

# Teacher

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## No solution in sight for class size/composition

By Charlie Naylor

In the 2001–02 school year, there were 737 more special education teachers than there were in 2010–11. When the BC government stripped ratios and caseloads of special education teachers from contract language and discontinued targeted funding for students with high incidence special needs in 2002, school districts slashed staffing in special education and learning assistance by over 18%. As a result, teachers in remaining special ed and LA positions faced increased workload and caseloads, as well as job fragmentation, with reduced time allocation in special ed being the new norm, and with many specialist teachers occupying multiple roles and only working part-time in supporting students with special needs.

Many experienced special ed/LA teachers either were either forced out of or opted for a classroom assignment rather than continuing in a role that some described as being “between a rock and a hard place,” in that they found it increasingly difficult either to meet students’ needs or to adequately support classroom teachers. As experienced specialists moved out of their specialist role, special education became an entry-level position into teaching. Thus, the least experienced teachers were

expected to support both students and classroom teachers. Many of these new teachers opt for regular classroom assignments whenever they become available, making special education positions more likely to be perennially staffed by newer teachers in many districts.

For classroom teachers, the existing and already limited support for effectively including all students in learning was greatly reduced with fewer and less experienced specialist support teachers. Managing classes with increased numbers of students with IEPs became more

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difficult and complex. The number of classes with four or more students with special needs has been increasing, with five consecutive years of increased numbers of classes with four or more students with IEPs since 2005–06. This means that all students are getting less attention in a province where, in 2010–11, 12,240 classrooms include four or more students with IEPs.

As reported in the September 2011 *BCTF Brief to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services*:

The number of students with special needs has been increasing



in most directly funded categories, most notably students designated as having Autism Spectrum Disorder and physical disability/chronic health impairment. In the categories that do not receive a funding supplement, the reported numbers have declined in some and increased in others. For example, there were 1,518 more students designated with a learning disability in 2010–11 than in 2005–06. In the special needs categories where there has been a decline in number of students identified, this is not necessarily because fewer students need the resources, but because there is no additional funding to support them. They do, however,

still require the additional support from teachers, making classroom conditions more difficult.

In the BCTF Research Worklife study, teachers reported a high level of stress caused by reduced levels of support for students who are not designated in terms of special needs, but who need additional help to succeed. Now that many learning assistance roles have been amalgamated into special education/learning assistance combinations, the levels of concern indicate that many of these students may not be able to access the help they need.

Cuts to supporting services to students with special needs reflect a

situation where government's fiscal decisions and cuts have won out over students' educational needs. The combination of class size, less specialist support, and unmanageable class composition has led to a deteriorating educational environment, negative impacts on all students, accompanied by high pressure and stress on teachers. The issue is support for inclusion and making supports in school match the government's policies. By addressing the three areas of class size, composition and specialist support in bargaining, teachers hope to better serve the needs of students and to make teaching manageable.

Charlie Naylor, BCTF Research

## BCeSIS is going, going... but not gone yet

By Larry Kuehn

The Ministry of Education paid \$250,000 to the Gartner IT consulting firm to conclude that “BCeSIS, as currently deployed, is not meeting the business, technical or operation needs of BC and is not a viable future alternative.”

Many teachers and the BCTF have been trying to get that message through to the ministry from very early in the life of BCeSIS.

The problem began with the conception of the project. The Ministry wanted it to be a province-wide, web-based system where everyone was using the same centralized database.

That was not available off the shelf—it wasn't a direction that other Canadian jurisdictions even wanted. State-wide student information system databases didn't exist in the US either, so there was no product that had been developed

and tested to do what the ministry wanted BCeSIS to do.

That may be changing now. Because of the amount of testing and tracking required for the No Child Left Behind program in the US, a number of states are trying, at significant cost, to create large-scale centralized student information data bases.

Even if jurisdictions in the US succeed, we still need to question whether the replacement for BCeSIS should be a new centralized system. One of the consequences and often the intention of these large-scale databases is data-matching and data-mining. This is to give more control over what happens in classrooms to people who are not teaching in that classroom—“steering at a distance,” as these approaches have been characterized. They have also been called forms of surveillance.

See BCeSIS page 4

## On the inside

Class size and class composition are major issues for teachers and parents and government has still not seen fit to restore the learning conditions language illegally stripped from collective agreements in 2002. The impact of this action has left a legacy of reduced services and increased stress and difficulties for teachers that are highlighted in the lead article for this edition.

In addition there is an update on the benighted BCeSIS saga of frustration and endless spending.

Members of our bargaining team relate their experiences and views, and Kamloops gives us a glimpse of what can be accomplished in local bargaining.

PSAs are celebrating 40 years of

professional opportunities for teachers and continue to profile their varied areas of expertise. Accompanying their contribution is an article on the crucial issue of professional autonomy.

We gain a perspective on the current state of public education around the world through a first-hand account of the recent Education International Congress held in Cape Town, South Africa.

A innovative First Nations school is paving the way in preserving the language and culture of the Secwepemc Nation.

Finally, amongst a number of other articles of interest, is a timely reminder that elections for trustees are upcoming and that it is important to cast your vote.

Government's mandate has chilling effect	3
Local bargaining is not a new creation	5
Stand up for public education November 19	7
Professional autonomy in teaching	8
Teachers united to defend public education	9

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President's message



Susan Lambert

"The best thing about this job action is that I've realized just how much I had taken on in addition to teaching—I hope we never go back

to taking on all that work again." I've been to many general meetings this fall and I've heard many anecdotes about teachers creating more space and more time for their true passion: teaching and learning. Moira Mackenzie ran into a teacher at a garden centre who recognized Moira and asked, "You wouldn't be teachers, would you? Isn't Phase 1 wonderful!?" She said that every time her principal tries to send a task her way she says, "Oh, no, I don't think that would add to my joy of teaching, do you?" Phase 1 has created some possibilities for us. Many are finding they have more energy for teaching. Many have found that making decisions for ourselves, making choices that benefit our students has empowered us as professionals

while at the same time it's serving its' purpose. The Labour Relations Board describes the purpose this way: "The Board has recognized that stretching management and excluded personnel resources is a legitimate process to achieve the object of exerting pressure on an employer in order to shorten a labour dispute." from BCLRB No. B431/2001 As we mount this job action we will at times feel the pressure to go along to get along. It is in our nature to make things work. We don't like to confront and we don't like tension. But we have worked for too long to patch and prop up this system and to maintain its high quality. And for too long, that work has been done by teachers alone. It

is time now for teachers to re-discover the joy of teaching. It is time now for our administrators to step up to the plate and to advocate for their teaching colleagues, for students, and for the system itself. At one general meeting a teacher told this cautionary tale at the microphone: A doctor, a lawyer, and a teacher were in the line-up facing execution by guillotine. They were told that lately there had been problems with the blade and if it hung up they would be free to go. The doctor went first and the blade suddenly stopped about a third of the way to the block. The doctor walked away free. The lawyer was next and the blade again hung up about halfway to its destination. The lawyer was freed. When the teacher stepped up he said to the

executioner pointing to the blade assembly "I think I see your problem." The next time your administrator tries to send a chore your way you may want to ask instead what she or he has done to help return our rights to bargain class size and composition? You may want to ask them what, specifically, have they done to advocate publicly for more education funding? Or you may want to ask, what have they done to advocate for fair compensation for teachers? And the next time your administrator asks you to take on yet another task, you may want to say, as one teacher did: "I don't think so, I don't think that will increase my joy in teaching."

Readers write

Historical right to a free, quality education

"Education is not the art of training and subjugating people to serve the profit of others—to educate is to reject the false analogies of the marketplace, to see justice and equality as noble aims rather than an obstacle to a takeover bid, to insist that human progress has no bottom line. If anyone survives to breed future historians, they will without doubt, study the memorials of our era with shocked incredulity, wondering what ghastly ignorance or ineptitude, what awful failure of education, led our citizens to accept the rule of madmen." – Norman Goble, secretary-general, World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession Convention, 1984. "Education for the marketplace" is the slogan by which public education is being attacked and dismantled by corporate powers, just as other social programs are also being assaulted. But with public education this attack profoundly affects the thinking, the philosophy, the very future of our children, and the world they will grow up in. No one stops to think how hard it was to win the fight for free, non-sectarian public schools in our country. When 10,000 citizens petitioned in 1831 in support of separation of church and state (the church was the biggest landowner and controlled the schools), they were refused in no uncertain terms by the Family Compact, a refusal which was a prime cause of the Rebellion of 1837. Protest rallies were held the length and breadth of Lower Canada, expressing their support for the Patriots led by Papineau, but they met defeat when 6,000 British troops marched against them, burning villages as they went.

At the same time, William Lyon Mackenzie and his Reformers in Upper Canada fared no better, in fact, between getting their dates for action confused and having their more conservative members turn traitor, Mackenzie never did see the great convention in York (Toronto) which was to proclaim responsible government. He fled to the United States, but his friends Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews were hanged, their bodies consigned to Potters' Field. It is amazing to find that just 14 years later in 1852, Lieutenant-Governor Wilmot of New Brunswick opened a provincial exhibition saying: "It is unpardonable that any child should grow up in our country without the benefit of at least a common school education. It is the right of the child. It is the duty not only of the parent but of the people. The property of the country should be to educate the country, I want to hear the tax collector calling at my door. I want the children of the poor in the remote settlements to receive the advantages now almost confined to their more fortunate brethren and sisters of the towns." British Columbia's historical development was quite different from the other provinces and the first school act of 1865 acceded to the popular demand of "a free, non-sectarian school open to all classes in the community." This was passed by the Vancouver Island Legislature seven years before BC joined Confederation. Canadians are known as a compassionate people. This is a time to be a passionate people, a time to go on the offensive, to insist that every child has a right to free, quality education with adequate funding provided by senior governments that profit from the selloff of our natural resources. Finally, a reminder to the BC school trustees of their discussion

paper of 1996, "A New Agenda for Education in British Columbia," in which they said: "We think it's clear that the agenda for public policy and public discussion of education can no longer revolve around a single item—How much does it cost? It must be about improving education and about doing a better job of meeting children's needs." Betty Griffin Burnaby (retired)

Support from retired staff

At a recent luncheon gathering of BCTF retired staff, the topic that dominated our discussion was the current bargaining situation. The topic was prompted when someone asked "how is the BCTF going to succeed this time?" As former staff members who have endured tough bargaining battles, we know how troubling it is to face seemingly insurmountable obstacles to collective bargaining. The Federation's history, however, is that progress is made and victories emerge. Our assessment of the current situation is that the BCTF is on the right path with its measured actions and careful attention to the membership's voice. Clearly, the government's intent is to further erode public confidence in teachers and the public school system. In response, the BCTF has to be more determined than ever to defend public education. Weakening support for public education will have devastating consequences for our society, creating sharp divisions amongst British Columbians. Uncertain economic conditions cannot be used as an excuse to "hold the line" on salaries and classroom conditions. Investing in teachers and in children's learning is an investment that never stops paying. The benefits far outweigh the alternative of crowded and neglected environments for children

and mediocre wages for teachers. Creating jobs in the education sector is one of the most worthwhile endeavours to boost our economy. We want you to know that as former BCTF staff members, we are fully supportive of your actions on behalf of teachers. Your considerable voice in defense of public education is highly regarded and essential. Wes Knapp on behalf of BCTF retired staff

Join us on Facebook BC voters supporting BC teachers and public education This group of concerned BC citizens feel that BC's public education system is underfunded. The group is growing at about 30% a day. Once you have joined the group, you can add others yourself. This is an exciting opportunity to build some momentum and cultivate grassroots support.

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- easy registration for conferences
- information, articles, videos

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- Choose a password (and remember it).
- If you have a problem, call 604-871-2119 or 1-800-663-9163, local 2119 or e-mail portal@bctf.ca.

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# Government's mandate has chilling effect on bargaining

## BCTF proposals

**Salaries commensurate with other teachers in Canada, particularly Alberta**  
BC teachers' salaries are now the lowest in Western Canada and Ontario, despite the fact that BC has the highest cost of living and housing prices in the country. An experienced Vancouver teacher now makes \$20,000 less than a teacher with the same qualifications and experience in Lethbridge.

**Improved benefit coverage**  
Teachers' benefits vary from district to district, but in all cases, there have been no improvements in almost 20 years.

**25% preparation time for all teachers**  
Elementary teachers in Ontario have a minimum of 220 minutes of preparation time each week, and secondary teachers have 25%—double the amount that teachers in BC have. Many teachers in Manitoba and Saskatchewan also have 200 minutes of preparation time in contract.

**Top up for EI Pregnancy/Parental and Compassionate Care leave benefits to 100% of salary**  
While almost all teachers have top up provisions for pregnancy leave, few teachers have top up provisions for parental leave. No teachers have top up provisions for the eight weeks of Employment Standards mandated compassionate care leave.

**Ten days bereavement leave for death of a family member**  
Local provisions for bereavement leave vary, but five days is a common provision. When a spouse or child dies, five days of leave is often not enough.

**Sick leave and guaranteed minimum salary for teachers teaching on call**  
Currently most teachers teaching on call do not earn sick leave credits for time worked and they are not guaranteed a minimum amount of work in a year, despite making themselves available on a daily basis.

**Work-day limits for distributed learning (DL) teachers**  
Currently DL teachers have no limits on their work day. Many DL teachers work with students in the evenings and on weekends based on student needs. There needs to be limits to the long hours they work.

## BCPSEA demands

**No increases to salaries**  
Government's "net-zero" mandate has restricted BCPSEA's ability to bargain fairly with teachers. Despite fair increases negotiated with police officers, nurses, municipal, federal, and private sector employees, government has singled out provincial and school district employees for wage freezes.

**No improvements to benefits**  
The government's "net-zero" mandate applies to improvements in benefits as well as salaries. This makes bargaining a fair collective agreement extremely difficult.

**No increases in preparation time**  
The government's "net-zero" mandate means that BCPSEA is prevented from negotiating increased preparation time for teachers.

**Filling of posted positions based on "suitability, performance, experience, and qualifications"**  
BCPSEA has demanded that teachers give up their rights to obtain posted positions based on their qualifications and seniority. Instead, they are insisting on giving administrators the right to fill vacant positions with teachers who they want.

**Right to force transfer teachers for educational, financial, or "administrative reasons"**  
BCPSEA has demanded that a teacher give up her or his rights to a position whenever the administrator wants someone new for the job. We go into bargaining to make things better for our members, not worse.

**Yearly evaluation through a new "performance review" process**  
BCPSEA has demanded that teachers give up the current fair evaluation procedures for a simplified administrator conducted "performance review."

**Right to dismiss a teacher after one unsatisfactory "performance review"**  
BCPSEA has demanded that a principal have the right to terminate a teacher's employment based on a single "performance review" of the teacher's "planning, collaboration, instructional techniques, and assessment and reporting practices."

**Mandatory professional development requirements determined by administration**  
BCPSEA is demanding that principals have the right to dictate individual professional improvement plans for teachers, including mandatory requirements for specific professional development activities.



Source image: Jupiterimages/Thinkstock

## Looking back

**70 years ago**  
Whatever the difference of opinion there may or may not be as to other virtues, the Minster of Education certainly does not lack for courage. It took courage on the part of Dr. Weir to place his official imprimatur upon the newly issued Departmental Regulation relative to Bible Study. We all are in sympathy with the Minister's desire to work out a solution for a problem that has perplexed thoughtful people and has hitherto been carefully and habitually avoided by responsible public men. That the typical high school student is abysmally ignorant of the Bible and of what it connotes everybody knows. And

with the statement in the departmental bulletin that the Bible is "an essential element in the culture of every educated man or woman," few educated men or women will disagree.

– October 1941, *The BC Teacher*

**50 years ago**  
The student teacher making his debut before a sea of expectant faces will find readily available all the horrors of the most oppressive nightmare. He has been precipitated into a strange school, from an atmosphere of sober reflection to one of chalk dust, lunch bags and P.A. systems. Rather than listening and learning, he will be talking (probably a little too much) and teaching. Knowing that it is better

to give than to receive, he will none-the-less have difficulty concealing a moist brow and a dry mouth. And observing him, surely only the most amnesia-stricken critic teacher could fail to murmur "But for the grace of God, there go I." Indeed, a guest is in the classroom, and he deserves every consideration, be he ever so inept to begin with.

– Sept./Oct. 1961, *The BC Teacher*

**30 years ago**  
The arts are systems of communication; they demand creativity that, once fostered, is transferable to other areas. They challenge our perceptions of ourselves and our society. These

things are what education is really about, not learning to be a consumer. A brief word about Consumer Fundamentals (surely more notice than it deserves): How sad it is that the vision of our leaders is so limited that consumerism is the centre of their perception. Where is the nobility of thought that holds that an educated, enlightened person in our society is free to make and capable of making his or her own choice? What respect can we have for a government whose ideals are so bankrupt that the limits of their goals are consumerism?

– Sept./Oct. 1981, *The BC Teacher*

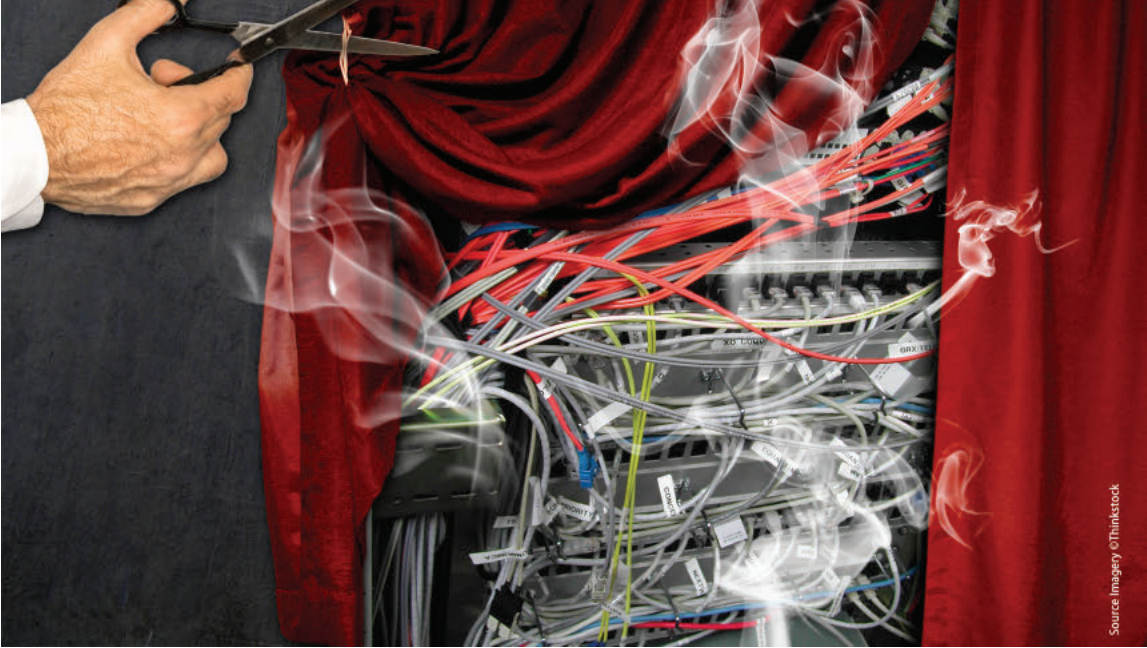
**10 years ago**  
It's about time . . . BCTF President David Chudnovsky explained that one of the first acts of the new government was to provide deputy ministers with an 18–32% increase over one year. As well, many of the deputy ministers had received a substantial increase the previous year. "Teachers are determined to bring up the level of compensation for the profession."

– October 2001, *Teacher newsmagazine*

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich



BCeSIS from page 1



BCeSIS was largely unsuccessful because it ran into some of the classic problems in the IT field—one is what they call “scalability.” That means that if the project works well in one set of circumstances, will it work in another where there are a lot more users and more demand on the technology. BCeSIS had been developed for a school-district-size application—and did not scale up to meet the conditions of the BC school system.

BCeSIS scored low on what the Gartner consultants call a “health check” used to evaluate projects. BCeSIS was low not just for scalability, but also on support-ability, availability and cost of support skills, technical performance, business robustness (the software company failed and was bought out by Pearson, who said they would not support the software) and life cycle position (in other words, based on old technology that is fading away). It did score medium on some other factors, but not high on a single one.

My thick files of teacher complaints were a BCTF “health check” that covered not only the health of the technology, but the health of the teachers who have had to use it. Several teachers wrote to tell me they went on stress leave or had to quit teaching because BCeSIS had caused them so much stress.

So what should a new system look like?

Not another centralized database to hold all the information on all the students

However, Gartner reported that everyone—except the BCTF—want a new “single, province-wide logical database with a single instance of the software supporting all students in the province.”

In discussions with Gartner, the BCTF opposed another centralized system and supported one that is distributed—more local databases

that only share the information needed for reports. A centralized system was opposed for a couple of reasons. One is that we have seen the operational problems of a single, province-wide database. At least some of the problems with this grow from the cyclical work of teaching. Lots of people need to have access at the same time, pushing the limits of the servers and the connection between the user and the central database.

*A technology has built into it a social order. Let's make sure that the next version of the technology is built around the key relationship in education—student, teacher and parent, and the school as a social unit.*

Just as important, even if it was user-friendly and speedy, we need to look at issues around how we want data used. The folks Gartner interviewed, according to the report, wanted standardized test data right down to “recording students' performance or mastery of each competency/objective.” Is this really how we want to know our students—as a matrix of competencies recorded in a database?

Also, Gartner reports, “In many districts there is a need to have standardized test results attached to a student record regardless of when they are taking the course or test for the course.” Again, do we want to build this into a database that will soon set up the expectation that we want a battery of standardized tests for every student.

And who has access to all this data. Gartner again speaks for the people they talked to—most of them want access to “all the data.” The report says “SIS reporting involves the ability to access all data,

(current and historical) within the system to create various reports in spreadsheet or other format for reporting and analysis for schools, districts and the Ministry of Education.” Notice that teachers, students, and the classroom are not mentioned.

Gartner goes COTS

Gartner explored four options to get beyond BCeSIS—rejecting two off the top. One was to go for a platform being used in other ministries. Not relevant to the education needs, and way too expensive was the recommendation. There may still be pressure in government to go this route because there is a cross-ministry business plan to have common databases for the purposes of linking different kinds of data and doing data mining. This would link education information on students with that from health, social services, and any other connection the individual has with government.

Another rejected option was to look at Open Source applications. These are not developed for commercial purposes and allow a user to modify and build on them, rather than paying a software company. Gartner couldn't find any that even aimed at the high data requirements of a centralized system.

A third option is to keep BCeSIS. Gartner says that for a one-to-three-year period BCeSIS “meets the majority of the current needs,” although it will need “some effort and cost for enhancements to meet current and future mandatory requirement gaps.” Beyond that, costs “for evolving and maintaining the solution will increase.”

Education Minister George Abbott has jumped on the one-to-three-year opening and announced that BCeSIS will be around until 2014—the outside range of what Gartner says makes sense. Abbott hasn't announced that the ministry will pick up all the costs of the work needed to make it last that long. One hopes it will not be still another case of costs downloaded onto school districts and taking away from other educational services.

So what is left as an option? Gartner calls for COTS—that stands for Commercial Off The Shelf software. In other words, this is software a corporation has developed for a particular market. They suggest that a COTS approach would likely meet about 80% of the requirements.

So what about the other 20%, more or less? Two options are open for that.

One approach is to customize aspects of the program to fit the way that you want it to operate. The downside of that is that every time you have to upgrade the base program, you have to worry about how the customized part will fit with the new core version. It probably won't, at least not entirely, so you will have to do some more

programming with every upgrade. The other option is to force the users to fit the requirements of the software, rather than the software fitting the requirements of the users.

Watch out for “best practices”

The phrase “best practices” is used frequently in the Gartner report and many other places these days. The implication is that someone has evaluated a number of practices and identified which is “best.”

That is not what it really means. Most “best practices” are actually standardized practices that someone wants to impose on someone else. Seldom have a variety of possibilities been explored, let alone tried and evaluated to be honestly described as “best.”

One of the evaluation categories Gartner uses for its assessment is “Organizational Change Management.” For the COTS (commercial off the shelf) approach, they say that “change management will be crucial in order to effectively deploy best practices built into the new system.” In other words, everyone will be forced to use the approach built into the software and change managed into doing it.

“Every tool shapes the task”

Technology analyst, Ursula Franklin, reminds us that every tool does shape the task. We can shape our technology, but then our technology shapes us.

How many times have you heard about technology “it's just a tool”? Tools are not neutral. One only has to look at BCeSIS to see that.

BCeSIS was built on a lot of assumptions about the nature of the process of schooling. Fixed class schedules. Students in rows (check out the organization of the photos of students). Summative assessment and record-keeping, not assessment for learning. The consultants were told that the new system has to be flexible for “personalized learning”—and that BCeSIS does not fit the bill. It was built on other assumptions.

A technology has implicit in it a social order. Both the design of the software and the standardized practices to use it reflect and impose important elements about the process of education.

That's why teachers should be involved in the beginning in defining what is needed. The nature of the social process of education should be determined by users, not by software developers. IT managers and staff of school districts and the ministry should not be the only ones involved.

The software vendors and developers must be told by educators what is needed—not the other way around.

Please, not a centralized BCeSIS—version 2

The software consultants noted that the only voice opposed to a centralized system was that of the BCTF. The people who currently manage and support BCeSIS want to replace it with another centralized system—it is easier for administrative purposes, but not necessarily educational purposes.

They want a new BCeSIS that will do what they wanted the old one to do—provide instant access to data for those who would give directions from the top of the hierarchy, making it a surveillance system for central direction.

A technology has built into it a social order. Let's make sure that the next version of the technology is built around the key relationship in education—student, teacher and parent, and the school as a social unit. Let's not let it be one that is based on surveillance and central direction through data-based direction imposed from outside the classroom.

Larry Kuehn, director, BCTF Research and Technology Division

Health and safety  
Job action Phase 1:  
What you can or  
can't do

By Karen Langenmaier

There have been a number of questions regarding what you can and what you can't do relative to health and safety in Phase 1 of our job action.

As the *Workers Compensation Act* and *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation* stand outside the *School Act*, collective agreements, bargaining and labour relations, joint committee members must continue to take part in their responsibilities.

Joint committee members will continue to attend site-based committee meetings, participate in inspection and investigations of incidents and accidents, and take part in their entitlement to the eight hours of release for training and education. If an emergent health and safety issue should arise, teachers on joint committees can meet with administration and the support staff representatives to go through incident investigation processes. For example, if there is a violent incident, the joint committee would conduct an investigation, do a risk assessment, and make recommendations to prevention plans to keep workers safe. Indoor air quality issues, communicable diseases, rodent infestation, asbestos abatement, lock-down procedures, will all require participation from teacher health and safety representatives.

The advice from the job action issues committee however, is that teachers will not participate in district health and safety committees as they are not mandated by the *Workers Compensation Act*. It is the site-based committee that has the jurisdiction to deal with issues at the site level. The only exception to this is if the local and district have a variance that gives the responsibilities to a district committee. In some locals, a released officer is attending the district committee when issues arise that impact teachers. Some districts have suspended district committee meetings.

A number of questions have come up around WHMIS training. The OH and S Regulation states that *if* (emphasis added) controlled substances are used in the work area, the employer must provide WHMIS training. The first step in the process would be for the joint committee to do an inspection of the workplace to determine if there are controlled substances, conduct a risk assessment, and then train the workers of the safe use and storage of the chemical or biological agent. If there are no controlled substances in the workplace, then WHMIS training is not required. General WHMIS education must be provided as it pertains to the workplace and as it is in-service, should be provided during work time.

In terms of health and safety education, joint committee members have two avenues from which to choose. Use the BCTF school union rep training and participate in tri-partite training of the joint committee member's choice. The language in the *Workers Compensation Act* says that the employer must provide the release time and associated costs of taking training and education. It does *not* say that the employer must provide the training.

For further information regarding health and safety relative to job action, please contact this office.

Karen Langenmaier, BCTF Income Security Division, klangenmaier@bctf.ca



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# Kamloops–North Thompson

## Local bargaining is not a new creation

By David Komljenovic

History teaches everything including the future – Lamartine

The shift to provincial bargaining in 1994 is a problem for addressing issues at local tables. While many matters remain that needed local solutions, the focus on the provincial table had dampened interest and capability in doing this.

Despite this, the local and board in the Kamloops–Thompson district have had some success in using varying aspects of local bargaining to achieve agreement on a number of items. Over the past 16 years, through the terms of seven presidents, we have achieved agreement on everything from partial medical leaves, general leaves, post-and-fill and job sharing language to an evaluation procedure for TTOCs. While these methods have achieved some success, it should be noted that they have resulted in a complicated procedure. This begged a provincial response to the lack of a coherent local bargaining process that we are now engaged in implementing.

Four methods that were used to achieve agreement on outstanding matters included the following:

- local bargaining pursuant to Appendix 2 (local items) of Letter of Understanding No. 1
- mid-contract modification process with approval from BCTF and BCPSEA
- grievance process
- local agreements on matters in Appendix 1 (provincial items) of Letter of Understanding No. 1.

Here is a review of various past agreements that were reached after local bargaining ended in 1994 and before an increased activity of bargaining local agreements in 2004.

**1. Term Certain/Temporary Appointments—1994**

Subsequent to negotiating a clause that would convert teachers to continuing term certain appointments with full recall rights based on seniority, the local union raised a grievance around the interpretation of this language. This new language was inconsistent with another newly negotiated clause in the contract that gave a TTOC who served in a position for two continuous months a temporary contract. A temporary contract does not have the same recognition as a continuing contract.

After months of grievance meetings, the parties came to an agreement that resulted in a Letter of Understanding. The parties agreed that the TTOCs who completed two months of continuous service in one position would be granted a retroactive continuing

term certain contract for that position and be given recall status. Further, that position would be posted automatically.

**2. Amalgamation: Red Circling Rights for North Thompson Teachers—1997**

After the provincial government amalgamated the Kamloops School Board and the North Thompson School Board, the local unions met to discuss merging rights for teachers in the North Thompson into the Kamloops collective agreement.

Agreement was reached in 1997 between the parties, which saw North Thompson teachers included in the Kamloops collective agreement and retain superior rights around salary, paid discretionary leave, funding for individual professional development, isolation and department allowances, and elementary preparation time. It also provided a process for merging seniority of North Thompson teachers into the entire seniority list.

**3. Part-time Teacher Employment Rights—Elimination of Hiring Bands**

The collective agreement divided teachers into three hiring bands depending on their full-time equivalent (FTE) status. Teachers who were less than half-time, between half-time and full-time, and full-time accumulated seniority in each or more than one band depending on whether they held a position in that band. The problem was that it created artificial lines and when teachers were recalled to a position, it was based not only on their seniority and qualifications but also their hiring band.

The parties met to resolve this matter as it was of mutual interest. In 2004, the parties reached an agreement and the matter was taken to the KTTA AGM for approval of the membership. The local agreement came into force, although BCTF and BCPSEA did not give formal approval.

The last agreement noted was of great significance as it demonstrated a formal local bargaining approach to what existed in Appendix 1 of Letter of Understanding No. 1 (provincial items) that eventually was implemented into the collective agreement through the MCM process. The legal effect of the agreement was that both parties agreed to a practice in writing that was contrary to the collective agreement and, despite BCPSEA's objections, estopped both parties from varying the practice until the next round of bargaining.

In 2006–07, the parties engaged in bargaining of “local” items in LOU #1: “Split of Issues” resulted in

negotiated provisions around unpaid leaves, personnel file, district professional development committee, joint labour liaison committee, and staff meetings.

The process of mid-contract modifications in 2009 resulted in more negotiated provisions around job sharing, post-and-fill around unpaid leaves, and elimination of bands (enshrining the local agreement into the collective agreement).

More recently, the local has

*In 2004, the local was barred from speaking at public board meetings because the presidents of the respective K–12 unions had criticized the board for giving raises to senior administration at a time when their members were facing layoffs and schools were closing. They had launched a campaign including a membership wide non-confidence vote in the board (whereby 93% of members voted in favour). These measures were unsuccessful.*

altered the collective agreement in a number of other areas including evaluation of TTOCs, elementary preparation time, and union raising items at public board meetings through methods other than formal bargaining.

Here are some of the more significant provisions negotiated for the membership:

- **Teacher Teaching on Call Evaluation Process**

A TTOC was investigated for neglecting her/his professional duties. After investigating the complaint, the district noted that the TTOC did not neglect her/his professional duties but that there were “significant concerns about... performance as a teacher and the quality of instruction.” A letter of direction was issued to the TTOC.

The KTTA filed a grievance citing the evaluation clause that states: “Formal reports resulting from such evaluation of the learning situation under a teacher’s charge shall be provided...for teachers for whom there are significant concerns about their ability to establish a satisfactory learning environment.” The grievance noted that the proper action to take when there are significant concerns is to conduct a formal evaluation of the TTOC.

The board attempted to dispute the grievance but was unable to when its own handbook given to TTOCs noted that the evaluations or a TTOC are conducted in accordance with the article regarding

teacher evaluations.

The board wrote the TTOC a letter noting that it would be conducting an evaluation upon successfully negotiating an agreement with the KTTA. The KTTA tabled language first and used the existing structure for evaluations of classroom teachers with some changes specific to TTOCs. Further, there were greater protections for TTOCs as considerations had to be made for length of the assignment, the classroom composition, and environment, etc.

- **Union presentations at public board meetings**

The KTTA, along with any member of the public, had been able to speak at public board meetings since the 1970s. Gradually, the ability to publically comment on board decisions started to erode.

In 2004, the local was barred from speaking at public board meetings because the presidents of the respective K–12 unions had criticized the board for giving raises to senior administration at a time when their members were facing layoffs and schools were closing. They had launched a campaign including a membership wide non-confidence vote in the board (whereby 93% of members voted in favour). These measures were unsuccessful.

In 2006–07, the local tabled language that would grant the right to speak at public board meetings, noting that it was a constitutional right. The negotiations were unsuccessful so a grievance was filed citing a violation of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The arbitration was scheduled for October 2008, a month prior to elections for board trustees. In the time preceding the arbitration, the news had taken an interest in the item and the board was portrayed in a poor light—permitting other groups to speak at board meetings but not the union representatives. The perfect storm was developing for the board.

At the outset of the arbitration process, the parties agreed to a settlement that permitted the union representatives to speak at public board meetings under the agenda item for public presentations.

- **Elementary preparation time**

An arbitration decision around the provision of preparation time to elementary teachers gave two interpretations to local language. Ninety minutes of prep time had to be provided per week for elementary teachers, but the arbitrator had given the board a choice in how that time was given. Because the word “week” was undefined, the board could give teachers 90 minutes every calendar week (Monday to Friday) or every instructional

week (Day 1 to Day 5). The board chose the latter resulting in a scheduling nightmare for elementary schools.

Through a bargaining survey, the elementary teachers identified this as one of their primary issues. The local approached the board through the Joint Labour Liaison Committee and requested that a subcommittee be struck to investigate methods to change the schedule of elementary schools back to calendar weeks. There was agreement to do this.

The local bargaining team created and distributed a survey to elementary teachers about their preference for scheduling and receipt of prep time. About 80% of elementary teachers returned the surveys and the results demonstrated that teachers wanted to go back to a calendar week schedule with preparation time scheduled within that time.

The bargaining reps went to the subcommittee meeting and noted an interest to negotiate an agreement around this issue. The subcommittee was disbanded and the parties created a side table to negotiate a settlement to this matter.

Attendance at executive and general meetings grew as teachers were engaged in the outcome of this matter. However, there were competing interests in how preparation time was scheduled as a change to a calendar week could affect programs for teachers who teach during the “prep” blocks. Disagreements about how the matter should be resolved resulted in a vote at a general meeting that ultimately gave the authority to the bargaining team to negotiate a settlement that would return elementary schools to the calendar week.

The matter was sent to the membership for a vote and the members voted 85% in favour of the deal (over 80% for elementary teachers alone). The key was an overwhelming number of teachers voted and an overwhelming number of teachers voted in favour of the settlement.

There are numerous matters that were negotiated through the methods described at the beginning of this article. The key is that local bargaining is not a new creation and boards and locals have been negotiating on a variety of matters since the inception of provincial bargaining.

The goal that exists now is to formalize what has been occurring for the last 18 years into one round of local bargaining.

*David Komljenovic, BCTF member-at-large and former KTTA president*

## Twitter feed fuels nasty news over Terry Fox Run 2011

By Nancy Knickerbocker

September 15: The day began with a call from the CKNW newsroom. “We’re getting word that as part of the job action, teachers won’t participate in the Terry Fox run.”

“Really? Where are you hearing this?”

“It’s all over Twitter,” said the reporter, citing the following tweet from @macleankay:

“BCTF now refusing to raise \$ for Terry Fox Run. Still ‘all about the kids,’ of course, just not the ones with cancer.”

Wow, cheap shot! One that was immediately retweeted by @Jeff\_Melland and @BCMusings.

“Terry Fox run latest casualty in

BC teachers’ dispute” was the headline on CKNW’s website and Twitter feed. Soon Global TV, with its 100,000 nightly viewers, was on the phone wanting to know just what was up with the teachers’ strike and the run.

BCTF President Susan Lambert responded to Global and numerous other media, talking about how teachers have always been the backbone of the run, teaching generations of children about Terry Fox’s heroic life and legacy, and providing countless hours of volunteer time outside of class participating in the annual runs. This summer, she explained, the BCTF had been in contact with the BC and Yukon director for the Terry Fox Foundation, to ensure job

action would not impact the 2011 run. The Foundation sent a letter to all the schools that signed up, clarifying that teachers would still be organizing the runs, but it would be up to parents or administrators to collect the cash.

Meanwhile, in damage control mode, @BCTF tweeted and retweeted the real story:

“Rubbish! Fox Found’n & BCTF agreed on full participation by teachers & schools. Admin have to collect the \$.”

“Again, NOT true. BC teachers are organising runs in agreement w/ Terry Fox Sun that admin or parents collect \$.”

Still, that nasty little tweet was clearly intended to spark a news story that would hurt the BCTF. So

where did this come from? It turned out the source was none other than the BC Liberal caucus communications department!

Kay Maclean, the initial tweeter, is a communications officer for the BC Liberal caucus. Jeff Melland and Thomas Marshall (aka BCMusings) both followed up with swift retweets, and both are also communications officers for the BC Liberal caucus. Geoff Sharpe, president of the BC Young Liberals, also chimed in with an ungrammatical reminder that folks “definitely need to remember that teachers doesnt equal BCTF. I know many who cannot stand the org[anization].”

Once the source of the story was known, a call from Susan Lambert to Education Minister George

Abbott’s office quickly resulted in apologetic tweets from the unethical hacks: “Mea culpa: happy to hear from BCTF indeed helping w/ Terry Fox Run. Sorry for any offence. TF’s legacy transcends political divides,” they said.

Yes, Terry Fox’s legacy does indeed transcend political divides. So why did BC Liberal caucus communicators think it would be acceptable to play politics with the very people who put so much heart into teaching about Terry Fox and who raise over 60% of the funds in BC?

The apology was accepted, but everyone knew the damage had already been done.

*Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF media relations officer*



# From the bargaining table

By Kathy Couch

I've been hearing for years that the bargaining system between BCPSEA and BCTF is "broken" and that a new system needs to be implemented.

After several months of bargaining, I now have a better idea of what is and isn't broken. The main factor that provides dysfunction to the bargaining process is that BCPSEA does not control the purse strings. They have been coming to the table with little or no money since their inception. This is not new. Net zero has been their mandate before. We have known since 1994 that bargaining without funds for improvements will always make freely negotiating a collective agreement extremely difficult.

Under a net-zero mandate, BCTF goes into bargaining with the list of desired improvements, but BCPSEA doesn't respond with counter proposals because they have no mandate to agree to any proposals that involve money. That is, unless BCTF offers monetary concessions, and that's not going to happen.

Some members of the media have stated that BCTF seldom moves off their initial proposals. BCTF knows the bargaining process often includes moving from opening positions. However, the fact that BCPSEA seldom offers counter proposals makes it difficult to move anywhere. Free collective bargaining cannot happen under these circumstances. Mandating to us, what we are going to get, is not bargaining. They are not negotiating. They are enforcing government rules that restrict real negotiations.

**Mandating to us, what we are going to get, is not bargaining. They are not negotiating. They are enforcing government rules that restrict real negotiations.**

All that BCPSEA seems to feel they can propose are concessions from teachers, which they refer to as "principled positions taken in bargaining recognizing the changing nature of the education system while ensuring a balance between the rights and responsibilities for the union and the employer." As we've seen, in this round of bargaining, these "principled positions" are really all about strengthening management rights. They involve stripping

teachers of all job security rights in the name of the necessity for flexibility to implement "21st century and personalized learning." And we won't be allowing that to happen, will we?

No, it's not the system that is broken. It's the mandate that doesn't allow the system to work as it should work. That, along with the ulterior motive of government to provide administration with the ability to "ignore job security and seniority," are a couple of major problems.

Kathy Couch, Nelson

By Tara Ehrcke

It was with some trepidation that I put my name forward to be a member of the provincial bargaining team. It would mean a lot of time away from my family, traveling, and leaving my work with my local teachers' association. But the opportunity to represent teachers across BC and to help work toward our shared goals for improvements in classrooms and a return to a more functional bargaining structure was too exciting to pass up.

For several years I have been advocating for a return to more local bargaining. I sincerely believe that our current provincial bargaining system is deeply flawed. It separates teachers from the bargaining process, and at the same time, is separates trustees (the elected guardians of our public system) from their responsibilities to work with teachers and define collective agreements. This is unhealthy for the relationship between teachers and their direct employers and it results in agreements that were never a shared commitment in the first place. Both groups can feel that the agreement was "imposed" rather than agreed to.

My experience actually sitting at the provincial table has only strengthened my viewpoint. Although we have a terrific cross section of teachers representing different areas of the province and different areas of teaching, the reality is that we are not intimately in tune with the needs of teachers in every community. When an agreement from Cowichan or Richmond comes up at the table, it is not embedded in our experience, but rather we need to go out on a fact-finding mission to get ourselves up to speed on the interests and

aspirations of those teachers. This is time consuming and ineffective. How much better it would be for the Richmond bargaining team to be talking about the Richmond pay scale.

At the same time, the people

**Provincial bargaining allows for a disconnect from the people we are ultimately talking about. There is no daily accountability for BCPSEA to the students and teachers and schools and communities. They will not be picking up the phone to hear from a teacher taking medical leave from stress on the job. They are many steps removed from the actual, on-the-ground realities of teaching and learning. This is a barrier to meaningful dialogue.**

across the table are similarly detached from the constituency they represent. There is one superintendent, but he has been released to work with BCPSEA and is not currently engaged with running a school district. There is one trustee, but he is from Revelstoke and there must be some disconnect for him on issues like Victoria middle schools. The rest of the BCPSEA team do not have a teaching background nor have they ever worked directly in schools. How can this enable meaningful discussions on teacher burnout from classroom conditions?

Provincial bargaining allows for a disconnect from the people we are ultimately talking about. There is no daily accountability for BCPSEA to the students and teachers and schools and communities. They will not be picking up the phone to hear from a teacher taking medical leave from stress on the job. They are many steps removed from the actual, on-the-ground realities of teaching and learning. This is a barrier to meaningful dialogue.

My biggest hope in this round of bargaining is that we can work to improve our bargaining processes for the long term. Only then will we be able to have teachers from classrooms talking to administrators and trustees in districts about what solutions we need to improve teaching and learning in our communities.

Tara Ehrcke, Victoria

By Bill MacFarlane

When first appointed to the BCTF's provincial bargaining team last September, I experienced a real sense of opportunity and optimism. The sense was reinforced by knowing that nothing can stop teachers when they are unified in their quest. This quest being to achieve a collective agreement that reflects the wishes of teachers. A collective agreement that achieves improvements to economic benefits, working conditions, and learning conditions for students.

After months of being at the table, my sense of opportunity and optimism has not wavered. Even though BCPSEA has tabled proposals that attack the collective bargaining rights of teachers and would eliminate hard-won collective agreement provisions that have been in place for decades. Provisions like seniority rights, post and fill procedures, transfer rights, reflect the collective determination and commitment of teachers to the collective bargaining process. This display of a total lack of respect for teachers by BCPSEA and the government has been frustrating and demoralizing but not unexpected when considering the history of actions undertaken by the government over the last decade.

The sense of opportunity and optimism I first experienced is still with me for a number of reasons. The first reason being the provincial bargaining team. Working with Jim, Tara, Kathy,

Christine, Gabriel, and John has been such a positive experience. Each one of these people exhibits a clear commitment to making things better for teachers and students. This commitment to making improvements has also been shown by the local teams at all the local tables where they have had to face incredible hurdles working to resolve local issues.

The judgment on Bills 27 and 28 was another source of opportunity and optimism (even if the government is ignoring it). I have said to my colleagues in Revelstoke that each one should have their own copy of the judgment to read. It so validates the campaigns that teachers have undertaken over the years to improve working conditions and learning conditions for students.

A most powerful source of opportunity and optimism was the results of the strike vote taken in June. I believe every member of the bargaining team was exhilarated when we heard the results.

As the team now returns to the bargaining table, the sense of opportunity and optimism is still strong. This sense is something I think all teachers experience as they work daily in their schools to provide the best learning opportunities for their students.

This sense of opportunity and optimism that teachers all share will keep us united in achieving the collective agreement provisions that respect our profession.

Bill MacFarlane, Revelstoke

## Research Teacher stress factors

Both classroom and specialist support teachers identified increased workload and increased stress linked in part to class composition issues in the BCTF Research study *Worklife of BC Teachers in 2009*. In this study, three factors prompted an indication of *high* or *very high* stress levels from a similar proportion of both special ed/LA respondents and all respondents: class composition issues, level of support for "grey area" students, and level of support for inclusion:

Percentage reporting <i>high/very high</i> level of stress		
Potential stress factor	Special Ed/LA teachers	All respondents
Class composition issues	69.0%	67.6%
Level of support for non-designated, "grey area" students	67.3%	64.2%
Level of support for inclusion of students with special needs	53.8%	52.3%
Inadequate access to specialist teachers (ESL, Special Ed, LA)	50.0%	43.7%
IEPs – online	44.4%	24.1%
IEPs – paper	38.8%	21.9%
Lack of control over work environment	30.3%	41.5%
Job insecurity/concerns about employment	27.3%	38.8%
Professional relationships with non-teaching professionals (e.g., Speech Language Pathologists, etc.)	22.7%	11.8%

Four of the nine stress factors generated indications of high or very high levels of stress from 50% or more of special education/ learning assistance teacher respondents. The one perhaps surprising finding in terms of the issue becoming a greater stressor at this time is the high level of stress indicated over level of support for "grey area" students—students who are not designated in terms of special needs, but who need additional help to succeed. Now that many learning assistance roles have been amalgamated into special education/learning assistance combinations, the levels of concern indicate that many of these students may not be able to access the help they need, and the inability of specialist teachers to provide support because of increased caseloads and reduced

time may be a stress factor. One respondent stated:

"I'm finding it increasingly difficult to help students who are in the grey area. They are not low enough (intellectually or behaviourally) to have full support (from educational assistants or LA teacher) but they require a huge amount of support in the classroom. These students require 80% of my time, effort, and energy and are not succeeding because of a variety of factors (home-life, attitude, laziness).... The intermediate class in elementary now has so many students at a variety of levels that it is almost impossible to provide them with the education they deserve (i.e., a Grade 4 class with math levels from 1-6 or reading levels from 1-8)."

– Charlie Naylor, BCTF Research



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**Info Sessions November 2011**

DATE	CITY	LOCATION	ADDRESS	TIME
Nov 16 <sup>th</sup>	Vancouver	Creekside Community Centre	1 Athletes Way Vancouver, BC V5Y 0B1	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM
Nov 17 <sup>th</sup>	Surrey	Fleetwood Library	15996 - 84th Avenue Surrey, BC V4N 0W1	6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
Nov 21 <sup>st</sup>	Nanaimo	Beban Park Rec Centre	500 Bowen Rd Nanaimo, BC V9R 1Z7	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM
Nov 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Victoria	Oaklands Community Centre	#1-2827 Belmont Ave Victoria, BC V8R 4B2	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM
Nov 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Vancouver	Killarney Community Centre	6260 Killarney Street Vancouver, BC V5S 2X7	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM
Nov 24 <sup>th</sup>	Coquitlam	Centennial Secondary School Room 102	570 Poirier Street Coquitlam, BC V3J 6A8	5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

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# In defense of compassionate care leave

By Tara Ehrcke

Within the various commentary about the BCTF negotiations, some have chosen to criticize BCTF proposals in an attempt to discredit teachers and teacher bargaining. One of the proposals that has been particularly singled out is compassionate care leave.

Compassionate care leave is currently provided through the *Employment Standards Act* and some unions have negotiated related provisions. It provides a leave for an employee to take care of a person who is terminally ill (a reasonable expectation of death within 26 weeks). The current *Employment Standards Act* provides eight weeks of leave and if eligible, employees can collect employment insurance benefits for six of those eight weeks. The person being cared for must be a "family member," but the definition of family member includes a person or friend who "considers you a family member," such as a friend or neighbour.

As the government program notes: "One of the most difficult times for anyone is when a loved one is dying or at risk of death. The demands of caring for a gravely ill family member can jeopardize both your job and the financial security of your family. The Government of Canada believes that, during such times, you should not have to choose between keeping your job and caring for your family." (<http://tinyurl.com/d4zj3m>)

Doctors agree that compassionate care leave has multiple benefits: "For most clinicians, compassionate care matters because it is fundamental to the practice of medicine, ethically sound, and humane," according to lead author Beth Lown, MD, medical director of the Schwartz Center and an associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. "However, there is also strong evidence that compassionate care improves health outcomes and quality of life, increases patient satisfaction, and lowers healthcare costs. Particularly as our healthcare system faces such intense pressure to reduce costs, we must make sure that this critically important element of healthcare is not lost." (<http://tinyurl.com/3le8afk>)

There are calls for an expansion to the existing employment insurance scheme, to extend the leave and benefits to 26 weeks. This makes sense. After all, the program is designed for those who might die in 26 weeks time. It is a bit odd that eight weeks is available but no more. What do you do after those eight weeks? Chances are, the person you are caring for is even more ill after the eight weeks than before.

The proposal put forward by BC teachers is akin to the "top up" programs that many Canadians already receive for maternity leave. These programs provide a top up by the employer to the employee's EI benefits so that their pay is closer to what their salary normally is. They are designed to ensure that women and parents can have adequate time off to care for their very young children without a significant loss of income. Taken together with the Employment Insurance benefits, these programs help to even the playing field for parents with respect to income loss and child bearing/rearing. There is a benefit to the individuals but also to society, which benefits from the future

earnings/production/taxes of the children. It is only a tiny portion of the vast cost of raising a child, but allows mothers and parents to ensure adequate care for the critical first year of life, without fear of losing their home or not being able to pay the bills.

The same rationale can be made for compassionate care leave. Those who are close to death and require care will end up somewhere in our social safety net. In the worst of cases, inadequate care might mean accidents and further complications to illness will take place. In the event hospitalization is required, the costs far outweigh what a compassionate care

**A survey found that three out of four unpaid care-givers were women between the ages of 50 and 65—that is, women in the prime of life who may already be juggling adolescent children, aging parents and a professional career.**

program would cost. But even if palliative care or home care services are used, the overall costs are likely in excess of what a compassionate care program would be. Moreover, a close friend or relative is likely able to provide more time and attention in caring and the care can likely be done in a home environment.

Compassionate care leave is also a women's issue, just as maternity leave is. The Canadian Women's Health Network describes why: "Care in the home is women's work. Women provide more than 80% of unpaid personal care for the elderly and for those of all ages with long-term disability or short-term illness. A survey found that three out of four unpaid caregivers were women between the ages of 50 and 65—that is, women in the prime of life who may already be juggling adolescent children, aging parents and a professional career." ([www.cwhn.ca/en/node/39518](http://www.cwhn.ca/en/node/39518))

I am proud that I am part of an organization that is advocating for improvements like compassionate care leave. It is a progressive change that I hope is both successful and replicated by other workplaces. Just as the landmark strike by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers eventually led to maternity leave rights and benefits for all Canadian mothers and parents, I am hopeful that the union movement's involvement in pursuing compassionate care leave will result in legislative changes that benefit all Canadians.

Tara Ehrcke, BCTF bargaining team member and president, Greater Victoria Teachers' Association.  
Read Tara's blog at: [staffroomconfidential.blogspot.com](http://staffroomconfidential.blogspot.com) or follow on Twitter—@taraehcke

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- protect our most vulnerable children and work to fight child poverty.

“Last election, Burnaby teachers endorsed a full slate of candidates and all but one was elected.

- Burnaby trustees more than double the amount of funding for special needs than the province actually provides for these students.
- Very few classes in Burnaby are oversized. In 2010–11, the number was less than 40 and all were done with teacher agreement.
- Burnaby trustees supported a teacher initiative Policy 5.45 in 2010–11, amidst fervent protests by some parental groups. Policy 5.45, titled Sexual Orientation/Gender Identify, addresses homophobic harassment and bullying in Burnaby schools. It was passed on June 14, 2011.”

– Marie De La Ronde, Burnaby



Illustration: Dostagan  
source image: comstock/thinkstock

- actively build community support for public schools.
- speak out against narrowly focused inappropriate testing and ranking.
- respect and invite public, parent, employee group, and student participation in decision making.
- work with trustees in other districts to get resources from

the provincial government.

- lobby MLAs on behalf of your community's unique needs.
- resist privatization of our public schools.

You can make a real difference. Voter turnout for school board elections is low. Take five friends or family to vote.

“Our local e-mails a Q&A survey to all prospective candidates and publishes their answers to members and to the local media (papers and radio). We hold a forum for our members and invite all trustee candidates to give a short speech and answer any questions.

“The work that locals put into finding people who will consistently advocate on behalf of our public education, system, and with input from the stakeholder groups using democratic processes, makes the difference in their ability to advocate successfully for their members during the foreseeable future. Our trustees attend the first 20 minutes of each monthly executive meeting to listen to staff rep concerns from the schools and ask questions. Remember, many incumbents run for more than one term and can have a positive or negative effect within a district for a significant period of time. It is well worth the local's effort to seek and support progressive public school board trustees.”

– Wendy Turner, Cranbrook

“In New Westminster, local 40, we want the BCTF members who are residents of New West to fully understand the education issues that are of particular importance to our local community. For this reason, we place a very significant value on the role of the local election contact.

“During the time leading up to the municipal election, the LEC organizes, hosts and MCs the all-candidates meetings that are open to BCTF members as well as the public. The LEC also prepares a questionnaire that is distributed to the trustee candidates. That questionnaire explores the trustees' views and beliefs about public education. In past elections we have mailed the trustee candidate responses to that questionnaire to BCTF members who live in New Westminster.

“The bottom line is, BCTF members have the very rare opportunity of being involved in the interviewing and vetting of their future employers. That is something we take great care to exercise responsibly.”

– Stacey Robinsmith, New Westminster

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# Professional autonomy in teaching

## Keynote address to PD chairs, Summer Conference 2011

By Joanna Larson

*Public Education is a sacred trust. As a community we promise to prepare learners for a socially responsible life in a free and democratic society, to participate in a world which each generation will shape and build. We promise a public education system which provides learners with knowledge and wisdom, protects and nurtures their natural joy of learning, encourages them to become persons of character, strength and integrity, infuses them with hope and with spirit, and guides them to resolute and thoughtful action.*

– Charter for Public Education

It is not often enough as teachers, we take the time to really reflect on our purpose in our classrooms, and the purpose of public education in society. It's even less often, that we examine the issue of professional autonomy through this lens.

Professional autonomy in teaching goes far beyond the ability to maintain a defined set of professional freedoms such as choosing our own resource materials, methods of instruction and assessing student progress.

*We strive to empower our students with the knowledge they need to make good decisions, the confidence they need to make responsible decisions, and the open mindedness to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions.*

It goes far beyond self-directed professional development: "Thinking for oneself in uncertain and complex situations in which judgment is more important than routine." – Anne Phelan and Alice Pitt

This definition not only defines what it means to be autonomous as a teacher, but also what it means to be an autonomous learner.

More than anything else we do, our constant striving to prepare our students to use their judgment is what sets us apart from other professions. And thus, has different consequences when our professional autonomy is eroded. You cannot erode a teacher's autonomy without eroding that of the students.

We strive to empower our students with the knowledge they need to make good decisions, the confidence they need to make responsible decisions, and the open mindedness to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions.

Essentially we are trying to create a safe place in schools for students to practice decision making, and gain confidence using their judgment. What sets teachers apart from other professions is our profound commitment to promoting our students autonomy, both as learners, and responsible citizens of a fair and just democratic society.

Teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are implicitly linked with one another by the nature and purpose of what we believe public education to serve.

If we want autonomous learners, we have to have autonomous teachers.

Phelan and Pitt make the case that the autonomy of a profession depends on the autonomy of each of its members. Autonomous participants must create and account for the singularity of the

profession as a collective vision of autonomy. Therefore, professional members have to become autonomous before there can be autonomy.

When Bills 27 and 28 were enacted, over 3,000 teaching positions disappeared. Many teachers ended up struggling in contract work or living below the poverty line as TTOC's.

When you are worried about paying your rent, and putting food on the table for your children, how much autonomy do you really have?

If we want teachers focused on being innovative, imaginative, and inspired in our classrooms, then they can't be worried about making it to their second job on time, and they can't be willing to compromise what they know is right and just in order to please those who control if, when, and how much they work.

Bills 27 and 28 left teachers in classrooms watching class sizes grow, the number of students with special needs increase, at the same time specialist and support programs decreased. These teachers saw their workload increase exponentially and they too started to drift into survival mode. Shutting their doors and often relying on "canned" programming just to make it through the end of the day.

This undermined their confidence. Teachers began to see themselves as failures, and broken spirits have a hard time exercising good judgment. They are more likely to prefer to follow routine.

In the current round of collective bargaining, the biggest problem we face, is that BCPSEA is proposing contract strips, and less than nothing in terms of compensation. Gutting teacher evaluation language, stripping seniority from post-and-fill language all have an incredible amount of influence over a teacher's confidence in exerting their autonomy.

Teachers become less willing to be creative, inventive, and push the envelope in methods that will engage students. We become obedient and compliant. We are more likely to follow bad advice from superiors in order to please them, than to challenge bad ideas.

"Personalized Learning"—an initiative that in my opinion is an insult to our profession, and a disservice to our students. This is not an initiative reminiscent of creating equal opportunity for all, and it is not an initiative designed to meet the individual needs of our students.

It is using digital evangelism to put millions of dollars in the hands of private business and strip collective agreements.

The vision of personalized learning that predominantly exists, diminishes the art of teaching and reduces the role of teachers to facilitators. It imposes the dominant or sole method of instruction through technology, and essentially removes teachers from classrooms potentially creating a dehumanized mode of instruction. Keeping in mind the purpose of public education, how will this vision help us achieve the goals of *encouraging our students to become persons of character, strength, and integrity?*

Personalized learning is a means of indoctrinating our children to exist in an urban consumerist society and no other. It disconnects us from our environment, and narrows our potential to the use of corporate technology.

Unfortunately, the erosion of public confidence in education seems to have left us in a position where "reform" is the only answer. Even in our professional conversations we are struggling to find the positives in the personalized learning movement, trying to find ways to shape it into what we want.

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Teachers are on a constant quest, a continual process of inquiry into how their practice can best promote autonomous learning for our students. And this often makes us weak to the seductive language used around education reform—21st Century Learning, Learner Focused, Flexibility.

We often underestimate the true intentions of the reformers, believing they too share our aspirations of autonomous, self-sufficient life-long learners. In reality, their intentions can be very different from ours.

Historically, public education evolved as a means of educating a class of people to serve the elite members of society.

"A general state education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another, and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government...it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by a natural tendency to one over the body." – John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty"

In the words of the Ministry of Education:

- "We want the right teachers placed in the right positions. Qualified and suitable teachers—in best 'fit' placements."
- "We want to align professional development with teacher performance evaluations and school district policy requirements."

These recent statements from the Ministry of Education expose the truth about what they really want out of education reform. Abject control. Not autonomous learners.

Phelan and Pitt explain the differences between autonomy and heteronomy:

"An autonomous society makes laws and knows it is the author of its laws.

"A heteronomous society lives by laws that came from elsewhere and are inviolable even if cruel, misconstrued, or out of touch."

The summative result of the loss of autonomy for the profession of teaching, is the loss of autonomy for our learners as well. That can only lead to a shift away from an autonomous society into a more heteronomous one, and a loss of democracy for us all.

Joanna Larson, president, Prince Rupert District Teachers' Union and member-at-large, BCTF Executive Committee.

# History of the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association (LATA)

By Marie Giesbrecht

The LATA (Learning Assistance Teachers' Association) was recognized as a PSA (Provincial Specialist Association) in 1980, but to understand the history of LATA, we must go back long before it officially came on the scene.

TOPSA (Teachers of Occupational Program Specialist Association) was recognized as a PSA in 1965 and was formed to help junior secondary students who, for various reasons, were not meeting academic requirements in the school system. The founders of TOPSA realized there was a need for courses with an emphasis on work experience, vocational training, and practical courses such as shop and home economics to help these students succeed. Without TOPSA, many students would never have had success. Eventually, out of TOPSA came the Secondary Learning Assistance Teachers' Association (SLATA), which was recognized as a PSA in 1975, with the new goal of helping struggling students achieve academically within the secondary school setting.

During the 1970s, things began changing at the elementary level when continuous progress and a promotion policy took effect, followed by mainstreaming and full integration, impacting the needs and education of children with special difficulties or learning disabilities. The first attempt at helping these students was the hiring of itinerant remedial reading teachers to help students who were struggling in reading. It soon became evident there were students who were struggling in other areas as well, such as writing, spelling, motor co-ordination, and mathematics. There was a need to assist learning: not only remediate reading, so the title was changed to learning assistance teacher.

In 1973, under the NDP government, this program became known throughout BC as the Learning Assistance Program. Funding was made available to school districts on the basis of one full-time elementary learning assistance teacher per 450 students and later changed to 350 students. The government was serious about this and learning assistance received a significant budget to purchase materials. Kits and buzz words of the day were—the Peabody Kit, SRA Reading Lab Kits, Orton-Guillingham, Frostig, Santa Clara for Kindergarten, balance boards to improve fine and gross motor skills, perceptual training and ITA—Initial Teaching Alphabet. The following year funding was provided to hire junior secondary learning assistance teachers.

As the concept of the learning assistance role broadened, what became apparent was the need for learning assistance teachers to specialize in testing and assessing students' strengths and learning styles, then design or select appropriate materials to help struggling students achieve academically within the school setting. In turn, it was necessary to serve as an advocate for these students. The need arose for a LATA role definition, and a support network for the teachers who took on this specialty area since most had been classroom teachers without a background in learning disabilities or special education. Professional development was increasingly sought after by the LATs in their

LACs (Learning Assistance Centers) as they realized the gap between their own expertise and the extensive demands of this new role.

In the summer of 1974, Dr. Ann Vicente, Heidi Garnett (SD 23 learning assistance co-ordinator), and Henry Lunn representing the Department of Education offered the first LA course and stressed role definition that included: identification, prevention, consultation, co-ordination, testing/assessment, and direct service. The curriculum centre in Vancouver also offered in-service where learning assistance teachers were able to discuss methods, research, resources, and ways to help in the newly-formed position on staff.

Of significance, is that visionary LATs, in the form of a provincial executive and regional representatives, saw the need for on-going communication and in-service. They gathered on Bowen Island in the late 1970s to hold the first of what was to become an annual LATA provincial conference, hosted by the LATA executive members and open to all learning assistance teachers in the province. Present day conferences are held alternately between Vancouver and the BC interior. In the mid-1980s the first LATA newsletter was produced. It was expanded to a quarterly journal in the late 1990s and is now available to the LATA membership online.

Many changes have evolved throughout the past 40 years in the history of LATA as it emerged and flexed into the importance it has today. At times the role has broadened and shifted to include English-as-a-second-language, gifted and enrichment education, and exceptionalities in children encompassing a wide spectrum of special needs. As an association, LATA has seen the good times of optimism and progress as well as the anxiety of restraint and cut-backs, but learning assistance teachers are a special breed and remain a vital force in the teaching profession today.

Marie Giesbrecht, M.Sp.Ed, former president and editor for LATA

“Over the past 10 years, we have seen our ability to work with students compromised, as class sizes have increased and budgets have decreased. We work with 30 to 32 students in classrooms designed for 24. Along with increasing safety concerns, we have seen increasing numbers of students with IEPs, and yet with larger classes, it is more challenging to meet their needs. We work with budgets that have not changed for years, or that have been reduced. ...teachers have gone to great lengths to find inexpensive resources for our classrooms. Many teachers drive to several stores to find the best deals, and pay for their own gas so there is more money in the budget for students. We have reduced our recipes to the smallest quantities (even to using one-eighth of an egg!) so that we can provide more hands-on experiences for our students, because we believe that learning is most enhanced when students practice it.”

– Paula Aquino  
Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association





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# Teachers united to defend public education as a fundamental right

By Nancy Knickerbocker

CAPE TOWN—Moving music and poetry of hope; students dancing for joy; the stirring harmonies of South Africa's national anthem sung by the Soweto teachers' choir: all these sights and sounds made for an unforgettable opening to the 6th World Congress of Education International held July 22–26, 2011.

"We cannot open this Congress in South Africa without remembering the enormous debt we owe to President Nelson Mandela for what he has taught us all about the struggle for freedom and respect for human rights," EI President Susan Hopgood said, to warm applause from 1,800 delegates and observers at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, where the plenary hall was hung with the national flags of more than 170 countries represented there.

The global federation bringing together more than 400 education unions from pre-school to post-secondary, EI represents about 30 million teachers, faculty members, and school support workers worldwide.

*El rejects privatization of learning because it leads to a race to the bottom, where limited resources are used to drive up profit margins instead of improving access to quality education. Standardized tests as a measurement of school performance must only be used sparingly, as reliance on test scores to evaluate and compensate teachers is inaccurate and narrows the scope of teaching.*

At a time when public education is under unprecedented attack, teacher unions' defence of every child's right to quality public schooling is more critical than ever, said Hopgood, who also serves as the General Secretary of the Australian Education Union.

"Much progress has been made over the last decade and...the number of primary age children out of school dropped from 105 million to 67 million. But we are still going to fall far short of the Millennium Development Goals on education by 2015."

Hopgood attributed slow progress towards the MDGs to a lack of political will by G20 governments. She noted that in 2010 global military spending was \$1,630 billion US, while the amount required to bridge the financing gap to achieve Education For All is only \$16 billion—less than 1% of the military budget. "Imagine what a different

world it would be for millions of children if that same effort was put into achieving universal basic education!" she exclaimed.

The keynote speaker at the opening ceremony was South Africa's Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe, a former activist in the mine workers' union and militant in the African National Congress who was held for 10 years along with Nelson Mandela in the notorious Robben Island prison.

Motlanthe began his address with a story about a young woman who was born in prison in 1983 during apartheid and was forced into child labour at a young age, but who now is a PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town. Sadly, such "incredible human triumph over heavy odds" remains impossible for "the majority of the world's people trapped in miserable socio-economic conditions," he said.

For its part, the post-apartheid government of South Africa has made significant achievements in public education. "Since the advent of democracy in 1994 we have successfully integrated the many racially and ethnically-based education departments into one unitary national system," Motlanthe said.

He said that in responding to the economic crisis, the government of South Africa followed the broad approach urged by EI: that is, investing in education to stimulate the economy and accelerate growth through expanding skills development, rather than cutting funding and services.

In his progress report, EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen outlined how Education International has advocated for a new global economic architecture based on decent work, social justice, and sustainability. In every international forum, EI has urged governments and financial institutions to invest in education, to make it part of the solution to the crisis, and not to make millions of children pay the price for the greed and folly of a few.

Facing the "sledgehammer of the International Monetary Fund" with

its mantra of cut and privatize, EI and other global unions adopted a Charter and launched a campaign for Quality Public Services for All. To learn more, go to: [www.qpsactionnow.org](http://www.qpsactionnow.org).

*The policy asserts that well-funded schools are essential to make learning open to students of all backgrounds and incomes. Its guidelines suggest governments should contribute at least six per cent of their nation's Gross Domestic Product to education*

Van Leeuwen also singled out the failure of rich countries to live up to their commitment to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

"While they had promised to contribute in 2009 an amount of 30 billion dollars, in reality they only transferred 3 billion. But in that same year it took them no more than a couple of weeks to put aside more than 1,500 billion dollars to rescue their banks and other financial institutions," he said. "This is just not acceptable!"

Van Leeuwen noted that the Global Unions have strongly advocated for an international Financial Transactions Tax as a better and more democratic way to generate the resources to fund quality public services worldwide.

Disturbingly, but not surprisingly, a steep increase in violation of teachers' human and trade union rights marks this period of crisis, van Leeuwen reported. EI has taken complaints forward to the International Labour Organization, the UN Human Rights Commission, and other bodies about violations including threats, suspensions, fines, transfers, dismissals, arrests, detention, violence, and even murder.

A black page in the human rights report was the case of teacher

unionist Farzad Kamangar, who was accused of "endangering national security" and "enmity against God." An Iranian judge sentenced Kamangar to death after a sham trial that lasted less than five minutes. His appeal was cancelled because the authorities "lost" the court files. EI lobbied the Iranian authorities, alerted the United Nations and mounted an international online campaign, but ultimately Kamangar was executed on May 9, 2010.

"We failed to save this young colleague," van Leeuwen said. "He stood for what all of us in this room stand for. But he paid for that with his life.... Let us not forget him."

Meanwhile on the pedagogical front, EI continued defending teachers from efforts to de-professionalize their work. Restrictions on professional autonomy, casualization of teaching, punitive evaluation models, the rapid rise of standardized testing, and the aggressive incursions of the education industry all pose threats to authentic teaching and learning worldwide, van Leeuwen said.

At this Congress, EI made the historic decision to agree to a comprehensive education policy that sets out the collective views of its 30-million-strong global membership.

"It is coherent, it is closely argued, clearly evidenced and we believe it is at the cutting edge of education policy," Hopgood said, adding it is particularly strong in terms of its critique of the disastrous impact of neo-liberal policies on public education.

EI rejects privatization of learning because it leads to a race to the bottom, where limited resources are used to drive up profit margins instead of improving access to quality education. Standardized tests as a measurement of school performance must only be used sparingly, as reliance on test scores

to evaluate and compensate teachers is inaccurate and narrows the scope of teaching. Instead, the policy suggests that to strengthen performance it is essential to invest in more professional development and training.

The EI President also emphasized the call for inclusive education that meets the needs of all students, whether they are living in poverty, struggling with learning difficulties, confronting discrimination based on gender, race, or any other factors.

The policy asserts that well-funded schools are essential to make learning open to students of all backgrounds and incomes. Its guidelines suggest governments should contribute at least six per cent of their nation's Gross Domestic Product to education.

*For the first time, a Canadian teacher was honoured with EI's prestigious Albert Shanker Education Award. Pauline Ladouceur, a member of the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ), brings 30 years of classroom experience to her work on behalf of students with special needs. In thanking EI for the award, Ladouceur emphasized her firm conviction that every child has a capacity to learn; they just need to believe in themselves and have appropriate support.*

To read the full paper, visit: [www.ei-ie.org](http://www.ei-ie.org)

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EI's other major award, the Mary Hatwood Futrell Human and Trade Union Rights Award, was granted to Gülçin Isbert of the Turkish teachers' union, Egitem Sen. Isbert and other teachers of Kurdish heritage have been persecuted for their struggle to assert the right of mother-tongue instruction. She and 30 other public sector unionists were charged with belonging to an illegal Kurdish organization and jailed. EI officially invited Isbert to attend the Congress and accept her award, but the Turkish government imposed a travel ban on her. Isbert addressed the Congress delegates in her native Kurdish language via pre-recorded video.

Nancy Knickerbocker, BCTF media relations officer.



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# The rebranding of Christy Clark and the BC Liberals



Trust looms large in the next provincial election

illustration  
Jennifer Sowerby

By Noel Herron

Queen of photo ops, Premier Maggie Muggins, and Madame Flip Flop are some of the less-than-flattering encomiums directed at Christy Clark since she assumed the premiership of BC seven months ago.

Clark who had parlayed her popularity as a CKNW radio host into the premier’s chair, defeating three well known Liberal cabinet ministers (she received the support of only one Liberal MLA for her campaign) has, only recently, been subjected to a more critical analysis by most of the mainstream media.

Prior to, and after her victory, the overweening attention of the media, especially the photo-a-day treatment by Vancouver-based Post Media conglomerate (print and television) for a three-month period, amounted to unabashed boosterism for Clark’s campaign. A few commentators stand out, notably the *Vancouver Sun*’s Vaughan Palmer, as insightful and incisive exceptions to this type of coverage.

Contrast that with the shabby treatment accorded John Cummins, the newly elected leader of the struggling provincial Conservative

party, who barely rated a mention and, if he did, it was in the last paragraph or two of political pieces. (Incidentally, last month’s Liberal attack ads targeting the Conservatives, underline the growing threat they perceive to their provincial coalition.)

But many questions remain as Clark continues what has been called, to date, her “never-ending election campaign;” some of these questions are: Is Christy Clark with her evolving political career and emphasis on self-promotion to the detriment of governing the province, now being too clever by half? And, most importantly, will the general electorate—not the registered Liberal party members of whom she is clearly the darling—buy into the reinvented and supposedly softer, gentler image of what was previously an ideological, right-wing coalition?

In her ongoing efforts to distance herself and her party from the more contentious policies of her predecessor, it is worth remembering that Clark served as deputy premier, minister of education and minister of children and family development in the Campbell government.

As education minister, the outright rejection by the Supreme Court of Canada as “unconstitutional and invalid” her 2002

sledgehammer education legislation that callously denied assistance to the province’s most vulnerable kids with special needs, was a resounding rebuke. It cost BC’s struggling education system \$275 million over a five-year period. This specific, court-ordered underfunding has yet to be addressed by the Liberals.

Having narrowly won the byelection to replace Gordon Campbell in his Point Grey riding, Clark brazenly asserted that she viewed her razor-thin victory as a “mandate for change.” And a day after her victory (in which she flatly refused to debate her opponent), and after she had promised her new constituents that she would faithfully represent them in Victoria, she allowed that she might not run in Point Grey in the general election.

Having polished her populism on radio, Clark comes across to many as glib, often dismissive, with even a touch of arrogance. While she earned kudos for raising the minimum wage, something the BC Liberals resisted for a decade, it won’t reach the \$10/hour level until May 2012. It was not lost on working stiff across this province that in May 2007, the governing Liberals voted themselves an increase of 29%, while the premier’s raise was a whopping 54%.

Clark’s policy flip-flops are many: her initial position on BC’s representation in the Canadian Senate, her ever-changing position on the HST, and her threat to over-rule mayors on a gas tax hike to fund the Evergreen Line.

Her penchant for sustained showboating as either a soccer mum, a Canuck supporter replete with hockey jersey, or as a Kitsilano waitress (barely disguising her power suit and high heels), is not her most appealing trait.

Her reversals of Campbell policies on such issues as increased camping fees in public parks, partial restoration of community grants (including last month’s reversal on playground grants) and the review of BC Ferries rates, will undoubtedly win her some support. However, the decade-old, over-the-top, Liberal claim to be “the most open government in Canada” falls far short, despite Clark’s promise to alter the secrecy-ingrained Campbell regime. Indeed, this change of approach received a serious blow when it was

discovered that four firms with Liberal ties received secret HST contracts.

However, it is Christy Clark’s signature, families-first policy that has been called “Liberal Lite”—heavy on platitudes and short on substance—that has come in for repeated and justifiable criticism.

Apart from restoring some funding to important non-core programs such as the school-based Roots of Empathy and the strengthening of school bullying programs, substantial issues such as the denial of funding to the most vulnerable kids with special needs in BC schools, coupled with the worst child-poverty rate in Canada, and the closure by the Liberals of upwards of 60 group homes for developmentally disabled and the cutting of services putting these families under stress—all of these mock Clark’s repeated and dubious claims for her families-first agenda.

Add to this the mid-summer announcement (astoundingly couched in Liberal terms as a good news story) of diminished access to subsidies for working families needing childcare. But remember, this is the new way of doing things as our premier never tires of telling us.

Even more damaging to Clark’s vaunted families-first mantra is the draconian 2004 legislative change to child labour law, whereby a 12-year-old BC child was allowed to go to work. Prior to this, the minimum work age was 15.

Joel Bakan, an internationally known UBC professor and expert in the field, (author of the new *Childhood Under Siege: How Big Business Targets Children*), notes that BC currently “has the most neglectful child labour law in North America, indeed in the world... Afghanistan and Haiti have more protective laws on their books.” To drive the point home Bakan adds, “In British Columbia, a child can go to work at 12, in just about any job, hazardous or not (mines, taverns, bars, and lounges are the only exceptions) and they can be required to work at any time of the day or night except during school hours.”

The Liberal rationale for this changed labour law was cited as “making BC more competitive.” Shameful.

In a sense, it really does not matter when Clark decides to call a provincial election. She recently ended months of speculation about an impending fall election. Be it

next year or the following year, one key word will be “trust.”

After Clark’s refusal to review the disgraceful Basi/Virk \$6 million legal payout, but more particularly, the late August defeat of Gordon Campbell’s deviously introduced HST tax (supported by every single Liberal MLA at the time, and endorsed, albeit in a modified form by the current government), the BC Liberals will have their hands full on the credibility front facing a revitalized opposition once the writ is dropped.

The sell off of BC Rail, after promising not to, also factors heavily into the Liberals’ trust deficit.

Certainly the rebranding of the BC Liberals as the party of lower taxes and fiscal management took a huge hit with the dumping of the HST. Now the complex task of unscrambling Campbell’s massive mess as the province returns to the PST/GST is estimated to last a year or more.

One expects the opposition party to provide detailed, if not biting, critiques of government leadership prior to an election, but when the current minister of education, George Abbott, albeit, in the final days of the heated leadership race for the premier’s office, bluntly stated that, “more and more it is abundantly clear that Ms. Clark’s positions are simply not credible and it shows that she has no real plan for our province, our economy or our families.”

Even some Liberals have started to question Clark’s gravitas in the premier’s chair. Her September job creation announcement, designed in part to counteract this negative impression, came replete with recycled and repackaged strategies originally designed by, what one reporter pointedly labelled, “he who shall not be named.”

Lastly, many middle-of-the-road BC Liberals have to be painfully aware that no amount of rebranding, hyperbolic sloganeering, or reinvention of the party’s image will overcome voter anger at the piling on, over a decade, of a host of both direct and indirect taxes (some surreptitiously) on a weary BC electorate.

Pocketbook issues dominate every time.

Voters will have the final say on this if, and when, Christy Clark finally drops the writ.

Noel Herron, former Vancouver school trustee.

## CSQ contract settlement in Quebec

By Larry Kuehn

### Common front for bargaining

In 2009, much of the Quebec public sector entered into a Common Front for collective bargaining. This Common Front covered about 475,000 workers in several of the major unions in Quebec, including the CSQ. The majority of francophone public school teachers in Quebec belong to the CSQ, although a half-dozen local teacher unions have withdrawn from the CSQ, and work as a separate group with about 32,000 members. The teachers in the anglophone schools were also in the common front through their union, QPAT (Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers).

The common front was to concentrate on common issues of remuneration (they sought 11.25% over three years), regional disparities, parental rights, and the pension plan. Union federations (teachers, healthcare, and public service) were to negotiate on sectoral demands.

In May of 2010, an agreement was reached between the Common Front and the Quebec government.

Results include, according to the *Gazette* on May 31, 2010:

- At least \$60 million in funding that brought extra support for elementary and high-school students was maintained, and another \$20 million was granted to provide additional services for children with behavioural disorders. Those services may include extra teachers, special classes, or even a new centre to help the children integrate into regular classes.
- Class sizes will be reduced in certain grades, going from a maximum of 29 students in Grade 6 to 20 students at schools in low-income neighbourhoods. Class sizes in all elementary grades are expected to drop by three students.

Over the next few years, class sizes in Grades 7 and 8 are to fall by four students, from the current maximum of 32. In addition, classes with children who have behavioural or developmental problems will

have fewer students.

The smaller class sizes will lead to the hiring of at least 3,200 teachers and involve new spending of \$200 million a year, the unions estimate.

The \$20 million negotiated for each year for behavioural problems is “in support of class composition for students with behavioural problems, which will enable weighting from the outset, additional respite classes, additional resources, etc.” (CSQ News (English), Fall 2010)

Joint committees were created to cover a number of problematic issues that were not concluded in the negotiations.

The salary deal reached for the whole Common Sector is very complex. The *CSQ News* says that “a five-year collective agreement foresees fixed salary increases of 6.0% and variable adjustments depending on the economic growth (up to 3.5%) or inflation (up to 1.0%) for a possible total of 10.5%.”

The largest percentage increases—both for the fixed increases and the increases linked to economic growth—come in years

four and five of the agreement. The inflation adjustment of 1.0% does not become a part of the scale until the final year of the contract.

The teacher union within the CSQ gained “a recurrent investment of over \$200 million” to cover the

various class composition and other service-level objectives.

A number of problematic issues were sent to joint committees.

Larry Kuehn, director, BCTF Research and Technology Division.

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# Texting all teachers: Making a case for cell phones in the classroom

By Stephanie Myers

December 2010 marked the 30th anniversary of the first mobile device. In just over 25 years, cell phones have emerged as the most pervasive technology worldwide and according to the 2010 Horizon Report, mobile phones are “likely to have the largest impact on teaching, learning, and education.” (New Media Consortium, 2010: 17) Yet, type the words “cell-phone and classroom” into any search engine and you will be struck by the overwhelming majority of sites advocating for the ban of cell phones in schools. Educators opposed to the use of m-learning (mobile learning) technologies in the classroom tend to cite: electromagnetic radiation (EMR) exposure, distraction, inappropriate social interactions, cheating, and systemic school board policies as the primary issues for keeping cell phones outside their classrooms.

### EMR exposure

According to Health Canada’s Promotion Minister, Margaret Best, exposure in Canadian schools is closely monitored and falls well below the guidelines set forth in Safety Code 6, which identifies the acceptable standards for Specific Absorption Rates (SAR). Despite what Canadian authorities say, many researchers worldwide are assiduously investigating the possible risks of cell phone use and the dangers of EMR exposure. Some preliminary results are suggesting that extended and prevalent cell phone use can be associated with a “wide range of health concerns ranging from belly fat and thinning skin to accelerated aging, blood sugar imbalance, cardiovascular problems, erratic sleep patterns, and mood disturbances.” (Cass, 2010)

*Our current system is based on an antiquated construct that grew out of the Industrial Age. Sir Ken Robinson (2010) refers to this as an agrarian, “production line” model, one designed to encourage conformity, standardization, and linear thinking. This model no longer fits.*

As educators, the question remains, do we stop using these ubiquitous technological tools completely, until concrete data tells us otherwise? Or do we adopt the recommendations offered by Dr. Ann-Louise Gittleman, author of the widely acclaimed book *Zapped*, who suggests equipping students with strategies they can use to avoid and mitigate the potential effects of EMR. (Gittleman, 2010)

### Distraction

While some teachers are preoccupied by the immediate distractions cell phones bring to class, others are more concerned with the long-term implications such technologies will have on overall learning. These teachers believe mobile technologies are fostering a fragmented learning style and creating a kind of ADD in today’s learners. (Moon, 2010) While their ideas aren’t exactly inaccurate, advocates for m-technologies and neuroscientists would suggest that the negative connotations teachers assign to this new style of parallel learning is the real problem.

In their groundbreaking work *iBrain*, Small, and Vorgan explain how the brains of digital natives are being rewired by their constant exposure to technology. Young people today have grown up with a never-ending stream of technological exposure. *iBrain* reveals how this digital bombardment is actually creating new sets of permanent neural pathways in the brains of young people, at a speed unlike anything that has been seen before. As a result of this constant connectivity, digital natives are “developing neural circuitry that is customized for rapid and incisive spurts of directed concentration.” (Small, 2008: 21) In essence, when teachers argue that students are unable to focus on classroom lectures, they are right.

The important point to note is not that today’s students are incapable of paying attention; in fact, studies suggest the opposite. Current research consistently demonstrates that digital natives are comfortable and capable of actively engaging in three to five activities at one time. (Small, 2008: 33)

So if students are in fact able to learn, what is going wrong in current classrooms? Advocates of education reform would argue that the problem is not with the students but with an outdated model of education. Our current system is based on an antiquated construct that grew out of the Industrial Age. Sir Ken Robinson (2010) refers to this as an agrarian, “production line” model, one designed to encourage conformity, standardization, and linear thinking. This model no longer fits.

What better way to engage young people in the classroom than to incorporate the technologies they are consciously choosing to use outside of school. According to the 2010 Pew Internet Study, cell phones will soon replace home computers as the number one means of communication for people under 20. So, instead of sloughing off cell phones as useless teenage toys we need to regard mobile technologies as a means of focusing kids’ attention. We need to use what is already in their hands—so they too can witness the potential power of the tool they possess, rather than the simple toy it appears to be.

### Cheating

The idea of collaboration is fundamental when we seek to dispel the myth that the introduction of cell phones in classrooms will increase instances of cheating. Sir Ken Robinson offers an excellent quote on this subject; “In school we are told that there is only one answer, and it is in the back of the book, and don’t look, and don’t cheat.” (Robinson, 2010) He goes on to suggest what teachers often identify as cheating in the traditional classroom is widely accepted as collaboration in the real world.

According to a recent study conducted at UC Berkley it was determined that information is the fastest growing thing on the planet; global information production has been and will continue to increase by a rate of 66% per year. (Technium, 2010) Why then do we continue to teach and test students on their abilities to memorize and synthesize information that has been taught to them, when we know that the human brain is incapable of memorizing, let alone retaining, the magnitude of information we are inundated with daily.

As educators in the 21st century, we must recognize that it is beyond our scope to teach students everything, and at the same time we must accept that limiting them to what we know is not enough. Instead of testing students on what they have been told, we would be far more effective teachers if we taught students how to access, analyze, understand, apply, create, and share information. To borrow a quote from Resnick and Resnick “The trick is not that teachers teach to the test but that teachers need tests worth teaching to.” (Resnick, 1992)

*In Grades 9–12, 79% of students use a cell phone outside of school every day. They quite literally have powerful tools in the palms of their hands that can radically improve their learning experience.*

### Inappropriate social interaction

I am not naive to the inherent risks associated with putting cell phones in the hands of teenagers, but it is relevant to note that to this point, young people have been left to their own devices to determine what constitutes socially appropriate behaviour with regard to technology and social media. In her work, *Teaching with the Tools Kids Really Use*, Susan Brooks-Young points out that as teachers we must “create engaging learning environments that mirror the real world. It is our role to teach them the skills needed to be successful and ethical in those environments.” (2010: 12) How are young people to develop appropriate communication and social skills in a digital world if teachers fail to help them develop guidelines for acceptable interactions? The expectations on teachers have not changed but the environment has.

As an educator, I completely agree that texting in class is disruptive and unnecessary, but I also believe it can be curbed without having to go to the extreme of confiscating students’ cell phones. Rather than creating a punitive relationship with students and their technologies, I encourage teachers to adopt a proactive, collaborative relationship with their students, working with them to determine concrete, meaningful guidelines around what is acceptable and beneficial to their learning.

A primary goal for 21st century educators must be to model appropriate interactions in both face-to-face and digital environments in a way that promotes a respect of self-respect of others, and respect of outside limits (Brooks-Young, 2010: 102).

In Grades 9–12, 79% of students use a cell phone outside of school every day. They quite literally have powerful tools in the palms of their hands that can radically improve their learning experience. Cell phones have the potential to personalize learning and foster learning opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom, at any time, in any place. A cell phone can be much more than a casual communication device; it can be a meaningful learning tool. We make a grave error when we resist the technology that is already there, and that teenagers are eager to use.

Stephanie Myers is a teacher with the Burnaby School District.

References available on request.

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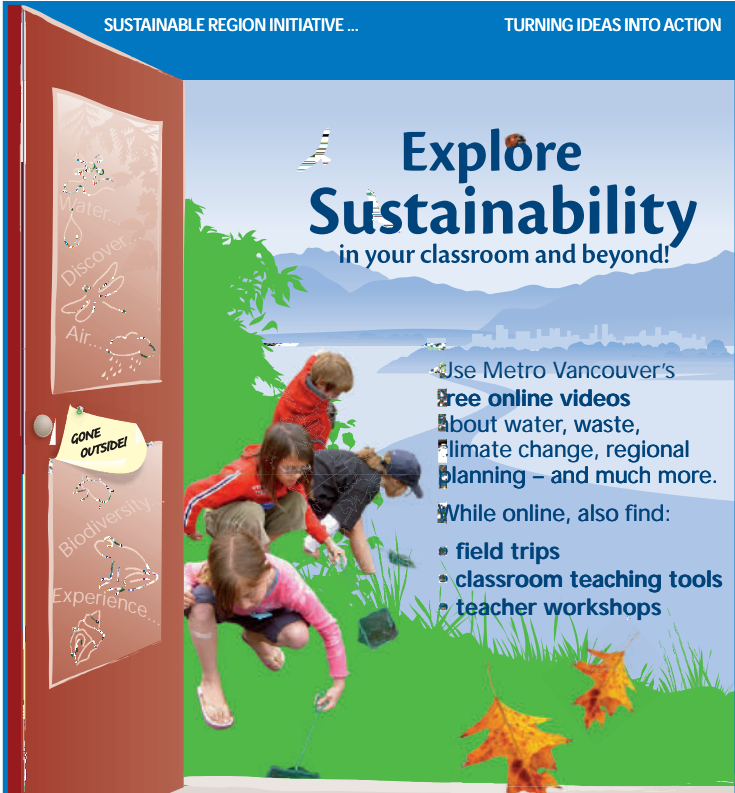
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# Thank you Canadian Direct Insurance and everyone else who helped out my classroom



**Top:** Colin Brown and Trisha Tyrell, Canadian Direct Insurance, with teacher Gurpreet Mahil, and student Trevor Stone. **Above:** At the restoration ceremony (centre front) student Trevor Conner and (front right) David Collier (Best Buy) along with Apple, Geek Squad, RobberStoppers, and Telus reps.

## By Gurpreet Mahil

It is heart breaking when your classroom is broken into and all your computers and the television are stolen. It makes you angry when the attack is against students who have special needs.

But, when a robbery happens a second time and the thieves break in using bolt cutters to do their smash and grab, you feel rage.

My students, who are in the low incidence, dependent handicapped

class at Langley Secondary School, could not understand why thieves would target them a second time. They had trouble expressing their feelings but I could feel their sadness and their parents spoke to me about the sleepless nights some were encountering as they tried to process the theft.

As a teacher, after such a horrendous experience, you are left with the tough decision.

Do you say nothing and hope that the school board would see the

wrongness of the action, support you with making the insurance claim, and ensure restoration of the equipment?

I chose to take action immediately and contact the press to tell the story. I wanted my students to tell the world that we will push back against crime fuelled by drug addiction.

Everyone needed to know that a wrong had been committed and that we were going to try to restore our classroom

**I was so proud of my class when they hosted the "restoration celebration" for the school and the donors. They presented beautiful signed plaques to each sponsor and we had an enjoyable luncheon.**

BCTF Advantage partner, Canadian Direct Insurance responded immediately with a commitment to restore all the computers and the television. They were equally disgusted by the mean-spirited way my students were treated by these thieves.

Best Buy worked with Canadian Direct to process the order and offered their Geek Squad to set up all the equipment.

Telus offered support and provided laptops, and the Geek Squad set them up to be useable in the resource room.

A wonderful Surrey company, RobberStoppers, offered to secure the room and they did so in a way that protected the dignity of the students. Their gift to the class was so wonderful.

The students in my program love soccer and were thrilled when the Vancouver Whitecaps offered support and encouragement to the students.

We held a "restoration celebration" and Colin Brown, chief operating officer, Canadian Direct Insurance, flew down from Edmonton to present the computers and television to the students. He said, "As a community, we struggle together to help each other and that it is important to support the most vulnerable in our society. No child should have to go through this horrible experience."

Carl Valentine, Vancouver Whitecaps community liaison manager, said, "It is important for the students to know that we care and value their contribution to our society and what they experienced is wrong. We are part of the community and the Whitecaps feel proud to support the courage of the class to speak out about what happened to them."

My students were guests of the Whitecaps FC on June 18 at the soccer game against the Philadelphia Union.

I was so proud of my class when they hosted the "restoration celebration" for the school and the donors. They presented beautiful signed plaques to each sponsor and we had an enjoyable luncheon.

I want to thank my colleagues at Langley Secondary School for being so helpful and supportive in protecting the rights of my students and I want to truly thank Canadian Direct Insurance and all the other sponsors for helping us.

Gurpreet Mahil, teacher, Low Incidence and Dependent Handicapped Program, Langley Secondary School, Langley.

# How unions protect our human rights

by Errol Black, Jim Silver

Unions are usually thought of as being about higher wages. It's true. Unions do produce higher wages for their members (and often, as a result of knock-on effects, for other workers as well). As of April 2011, for example, the 200,000 Manitoba workers covered by collective agreements earned an average hourly wage of \$24.57, 30% above the \$19 earned by workers not covered by collective agreements. Unionized workers also get better benefits.

Many people, including trade union members, see that as the end of the story. But unions do much more than this, and while wages and benefits are important, the other things unions do may be even more so.

Perhaps of greater importance is that unions bring the rule of law and the rights that go with it into the workplace. Without a union, management can treat employees arbitrarily. With a union, they cannot. They are constrained in their actions by the legal contract—the collective agreement—agreed to by the union (on behalf of its members) and the employer. That contract, the product of negotiations between union and employer, places limits on the potentially arbitrary exercise of power by employers, and empowers union members to defend themselves against abuses in the workplace.

A good example of how important such rights can be is the recent case of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and potential candidate for the presidency of France, and a New York hotel worker.

**Unions empower workers to protect themselves.... And so businesses, and many governments...work to undermine unions.**

The initial focus of the media's coverage of the alleged sexual assault charge brought against Strauss-Kahn was on the implications for him, and on his arrest and treatment by the New York police and justice system. Subsequently, questions were raised about the implications for the IMF. The media were largely silent about the situation of the New York hotel worker and the circumstances that motivated her to report the sexual assault.

A piece posted on Alternet, May 19, 2011 (see: [www.alternet.org/story/151022](http://www.alternet.org/story/151022)), titled "Accusing DSK of Sexual Assault Took Guts—But Union Protection is Essential," reports that the victim of the alleged assault is an African woman from a former French colony who works as a housemaid in the Sofitel Hotel. It is, of course, a story far from over. But the author observes that there would be no story at all if the housemaid were not protected by her union contract. "There's a reason why most rapes go unreported. But there was one thing the housekeeper knew could not be done to her for reporting her account. She could not be fired for having done so, because of the contract between her union, the New York Hotel Trades Council and the Sofitel Hotel at which she works."

An editorial in the New York Hotel and Motel Trades paper also stresses the importance of union membership. "In the worldwide

hotel industry, New York City has the highest proportion of unionization (75%), and hotel employees here have the strongest union with the best contract. They enjoy the highest wages in the industry, excellent benefits, strong job security, good working conditions, and powerful grievance rights. They also have a militant union—their own organization, governed and funded not by wealthy donors but by themselves—that aggressively enforces those rights."

The burden of both the Alternet article and the union editorial is that "the union does make us strong," both collectively and individually, by creating the conditions that allow workers who suffer abuse in the workplace to retain their dignity and seek redress and justice for the harm done them.

**A dirty little secret**

It is generally believed that employers don't like unions because they raise wages and improve benefits and working conditions. However, experience in the USA since the Second World War and in Canada in recent decades, suggests that the decisive motivating force in employers' animosity to unions is that they lose the right to treat employees in an arbitrary fashion. Unions empower workers to protect themselves from abuse (unfair dismissal, discrimination, etc.) by employers and, as in this case, sexual assaults by powerful patrons of hotels. And so businesses, and many governments over-friendly to businesses, work to undermine unions.

The drive to destroy unions in North America has progressed furthest in the USA. Steven Greenhouse reports in the January 21, 2011, *New York Times*, that union membership in 2010 was down to 10.9%, the lowest rate in more than 70 years. "The percentage of private sector workers in unions fell to 6.9%, the lowest rate for private sector unions in more than a century."

The situation is especially grim in the 22 so-called Right-to-Work (and Employment-at-Will) states, which started after 1947 in the old slave states, and then spread to agrarian and oil states. Union rates in 20 of these states are less than the US rate of 10.9%. North Carolina is at the bottom with a rate of 3.2%, less than 1/10 the current rate of 36% in Manitoba.

The union movement is stronger in Canada than the USA. However, in recent decades, both the overall rate and the private-sector unionization rates, have been declining. For Canada, the rate has dropped from an average 35.7% in 1980–89, to 34.4% in 1990–99, to 30.9% in 2000–06. The 2010 rate was 29.6%.

While the Manitoba labour movement has managed to sustain its strength in recent years, labour bodies must remain vigilant and intensify efforts to expand the movement in order to prevent the decline experience in the USA.

What is at stake is not just higher wages and benefits, but also, as revealed by the case of the powerful man who is alleged to have sexually assaulted a female worker, the defence of fundamental human rights in the workplace. Unions protect these rights, and for this reason alone deserve vigorous public support in a free and democratic society.

Errol Black and Jim Silver, CCPA–Manitoba board members and authors of "Building A Better World: An Introduction to Trade Unionism in Canada."

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# Parler français

de Sandrine Hebting

Je relisais récemment le journal Coup d'oeil sur la francophonie de chez nous lorsque je me suis rappelée le conseil d'une de mes enseignantes du programme de formation des enseignants à UBCO alors que je lui avais remis un devoir sur la place du français dans notre vie. Madame Ragoonaden m'avait suggéré de vous soumettre cet article pour votre journal parce qu'en tant que francophone ma perception du français est différente de celle de mes collègues francophiles. Je suis actuellement enseignante suppléante en immersion française pour le Conseil scolaire de l'Okanagan.

## Autobiographie :

Contrairement à beaucoup de mes compatriotes anglophones francophiles, le français est ma langue maternelle. Je suis née en France et j'ai été élevée dans le nord-est, en Alsace, dans la région des trois frontières entre la France, la Suisse et l'Allemagne. Bien que non alsacienne, j'ai été baignée dans cette atmosphère culturelle germanique où les influences langagières de l'allemand foisonnaient et les mots tels que « schlappe » (pantoufles ou chaussons) et « manala » (petite brioche) faisaient partie de mon vocabulaire. Cependant, je n'ai jamais développé d'accent régional, ma prononciation restait relativement neutre, à la parisienne, mis à part quelques expressions folkloriques.

C'est pourquoi en immigrant au Canada je fus à la fois sensible au régionalisme québécois et curieuse aussi des différences culturelles langagières. Il me semblait naturelle que le Québec ait développé des particularités au niveau de la langue qui se démarquent de celles de la France. Ainsi, à Radio Canada, j'entends souvent les animateurs dire : « à chaque semaine » alors qu'en France les gens disent : « chaque semaine ». Il s'agit, ici, je pense d'une variante de la langue française sans pour autant être un anglicisme. Cet exemple démontre qu'en habitant en Colombie-Britannique, j'ai pris conscience que

le français n'était non pas un principe acquis, solide et immuable mais un élément fragile et intégrant à ma réalité qui, sans attention particulière, pouvait facilement s'effriter jusqu'à son inusité. C'est pour cela que du moment où l'on franchit le seuil de ma porte la communication se fait en français. Il fut nécessaire pour ma famille de créer une niche où non seulement le français était utilisé mais aussi valorisé car rappelons qu'une langue ne se transmet pas génétiquement mais par acculturation. Ainsi, je fais l'effort, parfois fastidieux, de trouver des ressources en français.

Être francophone, c'est également un engagement politique et bien qu'il me serait parfois plus pratique et rapide de demander des services en anglais, lorsque je fais affaire avec le gouvernement j'exige d'être servie en français pour faire valoir mes droits au bilinguisme.

A l'heure actuelle je ne me considère plus tant française que francophone. Mes liens avec la France sont affectifs ; mon enfance et ma famille sont restées en France. Mais ma vie maintenant est en Colombie-Britannique et mon français est teinté de cette expérience. Avant tout, le fait d'avoir appris l'anglais sur le tard me donne une certaine souplesse et acceptation d'autrui dans l'apprentissage des langues. Ayant pris des cours théoriques d'anglais à l'école secondaire, je comprends à quel point une langue se doit d'être interactive et pertinente par rapport au cadre culturel. En tant qu'enseignante en langue la réussite communicative de mes élèves me tient à cœur. En tant que mère il est essentiel que mes filles se sentent à la fois canadiennes et francophones.

Je suis une littéraire depuis le plus jeune âge ; je vie par les livres, la poésie m'exalte et l'écriture éveille en moi des images vibrantes que j'absorbe vivement. Cette passion des mots je souhaite la transmettre à travers ma profession. Je suis consciente que la vie en Colombie-Britannique en dehors de l'école se fait en anglais pour bien des jeunes particulièrement pour ceux du programme d'immersion française. C'est pour cela que je veux pouvoir donner l'occasion aux étudiants d'écouter de belles phrases bien structurées et claires, de communiquer ouvertement et de lire un français soutenu et complexe car l'école est souvent la seule opportunité que ces élèves ont d'entrée en relation avec le monde francophone.

Par conséquent, je pense que les institutions scolaires se doivent d'offrir un enseignement de qualité avec un personnel qualifié tant dans la langue que dans le sujet d'enseignement. C'est avec cette volonté de bien faire que je travaille ma langue, qui sans être parfaite, est constamment en révision. Les moyens techniques actuels me permettent rapidement d'accéder à des ressources didactiques me permettant une autocorrection fiable. Ainsi j'utilise régulièrement des sites tels que le Larousse en ligne, La banque de dépannage linguistique, un site officiel du ministère de la culture du Québec et Mon bon patron.

À travers cette courte autobiographie j'espère avoir souligné le fait qu'une langue est vivante et que c'est seulement en l'utilisant activement que l'on peut la maîtriser que l'on soit francophone ou francophile. C'est seulement en développant une relation affective avec la langue que l'on peut la transmettre à autrui.

Sandrine Hebting, TTOC, Central Okanagan.

# How Chief Atahm Elementary became a success story

“Develop wisdom, honour the spiritual.”

Those principles guide a unique learning approach breaking through low expectations for First Nations achievement.

By Katie Hyslop

Chief Atahm isn't your typical elementary school. The teachers won't instruct in English until Grade 4. Curriculum is created by teachers and parents instead of the Ministry of Education. Here, hands-on learning means skinning a deer or collecting medicinal plants. It's one of the few Aboriginal immersion school programs in BC and—celebrating its 20th anniversary this year—the oldest.

Chief Atahm Immersion School is a one-storey building situated on top of the grassy plateau that is the Adams Lake reserve, a 60 kilometre drive north-east of Kamloops. For a Kindergarten-to-Grade 7 school, Chief Atahm is rather small: only five classrooms for 52 students. But Chief Atahm's teachers and parents say the school's full immersion in Secwepemctsin is a big deal. They say it produces students who not only have a good academic foundation but, equally importantly, are well grounded in their own culture.

“We think that if we offer a quality education here, [our graduates] will be prepared to go anywhere,” says Principal Robert Matthew. “And history has proven it's true. Our students here are well prepared for the public school, and many have gone to university or colleges.”

## Beyond a traditional education

Parents of kids at Chief Atahm want something more than academics: they want their children to grow up knowing who they are, where they came from, and why their identity should be a source of pride.

“We believe that everybody has unanswered questions of ‘Who am I? How did I get to this place and time?’” says Matthew. “We deliberately ask those questions, then answer them within our school. By the time they leave they'll have the [answer]: ‘Who am I? You are Secwepemc!’”

For kids in Kindergarten to Grade 3, instruction is entirely in Secwepemctsin. The teachers run the gamut from proficient to fluent, so elders also sit in on classes, either offering language help or running their own lessons. Instruction in Grades 4 to 7 is half Secwepemctsin, half English.

Unlike most reserve schools in the province, Chief Atahm doesn't follow the provincial curriculum. Instead teachers—mostly veterans of the public system—and parents adapt conventional classroom practice to involve aspects of traditional Secwepemc life: gathering roots and medicines, cleaning and smoking fish, singing, and creating art.

“In Grade 4 in the public school, they do bean seeds in an egg carton,” says Matthew. “We go out and study a real plant that has a stem, a flower, a root. We're observing nature and changes: that's science.”

## Maintaining the vision

Parents and teachers have devised a vision and set of values for the school that include these principles: we are all related; help yourself; take time for yourself; develop wisdom; and honour the spiritual.

“I think [in] public school and university, you do have to have some inner strength to survive,” says Matthew. “So this is what we want them to have when they leave here, some kind of inner strength.”

Like most of the 34 Aboriginal languages still spoken in BC, Secwepemctsin is endangered. Fewer than four dozen people still speak it fluently, and many are elderly. Because of this, fluency in Secwepemctsin is a hard goal to meet, especially when parents aren't fluent and kids revert to English outside of class.

But many educators agree traditional languages encode the personal history and culture students need to build strong, positive identities. Languages transmit ancestral knowledge, from tradi-

tional medicines to the meaning of land treaties, and other studies link early knowledge of more than one language to improved learning and achievement later in life.

## We used to raise our kids ourselves

Keeping Chief Atahm on track takes as much labour as love. In addition to the initial interview, parents attend four meetings per year to discuss the school's philosophy, budget, activities, and curriculum. They help fundraise—Chief Atahm gets support from Aboriginal and Northern Affairs but still needs to raise about \$100,000 each year to operate. They also participate in a three-day parent-teacher retreat to re-examine its vision and values.

Ultimately, it's that commitment and strength Matthew hopes to instil in the students. Whether they move far afield and earn doctorates or finish high school and stay on the reserve, he hopes to see self-reliance and pride in being Secwepemc.

“My dream is to be driving through this reserve 10 years from now and finding one of my former students repairing his own porch,” Matthew says. “Not phoning Indian Affairs, not phoning the band office, phoning anybody else, but doing it yourself.”

As a metaphor for Chief Atahm's first-of-its-kind model of learning immersed entirely in ancestral language and culture, you could hardly do better.

*Katie Hyslop reports on education and youth well-being for the Tye Solutions Society. This series on First Nations education success stories in British Columbia was made possible by funding from the McLean Foundation, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the Vancouver Foundation. If you would like to republish this or other stories produced by the Tye Solutions Society please contact Michelle Hoar at [mhoar@tyesolutions.org](mailto:mhoar@tyesolutions.org) or 778-558-1099.*

*For the full version of this piece, go to [theyee.ca/News/2011/09/06/Chief-Atahm-Elementary-School](http://theyee.ca/News/2011/09/06/Chief-Atahm-Elementary-School)*



MARVIN BEATTY PHOTOGRAPHY

Win an iPad

When you sign up to MyBCTF you will be automatically eligible to win an iPad

Details: Nine iPads will be randomly drawn at sign-up milestones (2,000 members, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000, 7,000, 10,000, 15,000, 20,000, and 25,000). If you are signed up, you are eligible to win in all subsequent draws. The sooner you sign up, the more chances to win.

Apple is not a participant in or sponsor of this promotion.



# Income security

## Reducing your assignment: The long-term financial impact could be significant

One of the findings of the recent BCTF study on the worklife of teachers is that many teachers are reducing their assignment by taking a partial leave due to the stress of trying to deal with class sizes and compositions that place too many demands to work full-time. We are finding this everywhere, but it is particularly evident in semestered secondary schools where many teachers are reducing their assignment by one block in the semester in which they have no preparation time. Elementary and middle-school teachers may reduce their workload by an afternoon, a day, or a full block in order to cope with the increased demand.

This decision should not be taken lightly for a number of reasons. Firstly, if you cannot work full-time due to an illness caused or exacerbated by stress, a partial medical leave is in order. Choosing to decrease your work load will result in a decrease in your household income. It also decreases your pensionable service unless you purchase the leave. You have, through your collective agreement, access to sick days for medical reasons. You are likely to be entitled to partial medical leave through your collective agreement. Through the BCTF Salary Indemnity Plan you have access to short- and long-term

disability with medical qualification if you no longer have access to sick days. These protections help secure your household income and you continue to receive full pensionable and contributory service during your sick leave and/or disability leave, this means that your pension is not affected in the long term.

The second and possibly more crucial reason is the possible long-term effect of taking this reduction. If you choose a reduced assignment due to an illness caused or exacerbated by stress and the illness worsens to the point that you are unable to work at all, your short-term and long-term disability payments will be based on the FTE on your final day of paid work. That, in turn means reduced household income and pensionable service. The long-term effect, should you become permanently disabled by a chronic illness, could mean a lifetime of reduced earnings. Under the rules of the Salary Indemnity Plan you are not eligible to access long-term disability after you reach Factor 90. You can reach factor 90 with very little pensionable service if you have only worked part time.

The other consideration that is often overlooked is the prospect of trying to increase your pension by working longer at the end of your career. Choosing to work 0.8 for five years will mean that you have lost a full year of pensionable service. With your present salary your pension will be reduced by over \$100 per month permanently, if you have met the rule of 90. If you have not reached the rule of 90, the effect could be \$350 per month.

While the option to work less

now may seem attractive, you have to ask yourself if you'll want to work a year or two longer when you are nearing 60.

For further information, contact your local president at your local union office, or one of the following staff members: Rob Taylor ([rtaylor@bctf.ca](mailto:rtaylor@bctf.ca)), Michael Kimmis ([mkimmis@bctf.ca](mailto:mkimmis@bctf.ca)), Chris Arcari ([carcari@bctf.ca](mailto:carcari@bctf.ca)).

– Rob Taylor, Income Security Division

## 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.

## Resources

# Protecting your online rep

How can you help kids protect themselves and their future online?

Today's world is vastly different from that of a generation ago. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than when it comes to information and communications technology, and media. And without question, today's youth are the first in line to deal with the effects of this change.

A generation ago, when teachers and other community leaders talked to kids about media awareness, it had to do with how on-screen images and advertisements could affect how they viewed the world and themselves. In comparison, today's youth are not just the audience, but also the actors. Advertisers not only seek to influence, but learn as much as possible about—and even track—them.

On top of it all, what kids post online can have dramatic and lasting effects on relationships with their peers and even their future academic and employment prospects. As has been said, "the Net never forgets." Increasingly, it's important for educators, community leaders, and parents to give today's kids guidance in this brave new world.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada has developed a resource kit to help teachers and community leaders talk with younger Canadians about protecting their privacy online.

The youth presentation package—*Protecting Your Online Rep*—offers people who work with youth the information necessary to offer an engaging and effective presentation in their own schools and communities.

The package includes a Power-Point presentation with detailed speaking notes for each slide, along with class discussion topics, targeted at Grades 9 to 12. In addition, presentations for Grades 7–8 and 4–6 are in development and will be available later this year.

The goal of the new tool is to teach young people that technology can affect their privacy, and to show them how to build a secure online identity and keep their personal information safe.

It was built from discussions held with students and teachers across the country, whose needs and concerns influenced its content and design.

It's been made to equip educators to deliver relevant information on a sometimes difficult subject in an interesting and engaging way.

If you're interested in talking to your students about protecting their online rep in an increasingly online world, you can find the presentation materials online right here: [www.youthprivacy.ca/en/9-12presentation.html](http://www.youthprivacy.ca/en/9-12presentation.html)

For more information, contact Kristen Yates at 613-947-7240 or [kristen.yates@priv.gc.ca](mailto:kristen.yates@priv.gc.ca).

### The Teachers' Pension plan invites you to free pension seminars designed especially for you!



- New to teaching or at the mid-point in your career? **Your Pension, Your Future** helps you better understand the value of your Teachers' Pension Plan.



- Within 5 years of retirement? **Thinking about Retiring** focuses on the information you need to know before you retire.

Learn more and pre-register for a seminar by visiting [tpp.pensionsbc.ca](http://tpp.pensionsbc.ca) (click on Resources, then Pension Seminars)

🕯️ IN MEMORIAM 🕯️

**Bronia Sonnenschein**

**Holocaust Survivor and Educator Extraordinaire**

Unveiling of Headstone:  
Oct. 30, 2 pm, Beth Israel Cemetery

Obituaries online at [legacy.com](http://legacy.com).  
Eulogy available upon request.  
For more info, contact her son Dan at (604) 681-1827 or [dans@portal.ca](mailto:dans@portal.ca).

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## Pressing Times in Africa – Grandmothers take action

**Saturday, November 5, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**  
Pamcitty Theatre, Vancouver International Film Centre, 1181 Seymour St., Vancouver

**Craft Fair** opens at 10 a.m., admission free. Proceeds to the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, Stephen Lewis Foundation.

**Film, *Life, Above All***, 1 p.m., followed by panel discussion. Tickets \$15 from Tickets Tonight [www.ticketstonight.ca](http://www.ticketstonight.ca) or 604-684-2787.

**Panel members:** Zahra Mohamed, Grandmothers Campaign Coordinator; Dennis Foon, Vancouver screenwriter, *Life, Above All*; Suzy Coulter, Vancouver HIV/AIDS nurse and founder of Turn to the Sun—Sewing Hope for Africa. Special guests: two grandmothers supported by an SLF-funded project in South Africa.

[www.greaterangogos.org](http://www.greaterangogos.org) | [www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org)





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Classified

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

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

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

**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)

**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.southoffrancereental.com](http://www.southoffrancereental.com)

**QUADRA ISLAND** private cabin for 2. Panoramic ocean, mountain view, soaker tub, [www.lunavista.ca](http://www.lunavista.ca)

**WATERFRONT CONDO** Birch Bay, WA. 2 bdrm, 2 bath, for week or weekend rentals. Complex has indoor pool, hot tub, games room. \$150/night or \$900/wk (plus \$50 cln. fee), [birchbayrentals.com](http://birchbayrentals.com) or call Teresa@ 604-831-4080.

**WHISTLER.** Townhouse, sleeps 6, fully equip. 604-925-7669 or Gary 604-669-7212.

**MESA/PHOENIX** park model trailer in 55+ park, sleeps 4, 4 pools, golf, tennis...huge variety of daily activities. \$1300/mo. 604-463-3151.

**WAILEA MAUI.** 2 bdrm. Condo beautifully renovated. Available to teachers at discounted rate. A/C, free long distance, free WiFi, flat screen TVs. New furnishings, private lanai, W/D, onsite property manager. Beach gear. E-mail: [waileavacationrentals@shaw.ca](mailto:waileavacationrentals@shaw.ca)

**WINTER STORM WATCH.** Sunshine Coast oceanfront home, spectacular SW Georgia Straight Views from every room. Enjoy a winter weekend getaway curled by the wood-burning fire watching the weather. 3 bdrm, 2 bath, private & peaceful, walk to beaches, Gibson's funky shops, restaurants. \$200/night, longer stays rates negotiable. Xmas avail. [janeki@telus.net](mailto:janeki@telus.net), 604-921-7122.

**LA MANZANILLA, MEXICO.** Beautiful, new, luxurious home in quiet cul-de-sac. 4 bdrm, 3½ bath, pool, fully furnished. 12-min. walk to village and playa. 250-537-6984, [casalamanz@shaw.ca](mailto:casalamanz@shaw.ca), [www.lamanzanillarental.com](http://www.lamanzanillarental.com)

**PHOENIX ARIZONA.** 2300 sq.ft. house on golf course. 3+ bdrm., pool with waterfall among palms, mountain views. Close to airport, sports stadiums, golf. Rent by the day/week/month. 604-465-5592 or [firemedic@shaw.ca](mailto:firemedic@shaw.ca)

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**SUBLET KITSILANO.** 1 bdrm. furnished view apartment, January–April, \$1,200 all inclusive. 604-731-4798.

**OCEAN VIEW HOUSE** on 1 acre garden property, Vancouver Island. \$1000/mo. plus utilities. Includes fridge, stove, washer, dryer. South of Ladysmith in Saltair. 2 bdrm. References, credit check & lease required. Beaches nearby. [mcleangrocery@telus.net](mailto:mcleangrocery@telus.net)

**FOR RENT.** Our beautiful waterfront home in Youbou/Lake Cowichan. For the perfect renters, we're willing to negotiate. Please contact [lmcdaniel@shaw.ca](mailto:lmcdaniel@shaw.ca) for more info.

MISCELLANEOUS

**RETIRING SOON?** Join the B.C. Retired Teachers' Association to: Keep informed, Stay connected, Remain involved. For more information, go to [www.bcrta.ca](http://www.bcrta.ca) or call 604-871-2260, 1-877-683-2243.

**FRENCH FIELD TRIPS.** Contact Sandy, Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

**FIELD TRIPS.** K–12 curriculum based. Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

**PENSION QUESTIONS?** Ask Arnie – now retired and available for expert, personal, one-to-one consultation including pension estimates, options, bridge, CPP/OAS, and pension splitting. Reasonable rates. Call Arnie Lambert at 604-354-5624 or e-mail [arnielambert@shaw.ca](mailto:arnielambert@shaw.ca)

**TEACHING POSITIONS IN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS** through the 24th annual Teachers' Overseas Recruiting Fair at Queen's University, January 27–29, 2012. Hundreds of K–12 positions in dozens of countries. Most contracts for 2 years. Pre-registration required. <http://educ.queensu.ca/careers>

**FOR PEAT'S SAKE.** A classroom study on Burns Bog and other peatlands. K–7 curriculum based. 206 pages, \$59.95 plus HST. Special rate for multiple copies. Burns Bog Conservation Society, 604-572-0373.

**SCHOOL TATOOS** 1,000 tattoos with your school's logo \$149. Visit [www.schooltattoos.ca](http://www.schooltattoos.ca), E-mail [info@schooltattoos.ca](mailto:info@schooltattoos.ca) or call 613-567-2636.

**PERSONAL.** 35-year-old good looking Caucasian male, employed as support staff, would like to meet a single Caucasian female teacher in her late 20s or early 30s with high moral and family values, for a long-term relationship leading to marriage, preferably Lower Mainland area. Reply in confidence. Serious enquiries only. [man4onewomen@hotmail.com](mailto:man4onewomen@hotmail.com)

**TILING & PAINTING.** Want to get the job done right? Call Vito. Glass and slate specialist. Indoor, outdoor painting. Serving the Vancouver area since 1996. [www.tile-rific.ca](http://www.tile-rific.ca) or call 604-831-4013.

**WIN AN AUTHOR VISIT.** Pam Withers, author of 15 teen books ([www.pamwithers.com](http://www.pamwithers.com)), is seeking male adults who went thru a period of being reluctant readers as youths, to interview for an upcoming book on getting boys to read. Involves 30-min. phone interview on reading habits. Interviewees' names then go into draw for free\* school presentation (value: \$325). E-mail [withers@intergate.ca](mailto:withers@intergate.ca). Male relatives of female teachers also welcome. \*Outside Vancouver, travel expenses apply.

**RESOURCES FOR SALE.** Like new. Current English workbooks. All levels, reading, writing, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. Also workbooks for disabled students. ESI workbooks and tapes, Toefl. [rburke@telus.net](mailto:rburke@telus.net), 604-228-9841.

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VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY

PD calendar

NOVEMBER 2011

**24–26** Vancouver. The 17th Annual Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education. Westin Bayshore Hotel. Watch for call for workshops and registration details at [www.fnesc.ca/conferences](http://www.fnesc.ca/conferences).

JANUARY 2012

**19–20** Vancouver. BCAEA (BC Alternate Education Association) Annual “Challenge and Change” conference. Keynote: Gabor Mate on *The Hungry Ghost: A Biopsychosocial Perspective on Addiction, from Heroin to Workaholism*. Sheraton Wall Centre, 1088 Burrard Street, Vancouver. For more information, go to [www.bctf.ca/bcaea/conference.html](http://www.bctf.ca/bcaea/conference.html) or contact DJ Pauls at [djpauls@shaw.ca](mailto:djpauls@shaw.ca) or 604-859-3015.

FEBRUARY 2012

**1–4** Vancouver. The Early Years Conference 2012: Development of Children's Mental Health: How do we become who we are? This conference will stimulate dialogue, reflection, a deeper understanding of a child's total development as rooted in their earliest relationships, and may revolutionize our approaches and practices with young children, their families, and their communities. The conference aims to understand global development of children (birth to six years), and how it progresses through their early relationships and experiences, promote focused dialogue among individuals and groups who support early child development and learning, showcase exemplary approaches that support healthy early childhood social emotional development, learn how to apply the understanding of child development to practice and development strategies. For further information please visit our website [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca), or contact us at [ipcde2@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipcde2@interchange.ubc.ca) or 604-827-3112.

MARCH 2012

**1–2** Vancouver, BC. SEA (Special Education Association) is proud to present the 37th Annual Crosscurrents Conference, at the Westin Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver. Keynote: To be announced, plus a variety of quality sessions and exhibitors for regular and special education. For information, contact or visit the website [www.bctf.ca/sea/](http://www.bctf.ca/sea/) or contact Conference Chair Leann Buteau at: [seaconferencechair@gmail.com](mailto:seaconferencechair@gmail.com).

APRIL 2012

**20** Whistler. Date Change! PITA's Supporting Struggling Students in Literacy and Math, Sixth Annual. Learn practical strategies to support all students. Sessions

focussed on intermediate classroom teachers and learning assistance. For information, contact Ray Myrtle, [president@pita.ca](mailto:president@pita.ca) or visit [www.pita.ca](http://www.pita.ca).

MAY 2012

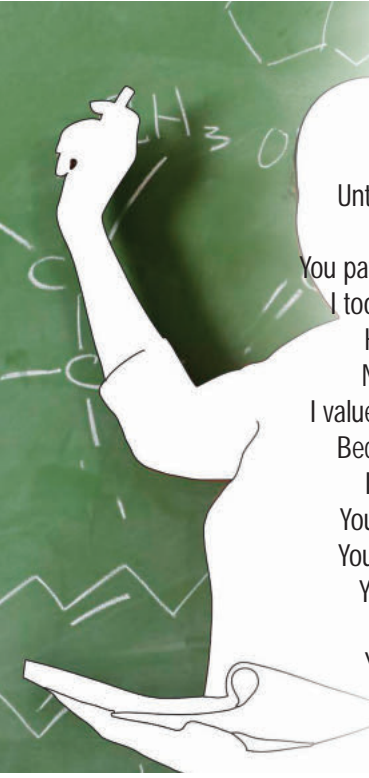
**6–8** Vancouver, BC. Child and Youth Mental Health Matters. This conference brings together an interdisciplinary group of professionals working in the field of mental health to share knowledge and experiences related to child and youth mental health. Three themes woven through the conferences: Parental mental health, children of parents with mental illness and young carers. A forum for focusing on the needs of families as they struggle with issues related to mental health concerns across the generations. The overall goal is help us develop a common language and understanding of the needs of young people and families. By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, we hope to enrich our collective knowledge of mental health strategies, best practices and the latest research in order to improve outcomes for young people and families. For further information please visit our website [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca), or contact us at [ipcde2@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:ipcde2@interchange.ubc.ca) or 604-827-3112. We are currently accepting presentation submissions until September 26, 2011. The presentations can be submitted on line at [www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/ChildandYouthMentalHealth.htm](http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/ChildandYouthMentalHealth.htm).

**11** Alert Bay. BCRSSTA (British Columbia Rural and Small Schools Teachers' Association) Annual conference “Learning from Each Other” featuring innovative school organization from Zeballos Elementary, as well as presentations on teaching practices from other North Island rural communities. Host school: Alert Bay Elementary. Contact information: [cmacdonald@sd85.bc.ca](mailto:cmacdonald@sd85.bc.ca) or [vcivey@explornet.com](mailto:vcivey@explornet.com).

**Future October PSA days**  
BCTF procedure statements:  
30.A. 14 That for the purposes of a province-wide PSA day, the BCTF supports the third Friday in October as the day on which all districts hold a professional day, except in years in which Thanksgiving Monday falls in the same week, in which case the fourth Friday would be the designated day.  
36.30.10: That the BCTF's PD Calendar not publish PD events by outside agencies scheduled for the provincial PD day.

2012–13: October 19, 2012  
2013–14: October 25, 2013  
2014–15: October 24, 2014  
2015–16: October 23, 2015

PD Calendar website: [bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProD/PD-Calendar.cfm](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProD/PD-Calendar.cfm)  
Additions/changes—contact Betty Goto at [bgoto@bctf.ca](mailto:bgoto@bctf.ca)



Teacher: Invisible Figure

I'm not sure what motivates you  
Doing the job you've chosen to do  
So much giving without many perks  
Unthanked, unseen for all of your work.  
Masses of kids filling your room  
You patiently nurtured and gently groomed  
I took for granted, didn't see in the past  
How powerfully you shaped my path.  
Now I'm aware and want you to know  
I value your efforts, seeds that you sewed  
Because of you, my mind became open  
I still hear your logic, quietly spoken.  
You pushed me when I dug in my heels  
You forgave me saying, It's no big deal.  
Years later, I see that it's you I reflect  
Not once did you give-up or reject.  
You were invisible, but now I can see  
I owe you thanks for influencing me.  
—Neil Garvie © 2007

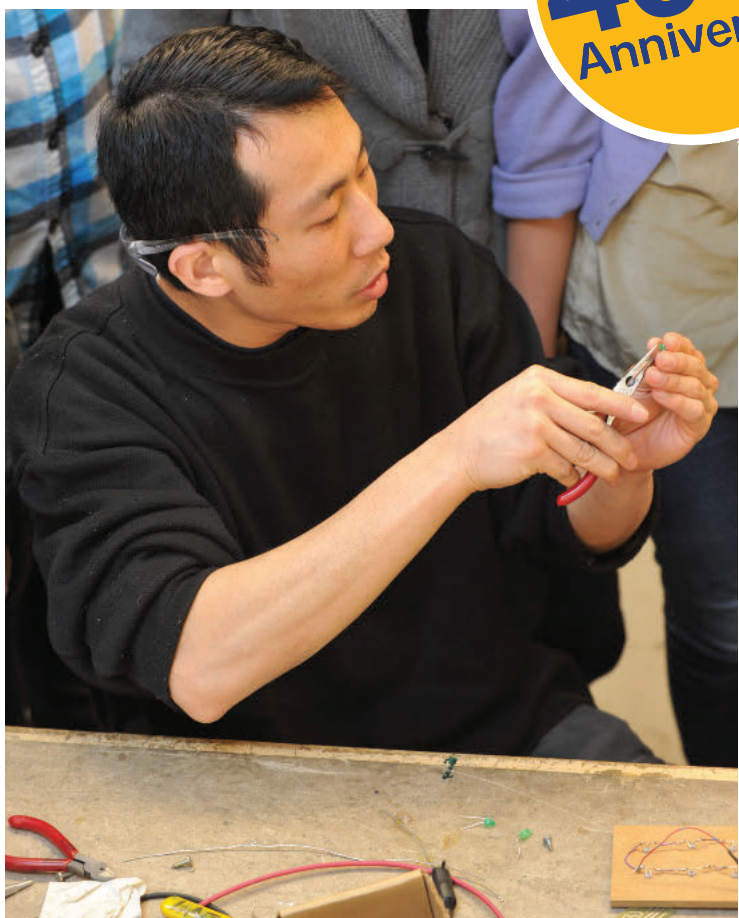




# Celebrate **BCTF** Professional Development

This year BC teachers are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the inclusion of professional development days in the school calendar *and* the 40th anniversary of PSA Council.

**40th**  
Anniversary



Professional autonomy in PD



Every teacher needs a PSA



Join a PSA—information and application form at [bctf.ca/JoinaPSA](http://bctf.ca/JoinaPSA)

Celebrate the efforts of your local ProD Committee