WHO) and National Protection Agency (NPA), there is some evidence of dangers from excessive cell phone use; however, it is clearly stated that cell phone risks are much higher than the emissions from Wi-Fi.***

I immediately want to go to the source and determine if the results are scientific. Had references been provided, I would ask the following questions of the recent study:

- how many students were involved?
- how much exposure was measured?
- what type or research was conducted: correlation or causal?
- how large was the effect size?

- how old is the study?
- is there newer research?
- are the researchers experts in this field?

h. has this been replicated?  
All are questions I can't ask because the original study is not referenced or even quoted.

I did look up Sir William Stewart to find that Stewart was involved in a report from the Independent Experts Group on Mobile Phones (IEGMP) in 2000, identifying concerns. He did call for "further studies," however, that call is taken out of context. In 2009, after leaving his post as the chair of the HPA, the following statement was made.

"On the basis of the studies carried out in-house, the HPA sees no reason why Wi-Fi should not continue to be used in schools. However, with any new technology it is a sensible precautionary approach, as happened with mobile phones, to keep the situation under on-going review so that parents and others can have as much reassurance as possible. That is why Sir William Stewart, formerly the chair[man] of the HPA, stated that it would be timely to carry out further studies as this new technology is rolled out.

Finally, the same Sir William Stewart article used to maintain fear of Wi-Fi stated, "The educational benefits from using laptops and having access to information far outweigh any unproven fears over the safety of Wi-Fi. I am more concerned about the heat laptops generate and the impact that could [have] on sensitive parts of the body." I would not consider Sir William Stewart as opposing Wi-Fi use in schools, as the reader is led to believe.

In my readings from the World Health Organization (WHO) and National Protection Agency (NPA), there is some evidence of dangers from excessive cell phone use; however, it is clearly stated that cell phone risks are much higher than the emissions from Wi-Fi.

1. It is generally understood that the closer you are to a dangerous emission, the more dangerous it is.

Holding a cell phone to your head puts the emissions beside the brain. Wireless devices in classrooms are not held to one's head.

2. From the WHO website, "In fact, due to their lower frequency, at similar RF exposure levels, the body absorbs up to five times more of the signal from FM radio and television than from base stations. This is because the frequencies used in FM radio (around 100 MHz) and in TV broadcasting (around 300 to 400 MHz) are lower than those employed in mobile telephony (900 MHz and 1800 MHz) and because a person's height makes the body an efficient receiving antenna. Further, radio and television broadcast stations have been in operation for the past 50 or more years without any adverse health consequence being established."

3. The HPA has said that sitting in a Wi-Fi hotspot for a year results in receiving the same dose of radio waves as making a 20-minute mobile phone call.

***Wi-Fi may have risks that have not yet been identified; however, based on my readings there have been at least 50 years of exposure to various forms of electro magnetic radiation (EMR) without scientific evidence to warrant cessation of its use.***

### Looking at Wi-Fi from an educators' perspective

We always keep the safety of our students at the forefront, however, we balance that with educational benefits. Students can break their bones while physically active in gymnastics. We identify the benefits outweigh the potential concerns. We also ensure that we are as safe as possible. Wi-Fi may have risks that have not yet been identified; however, based on my readings there have been at least 50 years of exposure to various forms of electro magnetic radiation (EMR) without scientific evidence to warrant cessation of its use.

Our schools are hubs of the community. In some districts,

schools provide Internet service to the surrounding community either in their homes or with open access to come in and use the school facility. Removing a potential risk without scientific evidence that will have direct negative consequences to students, teachers, schools, and communities is not appropriate.

The housing community surrounding the school likely has a thick layer of wireless signals in addition to other sources of EMR, including FM radio signals. If there was any danger from Wi-Fi, it would be compounded with the excessive signal coverage in homes. If there was danger, it would be greater from sleeping eight hours with multiple overlapping signals than a properly managed and powered system the school would be using. If Wi-Fi is a health risk that should be taken seriously, then it should be removed from cafes, your community, your home, and your schools.

We should be vigilant of known safety risks and continue to look for bodies of research that identify potential risks as well as how to mitigate the risks. We can follow due diligence to ensure safe learning environments. Removing a valuable education tool from schools is unfounded. I am making an informed decision based on a lack of any evidence of risk to students or staff that I will continue to use Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi is a tool to support student learning and teachers. If evidence is eventually shown in the scientific community, that there is a causal link between Wi-Fi in schools and health risks, then I will act seriously to identify alternatives.

We can use the learning tools and opportunities provided through Wi-Fi in our schools. Wi-Fi is not a known safety risk. Since I can't prove there is no effect, I will continue to believe there is no effect.

Kevin Amboe is elementary IML coordinator, Surrey.

References available on request.

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# Of science and cell phones

By Greg Payne

For the past few years there has been growing media attention given to the issue of Wi-Fi (wireless internet) and cell phone use and potential links to adverse health effects in humans. These technologies, like radio and television, rely on radio waves to send information. Aside from stories in the news, our very own *Teacher* featured a two-page article describing these alleged links in its September and October issues ("Should Wi-Fi be used in classrooms?" by Lynn Quiring). It goes without saying that, if the claims made in this article are true, we will soon be facing a modern health crisis that will make all previous ones pale in comparison. However, there are many important and compelling reasons to dismiss Quiring's extraordinary claims, not the least of which is what the related body of science has to say about this topic. Since there will always be a spectrum of ideas competing for our attention, some of them highly important and requiring our consideration, and others frivolous and distracting, science literacy is more important today than at any time in our history. An understanding of how science works, along with a healthy dose of skepticism, can improve everyone's ability to distinguish fact from fiction.

## How science works

In science, being open to the possibility of being wrong is a necessary virtue because if you don't find your own mistakes you can be guaranteed that others eventually will, and take great glee in doing so. In order to avoid the biases that allow us to so easily make mistakes, scientists have developed well-established methods that help to reduce errors in research. Where ever possible they ensure their experiments have a control group, are blind/double-blind, have randomly selected subject groups, and use large numbers of subjects. These and other methods help to ensure that research findings are both real and valid.

To ensure important methods are followed, scientific studies undergo an extensive, critical peer-review process. The ones with obvious flaws are denied publication in

***In order to avoid the biases that allow us to so easily make mistakes, scientists have developed well-established methods that help to reduce errors.***

respected journals. Getting published, however, doesn't necessarily mean that a scientist has actually yet discovered anything; mistakes may still remain, soon to be discovered by thousands of scientific peers carefully scrutinizing the latest journals. Additionally, scientists who truly understand, respect and follow the methods of science know that a single study, even one with no apparent flaws in it, isn't worth much by itself. This is because one of the greatest hallmarks of sound science is repeatability. The results of a study have to be independently replicated before an idea can even begin to become accepted. If further experiments in related fields also support the results, acceptance of an idea gains even more strength. This is a powerful point to keep in mind the next time someone tries to sway your views on a topic using a single study rather than addressing the overall scientific consensus.

When it comes to determining the truth behind any extraordinary claim, perhaps no question is more

important than, "What do you want to believe?" Our hopes, desires and wishes are powerful forces that constantly and unconsciously prejudice both our thoughts and actions. Perhaps knowledge of this fact led physicist Richard Feynman to state, "Science is a way of trying not to fool yourself. The first principle is that you must not fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool." Unfortunately, this wisdom is lost upon some scientists, and questionable or inadequate methodology allows wishful thinking to

***These organizations, which together have studied more than 25,000 research papers over the last 30 years, tell us there is no reason to believe radio waves (from cell phones, Wi-Fi, base stations, TV, radio, etc.) cause any adverse health effects at the levels that the public is regularly exposed to.***

bias their work, casting considerable doubt on the validity of their research. This characterizes much of the work done by a relatively small group of researchers who confidently and vocally assert in the media that radio waves from cell phones and Wi-Fi Internet lead to health problems.

One glaring example of such work is the "Bio-Initiative Report" (BIR). According to the scientists at EMF & Health, the work in the BIR suffers from significant problems, including: a complete omission of research representing the scientific consensus, studies with poor methodology, inadequate peer-review, studies that have not been replicated, and studies that have been refuted. Unbelievably, one of the organizers, authoring seven of the BIR's 17 chapters, has no science credentials or training whatsoever, and she runs a highly lucrative "EMF protection" business (EMF stands for electromagnetic frequency). Many alarmists, Quiring included, have ties to "EMF Protection" businesses. These businesses charge hundreds to thousands of dollars for unnecessary products and consultations designed to reduce harmless waves—the Emperor's clothes have never been so threadbare. Even more preposterous, the BIR includes studies guilty of fraud, science's cardinal sin. How anyone could rely on such a document is difficult to imagine, and yet the BIR is the primary reference used by Quiring in writing his article for *Teacher*. A thorough indictment of the BIR can be found at EMF & Health, a website created by a group of respected mainstream scientists dedicated to evidenced-based science that follows proper scientific methods.

## The scientific consensus

The scientific consensus is what most people rely on most of the time; we agree that the planets orbit the sun, germs cause infection, and that cells are the basic unit of life. We even accept that all matter is made up of atoms, though no one has ever observed atoms directly. So why do we accept these ideas? Not because scientists tell us to, and certainly not because scientists are smart people with impressive degrees from respected universities. All of our knowledge, without exception, is accepted only to the degree with which it is supported by scientific evidence. This is why your first attempt to research any topic should begin with respected scientific organizations that understand science and closely follow its methods. Health Canada and the

World Health Organization are two such organizations; both are well-positioned to provide the most accurate information regarding radio waves and health. These organizations, which together have studied more than 25,000 research papers over the last 30 years, tell us there is no reason to believe radio waves (from cell phones, Wi-Fi, base stations, TV, radio, etc.) cause any adverse health effects at the levels that the public is regularly exposed to. Also, there is no convincing evidence to suggest that exposure guidelines need to be further lowered. Other major science-based organizations and regulatory bodies are in agreement on this, including the Center for Disease Control, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer. The scientific community acknowledges that there are unanswered questions, intriguing questions, and questions that require further study in this field, but the present consensus at the moment, based on considerable evidence, is a reassuring one.

## Science as a candle in the dark

In a society as complex, large and technologically dependent as ours, reality matters. To give just one example, it is only a question of time before our earth is hit by an asteroid larger than the one that wiped out the dinosaurs. Somewhere in our solar system or beyond, a giant rock with our name on it speeds silently through space—it's not a question of if, but when. Assuming we're still here when it arrives, there's little doubt that, without science, our species will perish in this event. The same could be said about any number of other crises that will most certainly face our descendants. Science, however, could change all that. In just 400 years, science has evolved to a point where it provides us with a fighting chance of locating and redirecting such asteroids. But will it? Do we understand the value of science enough? Will we more fully embrace it and allow it to flourish? Carl Sagan, the greatest advocate for science the world has ever

known, was uncertain if society as a whole—our politicians, organizations, leaders, citizens and media—would possess the scientific wisdom required to muster such necessary feats. In his final book, *The Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, Sagan wrote,

"I worry that pseudo-science and superstition will seem year by year more tempting, the siren song of unreason more sonorous and attractive. Where have we heard it before? Whenever our ethnic and national prejudices are aroused, in times of scarcity, during challenges to national self-esteem or nerve, when we agonize about our diminished cosmic place and purpose, or when fanaticism is bubbling up around us—then, habits of thought familiar from the ages past reach for the controls. The candle flame gutters. Its little pool of light trembles. Darkness gathers. The demons begin to stir."

All educators, regardless of scientific training, have a role to play in protecting that candle. We can work collectively to create scientifically literate citizens—students who enjoy reading, work comfortably with numbers, learn critical thinking, develop a healthy skepticism, and understand the methods of science. Such students will ensure the flame survives and continues to illuminate genuine concern from imaginary folly. And, of course, they'll be far less likely to make stuff up about the candle's light and heat waves.

*Greg Payne teaches at Princess Margaret Secondary School, Surrey.*

References available on request.

***We can work collectively to create scientifically literate citizens—students who enjoy reading, work comfortably with numbers, learn critical thinking, develop a healthy skepticism, and understand the methods of science.***



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*Learning transforms.*

## Opinion

By Glenn Bullard

In the Nov./Dec. issue of *Teacher*, Bob Rosen accuses Israel of apartheid policies and ethnic cleansing, supports efforts to break Israel's weapons blockade of Hamas-controlled Gaza, supports campaigns to boycott Israel and all things Israeli, recommends dissolution of the state of Israel, and peremptorily dismisses concerns that his statements should offend the Jewish people: "Conflating criticisms of the actions of the state of Israel with attacks on Jewish people in general is utterly false." ("Is it Anti-Semitic to criticize Israel?")

As justification for this diatribe, he claims that "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." Presumably, his one-sided harangue reflects his notion of an appropriate curriculum unit.

However, as we shall see, he has rewrote an RA resolution, and obscured its plain sense meaning. Here is the actual resolution:

*That the BCTF support the development of learning resources for Social Justice 12 that will provide teachers with a balanced approach to teaching about peace and justice in the relationship between Israel and Palestine.* (Decisions of 2010 Spring RA, May 28–29, 2010).

What did this resolution accomplish? What are its implications for teaching?

The BCTF, of course, has no authority to tell teachers how to achieve the intended learning outcomes for Social Justice 12 or any other course. This is a good thing, since we could hardly object to employers infringing on our professional autonomy if our union was too! Also, the Social Justice 12 curriculum never even mentions

Israel and Palestine, so SJ 12 teachers are not required to discuss this conflict with their students.

However, because previous BCTF debates over anti-Israel resolutions have been so fractious, divisive, and embarrassing, it is appropriate that the RA offer guidance on the matter, without taking sides. To that end, what the RA accomplished in May 2010 was to set a standard that teachers can use to judge the merit of learning resources, and guide them in the development of their own. Let's see how the resolution sets this standard.

First, the resolution addresses "the relationship between Israel and Palestine," that is, between two sovereign states. This approach is firmly rooted in previous attempts to find peace between Arabs and Jews in the region, going back to the *Peel Commission* of 1936–37 and the *United Nations Partition Plan* of 1947, which envisioned an Arab state and a Jewish state living side-by-side in peace. There is no hint here of a so-called "one-state solution," which means nothing more than the dissolution of the state of Israel.

Second, the resolution promotes "peace and justice" for both parties, not boycotts or rocket and mortar attacks.

Social Justice 12 defines a culture of peace as "a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour, and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation." It is too late to prevent the Arab-Israeli conflict, and problematic to identify its root causes, but we can certainly agree to reject violence in favour of dialogue and negotiation.

Peace and justice for Israel and Palestine will not be attained through boycotts and blockade-breaking. Boycott is the opposite of dialogue and negotiation, and ending Israel's blockade of Gaza today would simply mean more weapons for Hamas to use against

# Getting it right on Israel and Palestine



Israel. To imagine what this would look like, search "Gaza rockets mortars 2010" on the Internet.

In contrast, instead of boycotting or attacking each other, the Palestinian Authority and Israel have been co-operating for the past year to suppress terrorism in the West Bank, with the result that the Palestinian economy is growing rapidly. For illustration, see "From

***We teachers, being human and living in the real world, may develop our own strongly held views on controversial topics, but our job is to teach students not what to think, but how to think, which includes the ability "to acknowledge and challenge [one's] own beliefs and biases." That is why we must avoid forcing our own political views on our students. If we cannot model a balanced approach to conflict resolution, how will our students ever learn it for themselves?***

intifada hub to model Palestinian city: How Jenin turned around" by Joshua Mitnick (August 5, 2010).

When Palestinians and Israelis themselves get it right, we should celebrate their success, and promote it as the path to peace.

Third, the resolution insists on a "balanced approach," not a one-sided criticism of one party or the other. This is rooted in the Social Justice 12 prescribed learning outcome for effective research skills, which insists that students access a range of viewpoints.

Students who have fully met the Prescribed Learning Outcome are able to access a range of information sources on selected topics, including sources... representing a range of perspectives ... [and are able

to] explain the importance of accessing and considering a range of information sources (e.g., to acknowledge and challenge [their] own beliefs and biases, to represent a range of viewpoints)" (A2).

Partisans of any political cause usually prefer one-sided presentations of events that reflect their own deeply entrenched views. In fact, partisans will typically interpret balanced and neutral news coverage of events as hostile to their own side in a conflict. This "hostile media effect" was first described by researchers (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985) looking at Israeli and Palestinian perceptions of television news coverage.

We teachers, being human and living in the real world, may develop our own strongly held views on controversial topics, but our job is to teach students not what to think, but how to think, which includes the ability "to acknowledge and challenge [one's] own beliefs and biases." That is why we must avoid forcing our own political views on our students. If we cannot model a balanced approach to conflict resolution, how will our students ever learn it for

themselves?

To sum up, the Representative Assembly set a clear and reasonable standard for learning resources, which is completely at odds with Rosen's interpretation: Learning resources concerning Israel and Palestine should provide a balanced approach, promote peace and justice for both parties, and honour the legitimate national aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Teachers will find it difficult to find up-to-date, ready-made resources that meet this high standard. Most Internet websites are too one-sided to serve as starting points for discussion, although they may serve as objects for critical media studies by well-informed students. A few websites try to provide a single, ostensibly neutral and inoffensive narrative, but the hostile media effect guarantees that they will offend one side or the other. This is why, incidentally, it is problematic for teachers (or the BCTF) to attempt creating their own narrative of events.

There is, however, one website that fits the bill precisely, by aiming for balance, not neutrality. Since November 2001, *Bitter Lemons: Palestinian-Israeli Crossfire* has produced a weekly edition of thoughtful, challenging, fact-based articles from both sides of the conflict, "...to contribute to mutual understanding through the open exchange of ideas." [Bitterlemons.org](http://Bitterlemons.org) also offers an e-mail subscription service for teachers and students to stay up-to-date with intelligent views on current events.

The RA got it right in May 2010, when they set the ethical standard for teachers to meet when choosing learning resources on Israel and Palestine for Social Justice 12. Now let's move on, and leave it to teachers to demonstrate that balanced approach.

*Glenn Bullard is social justice representative for the New Westminster Teachers' Union.*

# Thank-you Mr. Dawes

By Phyllis Ferguson

Teachers are often thanked at the end of a long career with mention made of the thousands of students they influenced in 30 or more years of service. However, some teachers have a positive and life-long impact in a much shorter period of time.

I believe Jack Dawes taught for only three years, but I was fortunate enough to have him as my teacher for two of those.

Originally from Lynn Lake in northern Manitoba, he was assigned to the small town of Miniota at the upper edge of the south-west corner of the province. We were told that Miniota meant "good water" and it was a good place as well, a place of large families and community spirit. In 1961, it consisted of about 250 people living on the edge of the Assiniboine River Valley.

In our classroom, in straight rows of desks bolted to the floor, were packed 40 or more eight-, nine-, and ten-year-olds who did not yet know that we were "baby boomers." Since I had spent my Grade 3 year in the hamlet of Lena, further south with 17 of us in a one-room school, 40 seemed a daunting number to me; how did it look from the viewpoint of the energetic young man barely in his 20s standing at the front? Although all adults seem so tall to children, even we could see that Mr. Dawes was short as he

was almost eye level to us. Perhaps that, plus his youth, is why he still retained some sense of our perspective.

He seemed to enjoy life and so did we. To the basic curriculum he added such unheard of novelties such as "multiplication bingo" on a Friday afternoon. Unlike my previous teachers who insisted that when I finished my work early, I must sit quietly with my hands folded on my desk, he permitted me to read. We left the classroom to go on nature-study hikes down into the valley. Once, he even decided that we should have a pet show. Incredible excitement to us and incredible courage (or naivety) on his part. We were not urban children with tiny pets in neat cages. Danny brought an elderly draft horse; Madeleine had found a fledgling owl. Many cats plus kittens were shocked to find themselves ousted from the barn for a trip to town to the delight of the various canines, who had never been on leashes before, so ignored or entangled the young owners at the other end. In my memory my beloved black-and-tan dog, Tinker, looked incredibly handsome in her yellow crepe paper ruff and clown hat, but I don't recall if she won the costume class over my friend Carol's fat collie who had only tolerated a piece of gauze taped to her flank. Carol wore a nurse's cap on her head as she explained repeatedly that Lassie was dressed

as a patient. By some miracle no child or animal needed true medical attention by the end of that memorable day.

Mr. Dawes did not seem to view education or his responsibility to us as something that ended at the four o'clock bell. Mind you, perhaps the fact that he boarded in a home at the end of our street meant that he didn't really have much choice! When our dear friend, Margaret Anne, received a stamp pad and rubber letters as a gift, Carol and I joined her scheme to create a newspaper. It took only one after-school session to realize that this was an inky way to produce very little. I don't remember how Mr. Dawes became involved, but somehow he agreed to provide the carbon paper and run off copies for us on the school's Gestetner machine. Muggins, Kettle, and I (then nick-named "Sid") produced seven or eight issues and sold the copies for a nickel each. We actually overheard and broke the news of the town's new fire engine before it was

announced in the local weekly and, to my pride, my article about our CGIT and Explorer party was reproduced exactly as written in that same paper. The whole experience was tremendously exhilarating and confidence building.

I am not sure if we ever thanked Mr. Dawes for his "technical assistance." Only when I was in my 20s myself, with a busy work and social life, did I look back and realize that he must have had other things, like sleep on his mind on a Saturday morning. The one time he didn't meet us at the school as scheduled, being very conscious of press deadlines, we chirpily went around and knocked on his door until he woke up. He looked quite groggy and wasn't particularly chatty but he did come to crank out the copies

for us without complaint (although perhaps it was best that he kept his thoughts to himself!)

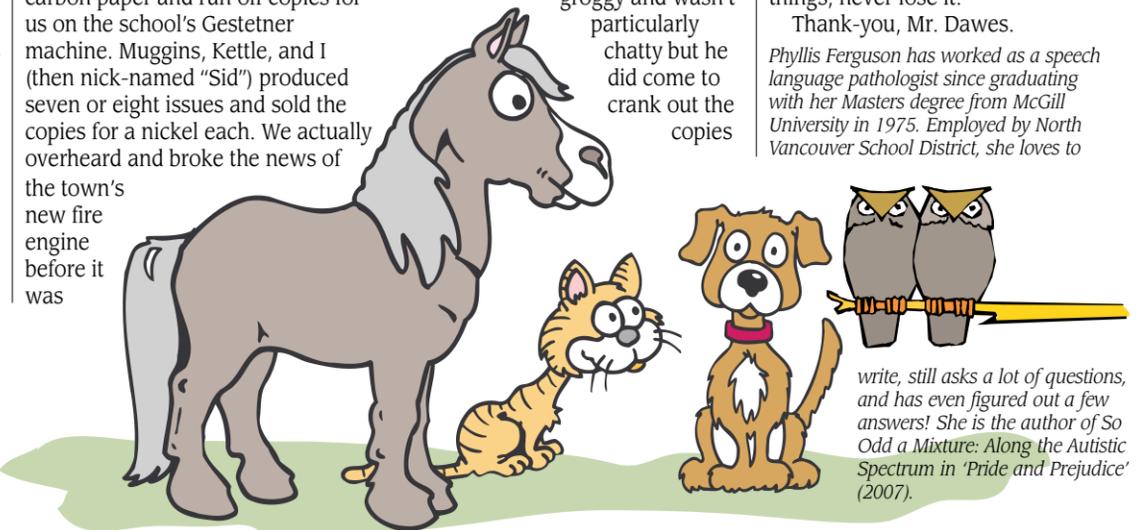
My family moved and so did he. I have a battered bright blue autograph book which, besides all the joking roses-and-violets rhymes, which passed for wit in our age group, contains one page with words from him. I know them by heart. These words encapsulated the positive recognition and unconditional acceptance of me as a person that made my two years in his classroom the happiest of my childhood. They gave me a core of strength which has helped me in endeavours both personal and professional throughout my life.

He wrote: "You have a great gift in that you can wonder at many things; never lose it."

Thank-you, Mr. Dawes.

*Phyllis Ferguson has worked as a speech language pathologist since graduating with her Masters degree from McGill University in 1975. Employed by North Vancouver School District, she loves to*

*write, still asks a lot of questions, and has even figured out a few answers! She is the author of So Odd a Mixture: Along the Autistic Spectrum in 'Pride and Prejudice' (2007).*



# Advantage program update

By Patti McLaughlin

In the last edition of the *Teacher*, I reported that as of January 13, 2011, BCAA would cease its partnership with the BCTF Advantage Program. The BCAA cited its desire to return to its roots—individual member services.

As a result, we have sought out a new partner, and have found an excellent fit—Canadian Direct Insurance—who will be able to step in and provide all of the services formerly provided by BCAA, and more.

Canadian Direct Insurance will assume their responsibilities as our provider for home, auto, and travel insurance on January 14. They are a western Canadian insurance company, offering their services in BC and Alberta since 1996. They are a wholly owned subsidiary of

Canadian Western Bank. Canadian Direct was the first BC-based insurance company to sell directly to customers by telephone.

Because of Canadian Direct's customized quoting system, and because there are no fee-charging agents, they are able to offer a multitude of discounts and coverages on their auto and home insurance policies. In addition, they now offer a variety of recreational vehicle insurance products.

Canadian Direct will tailor your policy to your needs and preferences at competitive rates. Home and auto insurance can be purchased over the telephone. Their claims line is open 24 hours a day.

The BCTF will be working with Canadian Direct on an on-going basis, in order that their products can best suit the needs of teachers. Their products, like all Advantage

Program offerings, are available to all BCTF members, and retired BCTF members.

When you're ready, call Canadian Direct Insurance at 604-699-3838, or 1-888-225-5234 for a quote on your home or auto insurance. Please have your current insurance documents handy to help save time.

And, watch the *Teacher* news-magazine and the Advantage Program website for future promotions by Canadian Direct Insurance.

Patti McLaughlin is assistant director, BCTF Income Security Division, and Advantage Program administrator.



# Teacher priorities for improving learning and working conditions

By Margaret White and Charlie Naylor

In the previous issue of *Teacher*, BCTF Research published an article sharing the results of what we learned from the "Worklife of BC teachers: 2009" survey about sources of stress and job satisfaction for teachers. The survey showed that the most significant stressors for teachers are linked to level of support for students, the unmet needs of students, and class composition. Teachers told us that it is the combination of these stressors in the classroom that creates the most severe consequences.

**The study also revealed that one in five teachers are considering leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement. Stress, burnout, and the need for greater work-life balance are some of the reasons teachers gave for considering leaving the profession.**

The study also revealed that one in five teachers are considering leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement. Stress, burnout, and the need for greater work-life balance are some of the reasons teachers gave for considering leaving the profession. For some teachers, this disillusionment is rooted in the inadequacy of government willingness and resources to meet the needs of students, making it harder to feel effective as a teacher.

*Teaching is no longer as fulfilling and rewarding as it was when I began teaching 20 years ago. I feel it is much more difficult to have an impact...or effect change. I blame this on long-term, chronic underfunding of education.*

Another objective of the survey was to learn which working and learning conditions teachers would most like to see the BCTF focus its efforts in terms of bargaining or advocacy. The survey asked teachers to rate the level of importance of 13 areas of focus for improving working and learning conditions, on a scale where 1=not at all important and 5=very important.

Teacher priorities are linked to learning conditions

Given the stress teachers are currently experiencing due to inadequate resources to meet student needs, it is not surprising that teachers emphasized improvements in learning conditions as priority areas for BCTF to focus on. The teachers in the survey rated learning conditions as the highest priority for the BCTF to focus on, followed closely by improving salary and benefits. The five most important areas (at least 60% of teachers rating an area as *quite* or *very important*) for BCTF to focus its efforts on are *improve support for special education* (72%), *reduce class sizes* (70%), *more time for planning and preparation* (69%), *improve salary* (61%), and *improve and expand benefits* (61%).

Other suggestions

Teachers also made suggestions as to what else they would like BCTF to focus on in addition to the areas already listed. Suggestions included improving conditions in school libraries, more support for teacher mentorship, improving working conditions for teachers teaching on call (TTOC), more support to address interpersonal issues at work, addressing assessment issues, funding advocacy, and improving the image of teachers in the public and the media. Some teachers suggested provisions or programs to support wellness and work-life balance.

Do priorities differ by gender, and teaching experience?

Priorities differ among teacher groups. Female teachers (on average) rate all areas of focus except for improving salary and benefits as more important than male teachers do. Secondary teachers assign a higher priority to providing more time for planning and prep, addressing issues with BCeSIS, programs to support wellness and work-life balance, and improving salaries and benefits. Elementary teachers rate the importance of improving support for special education and ESL students considerably higher than secondary teachers do. Teachers with less than 10 years' experience assign higher importance to improving resources (e.g., books, computers) and opportunities for collaboration and sharing with peers. Newer teachers rate technology concerns as less important than their more-experienced peers do.

What has other research shown about BC teacher priorities?

View Points Research, an external polling agency, surveyed BCTF members (teachers) in the spring of 2010, asking teachers "What is the most important thing that BCTF can do to improve your work life as an educator?" The top three factors all relate to learning conditions—reduced class size, class composition restrictions, and providing more support for students. In terms of bargaining priorities, 96.8% of teachers indicated it is *very important* (81.7%) or *somewhat important* (15.1%) for teachers to be able to negotiate class size and composition limits into future contracts. When the polling agency asked teachers to rate the importance of a list of bargaining issues, the three most important issues related to learning conditions, followed by improving pensions and salaries. The same poll also asked teachers about the single most important bargaining issue, with the top three priorities being a wage/salary increase, smaller class sizes, and class composition restrictions.

**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.**

Conclusion

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. This study sheds some light on the differing priorities among teacher groups by gender, teaching experience, and elementary/secondary programs, in terms of the emphasis placed on salaries and benefits, planning and preparation time, and specific needs of students. Data from this survey represents one way of ascertaining teachers' views on preferred areas of focus in bargaining, which complements the efforts currently

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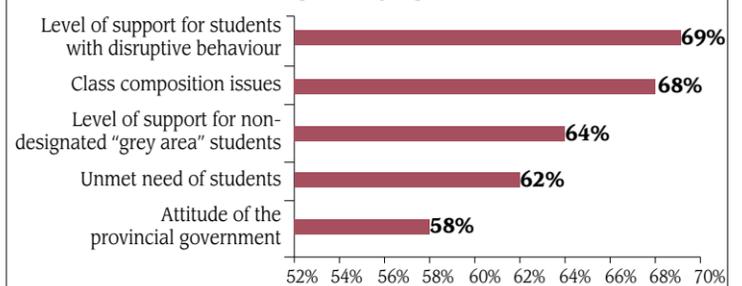
underway in BCTF locals across the province to identify bargaining priorities.

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

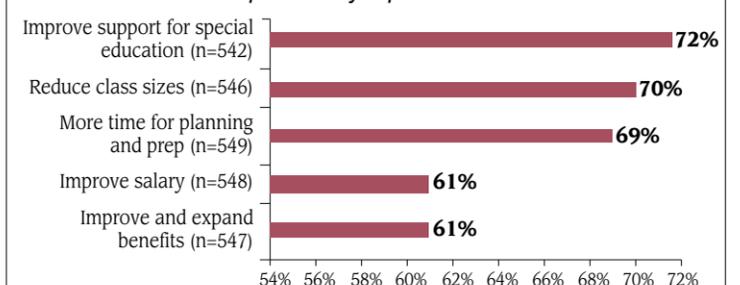
Full report:

"Worklife of BC Teachers in 2009" [bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=21498](http://bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=21498)

5 most stressful factors (out of 47)  
Percentage of teachers who rated the source of stress as high or very high stress



5 most important areas of focus (out of 13)  
Percentage of teachers who rated area of focus as quite or very important



# Every cellphone is a camera; every microphone is live



By Tony Wilson

Quick—what do Jean Chrétien, Jacques Chirac, Olympians Nancy Kerrigan, and Michael Phelps all have in common?

They all learned the hard way “Rule Number 1” in reputation management: Every cell phone is a camera and every microphone is live.

Nancy Kerrigan was attacked on the knee by an assailant who was working, it turned out, with rival Tonya Harding’s ex-husband. The attack happened so Kerrigan couldn’t compete against Harding in the US Skating Championship that year. After her return to skating, Kerrigan had the sympathy of all America, including the Walt Disney Company, who featured her on a Disney float at a Disneyland parade. As she smiled at the crowd, she said: “This is dumb. I hate it. It’s the corniest thing I have ever done.” Regrettably, she was within earshot of a live microphone, which picked up the off-hand remark. Needless to say, Disney immediately ended its relationship with Kerrigan.

Former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien attended a meeting of NATO leaders in 1997 in Spain. During a break in proceedings, he spoke to Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene in French about US politics without realizing that a nearby microphone was on and their private conversation was being recorded by Radio Canada. Chrétien said of the Americans “They sell their votes! You want me to vote on NATO, then you have to vote to build me a new bridge in my

constituency,” Chrétien’s candid comments about US politics became an embarrassment and a strain in relations for a short time. One White House staffer was reported to have told his counterpart in Ottawa: “Next referendum, we’re siding with the separatists.”

In 2005, during the bid for the 2012 Olympic Games, French President Jacques Chirac didn’t realize his microphone was live when he discussed rival bidder, London in a private conversation, “The only thing that they have ever done for European agriculture” he said, “is mad cow disease. You cannot trust people who have such bad cuisine. It is the country with the worst food after Finland.”

And how can anyone forget the performance of American swimmer Michael Phelps at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing? He was described by 1972 swimming sensation Mark Spitz as the greatest Olympian of all time. After Beijing, corporate endorsement money flooded to Phelps. Phelps’ agent, Peter Carlisle,

**So the lesson is this: if you’re a teacher, you’re already being scrutinized minute by minute by your students. They all have cell phones these days. All the cell phones have video and still photo capabilities. You may be their teacher, but they are the new paparazzi.**

said “What is the value of eight golds in Beijing before a prime-time audience in the U.S? I’d say \$100 million over the course of his lifetime.” Now, recall Michael Phelps went to a party at the University of South Carolina in the fall of 2008. He did what lots of 23-year-olds do at parties. He smoked marijuana from a bong. But someone took his picture with his face buried in the bong. The picture ended up on the cover of the London tabloid, *News of*

*the World* in January 2009 with the headline “PHELPS GOES BONG.” USA Swimming, the governing body for amateur swimming in the United States, suspended him for three months over the incident. It said in a statement:

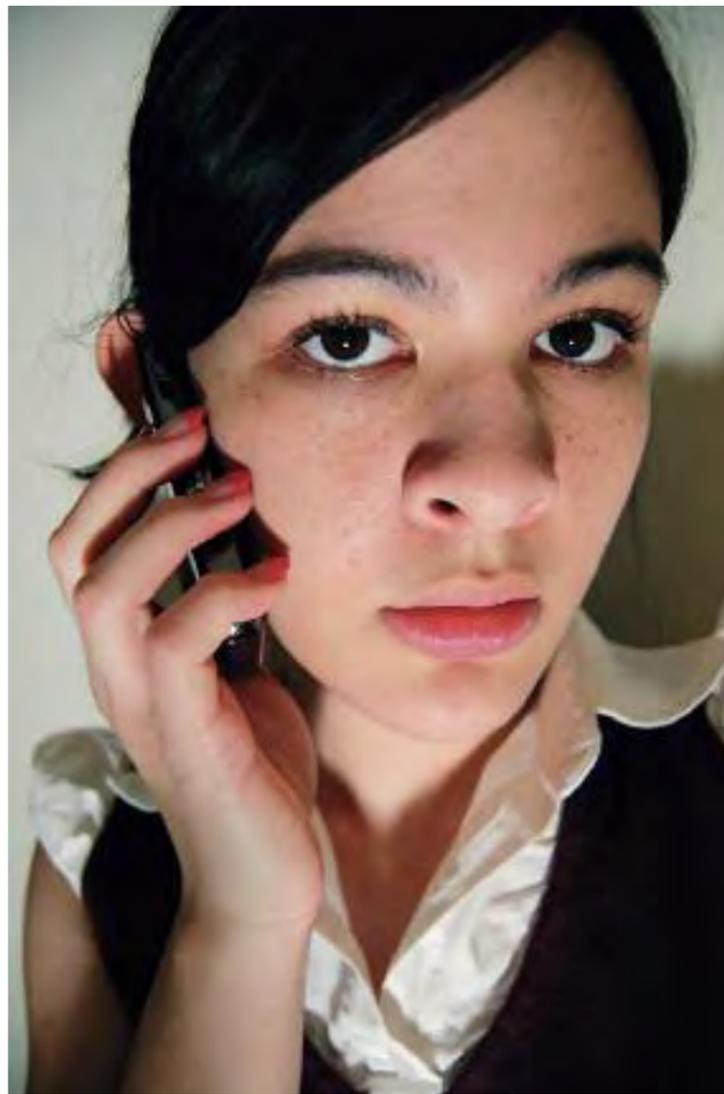
“This is not a situation where any anti-doping rule was violated, but we decided to send a strong message to Michael because he disappointed so many people, particularly the hundreds of thousands of USA Swimming member kids who look up to him as a role model and a hero.”

The US Olympic Committee said it was “disappointed in the behavior recently exhibited by Michael Phelps.

“Michael is a role model, and he is well aware of the responsibilities and accountability that come with setting a positive example for others, particularly young people. In this instance, regrettably, he failed to fulfill those responsibilities.”

Phelps issued this statement: “I engaged in behavior which was regrettable and demonstrated bad judgment. I’m 23 years old and despite the successes I’ve had in the pool, I acted in a youthful and inappropriate way, not in a manner people have come to expect from me. For this, I am sorry. I promise my fans and the public it will not happen again.”

As for endorsements, they didn’t dry up. But if you’re a lawyer or a business agent for Nike, Speedo, Omega, or Visa in charge of negotiating Michael Phelps’ endorsement contracts, you’re going to ask this question: was the Olympian still worth all that money after the bong incident than before it? Kellogg’s didn’t think so. It dropped him as a sponsor for Kellogg’s Corn Flakes, stating, “Michael’s most recent behavior is not consistent with the image of Kellogg. His contract expires at the end of February and we have made



The new paparazzi?

a decision not to extend his contract.”

All this is interesting, but what applicability does it have to the teaching profession? A lot, actually.

In February 2010, two teachers at Winnipeg’s Churchill High School got carried away with the moment, and performed a raunchy and suggestive lap dance at a student pep rally in front of 100 students. The fully clothed performance included mock spanking and implied oral sex. A student with a cell phone filmed it and posted it the next day to YouTube, resulting in the suspension and firing of the teachers involved.

So the lesson is this: if you’re a teacher, you’re already being scrutinized minute by minute by your students. They all have cell

phones these days. All the cell phones have video and still photo capabilities. You may be their teacher, but they are the new paparazzi. Make one slip up or error in judgment and you’ll find you’re suddenly Brittany Spears or Mel Gibson (but without all the money).

So protect your own reputations. Remember—every cell phone is a camera and every microphone is live.

*Tony Wilson is an Intellectual Property Lawyer at Boughton Law Corporation in Vancouver and an Adjunct Professor at Simon Fraser University. He is rated as a leading Canadian 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” was published in November 2010.*

## Ride don’t hide

By Dave Hamar

“If we talk about the absurdity of mental illness stigma, it will begin to disappear. If we can share the common story of how mental illness affects our lives, we will see it for what it is—a variation of the human condition. To harbour mental illness stigma is to harbour a stigma against humanity.”

— Michael Schratte

As a columnist for *24 hrs* and an active Vancouver teacher, Michael Schratte is fortunate to have access to a variety of media and intellects. In the summer of 2010, he bravely put this access to good use when he initiated the *Ride Don’t Hide* campaign. Through this campaign, Schratte vowed to focus discussions and attention on the difficulties of dealing with the stigmas associated with mental illness. By circumnavigating the globe on his bicycle, he is literally taking his message across six continents and through 30 countries. What’s more amazing than undertaking such an epic bike ride, is his public acknowledgement of how mental illness stigma has played such a huge role in the challenges of discussing and dealing with his own personal struggles. Schratte’s public announcement and his campaign, accomplish a great step in breaking down such a demobilizing stigma.

As articulated during a fundraising event prior to his departure, 20% of Canadians are personally touched by mental illness, and yet, we lack an open forum for combating flawed understandings about people who are dealing with such conditions. Schratte asks a pertinent question—Who is educating the public about mental illness? In an online audio clip, he

**Through this campaign, Schratte vowed to focus discussions and attention on the difficulties of dealing with the stigmas associated with mental illness. By circumnavigating the globe on his bicycle, he is literally taking his message across six continents and through 30 countries.**

begins to challenge people to think about media coverage of those living with mental illness. Gruesome news stories of a person going on a killing spree or movies such as *Silence of the Lambs* serve to perpetuate the stigma. Similarly disturbing cases represent a minute fraction of the people living with mental illness and yet they receive virtually all of the media coverage.



When misinformation is so rampant, those with mental illness feel further alienated because they do not want to jeopardize themselves by openly admitting their condition.

Schratte’s goal is to flip the media message on its head and begin to have people who are actually living with mental illness tell the story. The process of publicly talking about it, begins to enlighten the misinformed, and will hopefully lead to a more appropriate approach in assisting those who are seeking help.

Schratte is completely funding his trip around the world. All donations are forwarded to the Canadian Mental Health Association. At the time of publication, the campaign has raised \$22,600. Visit [ridedonthide.com](http://ridedonthide.com) to read his blogs, make a donation, or tell your own story related to mental illness.

*Dave Hamar is the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers’ Association communications chair.*



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**BCRTA**  
British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association

# Rethinking drug education with an inquiry-based approach

By Cindy Andrew

Drug education has been a subject of concern for decades. Most teachers, administrators, and parents agree that drug education is necessary, but just what to tell students about drug use—and what not to tell them—is still a matter of fierce debate.

A popular way to deal with the content question has been to invite “drug experts” or former users to speak to students about the dangers of drug use. But studies show that this approach has had no impact on student drug use.

Many teachers and researchers believe that traditional drug education programs don't work because they're not honest enough about the role of drug use in society. That drugs can be dangerous is only part of the story. The truth is that people around the planet have been using drugs—caffeine, alcohol, cannabis, and so on—for thousands of years for various everyday reasons: to get going in the morning and to unwind at night, to reduce pain and to increase libido, to celebrate good times and get through bad times, and so on.

Fear-based approaches also fail because they tend to be one-way conversations—a speaker tells students a story or a bunch of information—turning kids off or at best tuning them out.

So what do we do about it?

Two things are critical when effectively addressing substance use in the school setting:

- developing health literacy including literacy about alcohol and other psychoactive drugs
- creating healthy physical and social environments.

The Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CARBC), a research network hosted and led by the

**Evidence shows that students who develop strong connections with school and positive relationships with teachers and other school staff, attend school more regularly, show less involvement with health-risk behaviours, and perform better academically.**

University of Victoria, is helping schools address substance use by offering them a drug education program, free of charge, that meets the real-world needs of both students and teachers.

**iMinds—an inquiry-based drug education program**

iMinds is a learning resource designed to help students in Grades 6 through 10 understand the rela-

tionship between drug use, other human behaviours, and mental wellness. Teachers who use iMinds are not required to be “experts” but instead act as facilitators. The modules are easy to implement and include everything teachers need—lesson plans, master copies, rubrics, and background information. They also meet multiple PLOs of the BC curriculum.

Unlike traditional approaches that focus on a specific health behaviour goal (e.g., abstinence), iMinds focuses on health literacy. In other words, the goal is education. Using inquiry-based teaching methods or the “constructivist approach,” iMinds allows students to explore the social and environmental factors that influence their personal attitudes and behaviours (including those related to alcohol and other drugs) because this will equip them to make life-enhancing choices.

**Why not just bring in a guest speaker?**

Studies show that programs with education as the goal are best delivered by educators. That is why iMinds is designed to be delivered by classroom teachers who understand effective educational processes and have on-going relationships with the students. Each module is built on a 5-i constructivist model—identify, investigate, interpret, imagine, and integrate. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the material to the needs of their students but ensure integrity of the 5-i model.

**Drug education—important but not sufficient**

Addressing drug use in schools involves promoting health, not just treating or preventing problems. This means nurturing a healthy school environment that enhances the well-being of students, supports positive learning outcomes, and contributes to creating a healthy community.

To assist in this process, CARBC recently launched Helping Schools, an online resource designed to help educators and partners apply a comprehensive school health approach to addressing drug use.

The resource features:

- Promising Practices: information on how to apply evidence-based health promotion principles that enhance students' health and learning
- Evidence, Tools & Stories: supports for implementing the promising practices in school settings.

For more on iMinds and Helping Schools, visit [www.carbc.ca](http://www.carbc.ca) and click on the “Helping Schools” tab, or contact Cindy Andrew at [cinandrew@uvic.ca](mailto:cinandrew@uvic.ca) or 250-391-8452.

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## Opinion

# Wait a minute, didn't she just retire?

By Glynis Cawdell

As a TTOC rep, I field various complaints from members and a common one is about retired TTOCs. The complaint goes something like this, “I overheard him saying he's saving for his *third* home—beachfront property!” As many young TTOCs are trying desperately to save for their first home down payment, there is a palpable resentment toward retired teachers working on call. With this issue being no secret, the BCTF

established a task force in the fall of 2009 to look into the practice. They found that retired teachers often find their pension inadequate and seek out TTOC employment to help pay the bills. Only 5% of teachers retire with a full pension. The average retiree is 60 years old, has 25 years of service, and takes home a pension equal to 50% of their highest average salary. Yes, beachfront property guy may exist, but he's not the norm. Another reason retired teachers work as TTOCs is because they love the job, but want to enjoy a balance of vacation time too. After 25+ years of service, wouldn't you?

In Surrey, retired teachers make up less than 10% of the on-call list. They work part-time in selected grades and classes. Forbidding retired teachers to work on-call would amount to ageism. If TTOCs feel they are not getting enough work, they should consider other factors, such as preferential call-out and a too large TTOC list.

It's hard to be a new worker at the bottom of the pay scale, but we shouldn't take it out on experienced teachers.

*Glynis Cawdell is the Surrey TTOC chair.*

## Health and safety

# Asbestos in the classroom



By Joe Murphy

Under the *Workers Compensation Act*, employers are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all their employees. This includes the obligation to make workers aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health and safety hazards in their workplace. One such risk that teachers need to be aware of is the possible presence of asbestos in their classrooms and schools.

Asbestos is the name given to a group of minerals that occur naturally in the environment as bundles of fibers. These fibers have a unique quality that allows them to be separated into thin durable threads. The resulting products are highly resistant to heat, fire, and chemicals. For these reasons, asbestos has been used widely in many industries including construction. However, asbestos also has a dark history related to the fact that its fibres can break down into

**The threat from asbestos is real. The World Health Organization's latest estimate notes that asbestos already claims 107,000 lives a year. Even that conservative estimate means that every five minutes around the clock a person dies of asbestos-related disease. Asbestos-related illnesses are also among the most common causes of occupational death in British Columbia and Canada.**

microscopic particles that cannot be detected by the human eye. These particles can become airborne and easily enter the lungs. The extreme health risks of inhaling these fibres have been well documented for at least half a century. These risks have resulted in the use of asbestos being banned in more than 40 countries worldwide. These countries include all member states of the European Union, Australia, Japan, and South Africa. In spite of this fact, it is still found in the physical plants, vinyl flooring, ceiling tiles, plaster, insulation, wall coverings, and drywall tape of many of our schools.

The threat from asbestos is real. The World Health Organization's latest estimate notes that asbestos already claims 107,000 lives a year. Even that conservative estimate means that every five minutes around the clock a person dies of asbestos-related disease. Asbestos-related illnesses are also among the most common causes of occupational death in British Columbia and Canada. In 2007, WorkSafe BC accepted 139 claims for fatal benefits. Of those, 59 or 42%, were related to asbestos exposure. The true toll is far higher, as agency statistics only cover workers who have filed compensation claims.

As well as being ideally suited for multiple commercial uses, asbestos is also the “perfect carcinogen” as it acts as both a promoter and initiator of cancer. Exposure to asbestos has been linked to several diseases including asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. All of these diseases can have a latency period of up to 30 or more years. Asbestos fibres are dangerous when inhaled and the dustiest processes are, in general, the most hazardous. Although it is clear that the health risks from asbestos exposure increase with heavier exposure and longer exposure time, investigators have found asbestos-related diseases in individuals with only brief exposures. This is especially the case with the fatal disease mesothelioma, a formerly rare, but increasingly common cancer of the lung cavity. It's generally accepted by medical authorities around the world that no level of asbestos exposure can be considered safe, and that the more exposure one has, the greater the risk.

Because asbestos is classified as a hazardous material, WorkSafe BC has developed an extensive set of requirements that employers must meet to protect their workers from exposure. These requirements apply to any worksite where asbestos-containing materials are present or used. Therefore, every school district in BC is required by law to have an asbestos management program that requires:

1. An up-to-date inventory of asbestos-containing materials (ACM) in all school district buildings. This inventory must

detail the location, type, and percentage of asbestos present, the condition of the material, and the potential for worker exposure. This inventory must be present at the site and available to any worker at that site.

2. That all asbestos-containing materials are clearly identified.
3. Inspection of all asbestos-containing material identified in the inventory on a regular basis. The purpose of this inspection is to monitor the condition of identified materials and to ensure that it remains in good condition and is not likely to release fibers into the air.
4. Conduct a risk assessment prior to the disturbance, repair, or removal of asbestos-containing materials. This assessment must be sent to WorkSafeBC, a minimum of 24 hours, prior to the commencement of work.
5. Instruct workers in safe work procedures and the elements of the asbestos management program.
6. Keep accurate and complete records and annual review and update them.

**Because asbestos is classified as a hazardous material, WorkSafe BC has developed an extensive set of requirements that employers must meet to protect their workers from exposure.**

In addition to implementing an asbestos-management program, employers must ensure that all friable (materials that can be easily crumbled when dry and become airborne) are either removed from the workplace, encapsulated, or enclosed. The employer is also required to substitute material less hazardous than asbestos when practicable. If such substitution is not practicable, the employer must document the reasons why and make this documentation available to workers and the joint committee.

What can you do to ensure that you and your students are not being exposed to this hazard? Ask to see the inventory for your school. Every classroom should be clearly identified and assessed. If the inventory is not readily available, notify your administrator and your school safety or staff rep immediately. If the inventory shows asbestos-containing material in your room that is damaged or in any way can be disturbed, insist, through your safety committee, that it be removed.

*Joe Murphy teaches at Parkside Secondary School, Terrace, and is a member of the BCTF Health and Safety Committee.*

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# 21ST CENTURY

## Waiting on 21st century learning

...without apology to "Waiting on Superman"

By Grant Osborne

I attended the BC Superintendent's Association Conference in Victoria on November 17–19, 2010, with the two local reps of the New Westminster Teachers' Union. This annual conference is usually only attended to a capacity of 50% but this year was a sell-out. Why? We were to receive from on high the message of 21st century personalized learning. This was to be a "sea change" in learning in BC, emphasizing an increased use of technology, increased involvement of parents, students selecting from a smorgasbord of learning opportunities, and a move to having teachers become facilitators of learning. Superintendents, administrators, principals and vice-principals, select teachers and a small number of local union and BCTF executive members, and staff waited with bated breath to find out how this educational tsunami would appear. In a meeting with the 20 or so BCTF and local union reps the night before, the question was how to respond, especially since, to date, there had been no consultation with teachers.

What did we get? The new Minister of Education George Abbott led off with a speech in which he explained how new he was to education and how he hoped to learn with us. His humorous take on a "Curious George" approach with frequent reference to lyrics of the Beatles was at least entertaining. We had soon-to-be-ex-Premier Campbell give a gushing tribute to teachers saying how society needed to celebrate their passion, listen to their voices, have the best and brightest become teachers, reach out and support us. After all this time, we didn't realize how much he loved us! Cue Rod Serling and *Twilight Zone* music. Between this, we heard from presenters Valeria Hannon and Tony McKay (British and Australian respectively) describe to us 21st Century Learning. We were told it had no given menu, that we were co-creating, that education is a global business, and numerous references to the Gates Foundation and Global Education Leaders Programme. Education was constantly linked with employment,

and one quote they liked was, "We have to be hospice workers bringing the old system to a dignified death and midwives helping birth the new." We heard of Finland being a market leader without reference to the social factors that rank Finland number one in international testing—5% poverty (versus 15% +/- here), homogenous culture, small schools, a veneration of education, and the fact that it is extremely challenging to become a teacher in

**One memorable speech was from Deputy Education Minister James Gorman who told us that he didn't know who was going to lead the government, how long George Abbott would be the minister (Abbott had yet to declare his leadership intentions and had yet to resign as minister), and that 21st Century Learning was flying at 50,000 feet and we don't know where it will land.**

Finland. We heard about ubiquitous technology and opportunity and collaborative social-constructivist learning (a prize to anyone who can explain what was just said). We had videos from the states—my favourite was *High Tech High*, shot in black and white—which had many of the participants musing, "Why are we looking to the United States as an example of education when it ranks 33rd in the world and we rank in the top 5?" And yes, the musings. The presenters encouraged the participants to post Twitter feeds while the presentations unfolded, and to make their thoughts known on SurveyMonkey. This was to be their undoing.

On Friday afternoon, after a conference-highlight presentation by Stuart Shaenker, an expert in child development and development disorders, who provided a low-tech, riveting, funny, storytelling approach to his topic (definitely not 21st century learning!), we had a somewhat subdued pair of presenters return to tell us that they had spent the night looking at the Twitter feeds and survey results. They never meant to emphasize a corporate agenda, they said. They didn't realize that much of what they were presenting as cutting edge was already being done in BC schools; that probably they should have asked what was being done in BC schools first. That's how the conference concluded: roundtable discussions about the cutting-edge learning already happening here and now in British Columbia.

So what to take away from it? That's a hard question. One memorable speech was from Deputy Education Minister James Gorman who told us that he didn't know who was going to lead the government, how long George Abbott would be the minister (Abbott had yet to declare his leadership intentions and had yet to resign as minister), and that 21st Century Learning was flying at 50,000 feet and we don't know where it will land. This spoke of a government and ministry without any direction. Another reference by the presenters was to the documentary, *Waiting on Superman*, a film made by the same director who did *An Inconvenient Truth*. This documentary follows several children and their families as they wait to see if they have won the lottery to attend a prestigious American charter school. The film goes to great lengths to laud the charter school movement, but imbedded in it are the real facts—that only 17% of charter schools are outperforming public schools, with 46% performing the same and 37% worse (CREDO study)—or that there were charter school principals being indicted for embezzlement, or that studies have shown that teachers account for around 10% of a student's standardized test scores and non-school factors account for 60%. The praise is actually a condemnation of the charter system. Perhaps that's it—do you improve a system by supporting it or declaring it broken and in need of replacement without any meaningful studies to reach that conclusion?

International rankings have Canada near the top in the world in education and BC, despite the lack of government support, is on the top of that heap. Why are we looking to Britain (13th), the United States (33rd), or the Peoples' Republic of China (mentioned often in the presentation) as education models? Looking at other systems can be enlightening but we need to be clear why we are looking at them and what we are looking for. Rather, the final roundtable exercise of the conference was valuable. BC has an exceptional education system despite the lack of government funding and support. Imagine what we could do if public education was seen as the great social equalizer and promoter, the most successful social experiment in history, and something worth honouring and supporting.

In the meantime, the message from the Ministry of Education seems to be the need for change... the mantra seems to be:

21st Century Learning...it's coming, be excited, start talking about it, and planning for it...we just can't tell you what it is. At least Campbell says he loves teachers. Who' da thunk it.

Grant Osborne is president, New Westminster Teachers' Union.

## What does 21st century learning look like?

By Nicol Suhr

After viewing Susan Lambert's presentation at the fall Representative Assembly voicing concerns about the Ministry of Education's plan for 21st century learning, and listening to the comments of my fellow educators, I was deeply concerned about several factors. Technology and social isolation are at the forefront of my concerns. I would classify myself as a proponent of technology; I use it everyday in my math and science classes, both as a primary teaching tool and as a supplementary aid. However, technology is a tool to use, not something that excuses us from the thinking process itself. "The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do." – BF Skinner

Further, I am extremely concerned over the drive to "individualized learning," which seems to be used as a euphemism for "sitting at a computer terminal and spewing out the answers so that one can say, I've learned something!" Education is more than just spewing information. It includes learning to communicate, think critically, and work as a team. Today's students need communication, leadership, and teamwork skills more than ever. The lack of proper interaction, etiquette, and language expectation in today's society isn't giving our children the skills they need to succeed in tomorrow's workplace or society as a whole. Almost everyday, new research unveils that teambuilding and social interaction help to foster intelligence, language acquisition, community, and citizenship. So, why is our new education system being designed to

**Further, I am extremely concerned over the drive to "individualized learning," which seems to be used as a euphemism for "sitting at a computer terminal and spewing out the answers so that one can say, I've learned something!"**

go in the opposite direction, isolating students, and limiting their exposure to ideas to whatever is put on the screen in front of them?

The "21st century learning" model needs to be about communication, information, and technology—how

to use it sustainably, rather than solely in an industrial model based on efficiency. We need to ask the questions: What does our ideal education system look like? What will our education system look like in the future?

As teachers, we are in a unique position to understand what our students need and what we need to get them there. I, for one, would love to sit on a committee with the BCTF working with the ministry—let's show them what teamwork looks like—to develop this new system that works for all of us. Let's see what we can create!

Nicol Suhr teaches at Nakusp Secondary School, Nakusp.

## British Columbia's Neoliberal folly: Dissecting the 21st century agenda

By Tobey Steeves

As reported in *Teacher* (October 2010; Nov./Dec. 2010), educational reform in British Columbia has recently taken on the 21st century narrative as a model for modernizing and upgrading curricula. However, like most other pre-packaged educational reform initiatives, the 21st century learning agenda appears more firmly rooted in political ideology than pedagogic practice. While many educationists have contested the appropriateness of 21st century skills for youth, most critiques have focused on the contentions of privileging skills over content, the transferability of critical thinking skills, or coherence of vision. In contrast, I fear 21st century skills may mask a concerted attempt to align public education with a neoliberal world view.

According to Rod Allen, BC's superintendent of student achievement, 21st century skills encompass gathering, synthesizing, and analyzing information, working autonomously, leadership, creativity, tolerance, ethics, and communication skills.

Despite wide divergences in approach, these skills—far from modern—are representative of the 21st century movement. However, even though the 21st century narrative has many of the sensibilities of authentic student-centered reform initiatives, it may be unnecessarily constrained by the ideological horizons that give it shape—namely, neoliberal capitalism. By that, I mean that the 21st century agenda may maintain and institutionalize neoliberalism's emphasis on "giving greater scope to the single-minded pursuit of profit and showing significantly less regard for the need to limit social

# RY LEARNING

costs or for redistribution based on non-market criteria. The aim of neoliberalism is to put into question all collective structures capable of obstructing the logic of the pure market." (Tabb, W. (2002) *Unequal partners: A primer on globalization*. New York, NY: The New Press)

Beneath the assurances of sympathetic politicians and reformists in the UK, United States, and Canada lie the principle objectives

**By envisioning students as human capital to be sculpted in a particular way, the 21st century agenda attempts to normalize neoliberal values while supplying the business community with eager and profit-driven employees.**

of the 21st century agenda—nationalistic and economic advantage. Originating in the UK in 1983, with the establishment of a trust called Education 2000, the 21st century movement began as a means of addressing the academic/vocational divide in England's two-tiered education system. In an educational world view, in which it was believed "sometime between the ages of 14 and 16, young people [could] be divided into two groups—the academically gifted (at least relatively), and the rest," an emphasis on "core skills"—skills seen as necessary to a robust workforce—was seen as pragmatic. In other words, 21st century skills were developed to manage the labour pool, which was seen as critical to extending England's advantage in a competitive global economy. Likewise, according to P21, the largest advocacy group for 21st century skills in North America, successful education is inextricably linked with capitalist production. P21's policy texts make repeated references to the role 21st century skills should play in "reinvigorating the economy," "competitive realities," and "entrepreneurial literacies." By envisioning students as human capital to be sculpted in a particular way, the 21st century agenda attempts to normalize neoliberal values while supplying the business community with eager and profit-driven employees.

Nevertheless, many critics suggest framing an educational policy as student-centred in order to satisfy ulterior motives is deeply

problematic. Authentic student-centred programs situate power and agency in students, so when students are denied access to power or agency, an educational program cannot be said to be legitimately student-centred. To that end, it should be emphasized that from the vantage of the 21st century agenda students are said to meaningfully exercise power and agency when engaged in entrepreneurially relevant skill development. As an illustration, the 21st Century Learning Initiative—an advocacy group backed by the Canadian Council on Learning—emphasizes the necessity of cognitive mentorships. According to John Abbott, the current president of the initiative, cognitive mentorships allow students to learn by doing. By directly modeling skills, scaffolding understanding, fading into the background, and coaching to success, experts, i.e., cognitive mentors, are enjoined to harness the chaotic enthusiasm of the adolescent brain while providing a superior, real world curriculum. Even so, it is important to note that the 21st century learning initiative sees cognitive mentorships primarily as an opportunity for the corporate community to access and influence students. Admittedly, students should have the opportunity to explore careers, lifestyles, and values; but so long as an educational reform initiative is centred in a drive for profit and maintaining *status quos*, it cannot be student-centred.

Like many British Columbians, I think our public schools need significant reform.

While working as an employee on call for the Vancouver School District I have bounced from classroom to classroom, and school to school. In many of these classrooms it was obvious that teachers are over-worked and under-resourced. Moreover, when it comes to technology, Vancouver's schools are an unmitigated embarrassment. Architectural features, for instance, make several schools akin to digital black holes: carrier waves are blocked and technology stops working once thresholds have been crossed. These schools are throwbacks to a bygone era, a time before Wi-Fi, smartphones, and Facebook, and they are as anachronistic as betamax cassettes and drive-in movie theaters. Against this backdrop it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that BC's school system requires systemic reform, but it is not in need of policy initiatives that

**Admittedly, students should have the opportunity to explore careers, lifestyles, and values; but so long as an educational reform initiative is centred in a drive for profit and maintaining status quos, it cannot be student-centred.**

subjugate student-centredness beneath economic competitiveness. Rather, following the suggestion of Félix Guattari, perhaps the challenge of educational reform lies less in building bridges between the domains of education and economy than endeavouring to set in motion

new desiring machines capable of building an altogether different social order. Conversely, the 21st century agenda can be construed as an attempt to explicitly bridge education with neoliberal desire. While these horizons constrain educational reform debate, truly radical feasibilities will remain unrecognized and the needs of the public trumped by an insatiable and unethical demand for profit. That being the case, the people of BC might ask themselves whether 21st century learning should be considered deficient, obsolete, and inappropriate for our schools.

Tobey Steeves is a Vancouver TTOC.

To access the complete essay, go to <http://bit.ly/eVGFxS>.

## BC Ministry of Education's 21st century Seven "C"s

By Janice Johnson

One glaring omission in the list of the Seven C's that are part of "21st Century Foundation Skills" is perhaps the most important C: Caring for others. As Jinny Sims points out in her article (*Teacher*, Nov./Dec. 2010), this initiative is "...based on...a focus on the individual and self-interest." Included in the current proposed Seven C's are "Caring for personal health and planet earth," but what

condition is planet earth, and all of our society, going to be in if we don't begin to instill in our children the universally-accepted concept of The Golden Rule (treat others the way we would like to be treated)?

**Maybe, commencing in Kindergarten and continuing up to Grade 12, we teach, reinforce and practise with students the habit of asking themselves the question, "Would I like someone to treat me this way?" before each and every interaction or comment.**

When we have Grade 1 students who say that their favourite pastime is playing the video "shooting game where we round up all the villagers and kill them," we're in trouble if something doesn't change soon. Most children no longer attend Sunday school or something similar where they learn ethics, character development, and morals. Most parents are so worn out after work and household duties that they don't have time or energy to teach and model this concept of "putting yourself in someone else's shoes."

In some school districts, character development is interwoven into the curriculum at the teacher's discretion. However, as long as academics and standardized testing are the paramount goals, ethics and good citizenship often sit on the back burner for another time.

According to a recent issue of *People* magazine, young adults and children are still committing suicide due to bullying. So far, all we've been concentrating on is teaching kids who are victims of bullying what to do if they are bullied. How do we prevent bullying in the first place? Maybe, commencing in Kindergarten and continuing up to Grade 12, we teach, reinforce and practise with students the habit of asking themselves the question, "Would I like someone to treat me this way?" before each and every interaction or comment. We need them to get used to evaluating their response to this question. If the answer is "no"—don't do it. Only this inner direction can save the future of our civil society.

Janice Johnson is a TTOC in SD53 (Okanagan Similkameen).



21ST CENTURY ROPES COURSE

# A judge in gym class

The liability of school boards for teachers' negligence

By Noah Sarna

One of the first things new parents learn is the tremendous vulnerability of children and, as if that were not enough, how children seem intent on exposing themselves repeatedly to fresh and exciting ways of getting hurt.

As children age, what changes is not their willingness to welcome the possibility or likelihood of harm, but the type of risky behaviour they explore. The possibility of a lawsuit emerges where someone (usually a person other than the parent) assumes interim responsibility for a

...school boards have been watching closely as teenage plaintiffs have used tort law to turn physical education (PE) into a legal minefield, prompting increased scrutiny on PE teachers to follow strict protocols when overseeing teenage sports.

child participating in activities that may result in significant injuries.

School authorities have an obligation to protect children in their care from harm, but they are not required to keep them under constant supervision. When an injury occurs on school grounds or during school hours, students and their parents frequently look to school boards (in the context of public schools) for compensation arising from a breach of obligations under contract, statute, or tort. Specifically, school boards have been watching closely as teenage plaintiffs have used tort law to turn physical education (PE) into a legal minefield, prompting increased scrutiny on PE teachers to follow strict protocols when overseeing teenage sports.

Over the past 30 years, courts have established a series of factors to consider when determining whether a PE teacher has acted negligently in a way that has resulted in harm to a student who now deserves compensation from the school board as the teacher's employer. This has prompted a multitude of lawsuits, many of which

have been successful, which reflect a view among some parents that hiring a lawyer is one way to heal a sport injury.

## Liability of school boards

Schools employ or engage a number of different individuals to fulfill a variety of different functions. Staff can be academic or non-academic. Non-academic staff can be administrative or maintenance, but academic staff are often closest to students in their daily activities. Academic staff may be full-time or part-time; salaried employees or independent contractors. Like technology teachers, PE teachers are individuals directed by schools to educate students at a time when they are participating in activities fraught with risk.

Where a child suffers an injury caused by negligent conduct of a teacher, a school board can be held liable on one of two bases. First, the board can be liable because the negligence was a direct act—that is, it was authorized or initiated directly by the board. Second, the board can be found to have vicarious liability as an employer, which arises where an act was committed by an employee or a person under the board's control.

Vicarious liability relies on a strong connection between what the employee was being asked to do and the wrongful act. The idea behind the principle is that since the employer created the risk that resulted in harm to the victim the employer should be liable to pay the amount owed as compensation.

In practice, when addressing the claim of an injured student, courts usually gloss over the basis of a school board's liability and move immediately to whether the PE teacher breached the school board's duty of care to the student by using conduct that failed to satisfy a certain standard of care.

In British Columbia, section 94 of *The School Act* provides a statutory limitation shielding teachers from liability for certain wrongdoing committed in the performance of their duties, unless a teacher has been guilty of dishonesty, gross negligence, or willful misconduct.

## Standard of a careful, prudent parent

The standard of care required of a teacher was established in the old British case of *Williams v. Eady*, which found that a schoolmaster had to take care of his students "as a

careful father would take care of his boys," with consideration of the usual nature of children, their tendency for mischief and propensity for meddling. The court found that the schoolmaster failed to satisfy this standard when he left a bottle of phosphorus in a classroom, where the students found it and set it on fire.

This standard has been cited consistently for over a century, but the most well-known application involves the following facts.

On December 6, 1972, Gregory Myers was a 15-year-old boy attempting to dismount from the rings in a gymnastic class at high school. The PE teacher had given Myers and a friend permission to practice their gymnastic manoeuvres without faculty supervision. They had been informed in advance of the importance of someone serving as a "spotter," effectively positioned to catch the gymnast or at least break their fall, in case of an accident. At one point, Myers's spotter turned to leave; Myers remounted, attempted a difficult manoeuvre for the first time, and fell and broke his neck.

In *Myers v. Peel County Board of Education*, Justice McIntyre of the Supreme Court of Canada found that the school board failed to meet the standard of care exercised by school authorities, to provide for the supervision and protection of students for whom they were responsible. In those circumstances, there was inadequate protective matting below the rings and the PE teacher should not have allowed the rings to be used without adult supervision.

The court cited *Thornton et al. v. Board of School Trustees of School District No. 57 (Prince George) et al.*, a decision of the BC Court of Appeal, which referred to the common law duty of school authorities to take care of their students like a reasonable and careful parent, allowing for a larger-than-usual "family size" and the particular expertise of a teacher.

According to Justice McIntyre, this standard is not one that can be applied in the same manner and to the same extent in every case. Furthermore, it is subject to the qualifications set out in *Thornton*, which do not establish a strict test or "code" but do set out many of the appropriate considerations to determine the standard to be met when deciding whether a teacher has satisfied her or his duty of care:

1. whether the activity was suitable to the student's age and condition (mental and physical)

2. whether the student was progressively trained and coached to do it properly and avoid foreseeable dangers
3. whether the equipment was adequate and suitably arranged
4. whether the activity, having regard to its inherently dangerous nature, was properly supervised.

## Recent decisions

These criteria were applied in *Thornton* and *Myers* in relation to gymnastics accidents, but they have since been applied more generally to injuries suffered by students while in the care of school authorities, particularly in PE class.

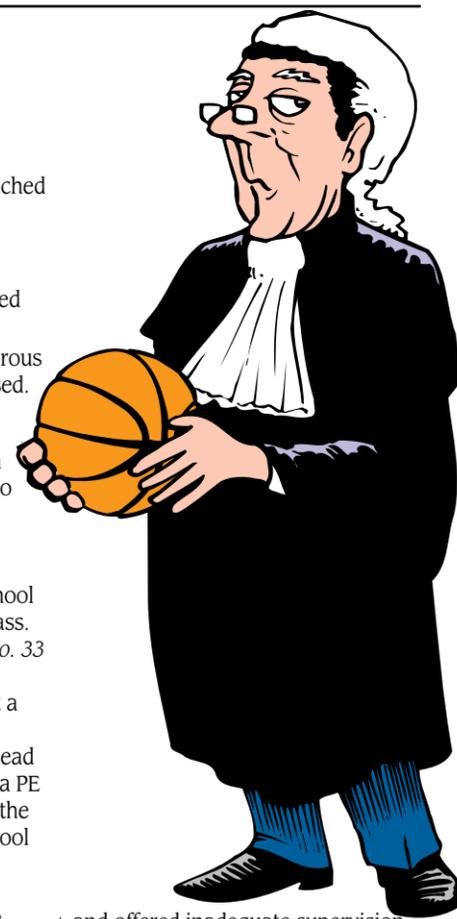
In *Hussack v. School District No. 33 (Chilliwack)*, Justice Boyd of the Supreme Court of BC found that a school board was liable when a Grade 7 student was hit in the head with a field hockey stick during a PE class. The court concluded that the teacher, an employee of the school board, had failed to prepare the student to play the sport safely before letting him join the game, even though the teacher knew the student had ice hockey experience.

In *Peterson (Guardian ad Litem) v. School District No. 36, Surrey*, Justice Owen-Flood of the Supreme Court of BC ruled that a school board, and a PE teacher, were liable when a Grade 11 student was hit in the head with a bat during a PE class. The decision, which was upheld on appeal, argued that the teacher had failed to advise the class about the foreseeable dangers involved with the sport.

In *Hamilton v. School District #37 (Delta)*, Justice Adair of the Supreme Court of BC held that a school board

**In British Columbia, section 94 of The School Act provides a statutory limitation shielding teachers from liability for certain wrongdoing committed in the performance of their duties unless a teacher has been guilty of dishonesty, gross negligence, or willful misconduct.**

was not liable when a Grade 11 student was accidentally hit on the nose by a classmate with a floor hockey stick during a PE class. The student alleged the teacher had failed to require the class to wear the appropriate protective gear



and offered inadequate supervision.

The court found that any wrongdoing in these circumstances fell far short of the standard set out in *Myers* and *Thornton*. The teacher had properly prepared the students for the sport and there was no evidence that it was necessary for the teacher to provide protective gear for any players but the goalies.

In sum, the court in *Hamilton* effectively ruled that the injury to the student was an accident, simply put, and there is a "risk of injury inherent generally in high school physical education activities and sports." PE teachers are not required to meet a standard of perfection.

In *MacCabe v. Westlock Roman Catholic Separate School*, the Alberta Court of Appeal held that a school board, and a PE teacher, were liable when a Grade 11 student was rendered quadriplegic after unsuccessfully attempting a complicated gymnastic move from a box horse. The decision indicated a failure by the teacher to satisfy any of the criteria set out in *Thornton*.

In *Madsen v. Mission School District No. 75*, Justice Grist of the Supreme Court of BC maintained that a school board was liable when a Grade 12 student dislocated his left shoulder when he was pulled to the ground by a classmate during a PE class involving a game of "capture-the-flag." The game was played off school grounds at a local park with a broad expanse and many hills and trees. Despite the age of the

# Steps for students

By Tulani Ackerman

*I created an organization—Steps for Students—for the purpose of bringing information I gathered from people across the province to present to parliament in Victoria. I wanted to show a bridging between parents, teachers, students, and the government by encouraging input from all, so we can work together for the future of our children. I set out on this journey to find the answers from the people of BC. What do we need to do to provide an education system that inspires and motivates our children to learn?*

*I gave the following speech to parliament on August 12, 2010.*

I have biked throughout the province challenged by the vast mountain ranges and thrilled by the incredibly beautiful scenery. My teeth have become my windshield for bugs of all shapes and sizes. I learned a lot about my own inner strength and what it takes to endure days of hills, bugs, rain, wind, and heat. I am an ordinary woman who

had a vision and felt that I should follow it by embarking on this journey that I feel any one of you could have done just as well as I. I would like to share my heart, vision, and thoughts with you.

I was inspired by the students at New Denver school because of the pride and responsibility they took with their food and flower garden.

The long-lasting and meaningful relationships built in South Slokan at Mount Sentinel School between teachers, parents, and students encouraged me to see a community work as a team for the betterment of their children.

However, I also listened to mothers as they cried about their children falling through the cracks and about their boys being lost in this system that they feel is designed for girls.

I listened to a young man as he expressed his anger at being called lazy in his Grade 4 class rather than receiving support to work at his best within his disabilities.

I heard the anger in the parents'

voices knowing that due to school closures, their children would have to take a bus for hours to get to school.

**I was inspired by the students at New Denver school because of the pride and responsibility they took with their food and flower garden.**

I heard the anger and fear in the parents' voices as they questioned how their children would survive a system that places them in overcrowded classrooms or that provides for little or no connection or support from teacher to student—product rather than process—like a fast food chain.

These are a few things that the public has shared with me along my journey:

- more one-on-one time with teachers
- smaller class sizes

- experiential learning where the world is the classroom—the daycare in Telkwa displayed this perfectly as we watched children hover over a dead bird amazed by this little creature. It was encouraging to see this curiosity and desire for learning from these children
- more life skills
- appreciation and acknowledgement of all learning styles
- communities wanting to be part of the schools—not separate entities.

However, this can only happen if each of us does our part. The only answer is to work together and that means parents, teachers, government, Ministry of Education, and community members. We cannot continue to fight amongst ourselves and allow our society and education to become more fragmented. We, as individuals, find it too easy to blame the government, the Ministry of Education, the teachers, the parents, or the community. Though government funding will always be

an issue, we must all take responsibility for the lack of trust and confidence in the public education system. We have become so focused on what we want and need that we have forgotten what really matters. Children do not see colour, religion, or race. They see friends. Can we as adults come together, drop our judgments, selfishness, and cynicism to take care of all of the children in this province, not just our own?

One day, I envision a British Columbia where our children are our first priority; where we make every decision based on whether it hinders or helps our children; where parents, teachers, and government all do their part.

How did we become a society where we feel entitled to everything and only think about ourselves?

Our challenge is to think, not of ourselves, but what is best for the children of this province. They are our future.

*Tulani Ackerman teaches at Charles Hays Secondary School, Prince Rupert.*

## Not good enough

### Adult educators lack prep time

By Ray Steigvilas

Preparation time varies between elementary and secondary teachers. Secondary teachers receive 12.5% while elementary teachers vary up to 7%. However, when it comes to adult education teachers, some do not get any! Most teachers also receive professional development days (PD Days), but again when it comes to adult education teachers, some do not get any! Who are these adult education teachers?

The BCTF, in 2003, identified 600 adult educators in BC, of which 400 were BCTF members. Even though adult education teachers can be members of the BCTF and the College of Teachers, be at Category 5 salary scale, and be teaching BC curriculum courses leading to graduation, they may still not receive any prep time or PD days. Where does this inequality exist?

This inequality exists for many teachers of adult education in many areas in BC. Some areas are not in a remote location but right here in the Lower Mainland. Surrey is BC's largest school district with about 5,000 teachers and 124 schools, yet an adult education teacher for the Surrey School District gets no prep time and no PD days. Burnaby, BC's 4th largest district, is only slightly better by offering only one PD day but still no prep time. Surrey and Burnaby are not alone in this harsh treatment for their Category 5 adult education teachers.

Why are adult education teachers so important? According to the BCTF Adult Literacy Brief in 2006, studies show that about 22% of BC individuals aged 16 to 65, (about

920,000) are functionally illiterate. BC Ministry of Education's own statistics show similar results. The BC High School Six-Year Completion Rates from 2004 to 2008 show a general trend that illustrates 18% do not graduate within this time frame. So where do these individuals go? They often go to adult education in order to take courses to complete their graduation.

Adult education occurs mainly through continuing education in school districts. Each school district is funded for adult students. This year the only exception is SD 10 (Arrow Lakes). The funding enables

**Even though adult education teachers can be members of the BCTF and the College of Teachers, be at Category 5 salary scale, and be teaching BC curriculum courses leading to graduation, they may still not receive any prep time or PD days.**

a variety of programs such as Adult Education High School Completion, Adult Education Academic Upgrading, Adult Basic Education, Adult English Language, Adult Special Education, etc. These programs attempt to provide education to the student who was unsuccessful in the regular K-12 system for a variety of reasons.

These reasons are now passed on to the adult education teachers to

deal with. There are diagnosed and undiagnosed learning disorders (LD) through neurological conditions such as ADHD/ADD, Dyslexia, Autism Spectrum Disorders, etc. LD conditions do not generally disappear upon entering the adult education programs. Other sociological conditions such as divorce, pregnancy, unemployment, shift work, English language difficulties, etc., present other difficulties that adults bring to the educational setting. Yet the funding formula for 2010-11, which is about \$4,400 per adult versus \$6,700 per regular student, is inadequate to meet the growing demand.

In 2004, according to Statistics Canada, BC received about 35,000 international immigrants and sustained an average of 46,500 immigrants every year over the next five years. Current stats show that BC has received 51,000 immigrants in 2009. To get a better perspective of this number, imagine our BCTF membership number of 41,000 active/retired teachers increasing by 41,000 every year. This immigration increase coupled to the yearly regular 18% non-graduates, provides evidence for the continued importance for adult education as a safety net to produce successful and productive individuals in our society. The front-line individuals are the adult education teachers. Some adult education teachers also need a more reasonable course load to address the myriad conditions that adults bring to school.

The BC *School Act* mandates an instruction time of 5.15 hours per day for Grade 8-12. This amounts to about 952 hours over the course of the year. Subtracting 12% prep time translates to about 830 hours of instruction for secondary school teachers who are 1.0 FTE.

For many adult education teachers their position is based on

1,000 hours of instruction during a work year. The course delivery mandated by their school districts varies (90-99 hours Burnaby), (77.5-96 hours Richmond) for secondary school completion courses. This means that to be a full-time teacher in Burnaby you must teach between 10 to 12 courses. This is extremely difficult. Many adult education teachers elect to work at 0.8 FTE due to these unrealistic course loads.

Consider the course load of one Burnaby adult education teacher: In order to achieve an equivalent 1.0 FTE in high school, she teaches 11 BC curriculum courses during 10 months. This means teaching around 29 hours per week the fall term, 22 hours per week the winter term, and 29 hours per week the spring term. She must also teach at least one evening course of approximately 6 hours per week in either the fall semester or the spring semester. This amounts to a job of approximately a 1.16 workload in the fall term, then a 1.28 job in the winter term, and another 1.16 job in the spring term to earn the same amount as her K-12 colleagues. Some of these classes involve more than one level. In addition, class size and composition do not apply.

This article was meant to inform our BCTF colleagues of the inequality that exists for some of our adult education teachers who are found predominately, right here in the most populous part of BC—the Lower Mainland. These adult education teachers endure no prep time, almost non-existent PD days, very heavy course loads, and classes that generally have neither class-size nor composition limits. As members of the BCTF this is just not good enough!

Ray Steigvilas is an adult education teacher, School District 78 (Fraser Cascade).

students, the court held that a prudent parent would not have accepted a low level of supervision in that setting, particularly given the contact among male students that had become part of the game, and would have realized the game

**PE teachers willingly assume a protective role in a professional capacity over the wellbeing of students, and as a result they must design their behaviour to avoid liability in accordance with the criteria identified by the courts.**

needed more control.

### Conclusion

Most parents exercise their obligation to protect their children from harm by relying on their instincts when allowing them to participate in certain activities. They do not consciously make such parental decisions in relation to a predetermined series of criteria. However, PE teachers willingly assume a protective role in a professional capacity over the wellbeing of students, and as a result they must design their behaviour to avoid liability in accordance with the criteria identified by the courts.

Noah Sarna, Boughton Law Corporation, Vancouver.

A version of this article previously appeared in the *Government Liability Law Report*. It appears here with the permission of the author and the editors of that publication.

The BCTF will be offering advice on this issue in a future edition of *Teacher*.

## Learning resource review

### Love, Hate and Propaganda

By Janet Nicol

*Love, Hate and Propaganda*—a six hour DVD series on World War 2, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Canada, (2010) \$34.99 box set.

The lessons of the Second World War still matter according to the filmmakers of *Love, Hate and Propaganda*. History teachers will agree as we continue to describe the events of 1939 to 1945 to students these many decades later. And while the Grade 11 Social Studies curriculum covers what happened in those pivotal years, expect this series to tell students why these events happened. A highly recommended resource for educators, *Love, Hate and Propaganda* is narrated by the dynamic Toronto-based talk show host, George Stroumboulopoulos and produced by Mark Starowitz, creator of *Canada: A People's History*.

The six-part series does not chronicle the battles of the war. Instead, using archival film footage among other fascinating sources, *Love, Hate and Propoganda* is a fast-paced narration focusing on leaders and their use of mass propaganda. We are also reminded that manipulating the media is a technique used by "the good guys" too.

An important component to the series is the inclusion of stories about the war in the Pacific. How did Emperor Hirohito convince an entire society that death was better than surrendering? What was the fate of one Japanese writer sent by his government to witness the attack of China and who came back to write the ugly truth? And what was the legacy created by the Japanese government for a soldier taken

prisoner by Americans at Pearl Harbour?

The early strategies of Hitler as he gained power open the series, in *The Strongmen*. Mussolini, a mentor to Hitler, is glimpsed as well as the authoritarian Russian ruler, Stalin. Nazi footage of rallies is set to contemporary rock music, giving students a sense of the emotionally charged atmosphere of the "new" Germany and the cult of personality created by Hitler. Germans could purchase postcards of Hitler, we learn, and listen to his speeches on cheaply mass-produced radios. They went to the cinema to watch the celebration of Nazi power in *Triumph of the Will*.

The second video, *Selling the War* explains how the Nazis rationalized the invasion of Poland. The lies are so big, even neutral government leaders believed Poles may have provoked the attack. Internal purges in Germany are also depicted, including that of disabled people living in institutions, given lethal injections by doctors. But when the government steps up the killings, by sending this targeted group to gas chambers, there is protest. Remarkably, the government stops for a time, but eventually reverts back to employing lethal injections.

Crossing ethical lines proved to be a precursor to the Nazi genocide of six million Jewish people in occupied Europe. As well, the pervasive racist Nazi propaganda created a climate of hate or indifference among the non-Jewish population. These morality lessons thread through the series and culminate in the fifth segment, *Hiding the Horrors*. Actual film footage of Red Cross officials visiting a "work" camp of Jewish inmates illuminates a masterful Nazi deception. Officials believed what they saw on the tour—children and adults happily at work and play. In actual fact, the inmates were coerced to "put on a

show," most destined to die in gas chambers.

Women play a role in film and poster-war propaganda. Stalin's dream girl is a female sniper who helps push back the Germans at Stalingrad. Ronnie the machine worker is Canada's "role model" woman on the home front. In Germany, a female actress and filmmaker orchestrates Hitler's image with her skilled camera work and flair for the dramatic.

Truth is the first casualty of war, and the Canadian news coverage of the battle at Dieppe in 1942 is a case in point. A precursor to D-Day, the battle was a military disaster but it would be some time after the fact when Canadians at home learned the newspaper headlines had lied.

The series wraps up with *Changing the Story*, revealing how the allied governments trumpeted victory over the enemy in ways that suited their purposes.

Students in Grades 11 and 12 are guaranteed to find the content relevant and engaging. They can also tune in to YouTube on their personal computer to watch some of the six one-hour segments as a homework assignment. Teachers can encourage students to think about the "big questions" as they follow the series—"Why do we have wars?" and "How do atrocities happen without protest?" A propaganda project is also a worthwhile follow-up activity.

Ultimately, the series proves understanding history is vital and instructive and the second world war still impacts on our society. The film's narrator also concludes we continue to live in a world of love, hate, and propaganda, an idea offering opportunities for important classroom conversations well into the 21st century.

Janet Nicol teaches at Killarney Secondary School, Vancouver.

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# BCTF Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2010

## President's comments

The accompanying financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2010, have been prepared in accordance with the by-laws of the Federation and the provisions of the *Society Act*. They reflect the stewardship of the Executive Committee over the resources of the Federation and the committee's accountability to the membership for the effective management of those resources.

On a combined (all funds) basis, revenues exceeded expenditures (a surplus) by \$841,000 for the 2009-10 year compared to a deficit of \$3.8 million for the 2008-09 year. The General Operating Fund (GOF) contributed to the positive results with a surplus of \$248,000 for 2009-10 due mainly to lower divisional expenditures and higher actual fee revenue.

In addition, the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (CBDF) contributed a surplus of \$535,000 for the 2009-10 year (Schedule 2) which, combined with the \$2 million transfer from the GOF approved by the 2010 AGM, increased the fund balance from \$7.8 million at June 30, 2009, to \$10.3 million at June 30, 2010.

The Provincial Bargaining Fund (PBF) deficit was \$112,000 for the 2009-10 year (Schedule 4), which increased the negative fund balance of \$162,000 at June 30, 2009, resulting in a negative fund balance of \$274,000 at June 30, 2010. The decrease in operating results was due mainly to higher expenditures in 2009-10 compared to the prior year.

The Public Education Defence Fund (PEDF) surplus of \$218,000 for the 2009-10 year (Schedule 5) reduced the PEDF negative fund balance from \$374,000 at June 30, 2009, to a negative fund balance of \$156,000 at June 30, 2010.

At their December 9-11, 2010, meeting, the Executive Committee will be considering the Finance Committee 2011-12 total fee recommendation of 1.49%, which represents an increase of 0.04% to the 2010-11 total fee of 1.45%.

The operations of the Salary Indemnity Fund (SIF) reflect a surplus of \$11.1 million for the 2009-10 year (Statement 3) compared to a deficit of \$27.1 million for 2008-09. The fund balance has now increased from \$44.4 million at June 30, 2009 to \$55.5 million at June 30, 2010. An \$11.1 million actual surplus occurred due to higher fee revenue and investment income. The increase in fee revenue occurred due to an increase in the fee from 1.50% in 2008-09 to 1.89% in 2009-10. The 1.50% fee in 2008-09 reflected a partial fee holiday for members, which was financed from the excess fund balance of \$71.5 million at June 30, 2008. The Income Security Committee is recommending a status quo fee of 1.89% for 2011-12.

Susan Lambert

## Auditors' Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of the General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2010, and the statements of changes in net assets, operations and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

In our opinion these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the General and Other Funds (not including the Salary Indemnity Fund) of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2010 and the results of its operations, changes in its financial position and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

Smythe Ratcliffe, Chartered Accountants

Vancouver, BC

October 22, 2010

## Management Responsibility for Financial Statements

The accompanying financial statements and all other information contained in this annual report are the responsibility of the management of the Federation. The financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and have been approved by the Executive Committee.

Preparation of financial information is an integral part of the ongoing operation of the Federation. A system of internal accounting controls is maintained to ensure that transactions are accurately recorded on a timely basis, are properly approved and result in reliable financial statements.

The Finance and Audit Committee reviews the financial statements and recommends them to the Executive Committee for its approval. In addition, the Finance and Audit Committee meets with the officers of the Federation and the external auditors, and reports to the Executive Committee.

The financial statements have been examined by the Federation's auditors who are engaged by the Executive Committee on recommendation of the Finance and Audit Committee and whose appointment was ratified at the Annual General Meeting. The auditors have free access to the Finance and Audit Committee, without management present, to discuss the results of their audit work and their opinion on the adequacy of internal accounting controls and the quality of financial reporting.

Moir Mackenzie, Executive Director

Rob McLaren, C.A., Treasurer

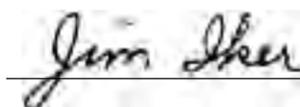
## STATEMENT 1

### Statement of Financial Position as at June 30

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash	\$ 7,349	\$ 4,676
Marketable securities (Note 3)	4,825	5,720
	<u>12,174</u>	<u>10,396</u>
Membership fee and other receivables	3,555	3,777
Due from Salary Indemnity Fund	—	650
Prepaid expenses	356	435
	<u>16,085</u>	<u>15,258</u>
<b>Capital Assets (Notes 5 &amp; 6)</b>	<u>13,823</u>	<u>14,439</u>
	<u>\$ 29,908</u>	<u>\$ 29,697</u>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 1,670	\$ 2,458
Employee future benefit obligation (Notes 2 f. & 7)	4,473	4,802
Due to Salary Indemnity Fund	486	—
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	1,112	1,111
	<u>7,741</u>	<u>8,371</u>
<b>Members' Funds</b>		
<b>General Operating Fund (including investment in capital assets) (Schedule 1)</b>	12,034	13,786
<b>Internally Restricted Funds:</b>		
<b>Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)</b>	10,328	7,793
<b>Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)</b>	131	147
<b>Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)</b>	(274)	(162)
<b>Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)</b>	(156)	(374)
<b>William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund (Schedule 6)</b>	89	126
<b>Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund (Schedule 6)</b>	15	10
	<u>22,167</u>	<u>21,326</u>
	<u>\$ 29,908</u>	<u>\$ 29,697</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee





See Notes to Financial Statements

## STATEMENT 2

### Statement of Changes in Net Assets for the year ended June 30

	General Operating Fund		Internally Restricted Funds				2010	2009	
							(in thousands)		
	Operating	Invested in Capital Assets	Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	Contingency Fund	Provincial Bargaining Fund	Public Education Defence Fund	Other Funds	Total	Total
<b>Balance, beginning of year</b>	\$ (653)	\$14,439	\$ 7,793	\$ 147	\$ (162)	\$ (374)	\$ 136	\$21,326	\$25,146
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	248	—	535	(16)	(112)	218	(32)	841	(3,820)
Transfer	(2,000)	—	2,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
Net change in capital assets	616	(616)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ (1,789)</u>	<u>\$13,823</u>	<u>\$10,328</u>	<u>\$ 131</u>	<u>\$ (274)</u>	<u>\$ (156)</u>	<u>\$ 104</u>	<u>\$22,167</u>	<u>\$21,326</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

**STATEMENT 3**  
**Statement of Operations for the year ended June 30**

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 32,868	\$ 32,294
Net investment income	250	349
	<u>33,118</u>	<u>32,643</u>
<b>Operating expenses</b>		
General Operating Fund (Schedule 1)	28,869	29,239
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund (Schedule 2)	1,388	2,125
Contingency Fund (Schedule 3)	244	611
Provincial Bargaining Fund (Schedule 4)	564	228
Public Education Defence Fund (Schedule 5)	688	3,729
Other funds (Schedule 6)	615	630
	<u>32,368</u>	<u>36,562</u>
Subtotal	750	(3,919)
Unrealized gain on investments	91	99
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses</b>	<u>\$ 841</u>	<u>\$ (3,820)</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

**STATEMENT 4**  
**Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended June 30**

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	\$ 841	\$ (3,820)
Items not affecting cash:		
Depreciation	1,339	1,218
Employee future benefits	(329)	(700)
Unrealized gain on investments	(91)	(99)
	<u>1,760</u>	<u>(3,401)</u>
<b>Changes in non-cash working capital items</b>		
Membership fee and other receivables	222	198
Prepaid expenses	79	90
Due to/from Salary Indemnity Fund	1,136	447
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(788)	(388)
SIP rebate (Note 10)	—	(2,164)
Due to Provincial Specialist Associations	1	(181)
	<u>650</u>	<u>(1,998)</u>
<b>Cash flow from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(723)	(955)
Sale of marketable securities	986	516
	<u>263</u>	<u>(439)</u>
<b>Change in cash</b>	2,673	(5,838)
<b>Cash, beginning of year</b>	4,676	10,514
<b>Cash, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 7,349</u>	<u>\$ 4,676</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

**Schedule 1**  
**General Operating Fund**  
**Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance**  
**for the year ended June 30**

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 29,112	\$ 28,601
Net interest (expense) income	(55)	(35)
	<u>29,057</u>	<u>28,566</u>
<b>Divisional operating expenses</b>		
Professional and Social Issues	5,014	4,571
Management	4,699	4,803
Communications/Campaigns	4,537	4,134
Finance and Administrative Services	2,889	2,614
Field Service	2,453	2,390
Research and Technology	2,247	2,345
Income Security	688	358
Collective Agreement and Protective Services	—	1,393
	<u>22,527</u>	<u>22,608</u>
Grants to Locals	5,255	5,167
Future Benefits	1,087	1,464
	<u>28,869</u>	<u>29,239</u>
Subtotal	188	(673)
Unrealized gain on investments	60	66
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses</b>	248	(607)
<b>Transfer to Collective Bargaining Defence Fund</b>	(2,000)	—
	<u>(1,752)</u>	<u>(607)</u>
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	13,786	14,393
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 12,034</u>	<u>\$ 13,786</u>

See Notes to Financial Statements

**Schedule 2**  
**Collective Bargaining Defence Fund**  
**Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance**  
**for the year ended June 30**

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 1,586	\$ 1,336
Net investment income	306	331
	<u>1,892</u>	<u>1,667</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Legal costs over GOF budget	938	1,671
Bills 27 and 28	434	298
VESTA/BCeSIS grant	11	—
BC Paramedics Support	3	—
GVTA prep time	2	116
Bargaining mobilization	—	40
	<u>1,388</u>	<u>2,125</u>
Subtotal	504	(458)
Unrealized gain on investments	31	33
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses</b>	535	(425)
Transfer to General Operating Fund	2,000	—
Transfer to Public Education Defence Fund	—	(3,000)
	<u>2,535</u>	<u>(3,425)</u>
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	7,793	11,218
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 10,328</u>	<u>\$ 7,793</u>

**Schedule 3**  
**Contingency Fund**  
**Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance**  
**for the year ended June 30**

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 227	\$ 223
Net investment income	1	10
	<u>228</u>	<u>233</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Legal costs over GOF budget	218	363
Bill 42	11	210
Canadian Red Cross (Haiti)	10	—
Central Falls	5	—
Codevelopment Canada re Cuba	—	20
Citizens for Public Power Society	—	10
Langley Commission	—	8
Langley Farmworkers	—	2
School closures	—	(2)
	<u>244</u>	<u>611</u>
<b>Deficiency of revenue over expenses</b>	(16)	(378)
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	147	525
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 131</u>	<u>\$ 147</u>

**Schedule 4**  
**Provincial Bargaining Fund**  
**Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance**  
**for the year ended June 30**

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 453	\$ 446
Net investment expense	(1)	(6)
	<u>452</u>	<u>440</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Provincial negotiations	564	228
	<u>564</u>	<u>228</u>
<b>(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses</b>	(112)	212
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	(162)	(374)
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ (274)</u>	<u>\$ (162)</u>

**Schedule 5**  
**Public Education Defence Fund**  
**Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance**  
**for the year ended June 30**

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 907	\$ 1,114
Net investment (expense) income	(1)	15
	<u>906</u>	<u>1,129</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Commitment to public education	695	791
Public education advocacy	(7)	2,938
	<u>688</u>	<u>3,729</u>
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses</b>	218	(2,600)
<b>Transfer from Collective Bargaining Defence Fund</b>	—	3,000
	<u>218</u>	<u>400</u>
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	(374)	(774)
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$ (156)</u>	<u>\$ (374)</u>

**Schedule 6**  
**Other Internally Restricted Funds**  
**Statement of Revenue, Expenses and Fund Balance**  
**for the year ended June 30**

	WR Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund	Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund	Total 2010	Total 2009
	(in thousands)			
<b>Revenue</b>				
Allocation of membership fees (Note 4)	\$ 552	\$ 31	\$ 583	\$ 574
Other income	—	—	—	34
	<u>552</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>583</u>	<u>608</u>
<b>Expenses</b>				
Grants	589	26	615	630
<b>(Deficiency) excess of revenue over expenses</b>	(37)	5	(32)	(22)
<b>Fund balances, beginning of year</b>	126	10	136	158
<b>Fund balances, end of year</b>	<u>\$ 89</u>	<u>\$ 15</u>	<u>\$ 104</u>	<u>\$ 136</u>

# Notes to Financial Statements

## Year Ended June 30, 2010

### 1. BACKGROUND AND BASIS OF COMBINATION

The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (the BCTF or the Federation) is incorporated as a society pursuant to the *Society Act of British Columbia*, and is a trade union pursuant to the Labour Relations Code of BC and the *Public Education Labour Relations Act*. The Federation is exempt from income tax.

The financial statements of the Federation include the results of the seven funds described below.

**General Operating Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to meet the goals of the Federation through program expenditures planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly. The General Operating Fund also holds the investment in capital assets.

**Collective Bargaining Defence Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to pay costs directly related to strikes, lockouts, the honouring of picket lines in third-party disputes, and contract enforcement in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the Representative Assembly.

**Contingency Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to meet, without delay, special or emergent expenses that could not reasonably have been anticipated and to promote the cause of public education by providing the financial means to respond effectively to any crisis in education. Expenditures from the Contingency Fund are made in accordance with policies and procedures approved by the Representative Assembly.

**Public Education Defence Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to ensure adequate resources are available to effectively respond to the attack upon public education launched by the government and to support the implementation of the Federation's Public Education Advocacy Plan. Expenditures from the fund are planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly.

**Provincial Bargaining Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to pay costs related to provincial contract negotiations. Expenditures from the fund are planned in advance and approved by the Representative Assembly.

**William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to improve public education in developing countries.

**Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund:** The purpose of the fund is to promote socially responsible teaching practices.

The **Salary Indemnity Fund** is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident. The total fee allocated to the Salary Indemnity Fund was 1.89% of gross salary for the 2009–10 membership year (2008–09 was 1.5%). Any fund deficiency is the responsibility of the Federation. The financial statements of the Salary Indemnity Fund should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

### 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Significant accounting policies used in the preparation of the financial statements are summarized below. These policies are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA).

#### a. Fund Accounting

The Federation follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fee whereby the fee is allocated to each fund on the basis approved annually at the Annual General Meeting.

#### b. Financial Instruments

All financial instruments are classified as one of the following: held-to-maturity, loans and receivables, held-for-trading, available-for-sale, or other financial liabilities. Financial assets and liabilities classified as held-for-trading are measured at fair value with gains and losses recognized in net income. Loans and receivables and other financial liabilities are measured at amortized cost using the effective interest method.

Receivables are classified as loans and receivables and liabilities are classified as other liabilities. Cash and marketable securities are classified as held-for-trading and presented at their fair value with the unrealized gains or losses recognized in excess/deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year.

#### c. Revenue Recognition

Membership fee is recognized as revenue of the appropriate restricted fund as received or receivable. Investment income from the Federation's investments is recognized as revenue as it is earned over time and is allocated to the appropriate restricted fund based on the investments held by the fund.

#### d. Marketable Securities

Marketable securities are presented at their market values as of the closing of business June 30, 2010.

#### e. Capital Assets

Capital assets are recorded at cost. Depreciation is calculated on the straight-line method based on anticipated useful lives:

Building	30 years	Furniture & equipment	3–10 years
Renovations	9–10 years	Computer hardware & software	3–10 years
Tenant improvements	10 years		

Several capital projects relating to the upgrading of computer software for the Federation approved for the 2009–10 budget year were not completed prior to year end.

#### f. Employee Future Benefits

The Federation maintains a defined benefit registered pension plan for all support staff of the Federation including casual and temporary employees and any administrative and excluded staff who are not eligible to join the Teachers' Pension Plan.

The pension expense and plan funding requirements are determined tri-annually by independent consulting actuaries. The date of the most recent pension valuation was January 1, 2008. The cost of pension benefits earned is determined using the projected benefit method pro-rated on service and is charged to expense as services are rendered. Adjustments arising from plan amendments, changes in assumptions, experience gains and losses, and the net pension assets are amortized on a straight-line basis over the estimated average remaining service lives of the employees.

In addition, the Federation provides non-pension benefits to qualifying retirees consisting of supplementary health insurance benefits. The cost of post-retirement benefits other than pensions is recognized on an accrual basis over the working lives of employees. The expense reported in the current year, based on tri-annual independent actuarial assessment, is an allocation of estimated future benefits under these plans related to the service of employees in the current year. Future obligations for these benefits are funded when they occur. The date of the most recent non-pension benefit valuation was June 30, 2009.

#### g. Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires the Federation to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Estimates in these financial statements include the collectability of receivables, the useful lives of capital assets, and the liability and expense related to employee future benefits. Actual results could differ from those estimates and could impact results of operations and cash flows of the Federation.

### 3. MARKETABLE SECURITIES

The market value of marketable securities at June 30, 2010 was \$4,825,034 compared to a cost of \$4,734,246 (June 30, 2009 market value—\$5,720,466; cost—\$5,621,508).

### 4. MEMBERSHIP FEE

The membership fee for the year ended June 30, 2010 was 1.45% of the gross salary of each member.

The following summarizes the fee allocations:

	2009–10	2008–09
General Operating Fund	1.31%	1.31%
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	0.07	0.06
Public Education Defence Fund	0.04	0.05
Provincial Bargaining Fund	0.02	0.02
Contingency Fund	0.01	0.01
	<u>1.45%</u>	<u>1.45%</u>

The General Operating Fund allocates 1.86% of its fee revenue to the William R. Long Memorial International Solidarity Fund. In addition, the General Operating Fund allocates \$1 per member per year to the Ed May Memorial Social Responsibility Fund.

### 5. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2010 Net Book Value	2009 Net Book Value
			(in thousands)	
Land	\$ 4,430	\$ —	\$ 4,430	\$ 4,430
Building	12,736	(6,151)	6,585	7,060
	<u>17,166</u>	<u>(6,151)</u>	<u>11,015</u>	<u>11,490</u>
Renovations	1,012	(646)	366	390
Tenant improvements	1,355	(758)	597	486
Furniture and equipment	1,014	(599)	415	487
Computer hardware & software	2,165	(842)	1,323	1,586
Work in progress	107	—	107	—
	<u>\$22,819</u>	<u>\$(8,996)</u>	<u>\$13,823</u>	<u>\$14,439</u>

### 6. NET ASSETS INVESTED IN CAPITAL ASSETS

Net assets invested in capital assets are funded as follows:

	2009–10	2008–09
	(in thousands)	
General Operating Fund	\$ 9,002	\$ 9,197
Collective Bargaining Defence Fund	4,821	5,242
	<u>\$13,823</u>	<u>\$14,439</u>

In 2000, the Representative Assembly authorized a loan of \$8,400,000 from the Collective Bargaining Defence Fund to the General Operating Fund to finance the purchase of the remaining interest in the Federation's building. For presentation purposes, the inter-fund loan payable and receivable are eliminated in the statement of financial position.

The outstanding principal balance at June 30, 2010 was \$4,821,314 (2009—\$5,241,833). The loan bears interest at an effective annual rate of 3.56% and is repayable in monthly principal and interest payments of \$49,773. The current term is renewable on December 31, 2010. Loan interest for the year 2009–10 was \$176,761, (2008–09—\$191,204).

### 7. EMPLOYEE FUTURE BENEFITS

The following tables pertain to the Federation's employee future benefit plans, and provide fair value of plan assets, benefit obligations, and funded status for the year ended June 30, 2010:

	Pension	Non-pension
	(in thousands)	
Fair value of plan assets	\$ 30,209	\$ —
Accrued benefit obligation	(24,511)	(12,068)
Funded status—plan surplus (deficit)	<u>\$ 5,698</u>	<u>\$(12,068)</u>

The plan assets are invested in a professionally managed balanced pooled fund.

The net expense for the Federation's future employee benefit plans is as follows:

	Pension	Non-pension
	(in thousands)	
Benefit expense	<u>\$ 311</u>	<u>\$ 845</u>

The actuarial determinations were based on the following assumptions during the year:

Discount rate	8.0%
Expected long-term rate of return on plan assets	6.5%
Rate of compensation increase	2.5%

The assumed healthcare cost trend rate at June 30, 2010 was 7.5%, decreasing to 5% after five years.

### 8. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

#### a. Fair Value

The Federation's financial instruments include cash, marketable securities, membership fee and other receivables, due to Salary Indemnity Fund, accounts payable and accrued liabilities, and due to Provincial Specialist Associations. The fair value of these financial instruments, excluding marketable securities, approximates their carrying value due to their short term to maturity. The fair value of marketable securities is as disclosed in Note 3.

#### b. Interest Rate Risk

The Federation is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain of the investments. Interest rate risk refers to the effect on the fair value of the Federation's assets and liabilities due to fluctuations in interest rates. These investments are interest rate sensitive although this risk is actively managed.

#### c. Credit Risk

Credit risk arises from the possibility that a counter party to a financial instrument would fail to fulfill its financial obligations; therefore, the Federation is exposed to credit risk with respect to its cash, accounts receivable, and marketable securities.

The credit risk associated with cash is minimal as cash has been placed with a major financial institution.

The Federation is not exposed to significant credit risk with respect to its accounts receivable and marketable securities as the majority of these amounts are due from school districts and governments.

### 9. SALARY INDEMNITY FUND

A summary of the financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund at June 30 is as follows:

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
Total assets	\$219,695	\$211,717
Total liabilities	164,158	167,352
Fund balance, end of year	<u>55,537</u>	<u>44,365</u>
	<u>\$219,695</u>	<u>\$211,717</u>

A summary of the revenue and expenditures for year ended June 30 is as follows:

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
Total revenue	\$ 53,488	\$ 28,026
Total expenditures	(47,567)	(42,454)
	5,921	(14,428)
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	5,251	(12,731)
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	<u>\$ 11,172</u>	<u>\$(27,159)</u>

A summary of cash flows for the year ended June 30 is as follows:

Cash flows from Operating Activities	\$ 3,845	\$(20,196)
Cash flows from Investing Activities	(1,496)	17,439

### 10. SALARY INDEMNITY PLAN (SIP) REBATE

The SIP rebate amount reported at June 30, 2008, represents the balance of funds received from the BC provincial government, net of refunds issued to members. Further to an Executive Committee motion of October 23, 2008, these funds were transferred into the Salary Indemnity Fund.

### 11. CAPITAL DISCLOSURE

The Federation preserves and manages its capital with the intention of promoting public education in British Columbia, obtaining improvement in conditions for its members and ensuring the continued existence of the Federation.

The Federation's capital includes cash, marketable securities, accounts receivable and accounts payable, and accrued liabilities.

### 12. COMPARATIVE FIGURES

Certain of prior years' figures have been reclassified to conform with this year's presentation.

### 13. CONTINGENCY

The Federation, from time to time, will guarantee certain loans made to locals.

# Salary Indemnity Fund

## Auditors' Report

To the Members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

We have audited the statement of financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2010 and the statements of revenue, expenditures and fund balance, changes in net assets, and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Federation's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation.

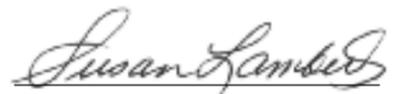
In our opinion these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Salary Indemnity Fund of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation as at June 30, 2010, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. As required by the *Society Act of British Columbia*, we report that, in our opinion, these principles have been applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

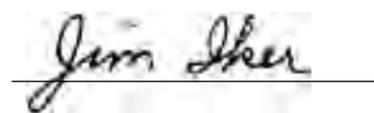
SmytheRatcliffe  
Chartered Accountants  
Vancouver, BC  
October 22, 2010

## STATEMENT 1 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Financial Position as at June 30

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Assets</b>		
Accounts receivable	4,771	3,865
Due from General Operating Fund	486	—
Investments (Note 3)	213,881	207,322
Capital assets (Note 4)	557	530
	<u>\$219,695</u>	<u>\$211,717</u>
<b>Liabilities and Fund Balance</b>		
Bank indebtedness	\$ 726	\$ 3,075
Accounts payable	686	573
Due to General Operating Fund	—	650
Provision for claims (Note 5)	162,746	163,054
	<u>164,158</u>	<u>167,352</u>
Invested in capital assets	557	530
<b>Fund balance</b>	<u>54,980</u>	<u>43,835</u>
	<u>55,537</u>	<u>44,365</u>
	<u>\$219,695</u>	<u>\$211,717</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee





## STATEMENT 2 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Changes in Net Assets for Year Ended June 30

	Fund Balance	Investment in Capital Assets	2010	2009
	(in thousands)			
<b>Balance, beginning of the year</b>	\$43,835	\$530	\$44,365	\$71,524
Excess (deficiency) of revenue before unrealized gain (loss) on investments	5,921	—	5,921	(14,428)
Depreciation (net of disposals)	161	(161)	—	—
Purchase of capital assets	(188)	188	—	—
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	5,251	—	5,251	(12,731)
<b>Balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$54,980</u>	<u>\$557</u>	<u>\$55,537</u>	<u>\$44,365</u>

## STATEMENT 3 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Revenue, Expenditures and Fund Balance for Year Ended June 30

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Revenue</b>		
Membership fees (Note 1)	\$40,727	\$31,759
Teachers' share of employment insurance premium reductions	2,505	2,645
Salary Indemnity Fund rebate (Note 8)	—	2,646
Investment gain (loss) income, net	10,256	(9,024)
	<u>53,488</u>	<u>28,026</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Short term claims paid	11,589	11,067
Long term claims paid	26,509	27,721
	<u>38,098</u>	<u>38,788</u>
Decrease in actuarial valuation of provision for claims (Note 5)	(308)	(5,813)
Total claim expenditures	<u>37,790</u>	<u>32,975</u>
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over claim expenditures	15,698	(4,949)
Administrative expenses	8,747	8,605
Investment management and trust company expenses (Note 6)	1,030	874
	<u>9,777</u>	<u>9,479</u>
Excess (deficiency) of revenue before unrealized gain (loss) on investments	5,921	(14,428)
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	5,251	(12,731)
<b>Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures</b>	11,172	(27,159)
<b>Fund balance, beginning of year</b>	<u>44,365</u>	<u>71,524</u>
<b>Fund balance, end of year</b>	<u>\$55,537</u>	<u>\$44,365</u>

## STATEMENT 4 Salary Indemnity Fund Statement of Cash Flows for Year Ended June 30

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenditures	\$11,172	\$ (27,159)
Items not affecting cash		
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	(5,251)	12,731
Decrease in actuarial valuation of provision for claims	(308)	(5,813)
Depreciation	161	136
	<u>5,774</u>	<u>(20,105)</u>
Changes in non-cash working capital items		
Accounts receivable	(906)	658
Accounts payable	113	(303)
Due to/from General Operating Fund	(1,136)	(446)
	<u>(1,929)</u>	<u>(91)</u>
	<u>\$ 3,845</u>	<u>\$ (20,196)</u>
<b>Cash flow from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of capital assets	(188)	(234)
(Increase) decrease in investment portfolio	(1,308)	17,673
	<u>(1,496)</u>	<u>17,439</u>
<b>Change in bank indebtedness</b>	2,349	(2,757)
<b>Bank indebtedness, beginning of year</b>	<u>(3,075)</u>	<u>(318)</u>
<b>Bank indebtedness, end of year</b>	<u>\$ (726)</u>	<u>\$ (3,075)</u>

## Notes to Financial Statements for Year Ended June 30, 2010

### 1. BACKGROUND AND FEES

The purpose of the Salary Indemnity Fund (the Fund) is to meet the obligations of the Salary Indemnity Plan (the Plan), which provides income benefits to members disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident.

The membership fee for the year ending June 30, 2010 was 1.89% (2009—1.5%) of the gross salary of each participating member as set at the 2009 Annual General Meeting.

The financial position of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (the Federation) is reported to the membership in a separate set of financial statements and is not included in these financial statements. The Federation is a trade union pursuant to the *Labour Relations Code of B.C.* and the *Public Education Labour Relations Act*. The Salary Indemnity Fund is part of the Federation and is therefore exempt from income tax. The financial statements of the Federation should be read concurrently with these financial statements.

### 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Significant accounting policies used in the preparation of the financial statements are summarized below. These policies are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA).

- Fund Accounting:** The Salary Indemnity Fund follows the restricted fund method of accounting for membership fees.
- Financial Instruments:** All financial instruments are classified as one of the following: held-to-maturity, loans and receivables, held-for-trading, available-for-sale, or other financial liabilities. Financial assets and liabilities classified as held-for-trading are measured at fair value with gains and losses recognized in net income. Loans and receivables and other financial liabilities are measured at amortized cost using the effective interest method.  
Receivables are classified as loans and receivables and liabilities are classified as other liabilities. Marketable securities are classified as held-for-trading and presented at their fair value with the unrealized gains or losses recognized in excess/deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year.

- Revenue Recognition:** The membership fee related to the Fund is recognized as revenue as received or receivable. Investment income on the Fund's investments is recognized as revenue in the year it is earned over time.
- Investments:** Investments are presented at market values as of the close of business June 30, 2010 and June 30, 2009.
- Capital Assets:** Capital assets are recorded at cost. Depreciation is calculated on the straight-line method based on anticipated useful lives:  
Furniture and equipment: 3 to 10 years      Computer hardware and software: 3 to 10 years      Renovations: 10 years

- A capital project relating to the SIF Software Upgrade was approved for the 2009–10 budget year, but was not completed prior to year end.
- Use of Estimates:** The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Estimates in these financial statements include the collectibility of receivables, the useful lives of capital assets, claim expenditures, and the provision for claims. Actual results could differ from those estimates and would impact future results of operations and cash flows of the Plan.

### 3. INVESTMENTS

The market value of long-term investments as at June 30, 2010 was \$213,881,400 compared to a cost value of \$193,284,780. (June 30, 2009 market value—\$207,321,534; cost value—\$191,975,662.)

### 4. CAPITAL ASSETS

	Original Cost	Accumulated Depreciation	2010 Net Book Value	2009 Net Book Value
	(in thousands)			
Furniture & equipment	\$ 126	\$ (103)	\$ 23	\$ 57
Computer hardware & software	958	(587)	371	202
Renovations	402	(315)	87	127
Work in progress	76	—	76	144
	<u>\$1,562</u>	<u>\$ (1,005)</u>	<u>\$ 557</u>	<u>\$ 530</u>

### 5. CLAIM EXPENDITURES AND PROVISION FOR CLAIMS

The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims is based upon an actuarial valuation as of June 30, 2010 performed in accordance with standards established by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries using data supplied by management of the Plan. This valuation uses standard claims tables modified to reflect Plan experience and is performed manually. In subsequent periods the accrued liabilities and provision for claims are adjusted based upon actual Plan experience. These adjustments can be significant. The estimate of accrued liabilities and provision for claims for the individual segments of the plan are set out below:

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
Short term claims	\$ 5,315	\$ 5,420
Long term claims	157,431	157,634
Total provision for claims	<u>\$162,746</u>	<u>\$163,054</u>

As a result of the current period's actuarial review, adjustments were required for claim benefits and pension contributions attributable to prior periods. These adjustments are included in the operations of the current period.

	2010	2009
	(in thousands)	
Decrease related to current period	\$ (105)	\$ 509
Decrease related to prior periods	(203)	(6,322)
Total change in provision for claims	<u>(308)</u>	<u>(5,813)</u>
Opening provision for claims	163,054	168,867
Closing provision for claims	<u>\$162,746</u>	<u>\$163,054</u>

### 6. INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT AND TRUST COMPANY EXPENSES

The investments of the Fund are managed by independent investment management firms in accordance with investment policies and restrictions as established by the Federation and the *Trustees' Act (B.C.)* and are lodged for safekeeping with a trust company.

### 7. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

- Fair Value:** The Fund's financial instruments include bank indebtedness, accounts receivable, investments, accounts payable, and due from General Operating Fund. These financial instrument, excluding investments, approximate their fair values due to their short-term nature. The fair value of investments is determined by using market price.

- Interest Rate Risk:** The Fund is exposed to interest rate risk due to the long-term maturity of certain investments. Interest rate risk refers to the effect on the fair value of the Fund's assets and liabilities due to fluctuations in interest rates. These investments are interest rate sensitive. To mitigate this risk the investments are actively managed by both management and professional investment managers.

- Currency Risk:** The Fund owns certain securities that are denominated in foreign currencies and as such is subject to risk due to fluctuations in exchange rates. Currently the Fund is exposed to currency risk with respect to approximately US\$29,110,000 (US \$29,400,000 in 2009) in marketable securities. The Fund mitigates this risk by using professional fund managers.

- Credit Risk:** Credit risk arises from the possibility that a counter party to a financial instrument would fail to fulfill its financial obligations; therefore, the Plan is exposed to credit risk with respect to its accounts receivable and investments.

The Plan is not exposed to significant credit risk with respect to its accounts receivable as the majority of these amounts are due from school districts. The credit risk inherent in investments is mitigated by the fact that the investments are professionally managed and must conform to strict investment guidelines.

### 8. SALARY INDEMNITY PLAN (SIP) REBATE

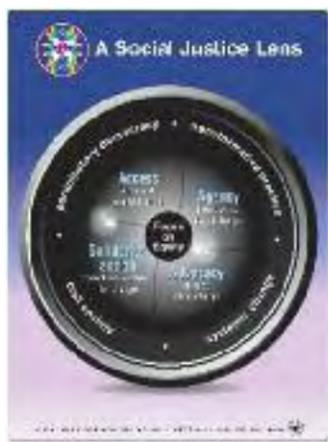
The SIP rebate amount represents the balance of funds received from the BC provincial government, net of refunds issued to members. Further to an Executive Committee motion of October 23, 2008, these funds were transferred into the Fund from the Federation.

### 9. CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

The Fund preserves and manages its capital with the intention of providing short-term and long-term benefits to members who are disabled from employment as a result of illness or accident together with ensuring the continued existence of the Fund. The Fund's capital includes cash, investments, accounts receivable, and accounts payable.

# Teachers' pension plan

## Dignity in retirement, a social justice issue for BCTF members



Consider these facts:

- The population of Canada is aging—the median age in Canada increased from 35.2 years in 1996 to 39.3 years in 2008.
- Those most likely to be thinking about retirement jumped by 28% to 3.7 million between 2001 and 2006.
- The life expectancy of Canadians increased to 80.4 years in 2008.
- The fallout from the financial crisis of 2008 has played havoc with the retirement income of many Canadians as well as senior citizens around the world, so much so, that few have escaped.
- The markets have been volatile and saving rates have been at rock bottom levels.
- According to Industry Canada, 33,516 Canadians aged 60 or over filed for bankruptcy between January 2008 and May 2010.
- Pension reform is on the agenda of provincial and federal governments.

With the above facts in mind and using the BCTF Social Justice lens dealing with access, inclusion, and participation, the BCTF Pensions Committee has zoomed in on your future income in retirement from the Teachers Pension Plan (TPP), the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and Old Age Security (OAS) to see if these enable you to live in dignity after you leave the classroom for the last time. The Lens will then focus on access and participation in the management and administration of the TPP.

### Who has access to the TPP?

Membership in the (BC) Teachers' Pension Plan is mandatory (and automatic) if you are a teacher or administrator working in a public school district in British Columbia or for another employer covered by the Teachers' Pension Plan (e.g., Teachers' Qualification Service). Contributions are automatically deducted from your pay based on your income and on the current member contribution rates. Your employer also makes contributions based on your income and on the current employer contribution rates.

### With my access to the TPP, what benefits can I expect?

Think of your teachers' pension as a long-term investment that provides financial security for you and your family. If you consider the resources and expertise within the plan that make financial security possible, you can see that the TPP has a significant value. While there is a cost to you now, the benefit far exceeds the cost: a lifetime income for you, and if applicable, your spouse. The total pension payments you will receive within the first five years of retirement will be more than the contributions (plus interest) you will make to the plan during your entire teaching career. Further, these pension payments to you will likely continue for many years as TPP retirees live to an average of 85 years.

### What happens to my TPP benefits if I move to teach in another province?

All Canadian provinces have pension plans for their public school teachers. If you leave BC and take up full-time residence in another province, you can transfer your BC teachers' pension service to that of the teachers' pension plan in your new province. Similarly if you worked in another public-sector capacity anywhere in Canada, or taught in another province before coming to take up full-time residence in BC, you can transfer your service and funds from your previous plan to the Teachers' Pension Plan here. This accessibility and participatory advantage is not normally available to private-sector workers.

### Do I have access to other public pension income?

With very few exceptions, every person in Canada over the age of 18 who earns a salary must pay into the CPP. You and your employer each pay half of the contributions. The CPP pays a small pension (up to 25% of the average wage of payroll employees in Canada, as measured by the federal government) after you retire. However, your teachers' pension can pay up to 70% of your total employment income, depending on your years of service and your age when you retire. While you are working, you are contributing to both the TPP and CPP, and, if applied for, you will receive both pensions in retirement.

The OAS pension is a monthly benefit available, if applied for, to most Canadians 65 years of age or over. OAS legal status and residence requirements must also be met. An applicant's employment history is not a factor in determining eligibility, nor does the applicant need to be retired.

### With my access to TPP, CPP, and an OAS payment, how much can I expect to receive if I teach at least 25 years?

On average, 70% of your pre-retirement income is required to maintain your pre-retirement lifestyle after you stop working. If you are retired by age 65, and you have duly completed the appropriate application forms, you will receive a monthly pension from the TPP, a monthly pension from the CPP, and a monthly payment from the OAS plan.

The average Teachers' pension granted in 2009 was based on a pensionable service length of 25 years, paying an average of \$2891.67/month before taxes. The average age of retirement in the TPP in 2009 was 58 years. The current maximum amount of CPP is \$934.17/month before taxes if taken at age 65, while the 2009 average was \$505.09/month before taxes. The current maximum amount for OAS is \$521.62/month before taxes.

### What about RRSPs?

Don't forget that all BCTF members have access to payroll-deducted group RRSPs. This is part of your collective agreement provisions and participation is voluntary. The advantages of group RRSPs are:

- convenience: automatically deducted from your pay cheque
- tax deducted: no tax is paid, so you do not have to wait for a refund
- investment: funds invested earn income through the whole year
- choice: group RRSPs available offer a variety of investment options, as well as access to

some funds not regularly available to individuals

- savings: RRSP limits have been increased allowing for more savings
- pension: RRSPs can later be used to purchase pension service if applicable.

To get the package of information about the RRSPs available in your school district, simply call and request a package from your local union office or local school office.

Now lets turn the social justice lens to look at access in terms of participation and democracy with respect to the management of our TPP.

### Who sponsors the Teachers' Pension Plan?

The BCTF and the BC government are joint partners in the sponsorship of the Teachers' Pension Plan. This joint trusteeship is confirmed through the *Joint Trust Agreement and Public Sector Pension Plans Act*.

The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees is made up of five trustees appointed by the plan-member partner (BCTF) and five trustees appointed by the plan-employer partner (the provincial government). The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees is responsible for managing the pension plan in the interests of all plan members. The board establishes investment policy, recommends changes in benefits and funding policy, and directs the application of the plan's rules. The board also appoints an independent actuary to assess the plan's financial health every three years. (The next valuation will be done as at December 31, 2011.) The board's administrative agent (BC Pension Corporation) looks after the day-to-day business of the plan, including providing benefit information for members, and estimating and paying pensions. The board's investment management agent (British Columbia Investment Management Corporation) manages the assets of the TPP.

### How are trustees selected?

The trustees appointed by the BCTF Executive are first nominated by the Teachers' Pension Plan Advisory Committee (TPPAC) composed of representatives from the BCTF Pensions Committee, the BC Retired Teachers' Association, the BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, and the BC School Superintendent's Association. Candidates for nomination must meet rigorous criteria related to pension knowledge in order to be nominated.

### How are BCTF Pensions Committee members selected?

The BCTF Pensions Committee provides advice to the BCTF Executive Committee on pension plans and matters, promotes awareness of pensions and retirement income planning among members, and develops and recommends a common statement of pension policy for adoption by member organizations of Teachers' Pension Plan Advisory Committee (TTPAC).

Vacancies on the Pensions Committee for term positions are advertised at all BCTF member work sites and on the BCTF website, with appointment to the committee being made by the BCTF Executive Committee. Applicants must be prepared to become knowledgeable about the Teachers' Pension Plan, the Joint Trust Agreement and any changes in pension plan and related matters, and to represent the BCTF on TPPAC. As mentioned, the five trustees of the Teachers' Pension Board are appointed by the BCTF from the members of the TPPAC, of which all members of the BCTF Pensions Committee are members.

So if you want to become a member of this committee, check the committee postings and download the application form from the BCTF website ([bctf.ca/opportunities/BCTFCommittees.aspx](http://bctf.ca/opportunities/BCTFCommittees.aspx)) in May or June.

### Conclusion

Is dignity in retirement possible for BCTF members? Your expenses are expected to be few by the time you retire; hopefully by then you fully own your own residence, your children have flown the nest, you are no longer making pension contributions, unemployment insurance, or union dues and you are no longer paying out of your own pocket for clothing and materials for the classroom. The BCTF social justice lens clearly demonstrates that each BCTF member has full access and participation rights to the income to which each is eligible in retirement—that is from the TPP, CPP, OAS and, if in place, personal RRSPs and savings. Assuming a teaching service of at least 25 years, retirement income from these sources should be enough to allow each BCTF member to live with dignity in retirement.

The BCTF social justice lens further demonstrates that participation in the management of the TPP meets the lens' criteria of democratic accessibility and participation by BCTF members.

The BCTF as a social justice union can be proud of its involvement in pension plan activism on behalf of its members and other workers in BC and, in particular, its current role as a TPP member partner. As a result, BCTF members can be confident that their life in retirement will be one of dignity.

*This article was contributed by the BCTF Pensions Committee and is the first of four articles devoted to the operation of the TPP.*

## Seminars: Your pension, your future and/or Thinking about retiring

Preregistration is required for these two seminars co-presented by BCTF staff and Pension Corporation staff. The time and the location will be confirmed by mail or e-mail. Check out the poster in your school staffroom or go to the Teachers' Pension Plan website ([tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca)) or contact the plan by phone 1-877-558-5574 or e-mail [TPPseminar@pensionsbc.ca](mailto:TPPseminar@pensionsbc.ca).

## Opportunities to transfer pension service from other BC public-sector pension plans

Did you previously work for the province of BC, a school district in a non-teaching role, a city, or a district municipality? Did you work for a public college in BC? If so, you may have been a member of a public pension plan and may have pensionable service with one of the other public pension plans. That service may now be transferable to your Teachers' Pension Plan.

The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees recently decided to replace the BC Public Sector Transfer Agreement (PSTA) with the National Public Sector Transfer Agreement (NTA) for transfers among the college, municipal, public service, and teachers' pension plans.

Both transfer agreements use similar calculation methods. However, the NTA has different and more flexible eligibility dates for members.

Under the NTA, a member of the Teachers' Pension Plan must apply

## There is more to it than money

The BCRTA has developed a workshop designed to complement the pension plan seminars, but with limited enrolment to facilitate sharing and learning.

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](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SalaryBenefits/SIP/LT-withdrawalForm.pdf) or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

to transfer service from a former plan either before they terminate their employment or before they retire.

If you missed an application deadline, or were previously told you were not eligible to transfer service under one of the transfer agreements, you might now be eligible to transfer your service to the Teachers' Pension Plan.

Teachers' Pension Plan staff are there to help you understand this topic. Please contact the Teachers' Pension Plan at your earliest opportunity if you have questions about your eligibility to transfer service from another pension plan.

For more information you may contact Rob Taylor, Income Security Division at the BCTF, 1-800-663-9163 or [rtaylor@bctf.ca](mailto:rtaylor@bctf.ca).

Or you can contact the Teachers' Pension Plan. They can be reached toll free at 1-800-665 6770.

# Classified

## TRAVEL/VACATION

**FRANCE.** Ultimate vacations, privately owned, beautiful furn. 1 bdrm. central Paris. Wkly/mthly. 604-738-1876, 604-879-4936, [irene.roland@gmail.com](mailto:irene.roland@gmail.com), [www.ultimateparis.com](http://www.ultimateparis.com)

**MAUI** Privately owned, beautiful fully furn. 2 bdrm, 2 bath condo, across from Kamaole Beaches. Great complex, Great location. 250-598-6955.

**HORNBY ISLAND** vacation accommodations, [discoverhornby.ca](http://discoverhornby.ca)

**TOFINO.** Owned by a Salt Spring teacher's family, this cozy condo is on the harbor in Tofino, at Elk Landing, across from The Shelter Restaurant, walking distance to town. To view, go to [www.tofino](http://www.tofino) beach homes, go to select your property, go to Eagles Nest. Call 250-725-2570.

**WHISTLER** Condo. Sleeps 4, views, close to village, 604-943-9423, [preddyplace@telus.net](mailto:preddyplace@telus.net).

**BLACKCOMB** Luxury 2 bdrm/loft, 3 bath, sleeps 8, ski-in/ski-out, 604-940-0156.

**GULF ISLANDS** Deluxe waterfront cottage, 1 bd./sleeps 4, winter and summer rates, call Alma 250-629-3008, [www.ainsliepointcottage.com](http://www.ainsliepointcottage.com)

**SOUTH OF FRANCE** villa in lively, lovely market town of Limoux. 4 bdrms. Sleeps 8. 2 bathrooms. All mod cons. Near lake and river swimming and historic Carcassonne. Great rates. Deep discounts for long-term, off-season. [www.southoffrancere.com](http://www.southoffrancere.com)

**PUERTO VALLARTA** Bright, clean, quiet, 1 bdrm, 2 blks from beach, downtown, \$350/wk., monthly rates. 604-608-4268, [dbemc@hotmail.com](mailto:dbemc@hotmail.com)

**WHISTLER** 1 bdrm. condo (Whistler Creekside) sleeps 4, hot tub, swimming pool, sauna, kitchen fully equipped, underground parking, close to lifts & stores. Call Jan or John 604-530-0958 or e-mail [jpmeargh@shaw.ca](mailto:jpmeargh@shaw.ca)

**FRANCE BURGUNDY** Weekly vacation rentals. Centre of medieval town. Fully equipped studio, 1 and 2 bdrm. apartments. Owned by former BC couple. [www.la-charite-sur-loire.com](http://www.la-charite-sur-loire.com)

**WHISTLER** townhouse, sleeps 6, fully equip. 604-925-7669.

**VANCOUVER ISLAND** oceanfront condo. New luxury 2 bdrm. Panoramic view, steps to the ocean, jacuzzi, pool, 604-274-2396, [www.yellowpointtreat.com](http://www.yellowpointtreat.com)

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**WATERFRONT CONDO** Birch Bay, WA. 2 bdrm., 2 bath., available for day, week, or weekend rentals. Complex has indoor pool, hot tub, games room. \$100/night. Further info contact Teresa, [tvferro@telus.net](mailto:tvferro@telus.net) or 604-831-4080.

**WATERFRONT P.E.I.** Beautiful 3 bdrm. cottage for rent May through Oct., \$1700/wk. July and Aug. or \$850/wk. spring/fall. Contact: [brucehaven@hotmail.com](mailto:brucehaven@hotmail.com)

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**COMOX VALLEY** 1 bdrm. fully equipped suite. Beachfront, close to skiing in the beautiful Comox Valley. Bates Beach Resort available nightly, weekly, monthly. Call for prices & photos. [rlmurphy@shaw.ca](mailto:rlmurphy@shaw.ca)

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**HAWAII.** Private Maui Schooner Resort in Kihei, Spring Break 2011-Sat. Mar. 19 to Sat. Apr 2. Two bdrm./2 bath (sleeps 6) \$1,350/wk. or 1 bdrm. condo/1 bath (sleeps 4) \$1,150/wk. Contact 604-535-9315.

**GABRIOLA ISLAND, BC.** 2 bdrm. Cottage, 250-247-9883, [www.gabriolacottage.net/firms.com](http://www.gabriolacottage.net/firms.com), [boysen@shaw.ca](mailto:boysen@shaw.ca)

**TEACHING EXCHANGE.** Consider an exchange to another country and receive your regular salary and benefits! Hundreds of BC teachers have done it, why not you? Contact BC Exchange Teachers' Assoc. [teather\\_t@sd36.bc.ca](mailto:teather_t@sd36.bc.ca) or go to [www.ceef.ca](http://www.ceef.ca) for more information.

**WANTED-PARIS** I am looking for a good cheap, clean and central B&B or small hotel in Paris, France. Please email [almassy@qcislands.net](mailto:almassy@qcislands.net) or [hgt@bctf.ca](mailto:hgt@bctf.ca) if you could recommend one. Travelling dates are July 17 returning Aug. 2.

**OKANAGAN** spring break ski. Penticton. 40 min. to Apex. Large house, sleeps 10, with a beautiful panoramic view. Wood burning f/place and full working kitchen. Split level, 2 bath. Contact Jan at [crawfordart@telus.net](mailto:crawfordart@telus.net)

**FRANCE FRANCE 2011** holiday rental. Well renovated converted barn & stoned houses in ancient, traditional vineyard village, SW France. Great walking, cycling, food, wine, Cathar castles. C\$765/C\$1051/wk. per family. U18. E-mail [mjcapper@hotmail.com](mailto:mjcapper@hotmail.com), visit [www.ourhouseinfrance.com.au](http://www.ourhouseinfrance.com.au)

**MAUI** Hawaii, Great S Kihei location, 1 bdrm. with ocean view, across the street from great beach. For more information 209-599-5248 or [www.maui342.com](http://www.maui342.com)

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**VANCOUVER** Clean, bright, quiet, centrally located condos at Robson & Bute. 1 bdrm. \$95. Daily/wkly/mthly rates. 604-608-4268, [dbemc@hotmail.com](mailto:dbemc@hotmail.com)

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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**DON'T GET BOGGED DOWN!** Book a field trip to Burns Bog. Discover the wonders of this globally unique ecosystem. Ask about our teacher's guides. 604-572-0373 or [www.burnsbog.org](http://www.burnsbog.org).

**RETIRING SOON?** Join the BC Retired Teachers' Association to: keep informed, stay connected, remain involved. For more information, go to [www.bcrrta.ca](http://www.bcrrta.ca) or call 604-871-2260, 1-877-683-2243.

**TEACHING EXCHANGE** opportunity. Counsellor/teacher from central Ontario high school in popular recreational area, interested in teaching exchange to BC for 2011-12 school yr. Interested in exploring this possibility? Email [ja.robinson@sympatico.ca](mailto:ja.robinson@sympatico.ca)

**SEE CHINA** for free and teach with Tianjiao, English short-term

assignments (10 wks) or (20 wks) in Xiamen, Fujian Prov. All levels, primary, intermediate, secondary. Starting next school year (2011-12): Sept, Nov., Feb., April. Contact [grahammul@canadatj.com](mailto:grahammul@canadatj.com)

**RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LENDING** Bill Mercer 604-897-3312, registered mortgage broker, Verico Financial Group, [www.verisite.ca/billmercer](http://www.verisite.ca/billmercer), [bmercer@mtgoptions.ca](mailto:bmercer@mtgoptions.ca), taught 33 yrs in SD35.

**RETIRING SOON?** Join the BC Retired Teachers' Association with 47 branches around the province. Services to members: Preservation of School heritage, Guarding members interests, Promoting members welfare. For more information, go to [www.bcrrta.ca](http://www.bcrrta.ca) or call 604-871-2260, 1-877-683-2243.

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Entrez le code promotionnel : CB

Agence de la consommation en matière financière du Canada Financial Consumer Agency of Canada BCSC BRITISH COLUMBIA SECURITIES COMMISSION Canada

# PD Calendar

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.bctf.ca/sea) or contact conference chair Leann Buteau, [lbuteau@gmail.com](mailto:lbuteau@gmail.com).

**17-18** Squamish. The Sea to Sky Teachers' Professional Development Committee is hosting "Power Up!! Energy in Us for Wellness Around Us." Keynote this year will be given by Dr. Art Hister, renowned author of *Guide to a Longer and Healthier Life* and daily health analyst on the *Morning News* on Global TV in BC. Dr. Art will be presenting "A Simple Guide to Wellness for Educators." We are also proud to feature a fantastic line-up of speakers including Susan Augustyn (*Achieving Excellence in Writing*), Gina Corpuz (*Aboriginal Ed: Effects of Residential School Trauma*), Emma Moses (*Support Strategies for the Classroom*), Luc P. Beaudion (*Memory Fitness 101*) and more! Visit the SSTA website [bctf.ca/ssta/](http://bctf.ca/ssta/) for workshop descriptions.

## APRIL

**1-30** Victoria, BC. "BC Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy" April 2011. The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia offers BC teachers an exciting professional development program at the Parliament Buildings in our provincial capital. Learn about parliamentary democracy and become champions of citizenship education. You will return to your school with an enhanced understanding of our political system in BC. You will meet with the Speaker of the House, MLAs, senior public officials, and have a behind-the-scenes tour of your Parliament Buildings. You will have plenty of opportunities to collaborate and develop new classroom activities! Deadline for applications is February 1, 2011. Further information and to apply on-line visit [www.leg.bc.ca/bcti](http://www.leg.bc.ca/bcti).

## 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://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/programs/institutes/iop.php> or contact Judy Paley at [judy.paley@ubc.ca](mailto:judy.paley@ubc.ca), 604-822-2733.

**Future October PSA days**  
2011-12: October 21, 2011  
2012-13: October 19, 2012  
2013-14: October 25, 2013

PD Calendar website:  
[bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProD/PD-Calendar.cfm](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProD/PD-Calendar.cfm)  
Additions/changes:  
[sdrummond@bctf.ca](mailto:sdrummond@bctf.ca)

# Think&EatGreen@School

By Kristina Campbell

Teachers play a big role in Vancouver food security through [Think&EatGreen@School](#) project.

A high school student walks into a fast food restaurant. She orders a cheeseburger and fries, then leans backward against the counter to send a text message while she waits for her food.

For too many students, fast food is part of a daily routine that they rarely stop to think about. But if some educators have their way, students will soon be armed with ample information on how their food choices affect both their health and the wider world—they'll find a bounty of choices inside the walls of their local high school cafeterias.

With the help of Vancouver teachers, a huge interdisciplinary project at UBC called *Think&EatGreen@School*, is aiming to teach K-12 students how their individual food choices affect the vast ecosystem that includes the planet's limited land and water resources.

"We assume that one of the reasons children at schools make bad choices in terms of diet, is because of their disconnect from the sources of the food—they don't

know where it comes from. They don't know how it is produced," says Dr. Alejandro Rojas of UBC's Faculty of Land and Food Systems. Rojas, who is spearheading the \$1-million project, is a social scientist originally from Latin America. He has spent most of his academic career studying the impact of human activity on the environment.

"We help the students to visualize food as a connector between humans and nature. We hope this will contribute to better choices and better decisions," he says.

Approximately eight months into the five-year project, facilitators are already helping schools implement community impact projects, such as planting school gardens, collecting compost from student lunches, keeping bees, and overhauling cafeteria menus. Hand-in-hand with these concrete initiatives is a plan to help teachers bring food education into the classroom. As the projects are carried out, schools monitor changes in their own ecological and carbon footprints.

According to project documents, the school-based initiatives all play a part in improving food security in Vancouver. Experts represent the dimensions of food security by Affordability, Availability, Accessibility, Appropriateness (nutritional, cultural, and moral), Safety, and Sustainability (AAAASS).

Rojas' *Think&EatGreen@School* team includes UBC researchers and students, the Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Coastal Health,

Vancouver Food Policy Council, and several community-based organizations. The key, says Rojas, is that all the groups have a say in how the project will unfold.

"There's not only a lot to learn from each other, but the changes are impossible if we are not working together," he says.

Rojas thinks the project could have a direct impact on the city in at least two ways: by motivating

**Approximately eight months into the five-year project, facilitators are already helping schools implement community impact projects, such as planting school gardens, collecting compost from student lunches, keeping bees, and overhauling cafeteria menus. Hand-in-hand with these concrete initiatives is a plan to help teachers bring food education into the classroom.**

masses of students to take better care of their own health, and by offering institutions practical ways to achieve carbon neutrality in time for the province's 2012 deadline.

In terms of human health, Rojas says the project's pilot research showed that many secondary school kids in the city were both

malnourished but overfed.

"The epidemic of obesity that is so prominent in the US is also a reality in Vancouver," he points out. "Nutritionalists are telling us that this is the first generation of children in North America that will live less than their parents." He hopes that, by giving kids a deeper understanding of the direct health effects of a poor diet, the project may help students make healthier choices for themselves.

As for the project's contributions to the environment, Rojas cites BC's *Climate Action Charter*, under which public institutions (including all schools) are committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2012.

"Institutions who are not able to become carbon energy neutral will pay big penalties," he says. "There is a big economic imperative...to reduce their carbon footprint. We saw here an important opportunity to collaborate with other institutions."



If some of the *Think&EatGreen@School* projects prove especially good at reducing schools' impact on the environment, project co-ordinators hope to turn them into governmental policy recommendations.

Rojas says the project's definition of success is different from that of other projects.

"We do not succeed if we publish fifty papers and make a book," he emphasizes. "We will succeed only if there are changes on the ground. If food gardens multiplied like mushrooms in the schools, if cafeterias become places where children want to eat and they're fed a nutritious and healthy diet, and if the curriculum becomes attractive, enlightening...that's success."

So far, the project has already amassed a large number of excited students and teachers at the 15 Vancouver schools in which they are working. "We have this sense of synergy and energy," he says.

After the project runs its course, a secondary school student might walk into a burger joint and see not a delicious, crisply-wrapped cheeseburger, but this: a farmer harvesting Roundup-Ready Wheat, a rancher loading his reluctant cattle into a trailer bound for the abattoir, a Mexican migrant worker picking tomatoes that will end up at the ketchup factory, and a scientist perfecting fried burger flavour droplets in a laboratory.

Would the student still choose it?

*Kristina Campbell is a Vancouver writer and educator.*

Read more educators' stories, or share your own on Campbell's School View blog: [www.vancouverobserver.com/blogs/schoolview](http://www.vancouverobserver.com/blogs/schoolview).

Reprinted from the *Vancouver Observer* website.



## High school garden project grows into full-scale urban farm

Windermere secondary students collecting compost from local schools, restaurants

A small box garden started by two Windermere secondary students has grown in just three years into an urban farm and composting project approaching industrial scale.

Using bicycles and two trailers, Grade 10 Leadership students are pedalling out to seven local elementary schools and the Three Links senior housing complex to pick up compostable waste and bringing it back to the imposing mechanized industrial composter installed in the school's courtyard area alongside conventional composting boxes, 11 raised-bed gardens and a 320-square-foot greenhouse.

The students are also putting out feelers to local restaurants to supply even more compostable waste. Students from the Leadership 10 class use their phys-ed period to

ride out and fill the trailers with waste twice a week. The Grade 9 Leadership class collects compost produced by Windermere itself.

So hungry are the students for more biomass, that they now spread out to the school's surrounding neighbourhood with rakes and bags to harvest fallen leaves from boulevards and roadsides.

"To get the money for these projects we apply for grants, mini-grants, big grants, whatever," said Kevin Liu. "Our principal, Robert Shindel, is really helpful when it comes to getting grants."

The students were able to combine some school funds with grants from Toyota Evergreen and BC Green Games to purchase and erect the greenhouse, complete with warm grow lighting, automated fans and an aquaponics system.

"The greenhouse was built two summers ago by students," said student Henry Lau, who at 16 has already worked in the garden for

three years. "It was a lot of fun assembling it; the manual was in German."

The Vancouver School Board grounds department sought and won a \$25,000 grant to install the composting Earth Tub, a 450-pound, six-foot monster that can consume about 70 kilograms of waste a day. A motorized augur and aeration system speeds waste on its way to finished compost in a matter of weeks. The compost will be used in the Windermere garden and distributed back to the elementary schools that are starting their own gardens.

"What separates this composter from other systems is that it can compost meat and it's pretty effective," said Lau.

Volunteers from the Environmental Youth Alliance come to Windermere regularly to assist students with their projects and provide little science lessons on the basics of composting and soil building.

Many of the raised beds are covered with leaves or winter cover crops of rye, fava beans, and field peas. Others still show the stubble where workers from the cafeteria have cut cauliflower florets or chard leaves. Fruit trees are trained along the inside walls of the courtyard, in the Victorian style.

A vermicomposting area consists of two wooden boxes filled with fruit and vegetable waste along with a few thousand helpful worms—red wigglers, to be exact.

"If you have good soil, you really don't need much fertilizer," Lau explained.

During the school year, most of the produce is used by the school cafeteria. When school lets out, the students who work on the garden through their summer vacation take the produce home or donate it to neighbourhood house food programs.

"When everything seems to come out of a factory, it's nice that we can grow food ourselves and it's really

simple," said Lau, who tries to bring the message home by talking to his mother about how to make earth-friendly food choices. "She mostly worries about the price, so it's a bit of [a] struggle."

Liu and Lau also farm a plot together in a local community garden, so they can take locally grown food home more regularly.

It has been said that a small group of dedicated individuals can make a difference, but at Windermere the struggle is keeping the group small. On teacher professional development days—which most kids regard as a holiday from school—50 to 60 students will show up to work in the garden, said teacher sponsor Vagner Castilho.

"The kids love it, and when they graduate they [will be] having their own gardens and getting jobs in food security and food production," he said.

—[rshore@vancouverobserver.com](mailto:rshore@vancouverobserver.com)

Reprinted with permission, Randy Shore, *The Vancouver Sun*, November 10, 2010.