

## Liberals fail to respond to family poverty

By Noel Herron

In her post-election analysis as to why the beleaguered BC Liberals lost two recent by-elections in Port Moody-Coquitlam and Chilliwack-Hope, Christy Clarke averred that her government needs to learn the "lesson" that "the recipe for success is to make sure we have a strong thriving economy and the reason we want that is, so that we can make sure people can put food on the table for their kids and look after the most vulnerable in society." Indeed.

Apart from the decade-long debacle over the withdrawal of support for kids with special needs—some of the most at risk in our public school system—and the disastrous attempts to address the plight of disabled adults struggling to obtain help from the dysfunctional provincial Community Living Program, this new announcement from the Ministry of Children and Family Development now emerges to target the "unique needs of families struggling to get out of poverty."

This announcement comes after leading the country in child poverty for the eighth year in a row. To put it mildly, it is too little too late.

In a press release, laced with bureaucratic euphemisms, about the hiring of ubiquitous "seven community poverty strategy consultants" to guide poor families to a "personalized path out of poverty" while "customizing strategies" and "optimizing existing resources," we are treated to a

string of vague promises of future action on family poverty but not a single mention of provincial funding.

The goal, according to Mary McNeil, the current minister for Children and Family Development, is "to provide low-income families with tailor-made spring boards out of poverty by focusing on their strengths—not just their needs."

Insisting that each community has "unique" and "distinctive" needs and that "customizing strategies" will be used in addressing issues related to "families vulnerable to poverty," the province has selected the following seven "pilot" municipalities—Cranbrook, Kamloops, New Westminster, Prince George, Port Hardy, Stewart, and Surrey.

Of course there are the usual local consultation mechanisms to be employed: "town hall meetings, community discussions and conversations" directed by the newly appointed poverty consultants.

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All of this could and should provide a timely opportunity for the seven BCTF locals in the designated areas to test both the authenticity and accountability of these pre-election pilots in their first go-round. It will also serve to highlight the decade-long neglect of schools across this province in meeting the urgent needs of vulnerable kids. Furthermore, it will help in raising awareness at a local level of a situation that negatively affects all of us. There are many questions to be raised and actions to be followed by Federation locals as they scrutinize the newly proposed MCFD "measurable (poverty) targets" that are slated to report out in September 2012.

The absence of the City of Vancouver from the seven pilots after the huge public outcry stemming from the searing series spearheaded by *The Vancouver Sun* on poverty in city schools, raises serious concerns about the validity of the entire project. This studied omission is especially telling when we are informed that pilot projects "will initially focus on families with children living in poverty."



MARCIA TOM PHOTO

***What's changed?***  
***(Above) 2012: The Strathcona Community School Breakfast Club feeds families. (Right) 1989: Community and professionals pulled together to support children through a lunch program at Queen Alexandra Elementary School.***



KHAREN HILL PHOTO, BCTF ARCHIVES

Rounding out all of this is a provincial steering committee comprised of representatives from the provincial cabinet, the Union of BC Municipalities, the voluntary sector, and the business community. The first seven pilots will be followed, we are told, over a two-year period until 2014, when a total of 20 is reached.

The lack of sensitivity and hypocrisy of the BC Liberals on the issue of poverty is striking.

***...these pilots must be viewed as nothing more than stalling tactics as part of the BC Liberals' strategy to avoid concrete and meaningful action on alleviating family poverty.***

Over the past 10 years, starting in 2002, when the then Minister of Children and Family Development, Gordon Hogg, proposed to cut \$5.4 million from funding that supported inner-city schools, lunch programs for poor children, social workers in

schools, and more than 100 community schools, this was followed by additional cuts in education, health and social services that disproportionately affected poor children and families. And coupled with this was Victoria's failure to act as the numbers of children living in poverty climbed steadily year after year in BC until it reached today's astounding 137,000 figure. (See below for related child poverty numbers.)

In this context, these pilots must be viewed as nothing more than stalling tactics as part of the BC Liberals' strategy to avoid concrete and meaningful action on alleviating family poverty.

It is just over a month ago, after 10 years of foot-dragging that BC's minimum wage reached slightly over \$10 an hour. And with the recent release of a new report (by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Metro

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### On the inside

Balancing the political and the professional has been one of the major challenges this year.

We have featured articles throughout this issue from a number of provincial specialist associations marking the 40th anniversary of the Provincial Specialist Association Council. Rounding out this final edition of *Teacher* for the 2011-12 school year a number of PSAs have contributed articles promoting their work. These and other articles on robotics, culinary arts, and business show that our present political

difficulties and struggles notwithstanding, teachers continue to show amazing creativity and enthusiasm for enriching the lives of their students.

Social justice issues are always on our agenda and this edition highlights the efforts being made to combat environmental degradation, racism, violence, and homophobia.

Questioning of our government's social/political objectives continues with critical pieces on fiscal policy, taxes, inequality, and the threats to our democracy.

### Child poverty by the numbers in BC

- 137,000 kids in BC living in poverty
- 92,000 are school-aged (5 to 17)
- Kids under 6 years have highest (20%) poverty rate
- 90,193 adults helped by food banks Canada in 2011
- 93 food banks across BC, with 86 outside Lower Mainland
- 249 schools helped this year by the non-profit Breakfast for Learning program
- 31,000 kids helped in the above 249 schools

Source: First Call; Greater Vancouver Food Bank; Breakfast for Learning; Metro Vancouver Living Wage for Families Campaign; Food Banks Canada.

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## President's message



Susan Lambert

We have been in an intense struggle for the entire 2011–12 school year. A struggle to advocate for our students, to try as best we can to maintain the quality of our public education system and to stand up for ourselves as a

profession. As you read this, summer beckons with its well-deserved and fully earned break.

We will all use this summer to recharge our energies and reflect on our work this year. We'll think about the students, our units and lessons, and we'll plan and resolve to do things differently and better next year. That's what we do every summer. But this summer will also be a year where we decide as a collective how to approach our advocacy for public education next year. This has been an extremely difficult year. We have seen our college razed to the ground as government used trumped-up allegations of undue influence to undermine our professional status and ability to self-regulate. We have seen government ignore the Supreme Court ruling that affirmed our right to free and full collective bargaining. This has shaken our

faith in the very rule of law that is the foundation of our democracy. We have witnessed the erosion of the system as positions, programs, and resources are cut. We have seen our educational leaders blithely welcome education legislation and policy changes that increase our workload, harm our students, and erode public confidence in public education. And this spring we've seen a flurry of legislation and regulations that will shape, without consideration, reflection, or consultation, the work we do and we are very apprehensive of the intent and direction of these interventions.

This has also been an historic year. We have persevered in an atmosphere of constant turmoil and distress. We conducted a brilliant and unprecedented eight-month strike. Within the constraints of essential services legislation we

successfully focussed attention on our issues—class size and composition, specialist-teacher ratios, and the compensation for a profession that must attract and retain the brightest and best into its ranks. We beat back many attempts by government and the employer to shut down that strike forcing them to, yet again, use ham-fisted legislation to compel us to end our job action. Our dignity and calm resolve, our unity and obvious commitment to students in the face of relentless attacks by this government, resulted in their popularity plummeting. The actions by the public school teachers of this province, has been nothing less than heroic in such trying times.

Recently a reporter asked me, "Where is the light at the end of the tunnel?" I had to stop and think about the question because of course we feel quite battered at the

moment. It's coincidental but fitting that these two last columns of the year would need to refer to Dr. Seuss; we are all feeling very "Mack" like—our shells are cracking. But my thinking quickly took me to the answer to the question. The light is in the faces of the children we teach.

As we craft our collective actions for next year we will keep the light at the end of our tunnel in mind. The light that is in our classrooms every day—the light of our students faces as we help them laugh, learn, and grow. Bask in the sunshine this summer, and as you reflect on this school year remember the fun, remember the jokes you shared with your students, and remember the critical nature and the value of the work we do in our schools every day.

## Thank you from Southern Okanagan Secondary School

By Sarah Riordan

In the wee hours of September 12, 2011, phones around the South Okanagan were ringing; Southern Okanagan Secondary School was on fire. The volunteer firefighters from Oliver and the surrounding communities arrived to find the fire fully involved. They tried desperately to keep the fire from spreading to the historical Frank Venables Auditorium, an auditorium that the people of Oliver had taken a voluntary tax increase to upgrade, but, it too succumbed.

*We cannot fully express to you what it feels like to know that colleagues we have never met are thinking of us.*

The school had been under renovations for the previous 18 months. Students and teachers learned and taught while massive machines pulled off the outside walls of the classrooms during the school day. Debris, dust clouds, alarms, water shut-offs, room changes, make-shift exits, and various very loud and constant noises had become normal. But the school year started with the office and library ready and the science lab, gyms, multipurpose area, and most of the classrooms just weeks away from completion. Then came the fire.

In the weeks and months since the fire, the teachers of SOSS came

to learn many things:

- You can be a teacher with 20 years of experience, but you may suddenly feel like a first-year teacher again with your life's work gone.
- It will take months for you to think of all the things that you no longer have.
- Some days, it really is the students who get you through the day.
- A school does not feel like a complete community when the students with special needs have to be moved to another building.
- People will be sympathetic but, chances are, only other teachers will "get it."

Luckily for us, there were teachers throughout British Columbia who understood. Binders, books, resources, and flash drives with lesson plans arrived from all over the province. Students and teachers from other schools held book drives to start our new library, set up science lab field trips, and volunteered at a school dance. BCTF locals sent the staff "fun" money. With that money, we have had a catered lunch and have plans for some other events and draws this spring. We cannot fully express to you what it feels like to know that colleagues we have never met are thinking of us. To all of our fellow teachers, who through thought, word, or deed, took some time to empathize, please know that we wholeheartedly thank you.

Sarah Riordan, South Okanagan Secondary School, Oliver

### POVERTY from page 1

Vancouver Living Wage for Families Campaign) estimating that at least 25% of families with children in the Lower Mainland are earning less than a living wage thus pointing clearly to the high levels of child poverty, housing and child care affordability, and rising inequality.



This situation will deteriorate even further without a substantive policy framework and genuine concrete actions.

The fact that at one time we had as many as five different ministries, including one called a Ministry of State for Child Care and Early Childhood Development, with overlapping and confusing responsibilities for the overall well being of families and children, speaks volumes about the concern for added portfolios for the boys and girls in the backbenches than it does for care for the province's needy citizens.

One can now anticipate that Mary McNeil's belated poverty pilots will be boldly portrayed, with the customary Liberal hyperbole, as solid steps forward by Victoria, in next year's pre-election budget with, no doubt, accompanying promises of future funding after May 2013. The only component missing from this carefully orchestrated Liberal scenario is the widening and deepening gap centered on the lack of trust now opening between a provincial government in free fall mode and its increasingly sceptical electorate.

Sweeping aside the bureaucratic baffle-gab in the MCFD's initiative, one is struck by the lack of realism from a children's ministry, rushing forward at this time to come up with something that resembles an anti-poverty strategy, to deflect the anticipated criticism on the hustings in 11 months.

Reading this new MCFD document, the sense of misplaced urgency is almost palpable (local

reports must be submitted to Victoria by September 2012), especially when we now have a so-called families-first premier who concedes that her government is belatedly endeavouring "to look after the most vulnerable in society."

It is a sad and shameful fact that the "best place on earth," thanks to dithering and denial, has the worst child poverty rate in Canada.

Noel Herron, former principal and school trustee; author of a history of inner-city schools in Vancouver.



Strathcona Community School Breakfast Club feeds families and trains students to be "breakfast buddies."

## Check your pension benefit statement

Within the next two or three weeks you should receive your annual Member's Benefit Statement from the Teachers' Pension Plan.

This document is your record of pensionable service and salary for the last calendar year. It will provide you with valuable information regarding your pension.

Check your statement carefully. Make sure that your personal information is correct. It should include your full name, your correct date of birth and, if you have a spouse, their name and birth date. Pensions are calculated according to age, so it's imperative that it be correct. If your marital status changed, you should contact the Pension Corporation and let them know because your pension is a marital asset and your spouse or ex-spouse has rights to pension earned while you are together.

The Pension Corporation records the employment information that is sent to it by your school district. If

there is an error, it is up to you to check with your employer and have them send the correct information to the Pension Corporation.

The most important numbers on your statement are your pensionable service and salary. Those two numbers are integral to the calculation of your pension.

Pensionable service is recorded for every day or part day worked in a month.

Your salary includes your regular earnings, plus any special allowances such as department head allowances or co-ordinator allowances. The Salary Indemnity Plan rebate is also used for pensionable salary.

If there are corrections to be made, the sooner it is done, the better. Trying to correct a mistake that was made 20 years ago can be difficult and frustrating, not only for you but for the school district and the pension plan.

— Rob Taylor, Income Security Division

# Teacher

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# Gladstone Secondary School robotics team on top of the world



By David Denyer

Back from winning first and second prizes in the 2012 VEX Robotics World Championship competition in Anaheim, California, Todd Ablett and his student teams from Gladstone Secondary School in East Vancouver are savouring their success.

This competition brought together 10,000 students in 400 teams from 20 countries around the world and represents the pinnacle of achievement in integrating student learning in physics, mechanics, mathematics, and programming.

Here is a striking example of a teacher and students working in a very innovative manner, far beyond anything conceived in the government's half-baked BC Education Plan. Boys and girls of mixed abilities and grades work in design, promotion, and marketing teams.

Despite their outstanding success, there has been no recognition from government. "It confuses me why there is not a parade of people from the education ministry coming through," said Ablett. "We do all this within budget and within the union contract. This is very powerful."

The robotics lab at Gladstone is a large area containing a vast conglomeration of work benches, tools, machinery, materials, and computers. In the centre is "the pitch," a raised square arena on which the robots are put through their paces and perfected. Some

students hover over the pitch, monitoring the robots performance while others gather in small groups at work stations and computers in the surrounding areas.

*Here is a striking example of a teacher and students working in a very innovative manner, far beyond anything conceived in the government's half-baked BC Education Plan.*

In talking about their experiences the students show great insight into how the program develops not only specific scientific skills but also more general life skills, such as communication and teamwork. The acceptance of different ideas, interpretations, ages, and backgrounds plays a big role in the development and success of the teams.

In reflecting on his own personal growth, one student remarked that his involvement in the robotics program has shaped "who I am and what I want to do in the future." Many are planning future careers in engineering and computing and we wish them and the program every future success.

David Denyer, editor, Teacher newsmagazine

For a closer look at the contest and the program go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/6n96d2b>



## Centennial celebration

Nelson School, in Burnaby, will be celebrating its Centennial in September, 2012.

In 1912 it was originally christened Alta Vista because of its beautiful views of the south slope. The following year it was renamed Nelson Avenue.

I have a very special history with Nelson that I treasure. In 1958, I enrolled in Grade 1 and was lucky enough to be in Miss Robinson's class. By Christmas, I knew I would be a teacher.

On the last day of school that year, David Gray, our principal, gave each Grade 1 student a baby fir tree and encouraged us to watch it grow as we grew. There are a few of those fir trees still growing in Burnaby yards today.

In 1972, my teaching career in Burnaby began. Thirty-five years later I retired. I spent the last decade of my career teaching Grade 6 and 7 students in the very same classroom I completed my own Grade 7 year with Mr. DeFaveri in 1968.

Since retiring in 2008, I have been volunteering at Nelson School and now am a member of the Nelson Centennial Planning Committee.

Do you have stories, memorabilia, or pictures to share? We'd love to hear from you.

The Nelson Centennial celebrations will be on September 27 and 28, 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Please let us know if you can join us. E-mail Dino Klarich, principal at [dklarich@telus.net](mailto:dklarich@telus.net) or Ila Appleby (Chapman), committee member, [doli@telus.net](mailto:doli@telus.net).

Ila Appleby  
Burnaby

## Historical context omitted

Correction to "Open letter to parents, administrators, and school trustees" by Bo Curtis printed in the April edition of *Teacher*.

In reprinting the letter, the historical context was unfortunately omitted. This letter was originally written in January 2002, just before Bill 28 was passed, and submitted to the *Gulf Islands Driftwood*.

Given the current situation the content is just as applicable and timely 10 years later.

— David Denyer, editor

## Looking back

### 70 years ago

Our Western civilization as it has unfolded during the last 2,500 years has maintained as one of its central ideals that of the man of broad understanding, of calm and steady vision and perspective. The man who, nourished by a "Liberal Education," has learned to understand and cherish all that is best in our tradition. However, during the last 40 years or so, particularly on the North American continent, this grand tradition has very nearly died. The reasons for this were many, but chief amongst them was that shallow and unlovely conviction which took possession of us all, that whatever was of no assistance in earning a living or in attaining success was, strictly speaking, useless and unworthy of the attention of grown man.

— April 1942, *The BC Teacher*

### 50 years ago

In improving education, the teacher is all important. Efforts better to serve the aims of education should be centered around the teacher. (1) Educate and train him more rigorously. Require full degree standing of him before permitting him to influence children. It is incredible to me that people who would throw up their hands in horror at the thought of

entrusting their car to a mechanic who is not fully trained will, with no qualms whatsoever, entrust their children to a youngster just out of high school with little or no training as a teacher. (2) Free him from clerical and other non-teaching trivia. (3) Free him from autocratic direction so that he may practise his profession in his own way. (4) Give him classes of manageable size. Give him time to prepare, to mark, to assess, to think, and to pursue his own further learning. The best educational aims in the world will never be realized unless they are fully appreciated by, accepted by, and implemented through, our teachers.

— April 1962, *The BC Teacher*

### 30 years ago

Although decision-making in the classroom can be a complex process, at its most simple level it revolves around the keeping, sharing, and giving of power. In this regard, most teachers could place themselves both philosophically and operationally on a continuum somewhere between democratic and authoritarian. Whether we choose to keep, share or give power, we all do so for good reasons. Yet, we must be constantly aware that our perceptions of our style are congruent with actual practice. We want always to be

certain that what we intend is actually what occurs, for it is not which style we chose, but how well we use it and how honest we are in communicating our decision-making style that may make the difference between a happy, productive classroom and the other kind.

— March/April 1982, *The BC Teacher*

### 10 years ago

Why me? Your layoff notice is a direct result of Christy Clark's opinion that larger class sizes are acceptable. It is also due to the Liberal government's belief that services for students are not as important as tax cuts for the wealthy and the corporations. Your school trustees have agreed with those opinions, and now they don't have enough money to exercise the flexibility they were asking for. The only choice they have is to lay off teachers. They should do it by seniority because that is the system least open to abuse. While your immediate agenda is going to be basic survival for you and your family, remember those who are responsible for your plight—school trustees and the provincial government.

— April 2002, *Teacher newsmagazine*

Compiled by Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

# 40th anniversary of non-instructional days in the school calendar

By Stephen Anderson and Heather Daly

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the addition of non-instructional days to the school calendar. Prior to 1971, teachers primarily developed professionally on their own time. This is one of two 40th anniversaries being celebrated this year; the 1971–72 school year was a significant one for the BCTF's Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs). The first meeting of the PSA Council was held on the October 23, 1971. Thus began the 40-year tradition of PSAs formally working together as "teachers teaching teachers."

In 1976, the Federation created the Professional Development Advisory Committee (PDAC) to support local associations. In 1977, the concept of "teachers teaching teachers" was further established through the beginning of the provision of training and support for PD associates, and the introduction in 1978 of Project TEACH instructors.

In 1982, government introduced Bill 89 to override the *School Act* in an effort to reduce the operating costs of districts and therefore help in slashing the provincial budget. The intent of the legislation was to change the hours in session as well as the days in session. A non-

instructional day was characterized as a day on which students were excused from tuition and instruction and during which teachers were subject to the direction of the board. The school board could designate a non-instructional day for the district and Bill 89 also allowed for districts to only have one non-instructional day, but they could, by agreement with the local teachers' association, increase this by five further days to a total of six non-instructional days. The result would have been a loss of non-instructional days in most districts for professional development. The BCTF opposed the loss of non-instructional days and encouraged its members to resist the attack on public education since teachers had resisted in the past and school boards had relented. Bill 89 was only in force until the end of June 1983.

There were continual pressures on professional autonomy in relation to non-instructional days, but the BCTF was able to fend this off and set a direction for local professional development leadership. In 1983, the BCTF established professional initiatives such as staff rep training, the integration of social responsibility into professional development activities, policy studies on teaching, pedagogy and professionalism, and advocacy work to defend public education. In

1992, the Federation introduced major changes to support local professional development leadership by establishing Summer Conference training of PD chairpersons and funding release time to support school PD rep training. All

*...40 years of inclusion of non-instructional days in the school calendar has also now seen the introduction of legislation (Bill 36) that would eliminate the provincially mandated school calendar.*

of these initiatives came as a result of the BCTF resisting attacks that would lessen the number of non-instructional days and professional autonomy in relation to these days. The Federation also took leadership in creating opportunities for teachers to examine their practice and develop their professionalism.

Today, continuous, career-long development as a professional is one of the key aspects of being a teacher in British Columbia. It is one of the primary goals of the BCTF and is noted in the four out of eight current BC Teacher Regulation Branch Standards. In order to

develop as professionals, teachers must have autonomy, respect, and time to assess and understand their own strengths and needs and must have opportunities to grow, and to share expertise.

The successor of PDAC, the Professional Issues Advisory Committee (PIAC), which includes three representatives of the PSA Council, now works to support the BCTF Executive, the BCTF zonal structure and locals' elected professional development chairpersons within a context of BCTF and PSA support. Workshops and programs with funding such as self-directed PD, Program for Quality Teaching (PQT), and teacher inquiry are all part of that support. The PD chairpersons in turn work to encourage and support autonomous, teacher-directed professional development and inquiry in their locals. The role of the PD chairpersons in ensuring the provision of teacher-directed professional development and the promotion of the opportunities provided by PSAs and LSAs in their locals is increasingly a critical one in continuing BCTF resistance against the threatened loss of teachers' autonomy over their professional development.

Ironically, what has been a year of celebration of the 40 years of inclusion of non-instructional days

in the school calendar has also now seen the introduction of legislation (Bill 36) that would eliminate the provincially mandated school calendar. In taking aim at the school calendar, Bill 36 is not dissimilar to 1982's Bill 89, and like the older legislation also appears to have targeted non-instructional days. In the case of Bill 36 this is through the inclusion of the wording "...one or more non-instructional periods, if any, scheduled by a board..." [emphasis added] and "hours of instruction" instead of "days in session."

Although non-instructional days were added to the school calendar 40 years ago, the ability for teachers in BC to choose to participate in, or to provide professional development opportunities, which meet their own assessed needs or share their strengths with others, requires continual utilization and defense; it must never be taken for granted.

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

This article concludes the year-long series celebrating the 40th anniversary of the PSA Council, and of the inclusion of non-instructional days in the school calendar.

Stephen Anderson and Heather Daly, PSA Council

## UK teachers take on the government

By Anne Guthrie Warman

In late March of this year I visited England where I lived and worked for 16 years and immersed myself briefly in the issues and challenges faced by British teachers under the current coalition government lead by Conservative David Cameron. Most of the cabinet members in this government are old Etonians (the name given to graduates of the most exclusive and expensive private school in the English-speaking world—Eton (the school that both Princes William and Harry attended). Therefore most of this government have never set foot in a state school and are personal millionaires. Unsurprisingly then one of the first acts of this coalition (Conservative and Liberal Democrats) was to cut the top tax rate from 50 to 45% with a view to bringing it down to 40%. (Very similar to the first thing our own governing liberals did when Gordon Campbell was first elected.)

Teachers in England are facing very similar attacks particularly on salary, pension, and conditions of service to those we in BC are currently experiencing.

For British teachers, 2012 will be remembered for a race to the bottom in pensions and pay and conditions of service for teachers. Currently the move is to have teachers work far longer before they can collect their full pension. The National Union of Teachers is suggesting that it could be as late as age 68 or 69. Additionally, like us, they have had a wage freeze and the unions are fighting that as well. One significant difference from BC is that teachers in the UK do not need to belong to a union to teach. The two largest unions, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National Association of School Masters and the Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) represent about 500,000 teachers.

Teachers in the UK also face a huge, unrealistic, and punitive accountability agenda. Some readers may be familiar with the dreaded Ofsted, the top heavy and

intrusive national Inspectorate who come in to schools on a three-year cycle (they review 20,000 schools each year) and is viewed by teachers in NUT and NASUWT as consistently denigrating teachers and schools causing fear and demoralization among teachers and heads alike. (Sadly, one of the architects of this so-called educational reform was our own Michael Fullan, Emeritus Professor of Education at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.) A few years ago when I visited England, I was struck by a headline that said that two head teachers of schools in inner-city areas in Liverpool and Birmingham had committed suicide after a poor Ofsted report.

The other major government initiative is to turn schools into so-called academies.

*For British teachers, 2012 will be remembered for a race to the bottom in pensions and pay and conditions of service for teachers.*

Academies can be secondary or primary schools, but the primary option was only added by the current government and so far there are not a large number. The earliest academies were "failing" schools (i.e., poor Ofsted assessments, poor performance as measured by national tests, and exam scores) and established, often with additional and welcome funding for new buildings and equipment.

Under the coalition government, successful schools are being offered/pressured into becoming academies. The problem here is that academy schools have the freedom to set their own admission criteria and thus introduce selection by the back door. It's a very different picture from the academies replacing failing schools in deprived areas. Primary schools are now being "encouraged" to take up

academy status. The rhetoric is wonderful doublethink: local authorities interfere too much in education (but they were forced to implement central government policy with regard to curriculum, etc.). So let's free schools from the dead hand of the local authority (read local school boards) and run them directly from Whitehall. That cuts out anyone with local knowledge of demographics, buildings, etc.

Free Schools are much more a gimmick than a serious new kind of school and are a further weakening of the local education authority. The Tories claim that state education is inadequate and fails able but poor children. The idea is that parents and other local interest groups can set up schools and run them much better than the state system. The threat is to an appropriately balanced intake in local schools. A socio-economic analysis would argue that Free Schools allow aspiring middle-class parents (or other interest groups) to open their "own" schools and run them in their own neighbourhoods in their own way—and enjoy state funding where otherwise they might have gone private and had to pay. They will be outside LEAs and receive start-up funds as well as recurrent funding. This sounds very much like the charter school movement so beloved of neo-liberal governments here in North America.

The big question relating to academies and free schools are first how "free" or "independent of the state" will they be after the initial start-up period? Once the LEA has disappeared, schools will be dependent for funds on central government (perhaps the plan all along) and therefore subject to whim and fashion, not to mention inconsistent and inequitable funding. Michael Gove, the minister of state for education, called teachers and their unions who raise questions about the wisdom of this unseemly rush to the creation of these academies and free schools "enemies of promise and people

who are happy with failure." This rhetoric starts to sound very familiar to us.

*One delegate to the NUT conference said "...it is a true reflection of the testing culture we are in that we are now testing nonsense."*

Both large unions had their National Conferences (AGMs) while I was in London. Both voted on a series of rotating strikes between now and the end of the year and into the fall. Teachers intend to bar inspectors from their classrooms and/or refuse to teach when the Ofsted inspectors turn up. Teachers would also fail to provide exam marks—the results of which like our FSAs and Grade 10–12 high stakes exams are used to make judgments about schools in league tables. In another jaw-dropping story in one of the English papers it also suggested that students were being recruited by management to "spy" on teachers. The General Secretary of the NUT reported that in some schools students are taken out of classes to be given a kind of informal Ofsted training to report on their teachers. This includes forms with tick boxes for these young putative inspectors to judge the teacher on things like engagement, fairness, etc., and includes the hoary old device of a star and a wish. The accountability agenda also extends to reading tests for five-year-olds in what is called Year 1 (our Kindergarten). These children will be required to read 40 words to check their understanding of the "phonics system" and odder still they would read 20 words and then 20 nonsense words like koob and zort. One delegate to the NUT conference said, "...it is a true reflection of the testing culture we are in that we are now testing nonsense." This ideological bid for

universal synthetic phonics is an idea, as we know, that has been rejected in many progressive educational jurisdictions.

During the first week I was in England, the NUT called for a walk-out of inner- and outer-London teachers. I joined in this march to Westminster (with my clumsily handmade BCTF sign) where a lively and noisy rally was held outside the Houses of Parliament and a letter was delivered to Prime Minister Cameron and Minister Gove. Because as I've stated, not every teacher in the UK belongs to a union, (in any given school anywhere in the country, there could be teachers who were members of the NUT or the NASUWT or another union and teachers who were not in any union), this tends to make cohesive and coherent action somewhat challenging. However, it seemed to me this time that what I saw was an unprecedented level of frustration and anger at what is happening to the British education system and with it, a level of co-operation and cohesion among the unions and all teachers around what actions to take to counter these attacks. Also, teachers in the UK are not bound by any essential service order so they are freer to take action as they deem fit. Some of those, as I have noted, are rotating walk-outs, non-co-operation with the Inspectorate, refusal to cover for colleagues in prep time, refusal to attend meetings or activities outside of instructional hours, no lunchtime supervision, no invigilation of exams and other actions as "deemed appropriate." The intention of the two big unions is to take these actions into the fall and to counter government cuts with a nimble and fluid action plan. We will watch these developments with interest.

Anne Guthrie Warman, BCTF Field Service Division

# The war on workers and what to do about it

By Ingo Schmidt

Remember the days when bargaining was a backroom affair, or have you heard about them? When union members would only know that contract negotiations were going on when their bargaining team came out of the room and asked for ratification? This old school approach of representation was really flawed in terms of accountability and membership involvement. Yet anybody who is riding today's rollercoaster of various levels of job action, rallies, media campaign, labour board rulings, and government offenses may wish the calm old days of backroom bargaining would come back. Don't bother waiting; those days are gone for good. The long-standing co-operation between employers and workers gradually deteriorated and has now been replaced by a full-blown employer attack on workers. This is true for teachers in BC, Caterpillar workers in London, steelworkers in Hamilton, and Vale Inco workers in Sudbury. It is also true for the public sector workers all over Ontario who are confronted with Don Drummond's (a former chief economist of TD Bank) master plan to balance the budget through cuts and layoffs. In fact, Canada is just one of the many fronts around the world where employers are on an anti-worker offensive in the aftermath of the 2008–09 world economic crisis. With this offensive, it seems, they want to finish off a job they started when the world economy was in severe crisis the last time in 1974–75 and 1980–82. Those were the days when employers first turned from co-operation to confrontation.

For roughly three decades, business leaders and governments sounded the alarm of deteriorating competitiveness, run-away deficits, and inflation, all the while demonstrating their entrepreneurial spirits by attacking workers, one group at a time, in the name of free markets and prosperity. For the happy few, prosperity of profits was built on the increasing misery of

many. At the same time, workers whose wages were cut were offered access to cheap credit. The same big shots that constantly lament about public deficits drove private households deeper and deeper into the red and took out some credit for themselves to invest in totally inflated stock markets. The downfall of this financial house of cards, the 2008 stock market crash, turned a cyclical recession into a major crisis. Shortfalls in government revenue and bank bailouts over the course of the crisis wrecked public coffers—and created a welcome pretext for the next, and possibly final, round of employer attacks on workers, notably in the public sector. The targeting of public sector workers makes perfect sense for the wealthy

**Public sector workers are also an easy target because the anti-union, anti-public sector sentiments, trumpeted by governments and the moneyed interests behind them, resonate with many poor workers who either lost their union contracts long time ago or never had one in the first place.**

classes whose profits could only be maintained through the crisis by government money. While charging public sector unions with wrecking public finances, they had their hands deep in government coffers. Public sector workers are also an easy target because the anti-union, anti-public sector sentiments, trumpeted by governments and the moneyed interests behind them, resonate with many poor workers who either lost their union contracts long time ago or never had one in the first place. Three decades of recurrent anti-worker offensives have created an unlikely alliance between the rich and the poor that makes it difficult today to defend anyone who still has

a union contract. The poor won't get much out of this alliance, but it is crucial to understand why many of them either support the attack on public sector workers or don't give a damn about it. Such an understanding is needed to develop effective strategies to stop the attacks on the public sector and allow poor workers to fight to improve their living and working conditions. More to the point, to be effective, union struggles need support from other groups of workers. Building alliances between workers divided by wage levels, skills, often enough by gender and race too, is sure a challenge—but no less than the making of today's alliance between the 1% of the rich and the X-number of poor people.

Key to understanding why poor people, employed and unemployed turned their backs on unions was the inflation-scare that businesses produced in the 1970s. At that time, private sector unions, namely in auto and steel, but also mining and forestry, set the pace of increasing wages and benefits for almost all workers, including those working in other sectors of the economy. Things started to change when investments in production capacities turned out to be more expensive than expected and also created overcapacities. The rising capital costs and unsellable products squeezed profit margins from two sides, so prices were jacked up in an attempt to maintain these margins. Yet, higher prices cut into the purchasing power of workers' paycheques and unions responded swiftly by negotiating higher wages to offset this effect. Prices and wages started spiraling upwards and left many behind, such as people on welfare or pensions, whose incomes didn't rise with inflation rates. This was the point where employers, who had triggered the price/wage spiral in the first place, began appealing to unorganized groups of society by blaming organized labour for the inflation and the hardship it inflicted on others. They also sought means to curb union's bargaining power and found them in finance ministers and central bankers who cut back

on spending and pushed up interest rates. The combined effect of these measures was a major recession and unemployment in the early 1980s that weakened private sector unions, which allowed companies to start increasing their profits at the expense of workers without meeting too much resistance. Labour-saving technologies, relocations to areas offering cheap labour instead of union organizers, and a string of laws restricting union activity turned former pacemakers of the labour movement into laggards. As a result, average wages fell behind the growth of labour productivity so that an increasing share of newly produced wealth went into the pockets of the happy few. In relative terms, though, private sector workers fell behind their companions in the public sector. This was not true for the few who managed to hang on to their jobs and existing contracts but the number of these workers was dwindling and further marginalized by the blossoming of low-wage employment everywhere in the private sector.

To appeal to these workers, governments, big businesses, and their propagandists invented the tax-scare. Like its predecessor, the inflation-scare, it is a grain of truth mixed in with lots of lies. The truth is that taxes are a real problem for poor workers or anyone else living on low incomes. Every tax dollar they don't pay helps them to make ends meet. The lies start by suggesting that poor people would be better off if public services were cut or privatized. After all, despite the cuts that already happened in the past, poor people still benefit more from public services than rich people. The next lie is that rich and poor are equally desperate for tax cuts. Tax cuts are regularly designed in such a way that they benefit the rich way more than the poor. And this is despite the fact that, no matter how badly they want them, there is absolutely no need to cut taxes for the rich. Quite to the contrary, faced with idle production capacities, investors prefer to put their money into financial gambling,

even after the stock market crash, rather than adding to the already existing capital stock. All this money could be spent to pay for public services, the creation of additional and decently paying jobs, and an ecological retooling of the economy. It could, but it isn't.

That the happy few are opposing this idea is no surprise. Since they managed to turn the crisis of the private economy into a fiscal crisis of the state they are eager to reap the profits of this coup. To them, every closed school, or, for that matter, hospital, daycare, or old folks home, represents the opportunity to sell private services to the ones who can afford them and forget about the rest. Every teacher who is replaced by a computer boosts the sales of information industries and takes an actual or potential troublemaker off the payroll. The same can be said about healthcare and other public sector workers. The challenge, then, is to build a coalition of these workers with poor people who need public services and good jobs, and the people who understand that today's *profit-über-alles-economy* ruins the environment beyond repair. To successfully defend themselves against recurrent Clark-Abbott-Falcon-offenses, teachers need to find common ground beyond their own ranks and launch an offensive for better living and working conditions for all but the happy few. The "we are the 99%" slogan with which Wall Street, Bay Street, and other occupy protestors took to the street last fall may have been overly simplifying. The top 1% of the income pyramid has a whole entourage of well-to-do and powerful friends who are determined to keep things as they are. But the direction of these protests struck a new chord, one that could potentially be developed into a song of equality and justice, among humans and with nature, too, that could replace the business tune that praises public sacrifices as a good and unavoidable deed to prop up private profits.

Ingo Schmidt, academic co-ordinator, Labour Studies, Athabasca University

## Teachers of many language programs

The British Columbia Association of Teachers of Modern Languages (BCATML) is your PSA for teachers of the many language programs offered in the province. With provincial curricula for six languages (French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, Punjabi, and Spanish), for several Aboriginal languages, as well as a number of other language programs, our

**...we believe that learning a language is really something to be celebrated, as it opens doors to so many rich possibilities in education, work, and leisure.**

association offers support to teachers interested in the many facets of language teaching and learning.

The BCATML is partnered with the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT). Through this partnership our members benefit from the very rich professional resources, research, communications, and support network that the national association provides. We have representation on CASLT's National

Council; Wendy Carr, past president of BCATML sits on the Board of Directors and Sandi Kostur, co-president of BCATML is the BC representative on CASLT's National Council.

The BCATML 13-member executive includes table officers and representatives of various languages and programs. We are an active group of professionals who participate in a broad range of language-related work. In addition to being classroom or online teachers, some members have been engaged as mentors or instructors in university programs and as helping teachers/co-ordinators in district programs. Several of our members have made significant contributions to curriculum revisions, and have participated on committees to promote and enhance language teaching in the province. Members have shared their expertise by offering professional development on a great many topics. Some have contributed their talents to the world of language teaching through authoring, reviewing, and editing resources for language teachers and learners.

It stands to reason, that BCATML executive members can boast quite a range of competency in languages. Among the current

executive members, we are proud to be proficient in nine different languages! As is fitting with language teachers, we are all passionate about language learning and about cultures, and love to share our experience with our students and colleagues.

The BCATML offers professional

development through its annual PSA fall conference. Our theme of "Celebrating Languages!" truly expresses the sentiment of our work: we believe that learning a language is really something to be celebrated, as it opens doors to so many rich possibilities in education, work, and leisure. In addition to our

annual conference, the BCATML offers the possibility of assisting in planning or offering other professional development sessions.

In order to get to know us better, we invite you to visit our website: [www.bcatml.org](http://www.bcatml.org).

— BC Association of Teachers of Modern Language

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## BC teachers promoting mental health in schools



If you ask Lily Yiu and Diana Mogensen, they would tell you that running the Learning Resource Center in the In-Patients, Eating Disorders Unit at BC Children's Hospital (BCCH) is both challenging and rewarding.

Housed within the Mental Health Building of BC Children's Hospital the unit admits the most complex cases in the province. Yiu points out that eating disorders are the most serious of all mental illnesses. "Having an eating disorder can lead to death more often than any of other mental illness. Many of our students have concurrent disorders, this means they exhibit a complex array of mental disorders in a variety of combinations that may include addiction, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation."

Mogensen and Yiu work as part of an interdisciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychologist, nurses, pediatricians, nutritionists, and youth and family counselors. They attend rounds on a regular basis, where the interdisciplinary team develops meticulous care plans.

According to Mogensen, "We work with school-based teams as well to insure transitioning of our students in and out of the program. We rely on school teams to help students remain connected to their schools and to support them in returning to school. Recovery from an eating disorder can take years. Recovery is a journey and school-based support teams are integral to the on-going support our students need."

Yiu points out, "We are amazed how teachers and school-based teams go above and beyond to support students. It is inspiring to work with so many teams province-wide, who despite cutbacks remain resilient; rising up to do whatever it takes to help our students succeed in reintegrating back to their lives. Many of our students are with us for months, but they are with their schools for years. We credit school teams with the success many of our students experience. It is amazing when we get a call from a former student thanking us and letting us know that they are enrolled at a university and are getting on with their lives."

Mogensen's agreement is qualified, "...even though the teams are amazingly resourceful they need more information regarding mental illnesses. For that reason we have felt compelled to organize ProD for our colleagues. We have done that by joining with professionals who are equally as passionate about promoting mental health in schools as we are."

"We have a three-pronged approach," Yiu explains. "The first thing we did was outreach through the PSA conferences. We had Dr. Bertrand Wicholas and other members from the team at BCCH and the In-Patients' Eating Disorders Program join us in addressing the counsellors' conference and the crosscurrents

conference over the last three years. In fact, we helped organize the first summer institute promoting mental health in schools, a partnering of BCCH and the BCTF. Now in its third year, it is supported by three ministries and a number of NGOs devoted to youth and mental health. It represents the second stream of our outreach. The third way we have tried to get the word out is through university course offerings."

In partnership with a number of mental health researchers, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals, the chapter may be ready, as early as this summer to launch a course offered through one of the universities in the Lower Mainland pertaining to mental health specifically designed for teachers.

"Outreach has become central to our work," according to Mogensen, "we thought we needed a PSA or an LSA to add cohesion to our efforts. That's why we developed a newly formed chapter of the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association (LATA), a provincial specialist association of the BCTF, called "BC Teachers Promoting Mental Health in Schools." We hope to spend the next school year building the chapter and connecting teachers to the many NGOs devoted to youth mental health. There are so many great things happening in the province, we felt the need to pull it all together for teachers in a co-ordinated way. We want to partner with as many PSAs as possible to offer a mental-health component to their yearly conferences. For example, we have approached the adult educators PSA and are hoping to offer them some workshops on mental health in the future. We believe that more work needs to be done on early childhood mental health and we would like to work with the primary teachers PSA around this population of students."

The outreach strategies developed by the chapter are comprehensive.

**To join LATA complete a PSA application form located on the BCTF site.**

"However we don't worry about saturating the air waves. There are at least 57,000 teachers in this province who need to access resources and need to develop an understanding of mental health and youth and the important role of teachers and schools. We can never do enough to reach out to our colleagues. We will use any opportunity that presents itself, and where none exist—we will create them. The need is just that great."

If you would like to join Yiu and Mogensen in their work, please consider joining LATA and the newly formed chapter—BC Teachers Promoting Mental Health in Schools. To join LATA complete a PSA application form located on the BCTF site. Indicate on your LATA application that you wish to enroll in the chapter—BC Teachers Promoting Mental Health in Schools for inclusion on the chapter's e-mail list. If you would like more Pro-D in your local or more information about promoting mental health and school connectedness for children and youth please contact Yiu and Mogensen at [dmogensen@cw.bc.ca](mailto:dmogensen@cw.bc.ca) or [lyiu@cw.bc.ca](mailto:lyiu@cw.bc.ca).

Diana Mogenson, Lily Yiu  
BC Learning Assistance Teachers' Association, [bctf.ca/lata](http://bctf.ca/lata)

## Racism and reclaimed language: Examining power and prejudice

By Amar Sull

I've been known to laugh when I hear comedian Russell Peters' famous line, "Somebody gonna get a hurt real bad" and when he talks about brown people who have funny accents. Many find him humorous and few people are offended by his stereotypical mimicry of different ethnic peoples. Yet, when others imitate these words or accents in a different context, they can be construed as racist. What makes a word coming from one person acceptable, but unacceptable when it comes from another in a different context?

Racialized terms carry connota-

**Racialized terms carry connotations that have been deeply rooted in colonization.**

tions that have been deeply rooted in colonization. For example, both the "N" and "C" words carry many negative connotations and images due to their histories and most would find the terms derogatory and demeaning. Yet, the "N-word" may also represent familiarity, kinship, and even bonding when reinterpreted by those who share a common history of oppression. It has gained new attributes and is used in different contexts. (Alves, 2009) Because of this double definition, using this word is very controversial. It is hard to talk about the word and claim who has the right to say it because different groups interact and hold different views about the word. The "C-word" however, has not been reinterpreted and remains negative in reference to people of Chinese descent. Language and its use are subjective and relative to one's beliefs and, because there is no collective, universal guide as to what word should be used in what context, they become contentious and controversial issues.

To add to this quandary, Olive and Hendricks (1999) contributed the idea of absolutists and reclaimers. According to them, absolutists believe that certain words are derogatory and, in order to undermine negative social practices, we must eradicate the use of these words. Absolutists would contend that these types of terms are so loaded that they would inherently incite racism and should be avoided altogether. Alternatively, reclaimers believe that words are embedded in a group's social history and by reappropriating them, they can change the social meaning. Similarly, Schneider (2007) states that the meanings of words, however hurtful in the past, can fluctuate and evolve over the course of history. Language is not separate from the society that uses it; however, can you separate a word from the connotations that it brings with it? Schneider (2007) contends that we must. She states that "If only bigots and hate-mongers are empowered to use the word...then the word indeed becomes hate's best weapon." In this scenario, we can reclaim words and repurpose them so that they gain a positive meaning, allowing us to overcome the word's negativity. When this has happened, the term can usually only be used by group members in reference to themselves. Regardless, some group members may be absolutists who think that these terms should never be used. Schneider (2007) uses the word *queer* as an example of this type of reclaimed language. We

cannot look at reclaimed language without considering that terms and labels are highly contextualized. What may be accepted coming in a humorous way from within a group may not be permissible coming from a person outside that group, regardless of whether it is used in a hurtful or benign context. We have a long way to go before reclaimed language has changed meaning so substantially that it can be used by anyone in any situation.

From my experience as a woman of South Asian ancestry, there are some words that I would consider offensive—*towelhead*, *raghead*, *Hindu*, *Paki*. The words *towelhead* and *raghead* carry racial overtones and are a derogatory way to refer to individuals who wear turbans.

These terms go beyond a physical descriptor as they are degrading a person's identity and religion. The term *Hindu* denotes a religion; however, this word is used to refer to people of South Asian ancestry, regardless of their religion. Hence, this term is used to colourize not only people but also a religion. It is an incorrect identification, especially in this region, since a large percentage of British Columbia's individuals of South Asian ancestry are Sikh. The word *Paki* is a regional descriptor and wouldn't necessarily, like *Hindu*, be racist of its own accord; however, it has been used in a racist context to refer to those of South Asian descent. As is the case with many terms, the word *Paki* has been created by uninformed individuals and has thus become negative.

Other words live on the periphery of acceptance. The word *desi*, (literally, from the country) is one of these words. Although some take offense at being labeled as originating from India, others don't mind having that affiliation. Another one is *apna*, (one of us). Although it is unifying and inclusive of people within the group, it does serve to strengthen the "othering" (Garland & Chakraborti, 2006) of groups that are ethnically different. Like these, the word *brown* is not an outright slur. Some people refer to themselves and their friends as *brown*, while others of the same group may be offended as being referred to by their colour. Young people in our schools frequently use this word and I have even heard students say that they think it's acceptable for an educator to call them *brown*; however, some words just are not appropriate coming from adults in a position of some authority over impressionable young minds. Regardless of what

we might think, students are listening to the words we use and to what we say and they use these knowledge acquisitions to make sense of their place in the world around them. If we refer to people by their colour, we are not acknowledging them as a whole person made up of different cultural and social experiences. As

**We need to remember that words can elevate or deflate us and we need to be careful to choose words that uplift our students' personal identities.**

educators, we need to be sensitive to individual differences and people's own perceptions of their self-identified ethnicities. We need to remember that words can elevate or deflate us and we need to be careful to choose words that uplift our students' personal identities. So what does that mean for our classrooms?

1. We can talk to our students. If we hear them using a term as a self-descriptor, we can ask them if they are comfortable with us using it or whom they think should be able to do it. It is important that we do this with every student as each of them may have a different perspective on what words should be used to identify her or him.
2. We can do what we do best—use the teachable moments to educate others. If individuals use a term that we feel might be derogatory to self-identify, we can check to see if they know its historical meaning, evolution, and present status. If we hear something questionable within our school, we can ensure that we address it.
3. We can educate ourselves about racism, reclaimed language and colonization (past and present) within Canada and around the globe.
4. We can be respectful of where others are in terms of acknowledging and implementing social change, recognizing that it is a difficult process and will need time to take root.

Amar Sull, visiting teacher, School District 37 (Delta)

References available in online version.



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# Expect more from your government

By Murray Dobbin

Something is happening in Canada that seems, in the context of a majority Harper government, counter-intuitive. Harper continues implementing his right-wing revolution by fiat, and Preston Manning's "democracy" institute says Canadians actually want "less" government and more individual responsibility. Yet a flurry of polls in the past few weeks and months suggest two dramatic counterpoints to this self-serving narrative.

First, in a development that is virtually unprecedented, inequality has become, by far, Canadians' top concern displacing the perennial front-runner, Medicare. And closely related are a number of polls showing that Canadians in large majorities think wealthy people and corporations should pay more taxes. They are even willing to pay more themselves.

How these attitudes will play out over the longer term is hard to predict. Other trends are not so encouraging.

The trouble with normal, Bruce Cockburn told us, is it always gets worse. The longer-term threat to democracy is that we become inured to the systematic assaults on it. It is easy to get demoralized with what one US writer called "surplus powerlessness." Without an obvious short-term solution to the quasi-dictatorship of the Harper government, the easiest response is to deny it is happening—and then get used to it.

No opposition party has so far said that they are committed to reversing all the reactionary and destructive actions of this government. Yet this is what we should be demanding of them.

The myriad assaults on the nation being implemented by Harper are really just the latest chapter in what has been a revolution of lowered

expectations: a deliberate and systematic culture war on ordinary Canadians deeply held values about the role of government. Starting in the late 1980s with the FTA campaign, corporations and their propaganda agencies like the Fraser Institute, set out to reverse the so-called welfare state, and the belief system it rested on. The slogan for the free-traders was simple and repeated endlessly: there is no alternative. Of course there were alternatives, just none that the corporate state was going to allow.

Neo-liberals and the Christian right have been engaged in a 30-year process of trying to change the political culture into something more akin to the individualism of the US. To do that they had to demonize government—the institution of collective action that distinguished us from our southern neighbours.

**The longer-term threat to democracy is that we become inured to the systematic assaults on it.**

The free-trade battle was followed by the deficit hysteria campaign promoting the spectre of hitting the (non-existent) debt wall, softening Canadians up for huge cuts to social spending (courtesy Paul Martin). Demonizing government and government workers (lazy, privileged, self-interested, overpaid) also prepared the ground for the laying off of 50,000 federal employees. And, of course, as programs were diminished so too was the average citizen's trust in government.

Lastly was the whole question of taxes and tax cuts—the litmus test of a new political culture of smaller

government and individual responsibility. Framing taxes as a burden, and telling people they knew how to spend their money better than government, the Liberal and Conservative regimes handed out billions upon billions of tax cuts in their efforts to downsize democracy.

Yet the whole project is turning out to be a failure. Canadians' values have changed very little since the 1960s and '70s. What has changed are people's expectations of what is possible from government. We cling stubbornly to our values but no longer expect to see them reflected in government policies. Until now. Thanks in large part to the wonderful activists in the occupy movement, suddenly Canadians are emerging from this war on democracy with the beginnings of what it will take to turn things around.

There is growing evidence that for a majority of Canadians, personal experience is beginning to trump propaganda. As they see services decline, inequality rise, infrastructure crumble, and democracy erode, what they have always known comes to the fore—that a civilized society is fair and that you have to pay for it.

For 31% of Canadians to say (as they did in this Ekos poll) that inequality is their number one concern, placing fiscal issues at 9% means this sentiment has been growing for sometime. It just took the catalyst of the occupy rebellion to bring it forward.

And the many polls revealing we are prepared to pay more taxes is an obvious extension of that moral imperative. The Ekos poll showed 59% chose investing in social programs as the highest government priority, compared to 16% who wanted to keep taxes as low as possible.

The Broadbent Institute's recent

polling was even more encouraging. Seventy-seven percent identified inequality as a major problem undermining Canadian values, were willing to do their part to address it, and believed it should be a government priority to deal with it. While a large percentage supported fairer taxes (with the wealthy and corporations paying more) a significant majority, 64%,

**When it comes to tax cuts the message is clear: enough is enough.**

were willing to pay more themselves to save social programs—72% of Liberal and NDP supporters and even 58% of Conservative supporters agreed. The majority support held across regions, gender, age, education level, and family income.

When the provincial NDP in Ontario recently called for a modest 2% tax hike for those earning half a million dollars or more the public response was overwhelmingly in favour—by a margin of 78% in favour to 17% opposed. The Liberal government read the polls—and agreed to the tax increase to get the NDP's support for its budget.

Even in Calgary—in the heart of anti-tax country—55% supported increasing municipal taxes while only 10% called for a decrease.

The media seems completely caught off guard by these and other polls. *The Globe and Mail* did an interactive poll the day before federal budget and declared: "What stood out was the across the board call for higher taxes." People were willing to see the GST restored to 7%. A columnist for *The National Post* worried that the arguments

against taxing the wealthy were not very convincing—especially when the mainstream is supportive.

When it comes to tax cuts the message is clear: enough is enough. At the same time as the polling is showing these remarkable results, there are now several organizations calling for fairer taxes: Doctors for Fair Taxation, Lawyers for Fair Taxation, and Faith Leaders for Fair Taxation. There is also a national group, Canadians for Tax Fairness (which I am associated with) and groups beginning to form at the provincial level—such as Nova Scotians for Tax Fairness. There is the Canadian section of the international uncut anti-austerity movement, with 14 local chapters across the country. NUPGE, the federation of provincial government employee unions has been running an amazing tax campaign called "All Together Now" for a couple of years.

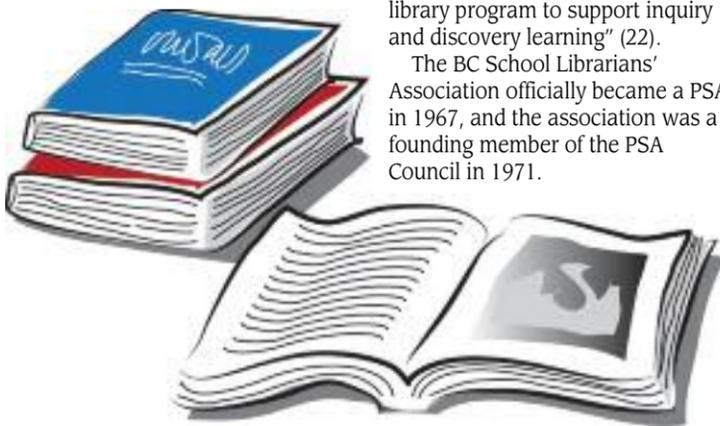
The movement for equality and tax fairness is barely off the ground and it already has majority support across the country. Now the opposition parties have to show that they have the courage and the principles to respond to this progressive sentiment. If the Liberals and the NDP ever manage to form a coalition government, the first item on which they should agree is the need for tax fairness and sufficient revenue to restore the Canada we once had and go beyond it. The Ekos poll revealed that 60% of Canadians say they would be more likely to vote for a party that pledged to raise taxes on the rich.

For Canadians and opposition parties the time for lowered expectations is over. Expect more.

*Murray Dobbin, political commentator, analyst, journalist, broadcaster, author, Powell River.*

Murray Dobbin's blog, April 24, 2012, [murraydobbin.ca](http://murraydobbin.ca)

## BC Teacher-Librarians' Association



By Heather Daly

The story of the BC Teacher-Librarians' Association begins in 1939, when it was founded under the name "BC School Librarians' Association." It was in that year, for the first time, that "all forty-nine elementary schools [in Vancouver] had libraries, making Vancouver the only city in Canada with that level of service" (Obee 115). At that time, Victoria librarian Margaret Clay noted that the libraries in schools should include "gramophone records and good periodicals" (115).

School libraries "...became more important in the instructional program, beginning in 1964, due to teaching methods that stressed independent learning and individualized instruction" (Haycock 22). In 1966, "The Department of Education conducted a Survey of British Columbia School Libraries giving support for a strong school

library program to support inquiry and discovery learning" (22).

The BC School Librarians' Association officially became a PSA in 1967, and the association was a founding member of the PSA Council in 1971.

In the mid-1970s, the term "teacher-librarian" was developed in BC to emphasize the teaching portion of the role and that the professional in the library was a teacher and BCTF member; concordantly, the school library came to be seen more as a classroom in its own right. In 1983, the BC School Librarians' Association became the BC Teacher-Librarians' Association to reflect the changed role. The term "teacher-librarian" is now commonly used throughout the world.

Today, the BC Teacher-Librarians' Association (BCTLA) offers:

- a year-round professional development program featuring an annual conference, webinars, and a summer institute.
- the annual Drop Everything and Read day which last year had over 60,000 participants, and other events including Love Your School Library Day.
- social media options, including

seven blogs, three wikis, two Twitter accounts, a Ning, and a Facebook group.

- professional publications such as *The Bookmark* journal, school library position statements, and BCTLA book reviews.
- guides and tools for all BC educators, including *The Points of Inquiry: A Framework for Information Literacy* and the *21st-Century Learner and Ethics of Information Use: A Guide for Teachers*.
- 14 awards and grants, including one to support teacher-librarian professional inquiry.
- resources and statistics to support school library and teacher-librarian advocacy efforts, including the results from BCTLA's nearly 30 years of annual BC school library working and learning conditions surveys.

It is important to note that from its inception, BCTLA has drawn its strength from its chapters. In addition to the initiatives and opportunities that are offered at the provincial level, the BCTLA's chapters (local specialist associations) provide professional development, advocacy for school libraries and teacher-librarians, and promotion of inquiry-based reading and learning at the local level. The Central Okanagan Teacher-Librarians' Association (COTLA), for example, annually organizes the COTLA Author Week, the Surrey Chapter of the BCTLA is involved in the Surrey Book of the Year program, and teacher-librarians in

Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows organize Bookfest. Other BCTLA chapters provide even broader service to their communities, such as the Vancouver Teacher-Librarians' Association's support for the Intrepid Pens, a Downtown Eastside Vancouver women's group focused on reading and writing.

The BC Teacher-Librarians' Association serves as an example to other associations. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, BCTLA will be the subject of a two-year school library advocacy study sponsored by the American Association of School Librarians. The chair of the awards committee who scrutinized the grant application for the study noted that the research "has the potential to serve as a model for future school-library advocacy." BCTLA has also recently been invited to

join an international committee working to develop a school library advocacy toolkit.

In 2014, the BC Teacher-Librarians' Association will celebrate its 75th anniversary as a group of "Professionals—Serving School Libraries" in British Columbia.

*Heather Daly, president, BCTLA, [www.bctf.ca/bctla](http://www.bctf.ca/bctla)*

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# The road to Rio

## Advancing social justice, sustainability, and socially responsible governance

By Louise Gonsalvez

Rio, Brazil, will host the 20th anniversary meeting (Rio+20) of the 1992 UN Rio Summit on Sustainability. The objectives of Rio+20 are to revive political commitments to sustainability and to address existing and emerging sustainability challenges. It is my great fortune to be selected to present two papers in Rio, at two conferences that accompany the delegates' meetings. My road to participating in these Rio events consists of many influential years while volunteering on the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice (CASJ), writing Social Justice 12 curriculum for the BC Ministry of Education, a Masters degree in Global Studies, and now my activities as a PhD student. I believe my strong social justice background facilitates my PhD research and grounds the emancipatory paradigm I assume as a scholar activist. My first academic publications focused on transformative educational leadership, critical feminist transnational praxis, institutional governance, and lately I've focused on sustainability.

In January, I presented two papers at the International Conference on Cultural, Environmental, Social, and Environmental Sustainability in Vancouver. In one paper, I addressed American income disparity and the insidious deregulatory, lobbying and hedging schemes that have advantaged an elite population of super-rich and the growth of a plutocracy that marginalizes, dismisses and/or penalizes a growing number of working poor and struggling middle class. For my second presentation I co-authored a paper that asks—Does Canada advance the cultural sustainability of Aboriginal women in Canada? The paper was timely given the recent housing, water, and health crisis in Attawapiskat

and Canada's recent signing of the *United Nations Rights of the Indigenous Peoples*. I enjoy analyzing policy ecologies, confronting injustices, and carving ways forward to overcome systemic oppressions.

*As I reflect upon my Road to Rio, I look in the rear-view mirror to my many wonderful years with colleagues on the BCTF CASJ and to the opportunities I embraced...*

In March of last year, I presented a paper at the International Journal of Arts and Science Conference at Harvard University, on the new International Standard Organization's ISO 26000: Guidance on Social Responsibility. I analyzed the document and explored how educational institutions could institutionalize social justice policies, practices, and procedures in their governance. My interest in this topic stemmed from my committee work on the BCTF social justice lens. The intent of the social justice lens is to provide a means to scrutinize all decision-making using four primary criteria: equity, access, advocacy, and solidarity. My article will be showcased in a brand new journal coming out entitled the *Journal of Teaching and Learning*.

In the fall of this year, I reviewed ISO 26000 implementation policies, identified how to improve them, and I related this to how ecological economics and sustainability could benefit from using an instrument such as ISO 26000. I submitted a paper to the International Ecological Economics Conference (Rio) but I didn't think I would have a chance after applicants were notified that 1,050 applications were submitted—

850 of these were international experts from 71 countries—thus the review process would take an extra month. In January, I was invited to present my paper and be part of a panel presentation. I was ecstatic! The results of this conference will be advanced to UN delegate meetings, which commence the day after the conference.

I submitted a second paper to the World Symposium on Sustainable Development for Universities (Rio). The conference is organized by the Research and Transfer Centre in Hamburg, which is co-ordinated by the United Nations University that consists of 12 institutes worldwide. These institutes act as academic arms to the United Nations. When I was exploring the topic of sustainability I found a proverbial research gap, something a research sleuth and PhD student is expected to do. The United Nations deemed that sustainability education was the most significant gateway to achieving sustainability. I wondered how universities were implementing sustainability initiatives into curriculum, pedagogy, programs, policies, and practices. Many post-secondary sustainability programs embed sustainability into their undergraduate curriculum (e.g., education programs) and establish on-campus sustainability initiatives (e.g., recycling, energy efficiency, gardens) but they neglect to address the controversial, complex, and potentially conflict-ridden stakeholder space where most sustainability related decisions are being made. This space is often fraught with hierarchies of power and actors need to learn how to address these hotbeds using critical scenario analysis, dialogue, and collective solidarity.

I conceptualized a faculty of education course for third- and fourth-year education students. The

program is premised on scenario analysis, dialogue, and a critical social justice framework. The purpose of the course is to build competencies so that students can identify, analyze, and confront the social injustices that can plague the stakeholder spaces where sustainability-related decisions are made. My abstract was not only accepted but I was informed by Dr. Walter Leal (editor), who is considered one of the top 10 world experts on sustainability, that my paper was selected to be published as a chapter in *Sustainable Development at Universities: New Horizons*, which is part of an award-winning series "Environmental Education, Communication and Sustainability" (Peter Lang Scientific Publishers).

*Will our educational policy-makers merely try to plug our students into a system that is potentially destroying or negatively impacting itself socially, economically, culturally, technologically, and environmentally or will they challenge our students to create a better world?*

As I reflect upon my Road to Rio, I look in the rear-view mirror to my many wonderful years with colleagues on the BCTF CASJ and to the opportunities I embraced, such as designing workshops named "Thirsty for Change: The Global Water Crisis." I look back on my first few publications and how, at times, my social justice passion was embraced by some publishers and conferences, for example: *International Journal of Learning* and Canadian International Conference on

Education, and deemed as activism, rather than academic by others. I took the higher road to Rio, and challenged a belief that post-secondary scholars must separate their activism from their research. It took me six months of research and writing to substantiate my claim—Manglares, Marimbas, and Vida Marina: Confronting Social Injustices in The Praxis Wetlands will appear as a chapter for a new university text entitled *International Handbook on Social (In) Justice and Educational Leadership*.

As I look forward to Rio, I look ahead to an exciting adventure, but I also wonder what journey this provincial government has in store for our students. Benjamin Disraeli once stated, "We are not creatures of circumstance; we are creators of circumstance." Will our educational policy-makers merely try to plug our students into a system which is potentially destroying or negatively impacting itself socially, economically, culturally, technologically, and environmentally or will they challenge our students to create a better world? Will they establish curricula, pedagogies, and learning opportunities that will guide students to the higher, more difficult, and challenging road that has fewer answers and far more questions? Will our students be encouraged to create an alternative future that is less consumer- and consumption-driven and more peaceful, just, and sustainable? Will teachers have the professional opportunities to explore new tributaries of teaching and learning, or will they be assigned to motor along a market-driven route driven by a competitive race to the "top" and the elusive belief that "it" exists. I hope that a 21st century education initiative will encourage us all to journey on the "road to Rio" so that we may create a sustainable future.

Louise Gonsalvez, Sparwood Secondary School, Sparwood

## Physical education PSA

By Sue MacDonald

(PE BC) has been a part of the PSA council since it began 40 years ago. In fact, the Physical Education council was formed before PSAC came into being!

Over the years there have been both highs and lows in our field and specifically in our specialist council. The name of the group has changed and the faces have changed but the focus remains the same. We keep our members up to date on best practices, current trends and provide support to those who need it via phone, email and through our website and a bi-monthly newsletter. Many of us present

workshops in a variety of areas specific to Physical Education. We attend the Council of Provinces meetings twice a year across Canada and bring back information to our members and help them implement national initiatives. We plan conferences and professional development opportunities for our members.

Our conference is currently a joint partnership with Douglas College but has been in a variety of locations over the years from Kelowna to Parksville and from Surrey to Courtney. Our PSA has been challenged over the years, not just in conference statistics but in maintaining credibility within the profession of education. Despite the healthcare crisis we are in where the current youth are predicted to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents, and the rise in type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and other life threatening diseases physical education is not given the attention it deserves. The budget cuts across the province, the reduction in specialist teachers and the general ignoring of the benefits of learning about healthy lifestyle choices and movement skills all mean that the number of Physical Education specialists and district coordinators in BC is lower than ever. In our PSA, the core group of organizers and

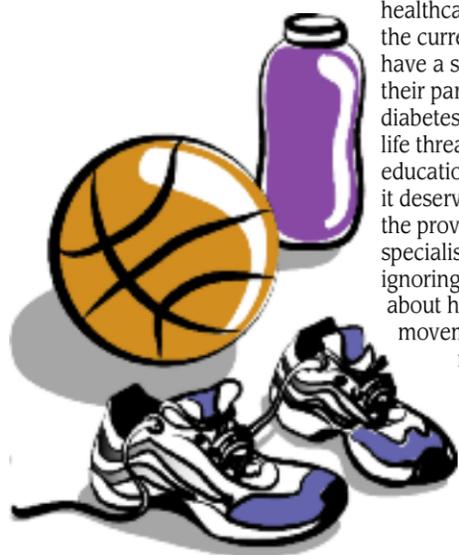
executive do what they can with limited funding and resources.

There are positives however. In October 2011, a celebration was held to recognize the 25th anniversary of the Douglas College Conference, in conjunction with the fall Provincial Pro-D day. It was a huge success with a keynote panel, a paddlewheel cruise, numerous workshops, and a chance to network and share experiences with many of those who have been involved over the years.

Our PSA is currently nearing the completion of our History of Physical Education project which has been a very valuable experience for those directly involved as well as providing a reference for current and future physical educators in our province. It will be made public soon and we hope future physical educators will add to it over the years.

The future of Physical Education's place in our ever changing, challenging education system is uncertain. We continue to be hopeful that things will again take an upward swing and the benefits will move back to the forefront where we firmly believe they belong.

Sue MacDonald, president, PE-BC, [bctf.ca/pebc](http://bctf.ca/pebc)



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# Positionality: Being a white queer ally with Aboriginal people

By David Butler

Positionality—what does that mean? In one way, the term evokes the concepts of identity, privilege, marginalization, and above all power. In another way the term relates to the myriad ways we identify ourselves and are identified by others and how these identities play out in various spaces, contexts, and times. Identities have an epistemology woven together by the power and privilege of certain groups at the expense of the subjugation and marginalization of others.

For that reason, I, as a white queer person, see commonalities (to some degree a shared experience) with Aboriginal people. Both identities have a shared history of being “othered” as less, inferior, undesirable, and even dangerous to the colonial project of nation building.

School systems are replete with identities that are constantly bumping up against each other, negotiating, collaborating, and oftentimes wrestling for position of acknowledgment and respect. Within the colonial framework that schools operate, Aboriginal peoples are

**Both identities have a shared history of being “othered” as less, inferior, undesirable, and even dangerous to the colonial project of nation building.**

often erased, silenced, or unacknowledged. Within the heterosexist framework that schools operate, similar processes are at play.

Let’s make this conversation concrete—I’ll give you one example. To me the library is the heart of any school site. When I walk into a library, I see the space as the material reality of the politics of identity positionality. Whose stories are being told? What images and representations are being permitted? Who’s histories are being displayed? Which books get fore-grounded? How hard do you have to dig to unearth the “other” stories. Who gets to tell the stories? And how often are they told?

I work in a Vancouver school where the majority of students identify as First Nations. In our library, there is a greater collection of literature by Aboriginal peoples. There are more images of First Nations art on the wall of the school. I am lucky to work with strong Aboriginal teacher-activists that infuse the curriculum with more content acknowledging Aboriginal cultures, and in so doing, provide an example for the kind of pedagogy that non-Aboriginal teachers can and should do. And although this is more than in any other school I have worked in, it is not enough. Still, the school apparatus—the wider structure of the educational system—is unresponsive to shifting this colonial paradigm to where Aboriginal people are truly included.

One example of this is in the number of Aboriginal teachers who work in BC schools. Very recently our school was chosen as the site of Vancouver’s first Aboriginal-focused school. In a meeting, a question was posed around the hiring of Aboriginal teachers. The question made me think about when I was

hired in Vancouver. I clearly remember before the interview thinking “I won’t mention anything about being queer, in case I should get someone interviewing me who really doesn’t think anything gay has a place in elementary education. In the actual meeting I was careful to mind my Ps and Qs and stay clear away from anything that could put me in a bad light. But the conversation took a turn. It went something like this toward the end of the interview:

Them: Do you have anything to add? Can you tell us, if hired, what you would bring to our board that is unique?

Me: Well, I am very interested in human rights and in how certain groups are under-acknowledged in education. I offered a lunchtime workshop on this when I was doing my practicum.

Them: Really, can you tell us more about that. What was the topic specifically?

Me: (Thinking—do I go for it or not. Screw it.) It was on anti-homophobia education.

Them: I see. And how long have you been interested in this educational topic?

Me: Ah, I’ve been interested in this since my young twenties.

Obviously I got the job and clearly the interviewees saw that what I had to offer was something positive. Now all this happened in a context where I knew Vancouver had a very progressive policy on anti-LGBTQ bias. However, the reality is that there is a wide space for individual discrepancy by whomever is interviewing. And as good as the Vancouver policy is, there can be no real checks when it comes to the impression I have made in the minds of the people who interviewed me.

This brings me back to the question posed around the hiring of Aboriginal teachers. I have the privilege to hide when it suits me, when power is operating in ways that could marginalize me. Sometimes I’m up for the fight, sometimes—depending on the costs—I am not. People who are visible minorities don’t have that privilege. I imagine an Aboriginal person going for an interview. And I imagine how easily it could go the other way. Not because Vancouver

**We need Aboriginal teachers. All schools do...**

doesn’t have an aggressive policy on antiracism, but because you can’t control the impression that is being made. Who’s to say if a “bad” impression is being made for legitimate reasons or not.

We need Aboriginal teachers. All schools do, even if there is not one identified Aboriginal student at the school. Aboriginal students need to see themselves reflected in the school system—in seeing teachers who are First Nations proudly infusing the curriculum with content from a special world view. Non-Aboriginal teachers and students need Aboriginal teachers to help us see our colonial blind spots. From the positionality of being queer, it’s obvious to me that I have many sisters and brothers who are engaged in social movements that demand more than tolerance. It’s a demand for acknowledgment, respect, and having our stories as part of the conversation within schools and beyond.

David Butler, Sir William Macdonald Community Elementary School, Vancouver

# Questions worth asking How do you make feedback meaningful?

By Dave Van Bergeyk

*It is one thing to accept the fact that feedback can allow students to begin to navigate their own learning. It is quite another thing to do this in ways that are meaningful for students while at the same time being manageable for teachers. In the next story, Linda tells how she not only found a way to give feedback to her secondary school mathematics students that helped them to become agents in their learning, but also how she did so within the context of something familiar to all of us—the math quiz. Although she was skeptical at first, the results of her efforts are undeniable.*

The above is the prefatory material that sets up one of the stories published in a recently released book from the BC Association of Mathematics Teachers (one of the 33 Provincial Specialist Associations of the BCTF).

**...the intent of the publication is to present true stories of assessment innovation, both the struggles and the successes, in a spirit of inquiry.**

The BCAMT is excited to have published *Questions Worth Asking about Assessment in Mathematics Classrooms* this past summer. For the preceding two years, a BCAMT subcommittee has been working on this project as part of the association’s objective to support mathematics teachers in understanding new developments in assessment practices. As it turns out, the book is also of value to teachers of other subjects, as the assessment themes are not specific to mathematics only.

The work of the subcommittee began with the identified goal of supporting BC math teachers in understanding and implementing assessment innovation, but with no clear picture of how to achieve that goal. In the early going, however, the committee quickly latched onto the idea of a collection of stories as a practical way to present the realities of new assessment practices. With this conception to work with, the committee members then set up professional learning groups within their individual schools to try some assessment innovation and collect stories about what happens in real classrooms. After almost a year of this process, the committee had collected enough stories to fill a volume, and they got to work editing the raw material into publishable form. Almost another year’s worth of work went into the editing process, and late last school year, the committee had completed a collection of stories, ready to polish up, and send to the printers.

As you can see from the

preamble above, the intent of the publication is to present true stories of assessment innovation, both the struggles and the successes, in a spirit of inquiry. No one has all the answers with respect to assessment practices, and indeed, the assessment subcommittee has become increasingly convinced that formative classroom assessment is a highly personal endeavour. BCAMT Past President Rob Sidley, suggests that when it comes to assessment, everyone must build her or his own light sabre.

*I have been trying to improve the formative assessment in my math classes for some time. In research I read that students improve most when they get written feedback without marks. I wanted to try this even though I was pretty sure my students, who are in Grades 8–12, would resist the idea. My first attempts were not very effective, and took me a long time and a lot of effort as I was not very good at giving verbal feedback. So, I decided to use a highlighter to recognize a student’s areas of understanding. I tried it on a quiz first, because I felt that quizzes really are meant to be formative assessment. I made a short quiz and used highlighters to emphasize correct thinking, and to note trouble areas. I didn’t mark anything with tick marks or x’s, and I didn’t give the quiz a total mark.*

So opens Linda’s story. She goes on to explain her innovation in more detail, and to give some of the results she sees in her students. She also explains some of the adjustments she has made, and is making, to the strategy and other parts of her practice as a result of this new technique.

You can tell from this small sample and Linda’s admission of her early struggles that these stories are not whitewashed. They are not merely empty theoretical musings, either. Rather, each story presents an actual strategy (or sometimes several related ones) that a teacher has tried. The intent, though, is not that readers necessarily adopt every strategy described, but rather the real value will be found in listening to the teacher’s reasoning, both the thinking that leads up to the innovation and the reflection upon its implementation.

While all the stories, in many ways, promote reflection and dialogue on their own, the subcommittee members, as they edited the volume, bracketed each story with supplemental material that helps readers extract maximum benefit from the resource. In

addition to a preamble like the one above, each story is followed by a set of suggested questions for further discussion. The editors envision that the nature of these stories will provoke informal dialogue among colleagues, and that the book will also be useful to focus formal workshops or discussion groups on assessment.

**The work of the subcommittee continues as they plan ways to support the use of the book in meaningful professional inquiry.**

At the BCAMT fall conference in October, several members of the subcommittee in charge of this project presented some of the stories as an official launch of the book. All attendees at the conference received a complimentary copy of the book. The presenters found the discussion questions provoked deep and meaningful professional discussion among the session participants. We have thus seen the power these shared stories can have to motivate inquiry into assessment issues.

The work of the subcommittee continues as they plan ways to support the use of the book in meaningful professional inquiry. The hope is that the book does not just end up on shelves, but lives up to its design to enable thoughtful discussion among colleagues. The BCAMT has had some preliminary discussions with some districts about facilitating workshops on the book. The committee is also considering working on follow-up volumes, either on assessment again or other timely professional issues.

Further information about *Questions Worth Asking about Assessment in Mathematics Classrooms*, including some sample stories, can be obtained on the BCAMT website, [www.bcamt.ca](http://www.bcamt.ca). Information about ordering copies of the book is available there as well.

Dave Van Bergeyk, teacher, Salmon Arm Secondary School and past president of the BCAMT

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# Austerity means more inequality

By Kip Wood

*The poor have generally been in favour of greater equality. This support has been tempered by the tendency of some of the poor to react sympathetically to the cries of pain of the rich over their taxes and of others to the hope that one day soon they might be rich themselves.*

—John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (1958)

Imagine that 100 people are in a bar and their average annual income is \$48,300. The distribution of their incomes is such that 50 individuals make less than \$48,300 and 50 people make more than \$48,300. (Note that the median annual income of a Canadian in 2009 was \$48,300.) Imagine now that Gord Nixon, CEO of the Royal Bank, walks into the bar. His income last year was \$11.9 million. So now, the average salary of people in the bar is \$166,000. However, the median salary of people in the bar is still \$48,300 because half of the people make exactly that or less.

This simplistic example illustrates what is happening in Canada. The average salary is increasing while the median salary is relatively stagnant. The Conference Board of Canada, in a 2011 report on Canadian income inequality, reported that in a 33-year period, the average salary went from \$51,100 in 1976 to \$59,700 in 2009, an increase of 17%. The median salary, in the same period, went from \$45,800 to \$48,300, an increase of only 5.5%. The Gord Nixons of our country benefit from a growing economy, while most incomes have stagnated. The average has continued to climb, the median has levelled off.

**...Canada widened the gap between rich and poor more significantly than any of the other 33-member states from 1998–2008.**

How bad is inequality in Canada? The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in a report entitled "Are we growing unequal?" (2008), revealed that Canada widened the gap between rich and poor more significantly than any of the other 33-member states from 1998–2008.

The evidence that inequality adversely affects everyone is revealed in *The Spirit Level*, a 2009 book by British epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. In meticulous detail, Wilkinson and Pickett show that more equal societies almost always do better than unequal societies. They found that health and social problems are related to the distribution of wealth, not the overall wealth, in a society. Countries with greater gaps between rich and poor had higher rates of substance abuse, more teen pregnancies, higher infant mortality, higher crime rates, more homicides, higher rates of incarceration, longer prison sentences, higher levels of anxiety and stress, lower educational outcomes, lower voter turnout, less upward mobility, and had lower life expectancies.

Concentration of wealth at the top also means a concentration of power at the top, weakening democracy and creating status competition. Doing well in unequal societies has come to mean doing better than others.

The "occupy" movement is criticized by the popular media and other corporate interests for not

having a central theme or focus. The criticism is startling given that the most repeated words refer to the 99% and the 1%. Inequality, and its devastating consequences, is what the occupy movement is all about.

Jim Stanford is an economist for the Canadian Auto Workers and a member of the Bottom Line panel that appears on *The National* with Peter Mansbridge. When summarizing 2011 and looking ahead to 2012, Stanford stated that at least one of three groups—consumers, employers, or government—have to start spending in order to prevent Canada from going back into recession. The concept that Stanford was talking about is what economists call "aggregate demand"—the capacity and willingness to spend money on goods and services. "Spending power" is a term that is often associated with consumers; however, aggregate demand is a sum that includes the spending of employers and government.

John Maynard Keynes, author of *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936), said succinctly, "Economic growth depends on aggregate demand." The current notion of a "jobless recovery," repeated by the corporate media, is insulting to citizens because it has little to do with their ability to spend money. Because sustained growth is not possible without aggregate demand, a jobless recovery is not really a recovery at all because of the continuation of unemployment, and underemployment.

Looking at the groups individually, consumers are not spending because median incomes in Canada have stagnated for the past 30 years while the cost of living has risen. In contrast to the three decades following WWII, incomes have not risen with productivity. In an attempt to maintain their spending power, consumers have chosen two main strategies—working more hours and taking on more debt. Most Canadians are working more than they were a generation ago and household debt is at an all-time high.

Robert Reich, economics professor at Berkeley and author of *Aftershock* (2010), described the predicament: "Consumers no longer have the purchasing power to buy what the economy is capable of producing." Reich then stated the reason: "A larger and larger portion of total income has been going to the top. What's broken is the basic bargain linking pay to production." Employers are not spending money despite record-level corporate profits. This has contributed to the demise of consumers and the labour market in general. Henry Ford was an innovator in regard to productivity but he also knew that higher wages were necessary if he expected to sell the automobiles that were coming off the assembly lines in his factories.

Low aggregate demand, like inequality, is self-reinforcing. Less spending means employers are less likely to invest and hire employees because they lack confidence in getting a return on their investment. Without demand for products, there is no incentive to invest. This of course leads to even less employment and less spending.

That leaves government as the third possibility to increase aggregate demand. Instead of spending and stimulating growth, governments on every continent, with astounding synchronization, are imposing austerity measures. Keynes warned that it is up to government, as the spender of last resort, to stimulate the economy by increasing aggregate demand.

Cutting spending to reduce debt, and spending instead on tax cuts that are largely turned into savings, is sold to voters as medicine for what ails the economy. However, this medicine actually reduces aggregate demand and exacerbates unemployment. Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist at the World Bank, was addressing the Toronto Forum on Global Cities last year and said, "Austerity is a suicide path" and that the solution to the "jobs deficit" is for governments to "tax and spend."

**When wealth is concentrated, power is concentrated and collective solutions to societal problems are not considered because individualism has replaced civic engagement.**

In January 2012, in a joint statement, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization issued a warning about the economic and social risks of austerity programs. Despite the deleterious effects of austerity measures, voters (and non-voters) continue to support governments that cut public services.

During the post-war years (1946–1976), economic thinking was influenced by Keynes. Governments were about taxing and spending. Unemployment was low, economic growth was rapid, prosperity was widely shared, and markets were stable. In the last three decades, economic growth has slowed, unemployment has risen, recessions and crises have become more frequent, and inequality has reached levels similar to the years just prior to the Great Depression.

Even though inequality has returned to a level like the late 1920s, the antidote is not the same because the challenges are significantly different. Rapid economic growth led to prosperity in the post-war years; however, there are limits to growth, and re-igniting an economy based on perpetual growth will not be possible. Will the middle class agree to compromise the dream of prosperity that middle class generations before them enjoyed? And will the challenge of climate change and environmental collapse affect the entrenched notion of the necessity for perpetual economic growth? In any case, consideration of what is best for all, now and in the future, must drive the debate.

Millionaires live in gated communities, places unlike the environs of the 99%. Unequal societies are segregated to the point that there is no common interest. When wealth is concentrated, power is concentrated and collective solutions to societal problems are not considered because individualism has replaced civic engagement.

The patrons in the bar making the median wage do not want to compromise their own chance to become wealthy so they accept and support policies that benefit the rich while remaining detached from historical events that prevent their own prosperity. Galbraith understood this in a time when our society was much more equal than it is today.

Kip Wood, Woodlands Secondary School, Nanimo and member-at-large, BCTF Executive Committee

# Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association

By Amanda Arneill

(PITA) is a PSA of the BCTF dedicated to providing useful professional development opportunities for intermediate and middle school teachers. We do this by offering online resources, and workshops and conferences throughout the year. Since teachers need to be masters of many subjects, all of our resources, conferences, and workshops span a variety of topics, subjects, and applicable grade levels. We try to ensure that there is something for everyone!

Each year, PITA runs a day-long conference in Whistler. This fabulous resort conference focuses on providing teachers with a way to support struggling students. Our two-day Fall Conference in October is the perfect opportunity to attend multiple workshops. With amazing presenters and a full marketplace, you are sure to leave equipped with

new ideas and strategies that you can use in your classroom on Monday.

Throughout the year, we support our members (and we have over 1,500 of them!) with newsletters full of lesson ideas, resources, and tools. The PITA website ([www.pita.ca](http://www.pita.ca)) has even more! Our members have full access to over 100 novel studies, newsletter links, and lessons. With PITA on Facebook, e-mail, and Twitter, we are trying to provide professional resources for intermediate teachers in as many ways as possible.

Like all PSAs, PITA is run by a group of committed and enthusiastic teacher volunteers. We work hard throughout the year to put on these events, and we do it because we are passionate about the importance of quality professional development for BC's teachers. Join us to see what PITA is all about!

Amanda Arneill, president, PITA, [www.pita.ca](http://www.pita.ca)

# Special education association grew quickly

By Stephanie Koropatnick

The Special Education Association (PSA #60) began almost 50 years ago, with 150 members in its first year of 1962–63. We grew quickly, and in 10 years, the membership had more than quadrupled, to 700 members in 1973. Two years later, the first spring conference for Special Education in BC was held. While information on those earlier conferences and of the members of those executives is incomplete, we do know that, since 1986, there have been 13 presidents of the Special Education Association. We also know that, since 1977, in honour of our former SEA president and principal of Woodlands School, Hazel Davy, our organization has conferred the Hazel Davy Award on more than 20 exceptional educators, to recognize a lifetime of dedication to students with special learning needs in BC. We also have a long tradition of conferring a

\$1,000 student scholarship on an outstanding post-secondary student who is pursuing advanced studies in special education. Since 1985, that scholarship has been known as the Marg Csapo Award, to honour another former president of SEA.

For the past 37 years, our annual Crosscurrents Conference has maintained a loyal following of attendees as well as the respect of both regular and special educators as we continue to strive to present professional development that is relevant and timely in support of teachers working with students with a wide variety of special learning needs. With keynote speakers as varied and fascinating as Anita Archer, Martin Brokenleg, Gordon Neufeld, Michelle Garcia Winner, Rick Hansen, and Gabor Maté, there is always a good reason to come back to Crosscurrents year after year.

Stephanie Koropatnick, secretary, Special Education Association of BC [www.seaofbc.ca](http://www.seaofbc.ca)

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## Opinion

# Too little knowledge and too much imagination

By David Fisher

Jim McMurtry's "Do You Know the Queen's English?" (*Teacher*, March 2012) was quite a surprise. It's not often that a BCTF publication runs an article forecasting the end of literacy as we know it because the government has removed spelling, grammar, punctuation, and perhaps literature, from the English curriculum. McMurtry is quite clear that all those elements are also gone from the English 12 provincial exam. This must have come as quite a shock to many language arts teachers.

In one of his most revealing statements, McMurtry writes that the government is "quietly lowering the achievement bar. I cannot think of any other explanation for removing grammar instruction from English class." It's the "I cannot think" that puzzles me. I would expect him to write, "My research didn't find a reason," or, "There was nothing in the English Language Arts (ELA) 8-12 IRP explaining the absence of grammar." These checks are easily done on the Internet, but for McMurtry it's enough to say that he cannot think of a reason.

When I go to the ELA 8-12 IRP, I find this statement:

Teaching grammar outside of the students' writing experiences, such as using grammar worksheets, does not result in a transfer of skills or learning to the next writing experience. Grammar skills should be taught in the context of the writing experience, using students' and teachers' own writing. (p.30)

In the IRP, this statement follows a description of "The 11 Key Elements of Effective Adolescent Instruction" in a report commissioned by Carnegie Corporation. Grammar instruction is not one of the 11 elements, and a note at the end explains why.

The meta-analysis found a negative effect for this type of traditional grammar instruction for students across the full range of ability, indicating that traditional grammar instruction is unlikely to improve the quality of students' writing. However, other instructional methods, such as sentence combining, provide an effective alternative to traditional grammar instruction. (page 29)

So, right in the IRP there are explanations why one particular method of teaching grammar, the traditional approach that McMurtry advocates, was dropped, as well as an indication of what forms of grammar instruction are recommended.

Neither is this finding a recent revelation, as studies have cast doubt on efficacy of the traditional approach of teaching grammar for over 60 years. In 1985, the National Council of Teachers of English, the pre-eminent professional body for teachers of language arts in North America, passed a motion stating that, "the use of isolated grammar and usage exercises not supported by theory and research is a deterrent to the improvement of students' speaking and writing." Few sources, other than publishers of traditional grammar workbooks, would now make the claims McMurtry makes for traditional grammar instruction, which has all but disappeared from language arts curricula in North America. For a good summary of the research, see

<http://tinyurl.com/7u6asz7>.

Neither is McMurtry's assertion that students in French class are "drilled daily in verb forms and other grammatical considerations" supported by the French IRP, which I checked. The French IRP stresses communicative competence, and opposes such practices as daily drills in verb forms.

Another area discussed by McMurtry is literature. McMurtry states that the English 12 provincial exam has "nothing at all on the novels and poems that comprise the English 12 curriculum." Yet all the samples of the English 12 exam that I could find online contained questions on both a poem and another literary selection. The English 12 Exam Table of Specifications confirmed this observation.

McMurtry might have made a simple mistake here, or perhaps he means that students are not examined on the specific literature covered in English 12. If so, this is another misreading of the IRP. The goal of instruction in literature in English 12 is to provide students with procedural knowledge about how to respond to and analyze any piece of literature given to them, a sophisticated and, in the long-term, beneficial approach. If the provincial exam tested literature covered in class, then students would be merely repeating facts and interpretations that they have been taught, declarative knowledge.

Also, an English 12 provincial exam that focused completely on literature already covered in English 12 would place unfortunate restrictions on the range of literature that teachers and students could choose to study in Grade 12. And surely it's safe to assume that the teacher has already evaluated the students on the literature they studied in class.

McMurtry blames all the defects he sees in English instruction on the government. While, like most educators, I have deep concerns about the current Liberal government, the decisions that McMurtry writes about were made in the 1990s, when an NDP government was in power.

McMurtry's views on the English 12 provincial exam are equally unreliable. I say this to defend the excellent work done by many teachers to improve an exam that was forced upon us.

Take McMurtry's claim regarding the removal of "a section on grammar" from the English 12 exam. First of all, what was removed in the early 1990s was a usage section, not a grammar section. Second, the push for removal of that section came more from teachers, not the ministry. The teachers successfully argued that the section lacked curriculum validity, that is, the section did not reflect how usage was taught.

The rationale for a six-point scale on the essay (McMurtry writes incorrectly that "exams are marked out of six") was not "to minimize the work of exam markers." A cursory familiarity with assessment practices and research would reveal that a six-point scale represents the finest degree of discrimination a marker can be reasonably expected to attain.

In BC, changes in language arts were primarily teacher driven, both in the last two language arts curriculums and the English 12 exam. McMurtry might not agree with the present state of language arts instruction, but rather than acknowledge the sound educational reasons for that curriculum, McMurtry mistakenly ties them to an unpopular government acting from cynical motives. In doing so, he unwittingly disparages the excellent work done by many devoted teachers.

David Fisher, retired English teacher and past president, BC Teachers of English Language Arts.

## Accents et langue française

par Sandrine Hebbing

Il suffit de quelques mots prononcés pour que mon interlocuteur se rende compte que je suis francophone. Quelque soit mes efforts, je ne peux masquer mon accent et inévitablement, on me demande poliment d'où je viens. Cela ne pose pas de problème en soi, d'autant plus que très souvent, on me rassure que mon accent est plaisant et agréable à l'oreille. Donc, mise à part quelques frustrations qui, plus d'une fois, m'ont fait épeler un nom impossible à faire comprendre, j'arrive pour la plupart du temps à communiquer assez aisément mes pensées. Ce qui me fascine, c'est que malgré le fait que je sache écrire chacun des mots que je prononce, je reste incapable de les articuler habilement. Il y aurait donc un bafouillage qui brouillerait la transmission des données allant du cerveau à l'élocution même puisqu'intellectuellement tout semble en ordre alors que le résultat est plutôt bancal.

Autre point tout aussi surprenant est que je reconnaisse non seulement l'accent de mes compatriotes mais que nos erreurs

soient bien souvent semblables. Allez comprendre pourquoi la plupart des francophones mettent des « h » en anglais où il n'y a pas et ne les prononcent pas là où il y en a. Ainsi, « air » devient « hair » et inversement. Les francophones peinent avec les « -th » anglais, refusant obstinément de placer la langue contre leurs dents, un vieil automatisme dictée par de longs exercices orthophoniques d'enfance. Ce sont donc des erreurs de prononciation que tout le monde peut tout bonnement associer aux francophones sans créer de conflit diplomatique. Cependant, je conserve une liste noire de mots impossibles à prononcer sans qu'il n'y ait de confusion aussi bien dans le contexte que dans le contenu de mon allocution. Les longs « e » anglais sont un cauchemar ainsi « the sheets » sont amalgamés au générique « bedding » pour éviter que l'on pense que je couche dans le purin. Dans le même ordre d'idée, la plage devient le bord de l'eau à cause des « t » qui s'insèrent odieusement là où il n'y en a pas. Les « o » posent eux aussi problèmes puisque que le paresseux « sloth », animal tranquille et lent, devient sous ma prononciation une travailleuse de nuit. Pourtant, il existe des mots incontournables qui, dans la profession, sont tellement pratiques et directs. Par exemple, un enseignant répète parfois inlassablement qu'il faut « stay on task » ou encore « focus

your attention on your work ». Or, l'expression faciale de vos interlocuteurs vous fait vite comprendre que le fil est coupé et que la compréhension est suspendue. C'est à ce moment là que le précieux mot de « focalisation », pourtant bien utile dans mon métier, est passé dans ma liste noire. Tout comme le « sloth » mentionné plus haut, le mot « focus » a perdu son sens premier, les élèves ayant vite fait de l'interpréter comme une grossièreté du genre « f\*\*\* us ».

Il faut donc une bonne dose d'humour et d'humilité pour parler une langue étrangère tout en portant son bagage langagier maternel dans un accent, car les chutes sont fréquentes et pas très heureuses. C'est pourquoi je vous prie, amis anglophones, de bien vouloir relever sans pudeur nos erreurs d'élocution. Il n'est pas garanti que nous puissions, sous votre tutelle, parler sans erreur la langue de Shakespeare mais au moins pourrions-nous utiliser à bon escient une liste succincte de synonymes.

Sandrine Hebbing, TTOC, Central Okanagan.

Après une année assez sérieuse, terminons-la en riant avec cet article de Sandrine Hebbing. Je vous souhaite de belles vacances reposantes, pleines de soleil et d'aventures.

Marie-Claude Tremblay, Bureau des programmes et services en français

## Ethics and religious culture program upheld in Quebec

Imparting information about different views of the world cannot be equated with a violation of freedom of religion. – Supreme Court of Canada

The Supreme Court of Canada recently rejected an appeal from parents in Quebec who sought the right to keep their children out of a new ethics and religious culture program taught in the province's schools. The program, which was introduced in 2008 to elementary and secondary schools by the Quebec education ministry, replaced the previous religion and moral education courses (which, depending upon the course selected, had a Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or secular focus) with a single curriculum covering all major faiths found in Quebec culture, including Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Aboriginal beliefs.

The appellants wrote to their children's schools to request that their children be exempt from the new courses and any such courses in the future, claiming their children would suffer serious harm from contact with beliefs that were

mostly incompatible with those of their family. Almost 2,000 other parents also requested exemptions from the education ministry but were denied. School boards refused to grant any exemption, and the Quebec minister of education publicly stated that there would be none.

... "[t]he very nature of a public education system implies the creation of opportunities for students of different origins and religions to learn about the diversity of opinions and cultures existing in our society..."

With its recent decision in February 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada has sided with the provincial government and an earlier ruling by the province's appeals court.

"Exposing children to a comprehensive presentation of various religions without forcing the children to join them does not constitute an indoctrination of students that would infringe the freedom of religion of L and J [the appellants]," Madam Justice Marie

Deschamps wrote in the main ruling.

"Parents are free to pass their personal beliefs on to their children if they so wish. However, the early exposure of children to realities that differ from those in their immediate family environment is a fact of life in society," Judge Deschamps wrote.

"Furthermore, the early exposure of children to realities that differ from those in their immediate family environment is a fact of life in society. The suggestion that exposing children to a variety of religious facts in itself infringes their religious freedom or that of their parents amounts to a rejection of the multicultural reality of Canadian society and ignores the [provincial] government's obligations with regard to public education."

Concurring with the main ruling, which is in keeping with the earlier *Chamberlain v. Surrey District School Board No. 36* decision, Justice Louis LeBel Due notes that "[t]he very nature of a public education system implies the creation of opportunities for students of different origins and religions to learn about the diversity of opinions and cultures existing in our society, even in religious matters. Imparting information about different views of the world cannot be equated with a violation of freedom of religion."

Glen Hansman, BCTF 2nd vice-president

## Health and safety

### Advice for the summer

By Karen Langenmaier

Summer is coming and it is amazing how good the summer sun makes you feel. In fact, it makes you feel so good; you think you are years younger. The stress of teaching is gone. No effects of Bill 22 to think about for a while. Summer conference and gearing up for the fall is a long way off and our minds turn to doing things that we would not ordinarily do.

Do not fall prey to the "I can still do it." state of mind.

You really cannot lift as much as you used to. Just ask a colleague who injured his back helping a friend last summer.

Flip flops are not recommended lawn-mowing attire. Just ask the colleague who cut off her little toe when she slipped on some wet grass and her foot went under the lawn mower.

Staying out in the sun unprotected is hazardous to your health. Just ask the colleague who was diagnosed with melanoma last year.

Be realistic about your physical abilities; wear appropriate work clothing, slap on a hat, slop on some sunscreen, and slip on a cover. Take breaks, sip on cool

beverages, read a book and stay healthy and safe so you can make public education a better place next year.

Karen Langenmaier, health and safety officer, Income Security Division



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# The assault on public education

By Noam Chomsky

Public education is under attack around the world, and in response, student protests have recently been held in Britain, Canada, Chile, Taiwan, and elsewhere.

California is also a battleground. *The Los Angeles Times* reports on another chapter in the campaign to destroy what had been the greatest public higher education system in the world: "California State University officials announced plans to freeze enrollment next spring at most campuses and to wait-list all applicants the following fall pending the outcome of a proposed tax initiative on the November ballot."

Similar defunding is under way nationwide. "In most states," *The New York Times* reports, "it is now tuition payments, not state appropriations, that cover most of the budget," so that "the era of affordable four-year public universities, heavily subsidized by the state, may be over."

Community colleges increasingly face similar prospects—and the shortfalls extend to Grades K–12.

"There has been a shift from the belief that we as a nation benefit from higher education, to a belief that it's the people receiving the education who primarily benefit and so they should foot the bill," concludes Ronald G. Ehrenberg, a trustee of the State University system of New York and director of the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute.

A more accurate description, I think, is "Failure by Design," the title of a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute, which has long been a major source of reliable information and analysis on the state of the economy.

The EPI study reviews the consequences of the transformation of the economy a generation ago from domestic production to financialization and offshoring. By design; there have always been alternatives.

One primary justification for the design is what Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz called the "religion" that "markets lead to efficient outcomes," which was recently dealt yet another crushing blow by the collapse of the housing bubble that was ignored on doctrinal grounds, triggering the current financial crisis.

Claims are also made about the alleged benefits of the radical expansion of financial institutions since the 1970s. A more convincing description was provided by Martin Wolf, senior economic correspondent for *The Financial Times*: "An out-of-control financial sector is eating out the modern market economy from inside, just as the larva of the spider wasp eats out the host in which it has been laid."

The EPI study observes that the "Failure of Design" is class-based. For the designers, it has been a stunning success, as revealed by the astonishing concentration of wealth in the top 1%, in fact the top 0.1%, while the majority has been reduced to virtual stagnation or decline.

In short, when they have the opportunity, "the Masters of Mankind" pursue their "vile maxim *à* (euro) [all for ourselves and nothing for other people," as Adam Smith explained long ago.

Mass public education is one of the great achievements of American society. It has had many dimensions. One purpose was to prepare independent farmers for life as wage labourers who would tolerate what they regarded as virtual slavery.

The coercive element did not pass without notice. Ralph Waldo Emerson observed that political leaders call for popular education because they fear that "This country is filling up with thousands and millions of voters, and you must educate them to keep them from our throats." But educated the right way: Limit their perspectives and understanding, discourage free and independent thought, and train them for obedience.

**"There has been a shift from the belief that we as a nation benefit from higher education, to a belief that it's the people receiving the education who primarily benefit and so they should foot the bill."**

—Ronald G. Ehrenberg

The *vile maxim* and its implementation have regularly called forth resistance, which in turn evokes the same fears among the elite. Forty years ago there was deep concern that the population was breaking free of apathy and obedience.

At the liberal internationalist extreme, the Trilateral Commission—the nongovernmental policy group from which the Carter administration was largely drawn—issued stern warnings in 1975 that there is too much democracy, in part due to the failures of the institutions responsible for "the indoctrination of the young." On the

right, an important 1971 memorandum by Lewis Powell, directed to the US Chamber of Commerce, the main business lobby, wailed that radicals were taking over everything—universities, media, government, etc.—and called on the business community to use its economic power to reverse the attack on our prized way of life, which he knew well. As a lobbyist for the tobacco industry, he was quite familiar with the workings of the nanny state for the rich that he called "the free market."

Since then, many measures have been taken to restore discipline. One is the crusade for privatization, placing control in reliable hands.

Another is sharp increases in tuition, up nearly 600% since 1980. These produce a higher education system with "far more economic stratification than is true of any other country," according to Jane Wellman, former director of the Delta Cost Project, which monitors these issues. Tuition increases trap students into long-term debt and hence subordination to private power.

Justifications are offered on economic grounds, but are singularly unconvincing. In countries rich to poor, including Mexico next door, tuition remains free or nominal. That was true as well in the United States itself when it was a much poorer country after World War II and huge numbers of students were able to enter college under the GI bill—a factor in uniquely high economic growth, even putting aside the significance in improving lives.

Another device is the corporatization of the universities. That has led to a dramatic increase in

layers of administration, often professional instead of drawn from the faculty as before; and to imposition of a business culture of "efficiency"—an ideological notion, not just an economic one.

One illustration is the decision of state colleges to eliminate programs in nursing, engineering, and computer science, because they are costly, and happen to be the professions where there is a labour shortage, as *The New York Times* reports. The decision harms the society but conforms to the business ideology of short-term gain without regard for human consequences, in accord with the *vile maxim*.

Some of the most insidious effects are on teaching and monitoring. The Enlightenment ideal of education was captured in the image of education as laying down a string that students follow in their own ways, developing their creativity and independence of mind.

The alternative, to be rejected, is the image of pouring water into a vessel—and a very leaky one, as all of us know from experience. The latter approach includes teaching to test and other mechanisms that destroy students' interest and seek to fit them into a mold, easily controlled. All too familiar today.

Noam Chomsky is emeritus professor of linguistics and philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass.

Reprinted with permission. *New York Times*, Op-ed, April 4, 2012. Noam Chomsky's new book, *Making the Future: Occupations, Interventions, Empire and Resistance*, is a collection of his columns for The New York Times Syndicate.)

## Opinion

### New provincial language on job security

By Glenn Bullard

Next September, BCTF local unions will have to defend the interests of their members under new provincial language for posting and filling of positions, assignment and transfer, layoff and recall, and evaluation and dismissal—all matters bearing on the job security of teachers.

To see what the BC Public School Employers' Association has proposed on these matters, visit their website ([www.bcpsea.bc.ca](http://www.bcpsea.bc.ca)) and follow the links: Teachers/Teacher Collective Bargaining/Proposals and Costing—BCTF and BCPSEA/February 1, 2012 Revised Package (47 pages).

At the core of the BCPSEA's proposals is the insistence throughout that all employment decisions are based on four factors: employee experience, performance, qualifications, and "suitability to the position and school as determined by the principal or designate."

Three of these factors—experience, qualifications, and suitability—are not defined in the BCPSEA proposals, which leaves their interpretation entirely up to the employer, while the fourth, performance, would be determined by a "performance review program" with a list of criteria, but no defined, measurable standards for those criteria, no defined process for evaluation, and no provision for independent verification of the results.

The BCPSEA's proposals are so ill conceived and lopsided, so completely lacking in even

rudimentary safeguards, that they would open the door province-wide to all manner of favouritism, nepotism, scheming, prejudice, personal revenge, and petty corruption. Their proposals for job security spell disaster, for teachers and administrators alike.

Any union that cannot defend the job security of its members will quickly become completely irrelevant to them. It is no exaggeration to say that these threats to teachers' job security pose an existential—life or death—threat to the BCTF, unless they are met with planning and determination.

#### How could this disaster come about?

Under Bill 22, the BCTF and the BCPSEA must "bargain collectively in good faith and must make every reasonable effort to conclude a new collective agreement." To this end, the minister of education has appointed a so-called mediator "to assist the parties in settling the terms and conditions of a new collective agreement." If the parties fail to reach a voluntary agreement, the mediator will make non-binding recommendations to the minister for an imposed contract.

The mediator's recommendations must enable "effective feedback and evaluation of teachers to promote improvement...alignment of professional development with teaching needs, and...scheduling and selection of teachers suited to student needs."

The mediator must make these recommendations not later than the

end of June, and the minister has made it clear that there will be a new contract for teachers—voluntary or imposed—by the end of August. This means that—with or without our input, with or without our signatures—there will be a new contract governing all BC teachers by the beginning of September.

**The BCPSEA's proposals are so ill-conceived and lopsided, so completely lacking in even rudimentary safeguards, that they would open the door province-wide to all manner of favouritism, nepotism, scheming, prejudice, personal revenge, and petty corruption.**

#### What can the BCTF do to achieve a decent contract for its members?

Between now and the end of June, the BCTF can propose and bargain new provincial language for teacher job security (and many other matters). The BCTF will have to address the BCPSEA's proposals and devise appropriate amendments or alternate language. The BCTF will have to bargain provisions that sound reasonable to the mediator, the minister, and the public, and which are worth defending for teachers in September.

#### What kind of leverage will the BCTF have in these negotiations?

The Liberal government cannot budge on their self-imposed "net-zero mandate" for costs, without reopening contracts they have already signed with other public sector unions, thereby giving ammunition to their political rivals on the right, a resurgent Conservative Party.

They will not undermine the BCPSEA's position on the so-called "split of issues" between provincial and local bargaining. Provincial bargaining has been the very goal and purpose of the BCPSEA since an NDP government in 1995 created it and the current Liberal government concurs.

However, the minister of education has no interest in micro-managing the labour relations of school districts. He does not care which teacher is hired for which position, or which teacher is laid off or recalled, and he does not care how teachers are evaluated. All of that messy stuff is the business of school districts. The Liberal government has its own problems, thank you.

However, the minister of education and the Liberal government do have an interest in appearing to be competent managers of public education, able to avert major strikes that greatly inconvenience parents—who vote!

In brief, Bill 22 will not be repealed, but that will not hinder the BCTF from securing provincial language that protects the job security of its members.

Here's why: Today, Bill 22

imposes a "cooling-off period" that makes all strike action subject to automatic, punitive fines, but only until the end of August. If we have not achieved a voluntary agreement by the end of June, we will have the summer to make our case to the minister of education, while he mulls over the mediator's recommendations.

Here's the case: In September, the BCTF will be able to threaten strike action under the usual rules of the Labour Code, and could count on its members to deliver a massive, positive vote for a strike, legal or illegal, in defense of teacher job security.

Ask yourself, would George Abbott risk a province-wide shutdown of the public school system over teacher job security? He has made it clear that his bottom line is "net-zero" and provincial language. He might want more, but is he prepared to pay the political cost?

By next September, the BCTF can bargain provincial language that guarantees job security rights for all teachers—objective standards for qualifications and experience, respect for seniority, and reasonable criteria, standards, and process for evaluation.

But we will achieve this only if we make it clear to the government that teacher job security is an existential issue for the BCTF, and that we intend to live.

Between now and September, we have a goal of enormous importance to achieve for our members, and they will expect us to make every effort to succeed.

Glenn Bullard, vice-president, New Westminster Teachers' Union

# Mapping desire and power within the field of education policy in BC

An interview with Dr. Charles Ungerleider

By Tobey Steeves

In their overview of qualitative interviewing (QI) as research methodology, Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) insist "...knowledge is power. The social practice of research interviewing may become a form of democratic practice that can be used to help create a free democratic society." With this generalized goal in mind, I initiated an interview-based research inquiry into education policy in British Columbia. Beginning with the question: What desires are privileged by education policy in BC?, I solicited the participation of a well-established policy maker/analyst and organized a series of questions that were designed to elicit a rudimentary outline of education policy in BC as a field of power. Phrased more succinctly, I used targeted questions to map the winners and losers within BC's education policy-making arena.

**I used targeted questions to map the winners and losers within BC's education policy-making arena.**

In this article I will share the fruits of my analysis. I will begin by contextualizing my choice of an interviewee—Dr. Charles Ungerleider. From here I will describe the methodologies used in analyzing interview data, and summarize key aspects of my analysis. To conclude, I will consider the study's generalizability, and return to the question of QI as a means of "creating a free democratic society." Ungerleider served as BC's Deputy Minister of Education from 1998–2001, and currently splits his time between UBC, where he is a professor specializing in the sociology of education and Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, LLP where he is director of Research and Managing Partner. In 2003 Ungerleider published a book-length analysis of education policy in Canada titled "Failing our kids: How we are ruining public schools," he has been widely published in academic journals, and he is a frequent contributor to local and national media. As a result, I felt confident in drawing on his expertise to map the desires structuring education policy in BC. After some organizing, I compiled a series of targeted questions, and we scheduled a 60-minute interview at his office. Our discussion was recorded, and 20 minutes were transcribed for analysis see <http://ow.ly/a5Exy>.

For the purposes of this study I combined two complementary lenses of analysis: narrative analysis and positioning analysis. To simplify and summarize, narrative analysis assumes that "...through live stories individuals and groups make sense of themselves; they tell what they are or what they wish to be, as they

tell so they come, they are their stories." (Cortazzi, 2001). Positioning analysis, on the other hand, assumes that "...selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines..." (Davies & Harré, 1990). Taken in conjunction, narrative analysis provides a means with which to analyze interview data as a story (i.e., with actors, a plot, and genre), and positioning analysis makes it possible to use interview data to construct a stratified field of power.

In a very meaningful sense, applying narrative analysis to interview data can be understood as analogous with translating a conversation into a script for a movie. My transcription and translation revealed that Ungerleider had foregrounded protagonists and antagonists, and scripted them within a particular genre. It should be no surprise that the principal actors in Ungerleider's "movie script" were teachers, BC's Liberal Party, the BCTF, and BC's Supreme Court. From here, Ungerleider casts the BCTF as inspired by moralistic idealisms and marginally dishonest (lines 184–191). On the other hand, the Liberal Party was cast as adamantly anti-labour, and scripted as British Columbia's version of the United States' Republican Party (lines 324–366). BC's Supreme Court, meanwhile, was cast as an external arbiter of legitimacy, and was more or less scripted as a bystander in the ongoing dispute between the BCTF and the Liberal Party (lines 157–171). It is also worth mentioning that Canadian society itself was cast as a vulnerable body, under threat from atomistic forces unleashed by the diminution of the state (lines 24–25; 99–104). These actors fit together within a plot that is more or less a "rigged game"—Teachers ask and teachers fight, but government reserves the ultimate monopoly on legitimacy (lines 302–303). As a result, interview data foregrounded two distinct genres: action and political affairs. Whereas an action story is one that has some risky decision linked with the experience of conflict and resolution, political affairs are those that involve governance and the desires of the state. To sum up, in Ungerleider's script, teachers made the risky decision of challenging the state, but they appear to have little to no chance of gaining legitimacy within the eyes of the state.

By filtering transcript data through the lens of positioning analysis, I was able to tentatively locate actors within a field of power. For instance, Ungerleider positioned the state as simultaneously under attack (lines 99–109) and dominant (lines 302–317; 285–290). It is important to emphasize, however, that the state is—to some extent—held in check by the Supreme Court (lines 302–312), and yet the Supreme Court is positioned as a more or less disinterested actor (lines 195–196). Teachers, meanwhile, are positioned as feminized victims of state policy (lines 285–

317). The element of feminization is critical, and was contextualized by Apple & Jungck (1992) as an attempt by state legislatures, departments of education, and educational managers to rationalize and standardize the process and products of teaching as a collection of measurable "competencies" and so on [; and] is related to a longer history of attempts to control the labour of occupations that have historically been seen as women's paid work.

In this way, teachers in BC may be understood as under attack, and the instrumentalist state—as embodied within BC's Liberal party—takes on a misogynistic and tyrannical hue. Against this backdrop, society is positioned as an effect of the state's desire: Given that the state has affirmed the construction of the common good as a privatized experience, society lacks "glue" or a "common set of values" (line 411). As a result, according to Ungerleider, society itself is at risk of fragmenting into a chaotic mass of self-interest and selfish desire. Here Ungerleider implicitly links the impacts of education policy in BC with broader socio-cultural trends. In particular, a growing chorus of research has foregrounded the effects of neo-liberal policy as imbricating a "narcissism epidemic" (Twenge & Campbell, 2009) and "Generation Me" (Twenge, 2003). Taken together, Ungerleider constructs an

**In this way, teachers in BC may be understood as under attack, and the instrumentalist state—as embodied within BC's Liberal party—takes on a misogynistic and tyrannical hue.**

asymmetrical field of power in which a pitched battle is being fought, and the outcome most singularly at stake is our collective future.

To conclude, my interview with Ungerleider provided the resources for diagramming the field power that regulates education policy in BC. It should be stressed, however, that the results of my study are unquestionably un-generalizable, (i.e., if I asked a dozen different actors, I'd get at least a dozen different diagrams). Nevertheless, I would suggest that the map provides a tentative answer to the question, What desires are privileged by education policy in BC?, and may be useful in the fight to achieve a "free democratic society" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).  
Tobey Steeves, Vancouver TTOC  
References available in online version.

**The Grinch got the presents  
But the Grabbit grabs rights.  
Now discredited Liberals  
Are picking more fights.  
Public school teachers  
Are under attack.  
We must heed the words  
Of a turtle named Mack:  
"I know, up on top you  
Are seeing great sights,  
But down here on the bottom  
We, too, should have rights."**

## Dual minority harassment

Asian-Canadian lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens more likely to face harassment, greater health risks: UBC research

Asian Canadian teenagers who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are 30 times more likely to face harassment than their heterosexual peers—a factor that is linked to higher rates of alcohol or drug use, according to UBC research. Recently published in the *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, this is the first study in North America to investigate the links between Asian teens dealing with "dual minority discrimination," problem substance use, and supports that can help reduce those risks.

"Discrimination for both ethnicity and sexual orientation is an important issue, especially in BC, where at least 20% of young people are of East Asian or Southeast Asian origin," says Elizabeth Saewyc, professor of nursing and adolescent medicine in the UBC School of Nursing, and research director for the McCreary Centre Society. "It can create even greater stress than experiencing racism or homophobia alone. Our study shows schools need to consider cultural diversity in their strategies to reduce homophobic bullying in schools, and work to create school environments where all students feel safe and connected."

The new UBC study confirms that fostering positive school climates, engaging sexual minority youth in extracurricular activities, and reducing homophobic bullying in schools may help prevent negative outcomes for these youth. The study further highlights the need to implement culturally diverse programs and policies to reduce sexual orientation stigma in schools, and to create safer school environments that are free from bullying, harassment, and violence for all youth.

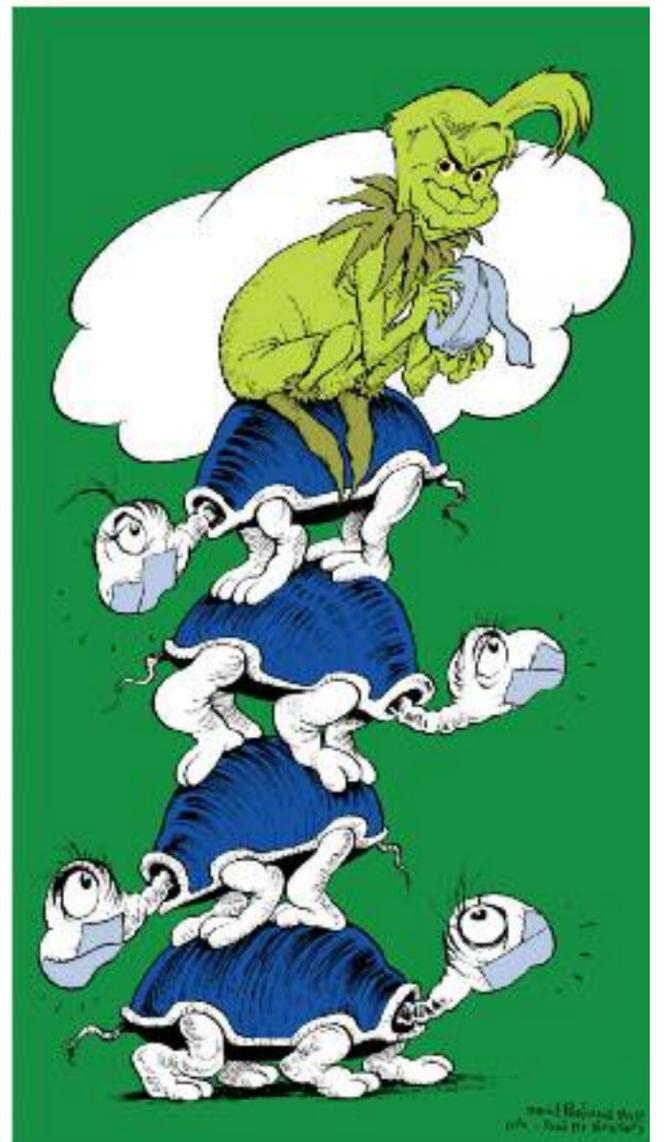
The researchers analyzed data from the BC Adolescent Health (BCAH) Survey, focusing on respondents who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and East or Southeast Asian, which includes Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Cambodian. Six per cent of Asian Canadian boys and 11% of Asian Canadian girls identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or mostly heterosexual, representing an estimated 4,389 students enrolled across the province. Conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, the BCAH survey was completed by more than 30,000 BC students in Grades 7–12.

"It may be culturally taboo for some Asian youth to speak about matters related to sex, sexual orientation, and sexual abuse, so school and health professionals need to consider culturally sensitive services," says Saewyc, adding that language barriers can also be an issue, as more than one-fifth of the adolescents in the study sample were recent immigrants, and more than half spoke a language other than English at home.

Key findings include:

- Asian-Canadian lesbian, gay, bisexual youth were 26 to 29 times more likely than their heterosexual peers to report being discriminated against due to their sexual orientation.
- Asian-Canadian sexual minority students who experienced multiple types of bullying and discrimination were more than 10 times as likely to report problems because of alcohol or drug use as heterosexual peers.
- Among those who experienced high rates of stigma and abuse, their chance of problem substance use was cut in half if they had high levels of school or family connectedness, friends with healthy attitudes, or involvement in extracurriculars like sports or music.

A copy of the full research paper can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/HFu6g1>.  
Glen Hansman,  
BCTF 2nd vice-president



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By Terri Anne Wilson

ArtStarts in Schools, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the value of the arts in young lives, is pleased to announce the acquisition of an exciting new program called "Infusion: Arts in Education." This program, designed in consultation with educators, aligns with ArtStarts' mission to provide innovative arts programs for young people, practical resources for teachers and artists, and leadership in advocacy for arts in education.

The program is a subsidized professional development and learning program for artists and teachers focused on arts integration in schools across BC. The purpose of Infusion is to assist teachers in their approach to facilitating opportunities in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form and engage in a creative process that connects an art form and another subject area, meeting evolving objectives in both. While Infusion shall eventually target Grades K-12, ArtStarts is now accepting applications from those interested for its first phase, beginning with primary and elementary schools for 2012-15.

#### The benefits of Infusion

Students who engage in arts-based practices show enhanced levels of achievement, have higher persistence levels in their programs of study, and demonstrate increased levels of motivation. They are more likely to collaborate effectively, be socially tolerant and show high levels of self-confidence. Arts-integrated learning also promotes opportunities for problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, teamwork, and the chance to work with ambiguity and complexity. Infusion provides teachers with the support required to design activities that invite the integration of multiple skill sets in their classroom activities. The program is an opportunity to help schools foster positive climates where conditions for learning are improved for students, teachers, and administration.

#### The goals of Infusion

ArtStarts hopes to accomplish the following through the scope of the program:

- Establish a shared definition of arts integration in BC

- Establish a network of schools committed to arts integration as an approach to teaching
- Develop teachers' and artists' abilities to plan, lead, and assess quality arts integration programming
- Positively influence the way teachers teach and the way students learn
- Facilitate teachers and students to meet provincially determined Prescribed Learning Outcomes in the arts and other subject areas
- Make effective and regular use of artists and cultural resources in the community.

#### Will Infusion mean extra work for teachers?

Infusion is designed to take place within a bell-to-bell approach, limiting the amount of time required for preparation and planning. It should not require more than the usual amount of planning and preparation teachers experience. In some cases, it may reduce a great deal of workload, as students in their role are encouraged to become architects of their experience.

#### How do schools participate?

Infusion is perfect for schools working on building a strong sense of community, who enjoy theme-based approaches and who have an interest in how arts integration can enhance student performance and engagement. A selection process will determine suitable infusion champion schools. Ideally, a champion school is a place where the arts are considered core to the learning process of its students. It is a place where a minimum of three teachers are committed to working with their classrooms, their administrator, and an Infusion teaching artist over a three-year period to successfully implement arts-based practices into their regular teaching regime.

You can apply to Infusion directly through the application process on the ArtStarts website: [artstarts.com](http://artstarts.com)

All teachers are invited to join our Community of Practice at [artsinfusion.ca](http://artsinfusion.ca)

Terri Anne Wilson, arts integration manager, ArtStarts in Schools, 604-336-0626, ext.106, e-mail: [terrianne@artstarts.com](mailto:terrianne@artstarts.com)

Infusion: Arts in Education was created with 2010 Legacies Now, with support from the Province of BC, as a legacy of the 2010 Winter Games.

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**VANCOUVER** Newly refurbished, furnished studio apt in West End, 2 blocks from Stanley Park & English Bay. \$450/wk. [jkathleen@shaw.ca](mailto:jkathleen@shaw.ca)

**VANCOUVER** Delightful, fully furn. 1 bdrm. Ninth floor, ocean view. 2 blocks to Stanley Park and English Bay. Available Oct 31 to Mar 31. \$1300/mo. [jzz.itup@gmail.com](mailto:jzz.itup@gmail.com)

**VANCOUVER** 3 bdrm. fully furnished home available Aug. 1 to Dec. 28. Ref. req. N/S, N/P, \$1800/mo. all utilities included. 604-738-1876, [irene.roland@gmail.com](mailto:irene.roland@gmail.com)

**VANCOUVER** 1 bdrm. & den, 900 sq.ft. rooftop deck. West 7th Ave. & Heather, available for rent July 7 to Aug. 7. Call 604-765-8551.

**CRESCENT BEACH** Cottage. 2 bdrm, W/D, fenced yard, 2 blocks from beach, ideal for a single or couple. \$1200/mo. Available Sept. 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013. Call Susanna 604-615-5611.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**VARIETY – THE CHILDREN'S CHARITY** Working with children is your passion. Leaving a legacy to Variety in your Will for BC's kids is your gift of a lifetime. There are estate planning benefits too. Contact Peter Chipman or Paul Spelliscy for information. Toll free 310-KIDS (5437) or 604-320-0505 or e-mail [peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca](mailto:peter.chipman@variety.bc.ca)

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

**RETIRING?** Join the BC 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.

**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)

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

**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 TATTOOS** 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.

**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.

**HOME-BASED TUTORING** Referral Agency. Immediately awarding franchises in the Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Okanagan and Prince George. Good income, flexible lifestyle, proven system. 1-877-ITS EASY or visit: [www.schooliseasy.com](http://www.schooliseasy.com)

**TEACH WITH TIANJIAO** English (and see China for free). Teach for 10, 20 or 40 weeks (20 and 40 week assignments will have priority) in Xiamen, Fujian. The package includes return airfare, accommodation and a stipend. For further information, contact [jim@canadatj.ca](mailto:jim@canadatj.ca)

**ALLIED DEZIGN.** Embroidered or heat pressed logos, names, numbers for school events, sport teams, or your personal needs. Affordable rates. [www.allieddezn.com](http://www.allieddezn.com) [maria@allieddezn.com](mailto:maria@allieddezn.com)

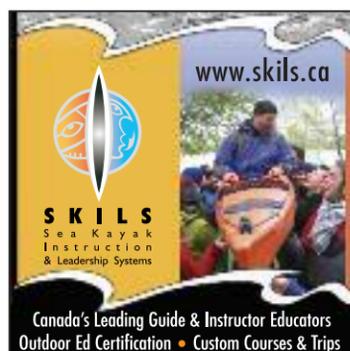
**www.independentteacher.com** Check out: Teaching ideas, current issues, classroom surveys, ebooks, motivational TED talks, classroom humor and more.

**BUCKINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** 50th Anniversary September 29, 2012. Calling former students, staff and parents to attend a special celebration in honour of Buckingham's 50 years. All are welcome. Information and registration forms available at <http://buckingham.sd41.bc.ca/>

**FOR SALE.** 1996 Silver 840 Volvo, 5 gear stick shift, turbo, 2.4 l engine 147,000 miles. Manuf. in Sweden \$65,000. Or 2002 VW Passat stationwagon, 81,000 miles, V-6 30 V, automatic, new warrantied tires, Manuf. in Germany, \$10,900. Courtenay — 250-339-2575.

**TEACHERS' TUTORING SERVICE** is accepting applications from certified teachers who would like to tutor this next school year. Orientations will commence in August. For more information and to apply, go to our website at [www.tutor.bc.ca](http://www.tutor.bc.ca) and visit our "Join Our Service" page. [teacher@tutor.bc.ca](mailto:teacher@tutor.bc.ca), [www.tutor.bc.ca](http://www.tutor.bc.ca)

**TEACHERS NEEDED.** B.C. Offshore School in Shanghai for Grade 10 core courses. One or two year contracts beginning September 2012. Generous compensation packages. BC Certification required. Contact [ron.greender@gmail.com](mailto:ron.greender@gmail.com) for further information.



# PD calendar

## JULY 2012

**2-20** Quebec City. Institut de Français, UBC à Québec, French Bursary Program for Teachers. This French immersion program is intended for all teachers and administrators interested in learning or improving their French language skills. Visit [www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec](http://www.frenchcentre.ubc.ca/quebec) or call toll-free 1-866-528-7485.

**3-4** Vancouver. Interactive Whiteboards: Teaching & Learning. A two-day summer institute designed for beginning through advanced users of Interactive Whiteboards (SMART Boards). Participants will work on developing literacies, lessons, and learning strategies that can be used in the classroom, focusing teaching lessons that engage students in active learning in many curriculum areas. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/WhiteBoards2012>. Repeats August 27-28.

**5-21** China/Korea. March 1, 2012 application deadline. 2012 Peace and Reconciliation Study Tour. BC ALPHA (Association for Learning and Preserving the History of World War II in Asia) would like to invite BC educators, who are interested in learning about the History of WWII in Asia, to apply to join this journey of discovery. The itinerary will cover Hong Kong, Shanghai, Nanjing, Harbin in China, and Seoul in South Korea. For application details and highlights of previous study tours, visit <http://alpha-canada.org/StudyTour>, or contact Thekla Lit at 604-313-6000 or [bcalpha@alpha-canada.org](mailto:bcalpha@alpha-canada.org). Scholarship will be offered to selected applicants to cover part of the tour costs.

**9-13** Castlegar, BC. Restorative Justice: Transforming education through peace and reconciliation. This summer program will deepen your understanding of restorative justice and how its theory and practice relates to education and socialization of our children. This course will take restorative justice (most recently called transformative justice) far beyond the realm of victim and offender, to provide a framework for not only responding to conflict but also to building cultures of peace in our education system. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/tfp2012>.

**9-13** Vancouver. Recurring Questions of Technology. A five-day UBC/SFU summer institute with leading scholars exploring how technology, as a particular regard for tools and techniques, reflects a state of consciousness that bears on our ideas of learning. These questions involve educational issues of culture and history, language and knowledge, identity and difference. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/rqt2012>.

**9-14** Toronto. Historical Thinking Project. This exciting institute will take you on an exploration of historical thinking, while examining the themes of immigration and aboriginality. As well, we will look at the broader substantive theme of cultural exchange across borders. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/htp2012>.

## AUGUST 2012

**13-15** Parksville. Achieving Excellence in Writing Annual Summer Seminar, presented by Susan Augustyn, provides an exceptionally effective method of teaching writing to children. Covering various stylistic techniques as well as structures, both expository and fictional writing are addressed. The material is structured and easy to teach. Provides a powerful tool for teaching students to write effectively. Meeting the requirements of both criteria-based assessment and ministry perfor-

mance standards, ideal for teachers eager for their students to achieve excellence in writing. For teachers with classes from Grades 2-11. Contact Susan Augustyn at [saugustyn@shaw.ca](mailto:saugustyn@shaw.ca) or phone 250-248-6434.

**21-23** Mill Bay, Vancouver Island. AIM Summer Institute West. Location: Brentwood College School (2735 Mount Baker Road, Mill Bay). Learn about the Accelerative Integrated Methodology (AIM) and experience language education that really works. AIM blends the best of language acquisition theory and brain-based research with interactive, systematized and engaging classroom practice, creating astounding results. You will learn how AIM gives students a working fluency in the target language in less than 100 instructional hours. Keynote John De Mado. AIM Summer Institute participants can apply for two Seattle University credits. For more information go to: <http://tinyurl.com/7qn3vrh>

**23-24** Vancouver. "Summer Institute 2012: Promoting Mental Health in BC Schools." Location: UBC, Neville Scarfe Building (2125 Main Mall, Vancouver). Learn how to build school connectedness and promote student mental health and well-being. Day 1—Building Strengths: School Culture and Connectedness; Day 2—Mitigating Vulnerabilities: Mental Health and Substance Use Issues. <http://tinyurl.com/7ct9upm> or call toll free 1-800-668-6288.

**27-28** Vancouver. Interactive Whiteboards: Teaching & Learning. (See July 3-4 for details.)

**29** Vancouver, BC. Interactive Whiteboards: Kindergarten teachers focusing on designing and creating interactive teaching and learning experiences for young children. Teachers will work on developing literacies and learning strategies that can be used with five- and six-year old students. <http://eplt.educ.ubc.ca/kindergartenWB2012>.

## OCTOBER 2012

**18-19** Kamloops. BCBEA (BC Business Education Association) Annual fall conference: "Digital Learning Tools—Everyone's Business." Keynote: Darren Weeks from Rich Dad Poor Dad. Junior Achievement—Titan Simulation at Thursday evening wine and cheese at Kamloops Coast Hotel. Conference location: Thompson Rivers University. Contact Ishtar Litt, [ilitt@sd73.bc.ca](mailto:ilitt@sd73.bc.ca), or Terry Downton, [tdownton@sd22.bc.ca](mailto:tdownton@sd22.bc.ca) or 250-309-1867. Go to [www.bcbea.ca](http://www.bcbea.ca) to register online.

**18-19** Port Coquitlam. BCTLA (British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association) Annual fall conference "We're In!: Inquire, Inspire, Innovate" featuring keynote speakers, including Dr. David Loertscher (San José State University School of Library & Information Science), a Thursday night social event, vendor display, and over 50 sessions on learning commons, inquiry, technology, media, authors, and more. Riverside Secondary School. For more information, visit [bctlacoquitlam2012.weebly.com](http://bctlacoquitlam2012.weebly.com).

**18-20** Richmond. BCMEA (BC Music Educators' Association). "Unison 2012: Coming together for Music Education." Keynote speaker: Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser. As educators we strive to promote higher learning and development! Join us at Unison 2012 where we hope you will be inspired and challenged while we come together as one. River Rock Conference Centre. To register go to [bcmeaconference.com](http://bcmeaconference.com),

or for more information, contact Angela Toth or Ethan Shoemaker at [info@bcmeaconference.com](mailto:info@bcmeaconference.com).

**18-20** Victoria. BCAMT (BC Association of Mathematics Teachers). "51st Northwest Mathematics Conference: Math in Bloom." Keynotes: Dan Meyer, Catherine Fosnot, Patrick Vennebusch. The three-day long Northwest Math Conference is held in BC every three years. With three well-known keynotes and many thought-provoking workshops, it will be a great chance to learn some new ideas, share thoughts with colleagues and have some great discussions about teaching and learning mathematics. Victoria Conference Centre and Fairmont Hotel, downtown Victoria. Register at [nwmc2012.com](http://nwmc2012.com). Contact information: Jack Showers, conference chair, [jackshowers@shaw.ca](mailto:jackshowers@shaw.ca).

**19** Burnaby. BCCLPSA (BC Co-operative Learning Provincial Specialist Association) "Social and Emotional Learning in Our Schools: What do we know? What do we do?" co-sponsored by BCCLA (BC Co-operative Learning Association), SRCLE (Social Responsibility in Collaborative Learning Environments) and the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education. This conference is being offered as a collaborative professional development opportunity by a network of Lower Mainland educators and educational researchers focusing on Social Emotional Learning. Keynote by David Osher (American Institute of Research/CASEL), followed by a panel discussion. Afternoon breakout sessions are co-facilitated by local teachers working to bring theory into practice. Themes include mindfulness-based approaches, restorative practices, classroom climate and co-operative learning. Location: Michael J. Fox Theatre in Burnaby. For more information, contact Mike Galliford at [mgalliford@sd43.bc.ca](mailto:mgalliford@sd43.bc.ca).

**19** West Vancouver. ESLPSA (English as a Second Language Provincial Specialist Association). Annual fall conference "I'm More Than a Colouring Person: Empowering English Language Learners." Keynote: Dr. Margaret Early. All-day workshops at West Vancouver Secondary School, 1750 Mathers Avenue, West Vancouver. Contact information: Marc Tremblay at [mt4919@gmail.com](mailto:mt4919@gmail.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/ProDI/ProDI-Calendar.cfm](http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/ProDI/ProDI-Calendar.cfm)  
Additions/changes—contact Betty Goto at [bgoto@bctf.ca](mailto:bgoto@bctf.ca)



# One jar at a time

## Preserving traditions at Brooks Secondary School



By Alison Bell

Take a team of keen students, two teachers, a forward-thinking school district, over 1,000 pounds of locally grown pickling cucumbers, and all the berries you can find, and what do you get? Pickle perfection and a groundbreaking Business Education and Culinary Arts course at Brooks Secondary School in Powell River that is changing the way we look at education.

When Mountain Ash Farms, an existing canning and preserving business, and a Powell River institution, was looking for a buyer, Powell River Education Society Services (PRESS) seized the opportunity. PRESS's executive director and superintendent of schools Jay Yule, recognized the value that the real-life educational experiences of running a business like this could provide students. With business plan in hand, an inventory of



Fenn, Tayla Gawley, Konane Laureta, and Dakota Whalley build camaraderie while preparing their prized preserves. Whalley, who is studying both Marketing and Culinary Arts, loves the skills she is learning, especially the teamwork aspect. Whalley explained, "...we all just jump on the task and get the job done...we are learning really good skills for the future, how to preserve foods and we learn the value of food when we look at food waste and food costing." She also sees this course as an important step on her journey to becoming a chef after leaving high school. In addition to culinary skills, students like Whalley are learning about how their food is grown, market trends, and customer satisfaction.

Mountain Ash Preserves produces over 20 delectable products including strawberry-rhubarb jam—one of their biggest sellers—heirloom tomato salsa and several varieties of pickles. In fact, Mountain Ash Preserves is one of two dill-pickle producers in British Columbia. And while the team has created "gourmet" products such as strawberry-fig jam, they are finding that the more traditional products are what customers want. "People want simply prepared natural foods that taste like the foods their grandmothers used to make," states Austin. And when it comes to quality ingredients, Mountain Ash Preserves does their best to obtain the freshest.

"We are trying to use as much local produce as possible, states Anne Hutchings, who goes on to say that Hatch-a-Bird Farm is a local certified-organic farm and they grow our pickling cucumbers, zucchini, cucumbers, and tomatoes for our September pickling." And, they don't just grow a few cucumbers. Last year, Hatch-a-Bird Farm provided 1,200 lbs of pickling cuCs! Working with large quantities of fresh produce requires a lot of foresight, seasonal cooking, and working closely with the farm. "We need to know that we can pick up the amount of product we need, otherwise that sets us back a week," states student Emily

Anderson. So, how does the team pull it all together?

Mountain Ash students contact customers in the early spring to determine their needs and to find out which products are the best sellers. Armed with this information, according to Anderson, they then meet with farmers Helena and Peter Bird to "request late planting." Staggering planting "can be a challenge" according to Helena Bird, but she sees enormous value in working with the students who visit the farm weekly to pick up their vegetables. In addition to pickles and salsas, Mountain Ash Preserves produces a wide variety of jams and jellies with locally grown berries.

Coast Berry Farm, a berry producer committed to sustainable agricultural practices on the Sunshine Coast, provided most of the berries that went into the making of over 300 jars of jams and jellies last year. An abundance of wild blackberries, harvested by students provides an unending supply of berries for blackberry preserves and syrup. And while Mountain Ash



According to Hutchings, "Mt. Ash students prepare invoices for out-of-town customers and sometimes go on field trips to deliver their products, to the Island and Lower Mainland. The responsibility of delivery is also shared by the whole team, including students, teachers, teacher assistants, Brooks Secondary School teachers and administrators who volunteer to drop off products when they take the ferry to visit family and friends." And there is more.

In April, the team from Brooks Secondary School attended the BC School Trustees Association conference in Vancouver.

They prepared "200 mini-jars of product to give away as samplers and students designed an information booth and made baskets for presenters," explains Hutchings. So, where

can you find jars of delicious Mountain Ash Preserves? Well, they are flying off the shelves all around BC. Mountain Ash Preserves are available at specialty grocers in Powell River, the Lower Mainland, and on Vancouver Island. Students learning

practical business,

marketing, and culinary skills, working side-by-side preparing recipes as good as your Granny made while supporting local farmers? What better recipe is there for student success?

*Alison Bell, BC Culinary Arts Specialist Association (BCCASA) media co-ordinator, chef instructor, David Thompson Secondary School, Invermere*

For more information and to find out where the preserves are available, visit: [www.mountainashpreserves.com](http://www.mountainashpreserves.com).

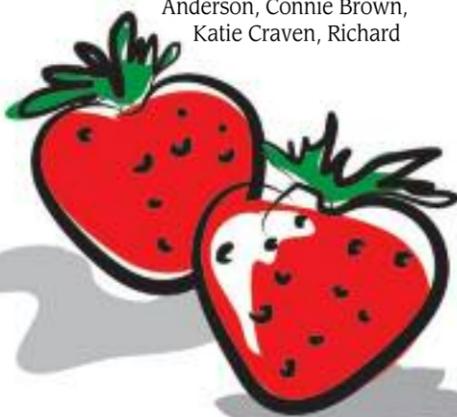


tried-and-true recipes, two innovative teachers, a group of keen students, and access to locally grown ingredients, the circle was complete and the creation of a delicious culinary edu-business was realized.

Under the direction of chef instructor and Red Seal chef Mike Austin and business education teacher Anne Hutchings, Business Innovations 12 students learn the importance of time-honoured culinary traditions, business and marketing acumen, and where their food comes from. And, did I mention that all of this happens outside of regular school hours in a gleaming commercial kitchen?

Every Tuesday afternoon, students assemble in the teaching kitchen at Brooks Secondary School, home to its highly successful Professional Cooking Program, to blanch, peel, chop, slice, and simmer a veritable bounty of mostly locally-grown berries and vegetables for delicious jams, jellies, salsas, chutneys and pickles.

Shoulder to shoulder, Emily Anderson, Connie Brown, Katie Craven, Richard



Preserves is sourcing as much locally as it can, Austin says that they are on the cusp of expanding and worries that they will have to look further a field for fresh ingredients. "We are already buying everything that is available locally," he states. Austin is seeking out growers on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. And, it doesn't stop there. Once preserves are bottled and packaged, the team works hard to get their products to customers quickly, economically, and with some value-added educational perks.

