

Teacher

Newsmagazine
BC Teachers' Federation
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September 2013

Social worker or teacher?

**That was
the decision
Jim Iker had to
make when he
was in Grade 13**

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President's message



Jim Iker

Welcome back. I truly hope that the 2013–14 school year is a productive, gratifying, and a happy year for you and for your students. I want to especially welcome and acknowledge new teachers whether you are beginning your career as teachers teaching on call, on temporary short-term contracts, or hopefully, as continuing contract teachers. All teachers really do make a difference in so many of our students' lives. Despite the many challenges that lie ahead this year, we need to remember we teach because we love what we do.

I describe this past summer as “the calm” and I hope all of you had the opportunity to enjoy summer's offerings. As much as we hope the calm continues, we need to be prepared for a change. CUPE

members are without a contract and the government is declaring that any costs related to a new collective agreement must be borne by school districts—that is unacceptable and really code for more cuts at the local level.

We return to the Supreme Court of BC to seek a proper remedy to the stripping of our collective agreement in 2002, and to reaffirm our constitutional right to bargain collectively without the fear or threat of punitive legislation or fines. Once our court case is completed, we will return to the bargaining table in early October.

What will it take to get a collective agreement for teachers? Minister Fassbender needs to scrap the 10-year sound bite and come to the table prepared to negotiate in good faith, bringing the necessary funding to enable a fair deal for teachers and provide better support for kids. Government also needs to ensure increased stable funding to bring BC from the bottom to at least the Canadian average. That's what teachers, students, parents, and public education need. That is how real labour peace and stability will be achieved.

September is also a time for renewal; it's our own “new year”

in so many ways. One of the best ways to renew one's teaching self is through professional development. Thank you to all the teachers, PSA executives, and organizing committees who have worked so hard to prepare conferences, workshops, and events leading up to and including the provincial PSA day, Friday, October 25.

Yes, the year ahead will be challenging, but we can build on our accomplishments from last year: Project of Heart—our participation was highest in the country. We hope you were able to join the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's events planned for mid-September. Teachers around the province have been advocating for antihomophobia policies in their school districts—now there are 25. I know the advocacy will continue because we have 35 more districts to go.

I remain optimistic despite the challenges ahead, because challenges are also opportunities. We are a strong union; we make a difference, especially when we act together. I am honoured to be your new president. I look forward to working on your behalf.

With solidarity,
Jim

Teacher

Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

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CALM Canadian Association of Labour Media
CEPA Canadian Educational Press Association



New editor, new look, new distribution



Susan Croll, Teacher newsmag editor, is a former classroom teacher, support teacher, and teacher-librarian from Maple Ridge.



Kathleen Smith, assistant editor, has worked on the newsmagazine for 26 years.

New look

With the advent of digital publishing we have changed the size and layout of the newsmagazine to accommodate both print and digital style. We hope you like it.

New distribution

This September edition only is being sent to all members and retired teachers; the March pre-AGM edition will also be sent to all members.

For the October edition and onward we will send one copy for every three members at school locations.

TTOCs will continue to receive a copy at their home.

Retired teachers

This September edition is being sent to all retired teachers who have retired in the last 5 years or people who have requested it. This distribution will change with the October edition onward. **We will no longer send copies to retired teachers unless we hear from you that you would still like to receive it.**

1. Contact us via e-mail at magdistribution@bctf.ca if you would like to continue to receive a *print* copy of *Teacher* at your home, include your name and address.
2. If you only want to be alerted via a group e-mail when *Teacher* is available online at bctf.ca/newsmag, send your name and your e-mail address to us at: magdistribution@bctf.ca

Write to us

Teacher newsmagazine is looking for writers like you. Do you have a story to tell, an experience to share, an idea you just can't keep to yourself?

We are looking for teachers to write about educational topics whether they relate to daily life in the classroom, professional issues, initiatives and activities, research about teaching, learning, and children in general.

Please send articles to: newsmag@bctf.ca

Articles should be no longer than 800 words; photos and graphics must be high resolution. For more information, contact Kathleen Smith, ksmith@bctf.ca, 604-871-1876, toll free 1-800-663-9163.

Schedules and deadlines: bctf.ca/newsmag

Looking back

10 years ago...

The BC Liberals have now taken political control of the College of Teachers. The new council of political appointees gives government, parents, and management representatives control over the affairs of the college. It now reports directly to Minister of Education Christy Clark. In the event that the college does something that the minister doesn't like, the minister has the statutory authority to disallow any by-laws of the college. In BC, teaching is no longer a self-regulating profession. Our profession is the only profession that does not have a majority of its governing council represented by elected members.

– September 2003, *Teacher* newsmagazine

– Chris Bocking, Keating Elementary School, Saanich

Who is Jim Iker?

By Susan Croll

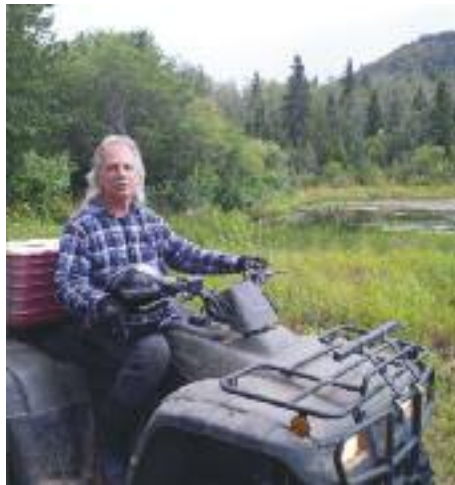
Social worker or teacher? That was the decision Jim Iker had to make when he was in Grade 13 in Oakville, Ontario, one of the southern Ontario communities where he grew up. Teaching won out, and after receiving an honour's degree in Political Science and Sociology at McMaster University, Jim enrolled at Dalhousie University in Halifax and completed his Bachelor of Education.

After travelling across the country and spending time on both east and west coasts, he realized he wanted to live in another part of Canada, preferably somewhere coastal or remote. In 1977, he submitted applications to school districts on both the east and west coasts as well as in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. He was qualified to teach at either the elementary or secondary level and as many teachers do, chose the first position offered to him and that happened to be a Grade 2/3 primary class in Topley, BC.

Topley is a small, unincorporated village not far from Burns Lake and is part of the Nechako Lakes School District. Like so many other interior communities, Topley once thrived with forestry, mining, and ranching driving the economy. Topley Elementary School, where he worked was bursting at the seams with 212 children and was the heart of this bustling community.

Jim is a versatile teacher and taught kids in nearly every elementary grade—including Kindergarten. He also was a teacher counsellor, learning assistance, and special

education teacher. Working from the BCTF building in Vancouver for the last six years, as 1st, then 2nd vice-president, and now as president, means that Jim is currently out of the classroom but he still fondly remembers times spent with his students and their families.



"I loved taking my Kindergarten students skiing. We went downhill skiing three times each year and it was amazing to see how much these little kids improved over three outings. The kids loved it and their families got involved too. It was fabulous."

"Another time, I took my Grade 6/7 class on a week-long field trip to Vancouver. Some of the students had never been south of Prince George. There were 16 kids, 3 parents, and me. We went to many places in Vancouver, including Science World, the Aquarium, the Planetarium, the children's festival, and travelled the Royal Hudson train to Squamish, but I think the kids just might have enjoyed the hotel pool the most."

As sawmills modernized and became more efficient and mines closed, many Topley families were left with little option but to move. There were enough children left in the community, but because of funding cuts to school districts, Topley Elementary School was closed in June 2010. Cheryl, Jim's wife and also a teacher in Topley, now teaches in a neighbouring community, Decker Lake, 45 kilometers from home. The area's economy has been sustained due to work harvesting wood devastated by the pine beetle, but it is difficult to attract families because there is no longer a school for their children.

Jim got involved in his local union, the Burns Lake District Teachers' Union, the first year of teaching. It was a natural step for him as he was drawn to social justice issues in secondary school and university, namely the grape boycott campaign led by Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers between 1965 and 1970. Bargaining, and achieving better working and learning conditions for teachers and students is also what Jim loves to do and he has much experience. He and his local bargaining team negotiated three contracts between 1988 and 1994, and he was also a member of the first provincial bargaining committee in 1995.

Although disappointed by the Liberal government's re-election, Jim is steadfast that our bargaining priorities would not have changed regardless of who formed government on May 14. He believes that the Liberals' chief motivation for pushing the idea of a 10-year contract has one central purpose and that is to silence teachers and the BCTF. "Be assured, 10 years has

nothing to do with labour stability, and everything to do with trying to shut down our collective voices to change working and learning conditions and advocate for increased, stable funding for a strong public education system.”

If Jim were education minister he’d move on three key areas. First, he would develop a relationship with the BCTF based on respect for the important work we do with students and for public education. He’d negotiate a deal at the bargaining table with the necessary funding to achieve it. He’d develop a funding plan to bring education funding in line with other provinces in Canada, so BC was not the worst in the country. His concerns extend beyond his own members though. “To be a trade unionist in 2013 means we need to continue our advocacy to improve economic and working conditions for all working people and for a just society. We need a strong social safety net and we need to decrease the inequity that’s prevalent in this country now.”

Jim was first elected to the BCTF Executive Committee in 2002 and served in that position for five years. He knew that when he ran for 2nd vice-president that there was a chance he might become BCTF president one day.

“I knew that I could run for president if I had the trust of our members and the support of my family. I believe that I have that trust and support and that is why I let my name stand. While I am in this role, I want to accomplish a number of things, but my priorities are to negotiate a collective

agreement, continue to advocate for increased and stable funding for public education, and to keep our union strong as a social justice union of professionals.”

Topley may be small but there is never a shortage of things to do for Jim when he goes home. He has 50 acres of land, mostly brush, swamp, and fields to take care of. Because he lives in the north, winters can be mighty cold. Jim and Cheryl heat their house with wood. Going home in the fall means cutting wood, which he enjoys, making sure their wood supply is replenished. Jim manages to get home about four days a month. He enjoys taking long walks and the peace and quiet his home and area have to offer. “Going home to the north grounds me,” says Jim. Cutting the lawn, which he also enjoys, in the spring and summer is no mean feat either—it takes four hours.

Still there is time to do more pleasurable and relaxing things like spending time with Cheryl, going out on his ATV, listening to music—his favourite kinds of music are classic rock and what he labels as new alternative music. His favourite musician grew up in Ontario too and is none other than Neil Young. Sometimes in the winter, he even can find the time to play a game of hockey with his friends (he plays goal), or go out snowmobiling on the trails, logging roads, and lakes near his home.

Jim typically spends some of summer vacation with the rest of his family; he is a father and a happy grandfather. His son who lives in Sudbury

has three children and his daughter living in Edmonton has one son.

A teaching career that spans 36 years sees many changes, but Jim explains that while there are more students who have IEPs and there are more kids with complex learning needs, the biggest change is the ongoing underfunding of the system. “Quite simply, there are fewer resources now, larger class sizes, fewer learning specialist teachers, and more demands placed on teachers. There is way less support for the classroom; the money just isn’t forthcoming and that is wrong.”

Cuts and problems aside, Jim has sound advice for any new teacher entering the profession: “Become involved in your local union and the BCTF, and find your balance between work and your own personal life so you can really enjoy the kids you teach. There is nothing like walking away at the end of the day with that feeling of enjoyment you get from working with kids.”

Susan Croll, Teacher newsmagazine editor, BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division



Jim and his granddaughter.

2013 bargaining timeline

Fall 2012

- The government asks BCTF, BCPSEA, and other “partner groups” for input regarding bargaining structures for public school teachers.

December 2012

- The BCTF submits Teacher Bargaining Structures brief to the Ministry of Education.*
- BCTF Bargaining Team is appointed.
- BCTF and BCPSEA sign a Framework Agreement in-committee.**

January 2013

- BCTF and BCPSEA ratify Framework Agreement.
- The Liberal government releases its White Paper on Teacher Bargaining calling for a 10-year deal.
- The BCTF responds to the white paper rejecting the concept of the 10-year deal and limits to bargaining rights and abilities.

February 2013

- Bargaining begins and the BCTF and BCPSEA sign a protocol agreement for negotiations.

May 2013

- Bargaining breaks during election campaign.
- Liberals are re-elected as government.
- Government informs the BCTF of its intent to pursue a 10-year “deal.” A similar letter is sent to BCPSEA.

June 2013

- Peter Fassbender is appointed Minister of Education.
- Mr. Fassbender asks BCTF and BCPSEA to “pause” 5 months of bargaining and appoints Peter Cameron to replace BCPSEA as government negotiator.
- Peter Fassbender sends each BCTF member a letter explaining that a 10-year deal is necessary for labour peace. Teachers en masse respond to Mr. Fassbender. BCTF calls for bargaining to continue.
- BCTF locals conduct a membership vote that overwhelmingly reaffirms confidence in the bargaining committee and opposes any interference in the bargaining process.

July 2013

- Liberal government fires BCPSEA Board and appoints Michael Marchbank, CEO of the Health Employer’s Association to take its place.
- BCTF reiterates that regardless of who sits across the table, the government must provide resources that address class size and composition, salary, and preparation time.
- What’s next? Stay tuned!

Winter/Spring 2013

- Bargaining continues and Bargaining updates are posted on the BCTF portal for members to read.

* The BCTF proposes full local and provincial bargaining including the right to bargain class size, class composition, and staffing levels for specialist teachers.

** This framework outlines the rules for this round of bargaining. Highlights include an expansion of items that can be bargained locally, the appointment of a mutually agreed-to facilitator (Marc Brown), the development of a common set of data regarding compensation, working conditions, demographics, and other relevant labour market issues.

With much-needed funding, we can achieve a negotiated solution

By Glen Hansman

In the spring of 2012, the provincial government legislated net-zero and a two-year term for the collective agreement that expired June 2013. This quick turn-around time was not of the teachers' choosing, and it meant that as soon as one set of negotiations ended, preparations for another one had to begin right away.

Since 1994, when the BC NDP government imposed the awkward provincial bargaining model that is in place in this province for teachers in the public system, negotiations have been frustrating for numerous reasons—though not because of teachers' efforts to negotiate fairly. When the process worked, as it did

To be clear, in the last few weeks of the last round of bargaining, the BCTF wrote to the Premier and Minister of Education asking to have direct talks on salary and other major cost items...

in 2006, it was because government provided the employer's side of the table with the recourses necessary to reach a deal. In June 2006, the BCTF and BCPSEA (which represented school districts and the provincial government) reached a five-year agreement that saw substantial improvements in each year of that agreement because the funding was

made available to do so. In other rounds, government has heavily intervened.

Sometimes this intervention has derailed the whole bargaining process—2002's Bills 27 and 28 being the prime examples. The latter piece of legislation was declared unconstitutional by the BC Supreme Court in 2011. Intervention also came in the form of so-called net-zero mandates and ridiculous concessions that simply negate any possibility of a negotiated agreement.

The scope of provincial bargaining has also proved to be unwieldy, with many items stuck at the provincial table that would more effectively be dealt with by the local parties—namely, individual BCTF locals and their school districts.

And so, prior to the present round of negotiations opening, the BCTF and BCPSEA continued to discuss different ways of approaching bargaining given the current legislative structure. These discussions culminated in an unprecedented framework agreement reached in December 2012 and ratified by both parties in January 2013.

This framework agreement established some procedures for the present round of bargaining—including the use of a facilitator, timelines for opening negotiations

and tabling of proposals, and process for costing items. It also included the agreement between the parties to shift some important, substantive items back to the local parties—namely, how jobs are posted and filled, how layoff and recall occurs in a district.

The government's white paper came as a surprise, and was universally panned when it was released, not only by teachers and trustees, but by the media as well...

This framework agreement represents the first change to how bargaining is conducted since 1995, and was seen as a significant step toward a more positive round of negotiations.

Of course, much would also depend upon whether the employer was willing and able to come to the table with the necessary funding to address key items.

At around the same time as the ratification of the framework agreement by BCTF and BCPSEA (the latter of which, it should be pointed out again, includes senior representatives from government), the provincial government released a document of its own—it's white paper on teacher bargaining that had a different set of ideas about

how bargaining should proceed. To be clear, in the last few weeks of the last round of bargaining, the BCTF wrote to the Premier and Minister of Education asking to have direct talks on salary and other

The bargaining context is the political context and the political context is the bargaining context.

major cost items that were at the bargaining table given the fact that BCPSEA had no resources to offer. In a brief submitted to government in the fall of 2012, the BCTF made a similar pitch, arguing that direct talks with government on matters like salary and class size made more sense if government wasn't prepared to equip BCPSEA with the necessary resources to tackle those items at the bargaining table.

The government's white paper came as a surprise, and was universally panned when it was released, not only by teachers and trustees, but by the media as well who jumped on the suggestion of a 10-year deal as bizarre and unrealistic, and who chided the government for seemingly trying to ambush the framework agreement.

It seemed for a while that the white paper would disappear. Minister of Education Don McRae would mention it when he spoke to provincial partner groups, and one meeting was held with him to discuss its content. It was at this meeting that Minister McRae conceded that it would be foolish for any government to lock itself into a set of wage increases 10 years out. When pressed on the matter, McRae stated that the only real selling point for teachers in

the white paper was the promise of stability. No commitment was made to meaningfully address class size, class composition, staffing ratios for specialist teachers, or the gap in salary and preparation time between BC teachers and teachers in the rest of Canada.

By this time, collective bargaining had already opened, as per the terms of the framework agreement. The BCTF and BCPSEA provincial bargaining teams began their work at the beginning of February, signing a protocol agreement that further established how negotiations would proceed.

The protocol agreement contained several items that also departed from practice in previous rounds—most importantly, the inclusion of a commitment to keep all proposals away from the public realm.

The BCTF could speak broadly about the class size, class composition, the importance of learning specialist teachers, and the need to get salaries and preparation time more in-line with other Canadian teachers, but the details of specific proposals would be kept at the table. Meanwhile, local bargaining tables were also hard at work in most school districts around the province.

The bargaining context is the political context and the political context is the bargaining context. The outcome of the May provincial election was not what most teachers hoped for—but bargaining must continue nonetheless.

The BC Liberal Party's platform contained a reference to the 10-year concept, though education itself did not figure prominently in any party's

campaign, and did not get featured in the televised debate or in the main advertising conducted by the political parties.

Nonetheless, after the provincial election and the appointment of Peter Fassbender as new Minister of Education, the 10-year concept and the white paper were raised again.

Susan Lambert, Jim Iker, and I met with Minister Fassbender near the end of the school year to discuss government's intentions. Peter Cameron was appointed by government to be the new lead on bargaining for government and to advance government's new mandate—despite the fact that negotiations had been on-going since February, deadlines for tabling

The outcome of the May provincial election was not what most teachers hoped for—but bargaining must continue nonetheless.

proposals had long-since passed, and talks were very cordial.

Our provincial bargaining team and Susan, Jim and I met with Peter Cameron (who was accompanied by BCPSEA's Allan Schell and BCSTA president Teresa Rezanoff) during the last week of school to hear what he thought his role was at this juncture. That same week, the BCTF conducted a province-wide vote.

Ninety-six per cent of BC teachers who voted expressed support for their bargaining team and opposition to government interference in the negotiation process. The vote also sends a strong message to government to provide

the necessary resources to achieve an agreement at the table.

Bargaining will resume early in the school year, once the 19 days at the BC Supreme Court conclude for our Bill 28 (remedy) and Bill 22 cases. Over the summer, Minister Fassbender dismissed the BCPSEA board out of the blue, and announced that a single government appointee would assume the role and function of that board—effectively removing the decision-making power of trustees in the provincial bargaining process.

The BCTF has never been in favour of the current provincial bargaining model nor a fan of BCPSEA. But the BCTF did not ask for the BCPSEA board to be fired or for democratically-elected trustees to be pushed aside. Minister Fassbender has publicly stated that the BC School Trustees' Association will have an elevated role, but it is still unclear what this role will be.

Regardless of who is sitting across from our bargaining team at the provincial table, government needs to provide the funding necessary to reach a deal.

More than anyone, teachers want stability in public education. We are open to a longer-term agreement.

With political will in Victoria and much-needed resources at the table and in the classroom, we can achieve a negotiated solution.

Glen Hansman, BCTF first vice-president and Vancouver teacher.

For more updates on bargaining, please go to the mybctf.ca portal.



Compassionate-care leave

Sometimes members find that they may have to deal with situations involving seriously ill parents, spouses, or other members of their family.

What collective agreement provisions are there to take leave to care for a seriously ill family member?

The teachers' provincial collective agreement provides compassionate-care leave for all members

BCTF members are entitled to eight weeks of leave in units of one or more weeks to care for a member of their family or their spouse's family, including a parent, child, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, foster child, or anyone who is considered to be like a close relative regardless of whether or not they are related by blood, adoption, marriage, or common-law partnership.

Members taking compassionate-care leave are entitled to Employment Insurance benefits, and the collective agreement requires the school district to supplement those benefits to 100% of the member's salary for the duration of the leave.

A medical certificate may be required to substantiate that the purpose of the leave is for providing care or support to a family member having a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death.

Seniority accrual and benefit coverage continues during the leave.

For full details, contact your local union office or see new Provincial Collective Agreement, Article G.2: <http://bit.ly/17fcgAG>

Provincial specialist association conferences



By Glen Hansman

Every year, at Provincial Specialist Association annual conferences, thousands of BCTF members enhance their skills and renew their

dedication to their professional practice. Planning has been under way all spring and summer for the numerous PSA conferences that are coming up in October.

The BCTF currently supports 32 PSAs that are sources of professional assistance within the Federation. Through PSAs, BCTF members exchange ideas on research, teaching strategies, curriculum development, and other shared interests. There are 25 conferences in October 2013 and two in February 2014.

These conferences are organized by volunteers (your teacher colleagues) whose aim is to provide the best professional development at the best price possible. Each year, PSA officers meet for scores of hours, produce publications, and respond to issues and needs, all to improve services to colleagues and students (feeding directly into offerings that are made available at the conferences). Since these specialist conferences are planned, co-ordinated, and largely carried out by other BC teachers, they're great professional learning opportunities grounded in the realities of working in BC schools.

The BCTF has increased the grants available to PSAs over the past few years, and invested in numerous initiatives to raise profiles within the Federation and to support the work they do. An on-line membership system for PSAs is now available—<https://bctf.ca/psajoin.aspx>—making it easy to join or renew your membership. Now is a good time to join a specialist association, or renew your involvement; attending a conference is a good way to do that.

Check out the diverse offerings listed here, and encourage your colleagues to do the same!

Many PSAs encourage the use of social media during their conferences to broaden the conversation across different conferences, and for those who cannot attend in person.

If you are on Twitter, you should check out the #BCTFpd hashtag around conference time, and join the professional dialogue.



October 2013

Art

October 24–26 Surrey. BCATA (BC Art Teachers' Association) annual conference "Draw Yourself In." Princess Margaret Secondary School and Kwantlen Polytechnic University. <http://bcata.ca> or contact Jane Skipsey at: skipsey_j@surreyschools.ca



Business ed

October 25 Surrey. BCBEA (BC Business Education Association) "BizTech 2013." Kwantlen Polytechnic University, 12666 72nd Avenue, Surrey. www.bcbea.ca or contact Harmale Sangha at 778-838-6578.

Computer-using educators

October 25 Vancouver. CUEBC (Computer-Using Educators of BC) annual fall conference includes keynote speaker and over 30 workshops. David Thompson Secondary School, 1755 East 55th Avenue, Vancouver. Mike Silvertown at msilvertown@cuebc.ca or go to <http://cuebc.ca/cue>

Counsellors

October 24–25 Richmond. BCSCA (BC School Counsellors' Association) annual conference: "Agents of Change: Counselling in a wired world." Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel, 3500 Cessna Drive, Richmond. Contact: info@bcscaconference.ca or visit <http://www.bcscaconference.ca>

Culinary arts

October 25–26 Nanaimo. BCCASA (BC Culinary Arts Specialist Association) annual fall conference "Great Big Sea." Registration and more details at <http://www.bctf.ca/bccasa> For more information, contact Eric Mac Neill at emacneill@sd68.bc.ca

Dance

October 25 Vancouver. BCDEA (BC Dance Educators' Association) annual conference is at Gladstone Secondary School, 4105 Gladstone Street, Vancouver. Keynote speaker, nine workshops to choose from for elementary and secondary school educators. kwolski@sd35.bc.ca or wmullens@sd38.bc.ca

Distributed learning

October 25 Vancouver. BCEDLPSA (BC Educators for Distributed Learning PSA) will be offering workshops relating to distributed learning at the CUEBC (Computer-Using Educators of BC) annual fall conference. David Thompson Secondary School, 1755 East 55th Avenue, Vancouver. Mike Silvertown at msilvertown@cuebc.ca or go to <http://cuebc.ca/cue>

Drama

October 25–26 Vernon. ABCDE (Association of BC Drama Educators) annual fall conference "Exploring the Dramatic Interior." WL Seaton Secondary School, 2701 41st Avenue, Vernon. <http://abcde.ourconference.ca> or contact Lana OBrien at lobrien@sd22.bc.ca

English as a second language

October 25 West Vancouver. ESLPSA (English as a Second Language Provincial Specialist Association) Annual fall conference "Elevating Their Voices: Connecting communities." West Vancouver Secondary School, 1750 Mathers Avenue, West Vancouver. Marc Tremblay at mt4919@gmail.com, To register, go to http://ellpsa.ca/?page_id=26

English language arts

October 24–26 Delta. BCTELA (BC Teachers of English Language Arts) annual fall conference, "Multiple Perspectives, Diverse Texts." Delta Secondary School, 4615 51st Street, Ladner. <http://bctela.ca>

Environmental ed

October 25 Vancouver. EEPSEA (Environmental Educators' PSA) is hosting a fall conference on Outdoor Education Programs and Clubs. Stanley Park Ecology Society, Stanley Park. Check eepsa.org or contact metcalfe_s@surreyschools.ca

French immersion

October 24–26 Richmond. APPIPC (Association Provinciale des Professeurs de l'Immersion et du Programme-Francophone BC) Conférence annuelle "L'APPIPC, au-delà des frontières." Executive Airport Plaza, 7311 Westminster Highway, Richmond. <http://www.congresappipc.ca>

Gifted, talented, creative

October 25 Vancouver, BC. AEGTCCBC (Association for Educators of Gifted, Talented & Creative Children in BC) "Engaging Gifted Students through Problem-Based Learning" Holiday Inn Express Vancouver—Metrotown, 4405 Central Blvd., Burnaby. Register at: <http://www.aegtcabc.ca> Contact Elizabeth Ensing, ebbensing@gmail.com or phone 604-574-0465.

Home economics

October 25 Coquitlam, BC. THESA (Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association) annual fall conference, "We ARE the Life App for That." Pinetree Secondary School, 3000 Pinewood Avenue, Coquitlam. <http://www.thesaconference.ca> or e-mail: info@thesaconference.ca or contact Denise Nembhard at dnembhard@sd43.bc.ca

Intermediate

October 25–26 Burnaby. PITA (Provincial Intermediate Teachers' Association) annual fall conference. Over 70 workshops with ideas to inspire and support Grade 4–9 teachers in all subject areas. Byrne Creek Secondary School, 7777 18th Street, Burnaby. Register at: www.pita.ca
For more information, contact president@pita.ca

Learning assistance

October 25 Vancouver. LATA (Learning Assistance Teachers' Association) "Success Through Self-Regulation: The key to 21st century learning." Sir Winston Churchill Secondary, 7055 Heather Street. Events page at: <http://www.latabc.com>
Info contact: maureen.bencze@sd23.bc.ca

Mathematics

October 25 Richmond. BCAMT (BC Association of Mathematics Teachers) is hosting its annual fall conference, "Math Outside the Box" at Steveston-London Secondary School, Richmond. www.bcamt.ca

Modern languages

October 25 Burnaby. BCATML (BC Association of Teachers of Modern Languages). The BCATML will host its annual fall "Celebrating Languages! 2013" conference at Burnaby South Secondary School and Michael J. Fox Theatre.
<http://www.bcatml.org>

Music

October 24–26 Richmond. BCMEA (BC Music Educators' Association) The annual BCMEA conference, River Rock Hotel and Resort, 8811 River Road,

Richmond. Register on-site or online at <http://www.bcmea.conference.com/Home.html>
Contact Ethan Shoemaker at shoemaker.ea@gmail.com

Peace and global ed

October 25 Surrey. PAGE (BC Teachers for Peace and Global Education) fall conference "Education for an Economics of Happiness." Fraser Heights Secondary School, 16060 108th Avenue, Surrey. www.pagebc.ca.
Contact: Betty Gilgoff, 604-732-8941.

Primary

October 25 Vancouver. BCPTA (BC Primary Teachers' Association) Primary Leadership Conference "Teaching from the Heart." Renaissance Vancouver Harbourside Hotel, 1133 West Hastings Street, Vancouver. www.bcpta.ca
Registrar: Joy Silver, odetojoy@telus.net, 604-941-2606.

Science

October 25 Richmond. BCScTA (BC Science Teachers' Association) "Catalyst 2013." Cambie Secondary School, 4151 Jacombs Road, Richmond. www.bcscta.ca
or contact person: cscta@gmail.com



Social studies

October 25 Vancouver. BCSSTA (BC Social Studies Teachers' Association) "Making Sense of Changing Worlds." Vancouver Technical Secondary School, 2600 East Broadway, Vancouver. <http://bcssta.wordpress.com/10-2>
More info: <http://bcssta.wordpress.com>
Any questions e-mail: bcssta@gmail.com

Teacher-librarians

October 25 Maple Ridge. BCTLA (BC Teacher-Librarians' Association) "Whet N' Wild in Rainy Haney." Thomas Haney Secondary School, 23000 116th Avenue, Maple Ridge.
<http://bctf.ca/bctla/conference>
or contact Halia Hirniak at haliah@shaw.ca

Technology ed

October 25 Squamish. BCTEA (BC Technology Education Association) "Rebuilding for the Future" at Howe Sound Secondary School, 38430 Buckley Avenue, Squamish.
www.bctea.org, Contact: Vicki Schenk, vschenk@sd48.bc.ca

An on-line membership system for PSAs is now available; making it easy to join or renew your membership.

<https://bctf.ca/psa/join.aspx>

Now is a good time to join a specialist association, or renew your involvement; attending a conference is a good way to do that.

Who we are, what we do

By Jim Hooper

Responding to the current wave of mental and emotional troubles among students is a key pre-occupation of school counsellors and of our professional body, the British Columbia School Counsellors' Association (BCSCA).

As the association most intimately involved in promoting the mental well-being of children and youth in BC schools, the BCSCA takes the leading role in offering professional development and program information to counsellors and teachers.

Although we've seen wide-ranging cutbacks in school, government and agency services to young people in recent years, there are some new initiatives, and the BCSCA helps to co-ordinate and publicize them. This year we are active participants in several organizations and projects.

The BC School-Centred Mental Health Coalition meets every few months and brings together representatives of counsellors, teachers, and administrators, in addition to medical, government, social work, and other people. The goal is to share information and to co-ordinate approaches to young people's mental health.

We are active in the new Child and Youth Mental Health Collaborative,

which strives to streamline and improve services in the area served by the Interior Health Authority.

We also participate in the Community Action Initiative aimed at alleviating poverty, isolation, and other social ills that bedevil families.

Our members are acutely aware of the need to advocate and to make sure that effective counselling is available to all students who need it. We are working on modern reformulations of our roles and responsibilities as counsellors.

We're developing our communications too. Recently we have joined Twitter (@bcscsca) and Facebook (British Columbia School Counsellors), refreshed our web site, reworked our list of local contacts in BC school districts, and expanded the membership and use of our listserve.

Our annual fall conference is a crucial element in our executive's efforts to create a community of school counsellors in the province.

This year's conference, "Agents of Change: Counselling in a Wired World" is October 24-25 in Richmond. We invite counsellors and teachers of all levels, and other interested professionals. A survey is planned on the views and experiences of school counsellors throughout BC.

There are sessions on apps for combatting anxiety, photo therapy, dealing with cyber and other bullying, self-regulation, developing healthy relationships in teens, treating depression, dealing with stress, engaging families in counselling, promoting school connectedness, promoting post-secondary success, legal/ethical issues, and what counsellors should know about the new *Family Law Act*.

The conference also offers sessions in each of the three general areas of counselling work: remedial, educational, and preventive. As well, our exhibitors will provide information on myriad topics.

The setting this year is the Delta Vancouver Airport Hotel in Richmond. It's a quick shuttle ride from the airport, and there are handy bus and shuttle connections to local amenities and to SkyTrain. There is ample free parking for commuters. Room prices are much lower than they were and what's more, our conference fees are lower this year for all classes of registrants and a year's membership in the BCSCA is included in the deal.

For information and to register, go to: <http://www.bcscconference.ca>.

Jim Hooper, president, BCSCA
<http://bctf.ca/bcscsca>

Summer Conference 2013 Kamloops

Educate, Engage, Enrich.

The theme of this year's BCTF Summer Conference was certainly that. More than 500 delegates from around the province came to Kamloops to learn, share, and re-connect with each other. The conference opened with outspoken journalist, Linda McQuaig, speaking about why strong, vibrant, democratic



unions are essential to a robust economy. Delegates then, over the next two days, chose from a wide array of workshops on all kinds of topics including social media for "newbies," health and safety rights in the classroom, life as a TTOC, the mental health of teachers and youth, and so many more that covered just about every aspect of teaching.

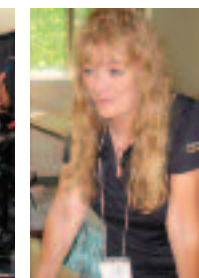


Joel Bakan, Vancouver lawyer and filmmaker, closed the formal part of summer conference describing what's happening in the US to education as an "early warning system" for us in BC and Canada. Although the situation is grim, he explained that as Canadians we value public education and that it is up to us as teachers and BCTF members to keep advocating for a quality and well-funded system. Drum Cafe, a BC-based high-energy drumming group ended the conference with more than a bang. All participants were given drums and together we made wonderful music before we journeyed home.



"The Kairos Blanket Exercise was one of the most powerful workshops I have ever attended. I got a small taste of the profound loss First Nations have experienced and felt outraged and the systemic and calculated approach past governments have taken. We, as a society, must understand this history and move to redress historical wrongs in a new power sharing relationship."

—James Sanyshyn, president, Burnaby Teachers' Association.



Share the pizza

By Kip Wood

Linda McQuaig's keynote address at the BCTF Summer Conference included a clever parable. In "a guy walks into a bar" style of starting a joke, McQuaig asked the audience if they had heard about the capitalist and the worker who ordered a pizza. When the pizza arrived, the capitalist took 11 pieces out of 12 and said, "Watch out for that union leader, he wants your piece."

McQuaig started her speech with the statement that the most significant societal change in the last three decades is the transfer of wealth to the top. Convincingly, she made the case that this was not an accident; rather, it occurred because of human-made laws drafted carefully to benefit the already rich.

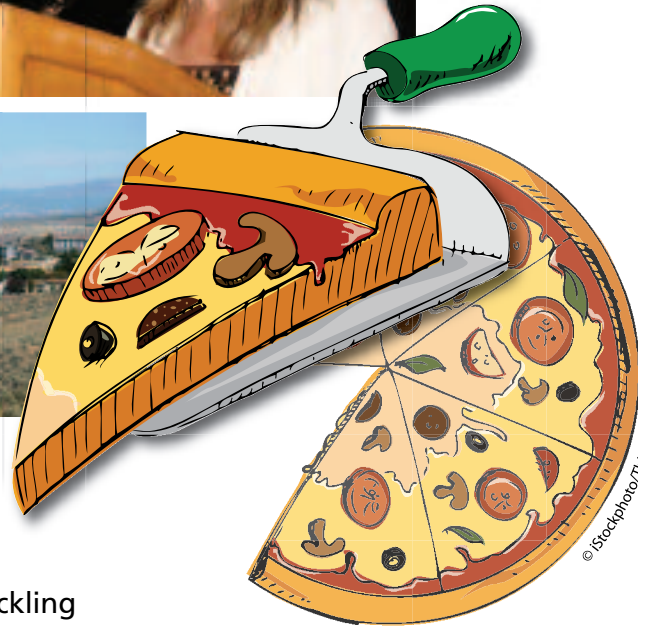
McQuaig referred to the years 1946 to 1979 as the golden years of capitalism, when economic growth was greater and productivity gains went hand-in-hand with social gains and incomes. Wage settlements raised the standard for the entire labour market and the golden years established a strong middle class.

The 1980s saw the end of the golden years. Since then, we have seen tax cuts, cuts to



social programs, deregulation, and privatization. The political talking points referred to wealth "trickling down." McQuaig blasted this idea by saying that instead of trickling down, wealth "gushed up" with 60% of economic gains going to the top 1% since 1980. The transfer of wealth upward accelerated after the housing crisis, with the 1% capturing 93% of income gains in 2010.

McQuaig exposed the message of "free market" capitalists: that there is an undisputed trade-off between economic growth and social gains. Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations*, 1776), said that when markets work well they are able to balance private returns and social benefits. McQuaig talked about the extreme distortions we have seen recently in the balance between social contribution and private compensation. Hedge-fund manager John Paulson made \$3.7 billion betting against the sub-prime mortgages.



McQuaig asked, "In what moral universe is John Paulson worth 82,000 nurses?"

McQuaig reminded delegates that the wealthy believe in collective action—for each other. They organize and support think tanks and chambers of commerce. Unions should feel no guilt for using collective action to make change. Indeed, if workers and the middle class are going to survive, and if the economy is going to deliver on the promise of balancing prosperity and social gains, organization across sectors and membership lines must occur. Without collective action, the struggle for the last piece of pizza will leave the unjust power structure intact.

Kip Wood, John Barsby
Secondary School, Nanaimo

Language teacher *reinvents* himself

By Chris Stolz

Marco Torres, the great inner-city media teacher from California, says that there are two possible responses to problems: “you can complain, or you can innovate. But only one of those gets you anywhere.”

I used to complain. I loved Spanish, and teaching Spanish. I’d learned “communicative” teaching, I’d made games and songs to “make grammar fun,” and I’d failed. Kids were “learning” but couldn’t speak, I was frustrated, and my students’ language retention rates were low. I complained to my colleagues, admin, and family. Me with 15 years of teaching experience, and those darned kids just weren’t learning! What to do?

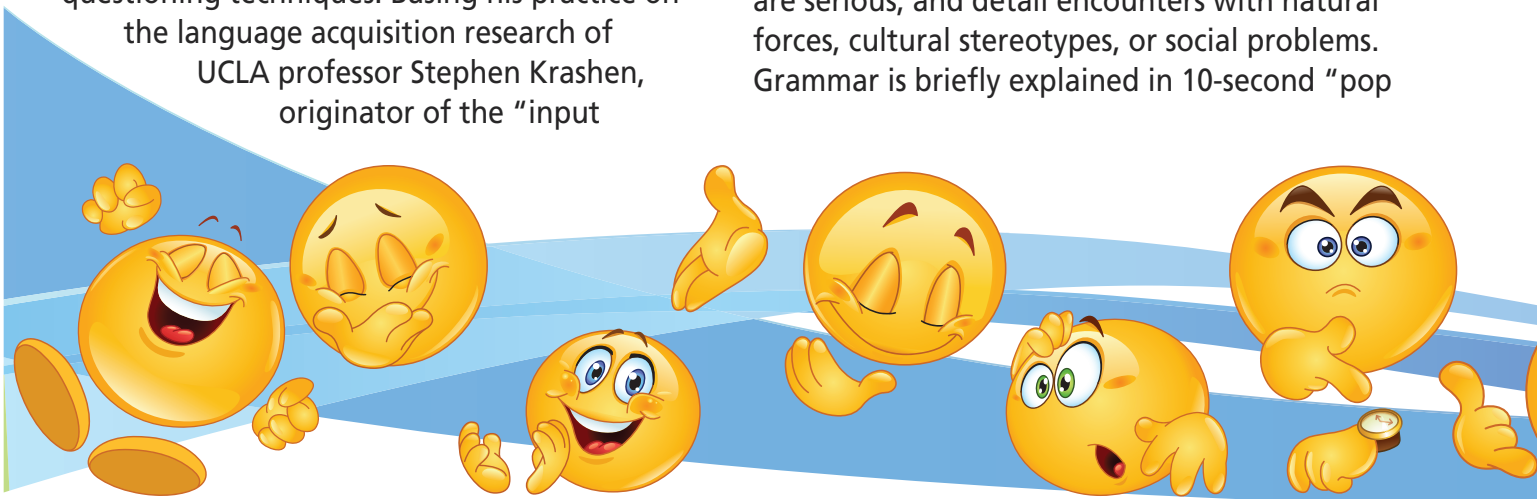
This was precisely the situation in which Blaine Ray, a US teacher of Spanish, found himself in the mid-1990s. Ray wanted more engaged kids and real language acquisition, rather than students who could parrot grammar rules. So he began to innovate. Beginning with James Asher’s “total physical response,” (TPR: language accompanied with gesture to increase retention), Ray then began experimenting with storytelling and acting, and moved on to develop some unusual questioning techniques. Basing his practice on the language acquisition research of UCLA professor Stephen Krashen, originator of the “input

hypothesis” of language acquisition, Ray focused his teaching on 100% comprehensible, personalized, occasionally bizarre stories, and readings.

Within a few years, Ray’s students were experiencing massive gains in acquisition and (along with their teacher) having a blast. Ray was done with both grammar worksheets and the awkward pseudo-conversation that make many students hate their second-language classes.

Ray’s method—total physical response storytelling, or TPRS—was unusual, fun, and very effective, as a growing body of research reveals. Students acquire language by listening to 100% comprehensible and contextualized input—no “guess the meaning,” vocab drills, or dictionary hunts here—which the teacher first personalizes, then weaves into an acted story, and finally recycles into written documents that form the basis for class readings.

Sometimes, stories are wacky and fun—a student has a cat but wants an elephant, and travels to Bloomington, Indiana, where she is eventually given a purple singing elephant. Sometimes stories are serious, and detail encounters with natural forces, cultural stereotypes, or social problems. Grammar is briefly explained in 10-second “pop



ups,” and unconsciously mastered through enormous numbers of varied repetitions of “structures”—meaningful phrases—around which stories are built. Skeletal narrative outlines are “personalized” (filled in) with funny details, and acted out, by students, while the teacher “circles” vocabulary by providing masses of easy oral questions that recycle the vocabulary. Kids feel safe and comfortable, and the focus is on meaning, not language.

My own revelation came when West Vancouver Secondary School’s very talented Michelle Metcalfe presented a TPRS workshop at a BCATML conference. “Don’t make them do verb tables,” said Michelle, “and don’t worry too much about grammar.” WHAT? I thought. This is heresy! But I was hooked. For three months, I read books and blogs, and spent a day observing Michelle practice TPRS, and on the first day of second semester, I jumped in headfirst: I began TPRS with both my beginner and second-year classes. “Hey,” I thought, “if it doesn’t work, I can always go back to the old stuff.”

I needn’t have worried. For the first time in 15 years, it felt like I had 100% student engagement. We gestured and sang. We did bizarre personalized interviews where we compared our sporting, cooking, and dating skills with those of celebrities and animals. We invented loads of bizarre stories. We read novels. We laughed our butts off, and I didn’t have to make a single phone call home, or mark a single idiotic, copied grammar worksheet, or sit painfully through a

memorized “dialogue.” There was no homework and there were zero management issues.

At the end of the semester, I had some astonishing results. The more challenged students—ones with IEPs, or family and behaviour issues—ALL passed with basic storytelling and dialogue skills, and marks over 60%. These were kids who under old-school teaching had either failed the mandatory French, or been exempted for IEP reasons from second-language study. At the other end of the spectrum, the more academic kids were writing fluent, largely error-free 500 to 800 word stories—including dialogue—in three verb tenses, at the end of their first year of Spanish. If I had seen this work on the old Spanish 12 exams I used to mark, they would have rated near the top of the rubric. When I spoke with fellow TPRS teachers Adriana Ramírez and Luce Arsenault of Semiahmoo Secondary School about my results, they replied “oh yes, that’s normal, we get that too” and showed me student work even more impressive than that of my students. I was thrilled, not just with results, but with knowing that there was more, much more, for me to learn.

Most importantly, the kids LIKED Spanish, and found it effortless—even the kids working with IEPs, many of whom, for the first time, found language learning easy. My retention rates went way up and the failure rate plummeted. Three days after classes ended, my department head found me dumping 15 years’ worth of

Continued on page 18



Think Stock Images

“communicative” activities into the recycling bin. I was grinning ear-to-ear. Like a poker player with a royal flush, I was all in, except this wasn’t the luck of the draw: TPRS is a method anyone can learn and apply.

TPRS is a largely new-to-Canada methodology with enormous potential for boosting second-language acquisition. Fun, brain-based, engaging, and—as lots of research shows—significantly more effective when properly done than older methods, this is a teaching tool that every serious second-language teacher should take a long look at. The method will work for any language. There’s loads of online support, massive US pro-D conferences, there are good resources in French, Spanish, Chinese, German, Russian, etc., and the method invites innovation and personalization. In the US, talented TPRS teachers even have fourth-year kids fluent in spoken Latin!

This year, there will be both introductory and advanced-skills TPRS workshops at the BCATML conference on October 25, 2013 in Burnaby (Michelle Metcalfe and Adriana Ramírez), and an all-day “Intro to TPRS” workshop at the Surrey Teachers’ Association convention in Surrey on May 2, 2014 (Chris Stolz and Adriana Ramírez). Michelle, Adriana, and I also do TPRS seminars for language departments, district in-services, and other ProD events.

Anyone—teacher, department head, or district helping teacher—who wants to learn about TPRS, can contact me. The future is wide open.

¡aprenderemos juntos!

Chris Stolz teaches Spanish, English, and social justice at Tamanawis Secondary School, Surrey
stolz_c@surreyschools.ca

Beyond BCeSIS

Will there be a difference?

By Larry Kuehn

Finally the Ministry of Education got the message that BCeSIS is inadequate and is getting in the way of effective recording and reporting on student development. Last year the ministry started a process of buying something new.

The cost of the new system is the same as the old—upward of \$96 million.

The new software is called Aspen, and the new service provider is Fujitsu, the same company that ran BCeSIS. The cost of the new system is the same as the old—upward of \$96 million.

Fujitsu has been in charge of many of the elements of BCeSIS—providing and managing the servers, providing the documentation, responding to the glitches, developing the training, providing support. They will now be in charge of the same elements of the new system. Presumably they were able to offer a better financial deal because they already have an infrastructure in place with BCeSIS.

The major change is in the software, moving from “esis” to Aspen.

Few teachers have seen the new software to hold an opinion on whether it will be a satisfactory system. It has been adopted in a number of states in the US, but that isn’t necessarily a positive factor.

In the meantime, work is proceeding on an alternative, open-source student information system. Called OpenStudent, it is being developed by a team in the Saanich school district. Several school districts have signed on to use this system rather than a new BCeSIS and are piloting it in schools. Information on this system can be found at openstudent.ca.

Larry Kuehn, director, BCTF Research and Technology Division



With 300,000 members strong and with ambitious plans to organize more workers, Unifor is the

largest, private sector union in Canada. Delegates at the founding convention on Labour Day weekend endorsed the plan to reach out to those workers who aren't unionized, are paid low wages, work part-time on a casual basis, and seldom receive benefits. These are the workers who serve us burgers, wraps, and milkshakes in the fast-food sector, or ring up our bill in a retail outlet.

Unifor is the result of the merger of two unions, the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), and the Communication, Energy, and Paperworkers' (CEP). Jerry Dias, Unifor's first president declared that the merger was necessary in order to set a new agenda for unionism and to regain the rights workers are losing under provincial or federal conservative governments. "Today is really about opportunity, it's about hope. It's about us saying 'we've had it' and it's about us saying 'we're determined to change the direction of the country,'" Dias said.

Unifor represents workers in more than 20 sectors including the auto, pulp and paper, manufacturing, and energy industries and those who work in communications, education, and healthcare. BCTF administrative staff are now Unifor members.



IKEA tries to turn clock back on employees

IKEA Richmond locked out their employees May 13, 2013. Management wants to impose a multitiered wage system that reduces both wages and benefits. This is from a company that made \$4.2 billion in profit by the end of its fiscal year in August 2012. The Teamsters' union local representing the workers asks shoppers not to patronize either the Richmond or the Coquitlam stores until the lockout is lifted and an acceptable agreement is negotiated.

Solidarity spotlight



BCTF table officers along with CUPE's Paul Faoro and BCFed's Irene Lanzinger show support for CUPE members locked out at North Shore Winter Club.

NHL Players' Association puts the North Shore Winter Club on ice

BCTF members, including President Jim Iker, First Vice-President Glen Hansman, and Second Vice-President Teri Mooring joined locked out workers on the picket line on August 25. Some may wonder what the connection between teachers and winter club workers is, and the answer is clear: solidarity is a two-way street. When teachers are in a tough spot, we want the support of parents, many of whom are also members of unions. Furthermore, if one employer wants rollbacks, other employers are often quick to follow suit.

In a gesture of solidarity, the NHLPA issued a letter to their members (NHL hockey players) urging them to respect the picket line at the North Shore Winter Club. CUPE members were locked out over 100 days ago and club management is seeking concessions. You can read their letter in full here:

<http://bit.ly/13FZqwp>

Curriculum 2013 status report

By Janice Neden

During the spring of 2013, teams of teachers began work on drafting new provincial curriculum for K to 10 in the following areas: English language arts, Français langue première, Français langue seconde immersion, Arts education, Math, Science, Social studies, Health and PE.

Some of the early curriculum drafts are being shared on the various provincial specialist association listserves. This preview allows educators to get an early look at the redesigned curriculum and begin to formulate feedback.

These early drafts are currently undergoing editorial processes and a field review process is forthcoming.

The ministry plans to post K–9 drafts on the website later this summer/early fall for review and feedback during the fall and winter. The draft material developed for Grade 10 will inform and be used as a starting point for the work at Grades 11 and 12. Along with the K–9 postings will be guidelines, questions, and information for providing feedback. Additional support material (e.g., instructional and assessment examples) will be posted into the fall as it is completed. Also added will be reference material and background information on BC's curriculum transformation effort.

A timeline for completion of redesigned curricula will be based on feedback received. Note that while the redesigned curricula are in draft format, all current provincial curricula and provincial examinations are still in place. See the ministry's website for more details.

Development of curricula at Grades 11 and 12 is dependent on further graduation program consultations, so this work will not advance as quickly as the work at the earlier grades. Other work this summer included having a small group of educators review the work done to date on the 2011 draft French curriculum material and consider how to utilize the work in the context of the curriculum redesign directions. As well, exploratory work will begin in the Applied Skills area. (Source: Ministry of Education).

Curriculum area	Current status
Arts Education	Initial draft curriculum ready and posted on the Art PSA website (bcata.ca)
English Language Arts	No draft available to date.
French Immersion	Have identified competencies and contents for Grades 3, 6, 10 "Français langue" Early French Immersion and Grade 6 Late French Immersion
French as a First Language	Draft has not been available to date.
Health & PE	Initial draft curriculum ready.
Math	Draft not ready, however, have concluded meetings, developed continuum for K–8 that outlines the progression and development of mathematical abilities. Developed an 8+ grades topic core and choice flow chart.
Science	Initial draft curriculum ready K–10.
Social Studies	A focus on competencies/skills in social studies (as opposed to content-driven curriculum), meta-cognitive processes, and critical thinking.

Competencies continua development

BC's redesigned curriculum framework envisions three broad cross-curricular competencies: thinking competency, personal and social competency, and communication competency.

The ministry has developed a draft concept paper "Defining Cross-Curricular Competencies" for review and feedback. The draft paper is posted on the ministry website at: <http://bit.ly/18b1Ikj>

Field work is now under way in nine school districts to collect student samples and develop competency continua to support teaching and learning. Draft continua will be made available for review and feedback in the fall and development work will continue this coming school year.

The nine participating school districts involved in cross-curricular field work are Comox, Coquitlam, North Okanagan/Shuswap, Penticton, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Richmond, Surrey, and Victoria.

The presidents of these locals have been notified of this undertaking and the names of participating teachers.

A summary of the background work to date on curricular transformation and redesign can be found at: <http://bit.ly/19SWKe7>

Curriculum feedback is welcome at any time and may be sent to curriculum@gov.bc.ca.

*Janice Neden, assistant director,
BCTF Professional and Social Issues Division*

Exchange teaching

The world is your classroom: same vocation, different location

Live and teach in another country for a year while remaining employed and paid by your Canadian board and retaining all benefits.

The Canadian Education Exchange Foundation, as mandated by the BC Ministry of Education, facilitates reciprocal teacher exchanges to the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales), Denmark, France, Switzerland (limited), Germany, Australia and some US states. Applications are now being accepted for the 2014–15 school year.

For information visit www.ceef.ca
Contact cwilk@ceef.ca or call 705-739-7596.

BC exchange teachers' orientation meeting

Saturday, October 26, 2013,
9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
William Watson Elementary School
16450 80th Ave., Surrey, BC

Carol Wilkins, from the Canadian Education Exchange Foundation, will present information regarding exchange opportunities. Teachers currently here on exchange will attend to answer questions specific to their country.

To register, contact:
Kulwant Toor, president, BCETA
toor_k@surreyschools.ca
or call: 604-574-4141 or 778-847-4453

Project of Heart

By Nancy Knickerbocker

In her native Nisga'a language, her first name meant "pearl skipping on clear water." As well as that beautiful Nisga'a name, she also was given an English name—Mercy. Sadly, little Mercy Thomas saw no evidence of merciful behaviour from the staff of Crosby Girls School in Port Simpson where strapping, hair-pulling, pushing, name-calling, being made to stand for hours, and other forms of



verbal, physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse were common.

Crosby Girls' School was one of 18 residential schools in BC,

part of a nation-wide network of schools run by government and churches with the goal of "killing the Indian in the child." Now, more than half a century later, Mercy and other survivors of residential school injustices are reclaiming the past by telling their stories to students across the country through a remarkable initiative called the Project of Heart.

The Project of Heart brings residential school survivors into classrooms to tell their stories and to involve students and teachers in seeking the truth about this atrocious, hidden chapter of Canadian history. Students then draw on what they've learned to create images on wooden tiles, which are being collected and used to create large works of art.

The students in Larry Goldsack's Social Studies 8 class at Brookwood Secondary School in Langley listened intently as Mercy told them: "Think back to when you were seven. Your parents were getting you ready to go to school, but you always

Students create art from painful truth of residential school experience

knew they'd come for you at the end of the day. That didn't happen for me."

She recalled the constant abuse: "You good-for-nothing, dirty, lazy Indian! If you hear that every day, you start to believe it. Some of us fought against it and we left school stronger. Others fell by the wayside and died."



Mercy Thomas

Mercy was one of 150,000 First Nations children who were forced into the residential school system between the 1870s and 1990s. Recent research reveals more than 3,000 children died in the schools—of tuberculosis and Spanish flu, in fires, by drowning or exposure while fleeing, and by suicide. In the latest shocking revelation, scholars have now shown that the federal government conducted nutritional experimentation on at least 1,300 Aboriginal people, most of them hungry children in six different residential schools across Canada, including the school in Port Alberni.

"Our days were punctuated by the supervisors' whistle. As soon as it blew, we had to be on guard. Whistles to wake up, get up, stand by the bed, go to the washroom, eat your meals, do your chores. One supervisor always had a horsewhip under her arm and if we didn't get into line fast enough, we'd feel that whip on our ankles."

"What did you learn in residential school?" one Brookwood student wanted to know. "We learned English because we were not allowed to speak our language. We only had classes in the morning, and then we cleaned, cooked, sewed, did

laundry, worked in the gardens. But we never saw the vegetables we grew on our table. They were sold in the city."

When she was 14, Mercy was sexually abused by the minister who was also principal of the school. "The rape of a child, male or female, is devastating. It shatters a child's well-being and future development as a human being. Sexual abuse is a very touchy subject for all former students of residential schools. It is demeaning in the worst way and has long-term impacts."

Did you ever think about running away? "Oh yes, millions of times."

Why didn't you?

"Because the school was 1,500 miles from my home. Years later, they found skeletons beneath the floors. These were of all the children they said had run away. There were rows and rows of graves."

At some level there is no healing for the survivors, Mercy said. "We will go to our graves carrying this hurt. There is not enough money in the world to buy away the hurt, shame, humiliation, loss of identity, and near annihilation of Aboriginal culture. It was nearly genocide."

At Brookwood Secondary School, students' heads nod around the classroom as one girl said: "It's hard to think that these really bad things happened right here in Canada. We're not perfect, like some people think we are."

Teacher Larry Goldsack says his passion for history fuels his commitment to teaching these painful truths. "This is a part of our history that is not represented in the textbooks we use to teach social studies. That's why the Project of Heart is so important, so that as Canadians we understand it and share that knowledge because that's where the healing starts."

Charlene Bearhead, program manager of the Project of Heart, says that BC is ahead of other provinces on the issues of Aboriginal education and has a record



participation of hundreds of teachers and thousands of students. "The commitment to look at the truth is really exceptional in this province," she said.

The wooden tiles created by BC students have been used to adorn a cedar canoe created especially for the Project of Heart by Tsleil-Waututh carver Kiapalanexw (Derrick George) and his sons, and designed by Tahltan artist Una Ann Moyer. It will have an important part in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission national commemorative events taking place in Vancouver in September.

Mercy Thomas will be among the survivors there, honouring the memory of those who did not survive and helping build a better future for First Nations children, their families, and communities. "If not for all the people now telling their stories, all that would remain hidden."

For more information, see www.projectofheart.ca

*Nancy Knickerbocker, director,
BCTF Communications and Campaigns Division*

To view some historical photos from Port Simpson, visit the United Church archive at:
<http://bit.ly/15kqU4A>





Not so fast, Mr. Fassbender

One of Peter Fassbender's first acts as education minister was to pick up the pen and send BCTF members a letter trying to convince teachers that the win for the Liberals was a nod to a 10-year agreement.

Not so fast, Mr Fassbender was the shout from teachers. Throughout the province, teachers picked up their own pens and sent Minister Fassbender their own letters, giving him a piece of their minds.

Featured below is a letter from Colin Plant, a teacher in Saanich. His letter was printed in the OpEd column in the *Saanich News/Victoria-Times Colonist*.

June 2013

Dear editor

Sitting at my school's graduation tonight was lovely and emotional and everything you hope for when you are a high school teacher; a beautiful and poignant send-off of children to become successful and productive adults.

But, (and you knew there was a but coming) during the ceremony the Valedictorian said something I found quite profound. She said, "Most of us were in Grade 1 in our first week of school when the tragedy of 9/11 happened."

And it hit me. What a world these children have had to grow up in. A world of fear, constant world tensions, and the inundation of security, intrusion, and general societal paranoia. A world where distrust and an overabundance of precautions are now the norm.

And then the other shoe dropped for me. The government I work for wants to lock in a contract with BC teachers for 10 years. I am in no means suggesting the tragedy of 9/11 is the same as our contract struggle. NOT AT ALL.

I am suggesting that we look at how much the world has changed since then and how changes in BC education, which will be required in the next 10 years, will be significantly thwarted if we don't have a school system and a collective agreement that will be flexible and adaptive to students' and teachers' needs.

The world is changing—so is education. And while we call for a system that will be adaptive to 21st century needs, we are being told that labour peace is the benefit of a 10-year deal. But what about the needs of a system to evolve? A 10-year deal thwarts and throttles that because so much cannot be negotiated for 10 years.

Of course I'd like labour peace, but to suggest that a 10-year deal is good for BC is like suggesting we all should just stick with the automobile we have now and not get a new one if the current one no longer runs, or is fixable, or needs new tires.

If asking to keep up with the cost of living and having contract rights that were dutifully (not rhetoric here folks, but court-

determined) returned and funded is considered greedy, then yes, I am greedy.

If asking for the government of BC to respect both students AND teachers in this province by funding education (and yes, gasp, perhaps raise taxes to do it) is the stuff of pipe-dreams, then call me a smoker.

I notice that each year my municipal taxes go up. I don't like it, but I understand and accept it, because I know that my roads need to be fixed, that the police and firefighters in my municipality deserve to keep up with inflation, then items like this must be funded.

But somehow our provincial government has gone to such a neo-conservative extreme that even the words tax increase are seen as heretical.

As we all were discussing in the staffroom last week, nobody would sign a 10-year cell phone deal, why would we do it with our children's future? And mine.

Sincerely,
Colin Plant
Saanich teacher

Three picture books you've never heard of... but will love!

By Lucinda Tooker

Colin Thompson's humorous picture books are touched with pathos. They can be enjoyed by readers of all ages, and everyone will take away something different.

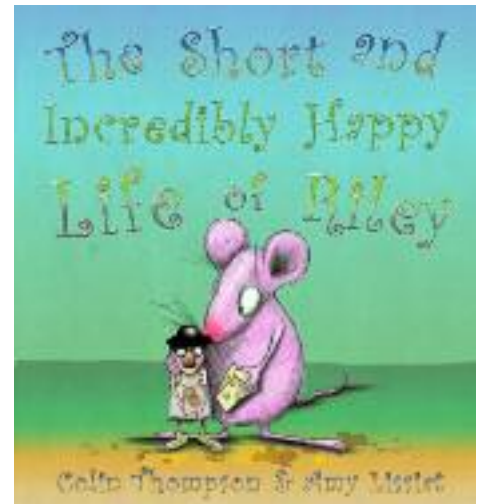


In the ***Big Little Book of Happy Sadness***, George and his grandmother live with grief until they adopt a little three-legged dog named Jeremy. The miracle of adopting a pet is that the humans benefit as well. I have used this book to teach primary students the notions of responsibility and compassion. This book won the Family Therapists Picture Book of the Year in 2009 and was named an Honour Book in the Children's

Book Council of Australia (CBCA) awards the same year.

Free to a Good Home features a typical busy, disorganized family, all of whom collect unusual things and stray animals, which adds to the chaos in their home. One day, the children—Peter and Sally—bring home an old woman who proves to be a great addition to the household, despite their parents' initial trepidation. Reading this book inevitably leads to discussing the contributions elderly persons can make to a family and to society, the very notion of family itself, and the issue of homelessness.

Is a rat's life better than a human's life? What if the real "rat race" isn't that bad? These questions, and more thought-provoking ideas, are explored in ***The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley***. With his co-author, Amy Lissiat, Thompson examines modern consumer culture and concludes that the "life of Riley" (a rat) is probably superior, even if it is brief. Besides being a discussion starter, this book makes a great choice for a graduation or retirement gift! ***Riley*** was named the Picturebook of the Year by the CBCA in 2010.



Colin Thompson trained as a visual artist eventually becoming an author and book illustrator. He has written and illustrated over 65 books, many of which have won major awards. He lives in Australia with his wife, who is a teacher-librarian.

Lucinda Tooker, teacher-librarian,
Kanaka Creek Elementary School,
Maple Ridge



World education news

World Action Year and Quality Teaching

Education International (EI), the federation of national teacher unions from 170 countries, is launching the “World Action Year” campaign this October to mobilize teachers, students, and parents worldwide to pressure governments to invest in creating quality systems of education. This international campaign dovetails with the BCTF *Better Schools for BC* campaign that puts quality teaching and learning front and centre of public education.

With 30 million teachers and educators acting in concert, this World Action Year has the potential to become influential and powerful. Check out EI’s website: <http://www.ei-ie.org/en/>

Minnesota and Seattle teachers take on standardized testing

St Paul, Minnesota, teachers have had it with the standardized testing agenda and federal *No Child Left Behind* laws. They proposed bargaining language to limit the amount of testing that happens in their schools. St Paul Federation of Teachers’ president Cathryn Richer says both teachers and students are spending way too much time preparing for and writing tests.

Unsurprisingly, the school district is not ready to sign-off on such language. Undeterred and inspired by St Paul teachers, Julie Blaha, president for Anika-Hennepin Minnesota teachers, mused that the time is ripe to raise these issues in bargaining. “Our working conditions are our students’ learning conditions.”

Seattle teachers also joined the growing US anti-testing movement boycotting standardized tests in January 2013 and succeeded. José Banda, superintendent of Seattle schools, announced in May that it will now be left to school leadership teams to decide which tests will be administered to

high school students. (Some testing is still required for K–8 students.)

They thought they could kill me—they cannot

Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani woman, gunned down by the Taliban on a school bus in 2012 because she was a girl who wanted an education addressed the United Nations, July 12, 2013. On this day, also her 16th birthday, she boldly and eloquently stated that she would not be silenced by extremists who try to prevent girls from getting an education. She stated, “The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life, except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power, and courage was born.”



Visit YouTube to view her address to the UN in full. <http://bit.ly/1cCoNPT>

California law protects rights of transgender students

A new law requires public schools to allow pupils from Kindergarten to Grade 12 to access male or female toilets according to their preference. The legislation also allows transgender school children to choose whether to play boys’ or girls’ sports. State Assembly Speaker John Pérez said it put “California at the forefront of leadership on transgender rights.”

Massachusetts and Connecticut have state-wide policies granting the same protections, but California is the first to put them into law.

Thanks to the *StarTribune*, *MintPress News*, and *BBC News* for information on the stories above.

L'enseignant a une responsabilité personnelle de faire un effort continu de perfectionnement professionnel

par Marie-Claude Tremblay

En tant qu'enseignant des programmes francophones, de français de base ou d'immersion, nos besoins en perfectionnement professionnel prennent le bord pour une multitude de raisons : trop peu de profs dans le département pour payer les frais d'un animateur, les besoins de l'école ou du personnel enseignant ont la priorité ou bien on enseigne tellement de matières à plusieurs niveaux, on ne sait pas par où commencer. En outre, la bourse annuelle pour le perfectionnement professionnelle ne couvre même pas les frais d'inscription à une conférence.

Au lieu de passer la journée dans la salle de classe à faire de la correction ou de la préparation, y a-t-il autre chose que l'on peut faire? Serait-il possible de collaborer avec mes collègues même si les priorités d'un enseignant ou d'une enseignante en début de carrière ou de celui ou celle qui enseigne depuis belle lurette sont différentes? Sont-elles, en fait, si différentes?

La FECB offre 2 programmes pour un enseignement de qualité. La recherche-action vous intéresse peut-être? Voilà une occasion parfaite pour collaborer avec des collègues de votre école, du conseil scolaire ou de plusieurs conseils scolaires, de diriger votre propre perfectionnement, de développer vos habiletés, d'approfondir vos connaissances en pédagogie ou d'explorer des stratégies innovatrices. La recherche-action offre à votre petite ou grande équipe des choix en matière de démarches et de stratégies d'enseignement. Elle peut enrichir votre planification, la collaboration, l'observation et les techniques de rédaction et de présentation. Elle encourage la réflexion, l'esprit d'enquête, la consultation des pairs, le soutien et le mentorat. La FECB offre des ateliers de formation et des séances de suivi avec des facilitateurs, du matériel d'enseignement et de suivi ainsi qu'un soutien continu. Le conseil scolaire et le syndicat local fournissent un financement pour la libération des fonctions pendant 5-6 séances, des coûts de formation sur place et un soutien sur une base continue.

Le 2e programme est la collaboration entre enseignants; une occasion pour travailler avec des collègues et de renforcer les méthodes de travail et

d'approfondir la compréhension de l'enseignement. Explorez des questions touchant à l'efficacité de l'enseignement et partagez idées et connaissance sur la pédagogie et les principes d'apprentissage par l'entremise d'activités de planification, d'enseignement et rétroaction avec un groupe de 3 personnes. Encore une fois, la FECB vous offre des ateliers de formation et des séances de suivi avec des facilitateurs, du matériel d'enseignement et un soutien continu. Pour les enseignants, il y a un engagement à l'égard du projet, vous devez assister aux séances de formation et vous contribuez à la mise en pratique dans votre école ou groupes d'écoles du conseil scolaire du Programme pour un enseignement de qualité (PEQ).

Votre curiosité a été piquée? Pour le programme de recherche action, soumettez une demande conjointement par le CS ou l'école et votre syndicat local. Il faut un minimum de dix enseignants par groupe et un engagement d'une année. Pour le programme de collaboration, demandez une séance d'orientation pour le personnel enseignant ou pour un groupe d'écoles. Communiquez avec Michelle Hope au 604.871.1860 ou sans frais au 1.800.663.9163 (1860).

N'oubliez pas les conférences annuelles. Celles de l'Association provinciale des professeurs d'immersion et du programme francophone (APPIPC) et de la BC Association of Teachers of Modern Language (BCATML) auront lieu le 25 octobre. Le Rond-point annuel pour les membres du SEPF aura lieu le 21 février 2014. La conférence annuelle pour nouveaux enseignants, suppléants et maîtres-stagiaires aura lieu le 28 février et 1er mars 2014.

Serait-il aussi le moment de commencer un dialogue avec la représentante ou le représentant du perfectionnement professionnel de votre école ou de votre syndicat local? Pour avoir un oui, il faut poser la question même si on croit que la réponse sera un non!

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

Factor 90 or 65 years of age? Don't wait

You can save the long-term fee (approximately 1.2%) from the date you reach age 64 or "Factor 88." Members are no longer entitled to long-term benefits under the Salary Indemnity Plan once they hit "Factor 90" (age plus cumulative service) or age 65. The BCTF does not have access to your personal pension information, so it is up to you to apply to withdraw from LTD.

How and when to apply

A member who has attained age 64, or has reached "Factor 88," 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. 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.

To get an application, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/7qrrnxx> or call the BCTF Income Security Division at 604-871-1921.

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Retirement: There's more to it than the money

On behalf of the workshop committee, we thank the *Teacher* newsmagazine staff for publishing information about our workshops. The BCRTA believes strongly that these workshops give teachers, who are within five years of retirement, a depth of guidance and introspection as they make important decisions about their life after class. Retirement has many components to it, beside finances, and the BCRTA workshops, help guide participants through the maze of opportunities and things to think about, that face retiring teachers, by using a friendly and interactive process led by teachers who are experienced in the role of retirees. <http://bcrt.ca>

– Charan Gill and Annette O'Connor

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