

Teacher

Newsmagazine
BC Teachers' Federation
Volume 26, Number 3
Nov./Dec. 2013

Peace education

Unfolding the layers



Freedom from hunger
Freedom from poverty
Freedom from violence

President's message



Bargaining a fair contract on behalf of all members is a top priority for me. This bargaining round is the first since our collective agreement was illegally stripped in 2002 that we have had the right to negotiate class-size and class-composition language.

As I travel around the province and talk to teachers, I hear about the reductions in teacher-

librarian time and the closures of school libraries, the loss of school counsellors, that fewer special education and resource learning teachers are working in schools, and that sometimes these supports are barely adequate. I hear about the ongoing overcrowding in classes. Ministry of Education numbers confirm this overcrowding; last year there were nearly 15,000 classes with three or more students with special needs. In total, there were 640 fewer full-time teachers in BC in 2012, than there were five years earlier.

These losses would not have occurred if prior collective-agreement language was intact. I must emphasize that it is only through our collective and steadfast efforts throughout the past 12 years, including our court case challenging the stripping of our contract, that we have won this right again.

Our bargaining objectives are clear; we need class-size and class-composition limits and minimum levels of learning specialist teachers in each school. Students deserve better supports and the return of specialist teacher caseloads and ratios will allow for more one-on-one and small-group learning that many students require.

Teachers have waited long enough for a fair salary increase and better prep-time provisions. No matter which data one looks at, BC teacher salaries are falling behind those of their Canadian colleagues. I firmly believe the time for catch up is in this round of bargaining.

I take heart that we are not alone in our bargaining efforts. Teachers worldwide, through Education International's advocacy campaign, are calling on governments to provide the funding and resources to support three pillars of public education: quality teaching, quality tools, and quality learning environments. All three pillars need to work in tandem.

My request to the BC government is straightforward and simple. Give teachers the respect they deserve. Come to the bargaining table prepared to bargain in good faith by bringing the funds necessary to negotiate a fair collective agreement. A fair collective agreement for teachers means better supports for students.

In October, the Ministry of Education posted new draft curriculum on their website. BCTF members were involved in writing these drafts. These 62 teachers invested a tremendous amount of knowledge, time, and energy, and took on the significant responsibility of representing the professional voice of the Federation. Thank you teachers, for all of your work.

I also encourage you to read the curriculum drafts and to participate in the consultation process to ensure that teachers lead the way in shaping new curriculum. Cast your mind to what is needed to implement new curriculum. We know from experience that curriculum redesign will not be successful if there are not sufficient resources, funding, or in-service time to support the transition.

Last year, more than 700 teachers participated in a survey conducted by the BCTF Research Division about poverty and its impact on students and learning. Read more about the results in this issue of *Teacher* on page 11.

I hope you had the chance to participate in an amazing day of professional development on October 25. I don't tweet (yet) but I enjoyed reading your ProD tweets posted on the BCTF web page. I know I speak on everyone's behalf as I thank all of you who organized professional development activities for our colleagues.

Jim Iker

Teacher



Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation

100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2

604-871-2283, toll free 1-800-663-9163,

F: 604-871-2289

E-mail: newsomag@bctf.ca

Web: bctf.ca/newsomag

Editor

Susan Croll

Assistant editor

Kathleen Smith

Graphics

Dale Costanzo

Luis Isidoro

Jennifer Sowerby

Karen Steel

ISSN

0841-9574



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Association
of Labour
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Teachers draft new curriculum

Sixty-two teachers were appointed by the BCTF to participate in Ministry of Education curriculum revision teams during the spring and summer of 2013.

These teachers worked developing draft K–9 curriculum in English Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Arts Education, Math, Health & PE, French Immersion, and French as a First Language. BCTF members also served on the Standing Committee on Provincial Curriculum that helps guide the work of the curriculum team and also presented to the ongoing Graduation Requirements Review. The outcome of this review will influence what happens with Grades 10–12 curricula.

English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies were recently posted on the Ministry of Education website and we expect more drafts will be released over the coming weeks. While we see many changes, both the ministry and the BCTF (along with other education-partner groups) are committed to including Aboriginal content and understandings across the K–12 curriculum, which is reflected in the drafts. You can also find these drafts on the BCTF web page (bctf.ca).

BCTF representatives continue to discuss the implementation of the new draft curriculum with Minister Fassbender and other ministry representatives. They are also raising concerns about potential changes and gaps in the newly combined Health & PE curriculum.

New K–9 curriculum drafts on ministry website

- English Language Arts
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies

The Ministry states there is no definite date for curriculum implementation; it will depend on the feedback they receive from teachers. In particular, think about the implementation and what is required to make this process work. We encourage you to send your feedback to curriculum@gov.bc.ca

BCTF discussion forum

The Curriculum Discussion Forum enables teachers to share and discuss information and perspectives regarding the draft curriculum in a collegial and professional manner.

BCTF wiki

The wiki supports teachers by providing resources and information about curriculum development. You will find curriculum drafts on the wiki too.

Access to these curriculum pages at:
<http://bit.ly/1iMWG1J>

Readers write

Just before school started this year a package of information was delivered to each public school in the province. Included in that package was a BC Retired Teachers' Association Golden Star Awards poster. The BCRTA is very proud of this initiative that recognizes the school and annually awards five school programs featuring regular interaction between seniors and public school students.

A year ago the BCRTA formed a partnership with the Royal Canadian Legion, BC/Yukon Command to offer a sixth award to recognize and award a school program in the province that features the regular interaction between seniors and/or veterans and public school students in intergenerational projects focusing on remembrance and patriotism.

At this time of year, it is a good opportunity to bring this sixth award to the attention of BCTF members around the province. One important criterion for this new award is that the intergenerational project must go beyond the usual school observance of November 11.

For a full description of all six awards we ask teachers to check out our poster in your staffroom as well as the application information for a Golden Star Award on our homepage at <http://www.bcrta.ca>. Descriptions of past award winners can also be found here. The application deadline for all six awards is April 15, 2014.

Carolyn Prellwitz

BCRTA Excellence in Public Education Committee



Operation

In BC, Premier Bennett and his cabinet, heavily influenced by the Fraser Institute and the academic architect of the new right-wing economic agenda, Milton Friedman, tabled 27 bills in the legislature on July 7, 1983, that visited that right-wing agenda upon the unsuspecting people of BC. Those bills, never mentioned in the election held on May 5, stripped human, workers', women's, and tenants' rights, and slashed social programs. And Bill 3 would allow school boards to lay off teachers arbitrarily without reference to seniority.

The response of the labour movement and social-action community was swift. Within weeks of the legislative assault, the BC Federation of Labour organized a new labour front called Operation Solidarity that included all organized workers in BC, including the BCTF. Community groups (human rights, women's rights, anti-poverty, tenants' rights, students, seniors, and environmentalists) joined together in a Solidarity Coalition. Never before in this province had labour and community united so actively around a common agenda created by opposition to the 27 bills. In August, 50,000 people attended a protest rally at Empire Stadium and in October, 80,000 people were marching through downtown Vancouver in the largest political protest in BC history, right past the assembled convention of the BC Social Credit Party at the Hotel Vancouver.

By Ken Novakowski

Sometimes significant actions or events occur that alter the course of history and the evolution of organizations and movements involved. The solidarity actions of 1983 did that. Solidarity mobilized tens of thousands of people in a common cause, created new and broad coalitions of labour and community, and took the province to the brink of a general strike. And teachers and the BCTF played a central role in that struggle.

In the early 1980s, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan sought to reverse the post-war advance of progressive ideas adopted by Western democracies, including Canada; ideas like human rights, fair labour standards, public healthcare, and so on. Instead, they re-introduced the right-wing agenda of previous generations that limited the role of government and let the market dictate how the needs of people would be met through private enterprise.

Thirty years after the solidarity experience, the BC Liberals are pursuing the same right-wing agenda, creating an increasingly unequal society where the rich are getting very rich, the poor very poor, and the middle class is disappearing.

Operation Solidarity, the union front, had developed a plan to have different sectors of the labour movement walk off the job joining government employees already on strike, in a phased action that would eventually see the entire province shut down. Teachers were now in a leadership role, as they and other education workers were in the first sector slated to walk out November 8.

Solidarity

30 years later

Only a year earlier, in February 1982, teachers in a province-wide referendum had turned down asking for the right to strike as a means of resolving bargaining disputes. Teachers had very limited bargaining rights; only salaries and bonuses, and inconclusive negotiations automatically went to binding arbitration. And when school support staff workers took strike action, teachers crossed their picket lines and carried on teaching. They did refrain from doing any of the work of their striking colleagues but schools remained open and carried on. So

Labour and community need to build a people's agenda for change that will create a more equal and fair society for all.

it was a dramatic turnaround when in November 1983, teachers voted to give their president Larry Kuehn and the Executive Committee the authority to join the solidarity strike. On November 8, teachers went out.

After three days on the picket line, November 8–10, Operation Solidarity negotiated a resolution with the premier. The deal provided some improvements in rights for unions, including the right for teachers to negotiate seniority/severance agreements. But, unfortunately, it left most of the other bills, the assault on the social-safety net, intact. People were back at work on November 14.

Labour's partners in the Solidarity Coalition felt betrayed by this deal. And so did many teachers, who were inspired to act in the first place by their sense of social injustice. The momentum and *raison d'être* for solidarity was gone. But, the Solidarity Strike of November 8–10, 1983, dramatically changed teachers and the BCTF.


It heightened teachers' trade union consciousness; teachers would no longer cross any picket lines. Teachers were now able to negotiate seniority and severance in their agreements, the first expansion of bargaining rights in close to 50 years. And teachers would achieve full bargaining rights four years later and subsequently affiliate with the BC Federation of Labour.

Thirty years after the solidarity experience, the BC Liberals are pursuing the same right-wing agenda, creating an increasingly unequal society where the rich are getting very rich, the poor very poor, and the middle class is disappearing.

If there is a lesson from the solidarity experience, it is that there is strength in labour and community organizations working together. Such solidarity is necessary if we are to end the assault on rights and social programs in this province.

Labour and community need to build a people's agenda for change that will create a more equal and fair society for all. They can demonstrate the value of unity and solidarity by defining a common cause for which we all want to fight, together.

Ken Novakowski, BC Labour Heritage Centre chair and BCTF past-president.



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Solidarity spotlight

Cadillac Fairview cleans out cleaners

In a decision that appears to be motivated by greed and dislike for unions, Cadillac Fairview awarded a cleaning contract to a company that pays its employees \$10.50 an hour instead of renewing the contract with a company that pays \$12.50 per hour. Cadillac Fairview, a leasing and management company that made close to \$1 billion in profit last year, is owned by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan.

Jim Iker has written a letter to the president of the Ontario Teachers' Federation expressing his concern over the job losses of almost 150 employees, many who have worked cleaning buildings in downtown Vancouver for 20 years or more. He explains that the BCTF is a living-wage employer and that the current estimated living wage for Vancouver residents is just under \$20 per hour. He asks the Ontario Teachers' Federation to take necessary action to reverse Cadillac Fairview's decision and to protect the jobs of these workers.

On Thursday, October 31, the day their collective agreement expired, the cleaners, members of Unifor, joined by the BC Federation of Labour, BCTF members, and other supporters participated in a spirited rally and occupation of the lobby and offices of Cadillac Fairview. They refused to leave until Cadillac Fairview agreed to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the cleaners and their union. A meeting has been set up between Unifor and Cadillac Fairview.



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2012–13 Canadian teacher salary rankings

By Richard Hoover

British Columbia teachers haven't had a salary increase since July 1, 2010. Since that time, Statistics Canada reports that the cost of living has risen by over 5%.

The BC government's heavy handed "net zero" and "co-operative gains" bargaining imperatives have taken their toll on our salaries with respect to other employees in BC and other teachers across Canada.

While BC teachers' salaries used to be among the best in the country, they are now among the lowest. And this despite the high cost of living in this province, particularly for housing.

So, how do BC teachers' salaries now compare with salaries of other teachers across Canada? BCTF Research has the answer.

The latest figures available are for last school year, 2012–13. The charts below show representative examples of minimum and maximum salaries for teachers in major cities across Canada who possess the equivalent of Category 5 and Category 6 qualifications, 5 years of university and 6 years of university respectively.

The starting salaries of BC teachers have fallen to ninth place in comparison to the salaries of teachers in other provinces. Only the starting salaries of teachers in Quebec are lower than those of BC teachers.

At the maximum salary ranges, Category 5 teachers in BC have fallen to sixth place, and Category 6 teachers have fallen to eighth place.

Minimum Category 5 salaries in BC, using Vancouver as an example, are over \$13,000 a year behind those in Edmonton. At Category 5 maximum, BC teachers' salaries are a full \$21,000 behind those in Alberta, again using Vancouver and Edmonton as the examples.

To put it another way, it would take immediate increases of between 22% and 28% for Vancouver teachers to obtain salary parity with teachers in Edmonton.

Teachers in Saskatchewan, where teachers' salaries are 8% to 13% higher than ours, have just voted 73% in favour of turning down a government offer of 5.5% over 4 years, 2013–2017. The offer also included one-time cash bonuses in Years 1 and 2, but provided no improvements in working conditions.

You should note that in some provinces teachers have negotiated province-wide salary scales.

Richard Hoover is director of the BCTF Field Services Division.

Thanks to Margaret White, BCTF researcher, for providing research for this article.

Equivalents to BC Category 5 (minimum)

Edmonton	\$61,489
Regina	\$54,393
Winnipeg	\$53,871
Ottawa	\$53,551
St. John's	\$51,166
Charlottetown	\$49,045
Halifax	\$48,980
Fredericton	\$48,793
Vancouver	\$48,083
Quebec City	\$41,451

Equivalents to BC Category 5 (maximum)

Edmonton	\$95,354
Ottawa	\$88,816
Regina	\$83,584
Winnipeg	\$81,915
Fredericton	\$75,241
Vancouver	\$74,353
Quebec City	\$74,244
Charlottetown	\$70,878
Halifax	\$69,907
St. John's	\$67,001

Equivalents to BC Category 6 (minimum)

St. John's	\$65,996
Edmonton	\$65,256
Halifax	\$64,205
Winnipeg	\$60,375
Regina	\$57,952
Ottawa	\$55,377
Charlottetown	\$54,933
Fredericton	\$53,195
Vancouver	\$52,823
Quebec City	\$45,050

Equivalents to BC Category 6 (maximum)

Edmonton	\$99,119
Ottawa	\$92,821
Winnipeg	\$91,469
Regina	\$88,347
St. John's	\$87,792
Halifax	\$87,413
Fredericton	\$81,851
Vancouver	\$81,488
Charlottetown	\$79,381
Quebec City	\$74,244

Freedom from hunger

By Susan Croll

Hungry. Unable to concentrate. Often absent or late. Easily frustrated.



These are just some of the words three teachers from different parts of the province use to describe day-to-day life for many of their students. It is a story that nearly every BC teacher understands—a story documenting the debilitating impact of poverty and the immense stress it causes for their students.

As a counsellor at two schools in Prince George, Nancy Alexander frequently works with families as well as students, giving her insight into the needs and difficulties that many poor families face.

Kyle Hamilton works with marginalized youth in an alternate program at a middle school in Kelowna. His students experience a multitude of problems, but poverty is the thread running through many of their lives.

Debbie Sabourin teaches Grade 3 and 4 students in Nelson. She has taught for 28 years and declares that poverty and the problems it brings are creating a crisis, a crisis that is exhausting and unmanageable for students and their families, but also for their teachers.

Poverty reveals itself in a variety of ways, and hunger is just one of the most obvious. “You can’t learn if you’re always hungry because you can’t focus or process information or understand concepts,” explains Debbie. Like Nancy and Kyle’s schools, her school tries to minimize students’ hunger by providing fruit and sandwiches.

“You can’t learn if you’re always hungry because you can’t focus or process information or understand concepts.”

– Debbie Sabourin, Nelson

“We have a breakfast and lunch program for all students at my school,” says Kyle. “Any student, poor or not, has access to the program. We need an inclusive program so no individual is stigmatized. As a staff we’ve worked hard to erase the possibility of shame or embarrassment.”

Understandably, few students or their parents announce on the first day of school that they are poor. But teachers begin to notice the kids from poor families. “You can tell by what’s in the lunch, if there even is a lunch. Sometimes it’s about falling asleep in class, and even about clothing, like not having the right clothing for the weather, or having money to pay for school-related activities,” Nancy says.

Nancy, Kyle, and Debbie are all concerned about the undue stress and disorganization many poor families experience. “Because parents may be working more than one job, or because they may have substance abuse problems, it often means that the kids don’t have much routine in their lives. No set meal or bed times, no help with homework, no screen-time rules, or that sort of thing.

“It’s hard for kids to regulate themselves, especially when you add hunger and fatigue on top of the chaos,” Nancy relates.

“We have a breakfast program for all students at my school; any student, poor or not, has access to the program. We need an inclusive program so no individual is stigmatized. As a staff we’ve worked hard to erase the possibility of shame or embarrassment.”

– Kyle Hamilton, Kelowna

High anxiety. Extreme anger. And more often than not, just exhausted.

"Many parents are in a place of enduring poverty. They are stuck. When you are poor, you are vulnerable; you have little resilience, and few supports or resources. It's a very difficult place to be," Nancy explains.

Debbie remembers that many good paying jobs were lost in Nelson back in 2002 when the government cut an extensive number of public services. "We are now a retail economy. Nobody can realistically support a family on minimum wage. Our students are poor because their parents have low-paying jobs, if they are working at all."

With 25 years of experience, Nancy sees teachers' roles expanding to compensate for the decrease in resources for people who need assistance with parenting skills, finding employment, or accessing mental health programs. "The services that are left are overloaded."

Kyle tells a similar story. "We're supposed to talk about academics, but we've taken on a much larger role. Some of our students don't live at home, they are not in care; they live in a shelter because they are in limbo. When kids are in this kind of situation, or hungry, or in a high state of anxiety, then everyday is like starting fresh. We are their family. These kids don't make the same leaps or progress academically. You have to have a long-term perspective."

While the children and their families are the ones who bear the burden of poverty, working with students who are poor is also challenging for teachers. It weighs on one's psyche and no matter how much teachers do every

"It's hard for kids to regulate themselves, especially when you add hunger and fatigue on top of the chaos."

– Nancy Alexander, Prince George

day to ease the situation for their students, it feels like it's not enough.

Nancy is proud that a community of care exists at her school and that programs like the Primary Project, which allows for smaller class sizes for Grades K–3, peer helpers, learning team grants, Mind-Up, and school-community parenting programs exist, but thinks that further answers lie outside of the school system.

Debbie believes that empathy, compassion, and understanding are necessary when working with kids who live in poverty, yet feels that these attitudes only go so far. "We need the support and resources for the kids who have learning challenges as a result of being poor. They have a right to learn too."

Kyle cautions that it's easy to start blaming and pointing fingers at parents, but that poverty is systemic and that many parents are caught in the cycle. "Of course parents have to take responsibility where and when they can, but the problem is larger than parents themselves."

"The greater challenge is getting at the real roots of poverty," he says.

Susan Croll is editor of Teacher newsmagazine.

While the children and their families are the ones who bear the burden of poverty, working with students who are poor is also challenging for teachers. It weighs on one's psyche and no matter how much teachers do every day to ease the situation for their students, it feels like it's not enough.

Freedom from poverty *By Noel Herron*



More and more hungry kids arrive in our schools

With a new school year underway and BC once again leading the country in child poverty (according to a mid-June Stats Canada report), it is clear that more schools will have to cope with malnourished kids arriving on their doorstep. In BC, food insecurity now impacts one-in-five children as of the 2013 Stats Canada report.

In Vancouver alone last year, three additional elementary schools were added to the growing list of schools scrounging for funds from individuals, businesses, and charitable organizations to provide breakfast for their students.

To underline the pressure some local school communities are under, on the second day of school this year, over 100 students arrived in the Downtown Strathcona Community Centre lunch room for breakfast, even before the initial notice to parents was sent home.

In Burnaby, another elementary school was scrambling for surplus food from local Walmart and Costco outlets in an effort to cobble together a breakfast program.

Across Canada at present there are five non-governmental sources providing limited financial assistance to needy schools—they are: Breakfast for Learning, which feeds around 300,000 kids; Breakfast Club of Canada feeding 120,000; Kids Eat Smart, 50,000; and Farm-to-School, around 20,000.

Representatives from both the Breakfast for Learning and the Breakfast Club of Canada state that they are unable to

meet escalating demands for help from so many schools in BC.

Last month the Conference Board of Canada, a leading conservative business group, called for a national breakfast food program in schools, acknowledging that kids cannot learn and thrive if they are not well nourished.

In the preceding month, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) called for a major pilot project at the federal level to alleviate child poverty. The association warned that “the cost of inaction is higher than acting,” noting that poverty hinders the ability to sustain economic growth and that Canada ranked 15 out of 17 peer countries in tracking poverty with only Italy and the United States having a lower ranking.

Based on the current Liberals’ adamant, short-sighted and non-interventionist policy, it is now clear that no help for these struggling schools will be forthcoming from Victoria, as more and more hungry kids stream into our public schools.

Despite the government’s inaction, all of us should have an unflinching commitment to the proposition that no kid in a BC classroom should be hungry. BC families should not have to rely solely on charity to ensure that children are properly fed.

Noel Herron is a former Vancouver school principal and trustee. He is a member of the recently formed “Justice not Charity” working group dedicated to eliminating food insecurity in schools.



Teachers' views

Over the past decade, BC experienced persistently high child poverty rates. The most recent Statistics Canada data shows that BC's child poverty rate increased from 10.5% in 2010 to 11.3% in 2011, with 93,000 children living in poverty. This means tens of thousands of children in BC schools are experiencing the effects of poverty.

In 2012–13, the BC Teachers' Federation conducted a provincial survey of teachers to assess the poverty-related needs of students, the adequacy of resources to meet these needs, and identify what is most needed to address educational barriers related to poverty. In total, 778 teachers completed the survey with respondents being well-represented across regional zones. Late-career teachers were more likely to respond to the survey than were early-career teachers.

Hungry students and adequacy of resources to support them

We learned that most of the teachers in the survey have some students who are experiencing poverty and that 80% of teachers surveyed have students who come to school hungry. Less than half (about 45%) of teachers surveyed indicate their schools had a lunch program or a breakfast program.

School fees and participation in school-related activities

We also learned that schools charge fees (or deposits) for a wide range of course materials, school supplies, or academies. While *The School Act* requires the school district to have a process in place to provide financial assistance to students experiencing financial hardship, only two-thirds of teachers in the survey were aware of such a process. And only one in three teachers considered the process for providing financial assistance to be working either "Quite well" or "Very well" to ensure all students can fully participate in courses and school-related activities.

When asked which factors prevent families from applying/asking for financial assistance, about one-half of teachers in the survey identified: "Parent and/or student is

not comfortable asking," one-third of teachers identified: "Family has no transportation to and from activity" and one-quarter identified: "Family cannot afford equipment and clothing." Some barriers related to the application process with one in four teachers identifying "Application is too technically difficult to complete" and one in ten "Language barriers, when translation is not available."

Staff awareness and understanding about poverty issues

We learned that many teachers do not feel well-prepared or feel their teacher training and in-service prepared them to teach students who are experiencing poverty. Teachers in schools in low-income and remote northern areas felt more prepared than those in suburban and high-income areas. Overall, teachers did not view the resources available to increase awareness and understanding about poverty as adequate.

What is most needed to address educational barriers related to poverty?

When asked about priority areas to focus on in advocating for the needs of students who are experiencing poverty, over half of teachers chose "Extra teaching support to address learning gaps related to poverty" (56.5%) and "Increased provincial funding for programs that support students in poverty" (55.2%) as either a 1st priority or 2nd priority area. When asked what the provincial government could do to improve learning conditions and address poverty-related barriers for students living in poverty, teachers recommended:

1. Provide extra specialist staffing resources to address learning gaps.
2. Improve education funding to address poverty-related barriers.
3. Address underlying causes of poverty.
4. Increase government awareness and understanding of poverty and education issues.

Prepared by Margaret White, research analyst, BCTF Research and the BCTF Antipoverty Action Group of the Committee for Action on Social Justice

Full study findings: bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx
Sources available on request.

Freedom from violence *Interview by Susan Croll*



What does it mean to be a peace educator?

Shannon Tito teaches intermediate students in Surrey. He recently received his doctorate in Education Leadership from SFU. I spoke with him about his work as a peace educator and the theories behind peace education.

What does it mean to be a peace educator? Informally, I call myself a teacher. If someone asks me what I do, I say that I am a teacher. Formally, I call myself a peace educator. To be a peace educator means you are deliberate in how you structure your classroom. You have a disposition toward creating a peaceful environment, a fair, and respectful classroom. You use as many opportunities as you can to teach about peace. Peace means much more than the absence of war. According to Johan Galtung (sociologist, author, and mathematician), the absence of war does not mean there is peace. It means we have negative peace. What we really should strive for is positive peace, which again according to Galtung, means there is no structural violence. Structural violence is a state of social inequality in which privileged groups exploit or oppress others; created by deprivation of basic human needs, such as civil rights, health, and education. (Galtung, 1996; Harris & Morrison, 2003)

You must practice what you preach. You have to respect every student and staff and honour diversity. There is no place for favouritism, and all students must be provided with the tools to solve problems peacefully. Peace does not mean there is no conflict; it is about how the conflict is resolved.

Peace education also depends on context. I wouldn't be teaching about peace the same way I do in Surrey if I was teaching in war zone where kids shoot and kill each other, even in schools. In that context, my primary focus would be getting at the root of the violence as well as developing practical ways to mitigate the violence.

How is peace education different from other kinds of teaching? Peace education is not a mandated subject in itself; there is no defined peace education curriculum in

BC. You have to piggyback and integrate peace education into other content areas. You teach peace from the perspective of social studies or art or language arts, social responsibility, etc. Peace is a philosophical construct so a teacher must make it concrete for their students. Reardon (1988) said the general purpose of peace education is the promotion of global citizenship and thereby positively transforming our social structures.

I use literature to teach my students about peace, especially around Remembrance Day. We know that wars and/or conflicts happen when there is inequality and discrimination or structural violence. There are many good literatures suitable for children that speak about inequality and conflict around the world. We can use these to teach students about peace.

What kinds of work or projects are your students involved with? Daily, we learn and practice virtues such as empathy, kindness, self-control, fairness, and problem-solving. Of course there are links to social responsibility that is an important part of BC's curriculum. I use certain events like Remembrance Day as a teachable moment. The students memorize poems and really get to understand the horrors of war, something not many students do these days. They also have the chance to create their own work of art about peace. The hands-on part of art works for many students. For example, I've challenged my students to artistically juxtaposition the notions of human Good and Evil or War and Peace or just opposing ideas.

Peace education also includes environmental education and learning about human's environmental degradation. I do not tell my students what to think; I want them to learn to think critically about the future of our planet. I pose open-ended questions as one way to help them develop their thinking.

Where can teachers interested in peace education find resources to get them started? The BCTF has some of the best resources for teaching for peace that you will find

anywhere. The “Acts of transformation from war toys to peace art” resource in particular is a practical activity that you can do as a class or a whole school project. I developed a peace education program for a non-profit organization in Vancouver for intermediate grades. It can be purchased from www.cnis.ca.

It is important to note that “peace education” is not about getting a lesson and photocopying and handing it out. It is a process and a way of learning.

Susan Croll is editor of Teacher newsmagazine.

Teaching about homophobia

Know where your support is

By Shannon Rerie

Standing up in the front of a class of 30 watching eyes, my hands shaking and my heart pounding, I start the conversation about anti-homophobia, racism, sexism, acceptance, and diversity. I have this conversation every year in my class and every year I fear it will go sideways and that the backlash from parents will begin anew.

We’ve all had those thoughts when teaching a controversial issue. Whether we’re teaching about Israel/Palestine, the Tsihqot’in War, anti-homophobia, or, in some districts, sexual education, we fear how the class will react, how parents will react, and if we are setting ourselves up for a fall.

A few years ago, at the New Teachers’ Conference, I picked up some “homophobia-free zone” posters for my wall. I naively put up the posters all over the school and my classroom and before I knew it I was knee-deep in controversy. Parents were calling administration to have their students pulled from my class for promoting gayness, students were going out of their way to test my anti-homophobia policy, and our discussions on acceptance and diversity were rapidly going sideways.

As a new teacher I was scared of the controversy but also realized that it was necessary. Thankfully I had a supportive administration, and a supportive social justice

rep with our local union. I still remember Amar Sull purposefully going around and putting up the “homophobia-free zone” posters on every available space, and challenging an administrator who questioned whether that was really necessary.

Teaching about anti-homophobia wasn’t easy though. I had teachers corner me in the library to question why I was doing this in a small community that decided I was clearly gay and had a gay agenda. One parent accused me of being anti-heterosexual. It was exhausting and emotionally draining and I spent the better part of a year in tears.

Was it worth it though? I have now run the Gay/Straight Alliance in both secondary schools in Williams Lake for five years and I believe that I have made a difference. A counselor, returning to the school after a few years, told me that she has never seen the environment so accepting and so many kids comfortable with being out of the closet. So was it worth it? Definitely, and I would do it again.

The key to teaching controversial issues, in my opinion, is knowing where your support is, who to turn to in order to help back you up, and having the materials and resources necessary to teach the issue properly. No one likes to teach a subject and realize they don’t know enough to handle any questions or backlash, so be prepared. Having a supportive network, knowing how the BCTF and your local union can protect you, is essential.

We must remember that as teachers we help students think critically about their own biases and their own ideas. We are not telling them what to think, we are providing them with a safe environment to look at issues, perhaps through the social-justice lens, and to arrive at their own conclusions based on the facts presented.

I hope I have helped a few students in my small town realize that just because a kid decides they are gay, it doesn’t make them a bad person, it just makes them human.

Shannon Rerie teaches at Williams Lake Secondary School



Burnaby students stitch peace quilt



Tina Anderson and her primary students at Douglas Road Elementary School in Burnaby designed this quilt as a peace project.

The United Nations has declared a culture of peace as “a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling the root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups, and nations.”

The economics of happiness

By Betty Gilgoff

Mark Anielski spoke at the PAGE BC Conference on October 26. In his book, *The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth* (2007, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC) Anielski argues that our current system of measuring success based on the GDP is faulty. Making money has become all that matters, often despite the consequences; despite the fact that natural resources are being depleted (natural capital) or that communities or individuals are being harmed (social and human capital). The real meaning of the value of wealth has been lost.

Fortunately, people are demanding change, specifically that economists and policymakers begin to ask different questions. For example, how much longer can our world sustain never-ending growth?

Anielski introduces his concept of “genuine wealth,” a concept that encompasses five types of capital—human, social, natural, built, and financial as equally important components of the measure of success. Anielski claims that a world where well-being and happiness drive economy and government policies, is within our reach. He provides examples of small businesses and communities that are already growing an economy of happiness based on genuine wealth.

Anielski has pertinent advice for teachers. We need to understand where money comes from. Money is a social construct, and because it falls to banks to create money, banks have become institutionalized counterfeiters. One-third of our working lives are now spent working to pay off interest in all its various forms, a fact that led Anielski into a call for us to wake up.

Education in its pure form means ‘to draw forth what is already within you.’ Well-being should be the ultimate mandate of our education system therefore we should build our classrooms around courage, moderation, justice, and wisdom, the four pillars that support creating space in classrooms for nurturing genuine well-being. That, Anielski says, would make sense.

Betty Gilgoff, retired Vancouver teacher and member of PAGE BC provincial specialist association.

Unapologetically passionate about peace

By Gary Sidhu

I am a Social Studies teacher at Princess Margaret Secondary School in Surrey and passionate about peace. I am unapologetically an anti-war advocate.

Last year, my Social Justice 12 students created eye-catching 10-foot banners each displaying facts about the global arms race. They hung the banners in the hallways because my students believed that all of our school's students need to be aware of weapons production.

My students are keen and want to understand world events. They were inspired by the courageous acts of millions during the Arab Spring because it demonstrated that when people act together that change is possible. They learned what motivated the Occupy Movement and why increasing inequality hurts everyone.

Recently, I invited two Aboriginal elders to speak to my students about residential schools. Their presentations were eye-openers for students.

Peace education however is not just about focussing on the world's problems; currently we are learning about heroic people and organizations that are committed to making the world more humane and peaceful.

Gary Sidhu, Princess Margaret Secondary School, Surrey

My students are keen and want to understand world events... They learned what motivated the Occupy Movement and why increasing inequality hurts everyone.



Staff and student games: You may not be covered

The BCTF recently received another decision by the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal (WCAT) denying a claim for a teacher who was playing in a staff vs. student soccer game at lunch time in the school gymnasium. They disallowed the claim on the basis that the soccer game was not part of the teacher's employment. WCAT disallowed a similar claim last year when the injury occurred during a lunch time student vs. staff softball game.

Specifically, the WCAT panel found that the teacher was injured outside normal working hours, he was not involved in an activity that was part of his job, he was not instructed or otherwise directed by the employer to carry out the activity, the activity was not directly supervised by a representative of the employer having supervisory authority, and fitness was not a job requirement. Evidence that the teacher was "encouraged to participate with students to foster good relations" did not carry sufficient weight with the tribunal to support the claim.

Teachers should be aware that if they choose to participate in recreational, exercise, or sports-related activities outside of instructional time, their WCB claim may not be accepted if they are injured.

Refer to your local president for advice on this matter if you participate in these kinds of recreational activities at your school.

Note that this decision does not affect coaches or supervisors of school teams.

Is it just me, or has *union* become a dirty word?

What's clear is that unions are more important now than ever before, not just for those of us in a union, but for all workers in Canada.

By Jennifer Wadge

I think that we can all agree that belonging to a union doesn't have the positive perception it once had. According to CBC's *The Current*, 10 years ago, when polled, Canadians viewed unions as useful institutions with a better image than businesses and the government. By 2010, this had changed. When polled, Canadians viewed unions in a much more negative light.

What happened?

This shift in public perception did not happen without help. The question is, "Who would benefit from Canadians having a negative view of unions?" This is actually a complicated question to answer. But simply put, corporations have the most to gain. In pushing an agenda that maximizes profits at the expense of workers, a shift in political ideology has crept its way into public consciousness. Job security, reasonable wage increases, and pension plans for workers do not align with an agenda to make the most profit possible.

As Linda McQuaig outlines in a column in the *Toronto Star*, the corporate agenda has been to pit worker against worker. She writes, "As private sector workers have lost ground, they've been encouraged to resent public sector workers, whose unions have generally been stronger and better able to protect them." The thinking that's encouraged is not about raising everyone up, but dragging us all down.

As corporations try to do away with pension plans, for example, private sector workers begin to ask why public sector workers, such as teachers, should have a benefit like a pension? Often "taxpayer expense" is thrown into this debate, as if public sector workers don't also pay taxes. This is helped by media, with right-wing radio hosts and columnists criticizing unions, as if less for us will mean more for everyone else.

In the pension example, private financial institutions such as those who run mutual funds stand to gain our enormous investment dollars if our pensions or CPP contributions are reduced or axed. It pays to ask again, "Who would benefit?"

Unfortunately, this ideological shift enables corporations and right-wing governments to make changes that result in an increasing gap between the richest Canadians and the rest of us. According to recent data from Statistics Canada, the average income in Canada is \$38,700, while the top 1% earn an average that's 10 times as much (\$381,300). In fact, the median individual income in Canada is just \$27,600.

Why don't more people seem to care?

With half of Canadians making less than \$27,600 and a large percentage unable to count on the next paycheque, who is going to be able to afford that new refrigerator, cell phone, or car? Never mind a new house. As corporations push for greater profits, at the expense of workers, it's going to become increasingly difficult to find a market for their goods. So, while the 99% certainly should be concerned, corporations have just as much reason to be worried about the growing inequality.

Can unions survive?

What's clear is that unions are more important now than ever before, not just for those of us in a union, but for all workers in Canada. Following the Great Depression, it was unions that fought for wage increases and workers' rights. This resulted in a decreasing gap between the wealthy and everyone else. If we ever hope to see the wage gap decrease in our lifetimes, it will have to be unions that lead that fight. That is exactly why corporations and right-wing governments have worked so hard to make "union" a dirty word.

What can we do about this?

It's time for us to reclaim the word "union." We need to say the word with pride and explain to those who aren't in a union why it matters to them. After all, what is a union but a group of workers, not fighting against each other, but working together for better working conditions and fair wages and treatment for everyone. Our actions can affect working conditions and wages for all workers. There's nothing dirty about that.

Jennifer Wadge is president of the Surrey Teachers' Association.

Reprinted from Surrey Teachers' Association Bulletin.

Math Catcher

SFU offers free workshops

The storytelling, pictures, models, and hands-on activities used in this 90-minute presentation encourage young people to enjoy math and helps dispel myths that math is boring and abstract.

Are you looking for a free and interesting way to promote mathematics among your elementary or secondary school students, including members of Aboriginal communities? Over 1,600 children and youth have taken part in SFU's Math Catcher program in schools throughout BC.

The program aims to educate students about mathematics and scholarship in general by encouraging students to recognize how math is used in everyday life and how it forms the basis for many of our daily decisions and life-long choices. The storytelling, pictures, models, and hands-on activities used in this 90-minute presentation encourage young people to enjoy math and helps dispel myths that math is boring and abstract.

Another key component of this program is to introduce these concepts to Aboriginal students through the use of First Nations imagery and storytelling and inviting Aboriginal university students to help with the presentation. Dr. Veselin Jungic, associate chair of the SFU Mathematics Dept., who started the Math Catcher Program in 2011, says "It is crucial that we engage Aboriginal students in mathematics at this early age because without numeracy skills, too many study and career options will be closed to them."

As part of this program, Dr. Jungic has developed books and animated videos in several First Nations languages (Blackfoot, Cree, Squamish, Heiltsuk, Nisgaa, Sliammon, Halq'eméylem, and Huu-ay-aht) as well as bilingual picture books in Blackfoot/English, Squamish/English, and Nisgaa/English that he includes in his presentations.

The Aboriginal students who assist in these workshops are currently enrolled SFU students who volunteer their time to this program. They get the opportunity to share their experiences studying mathematics and science as a university student. This often sparks a lively question-and-answer session with the students.

Students from Metro Vancouver, Kamloops, Sparwood, Oliver, Bella Bella, Brentwood Bay, and Chase have benefited from this program supported by Simon Fraser University, the Pacific Institute of Mathematical Studies, the University of British Columbia, and the National Sciences and Research Engineering Research Council of Canada. If you would like to bring Math Catcher to your classroom, please contact:

Dr. Veselin Jungic, 778-782-3340, vjungic@sfu.ca

<http://mathcatcher.irmacs.sfu.ca/node>

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Looks Like Daylight

Voices of Indigenous Kids

Deborah Ellis, Greenwood Books
Toronto, 2013

Author interview and book review by Janet Nicol

"History impacts on the present," says Deborah Ellis, discussing her latest book, *Looks Like Daylight: Voices of Indigenous Kids* in a recent telephone interview. "Situations grow from the past." Ellis gained this understanding and a great deal more travelling across North America for more than two years, talking to Aboriginal children and teenagers living on and off reserves. "Children don't get recognized for having opinions," she observes. "They have a lot to say."

Instead of turning these interviews into fiction, as Ellis does when writing award-

winning novels for and about young people, she lets First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth tell their stories in their own words. "Half of the interviewees are Canadian and half are American," she says, travelling with her tape recorder as far south as Texas, north to Iqaluit, and along the Pacific coast to Haida Gwaii. "I attempt to keep myself out of the book as much as possible." Even so, Ellis' trademark empathy and respect for young people is evident in the trust and open responses she elicits.

Each of the 45 people interviewed is identified with a first name only, along with her or his age and a brief biography. Photos of some of the interviewees and scenes of their communities are included. All describe their realities with courage—both heart-wrenching and inspiring. Suicide and addiction issues—among other challenges—appear in some of the young people's stories but so do their wise thoughts, selfless dreams, and their wealth of talents and achievements.

Tingo, aged 14, begins the collection. He describes a "family systems" program he joined: "We talk a lot about grief because that's been a big part of our lives as Native people—grief over losing our land, our language, our customs, our ways. Grief often comes out as trouble." Tingo was born in Kelowna, British Columbia, and is Blackfoot on his mother's side and Nicaraguan on his father's. His young life has already taught him much as he concludes: "It's your life. Find people who will help you live it."

Pearl, aged 15, is from a Cree reserve in Ontario and determined to give back as a police officer when she becomes an adult. "If I become a police officer I'll never use a car," she says. "I'll walk around and know what's going on and people will know that they can trust me."

Ta'Kaiya, is 11, from the Coast Salish Nation and lives in Vancouver, BC. A determined environmentalist, Ta'Kaiya was part of the Freedom Train that went across the country to protest the Northern Gateway pipeline. "If we don't take care of the earth there will be nothing left but mocking silence for what we could have saved," she says.

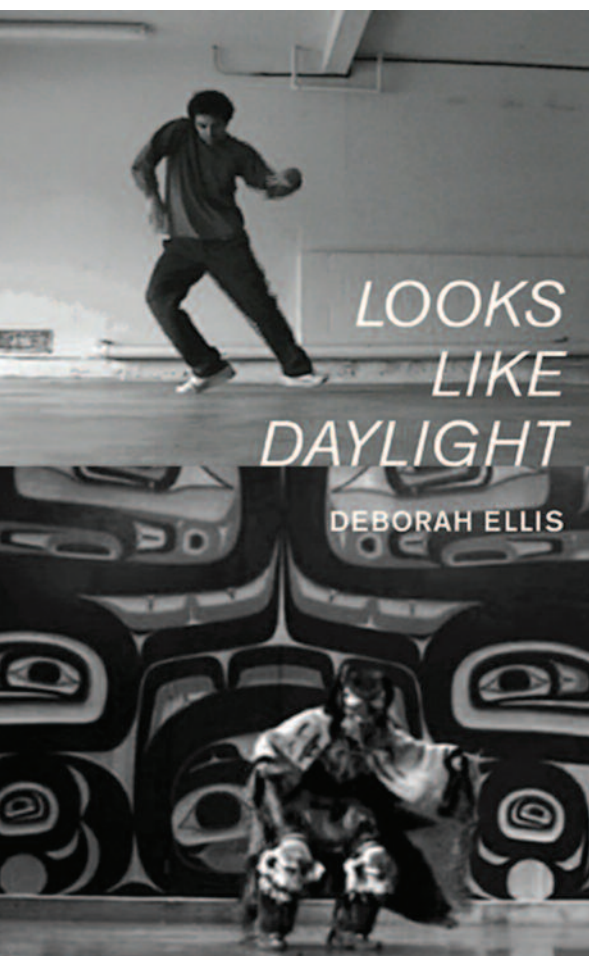
All proceeds for *Looks Like Daylight* will go to the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

Ellis acknowledges there are separate realities among First Nations youth and other North American youth. "Racism is an issue," she says. "Young people take the lead from the adults around them."

The last words in *Looks Like Daylight* go to Waasekom, aged 16. He is Ojibwe from the Saugeen First Nation in Ontario. "My spirit name ("Waasekom") means 'when it's night and lightning fills the sky and it suddenly looks like daylight,'" he explains, inspiring the book's title.

Janet Nicol teaches social studies at Killarney Secondary School, Vancouver.

For more information: deborahellis.com and fncaringsociety.com





Original source: iStock/Thinkstock

Pourquoi je n'achèterai rien pour ma classe

par Tanis Maxfield

Lors de ma première année comme enseignante, j'ai rencontré ma collègue Denise. Elle enseignait déjà depuis 6 ans et elle m'a offert de l'aide et des conseils qui m'ont aidé à survivre à cette année tant redoutée. Le message le plus profond qu'elle m'a apporté m'a échappé pendant longtemps et il m'a fallu plusieurs années pour en comprendre l'importance.

Elle m'a dit: "Je n'achète jamais quoi que ce soit pour ma classe de ma poche."

Elle adorait ses élèves et elle travaillait fort pour planifier des leçons engageantes et amusantes. Ce n'est pas qu'elle ne voulait pas avoir affiches, bordures de babillards, livres, etc. dans sa classe. Au contraire, elle trouvait pénible les lacunes dans sa classe.

Alors, pourquoi faisait-elle cela? C'est simple. Elle avait compris que plus on paye de notre poche, plus on cache la réalité de nos salles de classes. Autrement dit, si les parents ne voient pas des classes sans ressources, ils ne font rien pour changer la situation. C'est quand les parents se rendent compte de la réalité financière de notre système, qu'ils demandent des changements. Cette philosophie n'est pas limitée aux dépenses pour la classe. Il existe plusieurs exemples de coupures budgétaires cachées par la bienfaisance des enseignants, des parents et des élèves. Combien de fois a-t-on organisé des ventes de pâtisseries, des collectes de bouteilles vides, des rafles, etc. pour ramasser des fonds pour le PAC/conseil des parents?

Récemment, un parent a écrit une lettre à l'administrateur de son école pour exprimer son horreur vis-à-vis du manque de propreté de l'école. L'administrateur a passé le message aux enseignants pour les encourager à parler aux

élèves. Est-ce que les élèves ont besoin de prendre part à la responsabilité de garder l'école propre? Absolument! Mais la réalité c'est que les coupures budgétaires ont diminué le temps dont disposent les concierges pour nettoyer l'école. Si l'administrateur avait expliqué cela au parent, peut être qu'elle aurait adressé sa lettre au ministre de l'Éducation.

J'ai appris beaucoup de Denise pendant ma première année d'enseignement, mais cela m'a pris toutes ces années pour comprendre sa leçon la plus valable. Et voilà pourquoi je n'achète rien pour ma classe de ma poche.

Tanis Maxfield, professeure de mathématiques/sciences à l'École KLO middle school et aussi représentante bargaining/WLC chair pour le syndicat Central Okanagan Teachers' Association

April 10–11, 2014

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Judicial Council reports BCTF job-action decision

A three-member Hearing Panel of the BCTF Judicial Council was duly charged with determining if BCTF member Sue Leach was guilty of breaching Clause 8 of the *BCTF Code of Ethics*. It was alleged that Ms. Leach engaged in conduct harmful or prejudicial to the interests of the Federation (By-Law 7.1 (b), and a breach of Job Action Procedure 44.04—2.b. (Strikes/ Lockouts).

The charge arose when Ms. Leach reportedly worked during the BCTF job action of March 5, 6, and 7, 2012. There was no dispute of these facts.

The Hearing Panel determined that by her actions, Ms. Leach violated Clause 8 of the *BCTF Code of Ethics*.

The Hearing Panel subsequently imposed the following penalties:

1. Issuance of a reprimand to Ms. Leach for violating Clause 8 of the *BCTF Code of Ethics*.
2. A one-year suspension of Ms. Leach's right to hold office in the BCTF or any of its subsidiary bodies, including local associations, commencing 31 days after the issuance of this report.
3. A monetary fine as per BCTF policy 44.16 (f) 4.
4. Publication of these findings and penalties in the next issue of the BCTF *Teacher Newsmagazine*.

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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. It is up to you to apply to withdraw from LTD.

How and when to apply

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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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TEACHERS' TUTORING SERVICE is looking for qualified high school teachers for one-to-one in-home tutoring in all areas of Metro Vancouver. Teachers must be BC Ministry of Education certified. For more information and to apply online, visit our "Join Our Service" page at www.tutor.bc.ca TTS is a non-profit society.

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

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PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE.

Drs. Peter Williamson and Robert Wilson, registered psychologists, are seeking referrals from professionals who are experiencing personal or work-related distress. We specialize in relationship problems, depression and anxiety and have a long history of working with educators. For details on our backgrounds, please visit rfwilsonpsychologist.com or www.couples911.org, or referrals can be made directly by calling 604-341-3741 (Dr. Williamson) or 604-831-7792 (Dr. Wilson). Qualified, province-wide services available on Skype or Facetime, contact above for information.

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

HOME-BASED TUTORING Referral Agency. Awarding franchises in Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Victoria, Comox Valley and Prince George. Good income, flexible lifestyle, proven system. 1-877-ITS-EASY (487-3279) info@schooliseasy.com

SCHOOL IS EASY In Home Tutoring agency is seeking certified teachers in: Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Victoria, Comox Valley/Campbell River, Central Okanagan. Forward resume to tutor@schooliseasy.com or call 1-877-ITS-EASY (487-3279)

CHOOSE YOUR VOICE by FAST—award-winning, powerful antiracism education program. Curriculum-based FREE teachers' resource. Grades 6+; ERAC-certified; DOWNLOAD files: www.chooseyourvoice.ca Contact: jderkson@fastcyv.ca

PD Calendar

January 30–February 1 Vancouver. The Early Years Conference 2014—Shaping Childhood: Factors that Matter. <http://www.interprofessional.ubc.ca>

February 14–April 14 Various cities in BC. "Save Your Sanity: Proactive Strategies for Children with Challenging Behaviour." Phone: 250-572-4144. To register: www.saveyoursanity.ca

February 20–21 Richmond. SEA (Special Education Association) Crosscurrents Conference. Keynote speaker: Norman Kunc and Emma Van der Klift. Keynote and sessions related to students with special and diverse learning needs, for classroom teachers, special education teachers, administrators, educational assistants and parents. Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel, Richmond. Register online at www.seaofbc.ca/ Rae Perry, searegistrar@gmail.com or Stephanie Koropatnick, seaconferencechair@gmail.com

February 20–21 Vancouver. BCAEA (BC Alternate Education Association) "Challenge and Change" – 27th annual conference. Dr. Gordon Neufeld as keynote; sessions featuring diverse topics relevant to all those associated with vulnerable students typically enrolled in alternative learning environments. Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre, Vancouver. To register go to: bctf.ca/bcaea/conference.html. For more info: bctf.ca/bcaea/index.html Co-ordinator: DJ Pauls at djpauls@shaw.ca

February 21 Victoria, BC. It's Never Too Late to Begin. Connie Foss More presents ideas for creating musical magic with older beginner music classes for upper elementary and beyond. Free workshop courtesy of SD61 LSA and BCKSC. Victoria. 1:00–3:00 p.m. Registration and more info at the BC Kodaly Society of Canada website <http://www.bcksc.ca>, or e-mail Emily

Pollet at emilypollet1@gmail.com, or phone 250-337-8186.

April 12 Victoria, BC. Building a Successful Choral Program in the Elementary School. Presented by Kelly Foster-Griffin. Ideas to generate and sustain a flourishing, robust choir. Explore necessary components that make up successful and inspirational teaching. University of Victoria, MacLaurin Building A166, Registration and more info at the BC Kodaly Society of Canada website <http://www.bcksc.ca>, or e-mail Emily Pollet at emilypollet1@gmail.com, or phone 250-337-8186.

April 25–27 Berkley, CA. Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley, California. "Fourth International Conference on Families with Parental Mental Health Challenges: Addressing the needs of the whole families." View call for abstracts: bit.ly/1dtSEgF. Submit an abstract: bit.ly/1chWqu6. For more information, visit the conference website at <http://bit.ly/1arUT1d>. E-mail marketing.ipce@ubc.ca to get on an enquiry list for updates.

May 2–3 Vancouver, BC. 2014 Consensus Conference on FamilySmart & Youth Engagement. To view the advance notice, please visit <http://bit.ly/HhitD5>. For more information, please visit the conference website at <http://bit.ly/HhiuqP>. E-mail marketing.ipce@ubc.ca to get on an enquiry list for updates.

Future October PSA days:
2014–2015: October. 24, 2014
2015–2016: October. 23, 2015

Changes/additions:
bgoto@bctf.ca

Online PD Calendar:
<http://tinyurl.com/94nz4m5>

Teaching is art for me *By Kirsten Nicolson*

Every moment of my life, my head is at school.

I am an artist. I have been for as far back as my memory will allow me to go, although it took me a long time to find my medium. Over my years of growing up, with creativity bubbling inside, desperate to get out, I tried poetry, painting, knitting, singing, and playing a vast array of instruments to a moderate level of success. I started a million novels, abandoned a thousand sketches, and have a shameful drawer of half-finished sewing projects. And still, the artist in me felt restricted.

Then I arrived in a classroom. Even in my education program coursework, I wasn't sure that teaching was for me, but the minute that I set foot in a classroom, I knew I could never truly be happy anywhere else. Nothing had ever felt right until then. No other medium allowed me to pour myself out and still feel full. No other medium had pulled me in with such intensity. No other medium let me be the artist I knew I was.

You see, teaching is an art. Some will try to tell you that there is a science to it: do these things, get this result. They are wrong. Knowing that every child is a unique human being how can we possibly believe that there is one single way to teach them all? And just as each child is a unique human being, so is each passionate teacher. So many of us are artists in our own right—artists who take the bare bones that is the curriculum and create lessons, experiences, and memories.

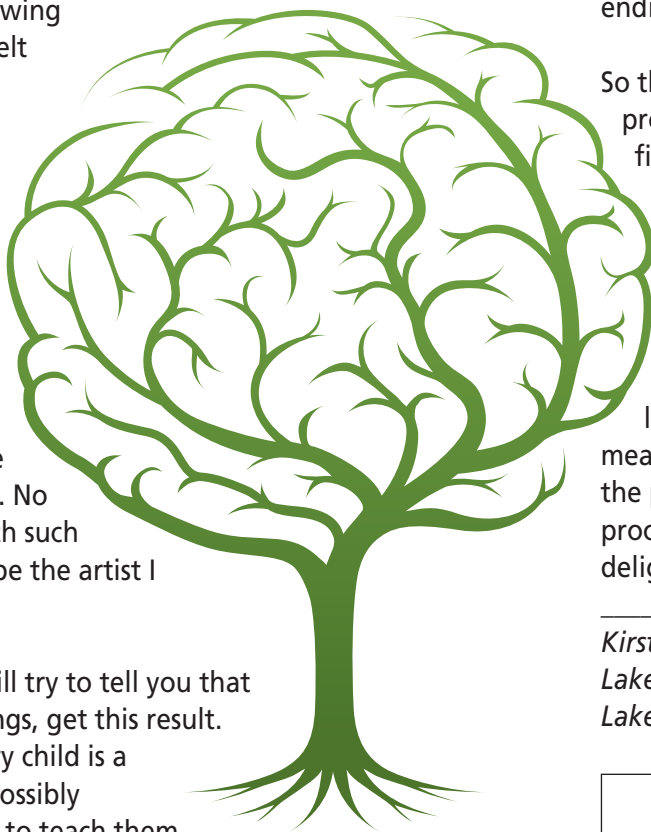
If you're not sure what I'm talking about, have a look at the curriculum documents on the Ministry of Education website. There is no big book of day-to-day instructions. Teachers are left to choose the resources they want to use, the way they want to present ideas, and often some of the subject matter itself. I love that freedom. I love that I can take my expertise and match it with the interests of my students in order to make learning as meaningful as I can for them.

I think about my classroom and the curriculum I am teaching every moment of the day. I am inspired by an article I read over the weekend, I see an art project in the way the snow falls on a Sunday afternoon, I find a way to reach my students in the YouTube video a friend posted on Facebook. Every moment of my life, my head is at school. Like a song writer who cannot put the wisp of a

melody in her head down until it becomes a song, I cannot just leave my teaching in the school when I head home. It is an integral part of who I am as a person. It is a never-ending artistic process.

So the next time you admire a project in your child's classroom or find yourself discussing with someone what exactly goes on in schools, please remember that what goes on there is the messy reality of art at work. When you ask a student about what they learned at school, look for what is particularly meaningful or memorable—that is the product of a truly creative process—take it from someone who delights in the art of teaching!

Kirsten Nicolson teaches at Christina Lake Elementary School, Christina Lake, BC



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