

Teacher

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BC Teachers' Federation

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BETTER SUPPORT FOR KIDS

By Richard Hoover

The forecast for the upcoming round of teacher bargaining, despite the ratification of a new framework agreement with BCPSEA on January 26, 2013, is very much the same as it was for the last round—a lot of uncertainty, possible government interference, and an unworkable government-imposed mandate for the provincial bargaining table.

Our current two-year collective agreement was signed and ratified by a membership vote in June of 2012. It was retroactive to July 1, 2011 and expires at the end of this school year on June 30, 2013.

Despite 16 months at the bargaining table in the last round of bargaining, government legislation in the form of Bill 22 eventually ended our LRB-approved strike and would have imposed a contract with devastating concessions had we not reached an agreement in June 2012.

The current collective agreement was negotiated under the government's net-zero mandate. BCPSEA, the trustees' bargaining agency, and government came to the table with nothing to offer, demanded a wage freeze and concessions, and threatened legislation to get what they wanted if we wouldn't agree to it.

Bill 22, which imposed the government's mandate, also legislated two years of wage freezes for teachers.

Government's new mandate for this round of bargaining is the so-called "co-operative gains" mandate, which is really very much the same as the old net-zero mandate. Under co-operative gains,

government will not fund any increased costs, including salary increases, for teachers or support staff. Any salary or prep-time increases for teachers, or other improvements that have cost implications such as class size and composition provisions or guarantees of specialist teacher support for students, would have to be offset by reductions in other areas. The co-operative gains mandate requires that savings for any increases be found through "operational cost reductions, increased efficiency, service redesign, business gains, and other initiatives."

School boards have already told government that there are no such savings to be found. The BC School

Salaries of BC teachers are now among the lowest in Canada, and are 15 to 20% below the salaries of teachers in Ontario and Alberta.

Trustees Association reports that President Michael McEvoy, on behalf of the province's Boards of Education, told Minister of Education Don McRae that "there are no gains to be had from our collective balance sheets this year or next."

Salaries of BC teachers are now among the lowest in Canada, and are 15 to 20% below the salaries of teachers in Ontario and Alberta. If government legislates another two years of wage freezes for this round of bargaining, it will result in six imposed wage freezes in 11 years.

Our preparation time lags far behind teachers in other Canadian jurisdictions, and the BC student-educator ratio is so far above other provinces that it would require another 6,800 teachers just to bring it down to the Canadian average.

So, in early November of 2012, the BCTF bargaining conference at the fall Representative Assembly in Richmond approved a list of bargaining objectives for the upcoming round.

We will be seeking reasonable increases in salaries and preparation time, limits for class sizes and composition, specified minimum staffing ratios for specialist teachers, and standardization of dental plans, among other objectives.

Soon after the Bargaining Conference, BCTF and BCPSEA quietly began

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President's message



Susan Lambert

I don't understand the attack on unions. Think of the range and breadth of this attack. Everything from a barrage of pejorative characterizations of unions as old-fashioned, unthinking, lunch-bucket, top down, sloganeering, massive power structures, to a host of legislative assaults on the right to organize and bargain collectively like right to work (RTW) legislation in the USA and our own federal Bill C-377, which purports to make union finances transparent, but in fact imposes a huge burden of record keeping, red tape, and intrusions into member privacy. The legislation is meant to entangle unions in a mass of bureaucratic barbwire and fetter their activity.

Unions make the world a better place. We know there is a high correlation between high quality public education and strong teacher unions. We also know, that correlation can be broadened and is generally true of the quality of life in jurisdictions with high union density. These jurisdictions have a higher standard of living, less economic disparity and more social programs. American states with RTW laws have higher poverty rates, more accidents in the workplace, and lower wages for all workers. Unions are not anachronistic organizations who brought us the eight-hour day, maternity leave, and protections to improve workplace safety in the past. Unions are a social force for equity, access, quality of life, and sharing of wealth today.

In Canada we have higher union density than in the United States. Our social programs are more robust. Our banking system has more financial and ethical integrity. We have medicare. We have less

disparity between the rich and the poor, though that is increasing at the same time as union density in Canada is decreasing. Unions are a force for the sharing of wealth. And such a sharing of wealth is good for everyone; even businesses thrive when workers have more take-home pay to spend.

Why then do many business organizations, individual multinational corporations like Wal Mart, and now governments work so hard to diminish the labour movement? How is that conscionable?

As electors we have to consider the role of government *vis-a-vis* the union movement. As consumers too, we must be aware of actions of business and corporate leaders with respect to unions. In both our roles we should look at the actions of these leaders, question their values and moral choices and act accordingly.

Wouldn't it be nice to see government enact legislation that recognizes the beneficial role of unions? A government that adopted the responsibility to nurture union density rather than decrease it?

In our own working lives we know that strong teacher unions are highly correlated with improved working and learning conditions and student success. But we can extrapolate from our experience the cumulative effect of unionization on society. Unions are a public good.

It's about time politicians acknowledged this and built recognition of the accomplishments of unions into their political platforms during elections and while in office.

Newsmagazine in digital format

This is the second digital-only version of the newsmagazine; October 2012 was the first one.

We are interested to hear your views on this change; please send comments to newsmag@bctf.ca

We are collecting e-mail addresses for people who would like to be notified when the *Teacher* is made available for online viewing. If you haven't already sent us your e-mail address, please send it to newsmag@bctf.ca.

Readers write

Delay Kindergarten

I have been a primary teacher in the province for over 10 years. In my practice I have noticed that the students in my classes requiring support services are, for the majority, born in the fall, which means they entered Kindergarten at age 4.

I also noticed that the services given to these students are occupied mainly by students born in the fall.

Notice of AGM 2013

As required by *The Society Act*, the following formal notice of the 2013 Annual General Meeting is made to all BCTF members pursuant to By-law 8.1 by publication in this edition of *Teacher*.

The 97th Annual General Meeting of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Vancouver, BC, beginning on Saturday, March 16, 2013 and continuing to Tuesday, March 19, 2013.

Teacher



Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

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CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association

CALM Canadian Association of Labour Media

It is easy for me to question the validity of setting the date for age requirement on December 31 in this province. It has been on my mind for some time and in consideration of today's conjuncture—increasing cuts in students services from counselling to supervision—wouldn't it be more justified to push back the age of entry into Kindergarten? Wouldn't it reduce the pressure on those much needed services? If there is educational value in doing this, as well as lowering expenses for school districts, shouldn't there be changes made? Is this something we can present and justify to preschooler parents?

I would like to know what my fellow teachers, education workers, and citizens think of the subject. Please, send your comments to entryagekinder@gmail.com

Vicky Grenier
Mission

Put Teacher back in print

I am wondering about the ad that I placed in the newsletter this fall for three winter escapes in Mexico, Palm Springs, and on Gabriola Island. I had missed the deadline for the September issue and it wound up in the October issue, which was online only. If I had known that issue was going to be online I would have waited. We received not one response to our ad which is very strange.

This is compared to our response last year when we received many calls and responses. My point is that people respond when they have the paper copy in front of them compared to having to look at the classified ads online.

I am wondering if this can be run again as I feel the online version is not what we expected and is not as effective.

Thank you.

Cynthia Chelsom
Gabriola Island

Forget or fix

Regarding Larry Kuehn's "Beyond BCeSIS, but not soon" report, (Nov./Dec. 2012 *Teacher*), it may surprise you to learn that I counted over 60 keystrokes/button pushes to get BCeSIS working from a switched off computer. If the user screwed up one of those keystrokes, one had to start over. Perhaps I had too much time on my hands.

Why doesn't the education ministry just fix or update that rubbish program instead of contemplating another disaster? Come to think of it, why don't they hire some students to do the job? They couldn't do any worse than the ministry.

For a bottle of wine, I'm happy to provide some more practical ideas for the computer boffins.

Andrew Beddoes
(retired) Vancouver

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Looking back

70 years ago

February 1943—It has been said by our highest military authorities that the most serious defect among young Canadians enlisted in the armed forces is their lack of social responsibility. This criticism has, of course, been worded in many ways. Reference has been made to their dislike of regulation, to their casual treatment of leave, to their desire for special privilege. It is not suggested that these young men and women are inferior in mentality or physique to any others in the world. It is simply pointed out that they are victims of a misdirected education, of an education that has cultivated their individualism at the expense of their social consciousness and social duty. — *The BC Teacher*

50 years ago

January 1963—Teachers are getting to be a mite testy. In the vernacular, they are getting fed up with being told not only what to teach and how to teach it, but also how they can teach more students more knowledge better and in less time. They are sick and tired of admonitions to be concerned about individual differences, when their timetables are laden heavily

with different courses, when their noon hours and after school time are plugged with extra duty and responsibility and when endless tocsins are sounded calling meetings for this or for that. They mutter darkly about administration which loads them with multi-grade classes and yet unctuously assures parents that students will do as well as those in single graded classrooms. — *The BC Teacher*

30 years ago

Jan./Feb. 1983—More than a decade has passed since the federal government announced a multicultural program for Canada. Born out of the necessity of a hard-pressed government to win the "ethnic vote," multiculturalism had a slow and controversial start. Now it has become Canada's fastest growing industry. Fuelled by untold millions of tax dollars, multiculturalism has provided the excuse for a plethora of conferences, workshops, fold fests, committees, societies, publications, and ethno-cultural directories. The multicultural phenomenon has spawned a new sub-species, which has penetrated many of our cherished institutions. Graced with titles like co-ordinator, consultant and organizer, these

instant "experts" in good neighbourliness are drawn from the ranks of bureaucrats, academics, school teachers, organized labour, and ethnic groups. — *The BC Teacher*

10 years ago

Jan./Feb. 2003—In the wake of an imposed contract, stripped learning and working conditions, and an attack on teachers' professional influence, many members have discovered that schools don't feel as safe as they used to. Although the majority of administrative officers do their job in as benign a way as the position allows, there has been an increase in the number of "rogue AOs" who have attempted to intimidate teachers, forgetting that they are still party to a collective agreement with rules about due process for and respectful treatment of employees. In many cases, they are supported by district personnel who attempt to silence teachers' voices and, in some cases, by school boards that do not make good personnel relations their business. — *Teacher Newsmagazine*

Chris Bocking
Keating Elementary School, Saanich

Fair deal continued...

discussions about the upcoming round of negotiations. These discussions were productive, and resulted in a framework agreement the parties planned on ratifying in January 2013.

But, to complicate matters further, on January 24, 2013, government released to the press a "white paper" outlining a process for teacher bargaining and a 10-year deal that would see issues such as class size and composition shuffled off to a policy committee and funded from a new Priority Education Investment Fund that would contain \$0 for the first year,

While there is uncertainty around the government's mandate and what the provincial election may bring, the Federation, at both the provincial and local levels, will be seeking a fair deal for teachers, and better support for kids.

\$0 for the second year and only \$100 million for the third year. Teacher compensation, including salary increases and improved benefits, would be determined by average amounts negotiated by other government civil servants, as determined by government. And our right to withhold services would be restricted to strikes that would have to begin at the opening of school in September. Partial strikes, instruction-only campaigns, withdrawals from extracurricular activities, or work-to-rule activities would not be allowed.

The government's timing with this announcement was very curious, given that the BCTF and BCPSEA had a positive framework agreement that was to be ratified only a few days later. In fact, the framework was ultimately ratified by the BCTF Representative Assembly and the BCPSEA board on January 26, 2013—a significant and positive step.

The framework with BCPSEA provides for the development of a common database for the provincial bargaining table that would include agreed-upon figures for teacher compensation comparisons, working conditions and more.

As well, the framework includes a new split of issues for provincial and local bargaining. The new split of issues will see many relationship issues such as layoff and recall, posting and filling vacant positions, transfers, and offers of appointment returned to local bargaining tables so that local solutions to meet local needs can be negotiated between the local parties.

The new split of issues takes effect immediately for this round of bargaining. Locals and school districts now have the opportunity to negotiate improvements to many provisions that have not been updated in over 20 years. This goes a long way in resolving a major concern that has lingered since the current provincial bargaining model was imposed through legislation in 1994.

The framework provides for provincial bargaining to commence on February 4, 2013, with proposals exchanged no later than March 1, 2013. Locals will decide when they open local bargaining tables, but it must be no later than March 1, 2013.

Additionally, the framework calls for the appointment of a facilitator at the commencement of provincial bargaining. Should there be no agreement by the expiry of the collective agreement on June 30, 2013, the facilitator will issue a report outlining the matters resolved at the table, the outstanding issues, the positions of the parties on the issues and a suggested process for continued negotiations.

By mutual agreement the facilitator can be retained beyond June 30, 2013.

So, our current collective agreement expires on June 30, 2013, and bargaining begins the first week of February. While there is uncertainty around the government's mandate and what the provincial election may bring, the Federation, at both the provincial and local levels, will be seeking a fair deal for teachers, and better support for kids.

For further information including details of the framework agreement with BCPSEA and the government's white paper on teacher bargaining, go to the BCTF member portal at www.bctf.ca and sign in.

*Richard Hoover
director
BCTF Field Services Division*

Readers write continued...

Celiac disease in teachers too

Congratulations on the excellent informative article about celiac disease (CD) and school-aged children on the back page of the Nov/Dec 2012 issue of *Teacher*. However, it is unfortunate that the article does not also address the issue of CD amongst school teachers and other school staff. The fact is CD is not just a disease of childhood. The average age of diagnosis is in the 5th decade of life.

CD is also a genetic condition. Two years ago the diagnosis of the disease in my then 2-year-old grandson led to my own diagnosis at age 63 even though I had no outward signs of the disease. This is quite typical and is known as "silent" CD. The only cure for CD is a lifelong gluten-free diet.

Here are some tips for consideration if a staff member at your school has CD:

1. Include gluten-free (GF) foods at staff meetings/staff parties. This includes reading labels to ensure that condiments such as mayonnaise, soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, etc. are really GF. Rice crackers, corn tortillas, quinoa/rice pasta are safe alternatives to regular wheat breads/crackers/pasta.

2. If staff get-togethers include meals at a hotel or restaurant, call ahead to let the cook know that at least one person attending has CD. Ask if a GF menu is available or if a GF meal can easily be prepared.

3. Avoid cross-contamination at pot-luck staff meals. Cut bread slices on a separate surface away from GF foods. Put all the GF foods together on a separate table. Make sure all foods have individual serving utensils. Allow staff members with CD to fill their plates first.

4. And lastly, don't forget to include GF items in earthquake safety kits in the school.

*Carolyn Prellwitz
(retired) Cowichan*



Inequality is a problem for Canada too

By Ed Broadbent

I don't know whether it's smugness or indifference, but we Canadians can be a self-deluding lot. Growing inequality, portrayed recently in *The Economist* as a global scourge, when viewed from Canada, seems to be a problem only for others.

After all, it was other countries' banks that crashed in 2008. It's in southern Europe that tens of thousands are taking to the streets. And it was in France and the United States that recent elections were fought over the fact that those who created the mess, the top 1%, are still getting big bonuses and low tax rates.

...the top 1% of taxpayers now have an effective overall tax rate that's not only lower than that of the middle class but even lower than that of the bottom 10%.

Well, guess what? Canada is not doing better. From 1982 until 2004, almost all growth in family income went to the top 20%, with much of that going to the top 1%, while the bottom 60% saw no growth at all. The increase in inequality in Canada since the mid-1990s has been the fourth highest in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

But does this matter? Yes, the evidence is in, and the conclusion is clear: Inequality does matter. In terms of social outcomes, more equal societies do better for everyone, not just for the poor, in almost every respect: health outcomes, life expectancy, level of trust in society, equality of opportunity, and upward social mobility. A recent study showed that if Americans want to

experience the American Dream of upward mobility, they should pack up and move to Sweden. They would have to leave the most unequal democracy and move to the most equal.

Contrary to the mythology propagated by so many, the actual degree of inequality in advanced democracies has little to do with the so-called forces of globalization or shifts related to technological change. It's largely the result of government action or inaction. Globalization affects all countries. But, from the mid-1970s, the share of income of the top 1% in Canada, the USA, and Britain rose rapidly, while there was little change in France, Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands. As recently highlighted by the World Bank, Brazil and other Latin American countries have become significantly more equal over the past decade.

Once again, the evidence is clear: Whether countries become more or less equal depends largely on government policies. Government can reduce or exacerbate the market trends producing inequality.

We should also lay to rest another myth: Contrary to the "trickle down" economics so dear to Mitt Romney, if we compare the stability and growth of rich country economies, there's no evidence that preserving greater equality comes at the price of economic success.

Having lost his election, Romney could comfortably move to Canada. Because of changes in tax policy that started in the 1990s, the top 1% of taxpayers now have an effective overall tax rate that's not only lower than that of the middle class but even lower than that of the bottom 10%. Between 1990 and 2005, their tax rate dropped by four percentage points, while that of the bottom 10% actually increased.

Canada's equalizing social programs remain underfunded, and the reason is clear. The tax share of our GDP has dropped to 31%, three points below the OECD average. That's billions of dollars in lost revenue.

In the November 6 US election, a solid majority in California—home of America's original anti-tax movement—voted to increase taxes to save what was once the world's best public education system. Recent opinion surveys suggest Americans in general have begun to move in this direction.

Canadians have certainly indicated a desire for change... a majority of Canadians said severe inequality is harmful to our democracy, and 64% said they were willing to pay slightly more taxes to do something about it.

Canadians have certainly indicated a desire for change. In a comprehensive poll in April, done by Environics for the Broadbent Institute, a majority of Canadians said severe inequality is harmful to our democracy, and 64% said they were willing to pay slightly more taxes to do something about it. No fewer than 58% of Conservative voters took this position.

It's time we quit deluding ourselves. Serious inequality exists in Canada, but it's not inevitable. If we want more equality and the strong universal social programs that help make it possible, we need to begin a serious debate about why we're falling behind so many other OECD countries. We need also to understand that, among other changes in government policy, tax reform is a key part of the solution.

Ed Broadbent is chair of the Ottawa-based Broadbent Institute, which recently issued the report "Towards a More Equal Canada" www.broadbentinstitute.ca

Reprinted with permission:
Ed Broadbent, *The Globe and Mail*,
Nov. 28, 2012



Teachers attend the BCFed convention

My impressions of the BCFed 2012

By Carol Topalian

In a room of 1,500 people, I'm impressed that the speeches and discussion from the floor are both passionate and diverse, reflecting a membership that embraces all British Columbians, and citizens from many countries.

Outside the auditorium, it's easy to strike up conversations with a local longshoreman or a health worker from Kamloops.

This year, challengers to Jim Sinclair and Irene Lanzinger launched a campaign that kept people on their toes all week. I was drafted into service to assist with the vote, since a sergeant-at-arms had to leave early, so I had a unique opportunity to meet some of the volunteers who make things run so smoothly.

Teachers, both from the BCTF and the union representing post-secondary educators, spent a good amount of time at the mics, so our concerns were well-served. Other unions, who stood with us at the legislature during job action, have learned from our recent struggles. The tactics used by government are some of what we share in common, yet they are facing unique challenges of their own.

One major battle is that regarding temporary foreign workers.

Longshoreman watch as temporary workers on a floating barge get paid \$400/week to do a job that has been done by BC workers until now.

Temporary foreign workers at a franchise of BC donut shops have their passports held; they're charged double in rent, and crammed in tiny quarters. Our current federal and provincial governments have made this sorry state of affairs the new normal.

Speaking of government, but of the positive kind, it was great to hear Mayor Corrigan, Adrian Dix, and Thomas Mulcair. On point, at times humorous, they were strongly focused on positive change.

Carol Topalian

Adult education teacher, Burnaby

Proud to belong to the BCFed

By Jane-Ann Kay

When I arrived back at my school after attending this year's BC Federation of Labour Convention, a meeting of BC's unions from all different sectors, someone asked me if I thought it was a good idea for teachers to be associated that closely with jobs in the trades. This person wondered why we wouldn't want to be associated more with the traditional professionals like doctors, accountants, or lawyers rather than with the hands-on jobs associated with members of the BC Fed. Think of the public perception! At the time, I didn't have a fantastic answer other than I thought it important that unions stick together and that I didn't think that belonging to the BC Fed negatively affected the "public perception" of teachers as professionals.

In hindsight, I was rather annoyed by this person's comments. There are thousands of skilled professionals—experts in their field—who belong to the BC Fed, from highly skilled steelworkers to tugboat captains, to firefighters, to post-secondary educators, to members of the coast guard, to nurses. I am very proud to be a member of my union, the BCTF, and equally proud to be affiliated with the BC Federation of Labour.

Unions fight for fair pay, safe working conditions and they increase the quality of life for

people in general. Unions brought us the weekend, parental leave, and countless other benefits like extended health benefits and pension plans that we wouldn't otherwise have. Some say that unions are not needed anymore but many of us know that they are necessary now more than ever in this era of corporate greed and environmental and economic uncertainty. I mention the environment because the BC Fed has a Green Jobs Plan to help guide BC in creating a sustainable future.

This year's BC Federation of Labour Convention in downtown Vancouver was an inspiring event. Even with the vigorous debates around our policies, I felt that we were united when we talked about the challenges that we all face in the future, whether it be related to unsafe working conditions, politics, or the environment. Throughout the convention we heard amazing speakers from journalist and social critic, Linda McQuaig, to Tracey Pham, daughter of a severely injured mushroom farm worker and there was a feeling of unity in the knowledge that we will continue to fight for our rights. So, in hindsight, I should have told this person who questioned the BCTF's affiliation with the BC Fed that belonging to such an organization, which fights for what is fair and just not only for union members but for all British Columbians, serves to elevate our status as professionals. This is why I am proud to be a member of the BC Federation of Labour.

Jane-Ann Kay

*MacCorkindale Elementary School,
Vancouver*

Bring labour history into BC classrooms

"These were the reasons..." is a new DVD keeping alive the voices of trade unionists who built the labour movement and the economy of BC. The 28-minutes DVD is divided into sections so they can be viewed as stand-alone vignettes as discussion starters or as a whole.

The title of the film is based on a quote from Al Parkin, a lumberworker: "These were the reasons the union became such a vital issue... Before, they were treated like damn cattle. After, a better life began to appear."

Photos from archives and news video provide the visual element of the DVD, coupled with clips from audio interviews carried out decades ago with union activists.

Copies of the DVD are available to teachers from the BCTF at no cost. Send an e-mail to afield@bctf.ca with an address and an indication of where you are teaching.

The History Department at SFU is offering a course called "Canadian Labour and Working Class History for

"These were the reasons..."
 - stories of union organizing in British Columbia

"This film goes a step further... connecting history with issues of today."
 audience comment, 2012 World Community Film Festival

A film by: **Howie Smith**
 Produced by: **BC Overtime**

28 MIN. DVD
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For copies of this dvd, please contact:
www.bcovertime.com

Stories of union organizing in British Columbia



Teachers." The course will give teachers an overview of Canadian labour history.

Participants will design and workshop teaching units for courses in social studies and other subjects. For more information, go to www.sfu.ca/history/history327.html.

A teaching resource is already available on the BCTF website called "Youth, Unions, and You: A Secondary Teachers' Guide to Labour Studies for B.C. Schools." It can be found at bit.ly/UIRMWu.



NOMINATE GREATNESS.

"This award is a testament to the quality staff at Britannia Elementary School, as well as the inspirational students who I have the privilege of working with every day."

Justin Borsato, Grade 7 teacher and winner of the Alumni Teacher Award in 2012

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BC Education Plan

"In making change, you don't have to boil the ocean."

By James Duthie

David Komljenovic and Tara Ehrcke did a good job in the Nov./Dec. *Teacher* magazine of exposing the corporate agenda behind the BC Education Plan. This agenda is a major cause of concern, but not the only one. Other worrying aspects of the plan are: the questionable generalizations about the world of the 21st century, the wholesale denigration of current teaching practices, the discrediting of the act of teaching and the dismissal of the need for a body of fundamental knowledge. Above all, there is the reckless haste with which these changes are to be undertaken.

Generalizations

Both the BC Education Plan and the Premier's Technology Council document, "A Vision for 21st Century Education" make sweeping generalizations about how different the 21st century is going to be, and how the current system cannot prepare students for it. It's true that technology is changing and that the amount of information available is increasing exponentially, but I would suggest that that is all the more reason to emphasize the fundamentals—the ability to focus, the ability to ask the appropriate questions, the ability to think clearly, to have a well-stocked mind, a sense of civic

duty, empathy, and communication skills. And I would suggest that these fundamentals are not best taught by teaching some basic skills, then setting

Increased opportunity to roam in "the cloud" is not a substitute for a good education.

students loose on a "personalized" program enabled by technology. Public education has always been about communicating society's core values and knowledge to the young, so it necessarily has had an element of conformity, which is not a bad thing. Increased opportunity to roam in "the cloud" is not a substitute for a good education.

Proposed reforms denigrate current practice

This raises the second point, that the proposed reforms consistently denigrate current teaching practice. The Education Plan itself says, "teachers will be empowered to shift from being the primary source of content to focus on helping students learn how to learn," and the Premier's Technology Council talks about changing the role "from teacher as lecturer to teacher as guide." Even

teachers themselves seem to share this disparaging attitude. Recently, Dover Bay Secondary School in Nanaimo produced a video for the "Flip Your Classroom" competition to win money for technology, in which the teacher was portrayed as a boring buffoon. With respect, these portrayals are a gross distortion of what goes on in classrooms. Most teachers I know go to great lengths not merely to lecture, but to give students a wide variety of learning activities designed to have them engage with the content and with each other while strengthening their skills and exploring issues. Sound educational policy cannot be based upon caricatures, but that is what is happening here. Why teachers are not rising up in protest against this misrepresentation of what they do is beyond me.

Discrediting the act of teaching

The Education Plan, like so many reform documents before it, also discredits the actual act of teaching, implying that only student-chosen "personalized" learning is of value. How often have we heard the old canard that teachers should cease to be the "sage on the stage" and become the "guide on the side"? This is simply a false dichotomy; there is a place in the teaching/learning process for both roles, and good teachers know when and how to shift from the one to the other. But the teaching component is essential before students are ready to launch into self-directed study. Psychologically, everyone needs a period of dependency on their teacher before they can undertake a task. Furthermore, the education plan completely overlooks the chemistry that takes place between student and teacher in the classroom. Whatever the reformers may say about current teaching practice, there is a magic in good teaching which,



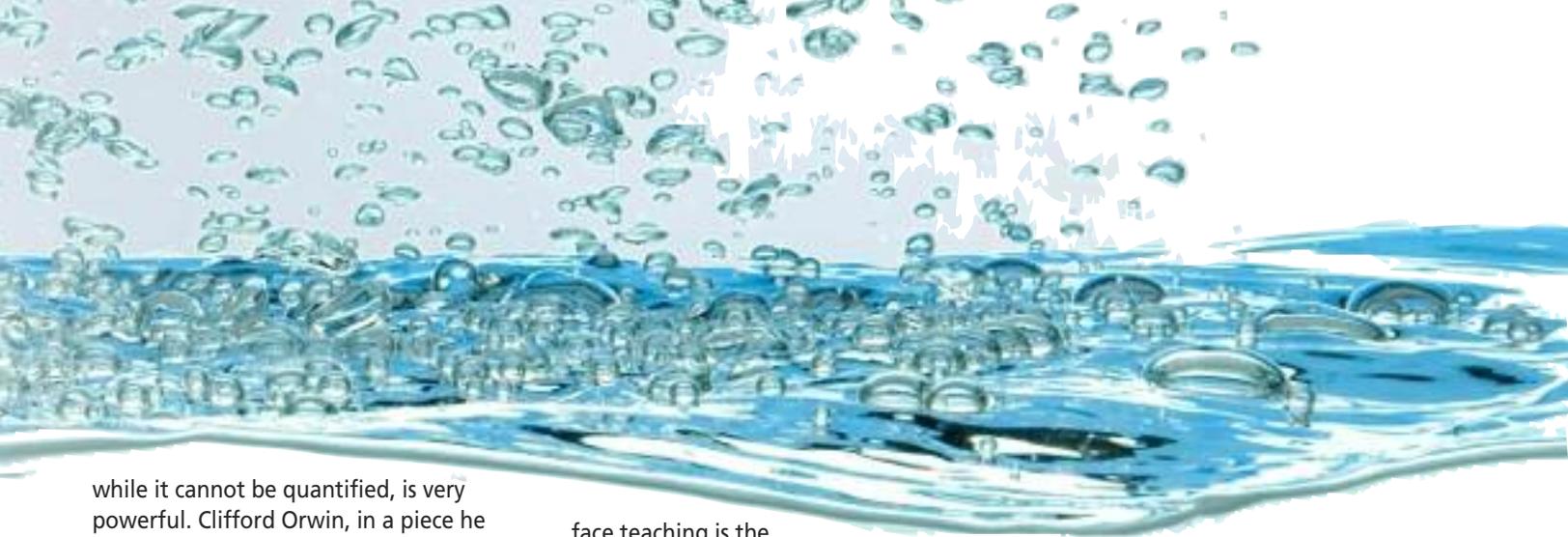
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~ Science World ~



while it cannot be quantified, is very powerful. Clifford Orwin, in a piece he wrote for the *Globe and Mail* called "Don't Teach Until You Can See the Whites of Their Eyes," explained the importance of the human interaction between teacher and student. In a brilliant analogy he compared the way a good teacher teaches to jazz improvisation, with the teacher responding in the moment to the feel and the feedback of the lesson to make each one a unique learning experience. You can't duplicate that in online learning. The difference between online and face-to-

If the proposed reforms go ahead, the opportunity for the young to develop a coherent body of knowledge will be much diminished.

but then shifts its focus to learning how to learn, personalization, flexibility, parental involvement, and so on. Fine talk, but how does it square with the idea that there are certain things that young people need to know if they are to become functional members of society? As a retired history and socials teacher, I maintain that knowledge of history, and the critical analysis of historical truth claims, are essential for any understanding of how the world is as it is, and what options are available to us in the present situation. There is also a strong case that the young should have exposure to the canon of literature, that they should understand our democratic system, and so on; in other words, they should have a well-stocked mind. This need is not rendered obsolete by the availability of information in "the cloud." Knowledge only exists in a human mind, not in a databank, and until it is transferred from that databank to the

face teaching is the difference between recorded and live performance; there's no comparison. Nor is it fair to suggest that such teaching never happens; it does. Not every lesson is masterful, but many more of them are, than the pundits behind the BC Education Plan would suggest. They should visit a large number of classrooms to find out what really goes on before making free with their stereotypes.

Some of the reformers actually give themselves away by acknowledging the power of face-to-face teaching. Rod Allen, BC superintendent of student achievement, is quoted in *The Tyee*, October 5, 2012, as saying:

"It will be interesting for people to learn from us and we learn from them, *but it's what happens when you're in the room together actively discussing and thinking about those issues that, to me, is the real magic.*" (my italics).

Larry Rosenstock, principal (sorry, chief executive officer) of High-Tech High in San Diego, one of the poster schools of the reform movement, said in the video "Project-based Learning at High-Tech High" that rigour consists of,

"...being in the company of a passionate adult who is rigorously pursuing inquiry in the area of their subject matter and inviting students along as peers in that adult discourse."

Notice the language; "in the room together...real magic," and "in the company of a passionate adult"—both good descriptions of the power of face-to-face teaching. Both men would probably admit that electronic interaction is no substitute for live teaching.

Quite apart from the human interaction involved in teaching there is the question of content. BCEP does talk about staying strong on the basics, at a very basic level,

mind and categorized, internalized, reflected upon, and evaluated, it might as well not exist. If the proposed reforms go ahead, the opportunity for the young to

The worst aspect of the current reform drive is the rapidity with which its supporters want to ditch traditional education.

develop a coherent body of knowledge will be much diminished. If a child wants to pursue her or his passion of the moment, or if a parent intervenes to say that their child should study this but not that, and education is personalized (read splintered and fragmented) then the possibility of a core curriculum is gone.

Moving ahead with reckless haste

The worst aspect of the current reform drive is the rapidity with which its supporters want to ditch traditional education. Their proposals may have some merit, but changing fundamental attitudes and methods is a slow, incremental business, starting with improved training, followed by implementation in pilot schools where new methods can be tried out, discarded, or refined. In a report on Canada's healthcare system, "Strengthening Health Systems Through Innovation," co-author Anne Snowden said that, in making change, "You don't have to boil the ocean." Policymakers in BC's Ministry of Education would do well to heed her advice.

*James Duthie
retired teacher, Nanaimo*

Young and old, together

**By Mae Burrows
and Donald Gutstein**

Whatever the future of the Occupy movement may be, it provided us with the clarity to see the profound inequality in our society and gave inequality a name: the 1% versus the 99%. Occupy also provided the opportunity for young and old to stand together in the fight against inequality. People of all ages could be found in Occupy camps and demonstrations.

The prospect of this looming solidarity led the 1% to attempt to fracture it by reframing inequality, not as something that exists between rich and poor, but between older and younger generations.

When deregulation and greed led to the market collapse of 2008 and forced governments to spend massively to prevent total economic meltdown, corporate and political elites set out to shift the blame for the near collapse from the actions of the 1%, which caused it, to the Boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964), which had little to do with it.

The idea was floated that people nearing retirement age skimmed off more than their fair share of wealth, leaving just scraps, and mountains of debt for those under 45. They came up with a new name for the declining fortunes of younger members of society: "intergenerational theft."

We need to prevent this divisive framework from sticking. Unions, and particularly the union-based young workers' movement, have a crucial role to play in the fight for a more equal society. Young and older workers need to work together to put the blame squarely on the shoulders of those who caused the crisis: the banks. Joe Brewer, director of Seattle-based Cognitive Policy Works, warns Americans and Canadians alike to not let "the real culprits—the reckless bankers and their enablers who have infiltrated our government[s]—shift blame" away from them.

Blaming boomers for our economic problems started in the USA, where Tea Party favourite Michelle Malkin called President Obama's 2009 stimulus package "The Generational Theft Act," which, she

claimed, was "mortgaging our children's future for the sake of present political crisis management." This clever diversion away from the 1% was picked up by senior Republican officials such as House Republican leader John Boehner, Arizona Senator John McCain, and McCain's 2008 vice-presidential running mate Sarah Palin, who spoke in 2010 to a sold-out Calgary audience about "immoral generational theft." "Generational theft" is also being used in Canada by the Right. It appeared first in Quebec, where avowed libertarian, *Sun* newspaper columnist and co-founder of the Quebec Freedom Network Eric Duhaime published a book on this subject. In a luncheon speech hosted by the right-wing Fraser Institute in Montreal, Duhaime approached Malkin-level rhetoric when he labelled Quebec's "irresponsible and insatiable spending" an "intergenerational holdup."

But it's in BC where the "generational conflict" framework is having its greatest Canadian impact. In September 2011, Paul Kershaw, an associate professor in UBC's College for Interdisciplinary Studies, was given a regular column in the *Vancouver Sun* by editorial page editor and former Fraser Institute staffer Fazil Mihlar, to "start a public dialogue about how we can distribute/invest tax dollars in a more equitable and efficient manner." This is necessary, Mihlar explained, "because boomers are hogging a lot of public dollars with potentially disastrous consequences for society," and particularly for young families with children, who "are being deprived of a chance at a good life."

Many in the labour movement like Kershaw for his progressive views on a national childcare strategy and more generous federally funded parental leave. But, in his columns, boomers versus young families with children replaced Occupy's framework of the 99% versus the 1%. Certainly, many young people are having a tough time of it—unable to get good jobs, or any jobs, saddled with a mountain of post-secondary education debt, frozen out of the housing market. But these problems have little to do with the alleged activity or neglect of boomers. Their roots lie in the 1970s, when the income gap between the rich and the rest was at its lowest level

in a century, thanks to a vibrant union movement, comprehensive unemployment insurance and social welfare, a progressive tax system, medicare, environmental regulation, government enterprise, and inexpensive post-secondary education.

That's when the business elite decided to end its three-decade-long truce with labour, reassert its control over the economy and society, and restore its historical grasp on income and wealth as the top 1%. And that's what it set out to accomplish over the next 30 years.

The agenda is well-known: crush union power, cut regulation and taxation (at least for the rich), reduce government's role in the economy, cut social spending, impose free-trade deals, move what once were good-paying industrial jobs to low-wage regions or countries, replace workers with computer-driven machines, and offload costs onto the environment.

To recognize what happened is to understand what needs to be done. Unions are in the eye of the storm. The rise in wage inequality has been directly linked to the decline in unionization in the UK, the USA, and in Canada.

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As a result, the middle class is shrinking, the rich are getting richer (the 1% now commands 14% of income compared to 8% in the late 1970s) and the gap between rich and poor is turning into a chasm. One percenters in Canada earn at least an average of \$450,000. For the population as a whole, in contrast, the average income is \$36,000. Unions have their work cut out for them. They have long had to deal with their own forms of generational strife in the form of two-tier wage systems. Employers use these to save money, of course, but they are also designed to drive a wedge through union memberships and ultimately weaken the union movement.

Some employers under federal jurisdiction, such as Air Canada and Canada Post, have been pushing hard for two-tier systems. In the auto industry, while the United Auto Workers in the USA agreed to a two-tier system with the companies, the Canadian Auto Workers avoided a lower-wage structure by, instead, agreeing to lengthen the amount of time it takes workers to reach the top of the scale.

Organized labour must continue to build its role in the worlds of work, politics, and the community, and it can only do this if younger and older workers (instead of fighting among themselves) join together to fight the common enemy—corporate power and complicit governments. There are many stories of resistance.

There's little generational conflict in Canadian Auto Workers' Local 3000, which represents generally low-wage workers in BC's janitorial, security, hospitality, and cleaning industries. Local president Jean Van Vliet says, "The world looks the same to 20- and 60-year-old security guards, cooks, and janitors, or to room attendants who have worked the same job for 20 years." Boomers in her local "are barely making ends meet, certainly haven't paid off a mortgage, and just can't afford to retire."

Adrian Burnett, a CAW Local 3000 youth activist, works for Securitas, a Swedish-based global security company. He used to think that boomers would retire at an appropriate age and younger workers would get their jobs. But now he sees that, with the increased cost of living, an uncertain economy, and fears about pension security, boomers are keeping their jobs longer. He sees their pain.

In BC, the average hourly rate for security guards is \$12.60. (In Ontario, the rate ranges from \$14.40 in Toronto to \$12.90 in London.) The average annual salary in the BC security industry ranges from \$20,000 to \$30,000, with few benefits. Some Securitas employees earn less.

Contrast that wage with the salary earned by Securitas president and CEO Alf Goransson, who took home \$1.7 million (in Canadian dollars) in 2011, plus a pension benefit of \$500,000. Goransson earns 110 times as much as his average BC employee.

Burnett has been working with other union activists on a campaign to repeal BC's minimum age law—that's age, not wage. This law allows 12- to 14-year-old

children to work up to 20 hours a week during the school year and up to four hours on a school day based solely on parental consent. The campaign wants the Ministry of Labour to take back its oversight responsibilities and ensure that the employment is appropriate and safe for a child, and issue a permit only in the cases where this is so.

The average annual salary in the BC security industry ranges from \$20,000 to \$30,000, with few benefits. Contrast that wage with the salary earned by Securitas president and CEO Alf Goransson, who took home \$1.7 million (in Canadian dollars) in 2011, plus a pension benefit of \$500,000.

As often happens at union halls, there are always opportunities for workers of diverse ages and from different job sectors to meet. In this case, the union local's youth committee was meeting at the same time as a retirees' group, and youth activists recruited retirees to discuss minimum-age issues, and to volunteer in the campaign by staffing the phones and participating in other essential activities.

Union activists of all ages work together on bargaining issues and on a variety of campaigns, such as elections, supporting

women's transition houses, opposing government cutbacks, fighting for better health care, and resisting government policies like MSP (Medical Services Plan) payments. (Only Alberta and British Columbia require individuals and families to pay premiums to be eligible for medicare.) They're also actively opposing, together, the government's migrant worker program, while working to protect migrant workers.

Vancouver and District Labour Council president Joey Hartman notes that younger and older workers are being drawn back together after a separation of nearly 15 years. "Young workers are now interested in what older workers know and do," she says. "And they are the ones who give me hope and energy. There was a time when I thought that young workers just wanted us to move out of the way, but now I see that there is a real desire for intergenerational partnerships."

Together, let's keep our focus on the inequities created by the 1%. Send in your stories of intergenerational partnerships to *Our Times*.

Mae Burrows, long-time environmental and social justice activist, and her partner Donald Gutstein, adjunct professor School of Communications Simon Fraser University

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Promoting the mental health of children and youth in BC

By Diana Mogensen

Given that children and youth spend more than six hours daily and over 180 days a year in school, the educational context provides key opportunities for delivering activities and comprehensive initiatives related to positive mental health. As children move into their early and later teen years, schools may play an even greater role than the home context in influencing youth, given the powerful influence that teacher support and peer networks have within the education settings.

(Stewart, 2008; Stewart et al, 2004)

There is increasing awareness of the importance of school and our students' connection to it in promoting good mental health. According to Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc of the McCreary Center, national and international research has established this as a fact.

In a recent interview with me, Saewyc stated; "That next to functioning healthy families, schools are the second most important protective factor in securing the mental health of children and youth." Put in this context it is very clear that the role of teachers is invaluable in promoting the mental health of their students.

The McCreary Centre Society is a non-government not-for-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, education, and community-based projects.

According to their research, youth in BC are feeling better about the state of their mental well-being since data was last collected about five years ago by Saewyc and her colleagues at the McCreary Center, reported in "Making the Right Connections," published in 2011.

"Most youth in British Columbia report positive mental health and low rates of mental health challenges. They not only have high self-esteem, educational aspirations for the future, and rate their health as good or excellent, but also have not self-harmed or had suicidal thoughts

or attempts in the past year. Youth report lower rates of considering and attempting suicide compared to their peers five years previously..."

Saewyc, in part attributes this to the fact that teachers intuitively and consciously promote school connectedness in their practice on a daily basis. However, it is still important to note that many youth do experience mental or emotional health issues (in fact, a full 56%). Most at risk are youth who self-identify as gay or bisexual, youth living in poverty, or those who have unstable lives at home, those who have been sexually or physically abused and those living with a chronic illness.

According to Saewyc and her team there are six main strategies to promote school connectedness.

1. Establishing decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement, academic achievement, and staff empowerment. An example includes giving teachers and principals appropriate decision making over how time, personnel, and money are used at the local level.
2. Provide educational opportunities to enable families to be actively involved with their child's academic and school life.
3. Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school. Using mindfulness techniques in classrooms, to bring awareness to students in this realm, is a growing trend among teachers in BC.
4. Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive classroom environment.
5. Professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of their students. This is strongly in evidence in the PSA conferences like LATA, SEA, and the counselors conferences all offer workshops on mental health topics aimed at teachers.

6. Create open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, student, families, and communities in order to foster trust and caring. It is important that we demonstrate this to our students in our own relationships within schools.

Saewyc and The McCreary Center have worked together with BC teachers Promoting Mental Health in Schools to present workshops for teachers across BC. Participants at recent PSA conferences were able to share their practice in an informal exchange. Dr. Saewyc is scheduled to present at the Alternate Educators' Conference in Vancouver in February 14-15, 2013. (Check the PD Calendar for details). Last month, Saewyc presented to about 40 teachers in training at SFU, who were appreciative for the opportunity to hear about this research from one of the primary researchers in North America on the topic of "School Connectedness."

If you are interested in finding out more about the work done by the McCreary Center, visit their website at www.mcs.bc.ca. You will find fact sheets and reports related to Youth Mental Health.

For information on additional topics related to Child and Youth Mental Health, contact either Diana Mogensen or Lily Yiu, co-chairs of BC Teachers Promoting Mental Health in School, a chapter of LATA.

The chapter meets regularly to disseminate information on Child and Youth Mental Health by organizing presentations directed toward practicing teachers. To date, presentations include Eating Disorders, Self-Regulation for Teachers, School Connectedness, Mindfulness in the Classroom, and The Impact of Child/Youth Exploitation on Mental Health. Your participation and involvement is welcomed. Contact: dmogensen@cw.bc.ca or lyiu@cw.bc.ca for inclusion on our e-mail list serves.

www.mcs.bc.ca

New teacher mentoring project

By Alison Davies

Mentoring has a long and prodigious history within education, stretching back to the original mentor who accompanied Odysseus' son, Telemachus, on his journey as told in Homer's epic. Mentor as guide provides the archetype for the informal and practical ways experienced teachers accompany and help new teachers as they move into the profession. Newer teachers need the help of other's experience to build confidence, understanding, and to translate their vision and ideals into effective practice. Mentoring programs have multiplied throughout BC and Canada within the last 15 years as an attempt to create more structured processes and supports for new teacher induction. The interest in mentorship programs is also reflected in the growing body of current international research, which confirms how mentoring can improve teaching effectiveness, teacher retention, and student achievement.

Discovering the satisfaction and empowerment of offering professional support to new colleagues is a welcome benefit many of the new mentors have expressed.

A grant from the Ministry of Education was approved in spring 2012 to support a joint BCTF/UBC pilot project aimed at developing mentoring programs in BC school districts that currently do not have structured mentoring programs in place. The proposal was submitted as a three-year project, beginning with three districts for the first year, and expanding from what is learned as the project grows. Funds were granted for the first year, and I was hired as co-ordinator on a one-year contract with the BCTF to oversee the project. As co-ordinator, I report to an advisory committee, including members from UBC, BCSSA (superintendents) as well as members of the BCTF.

In the spring 2012, the BCTF initiated a survey to better describe mentoring programs currently active in districts across British Columbia. Of the 60 school districts in the province, 29 reported having formal mentoring support for their teachers, and

21 of those programs have been functioning for five years or more. While there is substantial history of experience and practice in mentoring work within many districts/locals within BC, districts have struggled to sustain their programs through budget cutbacks, shifting demographics, and changes within district and local leadership. Many other districts/locals are seeking ways to initiate a mentoring program to help retain teachers and provide essential support for the transition into the practice of the profession. The New Teacher Mentoring Project offers a timely response at a critical time as teaching professionals recognize the significance of mentoring to the continuity of personal professional growth and to building a culture of collaboration and collegiality within and across schools. There is a growing consensus of interest among all education providers calling for a more integrated, and sustained system of support for the induction of teachers in their early years. The vision of the project is to place teachers mentoring teachers at the heart of the induction process, respecting the wealth of teacher knowledge and the capacity of teacher leadership.

Proposals came from 20 school districts across BC to participate in the first year of the project, prepared jointly with local teacher associations. The three districts—Haida Gwaii, Kootenay-Columbia, and Kamloops Thompson—were chosen for participation, because they offered comparative differences in geographic and demographic size, in the mix of rural and urban schools, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. The early months of the project have focused on supporting each of the three districts in establishing a framework for a mentorship program that can respond to the specific contexts and challenges for teachers in these different areas of BC.

There are currently 58 teachers engaged as mentors and mentees. A steering committee has been established in the three districts that includes union leadership and administrative directors. The focus of mentoring partnerships reveals the distinctiveness in each district: Kamloops is supporting some of the new TTOCs and chose to structure the program

to build connection across schools and district. In Kootenay-Columbia mentoring partnerships are providing a means for educators to collaborate on implementation of new math curriculum and explore innovations in secondary school teaching and learning. Haida Gwaii mentors are helping teachers build knowledge and confidence in new assignments such as learning assistance and counselling, and bridge between Haida language and curriculum implementation.

Discovering the satisfaction and empowerment of offering professional support to new colleagues is a welcome benefit many of the new mentors have expressed.

The project funds have also made it possible to hire a 0.2 FTE mentoring teacher in the Kamloops Thompson District to support four teachers working in rural schools. For teachers entering the profession in more rural environments, unique challenges are faced in accessing resources, networking with other professionals, and teaching across multiple grades. The Kamloops mentoring position provides a way to regularly visit these rural teachers and offer more consistent response to their challenges. UBC is partnering with the New Teacher Mentoring project to conduct research into ways that a formal mentorship program might more effectively support our rural teachers through its rural teacher education focus.

Although we are just a few months into the project, it is already evident how mentoring offers both emotional support and professional challenge for new professionals working to integrate their knowledge, skills, and ideals into the real world of the classroom. The 'praxis shock' in becoming a professional teacher is a familiar story and can lead quickly to feeling overwhelmed, discouraged, and isolated. Kamloops mentor Rachael Sdoutz states, "my mentee's biggest challenge will be to find a balance and to not let herself

...continued on page 14

Mentoring project continued...

get discouraged as she faces the reality of teaching day to day—the system is changing more slowly than the new techniques and philosophies.” How can we support our new colleagues in developing professional habits of mind that lead to greater efficacy, agency, and enjoyment as they meet the pragmatics of classroom life? This is the challenge mentors are exploring as they meet with their mentees.

Discovering the satisfaction and empowerment of offering professional support to new colleagues is a welcome benefit many of the new mentors have expressed. The reciprocity of learning and reflection, which develops over time within mentoring relationships, supports the inquiry approach to professional learning. Teachers are meeting together in partnerships and networks to set goals, examine student work, and improve practice. The process gives purpose for teachers to open up their classrooms to one another, to think and work together in a non-evaluative, growth-oriented and trusting way. Ann-Marie Hunter, the Kamloops mentor supporting four rural teachers in her district writes, “Yesterday it was wonderful to spend the morning with one of my teachers; she had many insights into teaching in a one-teacher school that I had not even considered. What an

amazing challenge! This is going to be quite a journey of mentoring—so interesting to continue to learn more and share more about education.” Continuing to build strong effective mentoring relationships will strengthen the professional culture of learning within schools and districts. We know from the successful mentoring programs already in place in BC, once a mentoring culture has found its roots in a school district, collaboration and the reciprocity of ongoing learning becomes a norm.

In February, I will return to the ministry to secure funding for two more years to expand the project more widely across BC’s educational landscape. If successful, the project will be welcoming new district applications before the end of the school year. Updated information about the progress of the project including criteria for participation can be found on the New Teacher Mentoring Project page of the BCTF website: www.bctf.ca.

(There is a network of educators from different school districts, universities and other partner organizations in BC who meet three times a year to support and promote mentorship across the province. This network can be contacted through Teacher Mentorship BC.)

Alison Davies
BCTF co-ordinator
New Teacher Mentoring Project

BCTF language brigade Peru, summer 2013

Are you interested in being a part of a “language brigade” to Peru in the summer of 2013? Or do you know someone in your local who has the relevant background?

The BCTF has been offering professional development workshops for teachers in Peru for four years. These workshops focus on pedagogy for teaching English as an additional language, and take place during the school holiday at the end of July and the beginning of August. The workshops are co-sponsored with SUTEP, the Peruvian teachers’ union.

The BCTF pays for travel and living expenses in Peru (airfare, accommodation, meals, etc.) for project participants for the duration of the project.

Criteria for selection as a team member include:

- BCTF membership (active status)
- specialized training and experience in second-language teaching, as you will be presenting a pedagogical workshop on this topic to colleagues in Peru
- minimum five years of classroom teaching experience
- fluent speaker of English
- Spanish-speaking skills are an asset
- excellent facilitation skills
- experience working with adults, ideally in developing workshops and delivering them
- ability to work co-operatively in a team
- flexibility in dealing with challenging situations, such as developing country conditions
- ability to work with minimal resources and to improvise
- commitment to participate in project meetings and preparation of teaching materials
- union experience in the BCTF and/or local
- valid Canadian passport.

Applications for the Peru project are now open; the application can be found on the BCTF website at

www.bctf.ca/socialjustice.aspx?id=19096

For more information, please contact Anne Field, afield@bctf.ca, (604-871-2251), or toll-free 1-800-663-9163.

The application deadline is March 22, 2013. To read articles by previous participants, go to <http://bctf.ca/SocialJustice.aspx?id=18878> and scroll down to “Peru.”

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Culinary education tour of China

By **Eric MacNeill**

The culinary education tour of China, at the end of June, 2012 included many of the sights of China that one would expect, such as The Forbidden City, The Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, and the Terra Cotta Warriors. It also included two days at the Beijing Jinsong Vocational School where we were taught a style of cooking that many of the chef instructors from BC Culinary Arts Specialist Association (BCCASA) were unfamiliar with.

We were treated to food that was fresh, colourful, and excelled in flavour and texture that went beyond any Chinese food we ever tasted. The trip also included a guide who introduced us to many cultural aspects of life in China now and during the time of the cultural revolution.

Eric MacNeill, BCCASA president



Daniel Lesnes, BCCASA 2nd vice-president and chef instructor at Garibaldi Secondary School in Maple Ridge, making spring rolls under the watchful eye of the chef instructor at the Beijing Vocational School.



BCCASA at the Great Wall.

Our city of colours

By **Glen Hansman**

In spring 2011, a community-based, non-profit organization called Our City of Colours was formed to address issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) people in different linguistic and cultural communities in BC. The organization's main message is that LGBTQ people exist in all cultural communities and there is need in all cultural communities to acknowledge and begin to talk about issues pertaining to LGBTQ people to help mitigate the combined effects of racism and homophobia often affecting members of this demographic. As Simon Lam, outreach and logistics chair, for Our City of Colours puts it: "Identifying as LGBTQ is still taboo and many people may not know much about LGBTQ issues. Since much of the current messaging predominantly features Caucasian people with English text, we decided to create materials that try to reach out to people from various backgrounds. We believe it is important to increase the visibility of LGBTQ people

"The majority of LGBTQ materials are written in English and are not sensitive to cultures outside the Western culture."

from various cultural and linguistic communities because we don't believe there are many resources for these communities."

To kick things off in the fall of 2011, Our City of Colours launched six posters featuring eight models from the Chinese, Iranian, and Punjabi communities. Each poster included written descriptions in English and in the models' respective languages. Our City of Colours' latest poster campaign, which received some financial contribution from the BCTF and other organizations, includes messages in Tagalog, Spanish, Vietnamese, French, and Russian.

"Many people and organizations have told us how long overdue a campaign like this was," says Lam. "We also have had a

lot of interest from other people, community groups, and organizations wanting copies of our posters to put up in their community spaces, offices, schools, etc."

He notes the lack of visibility for LGBTQ people from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which speaks to the importance of this campaign.

"The majority of LGBTQ materials are written in English and are not sensitive to cultures outside the Western culture. When talking about a sensitive topic like LGBTQ people, it is pertinent to be culturally sensitive, and when possible, to speak in the language of the respective culture. Given that Metro Vancouver continues to have a growing population of immigrants and ethnic groups, we feel there needs to be resources and information on LGBTQ people and topics for these groups. When looking at the media, LGBTQ issues and issues facing people of different cultural backgrounds are often separate. What we find is that

few people look at the intersection of the two identities; instead, they focus on one of the two and leave it at that. Our goal is to raise awareness of this intersection as many people live their lives in that intersection."

"Students in classrooms are the future of our communities...by raising issues featuring a diverse range of people, we hope to foster a more understanding and respectful society in the future."

While the posters are showing up in libraries and community centres in many places in the Lower Mainland, Our City of Colours hopes that their posters will be used in schools as well. "Ideally [a school] is a safe place for students to explore various topics, including LGBTQ issues," Lam explains, arguing that classrooms need to be spaces for students from different backgrounds to discuss issues in the presence of a teacher who is knowledgeable of discrimination and can lead a constructive discussion on diversity and LGBTQ issues.

"Students in classrooms are the future of our communities," Lam says. "By raising issues featuring a diverse range of people, we hope to foster a more understanding and respectful society in the future. Also by giving representation to LGBTQ people, especially from under-served cultural and linguistic backgrounds, it shows students going through the struggles associated with these issues, that they are not alone, and that help is out there."

Both poster campaigns can be viewed on Our City of Colours' Facebook page here: [facebook.com/ourcityofcolours](https://www.facebook.com/ourcityofcolours) Most are available in high-resolution so that they can be printed for classroom or community use.

Glen Hansman
BCTF 2nd vice-president

[facebook.com/ourcityofcolours](https://www.facebook.com/ourcityofcolours)



Photography: Ken Yang
www.kenyangfilm.wordpress.com
Design: Derek Reynolds
www.derekreynolds.ca

“Gay and lesbian students are left feeling like outsiders in their own schools; excluded, targeted, picked on, vulnerable, and unsafe at school.”*

*Report of the BC Safe Schools Task Force, 2003



10 years
since Christy Clark created the Safe Schools Task Force.



40 school districts still do not have specific antihomophobia policies.

That means ~ **350,000** BC students are going to schools without specific antihomophobia policies.

64% of LGBTQ students report feeling unsafe at school.**



Asian Canadian queer youth are **26 to 29** times more likely than their heterosexual peers to report being discriminated against due to their sexual orientation.***

Protecting LGBTQ youth, teachers, and families should be a given. Why won't Christy Clark enforce her own code of conduct and make sure school districts update their codes?



Does your district have a policy? <http://bit.ly/LGBTQpolicy>



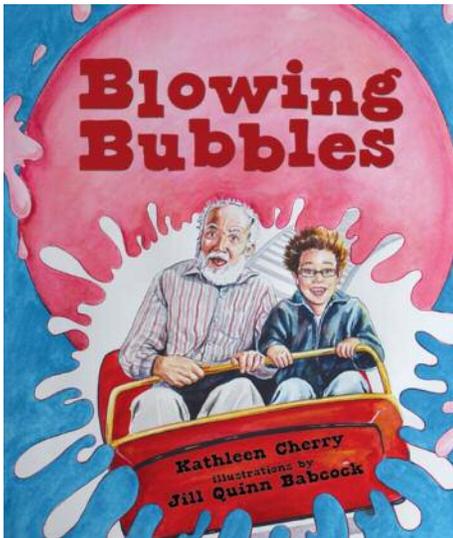
BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Egale's "Every Class in Every School" report, 2011 *Homma Y, Chen W, Poon C, & Saewyc EM, 2012 Images: iStockphoto/Thinkstock, Hemera/Thinkstock

BC teachers are writing books

Blowing Bubbles

New picture book helps children cope with illness and aging



Elementary counsellor Kathleen Cherry often reads to her students. Now she writes for them too.

"When children are experiencing difficulties, reading about characters encountering similar problems, can often help them to cope," she explains.

The process is called bibliotherapy and Cherry has added a new picture book to her collection, one of her own creation. *Blowing Bubbles* was written by Cherry and illustrated by Nova Scotian artist, Jill Quinn Babcock.

"*Blowing Bubbles* explores how the relationship between a boy and his grandfather changes and strengthens after Grandpa George has a stroke," Cherry explains.

Cherry began the project when she found that, despite the many picture books available to help children cope with death, few focussed on the changes occurring through illness and aging.

But writing and publishing a children's book proved an exhausting exercise in patience.

Blowing Bubbles first finalized in the National Writing for Children competition sponsored by the Writers Union of Canada in 2006 and again in 2009. Cherry adds that her other manuscripts also finalized.

"I made the top 10 for a total of five times. I began to feel like a bridesmaid but never a bride. I was thrilled when Aspirations Publishing decided to publish it," Cherry says.

Cherry adds that her interest in bibliotherapy has increased in recent years. "More and more Kindergarten and Grade 1 students are on my caseload and some traditional therapy techniques are not effective with such young children. I use a lot of play dough and books. Picture books can help children recognize their emotions, relate to others, and understand that they are not alone."

With this in mind, Cherry chose to further her knowledge through an on-line doctoral program in Counselling Psychology at Walden University. "I am not certain if I will do my thesis in this area, but I have been able to explore and increase my knowledge of the subject."

While the concept of bibliotherapy dates back as far as ancient Greece, the word itself was coined in 1916 when an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* discussed 'prescribing books,' much like medication. By the 1930s, librarians began to select books to address certain conditions—although these were mainly aimed at the adult audience.

Cherry began the project when she found that, despite the many picture books available to help children cope with death, few focussed on the changes occurring through illness and aging.

More recently, a form of bibliotherapy is frequently used in classrooms to increase emotional intelligence, particularly in conjunction with programs like the BC FRIENDS for life program, an anti-anxiety program authored by Dr. Paula Barrett.

Of course, bibliotherapy is not without its detractors. A comprehensive review in the magazine *Early Child Development and Care* found the research inconclusive. The authors suggested that it is most useful as an adjunct therapy.

One frequent concern is that such books might have a depressing effect and that children wish to use literature to escape into fictional worlds. Cherry adds that she

was very aware of this when she wrote *Blowing Bubbles*.

"I wanted to address a serious topic but keep FUN as the central element and I believe I succeeded. I think kids will love *Blowing Bubbles*. It's about bubble gum and go-karts and family and laughter. It's a really entertaining read with wonderful illustrations."

Blowing Bubbles is available at <http://www.aspirationspublishing.com>, through [Amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca) and at select local bookstores. Cherry has also taken her first tentative steps into the arena of social media and has her own website at <http://www.blowingbubbles.ca>. She welcomes any comments and recommendations of other books teachers, counsellors, children, and parents have loved.

The True Story of Yarrow's Water



Faye Wedel and Audra Schroeder, an EA and primary teacher at Promontory Heights Elementary School, Chilliwack, worked together to co-author the book, *The True Story of Yarrow's Water*. It tells how the town of Yarrow, located in the Fraser Valley, built its unique water system. The book, in its graphic comic style, is engaging and informative. It focuses on relating a part of Yarrow's historical development to young readers. Wedel and Schroeder presented the book at a book launch, arranged by Yarrow's librarian, Wanda Lindsay, and in numerous Grade 2–6 classrooms.

Wedel comments, "I think sharing this story and the writing process we used to make the book is relevant for all students. We hope to get students thinking of writing their own true stories and to have fun doing it."

For more information contact yarrowwater@hotmail.com

A Handbook for History Teachers

By James Duthie

To teach history as if it were a chronology of unquestioned truth, as is often done, is not intellectually legitimate. History is a subject in constant flux, with new interpretations of events being put forward all the time, all of them open to challenge and question. Students need to be taught that the things they are told in history class are subjective interpretations of events, of varying degrees of reliability, and they need to be equipped with the skills to assess the reliability of what they are being told and to develop their own interpretations. This is an intellectual task of a much higher order than memorize-and-regurgitate, and it makes the study of history much more interesting and relevant. It also means that history is constructivist in the truest sense of the word, since the student must derive his or her own truth claims and be able to defend them.

We are entirely dependent on past experience in our decision-making, and politicians are never hesitant to put forward historical parallels (frequently invalid)...

I always tried to teach history in that way, starting as a student teacher. During my internship I had to teach the Renaissance and Reformation unit in Socials 8, part of which involves the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. I remembered an article I had read several years before that put forward the hypothesis that there had been no plot; it had all been a put-up job concocted by the Chancellor, Lord Robert Cecil, to discredit Roman Catholics. I got hold of a copy of the article and from it took 22 pieces of evidence supporting this hypothesis, which I then posted round the room. At the start of the lesson I taught the class the standard version of the Gunpowder Plot—that the dastardly Catholics had planted a bomb under the

House of Commons the night before the state opening of parliament, with a view to blowing up the King, Lords and Commons, only to be discovered as Guy Fawkes was about to light the fuse. Fawkes and his co-conspirators met an apparently well-deserved fate on the scaffold. Then I directed the students to go around the room looking at the pieces of evidence, and to develop an alternative explanation of the events, taking into account as much of the evidence as they could. Much lively discussion ensued, involving a depth of knowledge much greater than that offered by the textbook, with no consensus reached on what really happened or why. Each student had his or her own opinion, which, to my mind, was a much better outcome than their knowing only the basic “facts” (which, incidentally, they knew far better than if they merely been given the standard lecture).

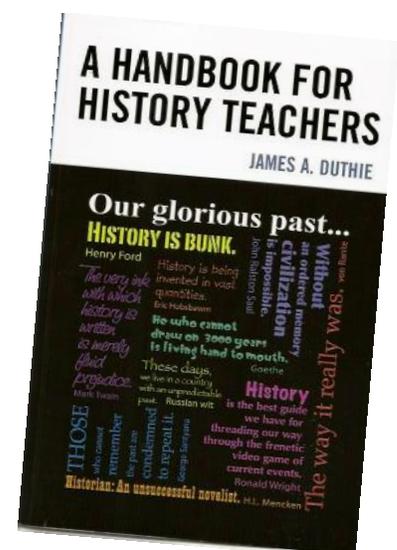
Throughout my career I tried to build on this foundation, teaching history as argument. It has far-reaching implications; students need to be taught how to interpret evidence at the literal and inferential level. They need to learn how to evaluate the reliability of evidence, and the validity of any arguments it may contain. They need to learn how to form their own hypotheses and support them with evidence, while at the same time discounting any contrary evidence or arguments. They need to learn how to categorize evidence appropriately, how to compare and contrast, how to analyze and how to create and defend their own hypotheses. They need to be taught a lot of content, because thinking without adequate basis in fact (except in the realm of abstraction) is bound to be flawed. And they need to learn how to express complex ideas both orally and in writing. In writing my book I tried to distill all of the methods I had learned or developed over my career to teach students these skills.

It seems to me that no subject is more relevant than history, paradoxical though that may sound. We are entirely dependent on past experience in our decision-making, and politicians are never hesitant to put forward historical parallels (frequently invalid) to justify what they are doing or what they want to do, or to condemn the policies of their opponents. Students need to be equipped, both in terms of background knowledge and logical thinking, to deal with the

competing historical claims that are bandied about in the public square. Karl Popper explained the contemporary relevance of history this way: he said that governments exist to solve problems. The policies they put forward to deal with them are hypotheses, and therefore the public must be able to examine and evaluate these hypotheses as an essential part of the democratic process. History is the best subject by far for inculcating these skills, and my book is an attempt to help teachers teach students how to participate meaningfully in the public debate.

The first four chapters of the book deal with the nature of history, its importance as a field of study, and the logical processes involved in the discipline. Subsequent chapters deal with practical methods for teaching the subject in a way consistent with its logical structure, including the acquisition and comprehension of data, organizing data, doing research, and writing. There are two chapters on the use of documents and how to answer document-based questions, skills which are the essence of the historian’s work. There is a chapter on the evaluation and grading of student work, especially important since under this approach there is no longer (except in simple objective questions) a single right answer. The final chapter is about classroom management, the nuts and bolts of running an effective classroom.

To order *A Handbook for History Teachers*, contact the author. Send a cheque for \$35 (includes postage) to James Duthie, 751 Harding Ave., Nanaimo, BC V9S 5C1 or contact the publisher at www.univpress.com



Surrey teacher produces documentary

Mississippi racism sparks parallels with Canada

After more than six years of retirement, Myra Williams Ottewell, has the opportunity to see her film *Mississippi ReMixed* screened in Canadian classrooms and libraries across Canada and the USA. The one-hour television documentary, commissioned by Mississippi Public Broadcasting and presently airing on the US station, has been a labour of love for Ottewell since she retired from a career in teaching media technology at Queen Elizabeth Secondary School in Surrey.

"...She was modeling for the rest of us what real repentance has to do, how unflinchingly we have to examine the legacy, the repercussions, and the gains wrongfully made as a result of the sins of the past."

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

"The US Civil Rights era is a small part of the Social Studies 12 Curriculum and the

film is perfect to deal with the issues in the short time allotted in the course. The archival footage and interviews compliment the textbooks and the personal nature of your story is very effective. The film does spark a lot of discussion about segregation, diversity, etc. and certainly has relevance to contemporary Surrey. The classes found *Mississippi ReMixed* very moving."

– Peter Rees, social studies department head, Queen Elizabeth Secondary School, Surrey

Ironically it was back in a Surrey classroom that Ottewell's film began. In 2004 she was asked to speak to a group of students fresh from watching the Hollywood blockbuster, *Mississippi Burning*. After sharing her recollections growing up in Mississippi during the notorious 1960s, the Grade 12 students didn't believe that Ottewell had had warm, peaceful, and loving relationships with African Americans in the South. Instead they called her naïve and

challenged her.

Frustrated, and not being believed, and determined to prove them wrong, Ottewell, who retired a few months later, set out for Mississippi with a film crew to record the positive changes taking place in her home state, but as the filming progressed Ottewell found herself having

"Mississippi ReMixed sparked dialogue about the caste system in India...historical Asian and South Asian discrimination, the comparison between First Nations in Canada and blacks in Mississippi, and the legacy of white privilege."

to face her past head-on, uncovering the real and sometimes painful truth about her family's racist past.

It was at this point in the journey that the film changed direction for the first-time filmmaker. "I had not set out to be a focal point of the documentary, but as the film progressed it became obvious that I was to be its voice. I've learned that sometimes you have to be vulnerable as a filmmaker and the project then morphed into a personal, and at times, emotional journey. In the end it's a stronger more relatable film," says Ottewell.

The program initially screened in Jackson, Mississippi, but for Ottewell the opportunity to present the film on Canadian soil in her school district of Surrey, BC, was a big motivator to finish the project. After watching *Mississippi ReMixed*, audience member and BCTF staffer, Kerry Richardson said, "I think the thing that made it so powerful was Ottewell's willingness to be so honest. She was modeling for the rest of us what real repentance has to do, how unflinchingly we have to examine the legacy, the repercussions, and the gains wrongfully made as a result of the sins of the past. Naturally, it leads us to look

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BC Teachers' Federation social justice – bctf.ca/socialjustice.aspx

's First Nations

at the story of our own Aboriginal people."

According to Ottewell even though the documentary takes place in Mississippi, and discusses racism from the 1960s through to today, the themes and subject matter are proving to be universal for international viewers. She hopes that it will be used as a catalyst for discussion and potential social change both in Mississippi, and here in Canada, regarding the treatment of Aboriginal and other groups.

"As I have reflected on the parallels between Mississippi and BC, this comparison is, I think, the one that is the most appropriate. The history of each group is horrific starting with early contact with European North Americans," says a sober Ottewell. "Blacks and First Nations were treated as essentially less than human. The destruction of the family unit devastated both groups, and that coupled with physical and sexual abuse, backbreaking work with little or no compensation, and contempt by dominant culture has left a heartbreaking legacy."

When asked what is next for the project

Ottewell says, "We are looking to see the documentary broadcast nationally in both Canada and in the US. It is proving to be a discussion starter, something I am extremely pleased about. I don't think there is a country where the film could not be used to begin or extend the conversation on race."

Ottewell, with a heart for teaching, said, "I recently showed the film to a group of Surrey secondary teachers and the discussion that resulted was fascinating. Mississippi ReMixed sparked dialogue about the caste system in India (and in BC), the shortage of administrators of colour in the school system, historical Asian and South Asian discrimination, the comparison between First Nations in Canada and blacks in Mississippi, and the legacy of white privilege."

More information on Mississippi ReMixed and a Canadian viewing guide can be found by visiting:
www.mississippiremixed.com

Moving Images, Inc. is distributing Mississippi ReMixed across Canada:
<http://bit.ly/TPfqBY>

www.mississippiremixed.com

Your education matters

Your Education Matters is the only TV program in BC dedicated to addressing education issues beyond the headlines. Hosted by Dr. Paul Shaker, past dean of education at SFU, the program provides insight and opinions from practitioners and scholars on education issues that matter for parents, students, educators, and policymakers alike.

From decision-making for your child's education to accountability and diversity in our schools to health education, *Your Education Matters* welcomes guests who explore the challenges and possible solutions for education issues, so viewers are informed and prepared to actively participate in making their family's education experience successful.

Your Education Matters will air a new episode with a new topic monthly and rebroadcasts on 2 channels:

Programs air on Lower Mainland Shaw Channel 4 and Vancouver Novus cable systems. Set the series recording on your PVR. Here are the Shaw times:

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Saturday—6:30 p.m.
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The role of education in reconciliation



Glen Hansman, BCTF 2nd vice-president addresses the 2012 First Nations Education Steering Committee conference in Vancouver. (FNESC photo)

This is the text of an address given by Glen Hansman at the recent 2012 First Nations Education Steering Committee conference in Vancouver. It followed a keynote address by the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. You can learn about the work of the commission at www.trc.ca

By Glen Hansman

Today, I am going to speak a bit about the present situation in BC public education, and how we might move to a better place for Aboriginal learners and how the public education system can be a part of the process of reconciliation. I'm in a very privileged position to be able to visit schools and school districts around BC, including some very rural and remote communities, and I've been learning a lot from that experience. One of the events that I've continued to think about took place two years ago, when the BCTF was invited to send participants to an all-day initiative for the public held at the Chief Joe Mathias Centre just across the Lion's Gate Bridge, hosted by the Squamish Nation, the Indian Residential School Survivors' Society, and the First Nations Health Council. The focus of the event was

on the Indian Residential School experience, and I remember very clearly Jody Wilson-Raybould, the regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations, talking about the need for all the individuals in attendance to be on their own journey to find balance and reconciliation, and that the act of transferring despair into hope is not an individual effort, but one that by necessity involves the larger community of Canadians recognizing our colonial past in order to move to reconciliation and a positive future for all of us. It is this "us" piece that seems to me to be so crucial. It will take a long time to change attitudes at all levels of government, throughout

In order to move forward, we need to have a lot of people come to the table to break through assumptions based on European perspectives.

society, as well as in our schools—such a long time that it will be the children, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who will need to carry on this work. And we have a responsibility for helping them.

We have a growing amount of curriculum /resources that are entirely focused on Aboriginal content, including

material that addresses the legacy of the residential school system. We have survivors speaking about their experiences at residential schools, and other opportunities to bring these issues into BC classrooms. Yet we're still facing many of the same obstacles. Why is this the case? What do we need to be asking ourselves?

Before going any further, I should situate my own public education experience as a white, Anglophone student in French immersion in North Bay, Ontario. I remember learning about Indians of the past as "helpers" to the people of Nouvelle France and the Hudson's Bay Company, though I grew up in a community where the narrative of the present was

one of the "lazy Indian." I did not learn about the genocide of Aboriginal peoples. Certainly did not learn about loss of languages, the anguish faced by children and parents in being separated, or of the abuse that occurred in residential schools.

From Grade 9 and up, I attended Chippewa Secondary School, where the non-Aboriginal principal would parade around in large feather head dress at pep rallies, cheerleaders would lead the student body through the tomahawk chop and chants of "Raiders on the Warpath" before football games, and the school's mascot was Joe Raider—a large, yellow, fuzzy character in buckskin and carrying said tomahawk. It was culture as a cartoon, appropriation at its worst, even while there was a significant Anishinaabe population at the school, and Ojibwe was a language course. (We raised this with some friends as being problematic when I was in high school, but we were rebuffed by the adults as being "too serious," though almost two decades later, a couple of us were happy to contribute to what became a bit of a chain reaction involving the Ontario Union of Indian Chiefs that finally saw the "firing" of Joe Raider. But it shouldn't have taken that long, and you wouldn't believe the organizing being done by some people to "save Joe Raider." But that's a whole other speech.)

I graduated from high school in 1992. It's now 2012. Has much changed?

Public education in Canada has been (up until and including the present moment) largely a settler construct, and that the legacy of colonialism has almost been completely obscured in what is taught in the public school system, and in some cases (in particular, the purpose and legacy of the residential school system) has been deliberately hidden. We know this to be the case, and it is time to stop denying it.

In order to move forward, we need to

...every student who leaves the BC public education system should, from K through Grade 12, have had school experience with Aboriginal content, knowledges, and understandings...

have a lot of people come to the table to break through assumptions based on European perspectives.

And part of that means we need to change what it means for a student to become an educated citizen. In March of 2010, based on a lot of conversations we were having internally with our provincial Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, the BCTF Executive Committee brought a number of Aboriginal education recommendations to our Annual General Meeting that carried overwhelmingly, which in and of itself perhaps represents a change. One of the recommendations is this:

That

- 1. Additional secondary school IRPs with an emphasis on Aboriginal culture (such as First Nations Studies 12, and English First Peoples 10, 11, and 12) be created, across the subject areas.*
- 2. Ministry funding be available to support the implementation of these courses.*
- 3. Should such additional courses be created and made available with the necessary supports, the completion of such a course be a requirement of graduation for all students.*
- 4. Aboriginal content be embedded in all K-12 IRPs.*

A bit of an explanation... Enrolment in the Aboriginal-themed secondary courses that do exist is extremely low—the courses are only offered in a handful of schools across BC, and there are less than 300

students registered in them in total. Boards need to have the funding that will allow them to offer such courses, and run them even if there are only 12 students registered in the course. We want them to expand in numbers and flourish; there need to be more such courses, covering other subject areas, and at least one such course should be a requirement for graduation for all students in BC.

Why? Because every student who leaves the BC public education system should, from K through Grade 12, have had school experience with Aboriginal content, knowledges, and understandings—and have had at least one course devoted to this content and these knowledges and understandings. For some, this might sit in tension with the present dialogue about “personalization” and moving to a system where all students are to have their own personal learning plans. One such course is now a requirement for teacher certification in this province, which is something the BCTF supports, but it needs to start earlier than post secondary.

Aboriginal content can't be an add-on to what we do in BC classrooms from K-12. It shouldn't happen by chance. It needs to be core.

And this speaks to the need to ensure that teachers have regular opportunities in all regions of the province for in-service and professional development to learn about the intergenerational effects of the residential schools, to learn how to incorporate Aboriginal content more appropriately into teaching from K-12, to have time and someone to go to for collaboration and to be able to talk through problems. And to address these things, we mustn't avoid the conversation about funding. We recently saw, for example, the cancellation of the Eagle program in Langley, which was a successful all-day Kindergarten program for Aboriginal students that had the involvement of elders and the local communities. Funding was the issue, as it is in many other circumstances positive initiatives and programs are stymied. To do this work meaningfully, and to ensure teachers are supported in doing this work, the provincial government needs to get BC back at least to the national average for education funding.

That being said—there are a tremendous number of new learning resources out there about the residential school experience. And lack of funding doesn't prevent the adults in the system

from reading, from borrowing the various documentaries from the library, from visiting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission website (www.trc.ca) or make connections with local communities. Government has its role too to support us in this work, but the access to information has improved remarkably over the past few years. It's not a matter of things being obscured or deliberately hidden any more.

There's something else though that can be done in the short term that would not cost significant amounts of money. And that is school districts working with teacher locals to implement Aboriginal educator employment-equity agreements. I can't emphasize enough how important this is. My background as a teacher is focusing on antihomophobia work, and often I and those I was working with would stress the positives for LGBT youth when they have role models in the system, not just allies but lesbian and gay teachers

We need self-identified Aboriginal people in regular classroom teaching positions where they are seen by all students and are working with all students.

and principals who are “out” at school as lesbian or gay. Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing student population in BC. The percentage of Aboriginal teachers needs to catch up proportionately, so that Aboriginal youth not only see themselves reflected in the curriculum but also in the teaching work force. There are ways of improving this situation if the two local parties co-operate on adopting a recruitment and retention strategy as part of an employment-equity agreement. That's why the human rights exemption is there, and why both the BCTF and the BC Public School Employers' Association signed off in 2006 on a letter of understanding that encourages the local parties (school districts and teacher locals) to do this. The number of Aboriginal educators in schools should be significantly higher than it is now, and not just in targeted funding roles. We need self-identified Aboriginal people in regular classroom teaching positions where they are seen by all students and are working with all students.

...continued on page 24

Role of reconciliation continued

There's also a conversation to be had about getting Aboriginal students from secondary schools into post-secondary programs and then into B.Ed programs, and that will require a provincial-level conversation as well.

Part of retaining people, though, is addressing the climate of racism in schools, and this is what I'm going to come back to now.

We need to acknowledge that racism is the norm in public schools—still today. Some people will take offense at that assertion, but it is the case, and educators have a responsibility to acknowledge that before we can move forward.

Changing culture of racism requires individuals taking steps to change what they do, and working collectively to change what we do. It's more than erasing bullying, in a generic sense; racism is more than bullying or individual acts of violence—it's attitudes, perceptions; it's people being excluded; it is about what is seen as a priority, what is acceptable

Teachers retired

In the November/December edition of *Teacher*, we missed printing the following names of teachers who had retired prior to October 31, 2012:

Burnaby Louise Baker Terri Flintoff	Comox Sharlie Chatterton Ron Crowther Jacquie Green Judith McIntyre Heather Manning Geoffrey Praine Penny Purdon Gerry Sando Patricia Shortridge Richard Walker
Central Okanagan Cherylanne Dick Rob Hughes Jacqueline Loyd Margaret Vellenoweth	Vancouver Paul Potvin
Cranbrook Jill Neil Dave Neil	
Kamloops Thompson Gwen Abley	
Surrey Gary Cleverley Ling Mellis	

knowledge and what are acceptable ways of knowing. It's about whose experience "counts." And those sorts of shifts require more than treating negative experiences of Aboriginal students and adults in the education system as simply symptoms of generic "bullying."

Addressing the racism is essential for everyone—not just Aboriginal students, but for the entire student population and, consequently, for healing and reconciliation of our nations together. The residential school system represents over

100 years of loss. Colonialism, in its totality, is several times that. Change takes time, but we need to ensure that we are working together to ensure that change is occurring and that it occurs at all levels.

We mustn't fall back on the old excuses anymore, and start by asking ourselves: what's holding us back now?

Glen Hansman
BCTF 2nd vice-president



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BCRTA
British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association



Your Union Cares for you

Sasha's story

A fictional scenario: Sasha, a 45-year-old teacher is experiencing increasing stress and mental fatigue in her workplace. Recently she separated legally from her long-term partner. She is to start Semester Two with a workload that includes four classes, two of which are challenging Grade 8 students (30 in each class). She requested and was granted a personal leave of one block to cope with her stress. This put her on 75% salary for Semester Two. The principal was happy to grant her the leave as the principal had spoken to her about underlying performance issues and had suggested professional development and in-service courses. She teaches in an old, musty portable around the back of the school. She complained to the principal on several occasions about the conditions of her classroom but her concerns fell on deaf ears. The member has a sick bank of 30 days.

Services the Income Security Division can provide:

Health and safety (prevention)

The symptoms of stress, elevated blood pressure, skin rashes, sleep disturbances, lack of energy, speech, and thinking disturbances can all be caused by working environment. Portable classrooms designed to be temporary structures but used as classrooms for decades, are notorious for having poor ventilation systems providing inadequate fresh air. They have leaky ceilings, windows, and door frames and do not have adequate eaves or drainage, creating leaks and possible mould growth. Mould and inadequate fresh air can cause a variety of symptoms including fatigue and cognitive impairments. Portable building walls are thin and hard, the flooring is typically tiled and fans in the unit ventilators hum all day causing noise levels loud enough to cause headaches. Typically teachers move their students from portable classrooms to the main school for computer classes, PE, music, and assemblies, often encountering various types of weather.

Health and safety issues cause the physical symptoms of stress and can be prevented. Such issues can also be addressed through the school-based Joint Health and Safety Committee and that reporting process.

Health and safety (WCB claims advocacy)

Aspects of the working environment that cause symptoms of stress, elevated blood pressure, skin rashes, sleep disturbances, and lack of energy are known as workplace stressors.

Sasha should see her doctor immediately. If diagnosed with a recognized mental illness or disorder that is predominantly caused by her workplace stressors she

should file a WCB claim. If the claim is denied or not fully accepted for wage loss or healthcare benefits, the BCTF WCB advocate can assist with the appeal. Do not delay as time limits apply.

Salary indemnity plan (SIP)

Sasha made a big mistake by reducing her assignment due to stress and fatigue without first consulting with her doctor to find out if she was eligible for a reduced assignment for medical reasons. This is very important because, should she need to apply for short-term disability benefits after exhausting the 30 days remaining in her sick bank, her benefits will now be calculated on the 0.75 FTE rather than her original 1.0 FTE. Short-term (ST) benefits are calculated on the salary paid at the last day of paid work or sick leave. If Sasha was unfortunate enough to see her medical condition worsen and had to take a lengthy period of time off, the ST SIP provides up to 120 days of benefits for any one illness or injury. Therefore, this reduction in her FTE would have significant financial implications for her that would be ongoing if she had to apply for long-term benefits.

Health and wellness program

While stress is not a medical condition, the symptoms of stress are. Symptoms such as increased blood pressure, changes in sleep patterns, changes in appetite, weight gain or loss, lack of energy and motivation are all possible medical conditions resulting from feeling stressed. The Health and Wellness Program is a voluntary program that provides support for members who are coping with medical problems. Together with the teacher and her doctor, a rehabilitation consultant develops a plan

to improve the teacher's health and her/his ability to cope with the stress, whether it is personal or work-related. Well-qualified and experienced consultants understand the work of teachers and will support the member to achieve their goals for wellness and a return to full time employment.

Pension advice

While we do not want to appear to be suggesting that Sasha should leave teaching, there are issues she should explore on how having a former spouse and a reduced assignment will impact her future finances.

Pensions are considered an asset. A spouse/partner may be entitled to a portion of the earned pension during the relationship. Whether her pension is divided or not, should be clearly stated in a court order as there are different options depending on whether her pension is shared or not. The options all have financial ramifications to both Sasha and her former spouse. They should get advice and additional information from www.tpp.pensionsbc.ca.

For more information, Sasha should contact her local president and the following members of the BCTF Income Security Division administrative staff:

- Victor Choy, Pensions, 604-871-1949, vchoy@bctf.ca
- Ritchie Kendrick, SIP administrator, 604-871-1955, rkendrick@bctf.ca
- Michael Kimmis, ISD director, 604-871-1957, mkimmis@bctf.ca
- Sarb Lalli, WCB Claims (advocacy), 604-871-1890, slalli@bctf.ca
- Karen Langenmaier, Health and Safety (prevention), 604-871-1891, klangenmaier@bctf.ca
- Drusilla Wilson, Health and Wellness Program, 604-871-1925, dwilson@bctf.ca



When a primary teacher retires... the shelves are empty

Teachers spend thousands of dollars of their own money on resources for their classrooms.

These examples demonstrate the dramatic difference when a primary teacher retired and cleaned out her classroom.

Is there a French advisory committee in your district?

By Marie-Claude Tremblay

Do you have a French programs and services advisory committee or task force in your district? If not, why not? Do you have a helping teacher for French programs? If not, why not? Did you know that your district receives federal funding for these programs and must send in an annual report on how these funds were spent? Do you look at this report, to make sure that these funds have been spent for the French programs in your district? Do your members with French as first or working language (FFWL) know that they have a right to know how much funding your district receives, to see this report and to have a say in how this money is spent?

The BCTF Advisory Committee for French programs and services (FAC) was created in

1996. It has seven members that represent the FSL, French Immersion, and Francophone programs, rural and urban centres, elementary and secondary teachers. One of its terms of reference is to advise the Executive Committee on the needs and concerns of French-as-a-first, and French-as-a-second-language teachers.

Last spring, a survey was e-mailed to local presidents asking some of the above questions. Fourteen locals said that they do not have an advisory committee or task force and seven said yes. The FAC will be completing this survey in the coming months by contacting local presidents or the district. Our goal is to promote the creation of local advisory committees to discuss the needs and concerns of FFWL members such as lack of resources, no

learning assistance for students with special needs, and having students removed from French language programs in order to get assistance, multi-grade classes, lack of support from district and administrators because 'French isn't important, lack of support for elementary teachers who have to teach French, and schools having to find an FSL teacher on an annual basis. The list goes on and on.

If you have a French advisory committee/task force in your local, a helping teacher or a director responsible for French programs, please contact Marie-Claude Tremblay at mctremblay@bctf.ca with this information.

Y a-t-il un Comité consultatif pour les programmes et services en français dans votre conseil scolaire?

Avez-vous un Comité consultatif des programmes et services en français dans votre conseil scolaire? Si non, pourquoi pas? Avez-vous une enseignante ou un enseignant responsable pour les programmes de français? Si non, pourquoi pas? Saviez-vous que votre conseil scolaire (CS) reçoit un financement fédéral pour ces programmes et doivent envoyer un rapport annuel sur la façon dont ces fonds ont été dépensés? Examinez-vous ce rapport pour vous assurer que ces fonds ont été dépensés pour vos programmes de français? Vos membres ayant le français comme langue de travail ou langue première (FLTP) savent-ils qu'ils ont le droit de savoir à combien se monte le financement que votre CS reçoit, peuvent voir ce rapport et avoir leur mot à dire sur la façon dont cet argent est dépensé?

Le Comité consultatif des programmes et services en français (connu affectueusement comme le Coco) de la FECB a été créé en 1996. Il dispose de 7 membres qui représentent les programmes francophone, de FLS et d'immersion française, les centres ruraux et urbains et les enseignants de l'élémentaire et du secondaire. L'un de ses termes de référence est de conseiller le Comité exécutif de la FECB sur les besoins et les

préoccupations des membres ayant le français comme langue de travail ou langue première.

Cette année, les membres sont : Susanne Blohm de Kamloops (FLS, secondaire), Gioia Breda de Surrey (immersion, élémentaire), Bénula Larsen de Victoria (immersion, secondaire), Sabina Lecki de North Vancouver (immersion, élémentaire), Henry Lee de Burnaby (FLS, secondaire), Tanis Maxfield de Kelowna (immersion, intermédiaire), Krista Peregodooff de Fort Nelson (FLS, secondaire) et Wendy Turner de Cranbrook, membre du Comité exécutif.

Au printemps dernier, un sondage fut envoyé aux présidents locaux demandant des informations de base au sujet de l'existence d'un comité consultatif et de qui avait la responsabilité des programmes de français. 14 syndicats locaux ont dit ne pas avoir de comité consultatif. Seulement 7 ont répondu positivement! À sa première réunion cette année, le Coco s'est donné la mission de compléter ce questionnaire dans les prochains mois en contactant directement la présidente ou le président d'une section locale ou le conseil scolaire. Notre objectif : promouvoir la création de comités consultatifs locaux, pour discuter des besoins et des

préoccupations des membres FLTP tels que le manque de ressources, le manque d'aide à l'apprentissage pour les élèves ayant des besoins particuliers et qui doivent être retirés des programmes de langue française pour obtenir de l'aide, les classes à niveaux multiples, le manque de soutien du CS et des administrateurs parce que «le français n'est pas important», le manque de soutien pour les enseignants à l'intermédiaire qui ont à enseigner le français de base, le problème des écoles élémentaires qui doivent trouver un professeur de français langue seconde sur une base annuelle. La liste s'allonge encore et encore...

Si vous avez un comité consultatif dans votre région, une enseignante ou un enseignant ou un directeur responsable des programmes de français, s'il vous plaît, écrivez un courriel à Marie-Claude Tremblay mctremblay@bctf.ca avec cette information. Cela facilitera notre tâche.

*Marie-Claude Tremblay
directrice adjointe
Bureau des programmes
et services en français*

Writing Thanksgiving from the perspective of turkeys

By Jim McMurtry

The Chinese writer Lin Yutang pronounced, "What is patriotism but the love of the food one ate as a child." I can say the same about historiography. I liked the old historical writing because it wasn't up in the air. Today no one can even agree on when Canadian history began. Was it 20 centuries ago when Asian migrants trudged across the Bering land bridge and descended south after the Last Glacial Maximum, or when Vikings settled at L'Anse aux Meadows in 1000 CE, or when Portuguese fishermen laid anchor off the Grand Banks around that time?

When I was in school our history began with Christopher Columbus who "sailed the ocean blue in 1492." Now there is speculation that the first visitors to the New World were Pacific islanders, or intrepid sailors in Chinese junks, or the mariners of legendary Atlantis. If you watch enough TV, you'll be convinced that aliens were the ones who built the Mayan temples and used them as landing pads.

John Still wrote in the novel *The Jungle Tide* that the "memories of men are too frail a thread to hang history from." It is not just our memories that are hazy, but the political spin we give to them. An African proverb says: "Until lions have their historians, the tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter."

I grew up learning that when Europeans won a battle, it was a victory, but when the Aboriginals won, it was a massacre. Our school textbooks still call an 1816 battle "The Seven Oaks Massacre" because 60 Métis led by a North-West Company employee killed 25 British soldiers and settlers. The Métis call it the "Victory of Frog Plain."

The problem for historians is choosing what to write in schoolbooks. A lot of girls like to know about how people dressed and bathed—or didn't bathe; while a lot of the boys want to hear about torture and war. Another problem is choosing the perspective to take. How does one tell the story of Thanksgiving from the perspective of a turkey?

Then there is the naming of Europeans as "conquerors," for the Spanish and French, who at different times claimed much of the continent, were ultimately conquered people, with the French only retaining two tiny windswept islands (Saint Pierre and Miquelon) south of Newfoundland. Aboriginals are the "conquered people" but the Iroquois decimated the southern Ontario Huron and took over their territory, with the only Huron left today being the descendants of those who escaped to Québec City.

The Canadian historian Marcel Trudel wrote that "there is nothing more dangerous than history used...for preaching; history used as a tool is no longer history." It is important that schoolbooks recognize the previously untold stories of women (herstory) and minority racial groups, but there is a tendency to be preachy. History, when used as a tool by Ministries of Education to atone for past wrongs, "is no longer history."

In the mandatory Grade 11 Socials courses on 20th century Canada, there is a litany of criticisms of Canada in the past: the head tax on the Chinese, Japanese internment camps, Indian residential schools, Canadian branches of the Ku Klux Klan, and the tragic exclusion of the migrant ships, *Komagata Maru* and *St. Louis*. Just as shocking is when the Québec Superior Court in 1921 ruled in favour of segregated seating in Montréal theatres, or the Supreme Court of Canada in 1928 ruling that women were not "persons" under the Canadian Constitution.

My point is not that we ignore the sins of our fathers (and some mothers) for history is about learning not to repeat them. Yet we shouldn't paint our ancestors with too dark a brush. Early Canadians were among the first to take a stand against slavery and welcome immigration. We should give credit where credit is due.

Jim McMurtry

Panorama Ridge Secondary School, Surrey

Student Vote

The future of Canadian Democracy

**Register for
Student Vote BC 2013**



This spring, British Columbia's elementary and secondary school students will have the opportunity to cast ballots for the official candidates running in the provincial election.

Student Vote is a parallel election for youth under the voting age, coinciding with official election periods. Participating students learn about the democratic process and party platforms through in-class activities, campaign events, family dialogue, and media consumption. The program culminates with an authentic voting experience where students take on the roles of election officials and conduct a vote on the official election candidates. The results are collected from schools and shared with media for broadcast and publication after the polls close on election night.

Nineteen student vote elections have been co-ordinated since 2003. In the last federal election, 4,300 schools registered to participate and 563,000 student vote ballots were cast across the country.

Following the federal election, Elections Canada commissioned an independent evaluation to assess program outcomes among teachers, students, and their families.

Main findings include:

- The student vote program is having a positive impact on political knowledge, discussion with parents, interest in politics and civic duty, which are all important predictors of voting.
- The student vote program is well received by teachers who praise the materials and support they receive from student vote. Overall, teacher satisfaction was very high, with 95% of

participating teachers saying they would very likely participate in the program in the future.

- Teachers also felt that their own knowledge and confidence regarding civic education had increased as a result of the program.
- Over 60% of parents reported an increase in their own political interest and knowledge as a result of the child's participation. The program provides families with more opportunities to learn about and discuss political issues. Among parents who voted, 20% reported that their child's participation in student vote positively affected their decision to cast a ballot.

BC students have participated in student vote programs within the 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011 federal elections as well as for the 2005 and 2009 provincial elections. In the last election, 580 schools registered to participate and 85,000 students cast a ballot.

"This will be our seventh parallel election in British Columbia, and we are hoping to reach more schools and students than ever before," said Taylor Gunn, chief election officer of student vote. "Our team looks forward to helping teachers make the best learning experience out of this election."

To register for Student Vote BC 2013, visit: www.studentvote.ca or call 1-866-488-8775.

David Halme
BCTF Communications
and Campaigns Division



British Columbia
Teachers' Federation

1. Are you a K to 12 teacher?
2. Are you concerned about poverty?
3. Are you willing to complete a survey?

Some facts...

- BC has the second highest child-poverty rate in Canada.
- The income gap is widening between the poorest and the wealthiest families in BC.
- BC has persistently high child-poverty rates; thousands of BC families are struggling economically; their children are dealing with the effects of poverty at home and at school.

2012 Poverty and Education survey

A teacher's perspective

If you answered yes to all three questions, we invite you to participate in a survey to learn from teachers about:

- the poverty-related needs of students
- the adequacy of resources to meet these needs
- what is most needed at school to overcome educational barriers related to poverty

If you would like to participate in the online survey, go to:

<http://bit.ly/WKft2k>

For further information or to request a paper version of the survey, contact:

BCTF Research, 604-871-2251 or toll free 1-800-663-9163, extension 2251, or by e-mail at afield@bctf.ca

This study is being conducted by BCTF Research, in collaboration with the Antipoverty Action Group of the BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice.

R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation

Is there a charitable educational project or education initiative needing funding in your community?

R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation, the charitable arm of the BC Retired Teachers' Association, is accepting grant applications for projects and initiatives in BC and developing countries. The deadline is March 1, 2013.

For more information and a grant application, go to www.rsmith.ca or contact the R.R. Smith offices at 604-871-2260/62 or toll free at 1-877-683-2243.

Factor 88? Don't wait

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

In making application for withdrawal, you should ensure that in the event of serious illness or accident you have sufficient accumulated sick leave which, when combined with 120 days of benefit from SIP short-term, will protect your salary to the end of the month in which you reach factor "90" or the end of the month you attain age 65, whichever comes first.

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

Applications are available online at: <http://tinyurl.com/7qrrnxx> or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

Poverty-related barriers encountered by students in adult education

By Margaret White

This article presents a summary of a group discussion with the BCTF Adult Education Advisory Committee, facilitated by Margaret White, research analyst (BCTF Research) on poverty and education issues specific to adults attending public school adult education programs. The discussion revealed several poverty-related barriers that make it difficult for adults to attend and complete adult education courses. Much concern was expressed about how restructuring of adult education programs is increasing the barriers faced by low-income adult students.

Logistical barriers—Balancing childcare, paid work, and school

Some of these barriers are logistical, as adult students often must balance childcare responsibilities, work demands, and attending school, with limited options for transportation. In rural and semi-rural areas, there may be no reliable way for adult students to get to school as public transit services are very limited. Low-income students cannot always afford the cost of transit when it is available.

Lack of affordable childcare can pose significant barriers to adult students who are returning to school. Childcare services are non-existent in some areas of the North. In areas where childcare is available, the hours of operation do not always fit with the parent's school schedule or the service is not located at or near the learning centre.

Balancing the demands of paid employment with school schedules can also pose barriers for adult students. Adult students often depend on employment income for survival and have little control over their work schedule when it conflicts with the needs of their school-work. As work schedules are changeable, students cannot always predict when they will work.

Economic barriers—Living on a poverty-level income

Adult education teachers observed that many adult students are living on a limited income that does not cover the necessities of life, including access to nutritious food. They described situations where parents

feed their children first, when there is not enough food to go around. Poverty is also an issue for young persons who are newly living on their own, with limited government support. These students receive just enough to pay the rent but not enough money to provide adequate food or nutrition. There are no subsidized meal programs for adult students such as those offered to school-aged students.

Barriers related to the cost of resources to support learning

Low-income students cannot always afford school-related costs such as the Cost of Book Deposit (up to \$100 per course) or registration fees. A concern was expressed that there is increasing pressure by administration to enforce collection of book deposits, etc. from adult students. Another barrier identified was that low-income students may have less access to technology, which can affect the quality and presentation of assignments (spell-check, typed vs. hand-written) compared to other students. Some public libraries provide computers for student use. Access varies depending on how close students live to a library, the hours of operation, and the availability of computers. An example was provided of a rural area where the public library service is well-integrated with the adult education program.

Institutional barriers—Erosion of adult education programs and services

Concerns were also expressed about how budget cuts and restructuring of adult education programs are making it harder for low-income students to attend and complete adult education courses. These included a loss of provincial ABE funds to assist with school fees, textbooks, and transportation; loss or reduction of self-paced programs; loss of counselling services; and inadequate support for students with special needs when moved into adult programs.

Loss of self-paced programs

A key concern that emerged in the discussion was about how the restructuring of adult education programs has reduced support for adult education students who face multiple barriers. Self-

paced programs provided more flexibility for adult students but are no longer available in some districts. Fewer self-paced learning programs means less flexibility to adapt learning to the needs of adult students (e.g., childcare, inflexible work schedules) and to adjust learning to a pace comfortable for the student. The loss of self-paced learning programs has the greatest impact on low-income adults who need the flexibility of a self-paced program to overcome the barriers that make it difficult for them to complete their education.

Loss of counselling services for adult students facing multiple barriers

The discussion revealed an erosion of programs and services to support adult students to overcome barriers to education. These included a loss of counselling services in Adult Learning Centres to assist vulnerable adult students with emotional counselling; finding childcare and affordable housing; financial assistance to cover costs associated with attending school; and access to other services. Some young adults need access to addiction counselling as part of a strategy to support their return to school so they can complete high-school requirements.

Lack of resources to support adult students with special needs

Another concern was the lack of assessment and support for students who have learning disabilities, or who are in need of learning support to successfully complete courses. An example was given of where a program geared to special needs students closed, with some of these students moving to an adult education program with none of the supports available in the special needs program.

Lack of awareness of the unique needs of adult students

The adult educators emphasized the need for flexible programs for adult students to help them balance the many demands they have on them in addition to attending school. They noted that many administrators are from K-12 schools, work primarily with school-aged students, and are not necessarily aware of the issues/barriers faced by adult students.

Change in the focus of adult education to high-achieving students

Adult education teachers observed that the composition of adult education students was changing, with a shift in the focus and support away from high-needs adult students to high-achieving adult students. For example, night-school programs that are more geared to students who are likely to do well. They attributed the growing income disparity between adult students to changes in ministry policy and the loss of services to support low-income students facing multiple barriers to completing an education.

Addressing poverty-related barriers

The group discussion with adult education teachers revealed multiple barriers for adult students, many of which are related to poverty. Adult educators emphasized the need for self-paced learning programs to provide adult students with the flexibility needed to overcome poverty-related barriers to completing their education. They also stressed the importance of self-paced learning programs for students with multiple risk-factors who have experienced little success in the regular K to 12 school system. These students need support to ease into adult education with time to build confidence in their ability to succeed at school-work. Much concern was expressed that the restructuring of adult education programs is increasing the barriers faced by low-income adult students, through reduced services to address these barriers, the loss of financial assistance for adult learners, and the elimination or reduction of self-paced programs.

Offering adult education programs for low-income adults that are flexible and responsive to their needs so they can complete high-school and pursue further education can remove a significant barrier to moving out of poverty. Further work is needed to evaluate how changes in adult education programs and policies is affecting the ability of low-income adult students to complete high school requirements and/or secondary courses required to pursue a post-secondary education.

Margaret White

*BCTF Research in collaboration with
the BCTF Adult Education Advisory
Committee*

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Alan Andrews, Prudential United Realty
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What is the best way to know if BC students have basic skills?



By **Sandra Mathison**

As schools prepare to give the FSAs next week it may be the last time they are administered, at least in their current form. The discussion about alternatives to the FSAs is a sign of a healthy education system where its constituents continually consider how best to know how schools are doing. This is an excellent opportunity to examine alternative means to getting the snapshot of students' literacy and numeracy skills that the FSA provides, but at great expense and with negative consequences for schools, teachers and students.

There are two viable sources of data that provide such a snapshot with significantly less disruption to teaching and learning, and that use high quality tests administered to samples of students. These are the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) and the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA).

The PCAP is administered by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), an intergovernmental group formed in 1967 by the provincial ministers of education. This is an assessment of reading, mathematics and science achievement administered to 8th graders every three years. All three areas are tested in each administration of the test, although during each test administration one subject is the primary

focus. The last PCAP testing was in 2010 when mathematics was the primary focus, the next will be in 2013 when science will be the primary focus.

The results of the PCAP are available on the CMEC website:
<http://bit.ly/XeH9gc>.

It may be that much of what we wish to capture in the snapshot of how well BC students are learning foundational skills in reading, writing, and numeracy is already available.

The other large-scale assessment that provides a snapshot of student achievement in basic skills is the PISA, an international assessment instituted in 1997 by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. Seventy countries, including Canada, participate in the PISA. The test alternates its focus on reading, mathematics and science achievement on a 3-year cycle. The last test administration was in 2012 and mathematics was the primary focus.

The results of the PISA are available on the OECD website:
<http://bit.ly/Y9RxM8>.

Both of these testing programs recognize that school programs and curriculum differ from one another, across Canada, and around the world. Neither assessment is tied to a particular curriculum and the tests focus on the skills that would be considered basic for students across educational jurisdictions. Both the PCAP and PISA include data about the context of learning, through surveys of teachers and students. Both assessments have been developed to answer big questions we all have about the quality of schools and student achievement. For example: How well are young adults prepared to meet the challenges of the future? Are they able to analyze, reason and communicate their ideas effectively? Do they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life? Are some kinds of teaching and school organization more effective than others?

Both the PCAP and PISA achieve the goal of providing comprehensive and comparable results on student achievement through the use of sampling procedures—testing a carefully selected sub-group of all students. In 2010, 32,000 Grade 8 students from 1,600 schools across Canada took the PCAP. In 2009, 23,000 students from 1000 schools across Canada took the PISA. This strategy provides trustworthy evidence of students' basic skills and does so with less burden to schools, teachers, students and taxpayers.

In the discussion of alternatives to or re-inventions of the FSA careful consideration ought to be given to whether its primary intended purpose may already be met by other well established, regularly administered assessment programs that allow us to understand student achievement in BC in relation to other provinces and countries. It may be that much of what we wish to capture in the snapshot of how well BC students are learning foundational skills in reading, writing, and numeracy is already available. If something other than a snapshot is the goal of a provincial student assessment program then we need to think carefully about how to meet those other goals appropriately.

*Sandra Mathison
UBC education professor*



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Make a Future – Careers in BC Education is a joint venture among BC's 60 Boards of Education, the BC Ministry of Education and the BC Public School Employers' Association.

www.makeafuture.ca



The link to the new Pacific Blue Cross micro site for members and locals that have joined the new standardized provincial EHB plan is:

www.pac.bluecross.ca/teachers

The site currently contains an overview of the new plan, an FAQ, useful links, a guide to the plan, details of BlueRx, and more.

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A writing contest for Canadian students in Grades 5 to 8

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World Literacy Canada and best-selling author Eric Walters are teaming up to bring you Write for a Better World: a national bilingual writing contest aiming to inspire global citizenship in Canada's youth.

Complete the following paragraph and continue writing for another 400 words.

I felt like I had been shot out of a cannon. Who were these people? Where in the world was I? Before I could get my bearings, I was almost run over by...

Write about a place and culture that is new to you. What is different about it and what is surprisingly the same?

PRIZES: FIRST PLACE wins **\$500** and an **eReader!**

Nine runners-up will receive \$50, plus...the top 10 will receive a full set of *Seven: The Series*, a world map and atlas, and World Literacy Canada swag.

All winners will become published authors and all participating teachers and schools will be gratefully acknowledged.

Visit our website for full contest details, entry form, a teacher resource and more!

www.worldlit.ca, 416-977-0008

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

MESA/PHOENIX Park model trailer in 55+ park, sleeps 4, 4 pools, tennis, bocce, pickle ball, golf, shopping...huge variety of daily activities. \$1350/mo. Nov/Dec. \$1500 Feb/Mar/Apr. includes utilities. 604-463-3151.

THREE WINTER ESCAPES • *Rincon de Guayabitos Resort, Mexico*, 4 bdrm. beach house, or 2 bdrm apartment, walking distance to town La Penita— available Nov, Feb, Mar., Apr. • *Palm Springs*, 2 bdrm, 2 bath townhouse, fully renovated, all amenities, fabulous location. Available Nov, Dec. April, May. • *Gabriola Island*, Beautiful waterfront home, southern exposure, beach access, kayaks culture, art, and recreation, great senior activities. Close to ferry, 20 min. to Nanaimo, VIU, Port Theatre, Vanc. connections. Available Jan. Feb. half March. Information, pictures: billchelsom@shaw.ca

ENGLAND The Cotswolds, cottage suitable for two people. Gorgeous, country walks and history at your doorstep. e-mail: lynette@coulter.plus

QUADRA ISLAND BC Lovely seaside cabin. Sleeps 4. Gorgeous ocean and mountain view. Outdoor sauna. Kayaking to your door step! www.otterhouse.ca

PALM SPRINGS VACATION! Golf, surf, hike, tan, shop, play. BCTF member discounts! <http://www.luxurypalmspringsvilla.com>

GABRIOLA ISLAND BC 2-bdrm cottage, fully furnished, very near sandy beach, 250-247-9883, boysen@shaw.ca www.gabriolacottage.netfirms.com

SALTSPRING ISLAND Beautiful house close to trails and water access in quiet, green south end. Open plan, big kitchen, 2 bdrms, office/craft room, loft, 1 and 1/2 bthrms, garden. \$1500/mo. 604-908-7407 bettyf264@gmail.com

PALM DESERT March 11–18. Marriott Desert Springs townhouse, www.desertspringsresort.com Lock off unit, sleeps max. 4. Access to all hotel amenities, tennis, spa, pools. See finals of BNP Paribas Tennis, \$1,200 all inclusive. Call 604-338-9823.

For Rent/Exchange

VANCOUVER Clean, bright, quiet, centrally located condos at Robson & Bute. 1 bdrm. \$95. daily/wkly/mthly rates. 604-608-4268. dbemc@hotmail.com

Miscellaneous

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

SCHOOL TATTOOS. Temporary tattoos printed with your school's art. Free Graphic Service and Free Tattoo Proof. Website: www.schooltattoos.ca E-mail: info@schooltattoos.ca or call 613-567-2636.

FIELD TRIP. Book a Burns Bog field trip today! A two-hour guided tour costs \$150 per class of up to 30 pupils. Visites guidées en français aussi! Buy For Peat's Sake, our educator's resource guide to peatlands. www.burnsbog.org 604-572-0373, info@burnsbog.org

NEW RESOURCE from School Specialty: Blended-media intervention for Comprehension, Word-Study, and Writing. "MCI" integrates explicit instruction with individualized online training. Includes teacher/student web links, teacher manuals, online/print assessment tools, consumable student booklets, and varied genre graded reading materials. Grade 6–8+ HS interest levels with Grade 3–6 readability. No required staff PD. Contact Eric MacInnis, M.Ed., ric@eduskills.ca 1-800-709-1952, www.eps.schoolspecialty.com/MCI

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

VOICE LESSONS, White Rock area. Ivy Charyna, SD#36 Music and Drama teacher. 604-817-7174 ivycharyna@gmail.com

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

TEACH IN CHINA for 2 or 4 weeks in July 2013. Interested? Check us out at www.china-connection.ca

PD Calendar

February 2013

14–15 Vancouver. BCAEA (BC Alternate Education Association) “Challenge and Change.” Keynote Gabor Mate. 30 different sessions focused on helping at-risk youth presented in varying styles and topics including technology, film-making, art, outdoor education, and mental health. Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre. Register online at <http://bctf.ca/bcaea/conference.html> For more information, contact DJ Pauls at djpauls@shaw.ca

15 Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney, BC. Social Thinking Meets RTI & PBS—presented by: Gretchen Schmidt-Mertes, M.Ed. in Special Education. Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tiered method of academic intervention designed to provide early, effective assistance to struggling learners at increasing levels of intensity. It is designed to address the learning needs of all students, school-wide, through academic supports aligned with individual student need. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) focuses on decreasing problem behaviour with a range of positive interventions. For details: <http://bit.ly/Ukqgjh>

15–16 Victoria, BC. Tapestry Conference. Hosted by the teachers' associations of Greater Victoria (61), Sooke (62) and Saanich (63). Tapestry hosts a variety of workshops (50+) for educators of K-12. Conference registration website is www.onlineregistrations.ca/tapestry

15–20 Online. Teaching at a distance: What does the research say about delivering K–12 online learning? Reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic (three Rs) have gone cyber. With this change come changes in the role of the educator. This CEET Meet delves into how the evolution of distance education has changed the role of the teacher and split it into multiple compartmentalized roles. It will discuss the PD needed to prepare the teacher for teaching in the online learning environment. It also explores the K–12 curriculum and describes how distance education has the potential to change the learning environment. Register at <http://ceetbc.ning.com/page/ceetmeets>

21–22 Richmond. SEA (Special Education Association) Annual spring conference “Scattered Minds, Beyond the Medical Model: A bio-psychosocial view of attention deficit disorder and other childhood developmental disorders.” Keynote: Gabor Mate. Two-day conference at Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, 7551 Westminster Highway, Richmond. Contact information: Alison Ogden, conference chair, seaconferencechair@gmail.com. Please see our website www.seaofbc.ca for conference program information.

22–27 Online. Three big trends in technology—the Internet of things, the rise of mobiles, and the consumerization of technology—are completely reshaping the way we engage with information and each other. The goal of this CEET Meet is to collaboratively produce a white paper assessing the effect of these trends on education and sketching out a vision for the future school. The course tutor is Brad Ovenell-Carter, the director of Educational Technologies at Mulgrave School in Vancouver. Register: <http://ceetbc.ning.com/page/ceetmeets>

26 Kelowna, BC. Understanding Mental Illness. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: www.ctrinstitute.com, 204-452-9199, e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

27 Vancouver, BC. Understanding Mental Illness. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: www.ctrinstitute.com, 204-452-9199, e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

28 Victoria, BC. Understanding Mental Illness. Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute Inc. To register or for more information: www.ctrinstitute.com, 204-452-9199, e-mail info@ctrinstitute.com

March 2013

8 SFU Harbour Centre, Vancouver, BC. How Schools & Families Can Prepare Adolescents with Autism for the Social Challenges of Adulthood—presented by: Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D. Children with ASD grow up, and as the numbers of adolescents and adults with ASD expand, we need to consider how to prepare them for the challenges of adult life. This presentation will provide an overview of the components of effective, behavioral

analytic intervention with older learners. Specific topics include community transition, employment, behavior support, healthy sexuality, and quality of life. For details: <http://bit.ly/UDmZdE>

8–13 Moviestorm Made Easy. Moviestorm is a fast, fun, easy software application that lets anyone make 3D animated movies on their computer. This CEET Meet will show you how to make a simple movie from start to finish. It covers set building, character creation, directing, dialogue, filming, editing, visual effects, sound and music, titles and credits, and rendering. The course tutor is David Le Blanc, an experienced online guide, Moodle expert and eLearning practitioner. <http://ceetbc.ning.com/page/ceetmeets>

April 2013

12–17 Online. Beyond the Bake Sale Building Community in Schools and Districts. This workshop will explore the notion of community, building trust, relationships, and social capital with parents and community through technology and social media; be it local, global, and blended. The course moderator is Dean Shareski, Community Manager of the Canadian Discovery Educators Network, Discovery Education. <http://ceetbc.ning.com/page/ceetmeets>

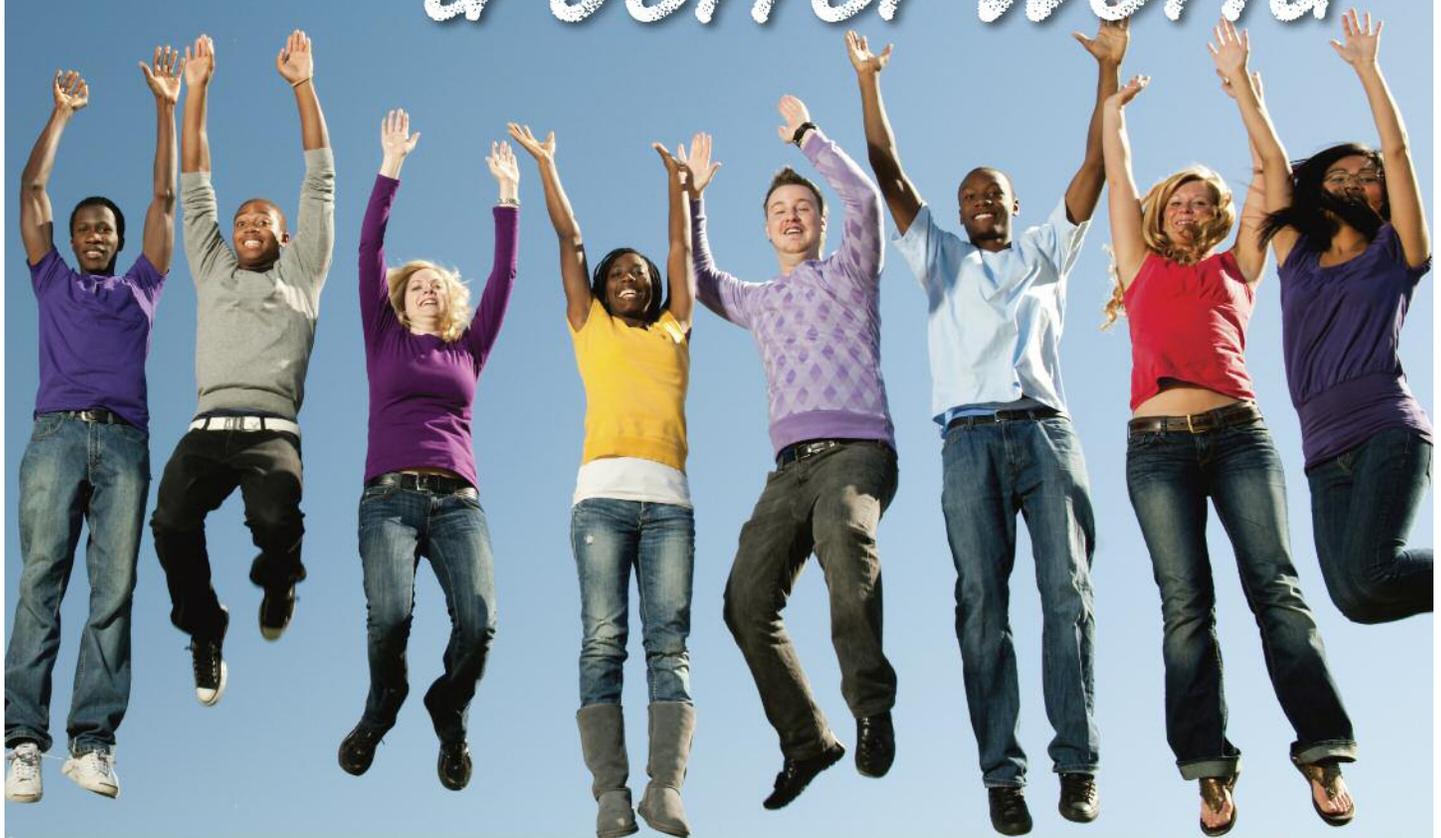
20 Victoria, BC. Solfa Success, Smart Recorder and Love to Listen presented by Denise Gagne. University of Victoria, MacLaurin Building, Room A166 from 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Lunch included! Lots of great ideas! More info and registration at BC Kodaly Society of Canada website <http://www.bcksc.ca>, or call 250-589-5108.

Future October PSA Days:
2013 - 2014: October 25, 2013
2014 - 2015: October 24, 2014
2015 - 2016: October 23, 2015

PD Calendar website

<http://tinyurl.com/94nz4m5>
Additions/changes:
Contact Betty Goto at
bgoto@bctf.ca

Teachers build a better world



Source image: Christopher Fulcher/Getty Images/Thinkstock

BCTF conference for new teachers, student teachers, and new TTOCs

Radisson Hotel

8181 Cambie Road

Richmond, BC V6X 3X9

**MARCH
1-2
2013**

- * visit resource fair
- * attend workshops
- * meet with Susan Lambert, BCTF President
- * network with other new teachers
- * collect valuable classroom materials

Conference registration information and program available on the BCTF website
bctf.ca/NewTeachersConference2013/

Registration opens January 2013

For registration information contact Marion Shukin 604-871-1804 mshukin@bctf.ca
or Cécilia Huard de la Marre chuarddelamarre@bctf.ca 604-871-1869 or 1-800-663-9163

For conference information contact Marie-Claude Tremblay, conference co-ordinator
mctremblay@bctf.ca 604-871-1844 or 1-800-663-9163. Twitter: #BCTFntc



BC Teachers' Federation